

Character Builder 您好學? 呀

The basic unit of the Chinese language is the *zi* (字), i.e. a Chinese word. Each *zi* has a written form (called a character, made up of strokes), a sound (made up of consonant and vowel) and a meaning (or multiple meanings). When we speak or write Chinese, we string *zi* together to form terms, phrases and sentences.

In Putonghua (the spoken form of Modern Standard Chinese) each *zi* is pronounced in one of four tones:

1st tone: 1 = diacritical mark — pitch: 5 to 5, highest prolonged

2nd tone: 2 = diacritical mark / pitch: 3 to 5, middle to high

3rd tone: 3 = diacritical mark U pitch: 2 to 1 to 4, low to lowest to high

4th tone: 4 = diacritical mark \ pitch: 5 to 1, highest to lowest)

To pronounce each *zi* below, follow its pinyin and the given tone number. Light-sound words, which have no definite pitch, carry no diacritical mark and are marked by 0.

This week: Words about hospitalization

補

Putonghua pronunciation: *bu3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *bo2*

Meaning: mend, repair, remedy, add, replenish, patch, fill vacated position

補 (radical 衣 *yī*, clothes) = mend/replenish: 補衣 (*bu3 yī* = mend-clothes), 補鞋 (*bu3 xié* = repair-shoes), 補習 (*bu3 xī* = extra-tuition). Builder 補漏 (*bu3 lòu* = mends-leaks) in walls/ roof. Speaker 補充 (*bu3 chōng* = add-fill = explains/expands) arguments.

Epidemic-fighters request 補助 (*bu3 zhù* = additional-aid/funding), 補給 (*bu3 gěi* = replenish-give = replenishments). 補薪 (*bu3 xīn* = remedy-salary = back-pay) 補救 (*bu3 jiù* = repairs-redeems) employer-employees' relationship.

Chinese concept 補身 (*bu3 shēn* = repairing/replenishing-body's-vitality) means eating 補品 (*bu3 pǐn* = nourishing-things/ foods e.g. 燕窩 *yān wō* = birds nest, i.e. swallow's saliva dried), 補藥 (*bu3 yào* = health-replenishing-medicinal-concoctions). Newly-operated patient 虛不受補 (*xū bù shòu bu3* = empty-no-receive-replenish = is too weak to absorb nutrients/nourishment).

by Diana Yue