

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

護

Putonghua pronunciation: *hu4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *woo6*

Meaning: protect, preserve, conserve, defend nurse

護 (radical 言 *yan2*, words) = 保護 (*bao3 hu4* = preserve-protect). Parents 愛護 (*ai4 hu4* = love-protect) kids. Environmentalists support 護林 (*hu4 lin2* = conservation/ protection-of-forests). Soldiers 護衛國土 (*hu4 wei4 guo2 tu3* = defend-guard-national-territory). Travelers carry 護照 (*hu4 zhao4* = protect-picture = passports).

護法 (*hu4 fa3* = defend-law/dharma/faith) = high-ranking judge/cleric. 護航 (*hu4 hang2* = protect-sailing) describes warships escorting carrier or powerful supporters backing political motion. Biased person 護短 (*hu4 duan3* = protect- short = support/ defend wrong causes/people). 護花使者 (*hu4 hua1 shi4 zhe1* = protect-flower-messenger) = lady's escort/ bodyguard.

醫護人員 (*yi1 hu4 ren2 yuan2* = doctor-nurse-people-personnel) = medics and paramedics. 護士 (*hu4 shi4* = protect-person = nurses) 護理 (*hu4 li3* = nurse-attend-to) patients.

by Diana Yue