

Character Builder 您好嗎？

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 the gangsters

Putonghua pronunciation: *bao4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *bo6*

Meanings: sudden, violent, violence, huge, fierce, harm, bully

暴 (radical 日 *ri4*, sun) means sudden/violent: 風暴 (*feng1 bao1* = wind-violent = storm), 暴食 (*bao4 shi2* = violent-eat = crazed over-eating), 暴斃 (*bao4 bi4* = sudden~death). Lotto-winner暴富 (*bao4 fu4* = becomes-suddenly~rich). 暴龍 (*bao4 long2* = fierce/powerful~dragon/dinosaur) = tyrannosaurus.

暴躁 (*bao4 zao4* = violent-irritable) wife-beater commits 粗暴 (*cu1 bao4* = rough~brutal) acts. 暴民 (*bao4 min2* = violence~people = rioters) launch 暴動 (*bao4 dong4* = violence~move = riots), overthrow 暴君 (*bao4 jun1* = cruel-king/tyrant/despot)'s 暴政 (*bao4 zheng4* = cruel~regime).

黑幫 (*hei1 bang1* = criminal-gangs/gangsters) use暴力 (*bao4 li4* = violent~physical-force = violence) for 殘暴 (*can2 bao4* = cruel-brutal) purpose: 強暴 (*qiang2 bao4* = force~violence = raping), 劫殺 (*jie2 sha1* = robbing~killing).