

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 dental care

植

Putonghua pronunciation: *zhi2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *jik6*

Meanings: plant, grow, cultivate, transplant

植 (木 *mu4*, wood/tree + 直 *zhi2*, straight/vertical) means planting/establishing something upright. 植物 (*zhi2 wu4* = plant~thing) = plants. Farmers 植樹 (*zhi2 shu4* = plant~trees), 種植 (*zhong4 zhi2* = sow-seeds~plant = plant/cultivate) crops, 培植 (*pei2 zhi2* = cultivate~plant = nurture) seedlings.

Geographer studies region's 植被 (*zhi2 bei4* = plant~cover = vegetation). Native culture 植根本土 (*zhi2 gen1 ben3 tu3* = plant~roots~own~land = has indigenous roots). 深耕密植 (*shen1 geng1 mi4 zhi2* = deep~plough~close~plant) describes intensive farming or pioneer/administrator's attentive/deep-reaching cultivation of plan/talents.

Doctors 移植 (*yi2 zhi2* = move~plant = transplant) foreign tissues/organs. Cosmetic surgeons 植皮 (*zhi2 pi2* = transplant~skin = do skin grafting) for burnt wounds. Dentists 植牙 (*zhi2 ya2* = plant~tooth = do teeth implants).

by Diana Yue