

Character Builder

您好嗎? 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 bio-chemical weapons

責

Putonghua pronunciation: **ze2**

Cantonese pronunciation: **jaak3**

Meanings: responsibility, duty, blame, reproach, reprimand, punish

責 (radical 貝 *bei4*, sea-shell) = 職責 (*zhi2 ze2* = profession/working-duties). Person with 責任心 (*ze2 ren4 xin1* = duty-appoint-heart = sense of responsibility) 盡責 (*jin4 ze2* = exhaust-duty = fulfills all duties). Irresponsible person 卸責 (*xie4 ze2* = shrugs-off-responsibilities).

Strict parent 責問 (*ze2 wen4* = blame-ask = questions/interrogates), 責罵 (*ze2 ma4* = scolds-rebukes), 責罰 (*ze2 fa2* = scolds-punishes) naughty kid. Kid fears 杖責 (*zhang4 ze2* = club-punish = punishment by flogging), not 薄責 (*bo2 ze2* = light-scolding).

World 譴責 (*qian3 ze2* = accuse/condemn-scold = denounces) manufacturers/users of 生化武器 (*sheng1 hua4 wu3 qi4* = biology-chemistry-military-tools/instruments = bio-chemical weapons). UN 負責 (*fu4 ze2* = bears-responsibility to) investigate sarin-gas which 毒害 (*du2 hai4* = poisoned-wounded/kill(ed) thousands.

by Diana Yue