

Character Builder

您好學嗎？

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 counting your blessings

Putonghua pronunciation: *shou4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *sau6*

Meaning: receive, accept, take, contain

受 (radical 又 = 手 *shou3*, hand) means 接受 (*jie2 shou4* = accept-receive): 受益 (*shou4 yi1* = receive-benefits), 受聘 (*shou4 ping4* = is-hired), 受罰 (*shou4 fa3* = is-penalized), 受傷 (*shou4 shang1* = is-hurt), 逆來順受 (*ni4 lai2 shun4 shou4* = against-come-meekly-accept) = take insults/harassment/blows meekly.

Wife 受孕 (*shou4 yün4* = gets-pregnant). Father-to-be 感同身受 (*gan3 tong2 shen1 shou4* = feel/empathize-same-as-body-receive = feels he is going through it himself).

Naïve person 受害 (*shou4 hai4* = is-harmed), 受騙 (*shou4 pian4* = is-cheated), feels 難受 (*nan2 shou4* = difficult-to-accept = unpleasant/miserable), consoles himself: 施比受更為有福 (*shi1 bi3 shou4 geng4 wei3 you3 fu2* = give-compared-to-receive-more-be-have-blessing = It is more blessed to give than to receive).

by Diana Yue