

Character Builder

您好嗎? 咳

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 IDs

護

Putonghua pronunciation: **hu4**

Cantonese pronunciation: **woo6**

Meanings: protect, defend, guard, supervise, support, help

護 (radical言 **yan2**, speech/word) means 保護 (**bao3 hu4** = preserve/guard-protect), 愛護 (**ai4 hu4** = love/care-for-protect). 護士 (**hu4 shi4** = protect-person) = nurse. 護衛 (**hu4 wei4** = protect-defend) = guard. Minor has 監護人 (**jian1 hu4 ren2** = guard-protect-person = guardian). 護城河 (**hu4 cheng2 he3** = protect-city/castle-river = moat) surrounds castle.

Warships perform 護航 (**hu4 hang2** = protect-sail/voyage = convoy) mission. Lawyer delivers 辯護 (**bian4 hu4** = argue/debate-defend = defence). 護苗基金 (**hu4 miao2 ji1 jin1** = tend/protect-young-shoots-foundation-gold/money) = protect/help needy children fund.

護照 (**hu4 zhao4** = protection-proof-document = passport) is refugee's 護身符 (**hu4 shen2 fu2** = protect-body-charm = talisman) when seeking 政治庇護 (**zheng4 zhi4 bi4 hu4** = politics-rule-blessing-protection = political asylum).

by Diana Yue