

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 IDs

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).