

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 raising families

帶

Putonghua pronunciation: *dai4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *daai3*

Meanings: line, belt, lead, take, carry

帶 (radical 巾 *jin1*, scarf/kerchief) means line/belt: 腰帶 (*yao1 dai4* = waist~belt), 裙帶 (*qun2 dai4* = skirt~belt = nepotism).

Verb 帶 means carry/lead. Air 帶有 (*dai4 you3* = contains~has) oxygen. Clouds 帶來 (*dai4 lai2* = bring~along) rain. Dad 帶回 (*dai4 hui2* = brings~home) pay/bread. Captain 帶領 (*dai4 ling3* = lead~collar = leads) troops, 帶頭 (*dai4 tou2* = lead~head = is first to) charge.

Mom/nanny 帶孩子 (*dai4 hai2 zi0* = carry~child~diminutive = carries/looks after baby/child). Parents 帶淚 (*dai4 lei4* = with~tears) or 帶笑 (*dai4 xiao4* = with~laugh/smile) remember days of 拖男帶女 (*tuo1 nan2 dai4 nü3* = drag~male/boy~carry~female/girl = kids in arms/at elbows), 帶大兒女 (*dai4 da4 er2 nü3* = bring~big/grow~son~daughter = raising children).

by Diana Yue