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:

1. **1st tone**: 1 = diacritical mark — pitch: 5 to 5, highest prolonged
2. **2nd tone**: 2 = diacritical mark / pitch: 3 to 5, middle to high
3. **3rd tone**: 3 = diacritical mark U pitch: 2 to 1 to 4, low to lowest to high
4. **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 the digestive system**

**飽**
- Putonghua pronunciation: **bao3**
- Cantonese pronunciation: **baau2**
- Meanings: satiated, full, satisfied, enough

飽, 餓 (e4, hungry) both have radical 食 (shi2, eat/food). When 肚子餓了 (du4 zi0 e1 le0 = tummy/stomach-diminutive-hungry-ed = stomach feels hungry), we 飽餐一頓 (bao3 can1 yi1 dun4 = full-meal-one-round = have a full meal), 打飽嗝 (da3 bao3 ge2 = hit/produce-full-belch = belch with full stomach).

飽讀詩書 (bao3 du2 shi1 shu1 = full-read-poetry-books) describes well-read/educated scholar. Well-paid workers 吃得飽 (chi1 de0 bao3 = eat-can-full = have enough to eat), 睡個飽 (shui4 ge0 bao3 = sleep-one-full = sleep to their hearts’ content) on Sundays. 飽滿 (bao3 man3 = full-filled) describes plump face/figure or robust spirit.

過飽 (guo4 bao3 = pass-full = over-stuffed/over-eating) harms body. 半飽 (ban4 bao3 = half-full) is best.

*by Diana Yue*