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 divorce**

Putonghua pronunciation: **shang1**
Cantonese pronunciation: **seung1**
Meanings: hurt, wound, injure

傷 (radical 亻 = 人 ren2, person) = 傷害 (shang1 hai4 = hurt-harm). Bully 傷人 (shang1 ren2 = injures-person/someone). Victim 受傷 (shou4 shang1 = receive-wound = is injured). 傷口 (shang4 kou3 = wound-mouth = open wound) leaves 傷痕 (shang1 hen2 = wound’s-mark/scar).

工傷 (gong1 shang1 = work/worker-injury) = injury due to industrial accident. Battle causes 傷亡 (shang1 wang2 = injuries-and-deaths). Difficult problems are 傷腦筋 (shang1 nao3 jin1 = hurt-brain-tendon = brain-racking). 傷風 (shang1 feng1 = wound-wind) means common cold.

Alcohol 傷身 (shang1 shen1 = harm-body = is bad for health). Disputes 傷和氣 (shang1 he2 qi4 = hurt-peace-breath = mar harmonious relationships). Unfaithful husband makes wife 傷心 (shang1 xin1 = wound-heart = feel hurt).

by Diana Yue