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 reporters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>報</th>
<th>Putonghua pronunciation: bao4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cantonese pronunciation: bo3</td>
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<td>Meanings: report, return, revert, newspaper</td>
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Workers/investors expect 報酬 (bao4 chou2 = return-reward/remunerations), 回報 (hui2 bao4 = return-pay = returns).

Grateful people 報恩 (bao4 en1 = return-favor/kindness).

Victimized people 報仇 (bao4 chou2 = return-offence = take revenge). Buddhists say 善有善報 (shan4 you3 shan4 bao4 = kind-deeds-are-kindly-returned), evil-doers get 報應 (bao4 ying4 = return-echo = fate’s punishment).

報紙 (bao4 zhi3 = inform-paper) = newspaper. 小報 (xia3 bao4 = small-newspaper = tabloids) 報導 (bao4 dao3 = report-direct/carry) scandals. Official organs 報喜不報憂 (bao4 xi3 bu4 bao4 you1 = report-happy-no-report-sad = only print good news, never bad news).

by Diana Yue