

Character Builder 您好嗎? 呀

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 spring cleaning

Putonghua pronunciation: *zì4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *ji3*

Meanings: steep, soak, stain, soil, sludge, pickle

漬 (radical 氵 = 水 *shuǐ3*, water) means soaking/staining. Riverbeds contain 沉漬物 (*chén2 zì4 wu4* = sink-stain-object = sediments). Textile manufacturer 漬染 (*zì4 rǎn3* = stain-dye = dyes) fabrics.

水漬 (*shuǐ3 zì4* = water-stain), 油漬 (*yóu2 zì4* = oil-stain), 茶漬 (*chá2 zì4* = tea-stain), 咖啡漬 (*kāfēi1 zì4* = “coffee”-transliterated-stain) are 污漬 (*wū1 zì4* = dirty-stains). Housewife uses 去漬劑 (*qù zì4 jì1* = go/remove-stain-solution = stain remover) to remove 漬痕 (*zì4 hén2* = stain-trace/marks).

Chef 醃漬 (*yān1 zì4* = marinate-soak) meat before stewing, 浸漬 (*jìn4 zì4* = immerse-soak) vegetables to make pickles. Japanese kanji term 漬物 (*zì4 wu4* = stain-object = tsukemono) = pickles. 酒漬 (*jiu3 zì4* = wine/liqueur-soaked) cherries are delicious.