

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 moving



Putonghua pronunciation: *baol*

Cantonese pronunciation: *baaul*

Meanings: bag, wrap, bun, enfold, pack, tolerate, absorb

包 means bag/wrap/bun: student's 書包 (*shu1 baol* = book~bag = schoolbag), shopper's 大包小包 (*da4 baol xiao3 baol* = big~bags~small~bags), gifts' 包裝 (*baol zhuang1* = wrap~decorate = packaging), 叉燒包 (*cha1 shao1 baol* = fork~roast~bun = barbecued-pork buns).

Troops 包圍 (*baol wei2* = surround~encircle/besiege) city. Movers 包紮 (*baol za1* = wrap~tie) things into 包裹 (*baol guo3* = wrap~enfold = parcel). 包袱 (*baol fu2* = wrap~cloth) means cloth-tied bundle or old habit/hang-up deterring work/thinking's progress.

錢包 (*qian2 baol* = money~bag) = Cantonese 荷包 (*he2 baol* = lotus~bag) = wallet/purse. Cantonese 打荷包 (*da3 he2 baol* = hit~wallet/purse) means pick someone's pocket, but 荷包蛋 (*he2 baol dan4* = wallet/purse~egg) means whole egg soft-fried on both sides.

by Diana Yue