

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 cancers

擴

Putonghua pronunciation: *kuo4*
Cantonese pronunciation: *kwok3*
Meanings: spread, enlarge, extend

擴 (扌 = 手 *shou3*, hand = 廣 *guang3*, broad/expansive) means spread/expand. 擴音器 (*kuo4 yin1 qi4* = spread~sound~ machine) = audio-amplifier. Business擴建 (*kuo4 jian4* = expand~build = expands) complex, 擴展 (*kuo4 zhan3* = expands~develops) operations. Travelling 擴闊視野 (*kuo4 kuo4 shi4 ye3* = expand~broad~sight~field = broadens one's view/experiential knowledge of things).

Hegemonic power 擴軍 (*kuo4 jun1* = expands~military), violating 核不擴散條約 (*he2 bu4 kuo4 san4 tiao2 yue4* = nuclear~no~spread~disperse~item~covenant = 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons).

血管擴張藥 (*xue3 guan3 kuo4 zhang4 yao4* = blood~vessels~enlarge~expand~medicine = vasodilators) widen blood-vessels. 癌擴散 (*ai2 kuo4 san4* = cancer~expand~disperse = cancer spreading) means affected area 擴大 (*kuo4 da4* = expand~big = is enlarged/enlarging).

by Diana Yue