

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.

This week: Words about the beaches

(radical 晒 = 日 ri = sun)

Pronunciation: *shai* (Putonghua, 4th tone), *saai* (Cantonese, 3rd tone)

Basic meaning: expose to sunlight, sun-bathe

曬 (日 *ri*, sun + 麗 *li*, lovely) = 晒 (日 *ri*, sun + 西 *xi*, west). Both characters are ideograms.

風吹日曬 (*feng chui ri shai* = wind-blow~sun~shine) means open-air exposure. Housewives put washings out to 曬乾 (*shai gan* = sun-bathe~dry). Farmers 曬穀 (*shai gu* = sun-dry~harvested-grains), 稻草 (*dao cao* = grain-stalk~grass = hay). Fishermen 曬網 (*shai wang* = sun-dry~fishing-nets), 鹹魚 (*xian yu* = salted~fish), 蝦米 (*xia mi* = shrimps~rice-grain = sun-dried shrimps).

Sun-bathers want 古銅色皮膚 (*gu tong se pi fu* = ancient~bronze~color~skin = bronze tan), 曬太陽 (*shai tai yang* = sun-bathe~ultimate~yang = laze around in the sun), but too much sun may cause 皮膚癌 (*pi fu ai* = skin~cancer).

by Diana Yue