

Character Builder



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 elections

Pronunciation: *min* (Putonghua, 2nd tone), *man* (Cantonese 4th tone)
Basic meaning: people

民 = 人民 (*ren min* = person~masses) = the people. 民間 (*min jian* = people~among) is how things are among the common people. 民歌 (*min ge* = people~song) means folksongs.

民族 (*min zu* = people~race = nationalism), 民權 (*min quan* = people~rights = civil rights), 民生 (*min sheng* = people's livelihood) are collectively called 三民主義 (*san min zhu yi* = three~people~ism = Three People's Principles). 民法典 (*min fa dian* = people~law~code) = civil code.

民意調查 (*min yi diao cha* = people~feeling~survey) means opinion polls. 民主 (*min zhu* = people~master = people have say) = democracy. The official organ of the PRC is 人民日報 (*Ren min ri bao* = people~day~newspaper = the People's Daily).