

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 bureaucrats

升

Pronunciation: *sheng* (Putonghua, 3rd tone), *sing* (Cantonese, 1st tone)
Basic meaning: rise, raise, promotion

升 = 上升 (*shang sheng* = up~rise = rise/rising). 升降機 (*sheng jiang ji* = rise~fall-machine) = elevators. 升旗 (*sheng qi* = raise/fly~flag). 升學 (*sheng xue* = rise~study) = pursue higher/tertiary education. 升值 (*sheng zhi* = rise~worth) means appreciate in value.

Airplanes 升空 (*sheng kong* = rise~empty/sky = take-off/soar). Christ 升天 (*sheng tian* = rise/ascend-into-heaven). Music makes thoughts 升華 (*sheng hua* = rise~splendor = transcend vulgarity).

Smart bureaucrats 升官 (*sheng guan* = get higher government posting) like 坐直升機 (*zuo zhi sheng ji* = sit-straight-rise~machine = take helicopter = ascend government ranks swiftly). Wishing somebody 升級 (*sheng ji* = rise~level/tier = get promoted), we say “步步高升!” (*bu bu gao sheng* = “Step-step-high-rise!”)

by Diana Yue