

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 banquets

賓

Pronunciation: *bin* (Putonghua, 1st tone), *ban* (Cantonese 1st tone)
Basic meaning: guest

賓 = 賓客 (*bin ke* = guest-visitor) = guest. 賓主 (*bin zhu* = guest-host) = guest and host. 賓館 (*bin guan* = guest-house) means hotel. 西賓 (*xi bin* = west-guest) means a private teacher/assistant lodging with the host family.

迎賓 (*ying bin* = welcome-guests) are receptionists at a party. 貴賓 (*gui bin* = elevated-status-guests) means honored guests. 主賓 (*zhu bin* = main-guest) = principal guest. 陪客 (*pei ke* = accompanying-guests) are additional guests invited to enliven conversation, atmosphere etc. 賓至如歸 (*bin zhi ru gui* = guests-arrive-like-returning-home) describes a successful reception which makes guests feel very much at home.

相敬如賓 (*xiang jing ru bin* = mutually-respect-like-guests) describes a model couple's loving respect for each other.

by Diana Yue