

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 education

師

Pronunciation: *shi* (Putonghua, 1st tone), *si* (Cantonese 4th tone)
Basic meaning: teacher, master, example, learn from teacher

師 means teacher/master. 教師 (*jiao shi* = teach-master) = school teacher. Confucius is honored as 至聖先師 (*zhi sheng xian shi* = most-holy-pioneer-teacher). 師範大學 (*shi fan da xue* = teacher-example-big-school) means normal university.

師傅 means skilled workman (修車師傅 *xiu che shi fu* = repair-car-master/teacher = car mechanic). Apprentices (學徒 *xue tu* = learn-pupils) have to 學師 (*xue shi* = learn-(from)-teacher) until 滿師 (*man shi* = complete apprenticeship).

師法 (*shi fa* = learn-method) means emulating somebody. 偷師 (*tou shi* = steal-learning) means learning from another by secret observation. 以俄為師 (*yi e wei shi* = with-Russia-as-teacher) means copying the Russian example, as China did in the 1950s and 60s.

by Diana Yue