

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

Pronunciation: *xue* (Putonghua, 2nd tone), *hok* (Cantonese 6th tone)
Basic meaning: learn, learning, branch of knowledge

The verb 學 = 學習 (*xue xi* = learn~practice) = learn, because studying requires practice. 學者 (*xue zhe* = learned~people) means scholars. 學佛 (*xue fo* = learn~Buddha) means studying/practicing Buddhism. 學做人 (*xue zuo ren* = learn~be~person/human) means learning about how to go through life.

The noun 學 = 學問 (*xue wen* = learn~ask) = learning, because learning involves enquiring. Traditional Chinese studies is 國學 (*guo xue* = national-studies) = what foreigners call 漢學 (*Han xue* = Han~studies = sinology). 物理學 (*wu li xue* = objects~principles~study) = physics. 神學 (*shen xue* = god~study) = theology.

學術 (*xue shu* = learning~method/art) = scholarship. 不學無術 (*bu xue wu shu* = no-learning~without~method/art) describes someone who has no substance.

by Diana Yue