

Character Builder 您好嗎？友

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 friendship

友

Pronunciation: *you* (Putonghua, 3rd tone), *yau* (Cantonese 5th tone)
Basic meaning: friend

友 = 朋友 (*peng you*) = friend: 好友 (*hao you* = good friend); 筆友 (*bi you* = pen pal); 男友 (*nan you* = male-friend = steady boyfriend); 女友 (*nu you* = female-friend = steady girlfriend). 友善 (*you shan* = friend-kind) = friendly. 友愛 (*you ai* = friend-love) = amity.

豬朋狗友 (*zhu peng gou you* = pig-companions-dog-friends) means good-for-nothing friends. 酒肉朋友 (*jiu rou peng you* = wine-meat-friends) meet for fun but nothing more. 誤交損友 (*wu jiao sun you* = wrongly-make-harmful-friends) means foolishly trusting bad people.

諍友 (*zheng you* = criticism-friends) give you well-meant criticism/advice. Fellow-fighters/soldiers are 戰友 (*zhan you* = battle-friends). Manual workers are amicably called 工友 (*gong you* = worker-friends).

by Diana Yue