

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 travelling

路

Pronunciation: *lu* (Putonghua, 4th tone), *lo* (Cantonese 6th tone)
Basic meaning: road

路 (*radical* 足 *zhu* = foot) = 道路 (*dao lu* = way/path~road). In Chinese philosophy, 道 (*dao* = way/path) = “Tao” (“the Way”) in “Taoism”.

路線 (*lu xian* = road~thread/line) means route or political line. 路程 (*lu cheng* = road~duration) = length of journey. 走路 (*zou lu* = walk~road) means travelling or going on foot. 鐵路 (*tie lu* = iron~road) means railway. 公路網 (*gong lu wang* = public~road~net) = highway network. 馬路 (*ma lu* = horse~road) means autoway. 行人道 (*xing ren dao* = walk~persons~road) means pavement.

The Silk Road is 絲綢之路 (*si chou zhi lu* = silk~satin~road). “路遙知馬力” (*lu yao zhi ma li* = road~far~know~horse~strength) praises someone who can bear prolonged hardship.

by Diana Yue