

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

Pronunciation: *che* (Putonghua, 1st tone), *che* (Cantonese 1st tone)
Basic meaning: cart, car, machine

車 means wheeled vehicles/machines: 人力車 (*ren li che* = human~strength~cart = rickshaw), 馬車 (*ma che* = horse~carriage), 風車 (*feng che* = wind~machine = windmill), 坦克車 (*tan ke che* = tank~(transliterated)~car = tank), 十字車 (*shi zi che* = cross-shaped-word~car = ambulance).

坐車 (*zuo che* = sit~car) means travel by train/car. 火車 (*huo che* = fire~car) means train. 汽車 (*qi che* = steam~car) means automobile. 地車 (*di che* = land~car) means underground/metro. Taxi is 計程車 (*ji cheng che* = calculate~journey~car). Bus/train terminal/stop is 車站 (*che zhan* = car~stand).

車去醫院 (*che qu yi yuan* = car-transport~to~doctor~institute) = drive (someone) to hospital. 車衣 (*che yi* = machine~clothes) means using sewing machine to make garments.

by Diana Yue