

# 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

船

Pronunciation: *chuan* (Putonghua, 2<sup>nd</sup> tone), *suen* (Cantonese 4<sup>th</sup> tone)  
Basic meaning: boat, ship

船 (*radical* 舟 *zhou* = boat) include 艇 (*ting* = rowboats), 艦 (*jian* = warships), 帆船 (*fan chuan* = sailing~ships), 貨船 (*huo chuan* = cargo~ships = container~vessels), 郵船 (*you chuan* = mail~ships = passenger~liners), 遊艇 (*you ting* = cruise~boats = yachts). Hongkong postcards show 舢舨 (*shan ban* = sampans), 龍舟 (*long zhou* = dragon~boats).

Ships 航行 (*hang xing* = sail~move) with 船長 (*chuan zhang* = ship~leader = captain), 舵手 (*duo shou* = helm~hand = helmsman), 船員 (*chuan yuan* = ship~members = crew), 水手 (*shui shou* = water~hands = sailors). 船王 (*chuan wang* = ship~kings) means shipping magnates.

“船堅炮利” (*chuan jian pao li* = ships~strong~canons~sharp) describes Japanese/western navies threatening China in the 1800's.

by Diana Yue