

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 books

字

Pronunciation: *zi* (Putonghua, 4th tone), *ji* (Cantonese, 6th tone)
Basic meaning: word, written character, sign

漢字 (*Han~zi* = Han-Chinese-characters) were developed by 象形 (*xiang xing* = resembling~shapes), 指事 (*zhi shi* = indicating~things), 形聲 (*xing sheng* = portraying~sounds), 會意 (*hui yi* = referring-to~ideas), 轉注 (*zhuan zhu* = transferring~explanations), 假借 (*jia jie* = borrowing~loaning-from-homophones). 字典 (*zi dian* = words~collections/dictionaries) explain them all.

繁體字 (*fan ti zi* = elaborate~form~words = unsimplified characters) are modified into 簡體字 (*jian ti zi* = simplified~form~words = simplified characters). 拉丁字母 (*La Ding zi mu* = Latin-transliterated~words~mother) = Latin alphabet. 打字 (*da zi* = hit~words) = typing/typesetting.

Christians, praying, 劃十字 (*hua shi zi* = draw~“十” /“cross”~sign = cross themselves). Sanskrit anti-clockwise 卍字 (*wan zi* = swastika-symbol) symbolizes Buddhist virtue; clockwise 卐 = Nazi symbol.

by Diana Yue