

# 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 weddings

# 婚

Pronunciation: *hun* (Putonghua, 1<sup>st</sup> tone), *fan* (Cantonese 1<sup>st</sup> tone)  
Basic meaning: wedding, marriage

The radical 女 (*nu* = woman) in 婚 (*hun* = marriage), 嫁 (*jia* = marry husband), 娶 (*qu* = take wife) reflects male dominance in Chinese culture.

婚約 (*hun yue* = marriage-agreement) means marriage promise, 訂婚 (*ding hun* = book-marriage) means engagement. 婚禮 (*hun li* = marriage-ceremony) = wedding. The bride (新娘 *xin niang* = new~woman) and groom (新郎 *xin lang* = new young-man) 結婚 (*jie hun* = tie-knot-marriage = get married), 度蜜月 (*du mi yue* = pass~honey~moon = go on honeymoon), then begin their 婚姻生活 (*hun yin sheng huo* = marriage~life).

Arranged marriages are 盲婚啞嫁 (*mang hun ya jia* = blind~wed~mute~marry-husband). 婚外情 (*hun wai qing* = marriage~outside~love/emotion) means extra-marital affair.

by Diana Yue