

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

娶

Pronunciation: *qu* (Putonghua, 3rd tone), *chui* (Cantonese 2nd tone)
Basic meaning: take wife

娶 (*qu*) = 娶新娘 (*qi xin niang* = wed~bride) = 娶妻 (*qu qi* = wed~wife) = colloquially 娶老婆 (*qu lao po* = wed~old~grandma = wed~wife) = taking a wife.

When a son marries, parents 娶媳婦 (*qu xi fu* = take~daughter-in-law) = Cantonese 娶新抱 (*qu xin bao* = wed~new~embrace, where 新抱 also means daughter-in-law). 明媒正娶 (*ming mei zheng qu* = open~go-between~proper~wed) means marrying a woman by lawful ceremony. A divorcee/widower may 再娶 (*zai qu* = again~wed). In polygamous societies, men can 娶妾 (*qu qie* = take~concubine).

非卿不娶 (*fei qing bu qu* = not~thee~no~wed) is a promise: “Thee only will I wed”, 卿 (*qing*) being an archaic form for 妳 (*ni* = you-feminine).

by Diana Yue