

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 birthdays

生

Pronunciation: *sheng* (Putonghua, 1st tone), *saang* (Cantonese 1st tone)
Basic meaning: beget, birth, live

生 (noun) = 生命 (*sheng ming* = born-life) = life.
Mothers 生產 (*sheng chan* = beget-produce) = give birth.
Babies 誕生 (*dan sheng* = born-life) = are born.
Children 生長 (*sheng zhang* = born-grow) grow.
Old people 養生 (*yang sheng* = nurture-life) = preserve energy.

生機 (*sheng ji* = life-chance) means vitality or chance of survival.
生理需要 (*sheng li xu yao* = life-reason-want-need) means physical (e.g. sexual) need.
生物學 (*sheng wu xue* = living-things-studies) = biology.

Buddhists 放生 (*fang sheng* = free-lives = free animals back into the wild) for good karma.
生辰 (*sheng chen* = birth-hour) means hour of birth.
“Happy birthday!” is “生日快樂!” (*sheng ri kuai le* = birth-day-cheer-happy).

by Diana Yue