

# 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 summer

夏

Pronunciation: *xia* (Putonghua, 4<sup>th</sup> tone), *ha* (Cantonese 6<sup>th</sup> tone)  
Basic meaning: summer

夏 = 夏天 (*xia tian* = summer~sky/days). 夏至 (*xia zhi* = summer~arrive) = summer solstice. 盛夏 (*sheng xia* = grand~summer) = midsummer. Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is 仲夏夜之夢 (*zhong xia ye zhi meng* = second-phase~summer~night~'s~dream).

In 炎炎長夏 (*yan yan chang xia* = hot~hot~long~summer) people 歇夏 (*xie xia* = rest~summer = take summer breaks), shops offer 夏季大減價 (*xia ji da jian jia* = summer~season~big~reduce~price = big summer sale).

Some buildings/fabrics are 冬暖夏涼 (*dong nuan xia liang* = winter~warm~summer~cool) = warm for winter, cool for summer. 夏蟲不可以語冰 (*xia chong bu ke yi yu bing* = summer~insect~no~can~to~talk/tell~ice) means it's useless telling small-minded people what they'll never see.

by Diana Yue