

# 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 Victory Harbour

岸

Pronunciation: *an* (Putonghua, 4<sup>th</sup> tone), *ngon* (Cantonese 6<sup>th</sup> tone)  
Basic meaning: shore

海岸 (*hai an*) = sea coast/shore. 天星小輪 (*tian xing xiao lun* = sky~star~little~wheel/machine-boat = the Star Ferry) sails between 維港兩岸 (*wei gang liang an* = Victoria~Harbour~two~shores). When it 泊岸 (*bo an* = park~shore), passengers 上岸 (*shang an* = up~shore = go onshore).

兩岸關係 (*liang an guan xi* = two~shores/sides~relationship) = relationship/tension between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. 兩頭不到岸 (*liang tou bu dao an* = two~heads/ends~no~reach~shore/land) describes something that is neither here nor there.

Buddhists preach enlightenment/repentance: “苦海無邊，回頭是岸” (*ku hai wu bian, hui tou shi an* = bitterness/sufferings~sea~no~border/end, turn~head~is~shore/land) = human existence is endless suffering; turn back and you will find transcendence.

by Diana Yue