

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 staple foods

稻

Pronunciation: *dao* (Putonghua, 4th tone), *do* (Cantonese 6th tone)
Basic meaning: rice plant

稻 = 稻米 (*dao mi*) = rice-plant grows in 稻田 (*dao tian* = rice/padi-fields). 插秧 (*ca yang* = insert-young-shoots) means planting young shoots. 收割 (*shou ge* = retrieve-cut) means reaping the harvest. 打穀 (*da ju* = hit-rice-grains) means thrashing grains to remove husks. 稻草 (*dao cao* = rice-grass) = hay. 糙米 (*cao mi* = rough-rice) means brown rice. 精米 (*jing mi* = fine-rice) = 白米 (*bai mi* = white-rice) = polished rice. 飯 (*fan*) is cooked rice, congee is 稀飯 (*xi fan* = diluted-cooked-rice = 粥 *zhou*).

為稻梁謀 (*wei dao liang mou* = for-rice-millet-aim/work) is saying humbly “Just earning a living”. 蛀米大蟲 (*zhu mi da chong* = eat-rice-big-worm) means an idle dependent.

by Diana Yue