

# Character Builder 您好嗎? 呀

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 museums

考

Pronunciation: *kao* (Putonghua, 3<sup>rd</sup> tone), *haau* (Cantonese 2<sup>nd</sup> tone)  
Basic meaning: scrutinize, examine, check, test

考 = scrutinizing. 考證 (*kao zheng* = test~prove) means methodological checking/ascertaining. In 考試 (*kao shi* = examine~test = exams), 考官 (*kao guan* = examination~officials) examine 考生 (*kao sheng* = examined~students).

In 田野考古 (*tian ye kao gu* = field~wild-examine~ancient = field archeology), 考古學家 (*kao gu xue jia* = examine~ancient~studies~master = archaeologists) examine 出土文物 (*chu tu wen wu* = out~earth~civilization~objects = unearthed cultural relics), e.g. 瓷器 (*ci qi* = porcelain~ware = china).

炭十四測年法 (*tan shi si ce nian fa* = carbon~ten~four~check~year~method = carbon-14 dating) differentiates 真品 (*zhen pin* = true/authentic~objects) from 贗品 (*yan pin* = false~objects = fakes). 不可考 (*bu ke kao* = no~can~check) means dates/origins are “untraceable”.