

# 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 tea



Pronunciation: *pin* (Putonghua, 3<sup>rd</sup> tone), *ban* (Cantonese 2<sup>nd</sup> tone)

Basic meaning: quality, class, taste, assess

品, with three 口 (*kou* = mouths/openings), means 物品 (*wu pin* = things-items) and 品級 (*pin ji* = grade/class). 品種 (*pin zhong* = class~kind) = species. 品格 (*pin ge* = quality~personality) is a person's moral character. Fine paintings/jewelry are 珍品 (*zhen pin* = valuable~things/items). Witty essays are 妙品 (*miao pin* = clever/amusing~things/ items).

品味 (*pin wei* = assess~taste) means taste/preference. Tea connoisseurs 品茶 (*pin cha* = taste/assess~tea), distinguishing 上品 (*shang pin* = high~grade/quality) from 下品 (*xia pin* = low~grade/quality). Gourmets 品嚐美食 (*pin chang mei shi* = assess~taste~lovely~food). Quality control is 品質控制 (*pin zhi kong zhi* = class~quality~hold~control).

品流複雜 (*pin liu fu za* = kinds~sources~multiple~complicated/impure) describes hangouts frequented by crooks/hookers/mobsters etc.

by Diana Yue