

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 books

Pronunciation: *shu* (Putonghua, 1st tone), *sue* (Cantonese, 1st tone)
Basic meaning: writing script, calligraphy, document, book

Verb 書 = 書寫 (*shu xie* = script~write = write): 書信 (*shu xin* = written~letters), 書法 (*shu fa* = writing~method/style = calligraphy), square-looking 楷書 (*kai shu* = model/regular script), highly-condensed, abstract-looking 草書 (*cao shu* = grass/cursive script).

書店 (*shu dian* = book~shops) sell 書刊 (*shu kan* = books~publications/magazines). 背書 (*bei shu* = behind-back~book = memorizing books) helps 讀書 (*du shu* = reading/studying~books). 書生 (*shu sheng* = books~gentlemen) = studious/bookish person. 世代書香 (*shi dai shu xiang* = generations~books/scholarship~fragrance) describes family lines of distinguished scholars.

上書 (*shang shu* = send-up~written-document) means submitting appeal/protest. The CCP's 黨總書記 (*dang zhong shu ji* = party~chief~document~secretary = party general secretary) is 胡錦濤 (*Hu Jin-tao*).