

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 computers



Pronunciation: *dian* (Putonghua, 4th tone), *din* (Cantonese 6th tone)
Basic meaning: electricity

Electricity: 電. Electrons are 電子 (*dian zi* = electricity~seed/son). Electronics is 電子學 (*dian zi xue* = electrons~study).

Electronic engineering (電子工程 *dian zi gong cheng* = electronic~technology~program) uses computers (計算機 *ji suan ji* = calculation~machines = 電腦 *dian nao* = electric~brains) to design programs (程式 *cheng shi*) to manipulate data (資料 *zi liao* = assets~materials).

Mainframes = 大型機 (*da xing ji* = big~size~machines/computers). PCs = 個人電腦 (*ge ren dian nao* = single~person~computers).

桌上電腦 (*zhuo shang dian nao* = table~on~computers) = desktops, 手提電腦 (*shou ti dian nao* = hand~held~computers) = laptops. 電腦奇才 (*dian nao qi cai* = computer~strange/rare~talents) = computer wizard.