

# 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 colours

黃

Pronunciation: *huang* (Putonghua, 2<sup>nd</sup> tone), *wong* (Cantonese 4<sup>th</sup> tone)  
Basic meaning: yellow

黃 means yellow/brown: 嫩黃 (*nen huang* = soft-yellow), 金黃 (*jin huang* = golden/glittering~yellow). China's 黃河 (*Huang He* = Yellow~River) is 泥黃 (*ni huang* = muddy~yellow).

黃蜂 (*huang feng* = yellow~bee) = wasp. 蛋黃 (*dan huang* = egg~yellow) = egg yolk. 黃金 (*huang jin* = yellow~gold) is gold. 黃燈 (*huang deng* = yellow~light) = amber/wait signal. 面如黃臘 (*mian ru huang la* = face~like~yellow~wax) means dried-up, sickly countenance.

人約黃昏後 (*ren yue huang hun hou* = people~dating~yellow~dark~after, 黃昏: evening) = lovers' evening rendezvous. On one occasion in Chinese history, a general was 黃袍加身 (*huang pao jia shen* = yellow~robe~put-on~body, 黃袍: imperial robe), i.e. coerced by supporters to become Emperor.

by Diana Yue