

# 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

Pronunciation: *lan* (Putonghua, 2<sup>nd</sup> tone), *laam* (Cantonese 4<sup>th</sup> tone)  
Basic meaning: blue

藍 = blue: 藍天 (*lan tian* = blue~sky), 湛藍 (*zhan lan* = deep~blue), 藍圖 (*lan tu* = blue~picture/print = blueprint = 藍本 *lan ben* = blue~original = master copy), 藍鯨 (*lan jing* = blue~whale), 藍牙 (*lan ya* = blue~tooth). Indigenous indigo prints are 藍印花布 (*lan yin hua bu* = blue/indigo~dye/print~flower/pattern~cloth).

Students surpassing teachers' achievements are 青出於藍而勝於藍 (*qing chu yu lan er sheng yu lan* = green~issues~from~blue~and~wins~over~blue), shortened to 青出於藍.

Taiwan's 藍綠對決 (*lan lu dui jue* = blue~green~face-to-face~final~battle) means election fight between blue-party 國民黨 (*guo min dang* = Chinese Nationalist Party = Kuomintang/KMT) and green-party 民進黨 (*ming jin dang* = Democratic Progressive Party/DPP).