

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 motherhood



Pronunciation: *mu* (Putonghua, 3rd tone), *mo* (Cantonese 5th tone)
Basic meaning: mother, female

母親 (*mu qin* = maternal~parent) = mother, 母系社會 (*mu xi she hui* = mother~lineage~society) = matrilineality. 母胎 (*mu tai* = mother~womb) breeds fetus. 母雞 (*mu ji*) = female~chicken/hen, 母牛 (*mu niu*) = female~cattle/cow, 母獅 (*mu shi*) = lioness.

母校 (*mu xiao* = mother~school) = alma mater. 母語教學 (*mu yu jiao xue* = mother~language~teach~learn) means teaching/learning in students' mother tongue. 母公司 (*mu gong si* = mother~company = head firm) controls 子公司 (*zi gong si* = son~company = subsidiaries).

母親節 (*mu qin jie* = maternal~parent~festival) celebrates 母愛 (*mu ai* = mother's~love), but famously “慈母多敗兒” (*ci mu duo bai er* = loving/indulgent~mothers~usually~[have]~failed~sons = ruin their children).