

# 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 Chinese cuisine

# 麵

Pronunciation: *mian* (Putonghua, 4<sup>th</sup> tone), *min* (Cantonese, 6<sup>th</sup> tone)  
Basic meaning: flour, noodles

麵粉 (*mian fen* = flour-powder) is made into 麵包 (*mian bao* = flour-pouch = bread), 意大利粉 (*Yi Da Li fen* = Italy-transliterated-noodles = spaghetti), 麵條 (*mian tiao* = flour-strips/strings = noodles).

煮麵 (*zhu mian* = boil/cook~noodles) requires 過冷河 (*guo leng he* = pass-through~cold~river = plunging boiled noodles into cold/iced water to steady texture). Noodle shops serve 雲吞麵 (*yun tun mian* = wonton noodles), 湯麵 (*tang mian* = soup~noodles = noodles in soup/broth), 炒麵 (*chao mian* = stir-fried noodles).

Chinese birthday parties serve 壽麵 (*shou mian* = longevity~noodles). 清湯掛麵 (*qing tang gua mian* = clear~soup~hanging~noodles) describes girl's fresh, straight-haired look. 即食麵 (*ji shi mian* = instant-eat~noodles) describes today's rash, non-thinking culture.