

# 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 myths and legends

仙

(radical 亻 = 仁 *ren* = person)  
Pronunciation: *xian* (Putonghua, 1<sup>st</sup> tone), *sin* (Cantonese, 1<sup>st</sup> tone)  
Basic meaning: fairy, immortal

仙 is opposite of 凡 (*fan* = ordinary/mortals): 仙境 (*xian jing* = fairy~realm), 仙草 (*xian cao* = magic~grass/herb), 仙樂 (*xian yue* = fairy/heavenly~music). In 傳說 (*chuan shuo* = pass-on~talk = legends), 神仙 (*shen xian* = gods/spirits~fairies = 仙人 *xian ren* = fairy~people = immortals) can 騰雲駕霧 (*teng yun jia wu* = soar~cloud~ride~mist = fly), use 仙法 (*xian fa* = fairy~method = magic).

Taoist priests 煉仙 (*lian xian* = practice~alchemy~to~attain~fairyhood), concoct 仙藥 (*xian yao* = fairy/immortal~elixir), make 仙丹 (*xian dan* = fairy~pills). 八仙 (*ba xian* = Eight~Immortals) are eight popular fairy characters.

Beautiful 狐仙 (*hu xian* = fox~fairies) bewitch men. In orgasm/LSD-affected state we feel 欲仙欲死 (*yu xian yu si* = feel-almost-like~fairy~feel-almost~like~dying).

by Diana Yue