

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 children

幼

Pronunciation: *you* (Putonghua, 4th tone), *yau* (Cantonese 3rd tone)
Basic meaning: young

幼 = 稚 (*zhi*) = young: 幼兒 (*you er* = young~child = baby/toddler), 幼樹 (*you shu* = young~tree), 幼蟲 (*you chong* = young~insect = larva). Baby carrots taste 幼嫩 (*you nuan* = young~tender). 幼稚園 (*you zhi yuan* = young~small~garden) = kindergarten. 幼稚 (*you zhi* = young~small/immature) means childish/foolish.

粗幼 (*cu you* = wide~slim) = width. Angel's hair is 幼麵 (*you mian* = thin/slim~noodles), not 粗麵 (*cu mian* = fat/chunky~noodles).

Beverages/sports/reading suitable for all are 老幼咸宜 (*lao you xian yi* = old~young~all~suitable). The maxim 幼吾幼以及人之幼 (*you wu you* = care-for~our~young, *yi ji ren zhi you* = and~extend-to~other-people's~young) encourages us to support/protect/love our own children and all children of the world.

by Diana Yue