

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 outer space

天

Pronunciation: *tian* (Putonghua, 1st tone), *tin* (Cantonese 1st tone)
Basic meaning: sky, heaven

The ancient Chinese worshipped 天 (*tian* = sky/heaven), the highest power. 天子 (*tian zi* = heaven's~son = emperor), given heaven's mandate, ruled 天下 (*tian xia* = sky/heaven-below = the world).

Clouds float in the sky (天上 *tian shang* = sky~above = 天空 *tian kong* = sky~space). Beyond 大氣層 (*da qi cheng* = big~air/gas~layer = atmosphere) is 外太空 (*wai tai kong* = out~ultimate~space = outer space). 宇宙 (*yu zhou* = physical-dimensions~time-dimensions) means the universe/cosmos.

We watch 太陽 (*tai yang* = ultimate~male/yang = suns), 行星 (*xing xing* = moving~star = planets), 星系 (*xing xi* = stars~systems = galaxies), 彗星 (*hui xing* = broom/long-hair~star = comets) through 望遠鏡 (*wang yuan jing* = watch~distance~mirrors = telescopes).

by Diana Yue