

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

光

Pronunciation: *guang* (Putonghua, 1st tone), *gwong* (Cantonese 1st tone)
Basic meaning: light, brightness

光 means light: 光線 (*guang xian* = light~thread) = light beams, 月光 (*yue guang* = moon~light), 火光 (*huo guang* = fire~light). Neon-lights 閃光 (*shan guang* = flash/shimmer/glitter~light).

光合作用 (*guang he zuo yong* = light~combine~act~function) = photosynthesis. 紫外線 (*zi wai xian* = purple~outer~light~beams) = ultraviolet rays. X光 (*X guang* = X~light~beams) = X-rays. 激光 (*ji guang* = stimulated~light/rays) = 鐳射 (*lei she* = "LASER"-transliterated). 光纖學 (*guang qian xue* = light~fine~fibre~study) = fibre-optics.

恆星 (*heng xing* = eternal/steady~star = stars) 發光 (*fa guang* = emit~light). 光速 (*guang su* = light~speed) calculations show they are many 光年 (*guang nian* = light~years) from 太陽系 (*tai yang xi* = ultimate~male/yang~system = the solar system).

by Diana Yue