

# 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 dieting

# 減

Pronunciation: *jian* (Putonghua, 3<sup>rd</sup> tone), *gaam* (Cantonese, 2<sup>nd</sup> tone)  
Basic meaning: subtract, reduce

減 = lessen. Kids learn 加 (*jia* = addition), 減 (*jian* = subtraction), 乘 (*cheng* = multiplication), 除 (*chu* = division).

After 減薪 (*jian xin* = reduce~pay = pay cut), our purchasing power 減弱 (*jian ruo* = diminish~weak = is weakened). We 減少 (*jian shao* = reduce-less = reduce) expenses, resist shops' 大減價 (*da jian jia* = big~reduce~price = big sales), petition government to 減稅 (*jian shui* = cut~taxes) to 減輕 (*jian qing* = lessen~lighten) our burden.

To avoid 過胖 (*guo pang* = gone-over~fat = overweight), people 減肥 (*jian fei* = reduce~fat = reduce weight), 節食 (*jie shi* = control/reduce~eating = eat less, go on diets). “You look 清減!” (*qing jian* = cleansed~reduced) means “You look thinner/slimmer!”