

# 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 recessions

花

Pronunciation: *hua* (Putonghua, 1<sup>st</sup> tone), *fa* (Cantonese, 1<sup>st</sup> tone)  
Basic meaning: spend

Noun 花 means flower. Verb 花 means spend: 花錢 (*hua qian* = spend~money). 大花特花 (*da hua te hua* = big~spend~special~spend) describes extraordinary, mindless, unchecked spending.

花 = 費 (*fei*) = spend. 消費 (*xiao fei* = vanish~spend) = consume/consumption. 消費品 (*xiao fei pin* = vanish~spend~things) = consumer goods. 消費者 (*xiao fei zhe* = vanish~spend~persons = consumers) support 消費主義 (*xiao fei zhu yi* = vanish~spend~principal~ideology = consumerism). Big cars 消耗 (*xiao hao* = vanish~waste = consumes/exhausts) petrol.

Recession reduces people's 消費能力 (*xiao fei neng li* = consumption~power~strength = spending power). However, 由儉入奢易 (*you jian ru she yi* = from~frugality~into~extravagance~easy), 由奢入儉難 (*you she ru jian nan* = from~extravagance~into~frugality~difficult).

by Diana Yue