

# 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 myths and legends

邪

Pronunciation: *xie* (Putonghua, 2<sup>nd</sup> tone), *che* (Cantonese, 4<sup>th</sup> tone)  
Basic meaning: unorthodox, sinister, evil

正 (*zheng*) = correct orientation, orthodox/righteous. 正派 (*zheng pai* = correct~school) describes orthodox/decent approach/behaviour. 邪 is 正's opposite: 邪惡 (*xie e* = unrighteous~evil), 邪念 (*xie nian* = evil/bad~thoughts). 邪教 (*xie jiao* = unorthodox/heretic-teaching/religion = cults) worship 邪神 (*xie shen* = evil-gods/spirits), practice 淫邪 (*yin xie* = lascivious~evil) rituals.

Buildings having bad 風水 (*feng shui* = wind~water = Chinese geomancy) install 辟邪物 (*pi xie wu* = expel~evil-beings~objects = talismans) to dispel 邪氣 (*xie qi* = evil~atmosphere/mystic-force).

Church authorities denounce/ban 邪魔外道 (*xie mo wai dao* = evil~demons~alien~ways/teachings = evil heresies). However, 道高一尺, 魔高一丈 (*dao gao yi chi, mo gao yi zhang* = orthodox-way~rises~one~foot, demon~rises~one~yard = evil-doers always out-smart law-enforcers).

by Diana Yue