

# 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 Christmas

聖

Pronunciation: *sheng* (Putonghua, 4<sup>th</sup> tone), *sing* (Cantonese, 3<sup>rd</sup> tone)  
Basic meaning: holy, sacred, saint

神聖 (*shen sheng* = god~holy) means sacred. Christians read 聖經 (*sheng-jing* = holy classics/ scriptures = the Bible), worship 聖父 (*sheng fu* = holy~father), 聖子 (*sheng zi* = holy~son), 聖靈 (*sheng ling* = holy~spirit), 聖徒 (*sheng tu* = holy~followers = the apostles/saints).

聖 = immortal: Confucius/Mohammed are 聖人 (*sheng ren* = saint~persons), 杜甫 (Du Fu) is 詩聖 (*shi sheng* = poetry~saint), Beethoven is 樂聖 (*yue sheng* = music~saint). 超凡入聖 (*chao fan ri sheng* = pass~mortal~enter~saint/holy) describes their immortal art/morality.

朝聖者 (*chao sheng zhe* = travel-to~saint~person = pilgrims) visit 聖地 (*sheng di* = holy~land, e.g. Jerusalem/Mecca). Crusaders seek 聖杯 (*sheng bei* = holy~cup = the Holy Grail). Jihad is 聖戰 (*sheng zhan* = holy~war).

by Diana Yue