

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



Pronunciation: *xue* (Putonghua, 3rd tone), *suet* (Cantonese, 3rd tone)
Basic meaning: snow

During 下雪 (*xia xue* = down~snow = snowing/snowfall), 雪花 (*xue hua* = snow~flowers = snowflakes) fall. We 溜冰 (*liu bing* = slide/twirl~ice = ice-skate) on 結冰 (*jie bing* = seal-ice = ice-frozen) lakes, climb 雪山 (*xue shan* = snow~mountain/peak), 滑雪 (*hua xue* = slide/slip~snow = ski).

大雪 (*da xue* = big/heavy~snow) causes 雪崩 (*xue beng* = snow~collapse = avalanche), 雪災 (*xue zai* = snow~disaster). 雪中送炭 (*xue zhong song tan* = snow~in/amidst~bring~charcoal) means bringing relief/donations badly/urgently needed.

Easter lilies are 雪白 (*xue bai* = snow~white). 冰雪聰明 (*bing xue cong ming* = ice~snow~good-ears~good-eyes=clever) describes intelligent/talented people. 瑞雪兆豐年 (*rui xue zhao feng nian* = auspicious~snow~omen~abundant~harvest~year) means good snow (precipitation) forecasts good harvest.

by Diana Yue