

# 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 drugs

販

Pronunciation: *fan* (Putonghua, 3<sup>rd</sup> tone), *faan* (Cantonese, 3<sup>rd</sup> tone)  
Basic meaning: hawk, sell, traffic

小販 (*xiao fan* = small~seller) = hawkers, 報販 (*bao fan* = report/newspaper~seller) = newspaper vendors. 販夫走卒 (*fan fu zou zu* = sell~man~run~paw) means lower-classes hawkers/workhands. 戰爭販子 (*zhan zheng fan zi* = fight~dispute~sell~ers) = warmongers.

黑社會 (*hei she hui* = black~societies = mafias) control 黃 (*huang*, literally “yellow” = prostitution), 賭 (*du* = gambling), 毒 (*du* = dangerous drugs). 毒販 (*du fan* = drug-traffickers/dealers) 走私 (*zou si* = run~private/illegal = smuggle) narcotics from 金三角 (*jin san jiao* = gold~three~corner = the Golden Triangle).

蛇頭 (*she tou* = snake~heads) help escapees 屈蛇 (*qu she* = crouch-like-snake = get smuggled) across borders, 販賣人口 (*fan mai ren kou* = traffick~sell~people~mouths = operate white slavery).

by Diana Yue