

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 dieting

餓

Pronunciation: e (Putonghua, 4th tone), *ngoh* (Cantonese, 6th tone)
Basic meaning: hungry

餓 = become/feel hungry: 餓了 (*e le* = hungry~already), 饑餓 (*ji e* = famished~hungry), 饑渴 (*ji he* = hungry-and~thirsty).

In 饑荒 (*ji huang* = famished-bad-harvest = famine), 饑民 (*ji min* = famine~people/victims) 餓死 (*e si* = hungry~die = starve to death). However, “餓死了!” *e si le* = starved~dead~already) after working the whole morning just means “I’ve got to eat!”

Girls on diet 餓瘦 (*e shou* = starve-themselves~skinny), 餓壞 (*e huai* = starve-themselves~bad/broken = famish), develop 厭食症 (*yan shi zheng* = tired-of~eating~illness = anorexia). Lascivious/horny men are 色中餓鬼 (*se zhong e gui* = women/sex~amid~hungry~ghost = hungry for women/sex). 餓狗搶屎 (*e gou qiang shi* = hungry~dog~snatch~faeces) means inelegantly pouncing on food/target/spoils.