

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 sleep

床

Pronunciation: *chuang* (Putonghua, 2nd tone), *chong* (Cantonese, 4th tone)
Basic meaning: bottom, bed

床 = bottom/seat: 河床 (*he chuang* = river-bed), 海床 (*hai chuang* = sea-bed), 牙床 (*ya chuang* = tooth-bed = gums).

床 = 榻 (*ta*) = bed: 床褥 (*chuang ru* = bed-mattresses), 床單 (*chuang dan* = bed-sheets), patients' 病榻 (*bing ta* = sick-bed). Cantonese 碌架床 (*lu jia chuang*) = bunk bed, 吊床 (*diao chuang* = hang-bed) = hammock. Poor people live/sleep in 床位 (*chuang wei* = bed-units), not rooms/apartments.

In X-movies sex stars perform 床上戲 (*chuang shang xi* = bed-on-drama = sex scenes), 叫床 (*jiao chuang* = scream-bed = pant/scream/moan/groan when having sex). Couples sometimes 床頭打架床尾和 (*chuang tou da jia chuang wei he* = bed-head-hit-fight-bed-tail-harmony = quarrel then quickly make peace).

by Diana Yue