

# 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 slavery

# 鎖

Pronunciation: *suo* (Putonghua, 3<sup>rd</sup> tone), *soh* (Cantonese, 2<sup>nd</sup> tone)  
Basic meaning: lock

鎖 (radical 金 *jin* = gold/metal) = lock. Before going out we insert 鎖匙 (*suo shi* = lock~key) into 門鎖 (*men suo* = door~lock) to make the door 上鎖 (*shang suo* = up~lock = locked). 鎖匠 (*suo jiang* = lock~workman = locksmiths) know skills for 開鎖 (*kai suo* = opening~locks).

鎖鏈 (*suo lian* = lock~chain) means chain with lock. Prisoners/slaves wear 枷鎖 (*jia suo* = yoke~locked~chain = yoke and chains). But they seek freedom, 鎖不住 (*suo bu zu* = lock~not~stay/steady = cannot be confined).

Snipers 鎖定目標 (*suo ding mu biao* = lock~fix~eye~target = fix on the target), then open fire. Inward-looking rulers implement 鎖國政策 (*suo guo zheng ce* = lock~state~political~plan = closed-door policy).

by Diana Yue