

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 race

膚

Pronunciation: *fu* (Putonghua, 1st tone), *foo* (Cantonese, 1st tone)
Basic meaning: skin

膚 = 皮 (*pi*) = 皮膚 (*pi fu*) = skin: 皮膚科 (*pi fu ke* = skin~skin~specialization = dermatology), 皮膚病 (*pi fu bing* = skin~skin~illness = skin disease), 皮膚癌 (*pi fu ai* = skin~skin~cancer), 護膚品 (*hu fu pin* = protect~skin~things = skin-care items).

紅種人 (*hong zhong ren* = red~race~person/people), 黃種人 (*huang zhong ren* = yellow~race~people), 黑種人 (*hei zhong ren* = black~race~people), 白種人 (*bai zhong ren* = white~race~people) have different 膚色 (*fu se* = skin~color).

膚淺 (*fu qian* = skin~shallow = shallow) people only know 皮毛 (*pi mao* = skin~hair/down/fur = surface/superficial knowledge). When our direct interests are threatened/hurt, we feel 切膚之痛 (*qie fu zhi teng* = cut~skin~'s~pain).