

# 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 agriculture

農

Pronunciation: *nong* (Putonghua, 2<sup>nd</sup> tone), *nung* (Cantonese, 4<sup>th</sup> tone)  
Basic meaning: peasant, farmer, agriculture

Ancient China 以農立國 (*yi nong li guo* = with-farming-establish-nation = the economic base is agriculture). Most people were 士農工商 (*shi nong gong shang* = scholars~farmers~artisans~merchants). Famines caused 農民革命 (*nong min ge ming* = farming~people~change~lives = peasants' revolts). In Socialist China, 工農兵 (*gong nong bing* = workers~peasants~soldiers) represent the masses.

農曆 (*nong li* = farmer's~calendar/almanac) = 陰曆 (*yin li* = lunar~calendar). 農村 (*nong cun* = farming~village = agricultural regions) produce 農產品 (*nong chan pin* = farming~produce~things = agricultural products).

農業現代化 (*nong ye xian dai hua* = farming~industry~now~generation~transform = agricultural modernization) improves yields. However, 穀賤傷農 (*gu jian shang nong* = rice-grains~cheap~hurt~farmers = slashed grain prices affect peasants' earnings/livelihood).

by Diana Yue