

# 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

(radical 禾 *he* = rice plant)

種

Pronunciation: *zhong* (Putonghua, 4<sup>th</sup> tone, noun 3<sup>rd</sup> tone), *jung* (Cantonese, 2<sup>nd</sup> tone)

Basic meaning: plant (verb), seed (noun)

Chinese mythology says the god 神農氏 (*Shen Nong Shi* = “god-farmer-sire”) taught man how to 種植 (*zhong zhi* = sow-seed-plant): using 種子 (*zhong zi* = seed-diminutive = seeds) to 種田 (*zhong tian* = planting-crops-in-fields), 植林 (*zhi lin* = planting-woods/forests).

Noun 種 means male sperms. 種牛 (*zhong niu* = seed-ox) = seed bulls. 有種 (*you zhong* = has-seed) describes someone with guts, 沒種 (*mei zhong* = no-has-seed) describes cowards. Bastards are 孽種 (*nie zhong* = sin-seed).

種下禍根 (*zhong xia huo gen* = plant-down~ misfortune~root) means doing something which would breed future harm. 種瓜得瓜, 種豆得豆 (*zhong gua de gua, zhong dou de dou* = plant~gourd~obtain~gourd, plant~beans~obtain~beans) means “You reap what you sow”.

by Diana Yue