

# 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 maps



Pronunciation: *tu* (Putonghua, 2<sup>nd</sup> tone), *to* (Cantonese, 4<sup>th</sup> tone)  
Basic meaning: picture

圖 = graphic shape: 圖象 (*tu xiang* = picture~image), 圖畫 (*tu hua* = picture~painting), 圖案 (*tu an* = picture~plan = pattern). 藍圖 (*lan tu* = blue~picture) = blueprint. 圖片 (*tu pian* = picture~piece = pictures/photos). 繪圖師 (*hui tu shi* = draw/paint~picture~master) = graphic artist.

Star-watchers study 星圖 (*xing tu* = star~maps/charts). Ship-captains need 海圖 (*hai tu* = ocean~map/charts). Explorers re-draw 世界地圖 (*shi jie di tu* = world~border~land~picture = world map/atlas). Tourists buy 街道圖 (*jie dao tu* = streets~roads~picture = street maps).

圖窮匕現 (*tu qiong bi xian* = picture~exhaust/end~dagger~appear) describes an assassin unrolling a map to reveal a dagger — his intention/plot to stab the king, create trouble, conceal secret agenda, is exposed.