

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

位

Pronunciation: *wei* (Putonghua, 4th tone), *wai* (Cantonese, 6th tone)
Basic meaning: seat, position

位子 (*wei zi* = seat~diminutive) = 座位 (*zuo wei* = chair~seat) = seat. 訂位 (*ding wei* = book~seat) = advance seat-booking. 地位 (*di wei* = ground~seat) = status. 王位 (*wang wei* = king~seat) = throne.

Maps use 經緯 (*jing wei* = warp~weft = longitudes and latitudes) to indicate 東 (*dong*, east), 西 (*xi*, west), 南 (*nan*, south), 北 (*bei*, north). 方位 is 方向 (*fang xiang* = direction~facing) + 位置 (*wei zhi* = seat~place). Strasbourg 位于 (*wei yu* = is-positioned/situated~at) the center of Europe. Glaciers, sand dunes, estuaries are found to 移位 (*yi wei* = move/change~course/position).

Air-plane/car navigation uses 全球定位系統 (*quan qiu ding wei xi tong* = all~ball/globe~determine~position~link~system = Global Positioning System = GPS).