

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



Pronunciation: *he* (Putonghua, 2nd tone), *hap* (Cantonese, 6th tone)
Basic meaning: combine, unite, merge

合 = join. Groups 集合 (*ji he* = assemble-together) for event. Choristers 合唱 (*he chang* = join-sing). Partners 合作 (*he zuo* = join-work = co-operate), sign 合約 (*he yue* = joint-agreement = contract). Go-betweeners 撮合 (*cuo he* = hand-pick-join = bring together) marriageable couples.

Small units/factions 合併 (*he bing* = join-combine = combine/merge). Allies 聯合 (*lian he* = link-join = join forces). United Nations is 聯合國 (*lian he guo* = link-join-states).

In multi-ethnic regions, different races 混合 (*hun he* = mix-together), 融合 (*rong he* = melt-join = merge). History shows ethnically-close states 合久必分, 分久必合 (*he jiu bi fen, fen jiu bi he* = merged-long-will-split, split-long-will-merge = are periodically united, periodically divided).