

# 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 meetings

席

Pronunciation: *xi* (Putonghua, 2<sup>nd</sup> tone), *jik* (Cantonese, 6<sup>th</sup> tone)  
Basic meaning: mattress, table-top, seat, post

席 means mattress/table-top/seat. Married couples 同枕席 (*tong zhen xi* = same-pillow-mattress = share bed). 酒席 (*jiu xi* = wine-table-top) = laid-out banquet. 席位 (*xi wei* = seat/position) = official seat/post. 議席 (*yi xi* = discuss-seat) = seat in congress/parliament.

主席 (*zhu xi* = principal-seat) = chairman. 首席執行官 (*shou xi ji xing guan* = first-seat-handle-execute-official) = top executive. Attending meetings/gatherings is 出席 (*chu xi* = out/appear-seat), being absent is 缺席 (*que xi* = void-seat).

Friends turned enemies 割席 (*ge xi* = slice/cut-mattress = sever relations). Campers spend nights 幕天席地 (*mo tian xi di* = canopy-sky-mattress-earth = under the stars). 席捲之勢 (*xi juan zhi shi* = mattress-roll-'s-trend/force) describes landslide victories in elections/takeovers.

by Diana Yue