

# 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 the beaches

浪

(radical 氵 = 水 *shui* = water)  
Pronunciation: *lang* (Putonghua, 4<sup>th</sup> tone), *long* (Cantonese, 6<sup>th</sup> tone)  
Basic meaning: wave, unrestrained

浪 = 波浪 (*bo lang* = billows~waves): 浪頭 (*lang tou* = wave~crest), 浪花 (*lang hua* = wave~flower = spray). 風平浪靜 (*feng ping lang jing* = winds~calm~waves~quiet) describes a calm sea.

Seafaring vessels 乘風破浪 (*cheng feng po lang* = ride~winds~break~waves). Beach boys play 衝浪 (*chong lang* = rush/dash/crash~waves = surfing), 滑浪風帆 (*hua lang feng fan* = glide~waves~wind~sail = windsurfing).

浪漫 (*lang man* = unrestrained~overflow) = “romantic”-transliterated. Tramps 流浪 (*liu lang* = flow~unrestrained = drift around). Careless consumers 浪費 (*lang fei* = unrestrained~ spend/waste) resources. “浪人” (*lang ren* = roaming~person) is kanji for Japanese “ronin” (lordless/homeless samurai). 浪子回頭 (*lang zi hui tou* = unrestrained/dissolute~son~return~head) = story of the prodigal son.