

# 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 elections

票

Pronunciation: *piao* (Putonghua, 4<sup>th</sup> tone), *piu* (Cantonese 3<sup>rd</sup> tone)  
Basic meaning: ticket, stamp, vote

Some 票 are sold: 郵票 (*you piao* = postal-stamps), 戲票 (*xi piao* = movie-tickets), 船票 (*chuan piao* = boat-tickets). Parking tickets (違例泊車告票 *wei li bo che gao piao* = violate-rule-park-car-prosecute-tickets) demand fines.

投票 (*tou piao*) = cast votes. 投票箱 (*tou piao xiang* = cast-vote-box) = ballot box. 出口點票 (*chu kou dian piao* = exit-mouth-count-votes) = exit polls. 公投 (*gong tou* = common/all-vote) = referendum. 鐵票 (*tie piao* = iron-votes) means a candidate's sure-win votes.

糧票 (*liang piao* = grain-ticket/stamps/coupons = grain coupons) were used in the PRC under the ration system. 長期飯票 (*chang qi fan piao* = long-term-rice-ticket) means financial support given to a kept mistress.