

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 confections and sweets

糖

Pronunciation: *tang* (Putonghua, 2nd tone), *tong* (Cantonese, 4th tone)
Basic meaning: sugar, candy

甘蔗 (*gan zhe* = sweet/sugar-cane), 甜菜 (*tian cai* = sweet-vegetable = sugar beet) produce sugars, e.g. 葡萄糖 (*pu tao tang* = grape-sugar = glucose). Dessert-chefs use 蜜糖 (*mi tang* = honey-sugar = honey), 冰糖 (*bing tang* = ice-sugar = rock sugar), 糖霜 (*tang shuang* = sugar-frost = sugar icing).

We put 砂糖 (*sha tang* = grain-sugar), 方糖 (*fang tang* = square-sugar = sugar cubes) in tea/coffee. 糖尿病 (*tang niao bing* = sugar-urine-illness = diabetes) patients check their 血糖 (*xue tang* = blood-glucose-sugar) level, avoid 糖果 (*tang guo* = sugar-fruit/candy = candy), 巧克力 (*qiao ke li* = chocolate-transliterated).

糖衣毒藥 (*tang yi du yao* = sugar-coat-poisonous-drug) means harmful ideas disguised in pleasant/high-sounding words.

by Diana Yue