

# 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 thunderstorms



Pronunciation: *lei* (Putonghua, 2<sup>nd</sup> tone), *lui* (Cantonese 4<sup>th</sup> tone)  
Basic meaning: thunder

雷, a weather word, shares its radical 雨 (*yu* = rain) with 電 (*dian* = lightning/electricity), 雲 (*yun* = cloud), 霧 (*wu* = mist/fog), 雪 (*xue* = snow). 雷電 (*lei dian*) = thunder and lightning. 雷公 (*lei gong* = thunder~grandpa) is the Thunder God.

When the sky 打雷 (*da lei* = hit~thunder = thunders), we hear 雷聲隆隆 (*lei sheng long long* = thunder~sound~rumble~rumble). 雷暴警告 (*lei bao jing gao* = thunderstorm~alert~announce) = thunderstorm warning, where 暴 stands for 暴風雨 (*bao feng yu* = violent~wind~rain = storm/tempest).

地雷 (*di lei* = land~thunders) = land mines. 雷聲大雨點小 (*lei sheng da yu dian xiao* = thunder~sound~big~rain~drops~small) means a lot of talk but little action.

by Diana Yue