

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

胖

Pronunciation: *pang* (Putonghua, 4th tone), *boon* (Cantonese, 6th tone)
Basic meaning: plump, fat

胖 describes people's weight/figure: 胖娃娃 (*pang wa wa* = plump~baby), 胖子 (*pang zi* = fat~diminutive = fat guy). Girls fear 發胖 (*fa pang* = develop/grow~fat = get fat), aim at 胖瘦適中 (*pang shou shi zhong* = fat~thin~appropriate~medium = weighing/looking just right).

肥 = fat/meaty/enrich: 肥豬 (*fei zhu* = fat/meaty~pig), 肥肉 (*fei rou* = fatty~meat). 癡肥 (*ci fei* = idiot~fat = obese/obesity). 肥料 (*fei liao* = enriching~materials) = fertilizers. 肥缺 (*fei que* = fat~opening) means lucrative vacant posts. Firms lay-off employees with 肥雞餐 (*fei ji can* = fat~chicken~set-dinner = golden handshake/parachute).

“You're 心廣體胖!” (*xin guang ti pang* = heart~wide~body~fat = no worries, gets fat) is politely saying “My, you've put on weight!”