

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 motherhood

Pronunciation: *yīng* (Putonghua, 1st tone), *yīng* (Cantonese 1st tone)
Basic meaning: baby

婦產科 (*fu chan ke* = women~birth/delivery~unit/department) = gynaecology-obstetrics. When 孕婦 (*yun fu* = pregnant~woman) safely gives birth to 胎兒 (*tai er* = womb~child = baby), nurses cry: “母子平安!” (*mu zi ping an* = mother~son~calm~safe! = mother baby both fine!)

Baby (嬰兒 *yīng er* = baby~child) is 哺乳 (*bu ru* = feed~breast/milk = breast-fed) by Mom or 乳娘 (*ru niang* = milk~mother = wet-nurse), uses 尿片 (*niao pian* = urine~pieces/pads = diapers/nappies). Baby's one-month-old celebration dinner is 滿月酒 (*man yue jiu* = full/complete~moon/month~wine/banquet).

聖母 (*sheng mu* = holy~mother) = Mary, 聖嬰 (*sheng yīng* = holy~baby) = baby Jesus. El Nino effect is 聖嬰效應 (*sheng yīng xiao yīng* = holy~baby~effect).

by Diana Yue