

# 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

乳

Pronunciation: *ru* (Putonghua, 3<sup>rd</sup> tone), *yue* (Cantonese 5<sup>th</sup> tone)  
Basic meaning: breast, milk

乳 = 奶 (*nai*) = milk. 乳房 (*ru fang* = milk~room = breast) = vulgar 奶子 (*nai zi* = milk~diminutive = tits). Mammals are 哺乳動物 (*bu ru dong wu* = feed~breast/ milk~move~thing/animal). Women's 雙乳 (*shuang ru* = pair~breasts) having 乳腺 (*ru xian* = milk~gland = mammary glands), 乳頭 (*ru tou* = breast~head = nipples) may develop 乳癌 (*ru ai* = breast~cancer).

Babies are fed 人奶 (*ren nai* = human~milk), 牛奶 (*niu nai* = cattle/cow~milk). Powdered milk is 奶粉 (*nai fen* = milk~powder), cream is 奶油 (*nai you* = milk~oil), cheese is 乳酪 (*ru lao* = milk~coagulation/ paste).

Tea with milk is 奶茶 (*nai cha* = milk~tea), suckling pig is 乳豬 (*ru zhu* = milk~pig).

by Diana Yue