

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 dieting

瘦

Pronunciation: *shou* (Putonghua, 4th tone), *sau* (Cantonese, 3rd tone)
Basic meaning: thin, skinny, slim, lean

瘦子 (*shou zi* = thin~diminutive = skinny guys) are described as 瘦小 (*shou xiao* = thin~small), 高瘦 (*gao shou* = tall~lean), 瘦削 (*shou que* = thin~trimmed/chipped = skinny), 皮包骨 (*pi bao gu* = skin~wrap~bones = skinny/bony).

Sick/dieting people 消瘦 (*xiao shou* = diminish/reduce~thin = become thinner/emaciated). Girls eat only 瘦肉 (*shou rou* = lean~meat), try to 瘦身 (*shou shen* = thin~body = slim down), watch their 體重 (*ti zhong* = body~weight), envy others' 瘦腰 (*shou yao* = slim~waist).

Financial tsunami forces 企業瘦身 (*qi ye shou shen* = standing~business~slim-down~body = enterprises to down-size). 瘦田無人耕 (*shou tian wu ren geng* = lean~field~no~person~till/cultivate) describes apparently low-potential/unprofitable areas which are neglected/unexplored in social development.