

# 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 autumn

熟

Pronunciation: *shou* (Putonghua, 2<sup>nd</sup> tone), *suk* (Cantonese, 6<sup>th</sup> tone)

Basic meaning: cooked, ripe, mature, thoroughly familiar

熟 describes cooked food/meat/vegi: “飯熟了!” (*fan shou le* = rice~cooked~already!), 炒熟 (*chao shou* = stir-fry~till~cooked/done), 熟食檔 (*shou shi dang* = cooked~food~stall).

熟睡 (*shou shui* = ripe/mature~sleep) means sound asleep. 生面人 (*sheng mian ren* = unfamiliar~face~persons) means stranger, 熟人 (*shou ren* = familiar~person) means acquaintance/friend. 熟練 (*shou lian* = thoroughly~practiced) technicians do their jobs properly. 熟能生巧 (*shou neng sheng qiao* = thorough~practice~can~produce~skill) = practice makes perfect.

Farmers harvest 熟稻 (*shou dao* = ripened~padi/rice-crop). 一年兩熟 (*yi nian liang shou* = one~year~two~ripe/harvests) means yielding two crops a year. Girls are more 早熟 (*zao shou* = early~mature = precocious) than boys. People/plans/intellecets 成熟 (*cheng shou* = form/complete~ripe = mature) with time.

by Diana Yue