

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

落

Pronunciation: *lou* (Putonghua, 4th tone), *lok* (Cantonese, 6th tone)
Basic meaning: drop, fall

落 = 落下 (*luo xia* = fall~down). Temperatures/prices 上落 (*shang luo* = up~down = fluctuate), 回落 (*hui luo* = return~fall = drop back). Migrants want to 落戶 (*luo hu* = down~household = settle down, establish residence). Policies need 落實 (*luo shi* = down~firm/solid = confirmation/implementation).

落霞 (*luo xia* = sunset~colored-clouds) accompany 落日 (*luo ri* = fall~sun = setting sun). Wishes sometimes 落空 (*luo kong* = fall~empty = evaporate). Losers 淪落 (*lun luo* = sink~fall = sink low in life).

In autumn we watch 落葉 (*luo ye* = fallen~leaves), 落花 (*luo hua* = fallen~flowers), feel 失落 (*shi luo* = lost~fallen = listless/low). 瓜熟蒂落 (*gua shou di luo* = squash/melon~ripen~tip-of-stalk~fall) describes mature pregnancy and child-birth.

by Diana Yue