

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 maps

Pronunciation: *xun* (Putonghua, 2nd tone), *cham* (Cantonese, 4th tone)
Basic meaning: seek, search

尋找 (*xun zhao* = seek~search) = look for, 尋獲 (*xun huo* = seek~get) = find. After unsuccessfully 尋訪 (*xun fang* = seek~visit/interview = looking for) persons, police place “尋人” (*xun ren* = seek~person) advertisements. Depressed people 尋死 (*xun si* = seek~death = commit suicide). Negotiators 尋求 (*xun qiu* = seek~beg = try to find) solutions.

Travelers 尋幽訪勝 (*xun you fang sheng* = seek~remote~visit~scenic = seek out rare scenic places). Overseas Chinese visit their home towns to 尋根 (*xun gen* = find~roots). At bedtime everyone 尋夢 (*xun meng* = seek~dream = sleeps).

Adventurers 尋寶 (*xun bao* = look-for~treasure). Chaplin movie The Gold Rush is called “尋金熱” (*xun jin re* = hunt-for~gold-heat/fever).

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