

# 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 pirates

# 海

Pronunciation: *hai* (Putonghua, 3<sup>rd</sup> tone), *hoi* (Cantonese, 2<sup>nd</sup> tone)  
Basic meaning: sea

海 = 海洋 (*hai yang* = seas~oceans) contain 海水 (*hai shui* = sea~water). 海島 (*hai dao* = sea~islands), 海灣 (*hai wan* = sea~bays) strew 海岸線 (*hai an xian* = sea~coast~lines). Mainland China and Taiwan are 海峽兩岸 (*hai xia liang an* = sea~gulf~two~shores = two sides of the Taiwan Strait).

海軍 (*hai jun* = sea~army) = navy. Fishermen harvest 海產 (*hai chan* = sea~products = fish/seaweed etc.)  
Romeos are 情深似海 (*qing shen si hai* = love/affection~deep~as~sea).

Wanderers 四海為家 (*si hai wei jia* = four~seas~are/ as/make~home). “四海之內，皆兄弟也!” (*si hai zhi nei, jie xiong di ye* = four~seas~'s~within, all~elder/younger-brothers~indeed!) means “All men are brothers!”

by Diana Yue