

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 ceramics

瓷

Pronunciation: *ci* (Putonghua, 2nd tone), *chi* (Cantonese, 4th tone)
Basic meaning: porcelain, china

瓷 (radical 瓦 *wa* = clay roof tile) = 瓷器 (*ci qi* = porcelain~containers = porcelainware/chinaware). Ceramics is collectively called 陶瓷 (*tao ci* = pottery~porcelain). 日用瓷 (*ri yong ci* = day~use~porcelain) = everyday china. 瓷磚 (*ci zhuan* = porcelain~bricks/tiles) line kitchen/bathroom walls.

宋瓷 (*Song ci* = Song-Dynasty~porcelainware), characteristically 青瓷 (*qing ci* = light-green/blue~porcelain), 白瓷 (*bai ci* = white~porcelain), represent classical refinement. The Ming and Qing Dynasties produced glamorous 彩瓷 (*cai ci* = multi-colored~porcelainware).

For centuries China sold 外銷瓷 (*wai xiao ci* = foreign-sell~porcelain = porcelainware designed/ manufactured for foreign consumption) to Europe, mainly 青花 (*qing hua* = blue~flower/pattern = blue-and-white porcelain) from the 瓷窯 (*ci yao* = porcelain~kilns) in 景德鎮 (*Jingde Zhen*, in Jiangxi Province).

by Diana Yue