

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 Taiwan

Also written as 臺

Pronunciation: *tai* (Putonghua, 2nd tone), *toi* (Cantonese 4th tone)

Basic meaning: Terrace, stage, platform, short for Taiwan

戲台 (*xi tai* = opera~stage) = 舞台 (*wu tai* = dance~stage) = acting stage. 台柱 (*tai zhu* = stage~pillar) = person(s) upholding an institution's performance/reputation. Politicians/CEOs 上台 (*shang tai* = ascend/enter~stage = assume office), 下台 (*xia tai* = descend/exit~stage = leave office).

電台 (*dian tai* = electric~platform) = radio station/channel. 電視台 (*dian shi tai* = electric~watch~platform) = television station/channel.

台 is short for 台灣 (*Taiwan*), capital city 台北 (*Tai Bei* = Taiwan~north = Taipei). 台灣海峽 (*Taiwan hai xia* = Taiwan~sea~strait) = Taiwan Strait. 台灣人 (*Taiwan ren* = Taiwan~people) speak 閩南話 (*Min nan hua* = Fujian~south~speech) = southern Fujian dialect. 台商 (*Tai shang* = Taiwanese~merchants/businessmen) have huge investments in China.

by Diana Yue