

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 computers

鍵

Pronunciation: *jian* (Putonghua, 4th tone), *gin* (Cantonese 6th tone)
Basic meaning: key

鍵 (radical 金 *jin* = gold/metal) = manipulating key/device: 鋼琴鍵 (*gang qin jian* = steel-musical-instrument~keys = piano keys). 關鍵 (*guan jian* = pass/lock-key) describes crucial moments/factors.

電腦鍵盤 (*dian nao jian pan* = electric~brain~key-board = computer keyboards) have 字鍵 (*zi jian* = word~keys), 數字鍵 (*shu zi jian* = number~word~keys = number keys), 功能鍵 (*gong neng jian* = achieve~ability~keys = function keys). 鍵擊 (*jian ji* = key~hit) means keystrokes (cf. brushstrokes in writing).

In文字處理 (*wen zi chu li* = language~word~handle~organize = word processing) we 鍵入 (*jian ru* = key~in) words/numbers, format 文件 (*wen jian* = language~piece = documents), 貯存檔案 (*shu quan dang an* = keep~preserve~cabinet~record = save files).