

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 outer space

夜

Pronunciation: *ye* (Putonghua, 4th tone), *ye* (Cantonese 6th tone)
Basic meaning: night

夜間 (*ye jian* = night-time) includes 半夜 (*ban ye* = half-night = midnight), 深夜 (*shen ye* = deep/late-night).

Nurses 值夜 (*zhi ye* = watch-night = do night shifts). Winters are 夜長日短 (*ye chang ri duan* = nights/long/days/short). 白夜 (*bai ye* = white-nights) occur in the Arctic. 夜生活 (*ye sheng huo* = night-life) means night-time entertainment/fun activities. 夜貓子 (*ye mao zi* = night-cat-diminutive) means owls or people who stay up late.

黑夜 (*hei ye* = black/dark-night) is good for star-watching. 爆炸 (*bao zha* = burst-explode = explosion) of 超新星 (*chao xin xing* = super-new-stars = supernovas) created 黑洞 (*hei dong* = black-holes). 永夜 (*yong ye* = eternal/endless-night) reigns in cosmic space.

by Diana Yue