

# 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 the Cold War

霸

Pronunciation: *ba* (Putonghua, 4<sup>th</sup> tone), *ba* (Cantonese, 3<sup>rd</sup> tone)  
Basic meaning: seize, dominate, bully, hegemony

霸 means seize/dominate. 霸王 (*ba wang* = dominating-king) means conqueror dominating neighboring region. In 戰國時代 (*zhan guo shi dai* = Warring-States-Period) 秦國 (*Qin guo* = the State of Qin) became 霸主 (*ba zhu* = conquering-master = hegemonous overlord) over other states.

Usurper 霸佔 (*ba zhan* = seizes~occupies) throne. 惡霸 (*e ba* = fierce~bullies) 橫行霸道 (*heng xing ba dao* = crosswise~walk~bullying~principal = openly violate law and order). Successful brands 雄霸市場 (*xiong ba shi chang* = powerfully~dominate~market).

In 1970s two 超級大國 (*chao ji da guo* = super~class~big~state = superpowers) US and USSR 爭霸 (*zheng ba* = compete-for~hegemony); China asserted 不稱霸 (*bu cheng ba* = no~claim~hegemony = will not seek hegemony).

by Diana Yue