

# 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 crime



Pronunciation: *dao* (Putonghua, 4<sup>th</sup> tone), *do* (Cantonese, 6<sup>th</sup> tone)  
Basic meaning: steel, rob, thief, robber

Noun 盜 means robber/thief: 小偷 (*xiao tou* = small/petty~thief), 扒手 (*pa shou* = rake~hand = pick-pocket), 大盜 (*da dao* = big~robber/bandit). 盜賊如毛 (*dao zei ru mao* = robber~thief~like~hair) describes places rampant with thieves/criminals.

Verb 盜 = 偷盜 (*tou dao* = steal~rob): 盜取 (*dao qu* = steal~take), 盜賣 (*dao mai* = steal~sell). Corrupt officials 盜用公款 (*dao yong gong kuan* = steal~use~public~funds = commit embezzlement), 監守自盜 (*jian shou zi dao* = guard~keep~self~steal = steal what they have responsibility to guard/protect).

欺世盜名 (*qi shi dao ming* = deceive~world~steal~name/reputation) describes glorified cheats/hypocrites. 掩耳盜鈴 (*yan er dao ling* = cover~ears~steal~bell) means committing glaring offences and foolishly believing that nobody has noticed.

by Diana Yue