

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 hiking

Pronunciation: *bu* (Putonghua, 4th tone), *bo* (Cantonese, 3rd tone)
Basic meaning: step, walk

步 = step: 步履 (*bu lu* = step~shoe = walking gait), 步伐 (*bu fa* = step~march = marching style), 舞步 (*wu bu* = dance~steps), 步驟 (*bu zhou* = steps~order = step/stage/procedure). When sprinters 起步 (*qi bu* = begin~step = start), some 偷步 (*tou bu* = steal~step = jump the gun).

步行 (*bu xing* = step~walk) = walking. 漫步 (*man bu* = aimless~walk) = strolling. Rifles are 步槍 (*bu qiang* = walk~gun = foot-soldier's gun). Large-scale conferences arrange 同步進行 (*tong bu jin xing* = same~step~advance~move = parallel) sessions.

Doctors/nurses treating virus-patients 步步為營 (*bu bu wei ying* = step~step-is~camp = proceed very carefully). Toast to newly-promoted: “步步高升!” (*bu bu gao sheng* = “step~step-high~rise!”)

by Diana Yue