

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 martial arts

Pronunciation: *quan* (Putonghua, 2nd tone), *kuen* (Cantonese 6th tone)
Basic meaning: fist, boxing

拳 = 拳頭 (*quan tou*) = fist. 西洋拳 (*xi yang quan* = west-ocean-fist) = western-style boxing, 拳手 (*quan shou* = fist-hands) = boxers. 回合 (*hui he* = chapter-conclude) means rounds in a match, 一拳 (*yi quan* = one-fist) means a fist-blow.

Learning Chinese 拳法 (*quan fa* = fist-methods = body/fist-movement styles) involves learning 招 (*zhao* = designed movements), 套路 (*tao lu* = set-procedure = sequences of 招) and 運氣 (*yun qi* = summoning-breath = producing and exerting energy/force). Some styles imitate animal movements, e.g. 猴拳 (*hou quan*, 猴 *hou* = monkey).

太極拳 (*tai ji quan* = ultimate-extreme-fist = English “Taiji Quan”), a health exercise based on Taoist concepts, is also famously used for combat.

by Diana Yue