

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 animal symbolism

豬

Pronunciation: *zhu* (Putonghua, 1st tone), *jue* (Cantonese, 1st tone)
Basic meaning: pig

豬 symbolizes laziness/stupidity or fat/well-to-do people. 豬農 (*zhu nong* = pig-farmers) rear pigs in 豬圈 (*zhu quan* = pig-ring) = pig sty. 殺豬般叫 (*sha zhu ban jiao* = kill-pig-same-as-yell/scream) means screaming loudly/desperately like pigs being slaughtered.

豬肉 (*zhu rou* = pig-meat) = pork. 火腿 (*huo tui* = fire-leg) is ham. Chinatown restaurants sell Hongkong-style 燒肉 (*shao rou* = burn-meat = roast pork), 叉燒 (*cha shao* = [Cantonese] cha siu = skewer-burn = barbecue pork).

Contemptible people are 豬狗不如 (*zhu gou bu ru* = pig-dog-not-good-as = worse than dogs and pigs). Dumb people are 蠢豬 (*chun zhu* = stupid-pig). “肥豬王” (*fei zhu wang* = fat-pig-king) is the Chinese title of Orwell's *Animal Farm*.

by Diana Yue