

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 auto-racing

標

Pronunciation: *biao* (Putonghua, 1st tone), *biu* (Cantonese, 1st tone)
Basic meaning: sign, symbol, mark, label, prize

標 (radical 木 *mu* = wood/pole) = 標誌 (*biao zhi* = mark/symbol): 路標 (*lu biao* = road-sign), 商標 (*shang biao* = trademark), 標點 (*biao dian* = mark-dots = punctuation), 標題 (*biao ti* = mark-title = title). Phoneticians use 音標 (*yin biao* = sound-mark = phonetic symbols) to indicate 標準 (*biao zhun* = mark-exact = criteria/standard) pronunciation.

Auto-racers join 錦標賽 (*jin biao sai* = brocade-symbol-contest = championship race). 冠軍 (*guan jun* = crown/first-in-army = winner) passes 標杆 (*biao gan* = sign-post), 奪標 (*duo biao* = snatch-championship = comes first), gets 獎杯 (*jiang bei* = prize-cup), 獎金 (*jiang jin* = prize-gold/money).

標奇立異 (*biao qi li yi* = show/advertise-strange-establish-odd = shock/break norms) characterizes punk culture.

by Diana Yue