

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

撞

Pronunciation: *zhuang* (Putonghua, 4th tone), *jong* (Cantonese, 3rd tone)
Basic meaning: bump, hit, collide, crash

撞 (radical 扌, hand/arm) is intended/unintended body collision: 撞見 (*zhuang jian* = bump-into~see = come across) someone, 撞上 (*zhuang shang* = bump~on = happen on to) chance, 撞破 (*zhuang po* = bump-into~break = catch red-handed) conspiracy. Footballers/boxers 碰撞 (*peng zhuang* = hit/collide~bump). Police 撞門 (*zhuang men* = crash/break~door) to enter crime scene.

意外 (*yi wai* = intention~beyond = surprise = accidents) occur when 天雨路滑 (*tian yu lu hua* = sky~rains~roads~slippery): 撞車 (*zhuang che* = collide~car = car crash), 翻車 (*fan che* = flip/turn~over~car = car overturned), 撞倒逃去 (*zhuang dao tao qu* = bump/hit~topple-down~someone/something~escape~away = hit-and-run).

Cantonese expression “撞鬼!” (*zhuang gui* = “bump-into~ghost!” = “Dammit!”) expresses dismay/anger (forgot wallet/appointment, got cheated etc.)