

# 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 the crime

搶

Pronunciation: *qiang* (Putonghua, 3<sup>rd</sup> tone), *cheung* (Cantonese, 2<sup>nd</sup> tone)  
Basic meaning: snatch, loot, rush

搶 (radical 扌 = 手 *shou* = hand) means snatch/loot. 搶走 (*qiang zou* = snatch~run) means snatch away. Thieves 搶錢 (*qiang qian* = snatch~money), 搶手袋 (*qiang shou dai* = snatch~hand~bag).

搶劫 (*qiang jie* = snatch~rob = robbery) is a 罪行 (*zui xing* = crime~action = criminal act). Bandits 公然搶掠 (*gong ran qiang lue* = openly~loot~pillage), 打劫銀行 (*da jie yin hang* = hit~rob~money~firm = rob banks). 持械行劫案 (*chi xie xing jie an* = hold~weapon~act~rob~case) means armed robbery.

搶先 (*qiang xian* = snatch~before) = rush ahead to overtake. Shoppers 搶購 (*qiang gou* = snatch~buy = snap up) discount items. Doctors 搶救 (*qiang jiu* = rush~save = give emergency treatment to) accident victims.