

# 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 dancing

拍

(radical 扌 = 手 *shou* = hand/arm)  
Pronunciation: *pai* (Putonghua, 1<sup>st</sup> tone), *paak* (Cantonese, 3<sup>rd</sup> tone)  
Basic meaning: tap, clap, beat, rhythm

拍 = tapping/clapping/beating. 拍掌 (*pai zhang* = clap~palms) = clap-hands/applaud. 拍賣行 (*pai mai hang* = bang~sell~companies) = auction houses. We 拍案 (*pai an* = bang~the-table) to express awe/anger.

Music has 節拍 (*jie pai* = musical-bar~musical-beat = rhythm): 重拍 (*zhong pai* = heavy~beat), 輕拍 (*qing pai* = light~beat). Chinese opera uses 拍板 (*pai ban* = clap~wooden-slices/blocks = clappers) to beat time. Dancers follow 拍子 (*pai zi* = beat~diminutive = beat): duple time (二拍 *er pai* = two~beats), triple time (三拍 *san pai* = three~beats), quadruple time (四拍 *si pai* = four~beats).

不合拍 (*bu he pai* = no~follow/fit~beat = incompatible) partners 一拍兩散 (*yi pai liang san* = one~bang~two~split = break/split up).

by Diana Yue