

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

勁

(radical 力 *li* = strength)
Pronunciation: *jing* (Putonghua, 4th tone), *ging* (Cantonese, 6th tone)
Basic meaning: strength, energy, tenacity, drive, zeal, fervor

勁力 (*jing li* = energy~strength) = muscle strength: 手勁 (*shou jing* = hand/arm~strength), 腰勁 (*yao jing* = waist~strength), 腿勁 (*tui jing* = leg~strength). Pop-stars perform 勁歌熱舞 (*jing ge re wu* = energetic~singing~hot~dancing). 勁敵 (*jing di* = strong~enemy) means formidable opponent.

勁 also means earnesty/zeal/tenacity. Teachers like 起勁 (*qi jing* = lift~strength = keen) students. Bosses like employees' 衝勁 (*chong jing* = push-ahead~strength = drive). Lazy people 沒勁 (*mei jing* = have-no~strength = lack~zeal/drive). Late-bloomers 後勁凌厲 (*hou jing ling li* = later~strength/tenacity~soar~terrible = do magnificently well later).

Recessions make investors 勁蝕 (*jing shi* = great~lose = lose heavily). Football-fans watching 勁射 (*jing she* = powerful~shot) yell “勁!” (*jing* = “Awesome!”/“Swell!”)

by Diana Yue