

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 Cold War

冷

Pronunciation: *dou* (Putonghua, 4th tone), *dau* (Cantonese, 3rd tone)
Basic meaning: fight, compete, struggle against, persecute

鬥's left-oppose-right shape indicates antagonism. 鬥嘴 (*dou zui* = fight~mouth) = argue/quarrel. 鬥牛 (*dou niu* = fight~cow/bull) = bullfight. 決鬥 (*jue dou* = determined/decisive~fight) = duel. 戰鬥機 (*zhan dou ji* = war~fight~machine/airplane = war-plane).

Sprinters 鬥快 (*dou kuai* = compete~fast-speed). Spies 鬥智 (*dou zhi* = compete~intelligence). 美蘇 (*Mei Su* = US~Soviet) 鬥強 (*dou qiang* = compete~strength), 爭霸 (*zheng ba* = fight-for~heremony). Oppressed peasants 鬥地主 (*dou di zhu* = fight~land~lord = join persecution rallies against landlords) in 階級鬥爭 (*jie ji dou zheng* = platform-tier~fight~argue = class struggle).

Hong Kong expressions: Discount stores 鬥平 (*dou ping* = Cantonese “dau peng” = compete~cheap-price), smart guys 鬥叻 (*dou li* = Cantonese “dau lek” = compete~smart).