

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

殺

Pronunciation: *sha* (Putonghua, 1st tone), *saat* (Cantonese, 3rd tone)
Basic meaning: kill

Killing is a 罪 (*zui* = sin/crime). Ten Commandments say “不可殺人” (*bu ke sha ren* = no~can~kill~person = “Thou shalt not kill”). Buddhists call killing 開殺戒 (*kai sha jie* = open~kill~ban = breaking rule against killing). 殺頭 (*sha tou* = kill~head) means decapitation.

誤殺 (*wu sha* = mistaken~kill) = unintentional killing, 謀殺 (*mou sha* = plan~kill) = murder. 殺手 (*sha shou* = kill~hand = killer) 殺死 (*sha si* = kill~die) target. 大殺傷武器 (*da sha shang wu qi* = big~kill~harm~military~instrument) = weapons of mass destruction.

殺雞儆猴 (*sha ji jing hou* = kill~chicken~warn~monkey) means punishing A to warn/threaten B. “天殺的!” (*tian sha de* = heaven~kill~it) = “Dammit!”

by Diana Yue