

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 policemen

捕

(radical 扌 = 手 *shou* = hand/arm)
Pronunciation: *bu* (Putonghua, 3rd tone), *bo* (Cantonese, 6th tone)
Basic meaning: hunt, catch, capture, arrest

捕 = 捉 (*zhuo*) = 擒 (*qin*): 捕魚 (*bu yu* = hunt/catch~fish), 捕手 (*bu shou* = catch~hand = baseball catcher). Credulous people 捕風捉影 (*bu feng zhuo ying* = capture~wind~catch~shadow = imagine/believe rumours). Music 捕捉 (*bu zhuo* = capture~catch) sounds/feelings.

Policemen 捉賊 (*zhuo zei* = catch~thieves/thugs). If thugs 拒捕 (*ju bu* = refuse/dodge~arrest) and escape, police issue 拘捕令 (*ju bu ling* = take~arrest~order = arrest warrant), 追捕 (*zui bu* = hunt/chase~to-catch) them.

欲擒故縱 (*yu qin gu zong* = desire~capture~deliberately~release = to capture, first let go) is a smart tactic. 螳螂捕蟬，黃雀在後 (*tang lang bu chan, huang que zai hou* = praying-mantis~hunts~cicada, yellow~bird~is/lurks~behind) describes the big-hunts-small power game among animals/humans/states.

by Diana Yue