

# 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

伴

(radical 亻 = 人 *ren* = person)  
Pronunciation: *ban* (Putonghua, 4<sup>th</sup> tone), *boon* (Cantonese, 6<sup>th</sup> tone)  
Basic meaning: accompany, partner

伴 = 同伴 (*tong ban* = same/together~accompany) = accompanying person. Party-goers need 男伴 (*nan ban* = male~escort), 女伴 (*nu ban* = girl/lady~partner) to be 舞伴 (*wu ban* = dancing~partner). 舞廳 (*wu ting* = dancing~parlours) hire 舞女 (*wu nu* = dancing~girl/woman-partners) to 伴舞 (*ban wu* = accompany~dance = dance with men customers).

Vocalists need 伴奏 (*ban zou* = accompany~perform~instrument = accompanists). Tourists hire 伴遊 (*ban you* = accompany~roam/tour = tour escorts/guides) or 結伴同遊 (*jie ban tong you* = knot/form~accompany~together~travel = travel together).

情侶 (*qing lu* = love~partners = lovers) may become 終生伴侶 (*zhong sheng ban lu* = lasting~life~accompany~partner = life-long partner/spouse, affectionately called “老伴” *lao ban* = old~partner).

by Diana Yue