

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 animal symbolism

狗

Pronunciation: *gou* (Putonghua, 3rd tone), *gau* (Cantonese 2nd tone)
Basic meaning: dog

狗 (= 犬 *quan* = dog) symbolizes servile/cheap/base/inferior character. 畫虎不成反類犬 (*hua hu bu cheng fan lei quan* = draw~tiger~un~successful~however~resemble~dog) means launching grand plans but results are no where near the aim.

狗 means no good. Ridiculous arguments are 狗屁不通 (*gou pi bu tong* = dog~fart~not~reasonable). “Son-of-a-bitch!” is “狗娘養的!” (*gou niang yang de* = dog~mother~born-raised).

Hunters use 獵犬 (*lie quan* = hunting~hounds). Politicians use 走狗 (*zou gou* = running~dog = lackeys). 狡兔死，走狗烹 (*jiao tu si, zou gou peng* = tricky~hare~dead~[so]~running~dog~cooked) is a cruel truth: abettors no longer useful are destroyed/eliminated. 狗肉 (*gou rou* = dog~meat) is called 香肉 (*xiang rou* = fragrant~meat — smells/tastes delicious!)

by Diana Yue