

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 money

幣

Pronunciation: *bi* (Putonghua, 4th tone), *bai* (Cantonese, 6th tone)
Basic meaning: currency

貨幣 (*huo bi* = commodity~currency) = currency/money: 人民幣 (*ren min bi* = person~people~currency = PRC's RMB), 港幣 (*Gang bi* = Hong Kong~currency), 澳幣 (*Ao bi* = Macau~currency = pataca/MOP). Tourists travelling abroad spend 外幣 (*wai bi* = foreign~currency/money).

In old China people used 銀兩 (*yin liang* = silver~taels), 銅錢 (*tong qian* = copper~coins). Today, for 現金 (*xian jin* = immediate~gold/money = cash) we use 紙幣 (*zhi bi* = paper~currency = 鈔票 *chao piao* = paper-money~ticket = banknotes/bills), 輔幣 (*fu bi* = supplementary~currency = coins).

Economic development necessitates 幣制改革 (*bi zhi gai ge* = currency~system~change~reform = currency/monetary reform). International trading uses 國際貨幣 (*guo ji huo bi* = nations~among~commodity~currency = international currencies).

by Diana Yue