

Chinese BuilderCards Booklet

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Chinese BuilderCards
The Lightning Path to Mastering Vocabulary

Song Jiang and Haidan Wang

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To Albert and Krystal

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1. Why BuilderCards?

Vocabulary is central to language and of critical importance to a foreign language learner. As one of the fundamental building blocks of language, vocabulary has always been at the center of language learning.

As a learner, you probably have already seen some Chinese flashcards on the market or had the experience of creating flashcards for yourself. So why another set? Why BuilderCards?

This set of BuilderCards is uniquely designed to help students build their Chinese vocabulary network and understand how groups of words are thematically and pedagogically related. Unlike most flashcards, which are created for single-character memorization, the main purpose of BuilderCards is to expand a learner's vocabulary in a systematic way, to establish a vocabulary network in the learner's mental lexicon and to facilitate vocabulary learning and teaching for users and teachers of various commonly used textbooks.

If you glance through BuilderCards, you will quickly see that it is different from most other flashcard sets in four outstanding ways:

1. *Word-based.* Instead of presenting a single character as the head on each card, BuilderCards treats words (one to four characters) as the basic unit, thus creating a headword on each card. Although there are certain cards with only one character as headwords, they are single-character words that are the immediate building blocks for building the language, and they can be independently adopted in language use.
2. *Headwords based on frequency of use in textbooks.* Instead of choosing words based on a generic character or word frequency list, BuilderCards presents a unique set of words based on the word frequency in the seven most commonly used beginning and intermediate Chinese language textbook series and the *Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi* (HSK, Chinese Proficiency Test) Level-I Vocabulary List. The cards cover all words appearing in these publications. For first and second year learners, the frequency information based on textbooks is much more practical and valuable than the frequency information provided in other flashcards, most of which is based on commonly used newspaper or general language use.
3. *Referenced to commonly used textbooks.* Rather than serving only the general learners, BuilderCards is intended to serve both general learners and the users of common Chinese language textbooks.

4. *Association by word.* Instead of listing some words containing the head character as a morpheme for the purpose of reinforcing learning the character, BuilderCards presents the semantically, linguistically and pedagogically associated words for the headword based on word association theory. (See “Pedagogical Rationale of BuilderCards” below for more information.)

2. Features of BuilderCards

The BuilderCards set is designed for all beginning and intermediate Chinese language learners, especially for (1) learners who want to systematically expand or review characters and vocabulary from the beginning to the intermediate level, (2) test-takers who are preparing for the HSK, SAT II Chinese Language Test, and other Chinese proficiency tests, (3) users of seven commonly used Chinese language textbook series.

The BuilderCards set contains 768 cards. Each card features 1 headword and 1 to 5 associated words. There is a total of 2,892 words introduced in the card set. These 2,892 words have been selected based on statistical studies of the vocabulary coverage in the seven most commonly used textbook series and the HSK Level-I Vocabulary List. This card set is intended to cover all the essential words that appear in these eight publications. The eight publications (and their abbreviations as appearing in this card set) are as follows.

1. HFBS: *Hanyu* for Beginning Students (汉语)
2. HSK1: *Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi* Level-I Vocabulary List
(汉语水平考试甲级词汇)
3. IC: Integrated Chinese (中文听说读写) (Level 1 Part 1, Level 1 Part 2)
4. INTR: *Interactions, A Cognitive Approach to Beginning Chinese* (I, II)
5. NPCR: *New Practical Chinese Reader* (新实用汉语课本) (1, 2)
6. PAVC: *Practical Audio-Visual Chinese* (实用视听华语) (I)
7. PCR: *Practical Chinese Reader* (实用汉语课本) (I, II)
8. PRIM: *Chinese Primer* (中文入门)

While we include all the essential words covered in these publications, for practical reasons, some specific names, proper nouns and words that we think may not be interesting to general users, or that are unique to particular textbooks, have

been excluded. For instance, 古波, 帕兰卡, 王朋, 李友, 《骆驼祥子》, 《喜福会》, 阜城門, 北京语言学院, etc. are not included in BuilderCards.

From the total of 2,892 words, 768 have been selected as headwords based on their textbook appearance frequency, their productivity in forming new words, and their roles in the corresponding semantic categories. Each of these 768 words appears as a headword on a card and then is used as a prompt to be semantically or linguistically associated with 1 to 5 other words, which are associated with the headword, but may or may not contain its character(s) or be derived directly from its structure. This is a basic strength of the BuilderCards approach.

The main focus of the BuilderCards is to develop a learner's vocabulary system. In addition, BuilderCards also provides radical information and stroke numbers for the characters of these 768 headwords, a fundamental need for beginning learners to develop any true facility with characters.

The cards are numbered sequentially based on dictionary order by Pinyin. For all the headwords and their associated words, Pinyin, English definitions, parts-of-speech, textbook appearance frequency, and references to where each word appears in the publications are provided.

The index of all words included in this card set is arranged in Pinyin order. Information about the headword, associated word(s), publication appearance frequency, and words' card number are included.

3. Structure and Organization of BuilderCards

Front Side

On the right upper corner of the front side is the card number. The numbers range from 1 to 768 based on the Pinyin alphabetical order of the headword.

The headword is centered in large bold strokes, with its associated word or words listed below in smaller strokes. Neither Pinyin nor English is provided. For the headword, references to the publication sources are listed. The publication references are arranged in alphabetical order based on the abbreviated publication titles. Following the publication title, lesson and section numbers are provided. (For example, for the word 姐姐, the reference "HFBS 2.1" indicates this word appears in *Hanyu for Beginning Students*, Lesson 2, section 1.) Supplementary words in some textbooks are marked by either "x" or "s" following the original textbook format. (For example, under the word 结婚, the reference "IC 17x" indicates that this word is in *Integrated Chinese*, Lesson 17 as a supplementary word; the reference "NPCR

22s” represents that it also appears in *New Practical Chinese Reader*, Lesson 22 as a supplementary word.)

Reverse Side

The reverse side of each card contains three sections.

In the top horizontal section, the headword is reprinted in a smaller size, followed by its Pinyin, part-of-speech, English definition, character radical information, and stroke number. (For information about the abbreviations of parts-of-speech, please refer to the “Grammatical Terms” section below.) If a headword contains different English definitions and different parts-of-speech, these definitions and parts-of-speech are separated by a semicolon “;”. The multiple meanings within one part-of-speech are separated by a comma “,”. The radicals and stroke number for each character of a headword are separated by a comma “,” in the order these characters appear in this word. For instance, for the word 结婚, radical information is presented as “radicals 纟, 女”, in which 纟 is the radical of 结, and 女 of 婚. The same convention applies to the stroke information. 结婚’s stroke information is presented as “strokes 9, 11”, meaning that 9 is the stroke number of 结, and 11 of 婚.

In the left section under the top part, the associated words appearing on the front side are reprinted with the Pinyin below, and part-of-speech and English definition to the right, with publication references.

The right section under the top part is an area for notes. It is intentionally formatted so that the user can add personal notes, or can make their own associations for the headword in addition to those appearing on the card.

4. Pedagogical Rationale of BuilderCards

Psychological studies on word association have revealed that words are not randomly stored in the mind, rather, there is specific organization. Word mastery necessitates understanding of various kinds of lexical knowledge. Words in a word family are related to each other through their common base-form. Linguistic studies show that the appropriate use of a word depends on understanding of the word’s meaning in relationship to other linguistically and semantically related words. These studies have inspired research on second language vocabulary acquisition, which has shown that words can be better mastered when they are learned together with other semantically and linguistically related words.

Whereas other published flashcards treat word relations in an implicit manner, the goal of this BuilderCards set is to make the relations explicit and use these relations to establish a vocabulary organization for learners. If you present the prompt word 桌子 “table” to a Chinese speaker and ask him/her to offer the associated words, you are very likely to receive words such as 椅子 “chair,” 家具 “furniture,” 房间 “room,” 杯子 “cup,” or 台灯 “table lamp.” You might also receive some “clang” response words that rhyme or contain the same sound, such as 儿子 “son,” 孩子 “child.” Words grammatically related to the prompt words, such as 擦 “to wipe,” 搬 “to move,” 抬 “to carry,” as in 擦桌子 “to wipe the table,” 搬桌子 “to move the table,” 抬桌子 “to carry the table,” may be given. Each of these associated words relates to the word in some way. Studying the word 桌子 together with its various associated words can help learners not only build a network of meanings and organize the semantic knowledge of the new word, but also establish the vocabulary organization and internalize the new word into their mental lexicon.

The word relations highlighted in BuilderCards are summarized and exemplified below:

1. **Synonym type relation.** For instance, under the headword 高兴 “glad,” such synonyms as 快乐 “happy,” 痛快 “delighted” and 愉快 “happy” are listed as associated words. 饭店 “restaurant, hotel” and 馆子 “(small) restaurant” are included in one card headed by 饭馆儿 “restaurant.” 觉得 “to think, to feel,” 以为 “to think mistakenly,” and 认为 “to consider that” are presented together.
2. **Antonym type relation.** For instance, 厚 “thick,” 薄 “thin,” 软 “soft,” and 硬 “hard” are presented together. 紧张 “nervous” is accompanied by 轻松 “relax.” 饿 “hungry” is associated with 饱 “to be full after eating,” 干净 “clean” with 脏 “dirty,” 可爱 “cute, lovable” with 可恶 “hateful, abominable,” and 便宜 “cheap” with 贵 “expensive.”
3. **Same character relation.** For example, 知道 “to know” is related to 知识 “knowledge.” 机场 “airport” is associated with 机会 “opportunity.” 安静 “quiet” is associated with 安排 “to arrange,” and 复习 “to review” is related to 恢复 “to recover.”
4. **Same semantic field.** For instance, words related to tea, 茶叶 “tea leaves,” 花茶 “jasmine tea,” 茶碗 “teacup,” 茶壶 “teapot,” 茶具 “tea set,” 茶馆 “teahouse,” 茶会 “a tea party,” 泡茶 “to steep tea,” can form a word group. 房

子 “house,” 屋子 “room,” 房租 “rent,” 房东 “landlord,” and 房客 “tenant” are basic words for the topic of house renting. 借 “to borrow,” 还 “to return,” 借给 “to lend (to),” and 借书证 “library ID” can be grouped under the scenario of borrowing and returning a book in a library. 电话 “telephone,” 电报 “telegraph,” and 占线 “the (telephone) line is busy” belong to the scenario of making a phone call.

5. **Superordinate and subordinate type relation.** This relation can be called “is a kind of” relation. 厉害 “strict” is “a kind of” 态度 “attitude.” 春天 “spring” is “a kind of” 季节 “season.” 花儿 “flower” has a generic or superordinate relation to 菊花 “chrysanthemum” and 梅花 “plum blossom.” Meanwhile, 菊花 “chrysanthemum” and 梅花 “plum blossom” maintain a subordinate relation to 花儿 “flower.”
6. **Paradigmatic relation.** A paradigmatic relation is similar to the same semantic field relation (see above), but requires the identical part-of-speech and the same grammatical function of the words within a given sentence. For instance, for the sentence 我喜欢打篮球 “I enjoy playing basketball,” 兵乓球 “Ping Pong [ball]” and 橄榄球 “football” can be used as substitutes to replace 篮球 “basketball.” For the sentence 今天天气很好 “The weather is good for today,” 今天 “today” can be replaced by 昨天 “yesterday” and by 明天 “tomorrow.” For the sentence 我喜欢吃甜的 “I like to eat sweet things,” 甜 “sweet” can be replaced by 辣 “spicy,” 苦 “bitter,” 咸 “salty” and 淡 “light (taste, color).” Therefore, 篮球 “basketball,” 兵乓球 “Ping Pong ball,” and 橄榄球 “football”; 今天 “today,” 昨天 “yesterday,” and 明天 “tomorrow”; 甜 “sweet,” 辣 “spicy,” 苦 “spicy,” 咸 “salty,” and 淡 “light (taste, color)” can be considered as in paradigmatic relations.
7. **Grammatical relations.** The grammatical relations are presented in three different ways in this BuilderCards set. **One way** is to group together the headword and the associated words that bear an obvious sequential relationship to the headword. The words in this group are usually from different word classes. 看 “to look, to watch” is related to 书 “book,” 报 “newspaper,” or 电视 “television” due to the frequent combinations of 看书 “read a book,” 看报 “read a newspaper,” and 看电视 “watch TV.” 钢琴 “piano” is related to 弹 “to play.” 小提琴 “violin” is associated with 拉 “to play.” 风 “wind” corresponds to 刮 “(wind) blow.” 错 “mistake, error” is

related to 犯 “to make (mistake).” **The second way** is to list a group of words with similar grammatical functions together in order to make a contrast. For instance, the following measure words are grouped together: 束 “a bunch of (flowers)”；枝, a measure word for stick-like things; 棵, for trees and plants; 根, for long and thin things; 株, for plants and trees. **The third way** is to present a word and a pattern with the word. For instance, 兴趣 “interest” is grouped with 对...有兴趣 “be interested in” and 感兴趣 “feel interested in.”

8. **Homonym type relations.** Words in the homonym relations, can be defined as words which are written in the same way but have different meanings. For instance 省钱 “save money” and 省 “province” are presented together. 的 “a particle indicating the possessive,” 的时候 “at the time of,” and 的确 “indeed” are grouped together.

In addition, some other relations, such as “part of whole” (e.g. 房间 “room,” with 墙 “wall,” and 房顶 “ceiling”), words with same origin (e.g. 番茄 “tomato,” and 葡萄 “grape”) and elements of a compound word as independent words (e.g. 公共汽车 “bus” with 公共 “public” and 汽车 “car, vehicle”; 烤鸭 “roast duck” with 烤 “roast” and 鸭 “duck”), etc. are also principles in making the associations for a given headword.

Vocabulary acquisition research and teaching practices suggest that the word relations outlined above are crucial for learners to establish their vocabulary system and organization for the target language. With an emphasis on these relations, BuilderCards can help learners make connections among the words they have learned and lay the foundation for further vocabulary expansion and enrichment.

5. How to Use BuilderCards

There are several ways to use BuilderCards, depending on your purpose of study.

- If you are aiming at systematically expanding or reviewing vocabulary at the beginning and intermediate level, or preparing for HSK, SAT II or other proficiency tests, study this set by following the original card sequence, from number 1 through number 768. You may use the reverse side of each card to study both the headword and its associated word(s) in detail. Study the headword first, pay attention to the relation between the headword and its associated word(s), and use such relations to group the headword and the associated one(s) together. You can also use the word frequency information

in the textbook reference part to estimate the importance of the word in the publications referred to and determine how to prioritize each word in your study. You can use the front side of the card to quiz yourself.

- If you are a user of one of the seven Chinese language textbook series indexed, you might use BuilderCards as a companion reference along with your study of the textbook. By using the index, you can re-sort the cards to match the textbook order. To achieve this, first look up the vocabulary list in your textbook and locate the words for which you want to create a card set. Then use Pinyin to locate these words in the BuilderCards index. Find the card numbers for these words, and locate these cards in the BuilderCards set. Remember that a word you are looking for in the BuilderCards set might appear as either a headword or an associated word. Also please keep in mind that you may not find some specific names and proper nouns that appear in your textbook because they are not included in BuilderCards. (See above “Features of BuilderCards” for more information on types of words that weren’t chosen for inclusion in BuilderCards.)
- If you are preparing for the HSK test, you can re-sort the BuilderCard set into the original HSK order based on the word sequence provided on the cards.

As mentioned in the “Pedagogical Rationale” section, the goal of BuilderCards is to help users establish a semantic and linguistic vocabulary network. The semantic and linguistic network provided by each card is a very basic system and intended to serve as a base for further development of such a system. In fact, the semantic and linguistic network and the word association system in the average speaker’s mind are far more complicated than the elemental system shown in BuilderCards. The higher a learner’s language proficiency is, the more sophisticated the learner’s vocabulary system is. Users should be aware of the fact that the associations presented on each of the BuilderCards are based on the vocabulary covered in the eight publications and they are intended to show an overview of the vocabulary in the beginning and intermediate levels of Chinese language instruction. Therefore, any word not occurring in these eight publications has not been included in this card set to complement certain semantic fields. Thus the word associations in the BuilderCards set are not comprehensive or complete.

In addition to studying each card as an individual network, you are encouraged to make further associations across different cards based on the associations suggested in the pedagogical section. For instance, on Card No. 40, you learn 病 “to fall ill; disease,” 病了 “to become ill,” 病人 “patient,” 病房 “ward,” and 症状 “symptom,” so you can establish a semantic field about illness and hospital. Under this theme,

other cards with the words related to this theme, such as Card No. 164: 发烧 “run a fever,” 发炎 “become inflamed”; Card No. 189: 感冒 “get a cold”; Card No. 669: 医生 “doctor,” 医务所 “clinic,” 医药费 “medical expense,” 护士 “nurse,” and 医 “to cure, to treat (an illness)”; Card No. 670: 医院 “hospital,” 住院 “be hospitalized,” 出院 “to leave hospital,” etc., can be further grouped together and form a more comprehensive associated word network for this theme. The word association can thus be very personalized. For a particular word, different people may generate different associations based on their personal experience. Therefore, users are encouraged to make their personal associations for any word they are studying in the card set. The notes section on the reverse side of each card is intended for these purposes.

6. Grammatical Terms

There is a great variety of parts-of-speech and grammar terms in the publications referenced in BuilderCards. Each publication differs in its classification and the use and definition of technical terms. Considering this great inconsistency, BuilderCards adopts its own parts-of-speech system and tries to employ consistent grammar terms. This is an attempt to make use of the most general type of parts-of-speech classification and the most common grammar terms. Some specific jargon in certain textbooks, such as “pre-transitive”, “unclassified bound form”, “movable adverb”, etc., are replaced with common and general terms. The following list shows the grammar terms and their abbreviations used in BuilderCards.

<i>adj</i>	Adjective	<i>part</i>	Particle
<i>adv</i>	Adverb	<i>PN</i>	Proper Noun
<i>av</i>	Auxiliary Verb	<i>pr</i>	Pronoun
<i>coll</i>	Colloquial	<i>pref</i>	Prefix
<i>conj</i>	Conjunction	<i>prep</i>	Preposition
<i>excl</i>	Exclamation	<i>prov</i>	Proverb
<i>IE</i>	Idiomatic Expression	<i>qw</i>	Question Word
<i>interj</i>	Interjection	<i>suf</i>	Suffix
<i>m</i>	Measure Word	<i>v</i>	Verb
<i>n</i>	Noun	<i>vc</i>	Verb Complement
<i>num</i>	Number	<i>vo</i>	Verb Object
<i>on</i>	Onomatopoeia		

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BuilderCards Index

- The headwords are indicated by shaded rows.
- **Simp**: Simplified Character
- **Trad**: Traditional Character
- **F**: Textbook Frequency, Number (1-8) of the chosen publications in which the word appears
- **No**: Card Number (1-768)

Pinyin	Simp	Trad	F No
ā, a	啊	啊	8 1
āyí	阿姨	阿姨	3 2
āi	哎	哎	1 1
āiya	哎呀	哎呀	2 1
āiyō	哎哟	哎哟	2 1
ǎi	矮	矮	5 3
ǎigèr	矮个儿	矮個兒	1 3
ài	爱	愛	7 4
àihào	爱好	愛好	1 4
àiqíng	爱情	愛情	1 4
àirén	爱人	愛人	4 4
ānjìng	安静	安靜	3 5
ānpái	安排	安排	1 5
ànshí	按时	按時	1 567
áoyè	熬夜	熬夜	1 661
ba	吧	吧	8 8
bā	八	八	5 6
bāchéng	八成	八成	1 6
bǎ	把	把	8 7
bà	爸	爸	1 379
bàba	爸爸	爸爸	8 379
bái	白	白	6 9
báibái	拜拜	拜拜	1 11
báilándì	白兰地	白蘭地	1 9
báitiān	白天	白天	3 9
bǎi	摆	擺	4 7

Pinyin	Simp	Trad	F No
bǎi	百	百	6 10
bǎihuò	百货	百貨	1 10
bǎihuòdàlóu	百货大楼	百貨大樓	1 10
bǎihuògōngsī	百货公司	百貨公司	3 10
bǎishìkělè	百事可乐	百事可樂	1 336
bàinián	拜年	拜年	1 11
bān	搬	搬	6 13
bān	班	班	5 12
bān chūqu	搬出去	搬出去	1 13
bāndào	搬到	搬到	1 13
bānjī	班机	班機	1 12
bānjiā	搬家	搬家	1 13
bàn	半	半	8 14
bàn	办	辦	6 15
bànchǎng	半场	半場	1 14
bànfǎ	办法	辦法	4 15
bàngōng	办公	辦公	1 15
bàngōngshì	办公室	辦公室	4 15
bàntiān	半天	半天	2 14
bànyè	半夜	半夜	3 14
bāng	帮	幫	6 16
bāngmáng	帮忙	幫忙	4 387
bāngzhù	帮助	幫助	4 16
bàng	棒	棒	1 17
bàng	磅	磅	2 18
bàngqiú	棒球	棒球	1 17