

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 MTR

線

Pronunciation: *xian* (Putonghua, 4th tone), *sin* (Cantonese, 3rd tone)
Basic meaning: line, string, lane, route

線 means line/linear/link. 線索 (*xian suo* = thread/line~seek) = clue. 電話線 (*dian hua xian* = electric~talk~line) = telephone line. 有線電視 (*you xian dian shi* = has~line~electric~watch) = cable TV.

航線 (*hang xian* = voyage~line) = ship's/plane's route. 行車線 (*xing che xian* = move~car~line) = traffic/car lanes. 鐵路線 (*tie lu xian* = iron~road~line) = railway line. 地鐵線 (*di tie xian* = ground~iron~line) = underground railway line. 轉線 (*zhuan xian* = change~lines/lanes).

針線 (*zhen xian* = needle~thread) = sewing/needlework. 穿針引線 (*chuan zhen yin xian* = thread~needle~guide~thread) means pulling strings to facilitate plans/actions. 牽線木偶 (*qian xian mu ou* = pull~string~wooden~figure/doll) means string puppet or somebody acting entirely under another's control/manipulation.

by Diana Yue