

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

擠

Pronunciation: *ji* (Putonghua, 3rd tone), *jai* (Cantonese, 1st tone)
Basic meaning: squeeze, cram, crowded

擠 = squeeze. Milkmaids 擠奶 (*ji nai* = squeeze~milk). Pimples must 擠膿 (*ji nong* = squeeze-out~pus). Creditors 擠乾 (*ji gan* = squeeze~dry) debtors' savings. Banks fear 擠提 (*ji ti* = crowd~withdraw = bank runs).

擠 = 擠迫 (*ji po* = squeeze~press) = crowded. During 上班下班 (*shang ban xia ban* = up~shift~down~shift = heading for work and getting off work) road traffic is 擠塞 (*ji se* = crowded/busy~blocked).

To avoid 塞車 (*se che* = block~car = traffic jam) and 遲到 (*chi dao* = late~arrive = being late), people 擠進 (*ji jin* = cram~into) the MTR, 擠滿 (*ji man* = crowd~fill = packing) the compartments like 沙丁魚 (*sha ding yu* = "sardine"-transliterated-fish = sardines).

by Diana Yue