

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 supermarkets

折

Pronunciation: *zhe* (Putonghua, 2nd tone), *jit* (Cantonese, 3rd tone)

Basic meaning: fresh, bend, break, discount

折 (radical 扌 = 手 *shou* = hand) means bend/break. Roads have 彎折 (*wan zhe* = curves~bends). Winding paths/tales are 曲折 (*qu zhe* = twisted~bended).

Losers experience 挫折 (*cuo zhe* = fall~break = defeats). Illnesses/rough journeys 折磨 (*zhe mo* = bend~grind = torture) patients/travelers. 骨折 (*gu zhe* = bone~break) = fractured bone. 雁行折翼 (*yan xing zhe yi* = wild-goose~journey~break~wing) describes man/woman mourning death of spouse in mid-life.

折扣 (*zhe kou* = break/cut~rebate) means reduction/discount. 七五折 (*qi wu zhe* = 7.5-tenths~ discount) = reduced to 75% of marked price. When shops 大出血 (*da chu xue* = big~out~blood = big sale), goods can be 三折 (*san zhe* = 3-tenths~ discount = only 30% of marked price = 70% off).

by Diana Yue