

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

送

Pronunciation: *song* (Putonghua, 4th tone), *sung* (Cantonese, 3rd tone)
Basic meaning: see off, give, gift, bonus

送 (radical 辶 = 艇 *ting* = small boat) involves polite/well-meant movement. 送別 (*song bie* = see-out/off~depart) means seeing/accompanying someone/friend leave. 送出 (*song chu* = give~out/away) means giving away things/money.

送 = 贈 (*zeng*, radical 貝 *bei* = seashells/money). Shoppers get coupons/gifts at 大贈送 (*da zeng song* = big~give~give = big sales). 送錢 (*song qian* = give~money). 送禮 (*song li* = give~polite-things) = give presents/bribes. 買一送一 (*mai yi song yi* = buy~one~give~one) = “Buy one get one free!”

送 + radical 食 (*shi* = eat) = 饌 (*song* = Cantonese *sung*) = food/dishes accompanying cooked rice. Housewives 買饌 (*mai song* = buy vegi/meat for home-cooking). “好饌!” (*hao song* = good~dishes) describes meals with sumptuous dishes.

by Diana Yue