

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 jewelry

石

Pronunciation: *shi* (Putonghua, 4th tone), *sek* (Cantonese, 6th tone)
Basic meaning: stone

Jewelers buy/sell 寶石 (*bao shi* = precious~stones): 鑽石 (*zuan shi* = drill~stone = diamonds), 紅寶石 (*hong bao shi* = red~precious~stone = rubies), 藍寶石 (*lan bao shi* = blue~precious~stone = sapphires), 綠寶石 (*lu bao shi* = green~precious~stone = emeralds), 紫晶 (*zi jing* = purple~crystal = amethysts), 閃山雲 (*shan shan yun* = glitter~mountain~cloud = opals).

Precious/semi-precious stones, weighed in 卡 (*ka* = short for 卡拉 *ka la* = “carat”-transliterated), are 鑲嵌 (*xiang kan* = set~inlaid = cast) in gold/silver/platinum. Right 切工 (*qie gong* = cut~workmanship = cutting) brings out 火 (*huo* = fire/flash) in 鑽戒 (*zuan jie* = diamond~rings).

珠寶玉石 (*zhu bao yu shi* = pearl~precious-items~jade~stone) = collective term for jewels.

by Diana Yue