

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 swindlers

利

Pronunciation: *li* (Putonghua, 4th tone), *lei* (Cantonese, 6th tone)

Basic meaning: benefit, advantage, gain, interest, profit

利 means benefit/advantage. 有利 (*you li* = has~advantage) = advantageous. 吉利 (*ji li* = luck~benefit) = auspicious/lucky. Businessmen want 利潤 (*li run* = benefit~nourish = gain/profit). Loan sharks charge exorbitant 利息 (*li xi* = gain-interest = interest). 利他主義 (*li ta zhu yi* = benefit-others-main-principle) is altruism.

個人利益 (*ge ren li yi* = unit~person~interest) = personal interest, 集體利益 (*ji ti li yi* = collective~body~interest = group interest). Greedy people 損人利己 (*sun ren li ji* = hurt-other-people~benefit~self). ICAC investigates 利益輸送 (*li yi shu song* = advantage-benefit~convey~deliver = illegal supplying of advantages).

Schemers 利用 (*li yong* = advantage~use = use/manipulate) others. Traitors 見利忘義 (*jian li wang yi* = see~gain~forget~righteousness/principles).

by Diana Yue