

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 dressmaking

裁

(radical 衣 *yi* = clothes)

Pronunciation: *cai* (Putonghua, 4th tone), *choi* (Cantonese, 3rd tone)

Basic meaning: design/cut sewing pattern, cut

裁縫 (*cai feng* = make-pattern~sew = tailor/dressmakers) draw/cut 紙樣 (*zhi yang* = paper~shape = clothing patterns) showing 領 (*ling* = collar), 袖 (*xiu* = sleeves), 肩 (*jian* = shoulders), 腰 (*yao* = waist), 褶 (*zhe* = folds/pleats/seams); cut 布料 (*bu liao* = cloth~materials = fabrics) with 剪刀 (*jian dao* = cut~knife = scissors). 相體裁衣 (*xiang ti cai yi* = assess-body-cut~dress) means planning to meet needs/resources/trends.

剪裁 (*jian cai* = cut~pattern = cutting) of 高級時裝 (*gao ji shi zhuang* = high-class-season-clothes = high fashion = haute couture) is more body-flattering than 成衣 (*cheng yi* = made~clothes = ready-to-wear garments = prêt-a-porter).

裁員 (*cai yuan* = cut~member) = corporate downsizing. 裁軍 (*cai jun* = cut~army) = disarmament.

by Diana Yue