

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

縫

(radical 糸 *si* = silk)

Pronunciation: *feng* (Putonghua, 2nd tone), *fung* (Cantonese, 4th tone)

Basic meaning: gap, fault, sew

縫 means sewing, 縫工 (*feng gong* = sew~work) means needlework. 裁縫 (*cai feng* = make~pattern~sew) means tailor, someone who cuts fabrics and sews/makes clothes. Factory girls use 縫紉機 (*feng ren ji* = sew~thread~needle~machine = sewing machines) to 車衣 (*che yi* = Cantonese “che yi” = machine-make~clothes), 釘鈕 (*ding niu* = Cantonese “deng nau” = nail/sew-on~buttons), 縫製 (*feng zhi* = sew~produce) garments.

縫 also means gap/crack on surfaces. Surgeons 縫合 (*feng he* = sew~close) wounds/cuts. Quarrels cause 裂縫 (*lie feng* = crack~gap = break) in friendships.

見縫插針 (*jian feng cha zhen* = see~crack~insert~needle) means using every available chance to plant/expand connections/influence. 天衣無縫 (*tian yi wu feng* = heaven-made~garment~has~no~seam/fault) describes perfect cooperation or faultless performances/plans/theories.