

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 autumn

秋

Pronunciation: *qiu* (Putonghua, 1st tone), *chau* (Cantonese, 1st tone)
Basic meaning: autumn

秋 = 秋天 (*qiu tian* = autumn~sky) = 秋季 (*qiu ji* = autumn~season). On 秋日 (*qiu ri* = autumn days) women wear 秋裝 (*qiu zhuang* = autumn~wear/fashion). 中秋節 (*zhong qiu jie* = Mid~Autumn~Festival) celebrates the full moon and family reunion.

In 金秋 (*jin qiu* = gold~autumn = golden-harvest season), farmers 收割 (*shou ge* = collect~cut = harvest crops with sickles). 秋收起義 (*qiu shou qi yi* = autumn~harvest~rise~righteous) = the 1927 Chinese peasants' Autumn Harvest Uprising.

春秋 (*chun qiu* = spring~autumn) means year-cycle, people's age, or historians' critiques. 秋後扇 (*qiu hou shan* = autumn~after~fan) describes something/someone exploited then abandoned. Debtors/offenders fear creditors' enemies' 秋後算帳 (*qiu hou shuan zhang* = autumn~after~calculate/ settle~accounts = launching reckoning/revenge later).

by Diana Yue