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 the beaches

沙 = sand: 沙子 (sha zi = sand-diminutive = grain of sand), 沙洲 (sha zhou = sand-continent = shoal/sandbank), 沙漠 (sha mo = sandy-desert), 沙丘 (sha qiu = sand-dune). 沙細水滑 (sha xi shui hua = sands-fine-water-smooth) describes nice beaches. 沙灘排球 (sha tan pai qiu = sandy-beach-row-ball) = beach volleyball.

泥沙 (ni sha = soil-sand) = mixture of soil/mud and sand. 沙啞 (sha ya = sand/grain-mute) describes hoarse voices. 沙糖 (sha tang = sand-sugar) is red granulated sugar. 紅豆沙 (hong dou sha = red-bean-sand/grain) is meshed red beans sweet soup.


by Diana Yue