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 MTR


擠 = 擠迫 (ji po = squeeze-press) = crowded. During 上班下班 (shang ban xia ban = up-shift-down-shift = heading for work and getting off work) road traffic is 擠塞 (ji se = crowded/busy-blocked).

To avoid 塞車 (se che = block-car = traffic jam) and 遲到 (chi dao = late-arrive = being late), people 擠進 (ji jin = cram-into) the MTR, 擠滿 (ji man = crowd-fill = packing) the compartments like 沙丁魚 (sha ding yu = “sardine”-transliterated-fish = sardines).

by Diana Yue