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 hiking

步 = step: 步履 (bu lu = step-shoe = walking gait), 步伐 (bu fa = step-march = marching style), 舞步 (wu bu = dance-steps), 步驟 (bu zhou = steps-order = step/stage/procedure). When sprinters 起步 (qi bu = begin-step = start), some 偷步 (tou bu = steal-step = jump the gun).

歩行 (bu xing = step-walk) = walking. 漫歩 (man bu = aimless-walk) = strolling. Rifles are 步槍 (bu qiang = walk-gun = foot-soldier’s gun). Large-scale conferences arrange 同步進行 (tong bu jin xing = same-step-advance-move = parallel) sessions.

Doctors/nurses treating virus-patients 步步為營 (bu bu wei ying = step-step-is-camp = proceed very carefully). Toast to newly-promoted: “步步高升!” (bu bu gao sheng = “step-step-high-rise!”)

by Diana Yue