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 travelling

飛 (fei) = fly

Pronunciation: fei (Putonghua, 4th tone), fei (Cantonese 1st tone)
Basic meaning: fly

飛機 (fei ji = fly-machine) = airplanes. 客機 (ke ji = guests-plane = passenger-plane), 貨機 (huo ji = cargo-plane), 戰機 (zhan ji = war-plane = fighter). 機師 (ji shi = plane-master) = pilot. 機場 (ji chang = plane-field) = airfield/airport. 坐機 (zuo ji = sit-plane = travelling by plane) requires 機票 (ji piao = plane-tickets).

航天工業 (hang tian gong ye = sail-sky-engineering-business) = airplane industry. Boeing is 波音 (transliteration “bo yin”), Airbus is 空中巴士 (kong zhong transliteration “ba shi” = air-middle-bus).

Flight departure is 起飛 (qi fei = begin-fly). Hard landing is 硬著陸 (ying zhao lu = hard-touch-ground). Soft landing is 軟著陸 (ran zhao lu = soft-touch-ground).