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 soccer

足 is radical in 踢 (ti = kick), 踏 (ta = stamp), 跑 (pao = run), 跳 (tiao = jump.

足球 (zu qiu = foot-ball) is 體育運動 (ti yu yun dong = body-education-circulate-move = physical sport). Soccer (English football) is 英式足球 (ying shi zu qiu = “Eng”-transliterated-style-foot-ball). American football is 美式足球 (mei shi zu qiu = “Mer”-transliterated-style-foot-ball).

足球員 (zu qiu yuan = foot-ball-members = soccer players) use their 足 (= 腳 jiao = foot), 腿 (tui = leg) to 控球 (kong qiu = control-ball), 盤球 (pan qiu = swirl-ball = dribble), 傳球 (chuan qiu = pass-ball), 射球 (she qiu = shoot-ball), hoping to 入球 (ru qiu = enter-ball = score goal).

by Diana Yue