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 summer

泳
Pronunciation: you (Putonghua, 3rd tone), wing (Cantonese 6th tone)
Basic meaning: swim

People 游泳 (you yong = swim) in 泳衣 (yong yi = swim-clothes = swimsuit), 泳裤 (yong ku = swimming-trunks), 比基尼 (bi ji ni = "bikini" transliterated) and take 日光浴 (ri guang yu = sun-light-bath = sun-baths) at 海滩 (hai tan = sea-beaches) and 泳池 (yong chi = swimming-pools). Kids 玩水 (huan shui = play-(with)-water), watched by 拯溺員 (zheng ni yuan = rescue-drown-members = lifeguards).

泳手 (yong shou = swim-hands = swimming athletes) compete in 背泳 (bei yong = back-swim = back-strokes) and other 泳式 (yong shi = swimming-styles).

Swimmers 水肺潜水 (shui fei qian shui = water-lungs-dive-water = SCUBA dive) to see 珊瑚礁 (shan hu jiao = coral reefs).

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