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**

**假**

Pronunciation: jia (Putonghua, 4th tone), ga (Cantonese 3rd tone)
Basic meaning: vacation, leave

Summer holidays are 暑假 (shu jia = heat-leave).
When schools 放暑假 (fang shu jia = release-heat-leave = are on summer vacation), teachers can 請假 (qing jia = invite-leave) = 告假 (gao jia = report-leave) = take vacation/leave.

Employees have 有薪假期 (you xin jia qi = have-salary-leave-period = paid leave): 病假 (bing jia = sick-leave), 年假 (nian jia = year-leave = annual leave), 產假 (chan jia = produce-leave = maternity leave). 銷假 (xiao jia = end-leave) means reporting duty after leave.

Public holidays are 公眾假期 (gong zong jia qi = public-masses-leave-period). Bank holidays are 銀行假期 (yin hang jia qi = silver/money-institution-leave-period), Golden Week is 黃金週 (huang jin zhou = yellow-gold-week).

by Diana Yue