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

扇 = fan. The verb 擀 (shan) = 搖扇 (yao shan) = wave fan. 擀涼 (shan liang = fan-cool) means waving fan to cool oneself. 擀動 (shan dong = fan-move) means inciting listeners with words. 扇 also means thin movable rectangle: a door = 一扇門 (yi shan men = one-fan-door).

Hand-held fans include 摺扇 (jie shan = folded-fans), 團扇 (tuan shan = round-fans), 葵扇 (kui shan = palm-leaf-fans), 羽扇 (yu shan = feather-fans). 電風 扇 (dian feng shan = electric-wind-fans) means electric fan, with 扇葉 (shan ye = fan-leaves = fan blades).

秋後扇 (qiu hou shan = autumn-afterwards-fan = fan after autumn) is the sad fate of those dumped after their period of usefulness is over.

Pronunciation: shan (Putonghua, 4th tone), sin (Cantonese 3rd tone)
Basic meaning: fan

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