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 computers

郵

Pronunciation: you (Putonghua, 2\textsuperscript{nd} tone), yau (Cantonese 4\textsuperscript{th} tone)
Basic meaning: post, mail

郵政 (you zheng = post-administration) means postal service: 郵局 (you ju = post-office), 郵件 (you jian = post/mail-piece = mail).

People working from home-offices use 電子郵件 (dian zi you jian = electronic-mail, shortened to 電郵 dian you = e-mail), 固網電話 (gu wang dian hua = fixed-net/line-telephones), 手電 (shou dian = hand-telephones = cell-phones), 電話會議 (dian hua hui yi = telephone-meet-discuss = telephone conferencing), 視象會議 (shi xiang hui yi = sight-image-meet-discuss = video conferencing).

Chinese people write e-mails by using 中文輸入法 (zhong wen shu ru fa = Chinese-language-transfer-enter-method = Chinese input softwares). In Taiwan, e-mails are facetiously called 伊妹兒 (yi mei er = she-sister-diminutive = e-mail-transliterated).

by Diana Yue