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 outer space

航 (radical 舟 zhou = boat) = 航行 (hang xing = sail-move) = boat/plane's voyage. 航線 (hang xian = sail/fly-line) = plane’s flight route, 航班 (hang ban = fly-round) = scheduled flight.

航空公司 (hang kong gong si = fly-sky-public-bureau) = airline companies: 星航 (xing hang = “Sing”-transliterated-fly) = Singapore Airlines.

China’s National Space Administration (國家航天局 guo jia hang tian ju = state-home-fly-sky-bureau) develops 航天工業 (hang tian gong ye = fly-sky-engineering-specialism = aerospace industries), builds and launches 火箭 (huo zhan = fire-arrows = rockets), 衛星 (wei xing = guard-stars = satellites), 太空船 (tai kong chuan = ultimate-sky-ship = space-ships), trains 太空人 (tai kong ren = ultimate-sky-person = astronauts/taikonauts).

Pronunciation: hang (Putonghua, 2nd tone), hong (Cantonese 4th tone)
Basic meaning: sail, voyage

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