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

夜 (ye jian = night-time) includes 半夜 (ban ye = half-night = midnight), 深夜 (shen ye = deep/late-night).

Nurses 值夜 (zhi ye = watch-night = do night shifts). Winters are 夜長日短 (ye chang ri duan = nights/long/days/short). 白夜 (bai ye = white-nights) occur in the Arctic. 夜生活 (ye sheng huo = night-life) means night-time entertainment/fun activities. 夜貓子 (ye mao zi = night-cat-diminutive) means owls or people who stay up late.

黑夜 (hei ye = black/dark-night) is good for star-watching. 爆炸 (bao zha = burst-explode = explosion) of 超新星 (chao xin xing = super-new-stars = supernovas) created 黑洞 (hei dong = black-holes). 永夜 (yong ye = eternal/endless-night) reigns in cosmic space.

Pronunciation: ye (Putonghua, 4th tone), ye (Cantonese 6th tone)
Basic meaning: night

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