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 zì together to form terms, phrases and sentences.

This week: Words about the crime

搶 (radical 手 = hand shou = hand) means snatch/loot. 搶走 (qiang zou = snatch-run) means snatch away. Thieves 搶錢 (qiang qian = snatch-money), 搶手袋 (qiang shou dai = snatch-hand-bag).


搶先 (qiang xian = snatch-before) = rush ahead to overtake. Shoppers 搶購 (qiang gou = snatch-buy = snap up) discount items. Doctors 搶救 (qiang jiu = rush-save = give emergency treatment to) accident victims.

by Diana Yue