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 supermarkets

折 (radical 扁 = 手 shou = hand) means bend/break. Roads have 弯折 (wan zhe = curves-bends). Winding paths/tales are 曲折 (qu zhe = twisted-bended).


折扣 (zhe kou = break/cut-rebate) means reduction/discount. 七五折 (qi wu zhe = 7.5-tenths~ discount) = reduced to 75% of marked price. When shops 大出血 (da chu xue = big-out-blood = big sale), goods can be 三折 (san zhe = 3-tenths~ discount = only 30% of marked price = 70% off).

by Diana Yue