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 zoos

**Pronunciation:** shou (Putonghua, 4th tone), sau (Cantonese, 3rd tone)  
Basic meaning: wild animal, beast

獸 = 野獸 (ye shou = wild-animal). 獅 (shi, lions), 虎 (hu, tigers), 豹 (bao, leopards), 熊 (xiong, bears) are 猛獸 (meng shou = fierce beasts). Kids believe 象 (xiang, elephants) fear 鼠 (shu, mice). 熊貓 (xiong mao = bear-cat = panda) devolved from 食肉獸 (shi rou shou = eat-flesh-animal = carnivore) to 食草獸 (shi cao shou = eat-grass-animal = herbivore).

馬戲班 (ma xi ban = horse-show-troupe = circuses) hire 馴獸師 (shun shou shi = tame-animals-master = animal-tamers).