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 sleep

(shape resembles square field)

Pronunciation: \textit{tian} (Putonghua, 2	extsuperscript{nd} tone), \textit{tin} (Cantonese, 4	extsuperscript{th} tone)
Basic meaning: farmland, field for growing crops

Farmers 种田 (zhong tian = sow-fields), 耕田 (geng tian = plough-fields): 稻田 (dao tian = rice/padi-fields), 麦田 (mai tian = wheat-fields), 良田 (liang tian = good-fields), 瘦田 (shou tian = lean-fields), 梯田 (ti tian = ladder-field = terraced fields).

田地 (tian di = fields-land) = cultivated land. 田野 (tian ye = field-wild) = mix of farmland/wilderness. 田径赛 (tian jing sai = field-path-competition) = tracks race. “農家樂” (nong jia le = farm-family-enjoyment) are eateries in 田园 (tian yuan = farmlands-groves/gardens = pastoral) settings.

肥田料 (fei tian liao = fat/nourish-field-material) = fertilizers. Kids say 米田共 (mi tian gong = rice-field-together) for 禽 (fen = faeces), splitting 禽 into three words.

by Diana Yue