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 autumn

秋 = 秋天 (qiu tian = autumn-sky) = 秋季 (qiu ji = autumn-season). On 秋日 (qiu ri = autumn days) women wear 秋装 (qiu zhuang = autumn-wear/fashion). 中秋節 (zhong qiu jie = Mid-Autumn-Festival) celebrates the full moon and family reunion.

In 金秋 (jin qiu = gold-autumn = golden-harvest season), farmers 收割 (shou ge = collect-cut = harvest crops with sickles). 秋收起義 (qiu shou qi yi = autumn-harvest-rise-righteous) = the 1927 Chinese peasants' Autumn Harvest Uprising.

春秋 (chun qiu = spring-autumn) means year-cycle, people's age, or historians' critiques. 秋後扇 (qiu hou shan = autumn-after-fan) describes something/someone exploited then abandoned. Debtors/offenders fear creditors' enemies’ 秋後算帳 (qiu hou shuan zhang = autumn-after-calculate/settle-accounts = launching reckoning/revenge later).

Pronunciation: qiu (Putonghua, 1st tone), chau (Cantonese, 1st tone)
Basic meaning: autumn