

Character Builder 您好嗎？

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 money

錢

(radical 金 *jin* = gold)
Pronunciation: *qian* (Putonghua, 2nd tone), *chin* (Cantonese, 4th tone)
Basic meaning: coin, money, cash

錢 = 錢財 (*qian cai* = money~wealth). 有錢人 (*you qian ren* = has~money~person) = wealthy people. Mints 鑄錢 (*zhu qian* = mint/manufacture~coins): 銅錢 (*tong qian* = copper~coins), 金幣 (*jin bi* = gold~coins). Businesses 賺錢 (*zhuan qian* = earn/gain~money/profit), 蝕錢 (*shi qian* = wane/lose~money). Shoppers 花錢 (*hua qian* = spend~money).

Laborers/prostitutes earn 血汗錢 (*xue han qian* = blood~sweat~money). Movie-makers treat stars as 搖錢樹 (*yao qian shu* = shake~money~tree = money-generating instruments).

Drug-dealers 洗錢 (*xi qian* = wash~money = launder money). Corrupt officials conduct 錢權交易 (*qian quan jiao yi* = money~power~exchange = trading advantages/positions for money). Cantonese expression “發錢寒!” (*fa qian han* = develop~money~cold-fever) describes money-hungry people or money-driven actions.