

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 supermarkets

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Pronunciation: *lei* (Putonghua, 1st tone), *lui* (Cantonese, 6th tone)
Basic meaning: kind, type, species

人類 (*ren lei* = person/man-kind = mankind), 種類 (*zhong lei* = seed-type = species), 鳥類 (*niao lei* = bird-species = birds), 同類 (*tong lei* = same-kind/species = similar/same type).

Foods in supermarkets 分門別類 (*fen men bie lei* = divide-doors-distinguish-kinds = are categorized): 蔬菜 (*shu cai* = vegetables), 肉類 (*rou lei* = meat-kinds = meat), 奶類食品 (*nai lei shi pin* = milk-kind-eat-things = dairy foods), 罐頭 (*guan tou* = can-head = canned foods), 糕餅 (*gao bing* = pudding-cake = bakery).

Librarians use 分類法 (*fen lei fa* = divide-kind-method = classification systems). Intelligent learners can 觸類旁通 (*chu lei pang tong* = touch/feel-kind-sideways-through = know something and deduce related things).

by Diana Yue