

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.

In Putonghua (the spoken form of Modern Standard Chinese) each *zi* is pronounced in one of four tones:

1st tone: 1 = diacritical mark — pitch: 5 to 5, highest prolonged

2nd tone: 2 = diacritical mark / pitch: 3 to 5, middle to high

3rd tone: 3 = diacritical mark U pitch: 2 to 1 to 4, low to lowest to high

4th tone: 4 = diacritical mark \ pitch: 5 to 1, highest to lowest)

To pronounce each *zi* below, follow its pinyin and the given tone number. Light-sound words, which have no definite pitch, carry no diacritical mark and are marked by 0.

This week: Words about new People's Congress

退

Putonghua pronunciation: *tui4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *tui3*

Meanings: retreat, withdraw, retire, give back

退 (radical 辵 = 走 *zou3*, run/leave) = 後退 (*hou4 tui4* = backward~retreat) is opposite of 前進 (*qian2 jin4* = forward~advance): 退步 (*tui4 bu4* = retreat~step = worsen), 退兵 (*tui4 bing1* = withdraw~army).

退 = abandon/return: 退票 (*tui4 piao4* = give-back-ticket for money), 退稅 (*tui4 shui4* = return~tax = tax rebate), 退黨 (*tui4 dang3* = withdraw-from~party = surrender party membership). Activists 退出 (*tui4 chu1* = withdraw-leave/quit) when radical movement 退潮 (*tui4 chao2* = retreat/ebb-tide = recedes/slow down).

Instead of 退居幕後 (*tui4 ju1 mo4 hou4* = retreat-stay~curtain-behind = leaving front-line to direct things behind the scene), outgoing president 裸退 (*luo3 tui4* = naked~withdraw = drops all posts), enjoys 退休 (*tui4 xiu1* = withdraw~rest/end = retirement).

by Diana Yue