

Character Builder 您好學? 呀

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 senile dementia

褪

Putonghua pronunciation: *tui4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *tui1*

Meaning: take off, put inside, strip, shed, remove, discard, cast off, molt, fade

褪 (radical 衤 = 衣 *yi1*, clothes) means 褪去 (*tui4 qü4* = shed/fade-away). Rabbits 褪毛 (*tui4 mao2* = shed-hair). Snakes 褪皮 (*tui4 pi2* = shed-skin = molt). Crabs 褪殼 (*tui4 ke2* = shed-shell = molt). 蟬褪 (*chan2 tui4* = cicada-molt) means cicada-pupa shedding skin and becoming adult insect, or the skin thus shed, an ingredient in Chinese medicine.

Model demonstrates trendy top-coat: 褪下 (*tui4 xia4* = takes-off) sleeves, makes hands 褪進 (*tui4 jin4* = pull-back-into) sleeves. User of skin-whitening cream wants to 褪黑斑 (*tui4 hei1 ban1* = remove-dark-spots).

Time/washing makes prints/fabrics 褪色 (*tui4 se1* = lose-color), wallpaper 褪落 (*tui4 luo4* = shed-off = peel). Dementia patient fears memories would 褪色 (*tui4 se1* = fade-color = fade).

by Diana Yue