

Character Builder 您好學？

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 vacation and retirement

退

Putonghua pronunciation: *tui4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *tui3*

Meaning: retreat, return, ebb, recede, withdraw, retire, backward

退 (radical 辵 = 走 *zou3*, run/leave) = 後退 (*hou4 tui4* = backward-retreat): 退步 (*tui4 bu4* = retreat-step = deteriorate), 退燒 (*tui4 shao1* = recede-burn = receding-temperature/fever), 退稅 (*tui4 shui4* = return-tax = tax rebate), 退兵 (*tui4 bing1* = withdraw-army). 進退兩難 (*jin4 tui4 liang3 nan2* = advance-retreat-both-difficult) = in a dilemma.

Career 不進反退 (*bu4 jin4 fan3 tui4* = no-advance-opposite-recede = instead of improving, worsens), star contemplates 退路 (*tui4 lu4* = retreat-road = exit plan), 退出 (*tui4 chu1* = retreat-out = leaves/quits) movie-world.

Ruler 退位讓賢 (*tui4 wei4 rang4 xian2* = return-post-yield-to-wise/virtuous = lets eligible successor takeover), 退休 (*tui4 xiu1* = retreat-rest = retires), 裸退 (*luo3 tui4* = naked-withdraw = drops all posts/titles).