

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 guerrilla warfare

退

Pronunciation: *tui* (Putonghua, 4th tone), *tui* (Cantonese, 3rd tone)

Basic meaning: retract, retreat, return, defeat, step down

後退 (*hou tui* = backward~retreat/retract) is opposite of 前進 (*qian jin* = forward~advance/proceed). 退潮 (*tui chao* = retreat~tide) = ebb-tide. 退燒 (*tui shao* = retreat~burn/heat) = fever/temperature subsides.

退稅 (*tui shui* = return~tax) = tax rebate. 退休 (*tui xiu* = retreat~rest = retirement from work). 退伍 (*tui wu* = withdraw~march/ranks) = military retirement. 退出 (*tui chu* = retreat~out) = withdraw from group/activity. 勸退 (*quan tui* = persuade/advise~withdraw) means politely telling someone to step down.

Defeated invaders find 退路 (*tui lu* = retreat~road = way out), 退兵 (*tui bing* = withdraw~troops). Dilemmas make us 進退兩難 (*jin tui liang nan* = proceed~back-out-both~difficult). Backing out safely unsoiled/unweakened is 全身而退 (*quan shen er tui* = keep-intact~body~and~withdraw).

by Diana Yue