

Character Builder 您好學嗎？

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 Alzheimer's disease

退

Putonghua pronunciation: *tui4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *tui3*

Meaning: retreat, withdraw, return

退 (radical 辶 *chuo4*, run) = 後退 (*hou4 tui4* = backward-retreat/move). Defeated country 退兵 (*tui4 bing1* = withdraws-troops), 退還 (*tui4 huan2* = returns/gives-back) occupied territory, 退出 (*tui4 chu1* = withdraws from) offensive alliance. Veterans 退伍 (*tui4 wu3* = withdraw-army = quit/retire from army).

Defeated politician 退回 (*tui4 hui2* = returns-back = gives back) campaign donations, seeks 退路 (*tui4 lu4* = retreat/escape-path = way out), plans 退休 (*tui4 xiu1* = retreat-rest = retirement).

阿茲海默氏病 (*a4 zi1 hai3 mo4 shi4 bing4* = "Alzheimer"'s-transliterated-disease = Alzheimer's disease) is old people's 失智症 (*shi1 zhi4 zheng4* = lose-intelligence-illness = dementia). Patient's brain 退化 (*tui4 hua4* = retreat-transform = deteriorates), abilities 退步 (*tui4 bu4* = retreat-step = decline).

by Diana Yue