

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 fever

退

Putonghua pronunciation: *tui4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *tui3*

Meaning: retreat, recede, ebb, back down

退 (radical 辶 *chuo4*, walk) = 退後 (*tui4 hou4* = retreat/recede-back-step). 退路 (*tui4 lu4* = retreat-road) = way out. 退讓 (*tui4 rang4* = retreat-defer) = act modestly/deferentially. Partner 退出 (*tui4 chu1* = retreat-out = leaves) company, 退休 (*tui4 xiu1* = retreat-rest = retires). 退潮 (*tui4 chao2* = recede-tide) describes tide/trend ebbing/going away.

Enemy 退兵 (*tui4 bing1* = withdraws-army). We 敵退我進 (*di2 jin4 wo3 tui4* = enemy-retreats-/we-advance = pursue them). They 進退失據 (*jin4 tui4 shi1 ju4* = advance-or-retreat-lose-reason = don't know whether to advance or retreat). Veteran 退伍 (*tui4 wu3* = retires-from-army).

Patient 退燒 (*tui4 shao1* = retreat-burn = temperature drops to normal), 退回 (*tui4 hui2* = retreat-return = sends back) remaining medicine.

by Diana Yue