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 hunting

Putonghua pronunciation: you4
Cantonese pronunciation: yau5
Meanings: lead, guide, attract, tempt, lure, entice, seduce


誘人 (you4 ren2 = lure-people) means attractive. Grifters plant 餌 (er3 = bait), 引誘 (yin3 you4 = lead-lure = lures) target. 色誘 (se1 you4 = color/beauty-lure) = seduction by women/boys. Footballer accepts club’s 利誘 (li4 you4 = gain-lure = big money offer). Jesus rejected the Devil's 誘惑 (you4 huo4 = lure-delusion = temptation).

Guerrillas 誘敵深入 (you4 di2 shen1 ru4 = lure-enemies-to-deeply-penetrate their territory/trap). Hunter 誘捕 (you4 bu3 = lure-catch/arrest = uses bait to lure and catch) prey.

by Diana Yue