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

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.

退税 (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).

Pronunciation: tui (Putonghua, 4th tone), tui (Cantonese, 3rd tone)
Basic meaning: retract, retreat, return, defeat, step down

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