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.

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 \ chuo4, run) = 後退 (hou4 tui4 = backward-retreat/move). Defeated country 退兵 (tui4 bing1 = withdraws-troops), 退还 (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 zil 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