mán tiān guò hǎi

瞒天过海

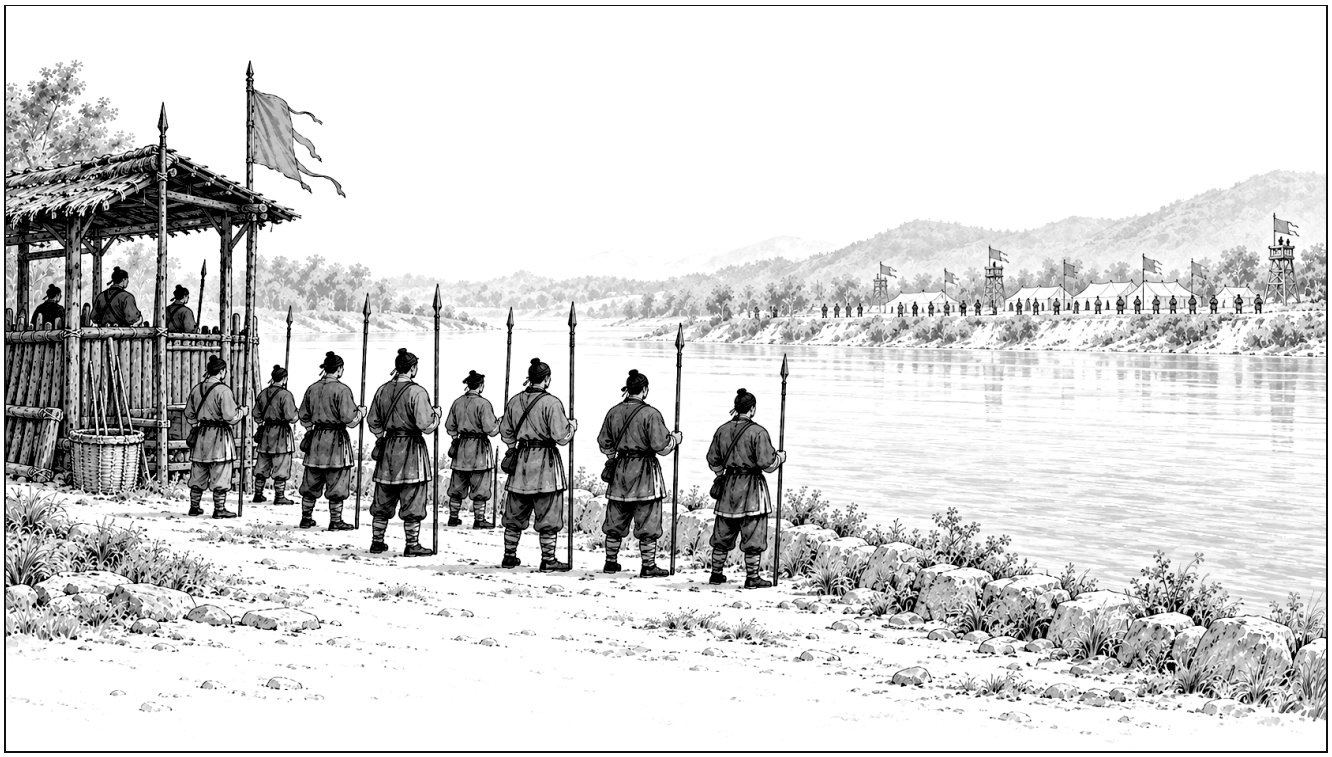
Hide it from heaven, cross the sea.

Hide your real move inside something people see every day. This week you'll learn to write four characters: 瞒, 天, 过, 海.

Stratagem No. 1 of 36 · one story, one lesson, four characters.

本周学：瞒天过海 · 练字：瞒、天、过、海

THE SAME DRILL, EVERY FEW WEEKS



Two states, one river. Soldiers on both banks.

In 589, China had two states left: the Sui in the north and the Chen in the south.

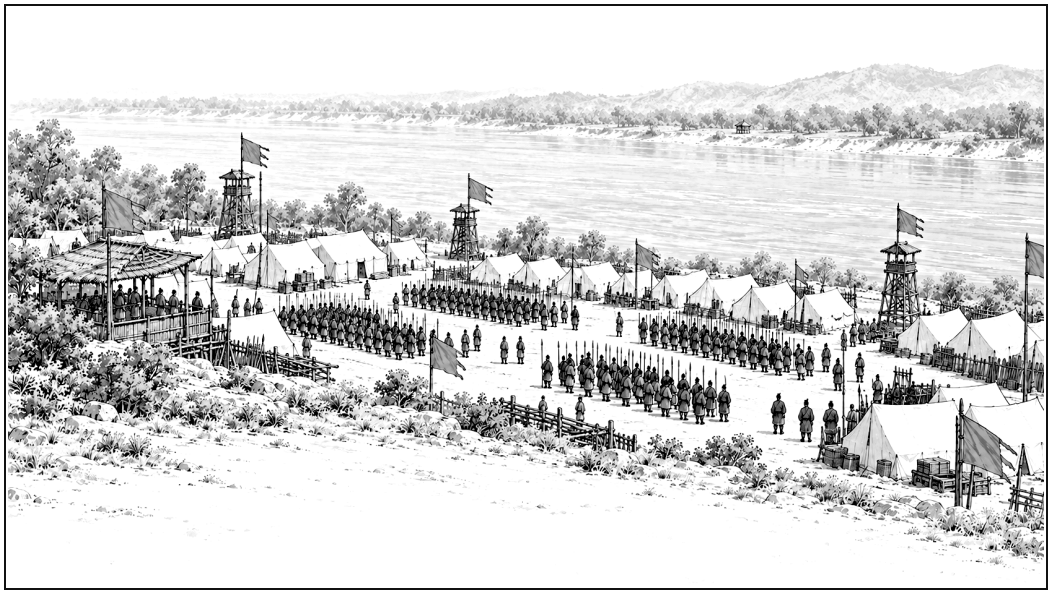
The two states watched each other across the river. Both had soldiers on the banks.

The Sui emperor wanted the south, and asked who could take it. One name came back: He Ruobi.

He handed the emperor ten plans. The emperor handed him the army.

《隋书》卷五十二《贺若弼传》

THE SAME DRILL, EVERY FEW WEEKS (2)



The south stops coming out. The north gathers again.

His first move was not an attack. Every few weeks, the soldiers on the north bank changed shifts. He had them gather at Liyang in full view: flags up, tents across the fields.

The south came out to defend. Then it turned out to be only a shift change. They went back. It happened again. And again. And again.

After a while, the south stopped coming out. The history books say they took it as normal, and stopped preparing.

Then the whole Sui army crossed the river. Nobody on the other side noticed. They took the north of Chen first, and finally the capital. The last Chen emperor, Chen Shubao, was found hiding. He was sweating, and his legs shook. The south had seen it so many times, they stopped looking.

《隋书》卷五十二《贺若弼传》

WHY IT WORKED

Step	Move	中文 · pinyin	Result
What they saw	The same drill, again and again	换防 huàn fáng	It looked routine
What they did	They stopped coming out	习惯了 xí guàn le	No one was watching
What was real	The whole army crossed	渡江 dù jiāng	Nobody noticed

The real crossing hid inside the drills. 阴在阳之内 yīn zài yáng zhī nèi

THE ORIGINAL LINES

《三十六计·第一计 瞒天过海》

The Thirty-Six Stratagems, No. 1 — "Hide it from heaven, cross the sea"

1

bèi zhōu zé yì dài

备周则意怠，

Guard long enough, and you relax.

2

cháng jiàn zé bù yí

常见则不疑。

See it every day, and you stop asking.

3

yīn zài yáng zhī nèi　bú zài yáng zhī duì　tài yáng　tài yīn

阴在阳之内，不在阳之对。太阳，太阴

。

The most open place hides the deepest secret.

A common reading of 太阳，太阴: the most open place is where the deepest secret hides. It is an interpretation, not the book's own explanation.

「太阳，太阴」的通行解读：最公开的地方，往往藏着最机密的东西。这是通行解读，不是定论。

PRACTICE · 瞒 MÁN · 天 TIĀN

Follow the numbers. Write each stroke in order.

先描一遍分解格，再在田字格里写 5 遍。

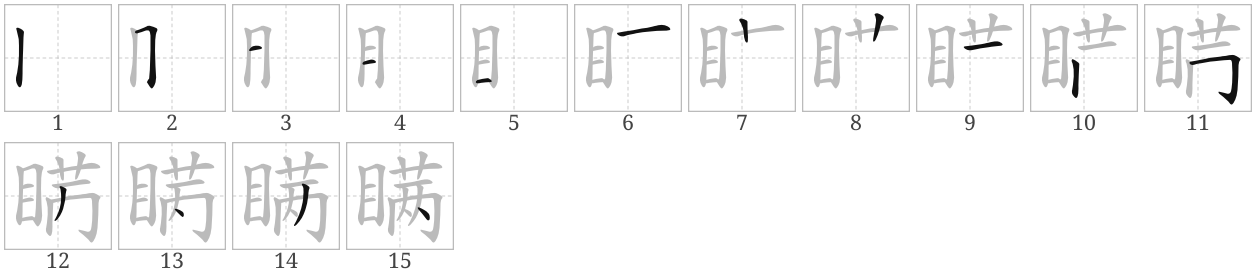
瞒

mán

to hide the truth from

15 strokes

STROKE ORDER



YOUR TURN

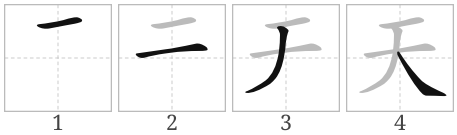
天

tiān

sky; heaven; day

4 strokes

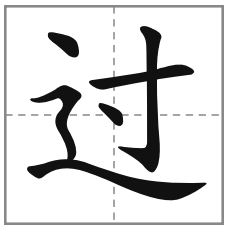
STROKE ORDER



YOUR TURN

PRACTICE · 过 GUÒ · 海 HǍI

Same order again. Write slowly, and say the sound out loud.

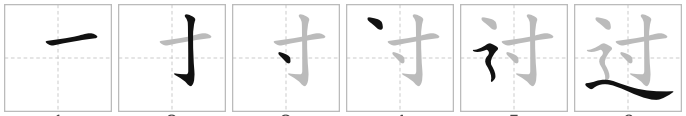


guò

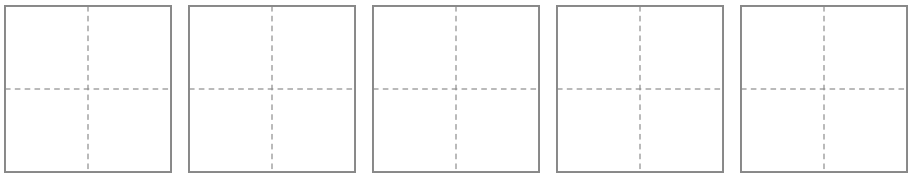
to cross; to pass

6 strokes

STROKE ORDER



YOUR TURN



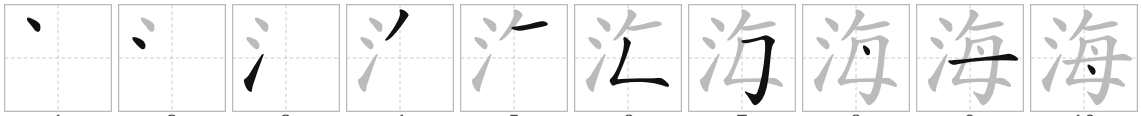


hǎi

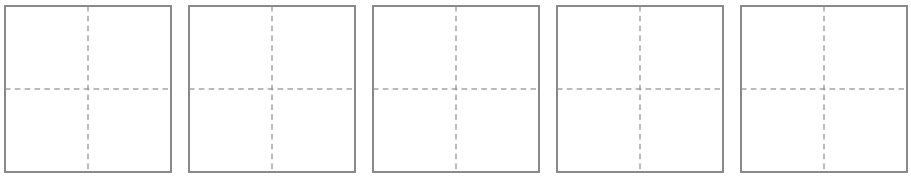
sea

10 strokes

STROKE ORDER



YOUR TURN



PRACTICE · 瞒天过海 MÁN TIĀN GUÒ HǍI

Trace the first row, then write the whole phrase four times. Say it out loud each time.

mán	tiān	guò	hǎi
瞒	天	过	海

瞒天过海 · Hide it from heaven, cross the sea.

THREE MORE WORDS

tiān tiān

1 天天

every day.

wǒ tiān tiān kàn zhè xiē yóu jiàn

我 天 天 看 这 些 邮 件 。

I read these emails every day.

What you see 天天, you stop checking. That's the trap.

---

guò qù

2 过去

the past; before.

guò qù tā cóng lái méi piàn guo wǒ

过 去 他 从 来 没 骗 过 我 。

He never lied to me before.

"He never did it before" is exactly when you should look again.

---

yǐn mán

3 隐瞒

to hide (the truth); to keep something back.

tā yǐn mán le yí jiàn shì

他 隐 瞒 了 一 件 事 。

He kept one thing hidden.

This is the 瞒 in 瞒天过海.

SPOT IT · STOP IT 识破 · 防住

Every month, the same invoice lands in your inbox: same amount, same logo, same sender. You stopped reading them a year ago. So did everyone else in the office. Then one month, the bank details change.

虚 · xū	**实 · shí**
The appearance	*The reality*
měi yuè yí yàng de zhàng dān 每 月 一 样 的 账 单 *The same invoice, every month*	zhàng hào bèi huàn 账 号 被 换 *Someone swapped the account*

This week, pick one routine (an email, a bill, a meeting) and look at it as if for the first time.

这周挑一件天天做的事，像第一次那样重新看一遍。 Zhè zhōu tiāo yí jiàn tiān tiān zuò de shì, xiàng dì yī cì nàyàng chóng xīn kàn yí biàn.

SEVEN DAYS, SEVEN QUESTIONS

Day 1 List three things you see or do every day without thinking. 天天 tiān tiān

Day 2 Pick one of them. When did you last really look at it? 检查 jiǎn chá

Day 3 Has anyone ever surprised you by changing something small in a routine? 变化 biàn huà

Day 4 What would someone need to make you "used to" before tricking you? 习惯 xí guàn

Day 5 Check one bill, email, or account you trust. Anything new? 确认 què rèn

Day 6 Is something hiding inside your own routine? Is it good or bad? 隐瞒 yǐn mán

Day 7 Where could you put your cards on the table instead of playing mind games? 光明正大 guāng míng zhèng dà

WEEK 1 REVIEW



The one-page summary of this week. 本周一图总结。

1. In one sentence: how did He Ruobi get his army across the river?

2. What does 瞒天过海 mean, in your own words?

3. Which of this week's four characters can you write now without looking: 瞒, 天, 过, or 海?

4. Where in your life could "being used to it" be dangerous?

Did anyone use a trick on you this week, and did you see it?
这周有没有人对你用了计？你看出来了吗?
Zhè zhōu yǒu méiyǒu rén duì nǐ yòng le jì? Nǐ kàn chūlái le ma?

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