

BÓYÌ 博弈 · WEEK 12

shùn shǒu qiān yáng

顺手牵羊

Take the sheep in passing.

More than 2,600 years ago, an army marched east to take a faraway state, and a merchant on the road stopped it with twelve oxen. The army went home — and on the way home it destroyed one small town, because the town was on its road. This week you'll learn to write four characters: 顺, 手, 牵, 羊.

Stratagem No. 12 of 36 · one story, one lesson, four characters.

本周学：顺手牵羊 · 练字：顺、手、牵、羊

THE ROAD EAST



The men took off their helmets, climbed down, and jumped back into the carts.

According to an ancient chronicle, this happened over two thousand six hundred years ago. It was winter. The ruler of Qin, Duke Mu, wanted the state of Zheng, far to the east. Someone inside Zheng sent word: we hold one gate. Come quietly. His old minister said no: an army this far, in secret, never wins.

What do you know? The trees on your grave will be thick as your arms. At the gate the old man cried: I will see it leave, not return.

In spring they marched east. Three hundred chariots passed the old city. The men took off their helmets, climbed down, and jumped back into the carts. A young man on the wall said: that army is rude. It will lose.

Then they came to Hua, a small state on their road. A merchant was coming the other way. His name was Xian Gao. Twelve oxen and some rolls of tanned hide, going to market. He walked up to the army and gave it everything.

《左传》僖公三十二～三十三年

ON THE WAY HOME



At his own gate, the Duke of Qin wept.

He said: my ruler heard you were passing. Stay, we feed you. Go, we guard you. He spoke as if he had been sent. He had not. Behind his back, a rider was already going home to Zheng.

In Zheng the ruler looked at the Qin officers' house. Before dawn, empty. The Qin general looked at the road and did the numbers. Attack: they are ready. Surround: we cannot. He said: home.

And on the way home, they came to Hua again. Hua was never the target. Hua was the road. They destroyed it on the way out. It cost them nothing.

But Hua was of Jin's clan. Qin broke it during Jin's mourning. Jin's army waited at a pass. The Qin broke. Three generals taken.

At his own gate the Duke of Qin wept: I did not listen to the old man. Twelve oxen. One small town. One war nobody planned.

《左传》僖公三十二～三十三年

WHY IT WORKED

Step	Who vs who	中文 · pinyin	Result
First	the gap is small	顺 shùn	Take it anyway
Second	the profit is small	手 shǒu	Small money is still money
Third	it has to be on your way	牵羊 qiān yáng	Turn around: not this stratagem

看准微隙、微利，而且要在自己的路上。顺手牵羊 shùn shǒu qiān yáng

THE ORIGINAL LINES

《三十六计·第十二计 顺手牵羊》

The Thirty-Six Stratagems, No. 12 — "Take the sheep in passing"

1 wēi xì zài suǒ bì chéng
微隙在所必乘，
The gap is small. Take it anyway.

2 wēi lì zài suǒ bì dé
微利在所必得。
The profit is small. Take that too.

3 shào yīn shào yáng
少陰，少陽。
The last four are about timing.

Sixteen characters, three lines, nothing more. The long commentary that follows in old editions is not part of this text.

原文只有这十六个字。后面那段按语是老版本的注释，不进原文框。

PRACTICE · 顺 SHÙN · 手 SHǒu

Follow the numbers. Write each stroke in order.

先描一遍分解格，再在田字格里写 5 遍。

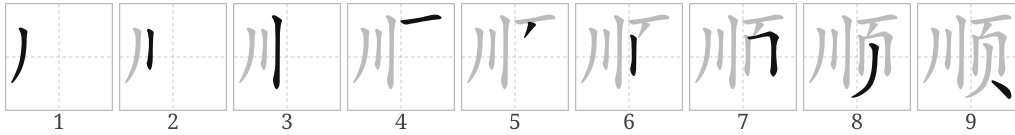


shùn

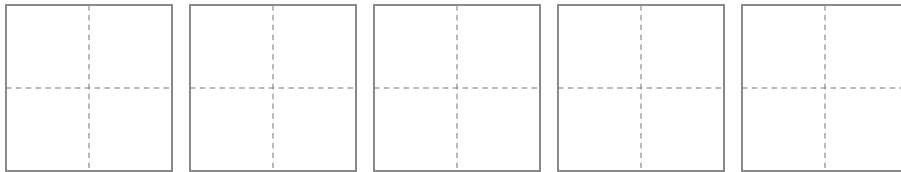
in order; smooth

9 strokes

STROKE ORDER



YOUR TURN

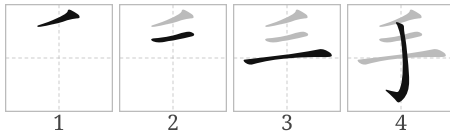


shǒu

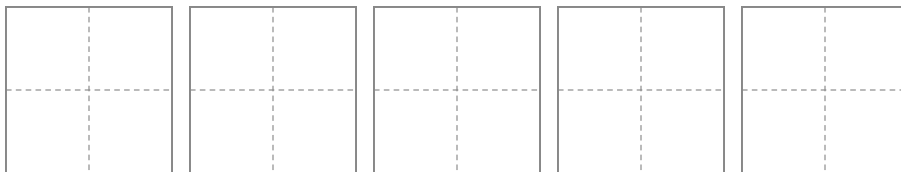
hand

4 strokes

STROKE ORDER



YOUR TURN



PRACTICE · 牵 QIĀN · 羊 YÁNG

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

写完 4 个字，再回到第 7 页连写整句。

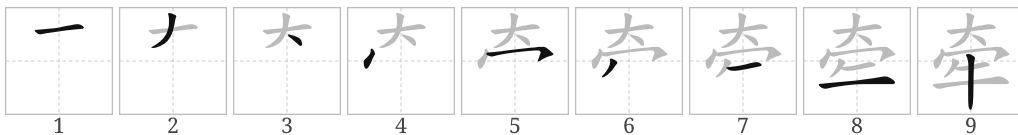


qiān

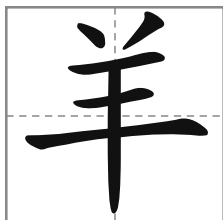
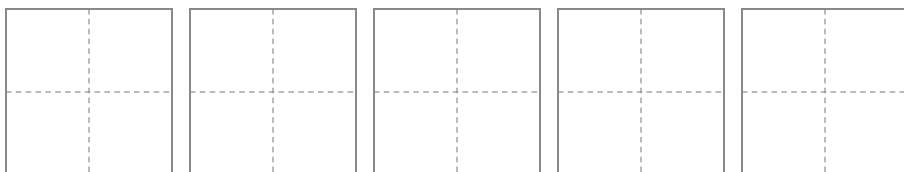
to lead along

9 strokes

STROKE ORDER



YOUR TURN

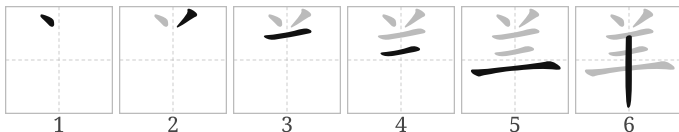


yáng

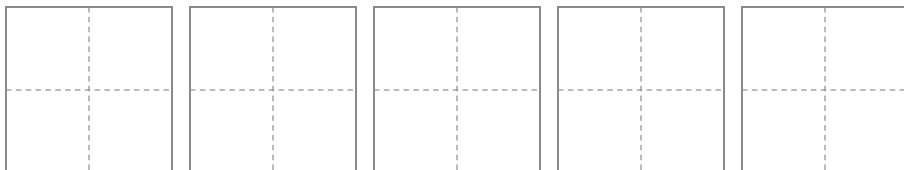
sheep

6 strokes

STROKE ORDER



YOUR TURN



PRACTICE · 顺手牵羊 SHÙN SHǒU QIĀN YÁNG

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

shùn	shǒu	qiān	yáng
顺	手	牵	羊

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顺手牵羊 · Take the sheep in passing.

THREE MORE WORDS

shùn lù

1 顺路

on the way.

bù duō pǎo yí tàng yě bù duō huā yì tiān
不多跑一趟，也不多花一天。

No extra trip. No extra day.

It has to be on your way.

shùn shǒu

2 顺手

in passing; while your hand is there.

kàn jiàn shén me ná shén me bù duō ná
看见什么拿什么，不多拿。

You pick up what you find. Not more.

Take what is on your way.

zhàng dān

3 账单

the bill.

zhàng dān lái de wǎn: xìn yù shù zì guān xì
账单来得晚：信誉、数字、关系。

The bill comes later: the credit, the numbers, the relationship.

Months later it lands, with your name on it.

SPOT IT · STOP IT 识破 · 防住

That order? The shop is in another person's area. You took it in five minutes. Nobody said anything. The bill comes later: the credit, the numbers, the relationship.

在路上 <i>On the way: the errand stays</i> lù zhào zǒu 路 照 走 <i>The errand stays</i> shùn shǒu ná 顺 手 拿 <i>Take what the road gives</i> suàn shì bái jiǎn 算 是 白 捡 <i>A bonus</i>	绕过去 <i>Off the way: the errand changes</i> lù xiàn gǎi le 路 线 改 了 <i>The errand changes</i> zhuān mén qù ná 专 门 去 拿 <i>You go and get it</i> suàn shì xīn zhài 算 是 新 债 <i>A new debt</i>
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Two ways to take something small. One is a bonus. The other is a new debt. So, one line: take what is on your way, and check whose it is.

顺手拿东西有两种：一种是白捡，一种是新债。一句话：在自己路上拿，先问这是谁的。

SEVEN DAYS, SEVEN QUESTIONS

Day 1 What did you pick up this week without leaving your route? 顺路 shùn lù

Day 2 Which small gap did you walk past because it looked too small? 微隙 wēi xì

Day 3 Whose area was that order in — and did anyone say? 地盘 dì pán

Day 4 What small profit did you refuse, and why? 微利 wēi lì

Day 5 When did you turn around for something that was never on the way? 绕路 rào lù

Day 6 Which bill is still coming, with your name on it? 账单 zhàng dān

Day 7 What is on your way next week that you could take cleanly? 路上 lù shàng

WEEK 12 REVIEW



Yoko
Read the 36 Stratagems with Yoko

第 12 计 / 36

顺手牵羊

shùn shǒu qiān yáng

ON THE WAY, NOT OFF IT · Take what is on your way. Check whose it is.

微隙在所必乘，微利在所必得。少阴，少阳。
A small gap must be taken. A small gain must be taken.

古 THEN	缝小 A SMALL GAP	利小 A SMALL GAIN	要在路上 ON YOUR WAY
理 THE LOGIC	主线不动 KEEP YOUR TARGET	界线在路上 ON OR OFF THE WAY	羊是谁的 WHOSE IS IT?
今 TODAY	别人的片区 ANOTHER PERSON'S AREA	五分钟签单 FIVE MINUTES	账单后来到 THE BILL COMES LATER
正用 DO IT CLEAN	反正去城东 GOING EAST ANYWAY	同一下午 THE SAME AFTERNOON	碰上就接 TAKE WHAT YOU FIND

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

1. In one sentence: why did the army destroy Hua on the way home?
2. What does 顺手牵羊 mean, in your own words?
3. Which of this week's four characters can you write now without looking: 顺, 手, 牵, or 羊?
4. Think of something you took that was not on your way. Who paid for it later?

Take what is on your way — and whose is it?

在自己路上拿，可那是谁的东西？

Zài zì jǐ lù shàng ná, kě nà shì shéi de dōng xi?