

BÓYÌ 博弈 · WEEK 5

chèn huǒ dǎ jié

趁火打劫

Loot a burning house.

More than 2,500 years ago, the king of Wu took his best soldiers north to a meeting of lords. The king of Yue asked his adviser one question: can we move now? The adviser said: heaven says yes, people say not yet. He waited one more year. Then the Yue army cut the road home. This week you'll learn to write four characters: 趁, 火, 打, 劫.

Stratagem No. 5 of 36 · one story, one lesson, four characters.

本周学：趁火打劫 · 练字：趁、火、打、劫

WHILE THE KING WAS AWAY



The king of Yue, on the day he asked whether he could move.

Three old Chinese histories record this. It happened more than 2,500 years ago. Two kingdoms, side by side: Wu north, Yue south. The king of Wu had just beaten Qi, and he wanted to be first among the lords — so that spring he rode north to a meeting of lords.

Before he left, he took his best soldiers with him. Back home there were only the old, the weak, and his son. The year before, Wu had a disaster of its own: crabs ate its seed.

In Yue, the king asked his adviser: can we move now? The adviser said: heaven says yes, people say not yet. Wait.

He waited one more year, until the king of Wu was far away. Then the adviser said one word: now.

《史记·吴太伯世家》《越王勾践世家》

THE FIRE WENT OUT, AND SO DID HIS LUCK



The Yue army inside the capital: the Gusu terrace burned.

The Yue army went up the coast and into the Huai River, and cut the road home. Wu's crown prince came out with what soldiers were left. He lost. He was taken.

The Yue army walked in, burned the Gusu terrace, and towed away the king's great ship. The city had lost its crown prince and had no one left to lead.

Up north, Wu and Jin had argued for days about who goes first. The news arrived. The king did not turn back — he kept it quiet, and kept arguing.

By the time he got home, the fire was out. That winter he made peace; Yue could not finish him yet. Nine years later Yue came back and kept the walls shut for three years. Then it was over.

He never lit the first fire. He just walked in after it started.

《史记·吴太伯世家》《越王勾践世家》

WHY IT WORKED

Step	Who vs who	中文· pinyin	Result
What Yue watched	The king away with his best men	空档 kòng dǎng	The opening was real
What Yue did first	Cut the road home	断归路 duàn guī lù	He couldn't come back in time
What Yue took	The capital, the terrace, the ship	就势 jiù shì	He walked in after the start

Yue didn't start the fire. Yue waited for it. 趁火打劫 chèn huǒ dǎ jié

THE ORIGINAL LINES

《三十六计·第五计 趁火打劫》

The Thirty-Six Stratagems, No. 5 — "Loot a burning house"

1

dí zhī hài dà jiù shì qǔ lì

敵之害大，就勢取利；

The enemy's trouble is great: use the situation, take the gain.

2

gāng jué róu yě

剛決柔也。

The hard decides the soft.

Two lines, nothing more. 剛決柔 is the I Ching logic of 夬 (guài) — the strong one acts, the soft one yields. It is the book's reasoning, not a separate story. The commentary that follows in old editions is not part of this text.

原文只有这两句。「剛決柔」是《易经》夬卦的说法（刚决柔），不是另一本书。后面那段按语是老版本的注释，不进原文框。

PRACTICE · 趁 CHÈN · 火 HUǒ

Follow the numbers. Write each stroke in order.

先描一遍分解格，再在田字格里写 5 遍。

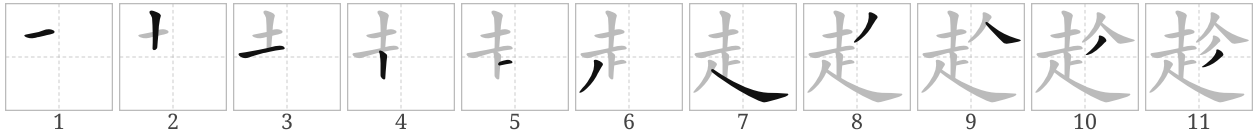


chèn

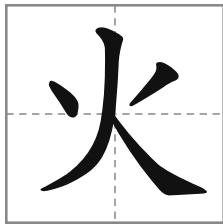
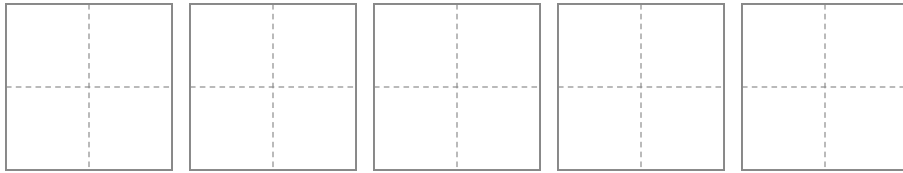
to take the moment

12 strokes

STROKE ORDER



YOUR TURN

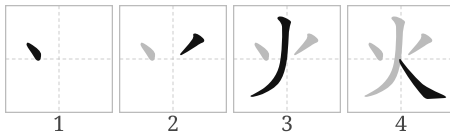


huǒ

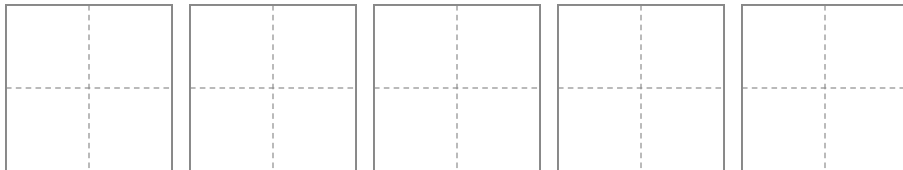
fire

4 strokes

STROKE ORDER



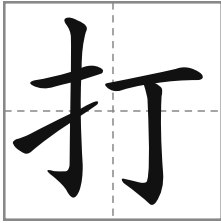
YOUR TURN



PRACTICE · 打 Dǎ · 劫 Jié

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。

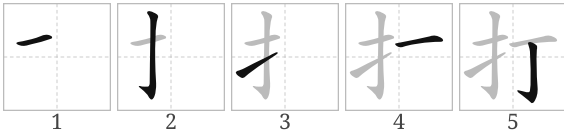


dǎ

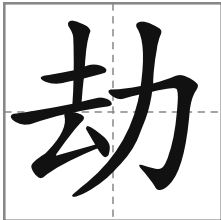
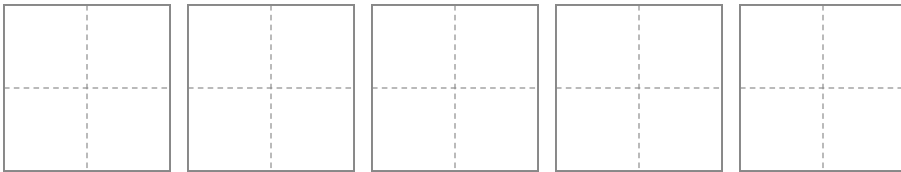
to strike

5 strokes

STROKE ORDER



YOUR TURN

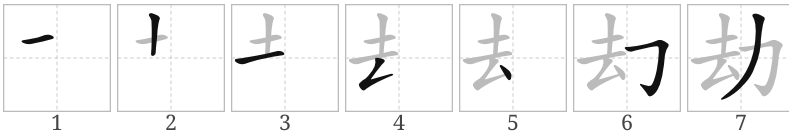


jié

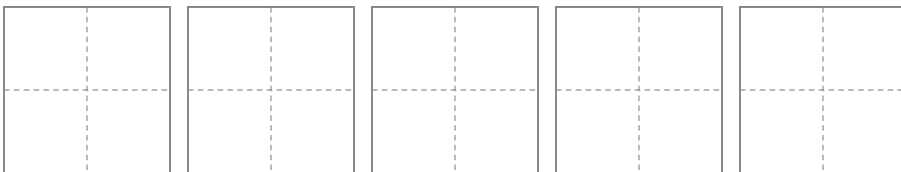
to rob; to seize

7 strokes

STROKE ORDER



YOUR TURN



PRACTICE · 趁火打劫 CHÈN HUǒ Dǎ JIÉ

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

chèn	huǒ	dǎ	jié
趁	火	打	劫

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趁火打劫 · Loot a burning house.

THREE MORE WORDS

chèn jī

1 趁机

to seize the chance.

tā chèn zhe kòng dàng chèn jī jìn chéng

他趁着空档，趁机进城。

He used the opening and seized the chance to get in.

趁 is the whole stratagem in one character: you don't create the situation, you move when it opens.

shāo

2 烧

to burn.

huǒ yǐ jīng shāo qǐ lái le

火已经烧起来了。

The fire is already burning.

The stratagem is about arriving after the fire starts — not about lighting it. That's the line the conclusion draws.

qiān zì

3 签字

to sign (a contract, a paper).

bié zài yān lǐ qiān zì

别在烟里签字。

Don't sign in the smoke.

Never sign in the smoke: when things are burning, the paper in front of you is the worst paper you'll ever read.

SPOT IT · STOP IT 识破 · 防住

At nine at night a supplier you've talked to twice calls and offers "the best terms you'll see this year — tonight only." His competitor just had a fire. You're being invited to take something. The question is which kind of taking this is.

干净的取 <i>The clean way to take</i> zhuā zhù kòng dǎng 抓 住 空 档 <i>You take the opening</i> xiū hǎo zì jǐ de dōng xī 修 好 自 己 的 东 西 <i>You fix what you own</i> mén kāi zhe 门 开 着 <i>You keep the door open</i> 	脏的取 <i>The dirty way to take</i> shāo duì fāng kù cún 烧 对 方 库 存 <i>You burn their stock</i> sàn yáo yán 散 谣 言 <i>You spread rumours</i> bǎ rén wǎng xià yā 把 人 往 下 压 <i>You push them down</i>
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Two ways to take. One clean, one dirty. The dirty way works once. So, in one line: never sign in the smoke, never light the match.

取有两种：干净的，脏的。脏的那种只灵一次。一句话：烟里别签字，永远别点火。Qǔ yǒu liǎng zhǒng: gān jìng de, zàng de. Zàng de nà zhǒng zhǐ líng yí cì. Yí jù huà: yān lǐ bié qiān zì, yǒng yuǎn bié diǎn huǒ.

SEVEN DAYS, SEVEN QUESTIONS

Day 1 What's on fire near you right now — a competitor, a boss, a market? 火 huǒ

Day 2 If you moved this week, what exactly would you be taking? Be specific. 取 qǔ

Day 3 Which part of that would you have to light yourself? Don't do that part. 点火 diǎn huǒ

Day 4 Who else is waiting for the same opening — and are you first? 空档 kòng dǎng

Day 5 Is your own house in order before you go take something? 底子 dǐ zi

Day 6 Last time someone offered you a "tonight only" deal, what were you signing? 签字 qiān zì

Day 7 Where are you the one whose house is burning — and who is watching? 趁 chèn

WEEK 5 REVIEW

*Yoko*
Read the 36 Stratagems with Yoko

第 5 计 / 36

趁火打劫

chèn huǒ dǎ jié

敵之害大，就勢取利，剛決柔也。
When their trouble is great, take the opening.

古 THEN	灾·稻种被吃光 Disaster: the seed was gone	→	精兵北上·门空了 The army went north	→	劫·不是火 He entered after the fire
理 THE LOGIC	时机，不是火 Timing, not fire	→	他烧·我等 Their trouble; your timing	→	门开了再动 THE DOOR IS OPEN
今 TODAY	今天就签? Sign today?	→	等三天 Whose clock is this?	→	机会自己消失 WHO WAS IN THE FIRE?
正用 DO IT CLEAN	那家关门一个月 Their kitchen fire	→	把自己的服务做稳 Fix your own service	→	客人自己走进来 They choose your door

干净地取·接住机会，把自己做稳。Never light the match.

But there's a line. Taking is not

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

1. In one sentence: why did the king of Yue wait one more year?
2. What does 趁火打劫 mean, in your own words?
3. Which of this week's four characters can you write now without looking: 趁, 火, 打, or 劫?
4. Think of an opening you used. Was it clean taking or dirty taking?

Whose fire is burning near you this week — and what would you be signing if you walked in?

这周你身边的人的屋子在着火? 你要是走进去, 签的是什么?

Zhè zhōu nǐ shēn biān shì shuí de wū zi zài zháo huǒ? Nǐ yào shì zǒu jìn qù, qiān de shì shén me?