

HSK 0 · Read pinyin without English guesses

Pre-HSK foundations; classroom examples, not official exam items.

Borrowed letters, not borrowed sounds

Pinyin borrows the letters, not the sounds: six trap letters decide whether your reading is Chinese or guesswork.

The six traps

One breath of traps

qī 七: light ch, tongue forward.

cí 词: ts. zhōng 中: heavy curled j.

rén 人: voiced hiss. nǚ 女: rounded ee.

Two shortcuts

Trimmed finals, moved marks

九 jiǔ: iou trimmed to iu.

水 shuǐ: uei trimmed to ui.

The tone mark rides the last vowel.

Split, sound, say

Meet xièxie

1. Split: xiè + xie.
2. Sound each part: smiling hiss + yeh; the second taps light.
3. Say it whole: ssh-yeh-sshie, thanks.

Watch out

Two guards

r is not English r: no lip curl, tongue curled back, voiced.

nǚ with dots is not nǔ: the dots decide the word.

Check yourself

Four checks

Which letter says ts: q, c or zh?

How do you say the letter x?

What full final hides in shuǐ?

女 after n keeps dots; what does 去 do after q?