



The I Ching

A Beginner's Guide to the 64 Hexagrams
with the received text and an original English rendering

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The I Ching: A Beginner's Guide to the 64 Hexagrams

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Written and published by Gavin, maker of Your I Ching — <https://www.youriching.com>

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Introduction

The *I Ching* — also written *Yijing*, and known in English as the *Book of Changes* — is the oldest of the Chinese classics, and the one that has travelled furthest. It began as a divination manual in the early Zhou dynasty, roughly three thousand years ago, and over the centuries accumulated layers of commentary until it became something larger: a book about how situations change, and about the stance a person can take inside that change.

Its structure is simple to describe. Every situation is represented by a **hexagram** — a figure of six stacked lines, each either solid (yang) or broken (yin). Six lines with two possible states give sixty-four figures in all, and those sixty-four are the whole book. Each carries a name, a short judgment, an image drawn from nature, and six line statements, one for each position from the bottom up.

What makes a reading feel alive is the idea of **changing lines**. When you cast the hexagram, some lines may come out unstable — in the middle of turning into their opposite. Those lines are read as the moving edge of your situation, and when they flip, they produce a second hexagram: where things are heading. The oracle therefore describes not a fixed verdict but a movement, from one configuration to another.

This book is a working reference for that practice. It explains how to cast a reading with three coins, how to read what you get, and then gives all sixty-four hexagrams in the traditional King Wen order: the received Chinese text, an English rendering, what the figure means in plain language, and what each of the six lines says when it moves.

How to use this book

If you are new to the oracle, read the two short chapters that follow — casting and interpretation — and then simply consult the reference when you have a reading in hand. If you already know the method, the sixty-four entries stand alone and can be read in any order.

The English throughout is an original rendering informed by the public-domain scholarship of James Legge, not a reprint of any modern copyrighted translation. The Chinese is the received text (通行本). Where a passage admits several defensible readings, this book chooses the plainest one and leaves the ambiguity visible rather than resolving it silently.

Cast a reading online, free. This book pairs with **Your I Ching** at <https://www.youriching.com>, where you can ask a question and throw all six lines by hand — no coins required — and get a reading written for the question you actually asked. All sixty-four hexagram references are also free to browse at <https://www.youriching.com/hexagrams>.

Casting a Reading with Three Coins

The traditional method uses fifty yarrow stalks and takes the better part of an hour. The three-coin method, in use for at least a thousand years, gives the same four possible outcomes with a slightly different distribution of probabilities, and takes about two minutes. It is what most people use today.

What you need

Three coins of the same kind, with sides you can tell apart at a glance. Any currency will do. Some people keep a set aside for this purpose; nothing is lost if you don't.

Ask one clear question

Write your question down before you throw. The oracle answers a specific situation better than a general one, and an open question better than a yes-or-no. *“What should I understand about this job offer?”* yields more than *“Should I take it?”* Keep it to one question — a compound question produces a compound answer that cannot be untangled.

Throw six times

Assign **3 to heads** and **2 to tails** (or the reverse, as long as you keep it consistent). Shake the three coins and let them fall. Add up the three values; each throw gives 6, 7, 8 or 9:

TOTAL	COINS	LINE	DRAWN AS

6	three tails	changing yin	broken line, marked ×
7	two tails, one head	stable yang	solid line
8	two heads, one tail	stable yin	broken line
9	three heads	changing yang	solid line, marked ○

Your first throw is the **bottom** line. Each following throw stacks on top of the last, so the sixth throw is the top line. Record all six before you look anything up.

Find your hexagram

Read the six lines as a figure and find it in the reference that follows. The Hexagram Finder on the next page indexes all sixty-four by their line pattern.

Reading What You Get

Start with the whole figure

Read the hexagram's name, judgment and image first, before any individual line. The judgment states the situation and what stance it rewards; the image gives the natural picture the tradition attached to it and, usually, what a person of judgment does about it. This is the frame — the lines are details inside it.

Then read only your moving lines

If your reading produced no 6s and no 9s, the situation is stable: the hexagram as a whole is your answer, and you can stop there. Otherwise, read the line statements *only for the positions that moved*. The other lines describe the figure in general, not your case.

Position matters. The bottom line is the beginning of a situation, still small and often hidden; the top line is its end, frequently past its useful peak. The fifth position is traditionally the seat of the person with authority, and the second its capable counterpart below.

Follow the change

Now flip every moving line into its opposite — changing yang becomes yin, changing yin becomes yang — and read the second hexagram that results. This is the direction the situation is heading, given how it currently stands. A reading is a movement from one figure to the other: first hexagram, moving lines, second hexagram.

Then decide something

The oracle is not a forecast to be verified but a lens for a decision you were already going to make. A reading has done its work when it makes one course of action look clearly more honest than another. If nothing shifts, the question was usually the problem, not the answer.

Each entry in the reference that follows includes a short reading for every line, telling you what it means when that line is the one that moves — and which hexagram it turns into.

Hexagram Finder

All sixty-four figures in King Wen order. Lines are read from the bottom up.

1		Heaven	乾 Qián	Heaven over Heaven
2		Earth	坤 Kūn	Earth over Earth
3		Sprouting	屯 Zhūn	Water over Thunder
4		Inexperience	蒙 Méng	Mountain over Water
5		Patience	需 Xū	Water over Heaven
6		Dispute	訟 Sòng	Heaven over Water
7		Troops	師 Shī	Earth over Water
8		Alliance	比 Bǐ	Water over Earth
9		Small Accumulation	小畜 Xiǎoxù	Wind over Heaven
10		Treading	履 Lǚ	Heaven over Lake
11		Peace	泰 Tài	Earth over Heaven
12		Obstruction	否 Pǐ	Heaven over

33		Retreat	遁 Dùn	Heaven over Mountain
34		Great Vigor	大壮 Dàzhuàng	Thunder over Heaven
35		Advance	晋 Jìn	Fire over Earth
36		Dimmed Light	明夷 Míngyí	Earth over Fire
37		Household	家人 Jiārén	Wind over Fire
38		Opposition	睽 Kuí	Fire over Lake
39		Hardship	蹇 Jiǎn	Water over Mountain
40		Release	解 Jiě	Thunder over Water
41		Decrease	损 Sǔn	Mountain over Lake
42		Increase	益 Yì	Wind over Thunder
43		Breakthrough	夬 Guài	Lake over Heaven
44		Encounter	姤 Gòu	Heaven over Wind

			Earth
13		Fellowship	同人 Tóngrén
14		Great Possession	大有 Dàyǒu
15		Humility	谦 Qiān
16		Anticipation	豫 Yù
17		Following	随 Suí
18		Corruption	蛊 Gǔ
19		Drawing Near	临 Lín
20		Observation	观 Guān
21		Jaws Closing	噬嗑 Shìkè
22		Adornment	贲 Bì
23		Stripping Away	剥 Bō
24		Return	复 Fù
25		Genuineness	无妄 Wúwàng
26		Great Accumulation	大畜 Dàxù

45		Convergence	萃 Cui	Lake over Earth
46		Ascending	升 Shēng	Earth over Wind
47		Adversity	困 Kùn	Lake over Water
48		Village Well	井 Jǐng	Water over Wind
49		Radical Change	革 Gé	Lake over Fire
50		Cauldron	鼎 Dǐng	Fire over Wind
51		Shock	震 Zhèn	Thunder over Thunder
52		Stillness	艮 Gèn	Mountain over Mountain
53		Gradual Advance	渐 Jiàn	Wind over Mountain
54		Young Bride	归妹 Guīmèi	Thunder over Lake
55		Plenty	丰 Fēng	Thunder over Fire
56		Sojourning	旅 Lǚ	Fire over Mountain
57		Wind	巽 Xùn	Wind over Wind
58		Lake	兑 Dui	Lake over Lake

27		Sustenance	颐 Yí	Mountain over Thunder
28		Great Exceeding	大过 Dàguò	Lake over Wind
29		Water	坎 Kǎn	Water over Water
30		Fire	离 Lí	Fire over Fire
31		Influence	咸 Xián	Lake over Mountain
32		Duration	恒 Héng	Thunder over Wind

59		Scattering	涣 Huàn	Wind over Water
60		Restraint	节 Jié	Water over Lake
61		Heartfelt Trust	中孚 Zhōngfú	Wind over Lake
62		Small Exceeding	小过 Xiǎoguò	Thunder over Mountain
63		Already Crossed	既济 Jìjì	Water over Fire
64		Not Yet Crossed	未济 Wèijì	Fire over Water



HEXAGRAM 1

Heaven

乾 · Qián

Heaven over Heaven

Hexagram 1 is pure creative force meeting no resistance: sustained, disciplined effort now opens the way, provided the pace stays true to your own timing.

THE JUDGMENT

乾：元，亨，利，贞。

Heaven: originating, successful, fruitful, and enduring — the four qualities present at every true beginning.

THE IMAGE

天行健，君子以自强不息。

Heaven in motion is vigor itself: the wise person draws on this to strengthen themselves without pause.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

Hexagram 1 opens the received sequence of the Book of Changes. Every other hexagram is read as a variation on the two founding poles it sets up together with Hexagram 2, so its position is not incidental: it names the active principle before the text turns to anything responsive or receptive.

The Chinese name 乾 (Qián) denotes the sky, the sun's daily circuit, and by extension unresting, self-renewing motion. It is often rendered in English as The Creative or simply Heaven. Six unbroken lines stack from

bottom to top, so nothing in the figure yields, pauses, or waits on another force; the entire hexagram is one continuous gesture of initiative. That purity is instructive and also a caution: a field with no yielding line offers no natural brake, so timing and self-restraint have to come from the person acting, not from the structure they are acting within.

Read as guidance, Hexagram 1 favors starting, building, and leading from a position of genuine capability rather than borrowed confidence. It rewards effort that keeps renewing itself across a long stretch — a habit revisited daily, a plan advanced in stages, a standard held even when no one is watching — over a single dramatic push. The six lines below trace exactly how that force should be paced, from a beginning still concealed to a peak that has overreached.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 1 joins Heaven over Heaven. The upper and lower trigrams are identical, so the figure carries no internal contrast between stillness and motion, or between an outer face and an inner one: the same unbroken force runs through the whole shape, top to bottom.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, all six positions are solid yang lines with no interruption. The lower and upper trigrams are both Qian, Heaven — the impulse that first moves, carried in the upper trigram to its full manifest height. Held together, the diagram depicts unmixed, self-sustaining strength — vitality that has to supply its own discipline, because no yielding line is present to slow it down.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 **Strength still concealed** BOTTOM LINE

初九：潜龙勿用。

A dragon still hidden: do not act yet.

The first line describes capability that is real but not yet ready for display. A dragon at this stage stays low, out of sight, gathering the depth it will need later; acting now, before conditions or your own readiness have matured, risks wasting strength on a premature move. This is not a summons to doubt yourself, only to hold the line between quiet preparation and public commitment. Let skill accumulate without an audience. When this line changes, the reading points to Encounter: a chance meeting or unplanned opening may arrive before you expect one, so stay ready even while waiting.

2 **Visible, and seeking counsel** SECOND LINE

九二：见龙在田，利见大人。

A dragon appears in the field: it is fruitful to seek out someone of real experience.

At the second line, the dragon has surfaced: your ability is now visible to others, and the field is open for it to be tested. The classical advice here is to seek out someone with real experience rather than proceed on confidence alone — a mentor, a collaborator, or simply a more seasoned perspective can sharpen judgment that raw talent has not yet refined. This is a moment for connection, not isolation. When this line changes, the situation shifts toward Fellowship: shared purpose with others becomes the frame in which your emerging strength is best carried forward.

3 Effort through a precarious stretch THIRD LINE

九三：君子终日乾乾，夕惕若，厉无咎。

The wise person works all day without rest and stays watchful into the evening; the position is precarious, but there is no fault.

The third line places you in the hardest part of the arc: full days of exertion, evenings still spent alert rather than at rest, and a position that remains genuinely risky even though nothing has yet gone wrong. The text calls this precarious but without fault, because the danger is being met with vigilance rather than denial. Consistency, not a single burst of intensity, is what carries a person through this stage. When this line changes, the reading turns to Treading: each step now needs to be placed with real care, since the ground itself has grown uneven.

4 Poised over the depths FOURTH LINE

九四：或跃在渊，无咎。

Poised to leap, still over the depths: there is no fault.

The fourth line holds a genuine choice: leap forward into open commitment, or remain poised above the depths a while longer. Neither option is condemned — the text names both as free of fault — because what matters is that the choice fits your own honest assessment rather than outside pressure to move faster. This is a moment to test intention against readiness one more time before acting. When this line changes, the destination is Small Accumulation: gains now arrive gradually, in small increments rather than one decisive stroke, so patience with modest progress serves you better than waiting for a dramatic opening.

5 Strength fully in its element FIFTH LINE

九五：飞龙在天，利见大人。

A dragon flies in the sky: it is fruitful to seek out someone of real experience.

The fifth line is the hexagram's high point: a dragon flying freely in open sky, strength operating exactly where it belongs and visible to everyone. This is the position of established, effective leadership, but the same counsel as the second line still applies — seek out someone of real experience rather than assume mastery closes off further learning. Confidence and continued attentiveness are not opposites here. When this line changes, the reading moves to Great Possession: abundance and wide influence follow, and the discipline now is to hold that abundance responsibly rather than let it scatter.

6 Strength that has overreached TOP LINE

上九：亢龙有悔。

A dragon that has flown too high: there is cause for regret.

The top line is the hexagram's clearest warning: a dragon that has flown too high, past the point where its strength still has anything to answer to, invites regret. This is not a verdict on strength itself but on strength detached from proportion — success pursued one stage beyond where it remained sound. If you recognize this position, the corrective is to pull back deliberately rather than push for one more gain. When this line changes, the destination is Breakthrough: a moment of decisive resolution follows, when what has been overextended is finally cleared away and a more honest footing becomes possible.

用九

见群龙无首，吉。

When every line is moving: a company of dragons appears with no single head among them — good fortune.

Read hexagram 1 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/1-creative



HEXAGRAM 2

Earth

坤 · Kūn

Earth over Earth

Hexagram 2 describes pure receptivity: strength that carries and completes rather than initiates, gaining direction and lasting good fortune by following a genuinely trustworthy lead.

THE JUDGMENT

坤：元亨，利牝马之贞，君子有攸往，先迷后得主，利西南得朋，东北丧朋，安贞吉。

Great success. Favorable to hold to the steadiness of a mare. When the wise person has somewhere to go, going first brings confusion; following finds a master to serve. Favorable to gain companions in the southwest, to lose them in the northeast. Resting in what is steady and true brings good fortune.

THE IMAGE

地势坤，君子以厚德载物。

The condition of the earth is complete receptivity. The wise person carries all things by cultivating a broad and generous character.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

Hexagram 2 stands second in the received sequence, immediately after Hexagram 1, Heaven. Where the first hexagram is unbroken yang throughout, Hexagram 2 is unbroken yin throughout — six open lines, nothing but receiving. Read together, the pair sets out the book's found-

ing polarity: initiating force and the ground that carries it forward. Neither is ranked above the other; each is unusable without the other to complete it.

The Chinese name 坤 denotes earth itself — the broad, level ground beneath the sky, patient and load-bearing. It is also translated as The Receptive, a name that names the working principle rather than the image: capacity that yields, absorbs, and then carries a thing to its finished form. The judgment praises a mare's steadiness rather than a dragon's flight, because Kūn's power is endurance and route-finding by response, not command. It warns that leading brings confusion, while following a genuine guide brings arrival — a lesson about knowing which role a moment actually calls for.

The image completes the thought: the character of earth is Kūn, and the wise person builds broad, generous character able to bear up everything that is placed on it. Nothing here asks for passivity. Carrying a household, a project, or another person's weight for years demands its own steady strength, only turned outward toward what is received rather than toward what is announced.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 2 joins Earth over Earth: the same open, receiving quality repeated above and below, with no interruption from a firm line anywhere in the figure. Nothing here resists; nothing here initiates on its own. The whole hexagram is one continuous field of ground, patient enough to take an imprint and hold it.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, all six positions are broken yin lines — there is no yang line anywhere in the structure. The lower trigram, Earth, and the upper trigram, Earth, are identical, so the figure has no internal tension between an inner and an outer disposition.

It is level from base to crown: one unbroken quality of yielding, doubled for emphasis rather than varied.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Frost before the ice BOTTOM LINE

初六：履霜 坚冰至。

Treading on frost: the hard ice is on its way.

The first line reads a small, early sign — frost underfoot — as proof that something larger and harder is forming beneath it. Nothing here is sudden; a pattern is simply accumulating past the point where it can still be waved off. Notice the first cool signal in a relationship, a budget, or a habit, and take it seriously while it is still manageable rather than waiting for the eventual solid ice. When this line changes, the hexagram becomes Return: the very same close attention that catches an early warning is also what lets you recognize the moment a better path opens and turn back toward it.

2 Straight, square, unforced SECOND LINE

六二：直方大，不习无不利。

Straight, square, and great: without any special effort, nothing fails to be favorable.

The second line describes strength so well-placed that it needs no special effort: straight in intention, square in conduct, and great in effect simply by being consistently itself. This is the clearest picture in the hexagram of receptivity done well — not passive, but so aligned with its situation that results follow without strain or performance. Trust habits and values you have already tested rather than reaching for a dramatic new method. When this line changes, the hexagram becomes Troops: quiet, disciplined consistency is exactly what allows a group of people, or a set of competing demands, to be organized and led toward one coordinated aim.

3 Ability held in reserve THIRD LINE

六三：含章可贞，或从王事，无成有终。

Holding refinement within can be kept true; if called to serve in a ruler's affairs, claim no achievement of one's own, yet bring the work to completion.

The third line describes real capability kept deliberately quiet: refinement held within, ready to be offered in service without insisting on personal credit for the outcome. If circumstances call you into a larger effort — a ruler's affairs, in the classical image, or any project bigger than yourself — the counsel is to contribute fully and let the completion belong to the whole undertaking. Chasing visible achievement here would work against the line's own logic. When this line changes, the hexagram becomes Humility: the same willingness to finish work without claiming it is the exact discipline that carries a person of real ability safely through public life.

4 The sack tied shut FOURTH LINE

六四：括囊，无咎无誉。

The sack drawn shut and tied: no blame, no praise.

The fourth line pictures deliberate discretion: a sack drawn closed and tied, holding its contents without display. Neither blame nor praise touches what stays sealed. There are moments — a sensitive negotiation, an unresolved conflict, information not yet ready to share — when the wisest available action is careful restraint rather than any visible move at all. This is not evasion; it protects a situation still too unsettled to survive premature exposure. When this line changes, the hexagram becomes Anticipation: what is being held closed now is preparation for a coming moment, and restraint today is what allows readiness and confidence to arrive later.

5 Quiet competence, worn plainly FIFTH LINE

六五：黄裳元吉。

A yellow lower garment: supreme good fortune.

The fifth line offers the hexagram's clearest image of good fortune: a yellow lower garment, the correct color of earth worn in its proper, understated place rather than displayed as an upper robe. Genuine merit does not need to be paraded to be recognized; carried with the right proportion and placement, it earns supreme good fortune on its own terms. If you hold real standing or skill right now, let its evidence do the work instead of insisting on the spotlight. When this line changes, the hexagram becomes Alliance: quiet, well-placed competence is precisely what draws trustworthy company and durable partnership toward you.

6 Contending dragons in the field TOP LINE

上六：龙战于野，其血玄黄。

Dragons contend in the open wild; their blood is dark and yellow.

The top line marks the point where pure yin, stretched to its limit, meets rising yang head-on: dragons contend in the open wild, and both sides bleed in the collision. This is the cost of receptivity carried past what it can sustain — pressure absorbed for too long eventually meets an equal, opposing force, and the struggle wounds everyone involved. Read it as a caution to set a boundary before capacity is exhausted, not as an outcome to fear once the confrontation has arrived. When this line changes, the hexagram becomes Stripping Away: what could not be sustained is finally worn down, clearing ground for what comes after.

用六

利永贞。

When every line appears as six: it is favorable to remain steady and true over the long span of time.

Read hexagram 2 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/2-receptive



HEXAGRAM 3

Sprouting

屯 · Zhūn

Water over Thunder

Hexagram 3 shows growth struggling to break through at its very start: real progress is underway, but it asks for patience, allies, and small, well-timed steps rather than force.

THE JUDGMENT

屯：元亨，利貞，勿用有攸往，利建侯。

Sprouting: profound success. It is fruitful to stay true. Do not rush out to act on your own; it is fruitful to appoint a helper.

THE IMAGE

云雷，屯；君子以经纶。

Clouds and thunder together: Sprouting. The wise person uses the time to sort and weave the threads of order.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received sequence, Hexagram 3 follows Qian and Kun — heaven and earth have just been named — and is the first figure to show what happens when that creative force actually tries to move. It is also translated as *Difficulty at the Beginning*, a title that names the strain of any true start: a plan, a relationship, a venture, or a life stage that is real but not yet formed.

The Chinese name 屯 pictures a young shoot curling as it pushes up through packed earth, bent under the weight of the soil rather than standing straight. Written without its tone mark the syllable is simply zhun, and searches for the wider tradition split the same way — some readers type it as two words, I Ching, others compress it to iching — different spellings for one image of a seed forcing its way toward light. The character also carries a sense of storing up or massing together, which is why classical readers link Sprouting to gathering resources quietly before results are visible.

Read as a season rather than a single event, Hexagram 3 describes the crowded, disordered opening minutes of something new: energy is genuine, but the channels for it are not yet clear. The text does not counsel retreat. It counsels small, deliberate motion, the recruiting of help, and enough patience to let form emerge from what currently feels like tangled effort.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 3 joins Water above Thunder. Kan, the Water trigram, sits over the figure as clouds heavy with unshed rain — real danger and real potential compressed together. Zhen, the Thunder trigram, moves underneath, rousing and insistent. Movement stirs directly beneath an unresolved risk: this is the shape of any beginning where enthusiasm meets a world that has not yet organized itself to receive it.

In the six-line diagram, read bottom to top, a single yang line opens the figure, planted and immovable like a boundary post driven into new ground. Three yin lines rise above it in hesitation and uncertainty, followed by a second yang line near the top that holds a modest, still-limited authority, and the whole closes on a yin line spent by delay. The lower

trigram Zhen supplies the thrust; the upper trigram Kan supplies the resistance it must work against.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Standing firm before moving BOTTOM LINE

初九：磐桓，利居贞，利建侯。

Circling like a great boundary stone, unmoving: it is fruitful to stay settled and true, fruitful to appoint a helper.

The first line pictures a great boundary stone, or a person circling near it, unmoving and unmoved. This is not paralysis; it is stored strength at the very base of a new undertaking, strength that has not yet been asked to spend itself. The guidance is to settle where you are, stay true to your intention, and use this early stillness to appoint a helper rather than to prove yourself through immediate motion. What looks like standing still is actually the groundwork being laid. When this line changes, Alliance follows: firm ground held early becomes, in time, real company and cooperation with others.

2 A suitor mistaken for a threat SECOND LINE

六二：屯如遭如，乘马班如，匪寇婚媾，女子贞不字，十年乃字。

Halting, circling; mounted on horses that only pace in place. It is not a raider but a suitor. The woman stays true and does not accept betrothal; after ten years she accepts.

At the second line, horses pace back and forth without advancing, and a genuine suitor is momentarily read as a raider. Confusion here is not a verdict on the connection itself; it reflects how hard it can be to tell real interest from intrusion when nothing is yet settled. The woman in the line does not refuse outright — she stays true and simply declines to commit before the moment is ripe, accepting only once time has passed. When this line changes, it leads to Restraint: the situation is asking for a defined limit, not a decision made in the dark.

3 Chasing without a guide THIRD LINE

六三：即鹿无虞，惟入于林中，君子几，不如舍，往吝。

Chasing a deer with no gamekeeper to guide the way, one only wanders deeper into the forest. The wise person reads the sign early and lets go; pressing onward brings regret.

The third line describes entering a forest after a deer with no gamekeeper to show the trails — the pursuit only carries you deeper into unfamiliar ground. It is a caution against following an attractive opportunity purely because it is moving, when you lack the local knowledge or support to see it through. The wise response named directly in the line is to perceive the sign early and let go, since continuing invites regret rather than reward. Restraint here is not timidity; it is judgment applied before momentum takes over. When this line changes, it becomes Already Crossed: releasing an ungrounded chase is what allows a matter to reach real completion.

4 Circling, then setting out FOURTH LINE

六四：乘马班如，求婚媾，往吉，无不利。

Mounted on horses that pace in place, then setting out to seek a match: going brings good fortune, nothing unfavorable.

The fourth line still shows horses pacing in place, but this time the hesitation resolves: the rider sets out to seek a proper match, and the text states plainly that going now brings good fortune and nothing unfavorable. The difference from the earlier lines is readiness — the fourth position has weighed its options and can commit to a real partner rather than circling indefinitely. This is the moment doubt has done its useful work and further delay would only cost opportunity. When this line changes, it points to Following: a decision made and acted on here opens into a season of willingly joining with others.

5 Small corrections, not sweeping ones FIFTH LINE

九五：屯其膏，小贞吉，大贞凶。

The rain and its bounty are held back. Correcting matters in small measure brings good fortune; correcting them all at once brings misfortune.

The fifth line holds real authority but describes its bounty — its rain, its fertilizing power — as still held back, unable yet to reach everyone who needs it. The instruction is exact: correcting matters in small measure brings good fortune, while attempting to fix everything at once brings misfortune. This suits a leader, parent, or decision-maker who can see what needs to change but does not yet have the reach to change it all safely. Patience paired with targeted action, rather than a single sweeping reform, protects what has already grown. When this line changes, it leads to Return: measured correction now becomes the turning point that lets abundance cycle back.

6 Exhausted by delay TOP LINE

上六：乘马班如，泣血涟如。

Mounted on horses that pace in place, weeping tears of blood, streaming without end.

The top line closes the hexagram with horses still pacing in place and tears streaming without end — the exhaustion that comes from a difficulty that has gone on too long without resolving. This is not a call to despair so much as an honest naming of what prolonged hesitation costs; grief here is information, showing that a matter has been left unresolved past its useful season. The remedy is not more waiting but an honest reckoning with what the delay has actually produced. When this line changes, it becomes Increase: what has been depleted at its limit is exactly the condition from which real gain can finally begin.

Read hexagram 3 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/3-difficulty-at-the-beginning



HEXAGRAM 4

Inexperience

蒙 · Méng

Mountain over Water

Hexagram 4 shows inexperience seeking a teacher: real clarity comes only when a genuine, sincerely asked question meets patient, well-timed, disciplined instruction rather than repeated doubt.

THE JUDGMENT

蒙：亨，匪我求童蒙，童蒙求我，初筮告，再三渎，渎则不告，利贞。

Inexperience: success. It is not I who seeks out the untaught youth; the untaught youth seeks me. The first request is answered plainly; a second or third becomes an imposition, and an imposition is not answered. It is fruitful to stay true.

THE IMAGE

山下出泉，蒙；君子以果行育德。

Below the mountain a spring comes forth: Inexperience. The wise person acts with resolve and cultivates character through it.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received sequence, Hexagram 4 follows Hexagram 3, Sprouting: once a beginning has broken through the surface, it is still unformed and needs guidance. The Chinese name 蒙 pictures grass or fog covering something — a mind not yet cleared, a situation still obscure. In some editions the hexagram is also translated as Youthful Folly, since the figure

most often addresses a young or untested party facing what it cannot yet judge on its own.

Hexagram 4 does not treat inexperience as a fault. It describes a natural stage, and it is precise about how learning actually works: the Judgment says the young one asking in earnest is answered, but a question repeated out of restlessness rather than sincerity gets no answer at all. Confusion is only a problem when it refuses correction. The task here is to locate one honest question, bring it to someone qualified to answer, and let discipline replace guesswork one issue at a time.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 4 joins Mountain over Water. Water gathers in a spring at the mountain's foot, still finding its channel; Mountain above gives it a boundary and a direction rather than letting it spread formlessly. The image is instruction itself: raw potential contained by structure until it can flow with purpose.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, the second line is the only strong yang position surrounded by yielding yin lines above and below it — the guiding figure embedded among learners. The lower trigram Kan, Water, is danger and depth not yet charted; the upper trigram Gen, Mountain, is a firm stopping point. Held together, the figure shows danger checked by a boundary, which is exactly how careful instruction keeps early missteps from becoming real harm.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Rules before freedom BOTTOM LINE

初六：发蒙，利用刑人，用说桎梏，以往吝。

Opening the untaught mind benefits from clear rules and consequence, as one loosens fetters and shackles; pressing forward from there without further correction brings regret.

The first line addresses the very beginning of instruction, when a mind is still entirely unformed. Here structure has to come before latitude: clear boundaries, plain consequences, and a firm first correction do more good than early leniency, because leniency without any framework just lets confusion spread further before it can be named. Once the fetters of not-knowing are loosened, though, continuing to press the same forceful correction becomes counterproductive and invites regret. When this line changes, Decrease follows: the lesson is to apply only as much discipline as the moment actually needs, then withdraw it.

2 Patience holds the center SECOND LINE

九二：包蒙吉，纳妇吉，子克家。

Embracing the untaught with patience brings good fortune. Taking a wife brings good fortune. A son proves able to manage the household.

At the second line, the single strong position in the whole figure, instruction succeeds through patient inclusiveness rather than harsh correction. Whoever teaches, manages, or advises here is asked to embrace uneven skill and slow progress without losing steadiness, the way a household absorbs a new member and still functions well. Good fortune comes from tolerance paired with genuine competence, not from indulgence alone. When this line changes, Stripping Away follows, warning that unchecked patience, left without any boundary at all, can erode the very structure it was meant to protect.

3 Attraction misreads status THIRD LINE

六三：勿用取女，见金夫不有躬，无攸利。

Do not take this woman in marriage: she sees a man of wealth and loses possession of herself. Nothing gained is worthwhile.

The third line marks the moment inexperience is exploited rather than guided: dazzled by wealth, confidence, or surface appeal, a person abandons their own judgment and, with it, their self-possession. The classical text is unusually direct that nothing worthwhile follows from this exchange. The corrective is not cynicism but discernment — asking what a person's conduct actually demonstrates, not what their position implies. When this line changes, Corruption follows, showing how an unexamined attraction, left uncorrected, decays into a deeper problem that now requires deliberate repair.

4 Isolated from correction FOURTH LINE

六四：困蒙，吝。

Bound in ignorance, cut off from help: regret.

The fourth line describes confusion made worse by distance: someone capable of learning is simply left without a teacher, a mentor, or an honest conversation, and regret follows not from lack of ability but from lack of contact. The remedy is not to wait for guidance to arrive unprompted but to actively close the gap — ask, reach out, or seek the person who can answer the real question. When this line changes, Not Yet Crossed follows, naming a situation still incomplete: the crossing has not happened yet, and pretending otherwise only delays the honest work still required.

5 Openness invites the answer FIFTH LINE

六五：童蒙吉。

The inexperienced youth, open and unassuming: good fortune.

At the fifth line, the classical image is the child-like youth: unguarded, receptive, and free of the pretense that so often blocks real instruction. This is the position the whole hexagram is built toward — genuine openness, held with dignity rather than passivity, draws the clearest teaching and the surest good fortune. It is not weakness to admit what you do not yet know; it is the condition under which learning becomes possible at all. When this line changes, Scattering follows, where accumulated confusion finally breaks apart and disperses once honest openness has done its work.

6 Discipline that protects, not conquers TOP LINE

上九：击蒙，不利为寇，利御寇。

Striking against ignorance: it does not favor raiding, it favors guarding against raiders.

The top line strikes at ignorance directly, but the classical text draws a careful line: this force should defend a boundary, not launch an invasion of someone else's territory. Correction applied to seize control, to humiliate, or to overreach becomes its own kind of misconduct; correction applied to guard against real harm remains legitimate discipline. The distinction matters most exactly when authority is strongest. When this line changes, Troops follows, describing organized, disciplined force — the kind that holds only when it stays answerable to a clear and limited purpose.

Read hexagram 4 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/4-youthful-folly



HEXAGRAM 5

Patience

需 · Xū

Water over Heaven

Patience asks you to wait at a safe distance from real danger, gathering strength and clarity until the moment is ready to be met.

THE JUDGMENT

需：有孚，光亨，贞吉，利涉大川。

Patience: sincerity brings brightness and success. Staying true brings good fortune. It is fruitful to cross the great river.

THE IMAGE

云上于天，需；君子以饮食宴乐。

Clouds rise above heaven: Patience. The wise person eats, drinks, and takes rest, keeping body and spirit ready for what is still gathering.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

Hexagram 5 follows Hexagram 4, Youthful Folly, in the received sequence: once early confusion has been named and worked through, the next lesson is timing. Growth cannot be rushed past the stage where conditions are not yet ripe, so the sequence turns from learning to a deliberate pause before the crossing.

The Chinese name 需 combines the idea of rain still gathering in the sky with the sense of needing, requiring, or being provided for. It is why the hexagram is also translated as Waiting, and occasionally as Nourishment or Attending, since the classical text pictures a person feeding and steady-

ing themselves before the crossing rather than sitting in blank suspension. Read this way, patience is an active discipline: you keep your resources in order, your intentions honest, and your attention on the danger ahead, so that when the water finally clears you are ready to cross rather than caught off guard.

The judgment names sincerity, brightness, and steadfastness as the conditions for a fortunate crossing of the great river. That river is not avoided — the hexagram never counsels retreat — it is approached deliberately. Confidence built during the wait, not impatience or bravado, is what makes the crossing safe.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 5 joins Water over Heaven: rain clouds gathered above the sky, not yet fallen. Heaven's steady strength lies underneath, while Water — the trigram of danger and depth — hangs above, still forming. Nothing is lost by this delay; the strength below simply has not yet reached the moment for release.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, three unbroken yang lines form the lower trigram Qian, Heaven, and a mixed arrangement of one yang between two yin lines forms the upper trigram Kan, Water, directly above. This diagram places solid, dependable strength beneath an unresolved danger, which is exactly the situation the hexagram addresses: hold your ground low in the structure while the risk above has not yet settled into a shape you can safely engage.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Held far from danger BOTTOM LINE

初九：需于郊，利用恒，无咎。

Held in the open country. It is fruitful to hold a constant course. No blame.

The first line places you in open country, well clear of the river and its risks. Nothing urgent is happening yet, and that is exactly the point: the danger has not reached you, so there is no reason to rush toward it or abandon your usual habits out of anxious anticipation. Hold a constant, ordinary course — the kind of steadiness that does not depend on knowing exactly when the moment will arrive. This is not indifference; it is patience practiced early, before pressure makes it difficult. This line's change points toward Hexagram 48 — Village Well, a reminder that resources tended quietly now are what future crossings draw on.

2 Held on uncertain ground SECOND LINE

九二：需于沙，小有言，终吉。

Held on the sandbank. Some minor talk arises, but the end is good fortune.

At the second line, you have moved onto the sandbank — closer to the water, on ground that shifts a little underfoot. Minor talk or criticism may reach you here: a doubting remark, a rumor, a moment where your patience looks to others like hesitation. The line's own verdict is that none of this changes the outcome; staying centered through small noise still ends well. Resist the urge to over-explain yourself or abandon the pause just to quiet the chatter. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 63 — Already Crossed, showing that the calm handling of small friction now is what carries the crossing through to a completed, settled result.

3 **Held on unstable footing** THIRD LINE

九三：需于泥，致寇至。

Held in the mud. This draws the raiders near.

The third line stands in the mud, close enough to the danger that footing itself becomes unreliable. This is the position that draws raiders — trouble finds you here specifically because you have pushed forward without a secure base rather than because the crossing is inherently hostile. The lesson is not to retreat entirely, but to recognize when your own position, not just the outside world, is creating the risk. Stabilize before advancing further. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 60 — Restraint, which names the discipline of accepting limits so that the ground you stand on can hold.

4 **Held under real pressure** FOURTH LINE

六四：需于血，出自穴。

Held amid bloodshed. One climbs out from the pit.

The fourth line is held in what the text calls bloodshed: three strong lines press upward from below, and the danger is no longer distant but immediate. Yet the line insists a way out remains — climbing from the pit is still possible if you act with care rather than force your way through blindly. This is the moment patience is hardest and most necessary: pressure from others can push you toward a decision before it is truly ready. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 43 — Breakthrough, showing that the tension building here is heading toward a decisive, open resolution rather than staying hidden.

5 Held with composure FIFTH LINE

九五：需于酒食，贞吉。

Held over wine and food. Staying true brings good fortune.

At the fifth line, the delay takes its most settled form: wine and food, shared hospitality, a steady presence that neither rushes nor withdraws. This is the position of someone whose patience has become genuine composure rather than strain — able to host, provide for others, and keep morale intact while the outer situation is still unresolved. Staying true here, without performing certainty you do not feel, brings good fortune. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 11 — Peace, the natural extension of a pause held with this much steadiness: harmony between what is above and what is below.

6 The pause reaches its limit TOP LINE

上六：入于穴，有不速之客三人来，敬之终吉。

Entering the pit. Three uninvited guests arrive; treating them with respect brings good fortune in the end.

The top line falls into the pit — the wait has run its course, and circumstances have moved regardless of readiness. Yet even here the outcome turns on conduct: three uninvited guests arrive, and treating them with respect rather than suspicion brings good fortune in the end. This line teaches that when the long wait finally gives way to arrival, whether planned or not, how you receive what comes matters more than resisting its unexpectedness. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 9 — Small Accumulation, a reminder that recovery from an unplanned turn begins with small, patient gains rather than one dramatic reversal.

Read hexagram 5 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/5-waiting



HEXAGRAM 6

Dispute

讼 · Sòng

Heaven over Water

Hexagram 6 describes a standoff between two forces moving apart: it warns against pressing a grievance to the bitter end and favors settling early through a trusted mediator.

THE JUDGMENT

讼：有孚，窒惕，中吉，终凶，利见大人，不利涉大川。

Dispute: sincerity is present, yet it meets obstruction and calls for caution. Fortune favors the middle course; carrying the matter all the way to the end brings misfortune. It is fruitful to consult a person of real standing; it is not advantageous to cross the great river.

THE IMAGE

天与水违行，讼；君子以作事谋始。

Heaven and water move in opposing directions: this is Dispute. The wise person plans thoroughly at the very start of any undertaking, before competing interests can harden into open dispute.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received sequence, Hexagram 6 follows Hexagram 5, Patience: once needs and resources have been waited on long enough, some of them collide, and collision is what this figure names. The Chinese name 讼 points at speech brought before an authority — an accusation, a grievance, a claim pressed in front of a judge. It is also translated as Conflict

or Lawsuit, and in older transliteration the reading is sometimes written Song rather than Sòng.

The hexagram does not say that dispute is always wrong. Sincerity is present at the start: someone has a real complaint, not an invented one. But the situation is obstructed by its own structure, so the text urges caution rather than confidence. A dispute carried to a moderate resolution can still end well; a dispute carried all the way to victory, at any cost, tends to end in loss for everyone involved, including the side that appears to win.

Practically, Hexagram 6 asks you to separate the standing you have to raise an issue from the wisdom of fighting it out alone. Seeking a capable third party — an elder, a mediator, someone with real judgment and no stake in the outcome — is treated as fruitful. Starting a new venture while the dispute is unresolved is treated as unwise, since attention and trust are already divided.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 6 joins Heaven over Water. Qian, Heaven, presses upward and outward by its own nature; Kan, Water, sinks and settles by its own nature. Set one above the other, the two trigrams do not meet halfway — they move apart with every line, and that steady separation is the shape of a dispute that keeps widening instead of closing.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, a broken line opens the figure, a solid line follows it, and a second broken line completes the lower trigram: Kan, water gathering in a hollow, the classical image of hidden danger. Above that, three unbroken lines rise together to form the upper trigram Qian, heaven climbing without pause. A single yang line boxed in by yin below, three yang lines massed above — strength exposed at the

top, risk concealed underneath, which is exactly why this figure reads as an open dispute over a submerged cause.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Let the small friction pass BOTTOM LINE

初六：不永所事，小有言，终吉。

Do not let the matter drag on. Some small criticism follows, but in the end, good fortune.

The first line catches a dispute at its smallest: a passing complaint, a sharp word, a minor accusation that has not yet gathered weight. The advice is not to suppress it but to refuse to let it drag on past its natural size. Address it plainly, accept a little criticism if it is fair, and move forward rather than replaying the exchange. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 10, Treading — walking a careful, exposed path where conduct matters more than argument, and where composure under scrutiny is what actually protects you.

2 Withdraw before it spreads SECOND LINE

九二：不克讼，归而逋，其邑人三百户无眚。

He cannot win the dispute; he withdraws and goes into hiding. The three hundred households of his town are spared any harm.

At the second line, the contest is already lost or unwinnable, and pressing forward would only drag others into the fallout. The wiser move is a deliberate retreat: step back, protect the people who depend on you, and let the matter cool rather than forcing a confrontation you cannot win cleanly. When this line changes, the reading becomes Hexagram 12, Obstruction — a period where communication itself is blocked, so the priority shifts from arguing your case to simply enduring and waiting for the channel to reopen.

3 Hold the line you inherited THIRD LINE

六三：食旧德，贞厉，终吉，或从王事，无成。

Living on inherited merit, holding to what is right through danger, brings good fortune in the end. If he takes up another's cause, no credit comes to him for it.

The third line describes someone living on standing built by earlier effort, holding steady through a risky patch without seeking a fresh fight. Claiming credit or chasing a new cause here brings little reward; consistency and restraint do. If you find yourself pulled into someone else's argument, ask whether joining actually serves you or simply borrows their risk. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 44, Encounter — an unplanned meeting that needs conscious handling, since what arrives unbidden can still shape what comes next.

4 Turn back toward what is right FOURTH LINE

九四：不克讼，复即命，渝，安贞吉。

He cannot win the dispute. He turns back, submits to what is right, changes course, and settles into steadiness: good fortune.

The fourth line shows a dispute that cannot be won by force giving way to a better path: submission to what is actually right, rather than to whoever pushes hardest. Changing course here is not defeat — it is the choice that produces lasting steadiness once pride stops driving the decision. When this line changes, the reading becomes Hexagram 59, Scattering — tension that has built up starts to disperse, and the practical task becomes reconnecting people and resources that the standoff had pulled apart.

5 Judgment from true center FIFTH LINE

九五：讼元吉。

Dispute resolved from a position of true center: supreme good fortune.

The fifth line is the figure's clearest fortune: a dispute met by someone whose position is centered, fair, and free of hidden motive, so the outcome favors everyone involved rather than one side alone. This is the line to aim for, whether you are the one deciding a matter or the one bringing it to someone else's judgment. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 64, Not Yet Crossed — the resolution is real, but the larger task remains unfinished, so care at the threshold still matters.

6 A win that will not hold TOP LINE

上九：或锡之鞶带，终朝三褫之。

Perhaps he is awarded a ceremonial sash for the victory; before the morning is over, it is stripped from him three times.

The top line describes total victory that cannot last: recognition granted for prevailing in the dispute is undone again and again before the matter is even settled for good. It is a caution against measuring success by who came out on top rather than by what was actually repaired. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 47, Adversity — a period of real constraint that asks for inner composure, since outward struggle has already shown its limits here.

Read hexagram 6 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/6-conflict



HEXAGRAM 7

Troops

师 · Shī

Earth over Water

Hexagram 7 asks you to organize scattered effort under one disciplined leader and one clear rule before any campaign, conflict, or shared project can succeed.

THE JUDGMENT

师：贞，丈人吉，无咎。

Troops: staying true. Good fortune comes when an experienced, mature leader takes command; there is no fault in this.

THE IMAGE

地中有水，师；君子以容民畜众。

Within the earth lies water: Troops. The wise person accordingly gathers the people and cares for the multitude, holding strength in reserve.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

Hexagram 7 follows Hexagram 6, Dispute, in the received sequence: when a disagreement cannot be settled by argument alone, people mass their forces, and the text turns from a private quarrel to organized conflict. The Chinese name 师 originally named a body of troops or an army encampment; by extension it came to mean the masses mobilized under a single command. In some editions the hexagram is also translated as The Army or Troops, and Your I Ching keeps that direct sense rather than

softening it into a metaphor, because the classical judgment is literally about how to raise and lead a force without ruin.

The figure is not a celebration of war. Only one yang line, at the second position, holds command inside five yin lines — the picture of a single capable leader responsible for a large, largely untested body of people. Real strength here is restraint: the campaign must have a just cause, a mature leader, and enough internal order that the group does not turn on itself before it meets any outside opposition. Read broadly, Hexagram 7 covers any situation where you must mobilize scattered resources — a team, a household, a budget, a set of allies — toward one demanding goal, and the classical answer is that structure and a clear chain of command matter more than raw numbers or enthusiasm.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 7 joins Earth over Water: Kun above, still and receptive, and Kan below, moving and dangerous. Water gathered inside the earth is the classical image for a standing army — hidden reserves of strength kept in reserve until the ruler calls them up, and returned to ordinary life once the campaign ends.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, a single yang line sits at the second position, surrounded above and below by five yin lines. That single strong line is the field leader; the five yielding lines are the mass of troops and the civil population that must trust him. The lower trigram Kan, Water, carries hazard and hidden depth; the upper trigram Kun, Earth, carries patience and the capacity to hold and provision what Kan sends upward. The diagram itself argues that a single point of disciplined authority, backed by a receptive and orderly base, is what turns danger into a controlled undertaking rather than a disaster.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Discipline before the first step BOTTOM LINE

初六：师出以律，否臧凶。

A force sets out under strict discipline; without that discipline, even a good cause turns to misfortune.

The first line insists that the rule comes before the campaign, not after trouble starts. Before you commit people, money, or your own energy to a demanding effort, state plainly how decisions will be made and what conduct is acceptable; a cause can be entirely just and still collapse if no one has agreed on the basic order of operations. When this line changes, Drawing Near suggests that clear, patient oversight offered early — before anything has gone wrong — is what actually keeps a shared effort from drifting into the very disorder this line warns against.

2 Authority held at the center SECOND LINE

九二：在师中吉，无咎，王三锡命。

The commander holds the center of the force: good fortune, no fault. The ruler confers authority on him three times over.

At the second line, one capable figure carries real command and is trusted repeatedly, not just once. This is the position of a leader whose authority has already been tested and confirmed, so the group can rally around a single point of decision instead of splintering into competing voices. If you hold this role, the responsibility is to use the trust conferred on you without treating it as personal credit. The change to Earth counsels a return to receptive steadiness once command is secured: having won the mandate, the wiser move now is patient, unspectacular follow-through rather than further assertion.

3 A command divided fails THIRD LINE

六三：师或舆尸，凶。

The force may return carrying its dead in the baggage carts: misfortune.

The third line describes what happens when authority is unsettled and eager but unqualified people press forward without a mandate: effort is spent and casualties, literal or practical, come home in the baggage carts. Watch for the moment someone volunteers to take charge mainly to prove themselves, not because the position has been earned. Refusing that offer, however well-meant, protects the larger effort. The change to Ascending points toward a steadier, gradual rise in standing — real capability, built and demonstrated over time, replaces the shortcut that this line's misfortune warns against.

4 A disciplined withdrawal FOURTH LINE

六四：师左次，无咎。

The force withdraws and camps to the rear: no fault.

The fourth line describes a force that pulls back and encamps rather than pressing forward on every front. This is not retreat in the sense of defeat; it is the discipline of recognizing when a position is overextended and consolidating strength before continuing. In practice this can mean pausing a task, narrowing your commitments, or accepting a smaller, sustainable scope instead of chasing every objective at once. The change to Release confirms the logic: easing pressure at the right moment is what allows accumulated tension in a plan, a team, or a relationship to genuinely dissolve rather than simply defer.

5 Naming the right leader FIFTH LINE

六五：田有禽，利执言，无咎，长子帅师，弟子舆尸，贞凶。

Game has entered the field; it is fruitful to state the charge plainly and give pursuit: no fault. Let the elder, capable son lead the troops; if a lesser, untested son shares command, the carts will carry home the dead — persisting in this brings misfortune.

The fifth line turns to who is actually placed in charge once the cause is just and the campaign underway. State the reason for action clearly, then entrust command to the mature, capable person — not to someone eager but untested, even if that person is closer to you or more senior by rank alone. Splitting authority between a proven leader and a junior rival, the line warns, produces the same losses a poor cause would. The change to Water repeats the hazard at its most exposed: without the right hand on the tiller, danger stops being manageable and simply becomes danger.

6 Reward matched to merit TOP LINE

上六：大君有命，开国承家，小人勿用。

The great ruler issues his commands: some are granted states to found, others households to inherit; the small-minded must not be employed in either.

The top line arrives after the campaign, when the ruler distributes recognition: territory, position, and household responsibility handed out according to what each person actually did. Its explicit warning is not to give real authority to the small-minded, however loyal or well-connected, because responsibility placed in the wrong hands undoes what discipline achieved. When settling accounts after a shared effort — crediting a project, dividing an inheritance, choosing who leads next — match the reward to demonstrated capability. The change to Inexperience shows what is at stake: misjudged appointments return the whole situation to confusion and untested ground.

Read hexagram 7 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/7-the-army



HEXAGRAM 8

Alliance

比 · Bǐ

Water over Earth

Hexagram 8 describes a bond that holds because it is chosen freely and confirmed early, not one enforced by rank, habit, or fear of standing alone.

THE JUDGMENT

比：吉，原筮元永贞，无咎，不宁方来，后夫凶。

Alliance: good fortune. Divine again from the source: lasting rightness brings no blame. Those still unsettled will come to join; whoever arrives last meets misfortune.

THE IMAGE

地上有水，比；先王以建万国，亲诸侯。

Water rests on the earth: Alliance. The ancient kings founded their many states on this pattern, drawing close to their regional lords.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received sequence, Hexagram 8 follows Hexagram 7, Troops: an army must disband into ordinary life, and the very next question is what keeps people together once the campaign ends. Bi answers it — not command, but alliance freely renewed.

The Chinese name 比 pictures two figures standing side by side, and it carries the sense of closeness, comparison, and mutual support. Some

editions also translate the hexagram as Union or Holding Together. The commentary tradition reads the single yang line at the fifth position as the one true center that every yin line in the hexagram turns toward, the way scattered communities once looked to one sovereign to organize and protect them. But Bi does not mean submission. It means recognizing where genuine trust already exists and confirming it before the moment passes — the judgment's warning about a late arrival names exactly this risk.

Read this hexagram whenever a bond, a team, or a shared commitment is forming and you are deciding whether to join early, hold back, or test the sincerity of the people asking for your loyalty. The lines trace the difference between alliance built on shared conviction and alliance built on nearness alone.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 8 joins Water over Earth. Earth is the receptive ground; Water settles into every low place it can reach and pools there, holding to the shape beneath it rather than resisting it. Ancient rulers read this image as the pattern for founding states and confirming allies: water does not flow toward what it cannot trust to hold its course.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, four yin lines surround a single yang line at the fifth position, with one more yin line above it. The lower trigram Kun, the Earth, is pure receptivity; the upper trigram Kan, the Water, is the one firm center around which the surrounding lines gather. Five lines lean toward the single strong line the way scattered water finds one basin, which is why this hexagram is read as a figure of gathering around a trustworthy center.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Sincerity fills the jar BOTTOM LINE

初六：有孚，比之无咎，有孚盈缶，终来有他吉。

Sincerity present: joining in alliance brings no blame. Let sincerity fill the jar to its brim, and in the end unexpected good fortune arrives.

The first line asks you to prove trust through consistency, not a single gesture. Filling a plain clay jar to its brim suggests sincerity accumulates slowly and is judged by whether it is complete, not by how impressive it looks at the start. A modest, steady show of good faith toward a new ally does more here than one dramatic promise. Keep contributing honestly even when the return is not immediate; unexpected good fortune arrives only after that fullness is reached. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 3, Sprouting: an alliance beginning here is still tangled and needs patient cultivation.

2 Loyalty from within SECOND LINE

六二：比之自内，贞吉。

Alliance formed from within: staying true brings good fortune.

The second line describes an alliance that grows from inner conviction rather than external persuasion. You are not being talked into this bond; you recognize it as right and stay close to its center because the fit is genuine, not because you were recruited. This is the healthiest loyalty the hexagram describes, bringing good fortune precisely because it does not depend on continued convincing. Guard against letting outside opinion talk you out of a connection you know from the inside to be sound. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 29, Water: repeated danger tests whether that conviction can hold steady when the path forward turns genuinely difficult.

3 The wrong company THIRD LINE

六三：比之匪人。

Allying with those who are not the right people.

The third line is the hexagram's clearest warning: proximity is not compatibility. You may find yourself drawn toward people or a direction simply because they are close at hand or standing apart feels lonely, even though your own judgment says the fit is poor. The commentary tradition reads this as siding with someone whose conduct does not deserve the loyalty offered. Pause and ask honestly whether you are choosing this alliance or merely accepting the nearest one. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 39, Hardship: continuing to ally with the wrong people does not resolve the discomfort, it deepens into a real obstacle blocking your path.

4 Alliance offered from outside FOURTH LINE

六四：外比之，贞吉。

Alliance formed outward: staying true brings good fortune.

The fourth line describes a bond formed with someone above or beyond your immediate circle — an external offer, a wider partnership, reaching past your usual world. Unlike the third line, this alliance is sound: it is called outward because it crosses a boundary, not because it is insincere. What makes it work is single-minded loyalty once chosen, giving full attention to this new bond rather than dividing commitment between it and older, weaker ties. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 45, Convergence: the outward alliance formed here is the seed of a larger gathering, and your task shifts to helping that group hold together.

5 Leadership with an open door FIFTH LINE

九五：显比，王用三驱，失前禽，邑人不诫，吉。

Alliance made visible. The king hunts on three sides only, letting the game ahead escape; the people of the town need no warning. Good fortune.

The fifth line, the hexagram's own center, pictures a ruler hunting with beaters driven from only three sides, deliberately leaving one route open so game that wants to flee is free to go. Applied to leadership, the lesson is that genuine loyalty cannot be cornered into existing; it has to be allowed to leave and choose to stay. Those who remain despite an open door are the alliance worth relying on, and people nearby need no threats to keep their trust. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 2, Earth: your open-handed center gives way to pure receptivity, letting whatever remains organize around patient, steady support.

6 An alliance without a head TOP LINE

上六：比之无首，凶。

Alliance without a head: misfortune.

The top line describes what happens when alliance has no genuine center to organize it — people nominally joined together but pulling toward private aims, unwilling to follow any shared direction. Without a recognized head, closeness curdles into faction, and faction brings misfortune regardless of how long the group has stayed together. If you sense this pattern in a partnership, the remedy is not louder loyalty from the edges but a clear, agreed center everyone can stand behind. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 20, Observation: the group without a leader steps back and watches what it has become before it can act again.

Read hexagram 8 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/8-holding-together



HEXAGRAM 9

Small Accumulation

小畜 · Xiǎoxù

Wind over Heaven

Small Accumulation asks you to build strength through small, steady gains while a larger release of energy is still gathering and cannot yet break through.

THE JUDGMENT

小畜：亨，密云不雨，自我西郊。

Small Accumulation: success. Dense clouds gather, yet no rain falls; they move in from our western outskirts.

THE IMAGE

风行天上，小畜；君子以懿文德。

Wind moves across the heavens: Small Accumulation. The wise person refines conduct and cultivates virtue through what is graceful and well made.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

Hexagram 9 follows Hexagram 8, Union, in the received sequence: once people have gathered and bonded together, the natural next lesson is restraint — learning to accumulate influence and resources in modest increments before a larger movement becomes possible.

The Chinese name 小畜, romanized Xiao Chu, joins the idea of smallness with 畜, meaning to gather, to tame, or to hold in check. Because of that

second sense the hexagram is also translated as Small Taming or The Taming Power of the Small: a single soft line restrains a great deal of latent strength beneath it, the way a light wind can shape a wide sky without forcing anything. The Judgment pictures dense clouds gathering in the west that have not yet released their rain, and that image sets the tone for the whole figure — pressure is building, but the moment for open release has not arrived.

Read this way, small accumulation is not a setback. It is the deliberate work of collecting resources, refining conduct, and cultivating character while outward results stay modest. The Image speaks of the wise person refining inner virtue through what is graceful and well made, which points away from forcing a breakthrough and toward patient, visible improvement in small, repeatable acts.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 9 joins Wind above Heaven: a gentle, penetrating current moving across a sky of pure strength. Heaven's full power lies underneath, yet it is the soft, pervasive wind above that currently sets the pace. Nothing about the arrangement is weak — the restraint comes from one yielding line positioned to guide great strength rather than oppose it.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, three unbroken yang lines form the lower trigram Qian, Heaven, and a single yielding line at the fourth position sits among yang lines to form the upper trigram Xun, Wind. That one yin line at the center of the upper trigram is the whole hexagram's pivot: it cannot block the rising strength beneath it, but its gentle, sustained influence is enough to hold that strength in check and shape how it eventually moves.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 **Returning to one's own path** BOTTOM LINE

初九：复自道，何其咎，吉。

Returning by one's own proper path — what fault could there be? Good fortune.

The first line describes a simple, unforced return: you step back onto a path that is genuinely your own, not one borrowed from someone else's urgency or expectation. Because the return is proper and sincere, no fault attaches to it, even though restraint from above is already being felt. This is the easiest form of small accumulation — quietly resuming good habits, honest routines, and steady effort before any real pressure has built. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 57 — Wind, showing that a simple return to your own course, sustained gently, is what lets influence spread further than force ever could.

2 **Drawn back together** SECOND LINE

九二：牵复，吉。

Drawn back by another, returning together. Good fortune.

At the second line, the return is not made alone; you are drawn back by someone else's steadying influence, and good fortune follows from accepting that help rather than insisting on independence. This line marks a stage where accumulation works better as a shared effort than a solitary one — a colleague, partner, or mentor pulling you toward a wiser, more disciplined course. Letting yourself be guided here is not weakness; it is recognizing that small gains compound faster when more than one steady hand is involved. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 37 — Household, where mutual support inside a close circle becomes the structure that holds everything together.

3 Forcing the cart forward THIRD LINE

九三：輿說輻，夫妻反目。

The cart's spokes come loose; husband and wife turn their eyes from each other in anger.

The third line marks the point where restraint is pushed too hard. The cart sheds its spokes because it has been driven against resistance rather than eased through it, and the resulting estrangement between husband and wife shows how forcing an outcome can damage the very relationship the effort was meant to serve. This is a caution against mistaking urgency for readiness: pressure that has not been given room to ease will eventually break something. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 61 — Heartfelt Trust, showing that rebuilding sincerity, not winning the argument, is what actually repairs the damage.

4 Sincerity dissolves danger FOURTH LINE

六四：有孚，血去，惕出，无咎。

Sincerity is present: bloodshed departs, and apprehension gives way. No blame.

The fourth line sits closest to real risk, yet sincerity is enough to dissolve it: bloodshed departs, and the apprehension that comes with holding strength in check finally gives way. This is the position of the one yielding line that restrains the whole hexagram's strength, and its power comes entirely from honesty rather than force. Naming your intentions plainly, without hidden agendas, is what turns a precarious position into a safe one. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 1 — Heaven, where the restrained strength beneath is finally free to move without obstruction.

5 Shared wealth, bound together FIFTH LINE

九五：有孚挛如，富以其邻。

Sincerity binds firmly together; wealth is shared freely with one's neighbors.

At the fifth line, accumulation reaches its most generous form: sincerity binds people firmly together, and wealth or resources are shared openly with one's neighbors rather than hoarded. This is leadership that trusts abundance to circulate rather than needing to control every gain individually. The bond described here is strong enough that shared prosperity strengthens rather than dilutes it. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 26 — Great Accumulation, showing that generosity practiced at this stage is what allows a small, careful gathering to grow into something substantial and enduring.

6 The moon nearly full TOP LINE

上九：既雨既处，尚德载，妇贞厉，月几望，君子征凶。

The rain has fallen and settled; accumulated virtue now carries its full load. The one who stays true must still watch for danger, as the moon draws near to full. Pressing forward now brings misfortune.

The top line marks the moment accumulation reaches its limit: the rain has finally fallen, and the virtue gathered along the way now carries real weight. Yet danger has not entirely passed — the moon nearly full still has room to wane, and pressing further forward at this point brings misfortune rather than reward. The lesson is to recognize completion and hold steady rather than reaching for one more gain out of habit. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 5 — Patience, a reminder that after a long accumulation resolves, the wisest move is often to wait again before the next crossing.

Read hexagram 9 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/9-small-taming



HEXAGRAM 10

Treading

履 · Lǚ

Heaven over Lake

Treading asks you to walk carefully beside real risk, keeping your footing and your manners exact even while something dangerous stays close behind.

THE JUDGMENT

履：履虎尾，不咥人，亨。

Treading: one treads on a tiger's tail, and the tiger does not bite. This brings success.

THE IMAGE

上天下泽，履；君子以辩上下，定民志。

Heaven above, the lake below: Treading. The wise person distinguishes high from low and settles the resolve of the people.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received sequence, Hexagram 10 follows Accumulation of small resources: once something has gathered, it must be carried with correct conduct, and Treading supplies the discipline of manner and step that lets a small, soft force move safely near a great, hard one.

The Chinese name 履 (Lǚ) means to step, to walk, or to tread, and by extension the shoe itself — the thing that meets the ground on your behalf. It is also translated as Conduct or Stepping, because the figure is less

about a single walk than about the manner you carry into every step: composed, deliberate, unwilling to provoke. The core image is a soft line treading directly behind a strong, unpredictable one — traditionally read as treading on a tiger's tail — and surviving, because the approach is careful rather than reckless.

Read this way, Hexagram 10 is not a warning to stay home. It is instruction on how to move through a genuinely risky situation: choose plain conduct over display, keep your bearing steady, and let correctness of manner be the thing that keeps a dangerous presence from turning on you.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 10 joins Heaven above Lake below. Heaven is firm, high, and unmoved; Lake is open, yielding, and glad. A lake settling beneath the sky, reflecting it without trying to rival it, is the classical image of correct conduct: the lesser party keeps its place and its composure in the presence of the greater.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, the third line is the only yin line, surrounded on every side by yang; the rest of the figure is solid strength. The lower trigram Dui, the Lake, is joyous and yielding; the upper trigram Qian, Heaven, is pure creative force. One soft line treading among five hard ones is the diagram's picture of a single vulnerable step taken with care through a field of strength.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Plain conduct at the outset BOTTOM LINE

初九：素履往，无咎。

Treading in plainness, one goes forward: no blame.

The first line treads forward in plainness — unadorned, without display or strategy, simply moving as one's ordinary self. This is the safest posture at the very start of a risky undertaking, because it invites no suspicion and provokes no one. Resist the urge to dress up your intentions or perform more confidence than you feel; plain conduct draws no blame precisely because it has nothing to hide and nothing to prove. When this line changes, the situation turns into Hexagram 6, Dispute: an early plain step, taken without enough attention to how others might read it, can still ripen into real disagreement if the underlying issue is not addressed.

2 The level, quiet road SECOND LINE

九二：履道坦坦，幽人贞吉。

Treading a level, easy road: a person who keeps to quiet retirement finds good fortune through staying true.

The second line walks a road that is level and easy, and the text names good fortune for a person of quiet retirement who stays true to their own path rather than chasing recognition. This is treading at its calmest: no tiger is directly underfoot here, so the wise move is to keep to steady, private integrity rather than seeking a more visible or dramatic role. Ambition for attention would trade away exactly the safety this position offers. When this line changes, it becomes Hexagram 25, Genuineness: the quiet, unforced sincerity of this step is precisely what carries forward into acting without pretense or calculation.

3 Overconfidence invites the bite THIRD LINE

六三：眇能视，跛能履，履虎尾，咥人凶，武人为于大君。

A one-eyed man thinks he can see; a lame man thinks he can walk well. He treads on the tiger's tail and is bitten: misfortune. Like a reckless soldier acting in place of the great ruler.

The third line belongs to someone who cannot truly see clearly or walk steadily, yet believes otherwise, and so treads directly on the tiger's tail — and is bitten. This is the figure's central warning against reckless self-assurance: mistaking partial ability for full competence, especially near real danger, is what turns treading into injury. The line even likens this to a common soldier acting as though he held the ruler's authority, overreaching what his position can support. When this line changes, it becomes Hexagram 1, Heaven: only sustained, disciplined strength, not borrowed confidence, can actually carry the authority this line's reckless step mistakenly assumed it already had.

4 Careful resolve near real danger FOURTH LINE

九四：履虎尾愬愬，终吉。

Treading on the tiger's tail with caution and care: in the end, good fortune.

The fourth line also treads on the tiger's tail, but with visible caution and care, and the outcome, in the end, is good fortune. This is the counterpoint to line 3: the same dangerous proximity to power, handled with watchfulness instead of bravado, passes through safely. Caution here is not paralysis — the line still moves forward — but every step is deliberate, alert to the tiger's temperament rather than assuming safety. When this line changes, it becomes Hexagram 61, Heartfelt Trust: careful, attentive conduct sustained long enough becomes the sincere, trusted bond that no longer needs constant vigilance to hold.

5 Decisive footing under danger FIFTH LINE

九五：夬履，贞厉。

Treading with decisive resolve: even while holding to what is right, there is danger.

The fifth line treads with decisive resolve, occupying the position of greatest authority, yet the text pairs even correct, resolute conduct with danger. Holding to what is right does not remove risk when the stakes are this high; it gives you the surest footing available while the danger remains real. This line counsels neither hesitation nor false comfort — decide clearly, act on principle, and stay alert, because rightness earns respect without purchasing safety outright. When this line changes, it becomes Hexagram 38, Opposition: decisive resolve at the top can expose differences in perspective that a gentler approach had kept hidden.

6 Reviewing the completed path TOP LINE

上九：视履考祥，其旋元吉。

Look back over the path trodden and examine the signs it left; if the return is complete, great good fortune.

The top line looks back over the whole path trodden and examines the signs it left behind — a retrospective, not a new step. If the return proves complete, meaning the manner held steady all the way through, the outcome is great good fortune. This is the figure's closing counsel: treading well is finally judged not by any single step but by the whole course, reviewed honestly once the risk has passed. Take stock of what your conduct actually produced, not only what you intended. When this line changes, it becomes Hexagram 58, Lake: a path walked carefully to completion opens into the shared ease and open exchange that Lake doubled represents.

Read hexagram 10 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/10-treading



HEXAGRAM 11

Peace

泰 · Tai

Earth over Heaven

Peace describes a season when opposing forces meet and exchange freely, so small effort now sustains a harmony that still needs tending to last.

THE JUDGMENT

泰：小往大来，吉亨。

Peace: the small departs and the great arrives. Good fortune and success.

THE IMAGE

天地交，泰；后以财成天地之道，辅相天地之宜，以左右民。

Heaven and earth exchange: Peace. Rulers of old shaped this exchange into order, assisted what was fitting in it, and so guided the people.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

Hexagram 11 follows Hexagram 10, Treading, in the received sequence: once careful conduct has been tested against real danger and proven sound, the reward is a season where things finally go smoothly. Small forces yield and great forces arrive; what was cautious footing becomes open ground.

The Chinese name 泰 carries the sense of great ease, smooth passage, and things flowing freely — it is why the hexagram is also translated as Prosperity or Greatness, though Peace best captures its central image of

two realms in genuine exchange rather than a fixed calm. Read this way, the hexagram does not describe a finished, static harmony; it describes an active mixing, the small departing and the great approaching, that has to be kept in motion or it will settle back into stillness and separation.

The judgment names the small departing and the great arriving as good fortune and success. That reversal of the usual order — what is modest steps back so that what is substantial can move forward — is the mechanism of peace itself: nothing here is static, and the very freedom that created the exchange is also what a careless hand can let slip away.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 11 joins Earth over Heaven: the light, rising force of Heaven sits below, while the heavy, settling force of Earth sits above. Instead of drifting apart along their natural directions, each is turned back into the other's path, so their energies meet and mix in the middle rather than separating toward opposite ends.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, three unbroken yang lines form the lower trigram Qian, Heaven, and three broken yin lines form the upper trigram Kun, Earth, directly above. This diagram places rising strength beneath a receptive, settling field, which is exactly the situation the hexagram addresses: qi that would otherwise separate is instead held in contact, producing the fertile exchange the judgment calls good fortune.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Rising together at the root BOTTOM LINE

初九：拔茅茹，以其汇，征吉。

Pulling up reed grass, root and all together. Advancing brings good fortune.

The first line pictures pulling up reed grass and finding the roots come up tangled together, not singly. Nothing moves in isolation here: whatever step you take at the start of a favorable season pulls your allies, resources, or circumstances along with it. This is a good moment to act, provided you recognize you are not acting alone — bring others with you rather than advancing quietly by yourself. The line names advancing as fortunate, but that fortune is bound up with the company you keep. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 46 — Ascending, where the same momentum continues, carried further by steady effort.

2 Bold, undivided crossing SECOND LINE

九二：包荒，用冯河，不遐遗，朋亡，得尚于中行。

Embracing what is uncultivated, daring to cross the river without a boat, not neglecting what is distant, letting go of factions — one is honored for holding the middle path.

At the second line, peace calls for a wider embrace: tolerating what is still rough or undeveloped, daring to cross real risk without full preparation, and not neglecting people or interests that are distant or easy to overlook. This is the line that asks you to let go of narrow loyalty to a small circle and hold a genuinely inclusive course instead. It is demanding — courage and generosity together — but the reward named is being honored for exactly that balance. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 36 — Dimmed Light, a caution that boldness without enough discretion can expose you to conditions where your intentions are misread.

3 Hardship inside a smooth season THIRD LINE

九三：无平不陂，无往不复，艰贞无咎，勿恤其孚，于食有福。

No level ground stays level forever; no departure goes without a return. Facing hardship with steadiness brings no blame. Do not fret over being trusted; there is good fortune in one's daily provision.

The third line interrupts the ease with a plain observation: no level ground stays level, no departure goes without a return. Even amid genuine peace, difficulty resurfaces, and pretending otherwise only makes it harder to meet. The line's counsel is steadiness through hardship, not anxious effort to prove your trustworthiness — daily provision is already assured, so the real task is enduring the rough patch without losing your footing. This is the pivot line of the hexagram, the reminder that ease was never permanent to begin with. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 19 — Drawing Near, favoring closeness and attentive presence over withdrawal while difficulty passes.

4 Descending without waiting to be ready FOURTH LINE

六四：翩翩，不富以其邻，不戒以孚。

Fluttering downward, not waiting to be rich before joining the neighbors, trusting without being warned.

The fourth line pictures fluttering downward toward one's neighbors, not waiting until wealthy or fully prepared before joining them, and trusting without needing to be persuaded. This describes generosity that moves ahead of its own justification: you reach out, share, or extend goodwill before circumstances have proven it safe to do so, because trust freely given is what keeps the exchange of peace genuinely mutual. Holding back until you feel secure enough would defeat the purpose. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 34 — Great Vigor, where this openness matures into visible strength — power used well rather than power hoarded out of caution.

5 A costly gesture that secures trust FIFTH LINE

六五：帝乙归妹，以祉元吉。

The sovereign Yi gives his younger sister in marriage; this brings blessing and great good fortune.

At the fifth line, peace is sealed by a deliberate, personally costly act: the sovereign Yi gives his own younger sister in marriage, joining two houses through a gift that carries real weight rather than an empty gesture. This is leadership by example — securing an alliance or a relationship not through demands made of others, but through what you are willing to give yourself. The blessing and great good fortune named here follow directly from that willingness. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 5 — Patience, suggesting that having made the gesture, what remains is to wait sincerely, without forcing the outcome, for it to bear fruit.

6 The wall falls into the moat TOP LINE

上六：城复于隍，勿用师，自邑告命，贞吝。

The city wall collapses back into the moat. Do not use troops. Issue orders only within one's own town; even with steadiness, there is regret.

The top line marks the point where peace, left untended, reverses: the city wall — built from earth dug from the moat — collapses back into that moat, undoing the order it once represented. The counsel is restraint, not panic: send no troops, do not force a recovery by strength, and issue orders only within your own town, the ground you can still hold. Even steadiness here brings some regret, because the reversal has begun; the task is limiting damage, not pretending it can be undone. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 26 — Great Accumulation: what follows a collapse is slow rebuilding, not a quick return to ease.

Read hexagram 11 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/11-peace



HEXAGRAM 12

Obstruction

否 · Pǐ

Heaven over Earth

Hexagram 12 describes an obstruction where those who should meet are drifting apart, and the honest response is to withdraw your ambition quietly rather than force a connection that will not hold.

THE JUDGMENT

否：否之匪人，不利君子贞，大往小来。

Obstruction: this is no way for people to live. It does not favor the steadfastness of the noble one. The great departs; the small arrives.

THE IMAGE

天地不交，否；君子以俭德辟难，不可荣以禄。

Heaven and earth do not exchange: Obstruction. The noble one uses frugal virtue to avoid danger, and does not seek honor through rank or pay.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received sequence, Hexagram 12 follows Hexagram 11, Peace, where heaven and earth exchanged their places and everything flowed together. Pi is the reversal: the same two forces pull back into their own lanes, heaven rising, earth sinking, and the exchange that made Peace possible simply stops. What was open now closes.

The Chinese name 否 means negation, or a flat no — the sense of something refused before it can even begin. Some editions also translate the hexagram as Standstill, and that word names the practical experience better than any single English gloss: not collapse, but a stall, everything technically in place yet going nowhere. The judgment calls it 匪人, not the way for people, because a world where the great departs and the small arrives is one where sincerity finds no path upward.

Read this hexagram whenever cooperation has quietly stopped working — a partnership, a workplace, a negotiation — and you are deciding whether to keep pushing or to pull back and wait. The lines trace how obstruction is endured, resisted, and finally overturned from within.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 12 joins Heaven over Earth. Heaven's nature is to rise; earth's nature is to sink. Placed in this order, each simply continues moving away from the other, so nothing between them ever meets or mixes. The ancient commentary reads this as the diagram of a season when the wise person conceals ability and lives frugally rather than seeking recognition that the moment will not honestly reward.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, three yin lines fill the lower trigram Kun (Earth) and three yang lines fill the upper trigram Qian (Heaven). The lesser, yielding lines sit inside and below; the greater, firm lines have already withdrawn above and outside. Every line faces its correct partner in principle, yet the two trigrams only separate further, which is exactly why this arrangement reads as blockage rather than balance.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Withdraw together, honestly BOTTOM LINE

初六：拔茅茹，以其汇，贞吉亨。

Pulling up sacred grass, roots tangled with its own kind: staying true brings good fortune and success.

The first line pictures pulling up a clump of sacred grass and finding its roots tangled with others of its kind — one small act reveals a whole network moving the same direction. At the start of obstruction, the honest path is to notice who shares your situation and step back together rather than trying to hold ground alone. This early, quiet alignment with people of like mind is what earns good fortune and eventual success, even though the wider climate favors withdrawal over advance. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 25, Genuineness: what looked like retreat turns out to be the ground for acting without pretense.

2 Compliance is not success SECOND LINE

六二：包承，小人吉，大人否亨。

Bearing up and deferring: good fortune for the small-minded, but the great person keeps to obstruction and calls that success.

The second line separates two responses to the same blocked situation: the small-minded person gets by through simple deference, agreeing with whatever keeps the peace, and calls that good fortune. The person of real substance can also bear up and defer for now, but does not mistake that patience for a real resolution — the text is explicit that what the great person calls success is still, honestly, obstruction endured. Play along where you must, but keep your own judgment intact underneath the compliance. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 6, Dispute: swallowed disagreement does not vanish, it resurfaces as open contention.

3 Carrying the shame THIRD LINE

六三：包羞。

Bearing up under shame.

The third line is stark: bearing up under shame, with no promise attached. Positioned at the top of the lower trigram, this line has pushed compliance about as far as it can go without any actual improvement to show for it, and the commentary tradition reads it as someone compromised by staying too long in a position that costs their own dignity. There is no reward named here, only the discomfort itself — a signal that this particular accommodation has reached its limit. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 33, Retreat: the honest next move is to withdraw cleanly rather than absorb one more round of quiet humiliation.

4 A mandate worth trusting FOURTH LINE

九四：有命无咎，畴离祉。

Holding a true mandate: no blame. Those bound to you attach themselves to good fortune.

The fourth line marks the turn from enduring obstruction to beginning to move through it. Holding a genuine mandate — a real basis for what you are doing, not a claimed one — brings no blame even while the wider stall continues, and the people whose fortunes are bound to yours attach themselves to the good that follows. This is the first line in the hexagram permitted to act rather than simply wait, provided that action rests on legitimate ground. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 20, Observation: having moved, the next task is to watch carefully what your action has actually set in motion.

5 Vigilance ties it to the root FIFTH LINE

九五：休否，大人吉，其亡其亡，系于苞桑。

Bringing obstruction to rest: good fortune for the great person. “It may yet fail, it may yet fail” — tie it fast to the thick mulberry root.

The fifth line, the hexagram's own center, shows a great person actively bringing obstruction to rest rather than merely surviving it, and calls the result good fortune. The image that follows is deliberately unsettling: repeating “it may yet fail, it may yet fail” while tying the whole enterprise fast to a deep-rooted mulberry. Security here comes from staying alert to real risk, not from assuming the danger has passed. Whatever you have stabilized still needs that same watchfulness, or the blockage can reassert itself. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 35, Advance: vigilant stability is finally rewarded with visible forward movement.

6 Obstruction turns to joy TOP LINE

上九：倾否，先否后喜。

Overturning obstruction: first blockage, then joy.

The top line marks the reversal the whole hexagram has been building toward: obstruction, having run its full course, overturns itself, and what began in obstruction ends in genuine joy. This is not a reward for waiting passively — it arrives after the patient, honest steps described in the lines below it. Recognize when the blockage has actually lifted and respond to the new opening rather than staying braced for a difficulty that has already passed. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 45, Convergence: the relief that follows obstruction draws people back together into real gathering.

Read hexagram 12 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/12-standstill



HEXAGRAM 13

Fellowship

同人 · Tóng rén

Heaven over Fire

Hexagram 13 asks you to join with others in the open, on shared and honest terms, rather than retreating into a narrow circle of family or faction.

THE JUDGMENT

同人：同人于野，亨，利涉大川，利君子贞。

Fellowship: joining with others in the open country brings success. It is fruitful to cross the great river; it is fruitful for the wise person to hold firmly to what is right.

THE IMAGE

天与火，同人；君子以类族辨物。

Heaven together with Fire: Fellowship. The wise person accordingly sorts people by their kind and distinguishes things by their category, so that real fellowship can be told apart from mere closeness.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

Hexagram 13 follows Hexagram 12, Standstill, in the received sequence: once a period where higher and lower could not communicate finally lifts, people are free to actively rejoin one another, and the text turns from blocked relation to open fellowship. The Chinese name 同人 literally means people joining as one; the character 同 carries the sense of sameness and shared purpose, so the hexagram names the deliberate work of

finding common cause across real differences, not merely tolerating the people around you. Some editions render it Fellowship with Men, and Your I Ching keeps that older title's underlying claim while using plainer language for it; in plain-English searches the pinyin often appears simply as *tong ren*, without its tone marks.

The figure sets a single yielding line at the second position among five strong lines — the picture of one open, receptive presence that everyone else is drawn toward, provided that presence does not close itself off. Read broadly, Hexagram 13 covers any effort to form real fellowship: a partnership, a community, an alliance, a shared cause. Its central caution is that fellowship extended in the open country, without favoritism, succeeds and brings fortune enough to cross a great river, while fellowship narrowed to one's own clan or in-group invites the very division it hoped to prevent.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 13 joins Heaven over Fire: Qian above, high and expansive, and Li below, bright and clinging upward toward it. Fire's flame naturally reaches toward heaven, so the two trigrams share one direction and one intent — the classical image of people whose aims genuinely align, rather than merely standing near one another.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, five strong yang lines surround a single yielding line at the second position. That lone yielding line is the figure everyone else in the hexagram is drawn toward, and how openly or narrowly it holds its company decides the whole reading. The lower trigram Li, Fire, carries clarity and attachment; the upper trigram Qian, Heaven, carries strength and untiring motion. Read together, the diagram argues that fellowship works when clear-sighted warmth below

is matched by tireless, principled strength above, not when one side dominates or the other hides.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Open at the very first meeting BOTTOM LINE

初九：同人于门，无咎。

Fellowship begins right at the gate, open to whoever passes: no fault.

The first line places fellowship right at the gate, before any private circle has had time to form: whoever arrives is met plainly, without screening for rank or familiarity, and no fault comes of it. This is the moment to extend an introduction, a collaboration, or an honest word before habit narrows who you let in. When this line changes, Retreat counsels knowing when an early, open connection has run its natural course, and stepping back deliberately rather than forcing continued closeness once its season has passed.

2 Fellowship kept too close SECOND LINE

六二：同人于宗，吝。

Fellowship narrowed to one's own clan alone: this brings regret.

At the second line, fellowship contracts to one's own clan — family, faction, or the people who already agree with you — and the text names this plainly as regret, not fortune. The comfort of a closed circle is real, but it buys safety at the cost of reach: a narrow alliance cannot cross the great river the Judgment promises to an open one. When this line changes, Heaven counsels expanding toward untiring, principled strength rather than settling for the smaller security of a familiar in-group.

3 A hidden rivalry stalls the alliance THIRD LINE

九三：伏戎于莽，升其高陵，三岁不兴。

Arms lie hidden in the thicket, and the watcher climbs a high mound to look out; for three years nothing comes of the ambush.

The third line hides arms in the thicket and climbs a high mound to watch, yet three years pass with nothing gained: this is unspoken competition, a private bid to outmaneuver a rival for the same connection, kept out of sight rather than resolved. The longer it stays hidden, the longer the larger fellowship stalls without visibly breaking. When this line changes, Genuineness counsels bringing the calculation into the open and dealing plainly, since only honest dealing dissolves a rivalry that concealment only prolongs.

4 Standing down from a claim FOURTH LINE

九四：乘其墉，弗克攻，吉。

He climbs onto the rampart but does not carry the attack through: good fortune.

The fourth line climbs onto the rampart, in reach of pressing an advantage over a rival for the same alliance, and chooses not to attack: good fortune follows the restraint itself. Real strength here is recognizing a contest you could win and declining it because winning would cost the fellowship more than it would gain. When this line changes, Household counsels turning that same restraint inward, toward settling and steadying the smaller circle you already answer to, once the larger contest is deliberately set aside.

5 Reunion earned through struggle FIFTH LINE

九五：同人先号咷而后笑，大师克相遇。

In fellowship, there is first loud weeping and afterward laughter; a great force prevails, and the two at last meet.

The fifth line moves from loud weeping to laughter: separation and effort come first, and only a great, sustained undertaking finally brings the two sides back together. This is not an easy or immediate fellowship; it is one that has to be fought for honestly before it can be trusted. When this line changes, Fire counsels holding to clarity and attachment through that struggle, since brightness sustained under pressure is what actually earns the reunion the line describes.

6 Fellowship kept at a distance TOP LINE

上九：同人于郊，无悔。

Fellowship kept out at the meadow, at a distance from the center: no regret.

The top line places fellowship out at the meadow, well beyond the center of activity, and finds no regret in the distance: some connections are meant to stay loose, cordial, and undemanding rather than close and binding, and holding them at that natural range is itself the sound choice. When this line changes, Radical Change counsels recognizing that a distant, low-stakes fellowship can nonetheless sit at the edge of a larger shift, one worth watching even from where you have chosen to stand back.

Read hexagram 13 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/13-fellowship



HEXAGRAM 14

Great Possession

大有 · Dà yǒu

Fire over Heaven

Hexagram 14 describes abundance held openly under one clear standard: real possession is only secure when what you hold is shared, seen, and used well.

THE JUDGMENT

大有：元亨。

Great Possession: supreme success.

THE IMAGE

火在天上，大有；君子以遏恶扬善，顺天休命。

Fire rests high above Heaven: Great Possession. The wise person checks what is wrong, raises up what is good, and follows the good fortune that Heaven has already given.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received sequence, Great Possession follows Fellowship: once people gather around a shared purpose, resources naturally accumulate. Hexagram 14 asks what happens next — whether abundance strengthens the group that produced it or quietly begins to divide it.

The Chinese name 大有, romanized Da You, combines 大, great, with 有, to have or to hold, giving the literal sense of holding much. Some editions render it as Possession in Great Measure. The image is a single

yielding line at the fifth position, open and central, with five firm lines gathered around it and beneath it. Wealth, talent, and authority here are not owned by force; they are entrusted to a center that stays receptive rather than seizing control of everyone it commands.

That is why the judgment is short and unconditional: great abundance succeeds simply by existing rightly. But the classical commentary is careful to add a warning found nowhere else in the six lines — the one holding great possession must actively check what is wrong and elevate what is good, and align conduct with what is already given by circumstance, rather than resting on the fact of having much.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 14 joins Fire over Heaven. Heaven below is pure creative strength; Fire above is the sun at its height, visible everywhere at once. These two trigrams together describe a position from which everything can be seen and reached — the natural image for wealth, reputation, or authority held at scale.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, five yang lines fill every position except the fifth, where a single yin line sits open and unclaimed. That one yielding line, high and central, is why the whole figure holds together: strength that surrounds a receptive center stays coherent, while strength gathered around a rigid one tends to fracture.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 No harm before contact BOTTOM LINE

初九：无交害，匪咎，艰则无咎。

No dealings yet, so no harm; this is not a fault. Treat the position as difficult and there is no fault.

The first line describes possession before it has met any test: nothing has yet been claimed, exchanged, or exposed to other people's demands, so nothing has yet gone wrong. That safety is real but incomplete — it holds only as long as you treat the position as difficult rather than settled. Do not mistake an early, untested gain for a secured one. Stay alert to the effort still required. When this line changes, Cauldron suggests that what looks like a quiet beginning is already being prepared to nourish something larger, provided you keep tending it with care rather than assuming it will simply hold itself.

2 A load worth carrying SECOND LINE

九二：大车以载，有攸往，无咎。

A great cart carries the load. There is somewhere to go: no fault.

At the second line, possession has grown substantial enough to need a sturdy vehicle — a great cart, built for real weight, not a light one meant for show. The image favors capability matched to the size of what you carry: build the structure, the team, or the plan strong enough for the actual load before setting out. There is somewhere to go, and moving is right, provided the means are equal to the distance. The change to Fire shows this capacity becoming visible and radiant — what you can carry starts to be recognized, so make sure the load is genuinely sound before it is seen by everyone.

3 Offered upward, not kept THIRD LINE

九三：公用亨于天子，小人弗克。

A duke presents his offering to the Son of Heaven; a small-minded person could not carry this through.

The third line reaches the point where a person of real standing presents what they hold to a higher authority, publicly and formally, rather than keeping it as private territory. Wang Fuzhi's commentary is blunt here: a small-minded person could not carry this through, because offering upward requires setting personal advantage beneath a larger, legitimate order. The temptation at this position is to entrench instead — to treat gathered strength as grounds for independence. Resist it. The change to Opposition warns that hoarding what should be offered creates exactly the friction and division this line is written to prevent.

4 Strength without a summons FOURTH LINE

九四：匪其彭，无咎。

Not sounding the drum to claim the crowd: no fault.

The fourth line sits close beneath the yielding center, surrounded by other firm lines that could easily be rallied around a rival claim. The instruction is restraint: do not sound the drum, do not gather a following, do not use your position to draw the crowd toward yourself instead of toward the legitimate center. What looks like an opportunity to consolidate power is, read correctly, a test of whether you will lend your strength upward or divert it for personal use. The change to Great Accumulation rewards exactly this discipline — restrained strength becomes the foundation for something substantial stored up over time.

5 Sincerity holds the center FIFTH LINE

六五：厥孚交如，威如，吉。

Sincerity draws others to exchange with you; carry dignity as well, and there is good fortune.

At the fifth line, the single yielding position at the heart of the figure, sincerity is what actually governs five firm lines gathered around it. This is not softness mistaken for weakness; the line explicitly pairs sincerity with dignity, because an open center without any firmness invites exactly the kind of encroachment the nuclear hexagram warns about. Stay genuinely receptive to what others bring you, and hold a clear, respected standard at the same time. The change to Heaven shows this trust, sustained without lapse, becoming pure creative strength — the natural result of a center that has proven itself reliable.

6 Favor from beyond effort TOP LINE

上九：自天佑之，吉无不利。

Help comes from Heaven itself: good fortune, nothing that does not favor you.

The top line describes help arriving from Heaven itself — good fortune that exceeds what the position alone could earn through calculation or maneuvering. Read carefully, this is the outcome of everything the lower five lines built: sincerity offered upward, restraint practiced under temptation, strength lent rather than seized. It is not a promise handed out independent of conduct. When this line changes, Great Vigor shows that abundance sustained this long becomes active momentum, ready to move forward decisively — provided that momentum is still guided by the same integrity that earned the favor in the first place.

Read hexagram 14 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/14-great-possession



HEXAGRAM 15

Humility

谦 · Qiān

Earth over Mountain

Humility asks you to keep a mountain of substance quietly held within, giving where there is excess and receiving where there is lack, until the whole stays level.

THE JUDGMENT

谦：亨，君子有终。

Humility: success. The wise person carries it through to the end.

THE IMAGE

地中有山，谦；君子以裒多益寡，称物平施。

Within the earth there is a mountain: Humility. The wise person reduces what is excessive and adds to what is deficient, weighing all things and distributing them evenly.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

Hexagram 15 follows Hexagram 14, Great Possession, in the received sequence: once abundance has been gathered, the very next lesson is how not to lose it. A full house tips over if it is not kept level, so the sequence turns from having much to holding it lightly.

The Chinese name 谦 pairs speech with the idea of insufficiency — a person who, having much, still speaks and carries themselves as though there were more to learn. It is why the hexagram is also translated as

Modesty, since the classical text pictures conduct rather than a private feeling: a measuring and leveling of what one has against what others lack. Read this way, humility is not self-erasure. It is the discipline of a person with real capacity who chooses to reduce excess, augment scarcity, and weigh every situation before acting, so that strength never advertises itself and never goes to waste either.

The judgment promises success and adds that the wise person carries this through to the end — a warning built into the text itself, since a humility performed only at the start, to make a good impression, is not the same virtue the hexagram describes. All six lines are yin except one, the third; that single firm line, carrying the weight of the household while surrounded by softness, is the quiet engine the rest of the hexagram turns around.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 15 joins Earth over Mountain: a great height tucked inside the plain rather than towering above it. The mountain does not vanish — its mass is still there — but Earth's yielding breadth surrounds it, so that substance and outward show move in opposite directions. What is highest chooses to sit lowest.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, only the third line is unbroken (yang); every other line is broken (yin). The lower trigram Gen, the Mountain, is firmness that knows how to stop; the upper trigram Kun, Earth, is receptive and devoted. A single strength set low among five yielding lines — two beneath it, three above — is the shape of a person or a household whose real capability is deliberately kept low in the structure, doing the work rather than claiming the credit.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 **Humble at the start** BOTTOM LINE

初六：谦谦君子，用涉大川，吉。

Modest, and modest again: the wise person is fit to cross the great river.
Good fortune.

The first line describes someone new to the terrain, doubling down on caution rather than assuming competence too early. "Modest, and modest again" is not timidity for its own sake; it is the honest posture of a person who knows the scale of what lies ahead and refuses to overstate their readiness. Because that caution is sincere rather than performed, the line judges this person fit to cross a great river — real difficulty is safely attempted from here. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 36 — Dimmed Light, a caution that unguarded openness may need to give way to deliberate concealment.

2 **A humility that speaks** SECOND LINE

六二：鸣谦，贞吉。

Humility voiced aloud. Staying true brings good fortune.

At the second line, quiet restraint becomes audible: this position calls out, drawing on the strength of the single firm line nearby rather than pretending to need nothing. Because the call comes from a centered, correct position and not from flattery, staying true here brings good fortune. Asking for help or naming a limitation out loud is itself an act of humility, not a failure of it, so long as the request stays honest and does not compromise your own footing. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 46 — Ascending, showing that a well-placed, sincere appeal can be exactly what lifts a situation upward.

3 The one who carries the load THIRD LINE

九三：劳谦，君子有终，吉。

Laboring with humility: the wise person carries it through to the end.
Good fortune.

The third line is the hexagram's single firm position, surrounded by softer lines that depend on it. "Laboring with humility" names a person who does the real, often unglamorous work — supporting a household, a team, or a family — and does not trade that labor for praise. The line is explicit that this must be carried through to the end, not staged for a season and abandoned once recognition fails to arrive. This is strength choosing restraint, not self-effacement out of fear. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 2 — Earth, the full expression of yielding devotion this sustained labor becomes.

4 Extending humility outward FOURTH LINE

六四：无不利，撝谦。

Nothing but gain: humility extended and freely given.

The fourth line marks the turn from private conduct to public dealing: the humility already formed within must now be spread wide and applied evenly, not hoarded for a favored few. The classical caution behind this line is that humility used selectively — kind to the powerful, dismissive of the weak — collapses into a hollow performance meant only to please. Genuine extension treats those with the least leverage as carefully as those who can reward you. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 62 — Small Exceeding, a reminder that small, careful, well-aimed gestures matter more than any sweeping display.

5 Plain authority, real correction FIFTH LINE

六五：不富以其邻，利用侵伐，无不利。

Not wealthy, yet drawing the neighbors close by it. It is fruitful to move against transgression. Nothing but gain.

The fifth line holds central authority without the outward wealth or display that usually signals power; it draws its neighbors close precisely because it has not sought to overshadow them. Yet the line also permits something sharper: when a genuine wrong persists nearby, it is fruitful to act against it directly rather than absorbing the injustice indefinitely in the name of staying modest. Humility here is not passivity — it is restraint that still knows when firmness is owed. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 39 — Hardship, a caution that even a rightful correction can open onto real difficulty that must be met with care.

6 A call with little left TOP LINE

上六：鸣谦，利用行师，征邑国。

Humility voiced aloud. It is fruitful to march the troops and set one's own towns and lands in order.

The top line also voices a call for support, but it sits at the very edge of the structure with the least reach and the fewest resources to answer it. What remains is smaller and closer to home: setting one's own towns and immediate affairs in order rather than reaching for anything wider. This line is a caution against extending humility past its capacity — yielded too far, for too long, softness can turn brittle and finally demand a correction that lands harder than it needed to. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 52 — Stillness, the counsel to stop, hold ground, and consolidate rather than press further outward.

Read hexagram 15 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/15-modesty



HEXAGRAM 16

Anticipation

豫 · Yù

Thunder over Earth

Hexagram 16 shows momentum built through one clear, trusted mover: readiness and shared eagerness carry a group forward, but only when timing and sincerity align.

THE JUDGMENT

豫：利建侯行师。

Anticipation: it is fruitful to establish leaders and to mobilize an army.

THE IMAGE

雷出地奋，豫；先王以作乐崇德，殷荐之上帝，以配祖考。

Thunder bursts out of the earth and stirs: Anticipation. The ancient kings composed music to honor virtue, and offered it richly to the highest power, joining it to the memory of their ancestors.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received sequence, Hexagram 16 follows Hexagram 15, Humility. The traditional commentary on the sequence explains that a person who holds greatness yet stays humble will surely find ease afterward — so Anticipation follows Humility as its natural reward.

The Chinese name 豫 carries two linked senses: joyful readiness and foresight, the ease that comes from preparing before a need arises. Hexagram 16 is also translated as Enthusiasm, since the single strong line at its

heart moves the entire figure the way a rousing call moves a crowd. Both senses matter together — this is not excitement for its own sake but momentum earned by sound timing and honest motive, the difference between a leader worth following and mere noise.

Only one line in the whole figure is strong; the other five are yielding around it. That shape asks a pointed question: is your excitement coming from something solid, or are you swept along by another person's energy before you have tested it yourself? Anticipation rewards the person who moves in step with real momentum and warns the person who performs excitement to be seen.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 16 joins Thunder over Earth. Thunder breaks out from the ground and stirs everything it passes over; Earth is the broad, receptive field that carries the sound onward without resistance. Ancient rulers read this image as an instruction to compose music and rites that honored genuine achievement, rather than noise raised for its own sake.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, five yielding lines surround a single strong line at the fourth position. The lower trigram Kun, the Earth, is entirely yin — receptive and still; the upper trigram Zhen, Thunder, begins with that one yang line and carries two yin lines above it. One firm line initiating movement inside an otherwise soft structure is the whole logic of Anticipation: everything else responds to a single trustworthy source of motion.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Excitement announced too soon BOTTOM LINE

初六：鸣豫，凶。

Anticipation announced aloud: misfortune.

The first line sits farthest from the strong fourth line yet responds to it, and mistakes that distant connection for standing. It broadcasts eagerness before earning any real basis for it — celebrating an outcome that has not yet arrived, or claiming closeness to a project you have not actually built. The classical reading is blunt: this kind of premature announcement invites misfortune, because it spends credibility the situation has not yet granted you. When this line changes, Shock follows: a sudden jolt tends to expose exactly what was announced too early.

2 Firm judgment, decided quickly SECOND LINE

六二：介于石，不终日，贞吉。

Firm as stone, deciding before the day is done: staying true brings good fortune.

The second line holds the center of the lower trigram with quiet firmness — steady as stone amid a field of general excitement, unmoved by the noise around it. Its strength is discernment: it reads a situation clearly enough to decide within the day rather than drifting toward whatever mood is loudest. This is the model line of the hexagram, showing that true readiness looks like calm clarity, not eagerness. When this line changes, Release follows: a firm, timely decision is precisely what loosens a tangle that hesitation would have left knotted.

3 **Watching another's ease** THIRD LINE

六三：盱豫，悔，迟有悔。

Gazing upward toward another's ease: regret. Hesitating over it also brings regret.

The third line looks upward toward the strong fourth line, hoping to share in its momentum, but the two are not truly aligned — proximity is not partnership. Acting rashly to attach yourself to someone else's success brings regret; delaying out of uncertainty brings regret as well, because neither choice is grounded in your own settled judgment. The line names a familiar trap: wanting the benefits of another's readiness without doing the work readiness requires. When this line changes, Small Exceeding follows, asking for care with small, unglamorous details rather than a bold move either way.

4 **The one trustworthy center** FOURTH LINE

九四：繇豫大有得，勿疑，朋盍簪。

The source of anticipation: great gain. Hold no doubt — companions gather to you like a clasp binding hair.

The fourth line is the single strong line in the entire figure, and everything else in the hexagram moves because of it. Holding this position means becoming the reliable point others organize around — and the text is explicit that hesitation here is the real risk, not overconfidence. Doubt yourself here and the momentum you carry falters for everyone depending on it; trust the readiness you have actually built and companions gather naturally, the way a clasp draws scattered hair into one binding. When this line changes, Earth follows: total yielding, asking you to let the structure rest rather than keep driving it.

5 Enduring a weakened position FIFTH LINE

六五：贞疾，恒不死。

A persistent weakness while holding to what is right: it does not end in death.

The fifth line holds the ruler's seat but is soft where the fourth line below it is strong, so its authority is quietly overshadowed by a subordinate whose momentum it cannot fully control. The classical image is a chronic weakness — persistent, uncomfortable, but not fatal. Holding to what is right lets this position endure the imbalance without collapsing. When this line changes, Convergence follows: what could not be commanded alone can still gather real support once the position stops resisting and starts drawing others toward it honestly.

6 Waking from a late excitement TOP LINE

上六：冥豫，成有渝，无咎。

Anticipation kept in the dark: what has already taken shape can still be changed. No blame.

The top line sits farthest from the source of momentum and furthest from clear sight, so it is described as anticipation kept in the dark — excitement that arrives late, distracted, or unaware of what has already been decided without it. The situation has already taken shape below; the only real choice left is whether to change your own stance to meet it. Because that change is still possible, the line closes without blame. Fittingly, this is the hexagram's unchanging line: when this line changes, Advance follows, rewarding the willingness to wake up and move forward rather than stay behind.

Read hexagram 16 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/16-enthusiasm



HEXAGRAM 17

Following

隨 · Suí

Lake over Thunder

Following asks you to move with what is genuinely worth joining, adapting to timing and circumstance without losing your own sense of direction.

THE JUDGMENT

隨：元亨，利貞，无咎。

Following: supreme success. It is fruitful to stay true. No blame.

THE IMAGE

澤中有雷，隨；君子以向晦入宴息。

Thunder rests within the lake: Following. As evening falls, the wise person goes indoors and settles into rest.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

Hexagram 17 follows Hexagram 16, Enthusiasm, in the received sequence: once shared excitement has gathered people together, the next question is what happens when that excitement asks something of you. Following takes up the practical side of enthusiasm — deciding when to move with a person, a group, or a moment, and when to hold your own line instead.

The Chinese name 隨 means to follow, to accompany, or to go along with, and it carries the sense of adapting your own step to someone else's pace

rather than either leading blindly or refusing to move at all. The hexagram is also commonly translated as Accommodation, since the figure is less about obedience than about a willing, discerning responsiveness to what the moment requires. Thunder settling beneath the lake, rather than cracking overhead, pictures strength that has quieted itself enough to move with the current instead of against it.

The judgment names supreme success, fruitful steadiness, and freedom from blame — a striking endorsement for a hexagram about yielding. That endorsement is conditional: following only earns its reward when it is chosen with clear eyes, tested against your own values, and not simply surrendered to whoever moves first or speaks loudest.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 17 joins Lake over Thunder, one of the sixty-four possible trigrams pairings. Thunder is movement and initiative; Lake is openness, pleasure, and glad response. Together they describe a moment when energetic action has learned to settle into a receptive form — thunder no longer crashing in the sky but resting within the still water of the lake, quiet and contained until it is needed again.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, the lower trigram Zhen, Thunder, opens with one yang line under two yin lines, and the upper trigram Dui, the Lake, closes with two yang lines under one yin line. Reading the line structure of both trigrams together shows an active first move beneath a responsive, welcoming surface, which is exactly the pattern the hexagram addresses: initiative that knows how to yield, and yielding that still keeps its own direction.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Leadership shifts, meet it directly BOTTOM LINE

初九：官有渝，贞吉，出门交有功。

The one in charge changes course. Staying true brings good fortune. Going out to meet others brings achievement.

The first line describes a change at the top — the one in charge, or the guiding principle you have relied on, moves in a new direction. Rather than clinging to the old arrangement out of habit or waiting anxiously to see what happens, the line advises staying true to your own steadiness and going out to meet the new situation directly. Passive following invites confusion here; active, sincere engagement earns achievement. This line's change points toward Hexagram 45 — Convergence, showing that meeting a shift in leadership with openness can gather genuine support around you rather than scattering it.

2 Choosing novelty over substance SECOND LINE

六二：系小子，失丈夫。

Bound to the young one, one loses the mature man.

At the second line, attention is caught by something young, new, and immediately appealing, and in binding to it you lose hold of a more mature, dependable connection. This is the danger of following at its most careless: chasing whatever is freshest instead of weighing what has actually earned your trust. The line does not forbid enjoying what is new, but it warns that you cannot keep both if the two genuinely compete for your loyalty. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 58 — Lake, where open, glad exchange replaces the firmer bond you set aside.

3 A deliberate, correct choice THIRD LINE

六三：系丈夫，失小子，随有求得，利居贞。

Bound to the mature man, one loses the young one. In following, what is sought is found. It is fruitful to remain settled and true.

The third line reverses the second: here you bind to the mature man and let the young one go, a choice made with clearer judgment about what genuinely deserves your following. What is sought is found, and staying settled in that choice is fruitful. This line rewards the discipline of weighing two attractions honestly instead of drifting toward whichever is loudest. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 49 — Radical Change, showing that a well-founded commitment can become the ground from which real transformation is possible.

4 A gain that must stay honest FOURTH LINE

九四：随有获，贞凶，有孚在道，以明何咎。

In following, one gains something, yet persisting in it brings danger. Holding sincerity to the path and making one's intent clear — what blame could there be?

The fourth line has gained real influence or advantage through following — a position, a following of one's own, an accumulated trust. Yet persisting in that gain for its own sake brings danger, because it can start to look like the follower has claimed authority that was never theirs. The remedy is sincerity kept visible on the path, intentions stated plainly rather than concealed, which clears any blame. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 3 — Sprouting, a reminder that whatever has been gained is still a beginning, not yet a settled structure.

5 Sincerity toward what is excellent FIFTH LINE

九五：孚于嘉，吉。

Sincerity toward what is excellent: good fortune.

At the fifth line, following reaches its most trustworthy form: sincerity directed toward something genuinely excellent, without hesitation or hidden calculation. This is the position of someone whose judgment about whom or what to follow has matured enough that the commitment itself becomes good fortune. It models the kind of leadership that earns followers by being worth following, and the kind of loyalty that is given rather than extracted. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 51 — Shock, showing that sincerity this settled can withstand sudden disruption and even be clarified by it.

6 Binding taken to its furthest point TOP LINE

上六：拘系之，乃从维之，王用亨于西山。

Bound fast, then tied still further. The king makes an offering at the Western Mountain.

The top line pictures a bond tied fast and then tied further still, and a king making an offering at the Western Mountain — following carried past ordinary loyalty into ritual devotion. This is not coercion; it is the willing extremity of commitment, given freely toward something regarded as worth every remaining tie. Few situations call for following this complete, but the line shows what full devotion looks like when it is genuinely earned. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 25 — Genuineness, where such complete sincerity finally rests in simple, unforced integrity.

Read hexagram 17 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/17-following



HEXAGRAM 18

Corruption

蛊 · Gǔ

Mountain over Wind

Hexagram 18 describes decay that has set in through neglect, and the patient, sometimes uncomfortable work of repairing it before it spreads further.

THE JUDGMENT

蛊：元亨，利涉大川，先甲三日，后甲三日。

Corruption: great success. It is fruitful to cross the great river. Three days before the starting day, three days after it.

THE IMAGE

山下有风，蛊；君子以振民育德。

Wind gathers, trapped at the foot of the mountain: Corruption. The wise person rouses the people and cultivates virtue in response.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received sequence, Hexagram 18 follows Hexagram 17, Following. Wang Fuzhi's commentary reads this pairing directly: to follow without discernment, again and again, is how small compromises accumulate into decay. Corruption is what settles in when nothing is examined for too long.

The Chinese name 蛊 pictures insects inside a covered vessel — food or grain left standing until it spoils and breeds what feeds on it. The charac-

ter does not describe a single event; it describes a process of quiet neglect that only becomes visible once it has already gone on for some time. In some editions the hexagram is also translated as *Work on the Decayed*, a title that keeps the emphasis where the line texts put it: not on blame, but on the labor of restoration.

Every line but the last speaks through the image of a child inheriting a parent's unfinished business, correcting what was left undone with a mixture of firmness and care. The lesson generalizes past family life to any situation you did not create but must now attend to: a project, an agreement, a habit, an institution. The judgment promises success precisely because decay named early is decay that can still be worked on.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 18 joins Mountain over Wind. The mountain stands still and heavy above; the wind moves and searches below it, unable to climb past the mass that blocks it and so turning back on itself. Read as a single image, it is stagnant air trapped at the foot of a slope — the atmosphere in which things quietly spoil.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, a yin line opens the figure, two yang lines rise through the middle, two yin lines follow, and a yang line closes the top. Read as a pair of trigrams, this is Gen over Xun: the lower trigram Xun, the Wind, sits beneath the upper trigram Gen, the Mountain, movement pressed down by stillness rather than lifted by it, which is why the figure reads as blockage rather than free exchange.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Taking up unfinished business BOTTOM LINE

初六：干父之蛊，有子，考无咎，厉终吉。

Repairing the father's decay: with a capable child to take it on, the departed father is freed from blame. There is danger, but in the end, good fortune.

The first line places you at the very start of the repair, before the decay has spread far enough to be dangerous. Taking responsibility for what a predecessor left undone is itself protective: it clears an old account before it can compound. There is some risk in stepping forward this early, since the full extent of the problem may still be unclear, but the classical text is direct that the outcome is favorable when a capable person accepts the task. When this line changes, Great Accumulation shows that steady, patient effort now builds real reserves you can draw on later.

2 Correcting without force SECOND LINE

九二：干母之蛊，不可贞。

Repairing the mother's decay: one should not press for rigid correction.

The second line addresses decay that involves someone gentler or more indirect than the situation described at the first line — the commentary reads this as a mother's fault rather than a father's. Rigid, forceful correction is explicitly warned against here: pressing too hard where softness caused the problem in the first place only creates a new conflict on top of the old one. Adjust your approach to the nature of the fault, not to your own preference for decisiveness. The change to Stillness suggests that restraint, held firmly rather than passively, is the more effective instrument.

3 Some regret, no real fault THIRD LINE

九三：干父之蛊，小有悔，无大咎。

Repairing the father's decay: some slight regret, but no great blame.

The third line describes correcting decay with more force than the second line allows, and meeting some friction for it: a little regret, perhaps a strained conversation, perhaps resistance from the person whose neglect you are addressing. The classical text is reassuring on the outcome, though — no great blame follows from doing the work, even imperfectly. Expect the process to be uncomfortable rather than smooth, and do not mistake that discomfort for evidence you were wrong to act. The change to Inexperience is a reminder to stay teachable about the details even while committing to the correction itself.

4 Tolerating what should be fixed FOURTH LINE

六四：裕父之蛊，往见吝。

Tolerating the father's decay without correcting it: going forward brings difficulty.

The fourth line names the opposite failure: letting the decay stand because addressing it looks like more trouble than it is worth. "Indulgent" is the classical sense of this line's key word, and the consequence is stated plainly — going forward on this path brings difficulty. Tolerance dressed up as patience is still avoidance, and the text does not treat it kindly. When this line changes, the situation becomes the Cauldron, an image of transformation through sustained heat; the redirection is toward doing the harder, slower work rather than managing around it indefinitely.

5 Repair that earns honor FIFTH LINE

六五：干父之蛊，用誉。

Repairing the father's decay: it earns honor.

The fifth line is the figure's clearest reward: correcting the decay from a position of genuine authority and balance, and being recognized for it. This is not correction performed for praise — the honor described here follows from the quality of the work itself, from people seeing that the fault was actually addressed rather than concealed. If you hold real responsibility for the matter at hand, this line suggests the moment favors decisive, visible repair. The change to Wind carries that clarity forward as something that can now spread and gently influence what surrounds it.

6 Beyond the work of office TOP LINE

上九：不事王侯，高尚其事。

Serving neither king nor lord, holding instead to a higher work.

The top line breaks the pattern of the previous five: instead of another figure correcting decay within a role, it describes someone who has stepped outside the hierarchy of king and lord altogether, holding to a higher standard of conduct on their own terms. Read in context, this is the point after long, settled effort where no further repair is owed and the fitting response is quiet integrity rather than continued striving. When this line changes, Ascending describes a gradual, unforced rise — the natural outcome of holding a genuinely high standard rather than chasing status.

Read hexagram 18 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/18-work-on-the-decayed



HEXAGRAM 19

Drawing Near

临 · Lín

Earth over Lake

Hexagram 19 describes a strong, benevolent presence drawing near to guide others, its influence growing while still gentle enough to earn trust rather than command it.

THE JUDGMENT

临：元亨，利贞，至于八月有凶。

Drawing near: great success. It is fruitful to stay true. By the eighth month, there will be misfortune.

THE IMAGE

泽上有地，临；君子以教思无穷，容保民无疆。

Earth rests above the lake: Drawing Near. The wise person teaches without end and shelters the people without limit.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

This page works through the I Ching Hexagram 19 meaning in full: the received sequence places it right after Gu, the work of repairing what has decayed. Once corruption has been addressed, growth becomes possible again, and Drawing Near names exactly that opening: a strong, still-rising presence moving toward the people or situations that need its attention.

The Chinese name 临 (lín) means to draw near, to look down upon, or to oversee from above, the way a ruler visits a province or a teacher walks

among students. The hexagram is also commonly translated as Approach, the sense kept in this page's own web address. Two firm lines rise at the base of the figure while four yielding lines still occupy the upper ground, so the image is not a single arrival but a slow, structural gain of ground: influence that grows because it is earned through steady presence, not seized through force.

The judgment's closing warning, that by the eighth month there will be misfortune, keeps the hexagram honest about time. Nothing that grows continues to grow forever; the wise reader treats a season of advance as a season, not a permanent state, and uses it to build something that can survive the turn.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 19 joins Earth over Lake. Earth is receptive ground that stretches without visible limit; the Lake beneath it is a gathering of open water, glad and communicative. Together they show a broad, patient authority resting directly above a body that welcomes it, rather than a distant power ruling from afar.

In the six-line diagram, read from the bottom, two yang lines rise first, then four yin lines fill the upper half of the figure. The lower trigram Dui, the Lake, is openness and quiet joy; the upper trigram Kun, the Earth, is receptive and nurturing. Strength is advancing from below while softness still holds the greater ground above it, so the whole diagram reads as confidence increasing steadily rather than power imposed all at once.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Sincerity at the first step BOTTOM LINE

初九：咸临，贞吉。

Drawing near through genuine feeling: staying true brings good fortune.

The first line begins Drawing Near with feeling rather than calculation: a genuine pull toward someone or something, matched by a position correctly aligned to receive it. Staying true to that honest impulse, rather than dressing it up or rushing it, is what makes the fortune good. Resist the urge to prove yourself immediately; let the sincerity itself do the early work. When this line changes, the reading turns toward Hexagram 7, Troops, a reminder that even a small, honest step forward needs discipline and clear direction behind it, or momentum alone will not hold formation.

2 Feeling proven by steadiness SECOND LINE

九二：咸临，吉，无不利。

Drawing near through genuine feeling: good fortune, nothing that is not favorable.

At the second line, the same genuine feeling that opened the hexagram has now been tested and found sound: the text repeats the phrase almost exactly, but adds that nothing here is unfavorable. This is a pull that has survived a second look. Trust it, and let your conduct stay as plain and consistent as it was at the start rather than escalating. The change to Hexagram 24, Return, suggests that this steadiness is really a homecoming: proven feeling does not need to conquer new ground so much as return honestly to what already works.

3 Sweetness without substance THIRD LINE

六三：甘临，无攸利，既忧之，无咎。

Drawing near through flattering sweetness: nothing favorable. Once this is met with honest concern, there is no blame.

The third line marks a shift from sincerity to performance: a step made pleasant on purpose, meant to win favor rather than to communicate anything true. The text is blunt that nothing favorable comes from this, because charm alone cannot sustain a relationship or a position once tested. Its remedy is equally direct: recognizing the emptiness with honest concern removes the blame. When this line changes, the outcome becomes Hexagram 11, Peace, showing that admitting the shortfall, rather than defending it, is exactly what opens the way to a healthier balance.

4 A complete, unhesitating step FOURTH LINE

六四：至临，无咎。

Drawing near completely, without reserve: no blame.

The fourth line stands closest to the ruling fifth position and answers the sincerity of the first line from above: drawing near completely, holding nothing back, brings no blame at all. This is the moment to stop testing the water and commit the full step you have already been preparing for. Reservation here would waste a position built for a wholehearted step forward. The change to Hexagram 54, Young Bride, marks this commitment as one made inside real constraints — roles, timing, and expectations that still need honest, deliberate handling rather than assumption.

5 Authority earned through understanding FIFTH LINE

六五：知臨，大君之宜，吉。

Drawing near through wisdom: fitting conduct for a great ruler, good fortune.

At the fifth line, drawing near becomes leadership: a ruling position that draws near to others not through command but through genuine understanding of what they need. The text calls this fitting conduct for a great ruler precisely because it is knowledge, not rank alone, doing the work. Whether or not you hold formal authority, this line asks you to lead by seeing clearly rather than by insisting. The change to Hexagram 60, Restraint, suggests that wise authority also knows its own limits, applying itself with defined boundaries rather than without end.

6 Generosity at the furthest reach TOP LINE

上六：敦臨，吉，无咎。

Drawing near with generous sincerity: good fortune, no blame.

The top line completes the hexagram with a presence grown mature: generous, sincere, no longer anxious about outcome. Having risen through feeling, proof, correction, commitment, and understanding, this position can afford warmth without calculation, and the text rewards it with good fortune and no blame. It is the furthest point from where advance began, and the most settled. The change to Hexagram 41, Decrease, fits this maturity: real generosity often means simplifying, giving something up willingly, rather than continuing to accumulate reach for its own sake.

Read hexagram 19 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/19-approach



HEXAGRAM 20

Observation

观 · Guān

Wind over Earth

Hexagram 20 asks you to step back and watch carefully before acting, because what you see clearly now will shape whether your next move is trusted or resisted.

THE JUDGMENT

观：盥而不荐，有孚颙若。

Observation: like the moment of purification before the offering is presented, not yet the act itself. Sincerity held with quiet dignity commands attention.

THE IMAGE

风行地上，观；先王以省方观民设教。

Wind moves over the earth: Observation. The ancient kings surveyed the regions, observed the people, and shaped their teaching accordingly.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received sequence, Hexagram 20 follows Approach, where growth advances with confidence; once things have drawn near, the next task is to look at them steadily rather than rush past them. Observation marks that pause — the moment a person, a leader, or a whole community stops to see what is actually present before deciding what to do about it.

The Chinese name 观 (guān) means to watch, to view, or to be seen — the same character can point outward, toward what you observe, and inward, toward how your own conduct is observed by others. Some translations render the hexagram as Contemplation, since the figure is less about a quick glance than a sustained, quieting gaze. Wind moving over the earth's surface cannot be grasped directly, yet its passage is visible in every bent stalk and rippling field; the ruler in the classical image studies the regions this way, reading the visible signs of a place to understand what is not yet spoken.

That double meaning — watching and being watched — is the hinge of this hexagram. Two firm lines sit at the top, exposed and observed by everyone below; four yielding lines gather beneath them, looking upward for direction. The reading rewards patience: gather more evidence, notice what your own position reveals to others, and resist the pull to declare a verdict before the picture has settled.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 20 joins Wind over Earth. Earth is the broad, receptive ground; Wind is the moving, searching current that passes across it without possessing it. Together they describe influence that spreads by being seen rather than by being imposed — a quiet authority that shapes a field the way weather shapes a landscape, gradually and without force.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, four yin lines form the base and two yang lines rise at the top. The lower trigram Kun, the Earth, is open and yielding; the upper trigram Xun, the Wind, moves gently and reaches everywhere. Two strong lines resting above four weaker ones give the whole figure its shape: what stands visibly at the top becomes the pattern the rest of the diagram is drawn toward.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 A child's narrow view BOTTOM LINE

初六：童观，小人无咎，君子吝。

A child's view: seeing only what is near and simple. For an ordinary bystander this brings no blame, but for someone who should know better, it is a source of regret.

The first line shows the simplest kind of seeing: near, immediate, and untested by wider experience. For someone with little responsibility this is unremarkable, even harmless, but for anyone expected to guide others it becomes a real shortfall. Notice when you are settling for the first impression because it is easier than sustained attention. When this line changes, the situation opens into Hexagram 42, Increase, where a modest, honestly limited view can still grow into real benefit once it is supplemented rather than defended.

2 Watching through a crack SECOND LINE

六二：窥观，利女贞。

Peering through a crack: a narrow, partial view. It is fitting for one who must stay cautious and watch from within, but it should not be mistaken for full understanding.

The second line watches from a hidden, protected position, catching glimpses rather than the full scene. That caution can be appropriate when circumstances genuinely call for restraint, but it should not be mistaken for complete understanding of what lies beyond the gap. Ask what a fuller vantage point would show that this narrow one cannot. When this line changes, the reading turns toward Hexagram 59, Scattering, where clinging to a single fixed viewpoint gives way to a wider, more dispersed perspective that finally lets things be seen whole.

3 Self-examination decides direction THIRD LINE

六三：观我生进退。

Observe your own conduct to decide whether to advance or withdraw. The direction forward is found by examining yourself, not by reading the room alone.

The third line turns observation inward: before choosing to advance or withdraw, examine your own conduct rather than only scanning outside circumstances for permission. The right direction is not handed down by events; it is found by an honest look at what you have actually done and where your judgment has proven sound. When this line changes, the figure becomes Hexagram 53, Gradual Advance, showing that a decision grounded in self-scrutiny develops best step by step, not in one sudden leap.

4 Drawn toward visible excellence FOURTH LINE

六四：观国之光，利用宾于王。

Observe the brilliance of the realm: it is fitting to be received as a guest at the court. Being close to what is admirable opens the way to serve it.

The fourth line observes something genuinely admirable — the brightness of a well-governed place, a capable team, a life ordered with evident skill — and finds it fitting to draw near, even to be welcomed as a guest within it. This is a moment for aligning yourself with quality you have verified rather than merely heard praised. When this line changes, the reading moves to Hexagram 12, Obstruction, a caution that access and welcome can still meet resistance, so proceed without assuming every door stays open.

5 Your own life as the model FIFTH LINE

九五：观我生，君子无咎。

Observe your own conduct as the one others watch. For a person of integrity this brings no blame, because the example given matches the position held.

The fifth line places you at the center of others' attention: your conduct has become the pattern people study to understand what is expected. For someone of integrity this position brings no blame, because the example matches the standard it sets. The obligation here is not to perform virtue but to keep living it, since the watching does not stop. When this line changes, the figure becomes Hexagram 23, Stripping Away, a warning that a position built on visible conduct can still erode if the underlying integrity is not maintained.

6 A pattern that outlasts the role TOP LINE

上九：观其生，君子无咎。

Observe the conduct that flows from your life, even after direct authority has passed. For a person of integrity this still brings no blame, since the pattern set continues to be seen.

The top line observes conduct after direct influence has already passed — the trace a life leaves once its formal authority ends. For a person of integrity this still brings no blame, because what mattered was never the position itself but the pattern of behavior it made visible. Ask what your example continues to teach even where you no longer hold control. When this line changes, the reading settles into Hexagram 8, Alliance, where a proven, consistent example naturally draws others to gather around it.

Read hexagram 20 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/20-contemplation



HEXAGRAM 21

Jaws Closing

噬嗑 · Shikè

Fire over Thunder

Hexagram 21 shows an obstruction lodged between the jaws that must be bitten through decisively before it can be swallowed and resolved.

THE JUDGMENT

噬嗑：亨，利用狱。

Jaws Closing: success. It is fruitful to use the courts — to bring a matter to a clear ruling.

THE IMAGE

雷电，噬嗑；先王以明罚敕法。

Thunder and lightning: Jaws Closing. The ancient kings made penalties clear and set the laws in order.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

Hexagram 21 arrives in the received sequence after Contemplation (Hexagram 20), where watching and being watched has clarified what is really going on. Once a situation is seen clearly, something obstructing it often becomes visible too, and Hexagram 21 addresses exactly that: a hard fact wedged between what should otherwise close smoothly.

The Chinese name 噬嗑, romanized without tone marks as Shi Ke (also seen written Shi He), combines 噬, to bite, and 嗑, to close the jaws to-

gether; read as one phrase it describes the jaws shutting on whatever sits between them. In some editions the hexagram is also translated as Biting Through. The image is the mouth: an open jaw with something lodged inside cannot close, and a mouth that cannot close cannot function. The obstruction has to be met directly — chewed, judged, or worked through — rather than avoided, and only then does the natural closing motion resume.

Because the obstacle sits inside the jaw itself, this hexagram speaks less to distant threats than to friction that has become part of the situation: a dispute that needs a ruling, a habit that needs breaking, a claim that needs testing. The classical judgment pairs the figure with legal proceedings for this reason. Firm, clear-eyed handling of the obstruction is what allows things to come back together.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 21 joins Fire over Thunder. Thunder below stirs and moves; Fire above illuminates and clarifies. Together they describe an obstruction that is first exposed by movement and then judged in the light — the shock of encountering the problem, followed by the clarity needed to deal with it fairly.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, a solitary yang line sits at the base, two yin lines rise through the middle, a lone yang line crosses the fourth position, then a yin line and a final yang line complete the top. That single fourth-line yang, wedged among the surrounding yin lines, is read as the very obstruction the hexagram names — the hard thing caught between the jaws.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 A light clamp, caught early BOTTOM LINE

初九：屢校滅趾，无咎。

A wooden clamp is fitted over the foot, covering the toes: no blame.

The bottom line shows a small restraint — a clamp fitted over the foot, just enough to cover the toes — applied to a fault caught at its very start. The commentary reads this as correction so mild it prevents worse trouble later: because the offense is minor and dealt with immediately, no real harm follows. The lesson is to address a small wrongdoing the moment it appears, before it hardens into a pattern that would require far harsher handling. When this line changes, the situation moves toward Advance, Hexagram 35: early, proportionate correction clears the way for visible, steady progress rather than repeated relapse.

2 Biting deep into soft resistance SECOND LINE

六二：噬肤灭鼻，无咎。

The teeth sink through soft flesh until it covers the nose: no blame.

At the second line, the obstruction gives way easily, like tender flesh under the teeth, yet the bite goes in deep enough to cover the nose. This describes a case where the person holding authority moves with real force against a weaker or more compliant party. Because the resistance was genuinely light and the correction, though strong, was warranted, no blame follows — but the image warns that ease of victory can tempt someone to apply more pressure than the offense actually required. When this line changes, the reading turns toward Opposition, Hexagram 38: overcorrecting a soft target can produce exactly the estrangement or pushback you were trying to avoid.

3 A tainted bite, held firm THIRD LINE

六三：噬腊肉遇毒，小吝无咎。

Chewing dried meat, the jaw meets a tainted spot: mild embarrassment, but no blame.

The third line bites into dried meat and meets a spoiled or bitter patch inside it — a minor, unpleasant surprise rather than a real crisis. Some embarrassment follows, since the timing and position here are not ideal, yet no lasting blame attaches because the person holds their ground rather than abandoning the effort. This describes encountering an unexpected complication mid-task and choosing to work through the unpleasant part instead of quitting. When this line changes, it points to Fire, Hexagram 30: pressing on through a sour moment brings you to clarity and illumination once the tainted portion has been dealt with.

4 Hard evidence found in the bite FOURTH LINE

九四：噬干肺，得金矢，利艰贞吉。

Chewing dried meat still on the bone, a bronze arrowhead is found inside: it is fruitful to hold firm through hardship; good fortune.

At the fourth line, the bite meets dried meat still fixed to the bone — genuinely difficult material — and turns up a bronze arrowhead lodged inside: hard, undeniable evidence of the obstruction's true nature. The obstacle can no longer be minimized; this line, isolated among yielding lines above and below, must hold firm and accept that the case is genuinely hard before it can be settled with good fortune. There is no shortcut through this position, only steady persistence. When this line changes, the situation resolves into Sustenance, Hexagram 27: having faced the hard evidence, attention shifts to what will properly rebuild afterward.

5 A costly ruling, rightly made FIFTH LINE

六五：噬干肉，得黄金，贞厉，无咎。

Chewing dried meat, yellow gold is found within: to persevere is dangerous work, yet there is no blame.

The fifth line chews dried meat and finds yellow gold within — a valuable discovery, but one that comes with real risk, since enforcing this ruling is dangerous work. Positioned at the center of the upper trigram Fire, this line represents a clear-sighted authority who sees the true stakes of a decision and issues it anyway, aware that firmness may provoke resistance from those it corrects. Holding to what is right despite that danger is what keeps the outcome free of blame. When this line changes, the reading turns toward Genuineness, Hexagram 25: a ruling made honestly opens onto a state where actions and intentions are unforced and true.

6 A heavy, overdue reckoning TOP LINE

上九：何校灭耳，凶。

A wooden yoke is fitted over the neck, covering the ears: misfortune.

The top line shows a heavier restraint than the first — a wooden yoke fitted over the neck, covering the ears — applied to someone who ignored every earlier, milder correction. Because the wrongdoing has compounded past the point where a light clamp would suffice, the outcome here is stated plainly as misfortune. This is the cost of refusing correction while it was still cheap: a problem once small enough for a clamp now needs a harsh measure that may not fully repair the damage. When this line changes, it moves toward Shock, Hexagram 51: the consequence lands like a sudden jolt, an abrupt reckoning that finally breaks the pattern.

Read hexagram 21 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/21-biting-through



HEXAGRAM 22

Adornment

贲 · Bì

Mountain over Fire

Adornment favors modest success: decoration and presentation can support a worthy matter, but only substance underneath makes a large undertaking sound.

THE JUDGMENT

贲：亨，小利有攸往。

Adornment: success. There is small advantage in having somewhere to go.

THE IMAGE

山下有火，贲；君子以明庶政，无敢折狱。

Fire at the foot of the mountain: Adornment. The wise person clarifies the ordinary business of governing, yet dares not decide a criminal case on appearance alone.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

Hexagram 22 follows Hexagram 21, Jaws Closing, in the received sequence: once an obstruction has been decisively judged and cleared, what remains needs a fitting outward form. The traditional commentary on the sequence puts it plainly — things cannot simply come together without order, so adornment follows the closing of the jaws. Fittingly, Jaws Closing is also this hexagram's own inverse: turn Adornment upside down and you return to the very figure it grew out of.

The Chinese name 贲 combines a plant radical with 贝, the character for shells once used as ornament and currency, giving a picture of bright, layered decoration. It is why the hexagram is also translated as Grace, and occasionally as Elegance or Ornament, since the classical text is concerned with how style should dress a thing rather than replace it. Read this way, adornment is a supporting art: it clarifies and presents what is already true, and loses its worth the moment it is asked to stand in for substance that is not there.

The judgment names success, but only a small advantage in having somewhere to go. That qualifier matters: decoration can smooth a genuine matter forward, yet the figure never promises that fine presentation alone carries a large undertaking. Fire's brightness below gives things visible shape; the stillness of mountain above keeps that brightness from spilling into excess.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 22 joins Mountain over Fire: a bright flame burns at the foot of a still, settled peak. Fire brings out color, edge, and visible form in whatever it lights; Mountain holds firm above, containing that brightness rather than letting it spread unchecked. Adornment, in this pairing, is illumination kept within a boundary — display with a limit built into it.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, the lower trigram Li — yang, yin, yang — forms Fire, and the upper trigram Gen — yin, yin, yang — forms Mountain directly above it. This diagram places a strong, discerning brightness at the base and a single firm line capping a still weight at the top, which is exactly the situation the hexagram addresses: let what is genuine be seen clearly, then let restraint decide how far that display is allowed to run.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Choosing the plainer way BOTTOM LINE

初九：賁其趾，舍车而徒。

Adorning his toes. He gives up the carriage and goes on foot.

The first line adorns only the toes: a small, humble touch on the part of you that actually does the walking. Offered a carriage — a faster, more impressive way to arrive — this line sets it aside and goes on foot instead. Nothing here criticizes ambition; it simply values earning your own ground over borrowing someone else's shine to get there faster. Held at the base of the structure, this choice costs little and signals a great deal about where your priorities sit before anything else is decided. This line's change points toward Hexagram 52 — Stillness, a reminder that steadiness, not speed, is what the early stage of any matter rewards.

2 Ornament that follows the substance SECOND LINE

六二：賁其须。

Adorning his beard.

At the second line, adornment turns to the beard — hair that grows only because the chin beneath it exists first. This line describes decoration entirely dependent on what it dresses: it cannot lead, only follow, and it has no independent strength of its own to drive events. Read as guidance, it cautions against putting energy into a detail that has no substance under it to grow from, and instead directs attention to strengthening the foundation the ornament is meant to accompany. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 26 — Great Accumulation, showing that real strength gathered underneath is what eventually gives any decoration something worth following.

3 Adorned, at risk of staining THIRD LINE

九三：賁如濡如，永貞吉。

Adorned and moistened. Lasting constancy brings good fortune.

The third line is adorned and moistened, sitting between neighbors who color it from both sides. There is warmth and benefit in this closeness, but also a real risk of being shaped by influences that are not fully your own — flattered into a form you did not choose. The line's own answer is that lasting constancy, not the moment's glow, is what keeps this position sound; holding to a steady standard lets you receive good influence without absorbing every stain that comes with it. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 27 — Sustenance, turning attention from outward polish toward what genuinely nourishes and needs tending.

4 Plain sincerity, mistaken for a threat FOURTH LINE

六四：賁如皤如，白馬翰如，匪寇婚媾。

Adorned yet plain, white as an undyed cloth. A white horse comes flying swift. This is no raider — it is a suitor come to marry.

The fourth line rides forward on a swift white horse, adorned yet essentially plain, moving with visible urgency toward the fifth line above. Because this approach carries no showy signal of good intent, it can be mistaken at first for a raider rather than recognized for what it is. The line resolves that suspicion directly: it is no raider, only someone coming to join in good faith. Trust built on plain conduct, even when it looks unpolished, is worth recognizing rather than turning away out of caution alone. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 30 — Fire, the clarity that follows once genuine intention is finally seen.

5 A modest gift, sincerely given FIFTH LINE

六五：賁于丘園，束帛戔戔，吝終吉。

Adornment in the hill garden. The bundled silks are small and few. Regret at first, but good fortune in the end.

The fifth line withdraws to a hill garden and offers only a small, thin bundle of silk — a gift stunted rather than lavish. At first this reads as regret, a display that falls short of what the position could afford. Yet the line's ending is good fortune: sincerity offered modestly outlasts extravagance offered for show, and what looks like a small gesture from a settled, unpretentious place carries more weight than its size suggests. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 37 — Household, where the same quiet, sincere modesty becomes the discipline that holds a home together.

6 Adornment returns to plainness TOP LINE

上九：白賁，无咎。

Plain, unadorned white. No blame.

At the top, adornment completes its arc and arrives at plain, unadorned white — no color, no further decoration, and no blame attached to that bareness. This is not a failure to finish dressing something up; it is the recognition that the highest form of adornment is knowing when to stop adding to it. Having moved through display, closeness, risk, sincerity, and modest gift-giving, the figure ends by valuing what is left when every unnecessary layer is removed. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 36 — Dimmed Light, a caution that even rightly chosen plainness can, in a harder season, need to be protected rather than paraded.

Read hexagram 22 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/22-grace



HEXAGRAM 23

Stripping Away

剥 · Bō

Mountain over Earth

Stripping Away describes a structure being worn down from below, layer by layer, until almost nothing solid remains, and it counsels patient restraint rather than a doomed stand.

THE JUDGMENT

剥：不利有攸往。

Stripping Away: it is not fruitful to go anywhere.

THE IMAGE

山附于地，剥；上以厚下安宅。

The mountain rests on the earth: Stripping Away. Seeing this, those above thicken what is below, so the dwelling can remain secure.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

Hexagram 23 follows Hexagram 22, Adornment, in the received sequence: once ornament and surface polish have been carried as far as they can go, what is unadorned or hollow beneath the finish begins to show. Stripping Away takes up that exposure directly — five yin lines rise from the bottom, each one eating further into the single yang line left standing at the top, until the structure that once held firm is almost entirely worn through.

The Chinese name 剥 means to peel, to strip, or to flay, the way skin is peeled from fruit or bark is stripped from a trunk, one layer coming away at a time rather than all at once. The hexagram is also commonly translated as Splitting Apart, since the image is of something whole being pulled apart from its base upward. A mountain resting on the earth pictures the same erosion in landscape terms: however solid the peak looks, it stands on ground that is being worn away beneath it.

The judgment is blunt and short: it does not favor going anywhere. That is not counsel to panic but to stop spending strength on a losing position. When the ground itself is eroding, the wise response is to secure what still stands, wait out the erosion, and let the structure fail on its own terms rather than force a confrontation that only hastens the collapse.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 23 joins Mountain over Earth, one of the sixty-four possible trigrams pairings. Mountain is stillness, a solid height that rests and does not move; Earth is yielding, receptive, and spread wide beneath it. Together they describe a shape under quiet stress — a fixed peak sitting on ground that keeps giving way, so that whatever looks unshakable above is being slowly undercut by what lies beneath.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, the lower trigram Kun, Earth, contributes three broken yin lines, and the middle trigram continues that same softness through the fourth and fifth positions, leaving only the top line whole. Reading the line structure of the whole diagram shows five yin lines advancing upward beneath a single surviving yang line — the clearest possible picture of erosion reaching its limit, one layer stripped away at a time until only the topmost line remains intact.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Erosion begins at the base BOTTOM LINE

初六：剥床以足，蔑贞凶。

Stripping the bed starting at its legs. To disregard what is true and steady brings misfortune.

The first line describes erosion starting exactly where a structure should be most secure: the legs of the bed, the lowest supports a person or a plan rests on. To disregard what is true and steady at this early stage — treating the first cracks as too small to matter — invites misfortune that could still have been prevented. The line does not describe collapse yet; it describes the first warning worth taking seriously. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 27 — Sustenance, showing that attending honestly to what nourishes and supports you is the direct answer to erosion at the root.

2 Erosion reaches the frame SECOND LINE

六二：剥床以辨，蔑贞凶。

Stripping the bed reaches its frame. To disregard what is true and steady brings misfortune.

At the second line, the stripping away has moved from the legs to the frame itself — the erosion is no longer isolated at the edges but working into the structure that holds everything together. As at the first line, disregarding what is true and steady here brings misfortune, but the deeper reach of the damage makes the warning more urgent. This is the moment to stop assuming small losses stay small. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 4 — Inexperience, suggesting that admitting how little is actually understood about the situation is the honest first step toward addressing it.

3 Standing apart from the drift THIRD LINE

六三：剥之无咎。

In stripping away, this one is free of blame.

The third line is the one bright spot in the lower half of the hexagram: surrounded by four other yin lines all drifting downward, this position alone is free of blame. It describes someone who keeps their own loyalty and judgment intact even while everything around them is eroding — not fighting the tide openly, but not joining its downward pull either. This quiet integrity is its own kind of achievement. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 52 — Stillness, showing that the same steadiness that kept this line blameless can settle into a deliberate, grounded stability.

4 Erosion reaches the skin FOURTH LINE

六四：剥床以肤，凶。

Stripping the bed reaches the skin itself. Misfortune.

The fourth line marks the point where stripping away stops being structural and becomes personal: the erosion has reached the skin itself, no longer a matter of frame and support but of the thing's own surface and substance. Misfortune here is stated without qualification, because the damage has moved past what can be patched or ignored. This is the line that calls for honest acknowledgment rather than one more attempt to shore things up quietly. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 35 — Advance, suggesting that bringing the situation into open visibility is more useful now than continued concealment.

5 Favor rightly distributed FIFTH LINE

六五：贯鱼，以宫人宠，无不利。

Fish strung one after another, as palace attendants are led in by favor: nothing is unfavorable.

The fifth line shifts the image from erosion to order: fish strung one after another, attendants led in by favor, a structure of deference maintained even at the height of decline. Nothing here is unfavorable, because this position uses whatever authority remains to organize what is left rather than let it scatter. It models leadership near the end of a difficult season — not denying the decline, but managing who is trusted and in what order with real care. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 20 — Observation, showing that careful, attentive watching is what makes this kind of orderly favor possible.

6 What survives the erosion TOP LINE

上九：硕果不食，君子得舆，小人剥庐。

A single large fruit left uneaten. The noble one obtains a carriage; the petty person strips away their own shelter.

The top line pictures the last thing standing: a single large fruit, left uneaten because it has not yet been consumed by the same forces that stripped everything beneath it. What happens next depends entirely on character — the noble one who has kept faith through the decline obtains a carriage, a means to carry forward what survived, while the petty person who only scrambled for themselves ends up stripping away their own shelter. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 2 — Earth, showing that total erosion, carried all the way through, arrives finally at plain, receptive ground on which something new can begin.

Read hexagram 23 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/23-splitting-apart



HEXAGRAM 24

Return

复 · Fù

Earth over Thunder

Hexagram 24 shows a single new impulse re-entering after a season of decline, small and fragile but pointed the right way, asking to be protected rather than rushed.

THE JUDGMENT

复：亨，出入无疾，朋来无咎，反复其道，七日来复，利有攸往。

Return: success. Going out and coming in bring no harm; friends arrive without blame. The way turns back on itself, and in seven days return comes again. It is fruitful to have somewhere to go.

THE IMAGE

雷在地中，复；先王以至日闭关，商旅不行，后不省方。

Thunder lies within the earth: Return. The former kings closed the passes at the solstice, so that merchants and travelers did not journey and rulers did not inspect the outer regions.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received sequence, Hexagram 24 follows Bo, the slow stripping-away of what has grown weak. Decline cannot continue forever: once the old structure has been worn down to almost nothing, one firm line reappears at the very bottom of the figure, and the whole hexagram is built around protecting that first return before it can be argued away or exhausted.

The Chinese name 复 (fù) means to return, to come back along the same road, or to repeat a cycle already known. The hexagram is also translated as the turning point, since it marks the exact moment a falling trend reverses into a rising one rather than the rise itself. Five yielding lines still fill the figure above a single strong line at the base, so the image is not triumph but a fragile beginning: something correct has come back, and almost everything about the situation still depends on whether it is given room to grow.

The judgment's picture of movement without strain, of friends arriving without blame, and of a cycle completing itself in seven days, treats return as something with its own natural pace. The wise reader does not force a comeback faster than its structure allows; the counsel is to keep the passage open, let the new impulse move freely, and trust a rhythm that has returned before and will hold again.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 24 joins Earth over Thunder. Thunder is movement stirring from below, sudden and alive; Earth above it is broad, receptive ground willing to be reshaped by what rises into it. Together they show new motion emerging quietly inside a settled world, rather than breaking it open by force.

In the six-line diagram, read from the bottom, one yang line appears first, then five yin lines fill the rest of the figure above it. The lower trigram Zhen, Thunder, is the single spark of renewed motion; the upper trigram Kun, Earth, is patient and unresisting, giving that motion space instead of smothering it. The diagram reads as a whole season turning on one small, correctly placed change at its root.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Correcting course early BOTTOM LINE

初九：不远复，无只悔，元吉。

Returning before going far: no room even for regret, great good fortune.

The first line is the return itself: a single firm impulse re-entering before it has drifted far, so there is not even room left for regret, only great good fortune. This is the model line of the whole hexagram — noticing a wrong turn almost immediately and stepping back onto the right path while the cost of doing so is still small. The lesson scales beyond this one line: catch the deviation early, and correction is nearly effortless. When this line changes, the reading turns toward Hexagram 2, Earth, showing that a return caught this soon settles into pure, receptive steadiness, ready to support whatever grows next.

2 Resting near what is good SECOND LINE

六二：休复，吉。

Returning to rest near what is good: good fortune.

The second line describes a return that comes to rest beside genuine goodness rather than merely passing through it. Sitting close to the firm line below, it draws strength from proximity to what is correct without needing to act alone, and the text rewards this quiet alignment with good fortune. The counsel here is companionship in the right direction: seek out the person, habit, or standard that keeps you near the good, and let that closeness do steady work. The change to Hexagram 19, Drawing Near, extends the theme directly, turning a moment of rest into an active approach toward what deserves your attention.

3 An unsteady, repeated return THIRD LINE

六三：频复，厉无咎。

Returning again and again, unsteady each time: precarious, yet no blame.

The third line admits something more difficult: returning again and again, faltering each time, correcting course only to drift once more. The text calls this precarious, yet still without blame, because repeated effort toward the right direction counts for something even when it is not smooth. This line asks for patience with your own inconsistency rather than shame over it — a return attempted five times is not a failure, provided each attempt still points the right way. The change to Hexagram 36, Dimmed Light, warns that this unsteadiness, left unaddressed, can shade into a harder season where the right course must be kept hidden and endured rather than shown.

4 Returning alone, mid-path FOURTH LINE

六四：中行独复。

Walking the middle way, returning alone, apart from those around.

The fourth line walks the middle way apart from its neighbors, a return made without the company of those around it. Surrounded by yielding lines not moving toward the same correction, this position still holds to what is right, guided by its bond with the firm line far below rather than the crowd beside it. The line names no fortune or misfortune directly, only the plain fact of walking alone, which is its own kind of quiet integrity. The change to Hexagram 51, Shock, suggests a return made this deliberately eventually announces itself — steady inner correction becoming an outer jolt others cannot ignore.

5 Generous, settled return FIFTH LINE

六五：敦复，无悔。

Returning with generous sincerity: no regret.

At the fifth line, return has matured into something wholehearted: generous, sincere, free of the anxious effort seen lower in the figure, and rewarded with no regret at all. Holding the ruling position, this line does not need to force its way back to the right path — it simply commits, fully and without reservation, the way a leader returns a household or a community to good order by steady example rather than by decree. The change to Hexagram 3, Sprouting, is a fitting next stage: a generous return of this kind plants something genuinely new, still tender and difficult at first, but rooted correctly from the start.

6 Mistaking confusion for return TOP LINE

上六：迷复，凶有灾眚，用行师，终有大败，以其国君凶，至于十年不克征。

Losing the way back and calling it return: misfortune, with calamity from without and error from within. Using this state to move troops ends in great defeat; it brings disaster on the ruler of the state, and for ten years it cannot campaign again.

The top line is the hexagram's clearest warning: losing the way back while believing you have found it, a confused return that brings calamity from outside and error from within. Pressed into service — forcing an old plan back into motion — this misjudgment ends in real defeat, disaster reaching whoever holds authority, the damage taking a full decade to recover from. The line asks for honesty about whether the ground has actually returned to what it once was before acting as if it has. The change to Hexagram 27, Sustenance, points toward the remedy: attend to what needs to be nourished and rebuilt, instead of forcing a false return.

Read hexagram 24 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/24-return



HEXAGRAM 25

Genuineness

无妄 · Wúwàng

Heaven over Thunder

Hexagram 25 shows action that arises without calculation or hidden agenda, so pure of motive that it moves in accord with what is already true.

THE JUDGMENT

无妄：元亨，利贞，其匪正有眚，不利有攸往。

Genuineness: supreme success, and it is fruitful to hold to what is correct. But conduct that is not truly correct brings harm, and it is not fruitful to go forward under those conditions.

THE IMAGE

天下雷行，物与无妄；先王以茂对时育万物。

Thunder rolls out under heaven, and every creature is granted its share without pretense. The ancient kings, in rich accord with the season, nourished and raised the many things.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

Hexagram 25 arrives in the received sequence after Turning Back (Hexagram 24), where a fault has been recognized and corrected at its root. Once a return to the right path is genuine and not merely staged, what follows is a state where nothing false remains between intention and action — Hexagram 25 names that state directly. Tradition attributes the line texts across all sixty-four figures, this one included, to the Duke of

Zhou, who is said to have completed his father King Wen's work on the system.

The Chinese name 无妄 pairs 无, without, and 妄, recklessness or false pretense; together the phrase describes conduct free of both rashness and deceit. English editions commonly render it as Innocence, and this page also uses that alternate translation where the plainer word serves better. The image is Heaven moving above Thunder: thunder rolls out under the sky exactly as the season dictates, no sooner and no later, with nothing added and nothing withheld. Every creature under that thunder receives its share without asking and without scheming for more.

Because the hexagram describes motive rather than outcome, its warning is as important as its promise. Acting without falsehood does not guarantee comfortable results — the judgment itself cautions that a course which is not genuinely correct can still bring trouble, and one changing line even names harm that arrives from outside through no fault of the person struck by it. Genuineness is a discipline of staying true to what is actually so, not a guarantee that the world will always cooperate.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 25 joins Heaven over Thunder. Heaven above is constant and unforced; Thunder below stirs and moves on its own timing. Together they describe motion that follows a higher constancy rather than private calculation — thunder does not decide when to sound, it sounds when Heaven's season brings it forth.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, a solitary yang line opens the figure, two yin lines rise through the middle, a lone yang line crosses the fourth position, then a yang line and a final yang line complete the top, framing two yin lines below them. That single strong line

at the base is read as the true, spontaneous impulse of the whole hexagram, the source from which the rest of the figure's genuineness unfolds.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 The first honest step forward BOTTOM LINE

初九：无妄，往吉。

Genuine action, without pretense: to go forward brings good fortune.

The bottom line is the source of the whole hexagram's genuineness: a first action taken with no falsehood mixed into it, no scheme riding underneath the stated purpose. Because the motive is clean, the commentary reads this as a moment fit for real initiative, since acting this sincerely carries Heaven's own timing rather than working against it. The lesson: the earliest, purest impulse toward something worth doing deserves trust, not second-guessing. When this line changes, the reading turns toward Obstruction, Hexagram 12: a genuine beginning can still meet a season not yet ready for it, and the honest response is to hold steady rather than force the block open.

2 A harvest that was not planned SECOND LINE

六二：不耕获，不菑畲，则利有攸往。

Reaping without having plowed, harvesting a rich field without having broken new ground for it: then it is fruitful to go forward.

The second line describes reaping a field never plowed, harvesting new ground never broken, an outcome arriving without the deliberate labor usually required to produce it. Centered and yielding, this line represents someone who does not chase results directly but lets outcomes follow from staying correctly positioned; the gain is not calculated in advance, which is why it counts as genuine rather than opportunistic. The caution built into the line warns against copying this as a method — unplanned gain cannot be manufactured by imitating its shape. When this line changes, it points to Treading, Hexagram 10: having received without design, the concern becomes how carefully one steps forward.

3 A loss that was never yours THIRD LINE

六三：无妄之灾，或系之牛，行人之得，邑人之灾。

An unearned misfortune reaches even the genuine: someone ties an ox nearby, a passing traveler takes it, and the local resident bears the loss.

The third line names harm that reaches someone who did nothing to deserve it: an ox is tied nearby, a stranger passing through takes it, and the resident of that place answers for the loss. This is the hexagram's clearest statement that genuineness does not insulate anyone from misfortune arising from circumstance, from other people's choices landing on the wrong doorstep. The line offers no method for preventing this loss, only the recognition that it is not a verdict on one's character. When this line changes, it moves to Fellowship, Hexagram 13: after an unearned setback, what steadies a person is turning toward genuine community.

4

Quietly holding the correct course FOURTH LINE

九四：可贞，无咎。

One may hold firm to what is correct: no blame.

The fourth line is brief and unadorned: one may hold to what is correct, and there is no blame in doing so. Positioned just below the ruler of the upper trigram, this line describes someone close to real responsibility who does not need to perform their integrity outwardly; simply maintaining a correct course, quietly and consistently, is sufficient. There is no dramatic gain named here and no dramatic risk, only the steady discipline of staying true when nothing forces the issue either way. When this line changes, it opens onto Increase, Hexagram 42: quiet constancy, sustained without fanfare, is exactly the condition under which real growth tends to follow.

5

An illness with no medicine needed FIFTH LINE

九五：无妄之疾，勿药有喜。

An illness that arrives without cause, despite genuine conduct: do not medicate it, and there will be cause for joy.

The fifth line names an affliction that arrives despite entirely genuine conduct, an illness with no fault behind it, and counsels against medicating it. Centered at the position of authority, this line describes trouble that is circumstantial rather than earned, the kind that resolves through patience rather than aggressive intervention that could make things worse. The advice is pointed: sometimes the most disciplined response to unearned hardship is to leave it alone and trust genuine conduct to see it through. When this line changes, it turns toward Jaws Closing, Hexagram 21: if the trouble does need direct handling, that handling should take the form of a clear, fair reckoning, not avoidance.

6 Genuine action at the wrong moment TOP LINE

上九：无妄行有眚，无攸利。

To act, even genuinely, at this position brings trouble: nothing is gained by moving forward.

The top line delivers the hexagram's sharpest caution: to act here, even with entirely sincere intent, brings nothing but trouble. Sitting at the very end of the figure, past the point where Heaven's season still favors forward motion, this line describes someone who cannot let a genuine impulse rest and pushes ahead anyway, mistaking the purity of their motive for permission to ignore the moment's actual conditions. Sincerity alone does not make every action timely. When this line changes, it moves toward Following, Hexagram 17: rather than forcing a genuine impulse past its proper season, the fitting response is to adapt and align with what the moment actually calls for.

Read hexagram 25 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/25-innocence



HEXAGRAM 26

Great Accumulation

大畜 · Dàxù

Mountain over Heaven

Great Accumulation asks you to hold restless strength in reserve, build real capacity through discipline, and release it only when the way is genuinely open.

THE JUDGMENT

大畜：利贞，不家食吉，利涉大川。

Great Accumulation: it is fruitful to stay true. Not eating at home brings good fortune. It is fruitful to cross the great river.

THE IMAGE

天在山中，大畜；君子以多识前言往行，以畜其德。

Heaven within the Mountain: Great Accumulation. The wise person studies the sayings and deeds of the past in order to build up their own character.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received sequence, Hexagram 26 follows Hexagram 25, Genuineness, which trusts spontaneous, unplanned action. Great Accumulation answers with the opposite discipline: strength that is stored, trained, and released only when the moment is ready to carry it.

The Chinese name 大畜 combines 大 (great) with 畜 (to accumulate, to raise, to restrain), and its pinyin can be read as Da Xu or, in the older

reading of the second character, Da Chu. It is also translated as Great Taming or Great Storage, because the same character 畜 covers both gathering resources and disciplining an animal until it can be trusted to work. Both senses matter here: the hexagram is about building real capacity — knowledge, wealth, skill, a herd, a following — and about the patient restraint that keeps raw power from being wasted on premature moves.

The image is Heaven contained within the Mountain: vast creative force held inside a solid, still boundary. Read as guidance, the hexagram does not ask you to suppress your ambition permanently. It asks you to let a firm structure — study, saving, training, a mentor's correction — hold that ambition until it has matured enough to act with lasting effect rather than scatter itself in an early rush.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 26 joins Mountain over Heaven. Heaven below is unlimited creative force; Mountain above is a fixed boundary that neither hides that force nor lets it escape unchecked. The pairing describes containment used as cultivation, not suppression: a wall built around something valuable enough to be worth protecting while it grows.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, three yang lines rise first, forming the trigram Qian, then two yin lines sit above them before a final yang line closes the top, forming the trigram Gen. The three lower yang lines are Heaven's stored energy, pressing to advance; the two yin lines mid-figure act as gentle checks, holding that energy while it accumulates; the top yang line has passed beyond restraint entirely, opening into free movement.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 **Danger calls for a full stop** BOTTOM LINE

初九：有厉利已。

There is danger; it is fruitful to stop.

The first line describes strength that wants to advance the moment it appears, before any restraint has been tested. The line's own text is blunt: there is danger, and it is fruitful to stop. This is not timidity; it is recognizing that an early push, however sincere, has not yet earned the standing to succeed. Whatever you are eager to start — a launch, a confrontation, a big ask — benefits from one more deliberate pause. When this line changes, Corruption warns that neglected foundations decay quietly; the stop you take now is what keeps small negligence from becoming a larger repair later.

2 **The cart withdraws itself** SECOND LINE

九二：舆说辐。

The cart's axle strap comes loose.

At the second line, the cart's axle strap comes loose on its own, so the vehicle simply cannot proceed. Read this as a healthy internal check rather than a failure: something in you recognizes that conditions are not right and withdraws from the attempt before damage is done. There is no blame attached to this line, only prudence. Let the interruption do its work instead of forcing repairs mid-journey. The change to Adornment shows that this pause is best used for refinement — polishing the presentation, tightening the plan — so the next attempt travels further than this one could have.

3 A fine horse, firmly held THIRD LINE

九三：良马逐，利艰贞，曰闲舆卫，利有攸往。

A fine horse gives chase. It is fruitful to stay firm through hardship. Practice defensive driving daily; it is fruitful to have somewhere to go.

The third line finally has real momentum: a fine horse gives chase, capable and eager. But the text immediately adds discipline — stay firm through hardship, practice defensive driving daily. Capability without ongoing vigilance invites an accident precisely because the horse is fast enough to outrun caution. Keep training and checking your position even as you gain speed; do not mistake early success for permission to relax. The change to Decrease reminds you that sustaining this pace may require deliberately trimming something else — rest, a side commitment, excess ambition — so the core effort stays sound.

4 Restrain the danger early FOURTH LINE

六四：童牛之牯，元吉。

A young bull wears a crossbar on its horns: great good fortune.

The fourth line places a crossbar on a young bull's horns before the animal has grown strong enough to gore anyone. This is preventive restraint applied early, and the text calls it great good fortune precisely because it costs so little compared to correcting a grown, unruly force later. Identify the habit, temptation, or unchecked impulse in your situation that is still small enough to redirect gently. The change to Great Possession shows what this early discipline earns: once the danger is contained while young, real abundance becomes available to hold safely.

5 Gentle restraint tames the wild edge FIFTH LINE

六五：豮豕之牙，吉。

A gelded boar's tusks: good fortune.

The fifth line gelds a boar rather than fighting its tusks directly — it removes the root of aggression instead of confronting the sharp symptom. This is a subtler, kinder form of restraint than the fourth line's crossbar, suited to a force already grown but still capable of being redirected at its source. Look for the underlying driver of a difficult behavior or dynamic, in yourself or someone you rely on, rather than only managing its visible edge. The change to Small Accumulation suggests the result is modest but real: gathering continues, just on a gentler, more manageable scale than before.

6 The crossroads of Heaven open TOP LINE

上九：何天之衢，亨。

One shoulders the open crossroads of Heaven: success.

The top line has moved beyond restraint entirely. One shoulders the open crossroads of Heaven, and the text simply says success. After lines of danger, checks, discipline, and gentling, the accumulated strength has matured enough that the mountain's containment is no longer needed; the way runs in every direction at once. This is the moment to act on what you have built, without second-guessing capacity you have already proven. The change to Peace confirms it: what was contained can now circulate freely, and a season of harmony between what you have gathered and how you use it follows.

Read hexagram 26 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/26-great-taming



HEXAGRAM 27

Sustenance

颐 · Yi

Mountain over Thunder

Hexagram 27 shows an open mouth between two firm lines, asking what actually nourishes you and whether you earn that nourishment or merely take it.

THE JUDGMENT

颐：贞吉，观颐，自求口实。

Sustenance: to stay true brings good fortune. Observe how nourishment moves, and watch each one seek their own food.

THE IMAGE

山下有雷，颐；君子以慎言语，节饮食。

Thunder stirs beneath the mountain: Sustenance. The wise person is careful in speech and moderate in eating and drinking.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

Hexagram 27 arrives in the received sequence after Great Taming (Hexagram 26), where resources and capability have been gathered and held in reserve. Once something has been accumulated, the next question is how it will be used to sustain life, so the sequence turns from storing up to feeding, tending, and providing for.

The Chinese name 颐 refers to the jaw and cheek, the part of the body that chews and speaks, and by extension the act of nourishing or being

nourished. In some editions the hexagram is also translated as Providing Nourishment. The judgment does not simply praise eating well; it says to stay true and then observe how nourishment moves — watch what a person seeks to fill their mouth with, and watch whether they earn their own sustenance or wait for someone else to supply it.

Read this way, Hexagram 27 is a character study disguised as an image of feeding. The six lines move from a base line that abandons its own judgment to chase another's plate, up through positions that reach for support in the wrong direction, and finally to a line that becomes the very source others depend on. The question threading through all of it is simple: are you nourishing yourself and others honestly, or are you living off borrowed strength while your own capacity for judgment goes unused?

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 27 joins Mountain over Thunder. Thunder below stirs, moves, and seeks; Mountain above stays still and holds its shape. Together they describe the working jaw: the lower part moves to take in food while the upper part stays fixed, and the whole motion only functions when stillness and movement do their separate, proper jobs.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, a single yang line forms the base, four yin lines rise through the middle, and a final yang line closes the top. This line structure, built from two trigrams read together, gives the whole figure the shape of an open mouth with teeth above and below — a picture the commentators read literally as the jaw itself, hinged at bottom and top, empty and waiting in the middle.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Envyng another's plate BOTTOM LINE

初九：舍尔灵龟，观我朵颐，凶。

You set aside your own sacred tortoise, the means of judging for yourself, and instead watch my jaws move with envious hunger: misfortune.

The bottom line shows someone setting aside their own sacred tortoise — their own capacity to judge and provide for themselves — to stare hungrily at what someone else is eating. The commentary reads this as the root failure of the whole hexagram: a person moved by desire, watching others rather than trusting their own resources, invites plain misfortune. Notice the moment you stop trusting your own judgment because someone else's situation looks more appealing, and return to what you can actually provide for yourself. When this line changes, the reading turns toward Hexagram 23, Stripping Away: unchecked envy slowly strips away the foundation you started with.

2 Reaching upward against the norm SECOND LINE

六二：颠颐，拂经，于丘颐，征凶。

Nourishment sought upside-down goes against what is proper; turning to the height above for support and pressing forward brings misfortune.

At the second line, nourishment is sought upside-down: instead of relying on its proper correspondence, the line turns to the height above for support, going against the usual pattern the relationship should follow. Pressing that request forward brings misfortune, because it asks a channel to provide what it was never meant to supply. This describes leaning on an elder, a patron, or an institution for something you should be securing through the correct, ordinary route. When this line changes, the situation moves toward Hexagram 41, Decrease: rather than pressing an improper request further, the sounder path is to reduce what you are asking for and simplify your needs instead.

3 Turning against your own nourishment THIRD LINE

六三：拂颐贞凶，十年勿用，无攸利。

To turn against the very source of nourishment brings misfortune even when held firm; for ten years it can serve no purpose, and nothing is gained.

The third line describes a more stubborn failure: turning against the very source that should sustain you, and holding to that refusal even when persistence is otherwise a virtue. The commentary calls this misfortune that stays misfortune for a long stretch — for ten years it accomplishes nothing, and no advantage follows. This is the position of someone who refuses help, correction, or proper support out of pride or mistrust, and then stalls rather than progresses. When this line changes, the reading points to Hexagram 22, Adornment: only once the refusal is set aside can attention return to how the situation is presented and shaped, rather than to blocking it outright.

4 A tiger's steady watchfulness FOURTH LINE

六四：颠颐吉，虎视眈眈，其欲逐逐，无咎。

Nourishment given downward here brings good fortune. Watching with a tiger's steady, unblinking gaze, pursuing the need with urgency: no blame.

At the fourth line, nourishment again moves downward, but here it brings good fortune rather than misfortune, because the position and the direction are correct. The image is vivid: watching with a tiger's unbroken, patient gaze, pursuing the need with real urgency, and yet no blame follows. This describes someone in a position of some authority who provides for another with full attention and intent, rather than carelessly or resentfully. When this line changes, the situation resolves into Hexagram 21, Jaws Closing: once nourishment is given properly and watched over with this much care, any remaining obstruction between the parties still needs to be met directly and worked through.

5 Holding still under a weak claim FIFTH LINE

六五：拂经，居贞吉，不可涉大川。

Going against the usual pattern, yet staying settled and true brings good fortune; it is not the time to cross the great river.

The fifth line again departs from the usual pattern — this position does not correspond properly with the line below it — yet staying settled and true still brings good fortune, provided no major undertaking is attempted. The line explicitly warns that this is not the moment to cross the great river. This describes leadership or responsibility carried from a position that lacks its normal support, where holding steady and trustworthy conduct compensates for a structurally weak claim. When this line changes, the reading turns toward Hexagram 42, Increase: patient, honest holding in a difficult position eventually opens onto a period where what you have carefully maintained begins to grow.

6 **Becoming the source others rely on** TOP LINE

上九：繇颐，厉吉，利涉大川。

To become the very source others rely on for nourishment is a position of danger, yet good fortune follows; it is fruitful to cross the great river.

The top line arrives at the far end of the pattern: to be the very source from which nourishment flows for everyone below is a position of real danger, since so much now depends on this one line holding firm, yet good fortune follows, and it is fruitful even to cross the great river. This describes carrying the full weight of responsibility for others' sustenance — a founder, an elder, a provider whose steadiness everyone else counts on. When this line changes, the situation turns toward Hexagram 24, Return: having carried the weight to its limit, the pattern circles back toward renewal.

Read hexagram 27 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/27-nourishment



HEXAGRAM 28

Great Exceeding

大过 · Dàguò

Lake over Wind

Great Exceeding describes a central structure sagging under a weight it cannot fully carry, warning that decisive, even solitary, action is needed before the strain reaches a breaking point.

THE JUDGMENT

大过：栋桡，利有攸往，亨。

Great Exceeding: the ridgepole sags. It is fruitful to have somewhere to go; this brings success.

THE IMAGE

泽灭木，大过；君子以独立不惧，遁世无闷。

The lake rises over the wood: Great Exceeding. Seeing this, the wise person stands alone without fear, and withdraws from the world without regret.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

Hexagram 28 follows Hexagram 27, Nourishment, in the received sequence: once a structure has been fed and built up, it can be loaded past what its middle was ever meant to hold. Great Exceeding pictures exactly that condition — four yang lines packed into the center, pressing outward against a single yin line at the bottom and another at the top, the weak ends unable to brace what the strong middle now carries. The whole fig-

ure reads like a roof beam bowed by too much weight resting on too little support at either end.

The Chinese name 大过 means the great one exceeding, or excess carried by what is substantial rather than by what is small — 大 marking that this is not a minor overreach but a major one, involving the central, load-bearing elements of a situation. Romanized without diacritics as da guo (the tone marks in Dàguò are often dropped in plain-text search and citation), the hexagram is also commonly translated as Preponderance of the Great or Critical Mass, both pointing at the same image: a weight so concentrated in the middle that the ordinary supports at either end are being asked to do more than they were built for.

The judgment says the ridgepole sags, yet it is still fruitful to have somewhere to go, and this brings success. That pairing is deliberate: a structure under this much strain cannot simply be reinforced quietly from within, but neither is it doomed. The situation calls for a real move — stepping outside familiar limits, taking on the excess directly — rather than waiting in place for the sag to become a break.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 28 joins Lake over Wind, one of the sixty-four possible trigrams pairings. Lake is a still, open body of water resting above; Wind, here also read as Wood, is a tree or a beam supporting that weight from below. Together they picture a lake pooling over submerged timber — water gathering above what should hold it up, until the wood beneath is soaked through and asked to bear far more than dry lumber ever could.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, a single yin line opens the figure, four unbroken yang lines fill the second through fifth positions, and a second yin line closes it at the top. Reading the line structure of the whole diagram shows the classic ridgepole shape: heavy, continu-

ous strength concentrated in the middle four lines while only a lone soft line braces each end, exactly the imbalance the judgment names when it says the beam sags under its load.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Care at the weak foundation BOTTOM LINE

初六：藉用白茅，无咎。

Laying down white reed grass as a mat beneath the offering. No blame.

The first line describes laying down white reed grass as a mat beneath an offering — a small, almost excessive act of caution at the point where the structure is weakest. No blame follows, because at the start of a period of overload, extra care at the base costs little and prevents much; treating the foundation gently is good sense, not timidity, when everything above will soon bear real weight. This line does not describe the strain itself, only the wisdom of preparing the ground before the load arrives. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 43 — Breakthrough, showing that careful groundwork now sets up a decisive resolution later.

2 An unlikely renewal takes root SECOND LINE

九二：枯杨生稊，老夫得其女妻，无不利。

A withered willow sprouts new shoots at the root; an older man takes a young wife. Nothing is unfavorable.

At the second line, a withered willow sprouts new shoots at the root, and an older man takes a young wife: nothing here is unfavorable, because an unconventional pairing or a late-stage renewal can genuinely revive something that looked spent. This line sits just above the weak foundation and just below the packed strength of the center, drawing on both — old capacity meeting new vitality in a way that looks unusual but works. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 31 — Influence, suggesting that mutual, honest responsiveness between two unlike parties is exactly what makes this renewal take hold.

3 The beam sags under the load THIRD LINE

九三：栋桡凶。

The ridgepole sags. Misfortune.

The third line states the hexagram's core danger without softening it: the ridgepole sags, and misfortune follows. This position sits deep in the packed center of yang strength, yet its own placement is too rigid and too isolated from the weak lines at either end to distribute the load properly — strength alone, applied without support, still breaks. This is the line that names the real cost of ignoring the overload rather than addressing it directly. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 47 — Adversity, showing that unaddressed strain leads directly into a period of real constraint.

4

The beam arches and holds FOURTH LINE

九四：栋隆吉，有它吝。

The ridgepole arches upward, holding firm. Good fortune, but there is difficulty from another quarter.

The fourth line answers the third directly: the ridgepole arches upward and holds firm, bringing good fortune, though difficulty still comes from another quarter. Closer to the yielding line at the top, this position pairs strength with enough flexibility to bear real weight without breaking — proof that the same load, met with the right support, need not end in collapse. The remaining difficulty is a reminder that holding firm here does not mean every problem elsewhere is solved. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 48 — Village Well, suggesting that what sustains this structure must be maintained, not just discovered once.

5

Flowering without lasting praise FIFTH LINE

九五：枯杨生华，老妇得其士夫，无咎无誉。

A withered willow puts out flowers; an older woman takes a young husband. No blame, but no praise either.

The fifth line mirrors the second: a withered willow puts out flowers, an older woman takes a young husband, and the result is free of blame but also free of praise. At the seat of authority, still within the overloaded center, this line shows that even a well-placed response to excess may go uncelebrated — flowers on a withered willow are a genuine sign of life, not a permanent cure. The lesson is to value the honest outcome over whatever applause it does or doesn't receive. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 32 — Duration, showing that lasting value comes from sustained commitment, not one flowering moment.

6 Wading past the point of safety TOP LINE

上六：过涉灭顶凶，无咎。

Wading through water so deep it covers the crown of the head.
Misfortune, yet no blame.

The top line pictures the most extreme image in the hexagram: wading through water so deep it closes over the crown of the head. Misfortune follows, yet there is no blame, because this line describes someone who carried the necessary risk all the way to its limit rather than turning back at the first sign of danger — the outcome is difficult, but the intention was sound. This is the cost sometimes paid by whoever stands alone and acts when the structure most needed it. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 44 — Encounter, showing that even after being overwhelmed, an unplanned meeting can reopen a path forward.

Read hexagram 28 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/28-great-exceeding



HEXAGRAM 29

Water

坎 · Kǎn

Water over Water

Hexagram 29 is water flowing into a gorge and out again: real danger repeats, but staying true to your own course carries you through it intact.

THE JUDGMENT

坎：习坎，有孚，维心亨，行有尚。

Danger doubled and practiced. When sincerity is genuinely held, the heart finds its way through, and right action is honored.

THE IMAGE

水洊至，习坎；君子以常德行，习教事。

Water arrives again and again, filling one gorge after another. The wise person keeps a constant standard of conduct and practices what they teach until it becomes second nature.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

Hexagram 29 stands in the received sequence after Great Exceeding, a structure so overloaded it collapses under its own weight. Water follows naturally: when a load finally gives way, what remains is the plain fact of a pit, a channel, a drop the current must now find its way through.

The Chinese name 坎 (Kǎn) names a pit, a hole in the ground, or a gorge that water repeatedly falls into. Some editions render the hexagram as

the Abysmal, or simply as Danger. The doubled trigram gives the classical title 习坎 — practiced pit, danger repeated — because the same difficulty does not arrive once and depart; it recurs, the way a river finds a second gorge after clearing the first. This is not a hexagram about a single crisis to survive and forget. It describes a pattern of hazard that keeps returning, and it asks what habit of mind lets a person meet it the same way each time rather than being surprised by it again.

Read as guidance, Hexagram 29 favors neither retreat nor bravado. Water does not argue with the gorge; it fills the low place fully before moving on, and it never loses its own nature no matter how many turns the channel forces on it. The image commends practiced steadiness: a habit of honest action and sincere teaching, held constant through repeated difficulty, rather than a fresh strategy invented for every fall.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 29 joins Water over Water. The upper and lower trigrams are identical, so the figure carries no internal contrast between a placid surface and a hidden threat: the same hazard runs through the whole shape, and the danger it names is real at every level, not merely on the outside.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, each trigram places one solid yang line between two broken yin lines — strength held inside, openness at the edges. The lower trigram Kan is water beginning its descent into the first pit; the identical upper trigram is that same water reaching a second one before it clears entirely. Held together, the diagram depicts a channel that repeats itself, testing whether the strength at the center of each fall holds steady both times.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Sinking into the first pit BOTTOM LINE

初六：习坎，入于坎窞，凶。

In the repeated pit, sinking into its deepest hollow: misfortune.

The first line describes the earliest and least prepared encounter with danger: caught off guard, a person sinks straight into the deepest hollow of the gorge rather than stopping at its edge. The text calls this misfortune plainly, without softening it, because habits formed at this stage — carelessness, denial, moving too fast through unfamiliar ground — tend to repeat themselves in the pits that follow. The corrective is not heroics; it is attention. Notice the ground changing under you before it gives way entirely. When this line changes, the reading points to Restraint: the answer to sinking too far is to set clear limits before the next descent begins.

2 Danger held, gain kept small SECOND LINE

九二：坎有险，求小得。

Within the pit there is real danger; seek only a modest gain for now.

At the second line, the danger is acknowledged rather than denied, and the guidance is to seek only a modest result while it lasts. This is not timidity; it is proportion. A person genuinely inside a hazardous stretch who insists on a large, decisive win is gambling the ground they still need to stand on. Small, verifiable progress — a partial repair, a single honest conversation, one commitment kept — actually holds in conditions that would swallow a larger, more ambitious move. When this line changes, the situation shifts toward Alliance: cautious, modest steps now build the trust that makes real cooperation possible later.

3 Between two pits, no clear ground THIRD LINE

六三：来之坎坎，险且枕，入于坎窞，勿用。

Coming and going between one pit and the next, danger pressing close on every side, sinking into the deepest hollow: do not act.

The third line names the hardest position in the figure: coming and going between one danger and the next, with no level place to rest, and a real risk of sinking into the second hollow before recovering from the first. The line's counsel is blunt — do not act. This is one of the few points where the wisest move is to stop entirely rather than push forward on momentum. Wait for solid ground before committing to another step. When this line changes, the reading turns to Village Well: return to a shared, reliable source rather than improvising between two unstable positions.

4 A plain offering through the window FOURTH LINE

六四：樽酒簋贰，用缶，纳约自牖，终无咎。

A jar of wine, a simple dish of grain, plain earthen vessels, an offering passed through the window rather than the door: in the end, no fault.

The fourth line turns from danger to a specific, workable response: a simple jar of wine, a plain dish of grain, offered through whatever opening is actually available rather than the formal front door. This favors sincerity over display when circumstances are constrained. A modest, honest gesture — made through the channel that is open, not the one that would look best — reaches someone in a way a grander offering delayed by circumstance cannot. The text closes with no fault: humility fitted to real conditions is not a failure of standards. When this line changes, the destination is Adversity: constrained conditions persist, and the same plain sincerity remains the right response.

5 Level ground, not yet full FIFTH LINE

九五：坎不盈，只既平，无咎。

The pit is not yet full, but the water has reached level ground: no fault.

The fifth line marks real progress that is not yet complete: the pit has not filled to its brim, but the water inside it has reached level ground, and the line names this no fault. This is worth sitting with directly, because it corrects a common misreading of hardship — that nothing counts as progress until the difficulty is fully resolved. A situation can be genuinely safer, genuinely more stable, while still carrying visible signs of the trouble it came from. Recognize partial recovery as real recovery. When this line changes, the reading moves to Troops: organized, disciplined effort is now what consolidates the ground this line has already reached.

6 Bound among the thorns TOP LINE

上六：系用徽纆，寘于丛棘，三岁不得，凶。

Bound with cords and placed among thorn bushes, not released for three years: misfortune.

The top line is the hexagram's clearest warning: bound with cords and left among thorn bushes for three years, unreleased. This is not sudden misfortune; it is the accumulated result of danger left unaddressed across the lines below — sinking too readily, thrashing between pits, never settling on solid ground. Read it as a caution against letting recurring hazard become a fixed condition through neglect. If this describes your situation, the honest first task is to name how the pattern became entrenched, not to search for one dramatic escape. When this line changes, the destination is Scattering: what has grown rigid needs gentle dispersal, not force.

Read hexagram 29 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/29-the-abysmal-water



HEXAGRAM 30

Fire

离 · Lí

Fire over Fire

Fire has no light of its own; it must cling to fuel and repeat itself to keep burning, so lasting brightness depends on what you attach yourself to, not on intensity alone.

THE JUDGMENT

离：利贞，亨，畜牝牛，吉。

Fire: it is fruitful to stay correct. Success. Nurturing a cow brings good fortune.

THE IMAGE

明两作，离；大人以继明照于四方。

Brightness arises twice, one flame after another: Fire. Seeing this, the great one carries the light onward, illuminating every quarter without letting it lapse.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

Hexagram 30 follows Hexagram 29, the Abyss, in the received sequence: after facing the deep water of real danger, the text turns to fire, the element that cannot exist by itself and must depend on something outside it to burn. Two identical Fire trigrams stack on top of each other, so brightness here is not a single flare but a continuity — one flame handing its light to the next the way a torch is passed hand to hand, or the way each day's sun rises again after the last one set.

The Chinese name 离 carries the older sense of clinging or attaching, not the modern meaning of leaving or separation; a flame only exists where it clings to wood, oil, or wick. The hexagram is also commonly translated as The Clinging or The Clinging Fire, both pointing at the same idea: brightness is relational, not self-sufficient. The judgment adds that it is fruitful to stay correct, and that nurturing something as gentle and receptive as a cow brings good fortune — fire needs a steady, yielding thing to attach itself to, and that quiet nourishment is what keeps a flame from either dying out or burning out of control.

Read together, the sequence asks where your own brightness is actually anchored. A fire that clings to the right fuel — a discipline, a relationship, a piece of work worth doing — can burn a long time without consuming itself. A fire that clings to nothing but its own intensity, or to fuel that cannot sustain it, flares and then goes dark.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 30 joins Fire over Fire, the only pairing in the sixty-four hexagrams where light is doubled directly on top of itself. The lower trigram burns and gives way; the upper trigram catches what rises from it and burns again. Nothing here is passive: each Fire trigram is bright on the outside and hollow at the center, meaning the strength of this figure is displayed rather than hidden, and its continuity depends on one bright moment truly igniting the next.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, a firm yang line opens the figure, a yielding yin line sits at the center of the lower trigram, and a second firm line completes it; the same pattern of yang, yin, yang then repeats through the upper trigram. Reading the line structure of the whole diagram shows fire's real shape: solid strength framing a hollow, receptive

center, twice over, which is why the image describes brightness as something that must hold and be held rather than blaze on its own.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Careful steps in dazzling ground BOTTOM LINE

初九：履错然，敬之，无咎。

Treading carefully among crisscrossed, dazzling patterns. Showing reverence and care. No blame.

The first line pictures someone treading into a field of crisscrossed, brilliant patterns — a new situation so full of dazzling detail that it is easy to rush forward and try to impress before you understand what you are standing on. No blame follows, because this line pairs a lowly, still-forming position with genuine reverence: careful attention, not showy confidence, is what a beginner's brightness actually needs. Rushing to display yourself here risks being dazzled by your own surroundings rather than truly seeing them. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 56 — Sojourning, showing that careful, modest conduct in unfamiliar territory is exactly what this early brightness is turning into.

2 Yellow fire holds the center SECOND LINE

六二：黄离，元吉。

Yellow fire, clinging to the center. Great good fortune.

The second line names the hexagram's clearest image of success: yellow fire, clinging at the exact center, bringing great good fortune. Yellow is the color of balance, neither the pale white of a fire too faint nor the harsh red of one burning out of control, and this line sits centered within its own trigram, correctly placed and correctly proportioned. This is brightness doing precisely what fire should do — attaching itself firmly to the right fuel and burning steadily rather than flaring. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 14 — Great Possession, showing that centered, well-proportioned brightness is what allows real abundance to gather and be properly held.

3 Facing the fire's own sunset THIRD LINE

九三：日昃之离，不鼓缶而歌，则大耋之嗟，凶。

The fire of the setting sun. If one does not drum on the jar and sing, then comes the lament of old age. Misfortune.

The third line describes the sun's fire at its setting hour, and it offers a direct choice: accept the hour by drumming on the jar and singing, or resist it and fall into the bitter lament of old age, which brings misfortune. This line sits atop the lower trigram, the point where one cycle of brightness ends and gives way to the next, so the danger here is not the ending itself but refusing to meet it with grace. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 21 — Jaws Closing, showing that whatever resistance blocks an honest acceptance of this transition needs to be bitten through directly.

4 A blaze that consumes itself FOURTH LINE

九四：突如其来如，焚如，死如，弃如。

It comes on so suddenly: burning, dying, cast aside.

The fourth line arrives without warning: fire coming on so suddenly that it burns, kills, and casts aside almost in the same breath. Positioned just past the boundary between the two trigrams, this line describes a displaced, ill-fitting force that flares up abruptly rather than clinging properly to steady fuel, and a fire with no real attachment behind it consumes whatever is nearest and then leaves nothing standing. This is the hexagram's clearest warning against intensity mistaken for genuine brightness. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 22 — Adornment, showing that what follows a destructive flare is the slower work of restoring form and proper appearance.

5 Grief that clears the way FIFTH LINE

六五：出涕沱若，戚嗟若，吉。

Tears streaming down, grieving and sighing. Good fortune.

The fifth line shows tears streaming and open grieving, and yet it brings good fortune. Seated in the place of honor within the upper trigram, this yielding line occupies real authority while still allowing itself to mourn honestly what has passed, and that visible grief — rather than a forced, brave composure — is exactly what lets a later brightness succeed the one before it with integrity. Fire does not have to pretend the previous flame never mattered in order to burn in its place. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 13 — Fellowship, showing that honest mourning shared openly is what makes genuine companionship possible afterward.

6 A disciplined campaign TOP LINE

上九：王用出征，有嘉折首，获匪其丑，无咎。

The king uses this to march out on campaign. There is praise for striking down the chief, while those who merely followed are spared. No blame.

The top line pictures a king marching out on campaign, praised for striking down the chief instigator while sparing those who merely followed along. Positioned at the very peak of doubled brightness, this line has the clarity to see a problem's true source and the discipline to address only that, rather than letting fire consume indiscriminately; no blame follows because the response is proportionate, not excessive. This is brightness used with judgment at its most demanding moment. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 55 — Plenty, showing that a well-aimed, disciplined resolution is what opens the way toward genuine abundance.

Read hexagram 30 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/30-the-clinging-fire



HEXAGRAM 31

Influence

咸 · Xián

Lake over Mountain

Influence begins with receptive attention: attraction becomes meaningful when each side can respond freely, steadily, and without force. Being moved and being right to move are separate questions.

THE JUDGMENT

咸：亨，利贞，取女吉。

Influence: success. It is fruitful to stay true. Taking a wife brings good fortune.

THE IMAGE

山上有泽，咸；君子以虚受人。

High on the mountain rests a lake: Influence. The wise person keeps the heart open and receives others without preconception.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the I Ching's received sequence, Hexagram 31 opens the second half of the book — the part that turns from cosmic pattern to human relationship.

The Chinese name 咸 can carry the sense of all, together, or mutually affected. In some editions the hexagram is also translated as Wooing or Courtship. That emphasis matters. Hexagram 31 does not celebrate the person who can make anyone comply. It examines a relational field in

which response travels both ways. Before acting, notice what is actually moving: affection, admiration, fear of missing out, social pressure, bodily excitement, or a thoughtful recognition of shared values. Those forces may feel similar at first, but they lead to different decisions. A sound reading separates the fact of being moved from the question of whether the movement deserves your participation.

The sequence also asks for timing. Attraction begins in small sensations and can rise toward speech, but intensity alone does not make the direction wise. Let repeated actions reveal the quality of the connection. Keep your own standards visible while remaining curious about another perspective. If you need to corner, impress, or hurry someone, the exchange has already lost the freedom that makes influence fruitful. When your conduct is steady enough to accept either response, you can approach, invite, negotiate, or commit without turning desire into control.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 31 joins Lake over Mountain. Mountain gives form and stillness; Lake brings openness and responsive exchange. Together they describe a meeting where a clear presence makes room for an equally real answer. Influence is not a contest of will; it appears wherever trust, attraction, example, or ideas move between people.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, two yin lines form the base, three yang lines rise through the middle, and one yin line opens the top. The lower trigram Gen, the Mountain, is stillness that knows its own limits; the upper trigram Dui, the Lake, is openness and glad exchange. Held together, the figure carries strength inside and softness at the surface — the shape of a person steady enough to be genuinely receptive.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Sensation at the threshold BOTTOM LINE

初六：咸其拇。

Influence reaches the big toe.

The first line describes the earliest hint of attraction, before intention has gathered enough strength to become action. You may notice a glance, a possibility, or a subtle change in atmosphere, yet the signal is still too small to carry a decision. Treat it as information rather than instruction. Give the situation room to declare itself through consistent behavior. When this line changes, Radical Change suggests that a minor sensation can eventually expose a deeper need for renewal, but only after the difference between passing curiosity and genuine commitment becomes clear.

2 Impulse seeks a center SECOND LINE

六二：咸其腓，凶，居吉。

Influence reaches the calves: misfortune. Staying still brings good fortune.

At the second line, influence has entered the body as restlessness. The urge to move, reply, accept, or pursue may feel immediate, but acting only to discharge tension gives the other person or circumstance control of your pace. Pause long enough to recover your own center. A response chosen from steadiness can still be warm and timely; it simply is not compelled. The change to Great Exceeding warns that emotional or practical pressure may be carrying more weight than the present structure can support. Reduce the load before asking the bond or decision to bear more.

3 **Desire becomes pursuit** THIRD LINE

九三：咸其股，执其随，往吝。

Influence reaches the thighs; it clings to what it follows. Pressing forward brings regret.

The third line marks the point where attraction can turn into chasing. It is easy to borrow another person's urgency, copy a group's direction, or pursue approval because standing apart feels uncomfortable. Influence becomes distortion when you abandon your own judgment to remain close to what moves you. Name what you actually want, then compare that desire with the conduct now required. Convergence is the destination of this change: a gathering can offer support and shared purpose, provided you enter it as a whole participant rather than as someone willing to surrender every boundary for belonging.

4 **Steadiness shapes the field** FOURTH LINE

九四：贞吉，悔亡。憧憧往来，朋从尔思。

Staying true brings good fortune and regret fades. Restless coming and going; only close companions follow your thoughts.

The fourth line reaches the heart of mutual influence. Here the strongest effect comes from coherence between motive, word, and action, not from persuasion techniques. If your attention jumps from one desired reaction to another, people sense the hidden demand. Return to the principle you can maintain even if the answer is delayed. That steadiness makes genuine response possible because it removes the pressure to perform for you. Hardship follows when this line changes, showing that obstacles may test whether your position is grounded. A difficult passage calls for patient orientation, not increasingly forceful attempts to control the route.

5 Quiet influence at the core FIFTH LINE

九五：咸其脢，无悔。

Influence reaches the flesh of the back: no regret.

At the fifth line, influence is quiet, durable, and less dependent on visible feedback. You may care deeply without needing to advertise the feeling or extract reassurance. This is useful in relationships, leadership, and creative work: the clearest contribution can be a stable presence that lets others think and choose. Do not mistake reserve for indifference, however; calm influence still communicates honestly when communication is needed. The change leads to Small Exceeding, where modest details deserve close attention. A small promise kept, a careful correction, or a restrained gesture may matter more now than a sweeping declaration.

6 Words reach their limit TOP LINE

上六：咸其辅颊舌。

Influence reaches the jaw, the cheeks, and the tongue.

The top line places influence in speech, expression, and social display. Conversation can open a door, but eloquence cannot create consent, trust, or substance by itself. If you keep explaining after the essential truth is understood, language may become performance or pressure. Let actions carry the part that words cannot prove. Ask whether the exchange is producing clearer mutual understanding or merely more sound. Retreat is the destination when this line changes. That does not require hostility or disappearance; it can mean stepping back from argument, reducing contact, or allowing silence to restore proportion before another honest approach.

Read hexagram 31 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/31-influence



HEXAGRAM 32

Duration

恒 · Héng

Thunder over Wind

Duration asks whether a commitment, habit, or bond can hold its course through ordinary time, favoring steady conduct over any single dramatic gesture of loyalty.

THE JUDGMENT

恒：亨，无咎，利贞，利有攸往。

Duration: success, no error. It is fruitful to stay true, and favorable to have somewhere to go.

THE IMAGE

雷风，恒；君子以立不易方。

Thunder and wind together: Duration. The wise person stands firm and does not change direction.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received sequence, Hexagram 32 closes the upper canon of the I Ching, following directly after Hexagram 31, Influence. Where Influence traces the courtship that draws two things together, Duration asks what allows that connection to actually last once the initial attraction has settled into daily life.

The Chinese name 恒 carries the sense of constancy, the long, unbroken thread that continues once a beginning has been made; the hexagram is

also translated as Constancy in some editions. That distinction matters. Duration does not celebrate rigid, unchanging repetition for its own sake. It examines whether the direction underneath your conduct stays coherent even as the particular actions adapt to circumstance — a habit, a craft, or a principle can look different from year to year and still be genuinely steadfast, provided the underlying commitment never actually breaks.

The image also carries a warning against two opposite failures: digging in too fast before trust is earned, and abandoning a course the moment it stops feeling easy. Long-term duration is built through pace, not through either impatience or performance.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 32 joins the trigrams Thunder over Wind. Wind is gentle penetration that adapts moment to moment; Thunder is decisive movement that acts and returns. Together they describe how genuine duration works: an underlying direction stays constant while its outward expression keeps adjusting to what each new moment actually requires.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, the lower trigram Xun, the Wind, offers a yielding base capable of adjusting to whatever it meets, while the upper trigram Zhen, the Thunder, moves above with steady, repeated force. Held together, the figure carries flexibility below and consistent motion above — the shape of a course that holds firm precisely by knowing how to bend.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Digging too deep, too soon BOTTOM LINE

初六：浚恒，贞凶，无攸利。

Digging deep too soon for duration: to persist here brings misfortune, and nothing is gained.

The first line pictures someone digging straight down before any foundation has been tested, trying to manufacture depth and permanence on the very first day. Wang Fuzhi reads this as a young position that pushes into intimacy too fast, mistaking urgency for commitment. A bond, a habit, or a plan cannot be forced into permanence before it has earned trust through repetition. Slow down and let small, repeated actions build the footing that hurried demands cannot. When this line changes, the reading moves toward Hexagram 34, Great Vigor — real strength is coming, but only once the base beneath it can bear the weight.

2 Centered without forcing SECOND LINE

九二：悔亡。

Regret disappears.

The second line is off its formal position yet holds the center, and that centeredness is what saves it. Rather than chasing a guarantee of permanence, this line simply keeps its own composure while the situation around it shifts. Wang Fuzhi notes that not demanding constancy outright is exactly what lets regret dissolve; the strength of this position is restraint, not assertion. You do not need to lock every outcome in place today. When this line changes, the reading moves toward Hexagram 62, Small Exceeding — attend to modest, careful details rather than reaching for the whole picture at once.

3 **Virtue that will not hold** THIRD LINE

九三：不恒其德，或承之羞，贞吝。

Virtue that will not hold steady may bring shame; to persist in this way invites regret.

The third line is capable and eager to advance, but capability without follow-through becomes its own trap. Wang Fuzhi describes this position as one that mistakes a moment of comfort for a durable arrangement, then abandons the path as soon as something easier appears. Inconsistency like this invites the very embarrassment it hoped to avoid — commitments made loudly and dropped quietly cost more credibility than commitments never made. Examine whether your recent promises match your recent conduct. When this line changes, the reading moves toward Hexagram 40, Release — the pressure eases, but only after the inconsistency is acknowledged and let go.

4 **Waiting where nothing gathers** FOURTH LINE

九四：田无禽。

Hunting the field all day, no game is caught.

The fourth line has moved into a position that was never suited to it and then settled there as though it belonged, like a hunter waiting all day beside an empty field for game that will not come. Effort spent in the wrong place produces nothing, however patient the effort is. Wang Fuzhi treats this as a caution against confusing motion with progress: activity in an unsuitable field cannot manufacture results. Reassess whether the ground you stand on can actually support what you are asking of it. When this line changes, the reading moves toward Hexagram 46, Ascending — real progress needs the right footing first.

5 Constancy in a supporting role FIFTH LINE

六五：恒其德贞，妇人吉，夫子凶。

Holding virtue with constancy: good fortune for a wife, misfortune for a husband.

The fifth line holds its virtue with quiet steadiness, and the classical text calls this fortunate for the receptive party, unfortunate for the one meant to lead — not a verdict on gender, but on role. Patient support serves well when the moment calls for endurance. That same stillness becomes a failure of duty when the moment calls for initiative and decisive leadership. Wang Fuzhi warns against letting comfortable passivity stand in for the demands of authority. Ask which role this situation needs from you. When this line changes, the reading moves toward Hexagram 28, Great Exceeding — the structure is under real strain and needs someone to act, not merely endure.

6 Restless at the very top TOP LINE

上六：振恒，凶。

Shaking constancy at the very end: misfortune.

The top line sits highest in the figure and, trusting that height alone guarantees standing, tries to wrap things up quickly and call the result lasting. Wang Fuzhi describes this as agitation mistaken for closure — a hurried, restless gesture toward permanence right when patience is most needed. What was built slowly cannot be sealed shut in a rush; forcing an ending does not protect what came before it. Genuine duration is earned through the whole course, not secured at the last moment. When this line changes, the reading moves toward Hexagram 50, Cauldron — everything must be gathered and refined again, starting fresh rather than closing early.

Read hexagram 32 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/32-duration



HEXAGRAM 33

Retreat

遁 · Dùn

Heaven over Mountain

Retreat teaches timely withdrawal: when a small, rising pressure cannot yet be met head-on, the wiser move is a measured, dignified departure.

THE JUDGMENT

遁：亨，小利貞。

Retreat: it succeeds. In small matters, it is fruitful to stay true.

THE IMAGE

天下有山，遁；君子以远小人，不恶而严。

Heaven lies far above the mountain: Retreat. The wise person keeps distance from small-minded pressure, firm without contempt.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received sequence, Hexagram 33 follows Heng, Duration: nothing sustains its position forever, and the steady continuity Duration describes eventually meets a pressure it cannot simply outlast. Retreat is the response — not because endurance has failed, but because the timing underneath it has quietly changed.

The Chinese name 遁 combines the walking radical with a phonetic element, and its plain sense is to withdraw, step back, or slip out of the path of something advancing. Retreat here is not a synonym for defeat. Two

yin lines are quietly gaining ground at the base of the figure, and the four yang lines above answer not by fighting for the lost inch but by putting real distance between themselves and what is rising. The Image reads that response as a discipline: keep away from small, encroaching pressures, and do it firmly, without contempt for whatever is doing the encroaching.

Read practically, this hexagram marks a moment when holding your ground has stopped being the wise option, and its six lines trace what a good retreat actually looks like — from a dangerous scramble at the very rear, through attachments that make leaving painful, to a departure so complete and composed that the classical commentary calls it a heart grown broad and a body at ease. The lesson is not simply to leave, but to leave in a way that keeps your integrity, your smaller duties, and your dignity intact.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 33 joins Heaven above Mountain below. Heaven is unmixed strength that never stops moving; Mountain is a firm shape that already knows where it must stop. Their relationship pictures the whole hexagram: what is high and forceful keeps drawing away from what is high but fixed in place, and the widening gap between them is exactly what a timely retreat looks like from the outside.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, two yin lines occupy the base and are pressing upward, while four yang lines fill the positions above them. The lower trigram Gen, the Mountain, is stillness that already senses its own limit; the upper trigram Qian, Heaven, is unmixed strength continuing to move away. Held together, they show why this retreat is not flight: the upper lines are simply continuing a motion that

was always theirs, opening distance from a rising pressure rather than suffering a defeat.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 **Lagging at the rear** BOTTOM LINE

初六：遁尾，厉，勿用有攸往。

To lag at the tail of a retreat is dangerous. Do not press forward to hold what is already leaving.

The first line sits at the very rear of a retreat already underway, its attachment reaching toward the fourth line above like a hand grasping at a coattail. The classical commentary reads this as the smallest, least capable position trying to hold back a movement that has already decided to leave — a stance that invites rebuke rather than success. The line's own advice is blunt: do not use this position to go out and detain what is departing. Better to accept the lag than to chase after ground already lost. When this line changes, the tie loosens into Hexagram 13, Fellowship: genuine companionship becomes possible only once the grasping stops.

2 A bond that will not loosen SECOND LINE

六二：执之用黄牛之革，莫之胜说。

Bound with a strap of yellow ox-hide, and nothing can loosen it.

The second line is central and correctly placed, bound to the retreating fifth line above by what the commentary calls a strap of yellow ox-hide — yellow the color of balance, the ox an image of patient compliance. Nothing can loosen this hold, yet the bond cannot ultimately keep the retreat from happening either. What holds here is sincerity, not control, and sincerity kept honestly earns no blame even when the outcome cannot be changed. When this line changes, the inner mountain opens into Hexagram 44, Encounter: a single yielding line meeting a field of advancing strength, the same devoted posture now facing what arrives rather than what departs.

3 Torn between staying and leaving THIRD LINE

九三：系遁，有疾厉，畜臣妾，吉。

Held back by attachment while retreating brings distress and danger; yet tending one's own household still brings good fortune.

The third line has bonded with the yielding second line beneath it, and that attachment becomes the very thing obstructing its own departure. The commentary names the resulting strain as genuine sickness and danger: torn between going and staying, the mind itself grows exhausted. Yet the same close, caring bond that endangers a larger retreat is exactly right for a smaller domain — tending one's own household and those who depend on you stays fortunate even when withdrawing from wider affairs is not yet possible. When this line changes, Hexagram 12, Obstruction, follows: unmanaged attachment left unresolved is what finally stalls the whole situation.

4 A clean, willing release FOURTH LINE

九四：好遁，君子吉，小人否。

A willing retreat: fortunate for the wise person, but not for the small-minded.

The fourth line answers the first: paired with that same lower attachment, it is nonetheless able to let go cleanly, without resentment or a hidden score to settle. The wise person, secure enough in principle to release what a lesser rival still needs to possess, finds good fortune in exactly this parting; the small-minded person, unable to do the same, meets misfortune instead. The measure is not the bond itself but whether it can be set down with goodwill. When this line changes, Hexagram 53, Gradual Advance, follows: a release made this cleanly opens onto patient, steady progress elsewhere.

5 Withdrawing with grace FIFTH LINE

九五：嘉遁，贞吉。

An admirable retreat, held to what is right: good fortune.

The fifth line withdraws from a position of real strength and correctness, properly matched with the devoted second line below, yet it does not need to be pried loose by that devotion. The commentary calls this an admirable retreat: conducted with dignity and ceremony rather than dragged out by attachment, because the one leaving, not the one left, decides how the parting is carried out. Nothing here is claimed as a personal favor; the grace of the exit is its own reward. When this line changes, Hexagram 56, Sojourning, follows: having relinquished a fixed position with such composure, one now travels as a guest through unfamiliar ground.

6 Free and unburdened retreat TOP LINE

上九：肥遁，无不利。

An ample, unburdened retreat: nothing is unfavorable.

The top line has no correspondence pulling it back and stands furthest from the rising pressure below, so its retreat is complete, expansive, and entirely untroubled — what the commentary calls a heart grown broad and a body at ease. Classical readers point to figures who withdrew from one age only to shape the next: a released position becomes ground for a different kind of contribution. Nothing here is left unfinished by leaving. When this line changes, Hexagram 31, Influence, follows: only once the grasping has fully stopped does an open, mutual response with others become genuinely possible again.

Read hexagram 33 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/33-retreat



HEXAGRAM 34

Great Vigor

大壮 · Dàzhuàng

Thunder over Heaven

Great Vigor arrives at the height of its strength and asks whether that strength is disciplined enough to act only on what is right.

THE JUDGMENT

大壮：利贞。

Great Vigor: it is fruitful to hold to what is right.

THE IMAGE

雷在天上，大壮；君子以非礼弗履。

Thunder sounds above heaven: Great Vigor. The wise person will not set a foot on ground that violates propriety.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received sequence, Hexagram 34 follows Dun, Retreat: after a period of withdrawal, the yang lines have advanced again and now fill four of the six positions. Something that was gathering quietly has become large, visible, and hard to ignore.

The Chinese name 大壮 combines 大, great, with 壮, vigor or robust strength — the same character used for a body at its physical peak. Several keyword lists also carry the figure under the translation Great Power, a fair rendering of the same idea: capacity has become undeniable. The judgment does not celebrate size for its own sake. It ties the word great to what is upright, because unchecked force behaves the same

whether it serves a good aim or a selfish one. The image of thunder sounding above heaven says the same thing: an immense, audible force needs a boundary it will not cross.

Read practically, Hexagram 34 marks a moment of leverage — new authority, new resources, unmistakable momentum — and asks what governs it. The six lines trace that question from a first careless step through a ram literally caught by its own horns in a hedge, ending with strength that finally learns to yield. The lesson is not to shrink from power once it is real, but to let restraint, not appetite, decide how it moves.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 34 joins Heaven below and Thunder above. Heaven is pure, unblended yang; Thunder is its own image of sudden, audible force. When thunder rides on heaven's strength, sound and power reinforce each other, so the whole figure reads as vigor with no relief valve — which is exactly why it needs a rule for how it may be spent.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, four unbroken yang lines fill the base and rise through the middle, while two broken yin lines remain at the very top. The lower trigram Qian, Heaven, is unmixed strength; the upper trigram Zhen, Thunder, is movement breaking loose. Strength this concentrated cannot simply keep climbing — the diagram itself shows the yin lines waiting above as the place where advance must eventually answer to limit.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Force before footing BOTTOM LINE

初九：壮于趾，征凶，有孚。

Vigor shows first in the toes. Advancing now brings misfortune, even though sincerity is present.

The first line puts vigor in the toes — strength that has only just reached the lowest, least stable part of the body. The sincerity behind it is real, but sincerity is not the same as readiness, and advancing now converts good intent into a misstep before the rest of the structure can support it. The wiser move is to let strength settle before it travels. Notice the impulse, credit it, and wait for the situation to catch up with your resolve. When this line changes, Hexagram 32, Duration, follows: what needs testing here is not whether the impulse is genuine but whether it can be sustained long enough to matter.

2 Strength held at center SECOND LINE

九二：贞吉。

Holding to what is right brings good fortune.

The second line asks nothing elaborate — only that you hold to what is right, and it promises good fortune for exactly that. Positioned centrally, this line shows strength that does not need to prove itself through display; it is simply steady, correctly placed, and enough. If the first line was strength arriving too early, this one shows strength arriving on time, doing its work without ceremony. Trust the plain, undramatic version of the right choice over a more forceful alternative. The change here leads to Hexagram 55, Plenty: sustained rightness at the center is what eventually earns a season of real abundance, not the other way around.

3 The ram and the hedge THIRD LINE

九三：小人用壯，君子用罔，貞厉，羝羊觸藩，羸其角。

The small-minded rely on force; the wise person relies on restraint. Even holding correctly is precarious here: a ram butts a hedge and tangles its horns.

The third line draws the hexagram's central image: a ram charges a hedge and its horns get caught, because the small-minded rely on raw force while the wise rely on restraint. Even correct persistence is called precarious here — the danger is not that you lack strength but that you are certain to use it the wrong way if you do not pause first. This is the line to recognize in yourself before it becomes visible to everyone else. When it changes, Hexagram 54, Young Bride, follows: an unequal or awkwardly matched situation is exactly what forceful, unexamined action tends to create.

4 The hedge finally gives way FOURTH LINE

九四：貞吉悔亡，藩决不羸，壯于大輿之間。

Holding to what is right brings good fortune and regret fades. The hedge breaks open and no horns are caught; strength now shows in the axle of a great cart.

The fourth line answers the third: holding to what is right brings good fortune, regret fades, the hedge breaks cleanly open, and strength now shows in the axle of a great cart rather than in a ram's tangled horns. The difference is not less power but power correctly placed — carrying weight instead of colliding with it. This is what disciplined vigor looks like once it has learned from the previous line's entanglement. When this line changes, Hexagram 11, Peace, follows: strength that has stopped fighting its own limits is what allows genuine harmony to settle in afterward.

5 Letting the ram go FIFTH LINE

六五：喪羊于易，无悔。

The ram is let go at the border, without regret.

The fifth line describes something unexpected at the height of strength: the ram is let go at the border, without regret. Surrounded by yang power beneath it, this soft, central line does not fight to keep what it could still claim by force; it releases a contested advantage before the contest becomes a struggle, and loses nothing essential by doing so. This is restraint exercised from genuine strength rather than from weakness, which is why no regret follows. When this line changes, Hexagram 43, Breakthrough, follows: a clean, voluntary release like this is what clears the way for a decisive resolution.

6 Trapped by your own power TOP LINE

上六：羝羊触藩，不能退，不能遂，无攸利，艰则吉。

A ram butts a hedge, unable to retreat and unable to advance. Nothing is gained by it, yet facing the difficulty honestly brings good fortune.

The top line returns to the ram, now fully stuck: it cannot retreat and cannot advance, nothing is gained, and the situation looks like a dead end — until the line adds its final clause, that facing the hardship honestly brings good fortune. This is vigor that overreached and got caught by consequences of its own making. The way out is not one more push; it is the plain acknowledgment of the difficulty, which is what finally lets the deadlock resolve. When this line changes, Hexagram 14, Great Possession, follows: strength that has stopped struggling against its own limit is what earns real, lasting abundance next.

Read hexagram 34 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/34-great-power



HEXAGRAM 35

Advance

晋 · Jìn

Fire over Earth

Hexagram 35 shows the sun rising above the horizon, a figure of steady, visible advance and recognition that grows out of merit already noticed rather than force.

THE JUDGMENT

晋：康侯用锡马蕃庶，昼日三接。

Advance: the accomplished marquis is granted many horses, and is received in audience three times in a single day.

THE IMAGE

明出地上，晋；君子以自昭明德。

Light rises above the earth: this is Advance. The wise person thereby makes their own bright virtue shine forth.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received sequence, Hexagram 35 follows Great Strength (Hexagram 34): a force that has grown genuinely strong does not stay idle in its own power — it moves forward and becomes visible advance. Hexagram 35 takes up that momentum and asks what happens once strength turns into advance that others can actually see.

The character 晋, pronounced Jìn, has long been read as an image of the sun climbing above the horizon line, and it carries the double sense of

moving forward and being promoted or raised in rank. In some editions the hexagram is also translated as Progress. The name works as both a verb, to advance, and a title once granted to a feudal domain — advance, here, is inseparable from being recognized for it.

The Judgment pictures a meritorious marquis rewarded with many horses and received in audience three times in one day — recognition arriving quickly and repeatedly once it starts. This is advance built on standing merit already noticed by someone above, not advance forced or hurried along; the figure favors work that is allowed to become visible on its own timing.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 35 joins Fire over Earth. Fire above is the sun, and Earth below is the plain it rises over: light spreading steadily across open ground, one degree of the sky at a time. Nothing in the image is sudden — the sun does not leap to noon, it climbs, and the figure reads advance the same way.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, three yin lines rise first, unconfirmed and still finding their footing; a lone yang line crosses the fourth position, blocking the way like an obstacle underfoot; a yin line sits at the fifth position, the seat of the ruler, catching the light directly; and a final yang line tops the figure, having advanced as far as it safely can. The lower trigram's rising yin lines are the light still climbing; the fifth line is where that light is finally received.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 An early advance, not yet trusted BOTTOM LINE

初六：晋如摧如，贞吉罔孚，裕无咎。

Advancing, yet held back: to hold steady is fortunate. Trust from above has not yet arrived, but an unhurried, generous bearing brings no blame.

The bottom line shows the very start of an advance — real movement forward, yet without any answering trust from above, since the base line's proper partner has not yet responded. Held back this way, an anxious response would only make things worse; the figure instead counsels an unhurried, generous bearing that absorbs the delay without resentment. Because the intention is sound even though it is unconfirmed, staying steady brings no blame. When this line changes, the reading moves toward Jaws Closing, Hexagram 21: the uncertainty hardens into an obstruction that now needs to be addressed directly rather than waited out.

2 A troubled rise, quietly rewarded SECOND LINE

六二：晋如愁如，贞吉。受兹介福，于其王母。

Advancing, yet troubled: to hold steady is fortunate. A great blessing is received, coming down from the royal grandmother.

At the second line, the advance continues but brings real unease with it — a sense of going unnoticed even while doing everything correctly. Holding to steady, correct conduct through that worry is what the line calls fortunate, and it is answered with an unexpected blessing arriving from someone senior, pictured as a royal grandmother's favor reaching down. The reward does not come because it was demanded; it comes because the position was held with integrity while it felt uncertain. When this line changes, it points to Not Yet Crossed, Hexagram 64: the reward has arrived, but the larger passage is still unfinished.

3 Advance trusted by the group THIRD LINE

六三：众允，悔亡。

The multitude gives its trust and joins in: regret disappears.

The third line shows the advance no longer belonging to one person alone: the surrounding lines, read as a wider circle or a rising group, extend their trust and join the movement together. Whatever hesitation marked the first two positions dissolves once the effort is recognized collectively rather than left to prove itself in isolation, and regret disappears accordingly. This is the moment an individual advance becomes a shared one, carried by consensus instead of solitary effort. When this line changes, the reading turns to Sojourning, Hexagram 56: the group sets out together, moving like travelers into new and less familiar ground.

4 A rodent blocking the way FOURTH LINE

九四：晋如鼫鼠，贞厉。

Advancing like a large, hesitant rodent, darting forward and back: to persist this way is dangerous.

At the fourth line, a single yang line sits wedged among the rising yin lines below it, likened to a large, hesitant rodent darting forward and back without committing to either direction. Positioned where it can obstruct others' advance rather than make its own, this line describes someone clinging to an unearned or precarious position, and the text names that persistence as dangerous even though the line itself is firm. The warning is about clinging and blocking, not about strength used well. When this line changes, it moves toward Stripping Away, Hexagram 23: what was hoarded or defended without real foundation erodes and falls away regardless.

5 Advancing without counting the cost FIFTH LINE

六五：悔亡，失得勿恤。往吉，无不利。

Regret disappears. Do not fret over gain or loss: to go forward is fortunate, and nothing is unfavorable.

The fifth line holds the ruler's seat, the point where the rising light is finally received directly, and any earlier regret is dissolved here. Its instruction is unusually plain: stop weighing every gain and loss along the way, and simply continue forward, which the text calls fortunate with nothing unfavorable. This is generosity from a position of real authority, willing to keep extending itself downward toward those still climbing rather than guarding its advantage. When this line changes, the reading turns to Obstruction, Hexagram 12: generosity from the top does not by itself guarantee the whole structure stays open, so it still needs matching by real connection below.

6 Advance pressed to its very edge TOP LINE

上九：晋其角，维用伐邑，厉吉无咎，贞吝。

Advancing to the very horns: use this force only to correct one's own domain. Danger, yet good fortune and no blame; but to make it the constant rule brings regret.

The top line has advanced as far as the figure allows, pictured as reaching the horns — the sharpest point of the animal, useful for defense but dangerous if swung carelessly. The text permits using that force only to correct disorder within one's own domain, never to extend the advance further outward; handled that way, the situation is dangerous yet still fortunate and blameless. But kept up as a standing policy rather than a one-time correction, it turns into ongoing regret. When this line changes, it settles into Anticipation, Hexagram 16: the sharp edge relaxes into ease, and the advance gives way to simple, well-earned contentment.

Read hexagram 35 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/35-progress



HEXAGRAM 36

Dimmed Light

明夷 · Míngyí

Earth over Fire

Hexagram 36 shows light buried under the earth: brightness is real but must be guarded quietly for now, held firm through hardship rather than shown openly.

THE JUDGMENT

明夷：利艰贞。

Dimmed Light: favorable to hold firm through hardship.

THE IMAGE

明入地中，明夷；君子以莅众，用晦而明。

The light has entered into the earth: this is Dimmed Light. The wise person, governing others, uses an appearance of obscurity and still sees clearly.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

Hexagram 36 follows Advance in the received sequence, and the reversal is deliberate: a light that has been rising cannot climb forever, and this figure marks the moment it is forced down and covered over. Where the previous hexagram showed brightness ascending in the open, this one shows the same brightness driven underground, still burning but no longer safe to display.

The Chinese name 明夷 (Míngyí) pairs 明, brightness or clear intelligence, with 夷, to wound or bring low — the light itself is injured, not merely hidden by circumstance. English sources also render the hexagram as Darkening of the Light, Brightness Wounded, or Intelligence Hidden, all pointing at the same picture: a capable, clear-sighted person operating under conditions that actively work against them. The classical reference is King Wen's own imprisonment and the sage minister Count Ji feigning confusion to survive a tyrant's court — real virtue continuing to function while deliberately dimmed from outside view.

Read as guidance, Hexagram 36 does not counsel despair, and it does not counsel open resistance either. It favors holding firm through difficulty: keeping your judgment intact and your conduct correct while the outer situation stays hostile to open brightness, and trusting that a light kept whole underground can still be recovered when conditions change.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 36 joins Earth above Fire. The brightest of the eight trigrams is pressed downward and covered by the most yielding, so the whole figure reads as light forced beneath a heavy, undifferentiated surface rather than light meeting an obstacle it can burn through.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, the lower trigram Li is fire and clarity, two solid lines wrapped around a broken center; the upper trigram Kun is unbroken yin throughout, earth without a single crack of light in it. Read bottom to top, the diagram shows fire's own brightness trying to rise while an entirely opaque mass sits directly above it, blocking every route upward and leaving only depth and patience as the available response.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Wings drooping in flight BOTTOM LINE

初九：明夷于飞，垂其翼，君子于行，三日不食，有攸往，主人有言。

The light dims in flight, its wings drooping low; the wise person presses onward, going three days without food. There is somewhere to travel to, though the host has words of complaint.

The first line shows the earliest sign of trouble: brightness already dimming in the middle of departure, wings drooping under the strain, the traveler pressing on for three days without food while the very people sheltering him complain about the disruption. The line does not call this a disaster; it calls it a cost worth paying to get clear of danger early, before the situation worsens. Leaving hungry and unwelcomed is preferable to staying somewhere that will only wound the light further. When this line changes, the reading points to Humility: the right response to an uncomfortable early exit is modesty, not resentment at the discomfort it caused.

2 A wound that can be carried SECOND LINE

六二：明夷，夷于左股，用拯马壮，吉。

The light is wounded, injured in the left thigh; rescued by a horse strong enough to carry the weight — good fortune.

At the second line, the injury becomes concrete — a wound to the left thigh, real damage but not disabling — and the resolution is equally concrete: a horse strong enough to bear the weight, offering rescue rather than a solo recovery. This line teaches that accepting real help after a real setback is not a failure of self-reliance; it is the difference between an injury that heals and one that worsens from being carried alone. Good fortune here comes specifically from allowing the rescue to happen. When this line changes, the situation shifts toward Peace: accepting support at a low point opens the way to genuine harmony afterward.

3 A deliberate hunt to the south THIRD LINE

九三：明夷于南狩，得其大首，不可疾，贞。

Amid the dimmed light, a hunt toward the south captures the great chief responsible for the harm; this cannot be forced through quickly — hold firm.

The third line turns from enduring harm to addressing its source: a hunt toward the south that captures the great chief responsible for the darkness, but the text is explicit that this cannot be rushed. Confronting the actual cause of a difficult situation is permitted here, even encouraged, but only once you hold firm and act with the patience the moment requires rather than striking in anger at the first opportunity. A hasty confrontation undoes the very clarity this line is trying to recover. When this line changes, the reading turns to Return: the source of harm addressed correctly opens a genuine path back toward the right course.

4 Reading the true intent, then leaving FOURTH LINE

六四：入于左腹，获明夷之心，于出门庭。

Entering deep on the left side, one grasps the true intent behind the dimmed light, and then withdraws again through the courtyard gate.

The fourth line describes going deep enough into a difficult situation to understand what is actually driving it — entering, in the image, all the way to the left side of the belly — and then withdrawing again through the courtyard gate once that understanding is secured. This favors reconnaissance over confrontation: know precisely what you are dealing with before you decide whether and how to act on it, and be willing to leave once you have that clarity rather than lingering unnecessarily. When this line changes, the destination is Plenty: real understanding gathered quietly here becomes the basis for a season of far greater abundance.

5 Holding firm under a hostile superior FIFTH LINE

六五：箕子之明夷，利贞。

The dimmed light of the Count of Ji: favorable to hold firm.

The fifth line names the hexagram's central figure directly: the Count of Ji, who kept his integrity whole while a tyrant's court would have destroyed it if shown openly, and the guidance is simply to hold firm. This is the position closest to real power while still trapped beneath it, and the counsel is neither to flee nor to fight, but to preserve inner correctness intact even while circumstances demand an outward appearance that hides it completely. When this line changes, the reading moves to Already Crossed: sustained integrity under pressure is what eventually brings the whole difficult passage to a completed, settled state.

6 Risen high, then fallen into darkness TOP LINE

上六：不明晦，初登于天，后入于地。

No longer merely dim but wholly dark: first risen to the height of heaven, then fallen into the earth.

The top line is the hexagram's clearest warning: no longer merely dimmed but wholly dark, a light that first rose to the height of heaven and then fell into the earth. This is the fate of a source of harm that pursued brightness's destruction so completely it consumed its own position in the process — a caution that hostility pressed to its limit eventually collapses under its own weight, whether or not you do anything further to hasten it. When this line changes, the destination is Adornment: what has fallen into total darkness gives way, in time, to a fresh concern with surface and form rather than substance.

Read hexagram 36 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/36-darkening-of-the-light



HEXAGRAM 37

Household

家人 · Jiārén

Wind over Fire

Household describes order built from the inside out: a home, a team, or a life holds together when roles are clear, speech has substance, and conduct stays consistent.

THE JUDGMENT

家人：利女贞。

Household: it is fruitful for the woman to remain constant and true.

THE IMAGE

风自火出，家人；君子以言有物而行有恒。

Wind rises out of fire: Household. The wise person speaks with real substance and acts with lasting constancy.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received sequence, Hexagram 37 follows Hexagram 36, Dimmed Light, arriving after a period when clarity had to withdraw and endure hardship in silence. Once that dark passage has been survived, the text turns inward, to the smallest and most durable unit of order: the household. Before order can extend outward into a community, a nation, or any larger enterprise, the text argues, it has to first take root close to home.

The Chinese name 家人 literally means people of one house, and the hexagram is also translated as Family in many editions, or occasionally

The Clan. That literal sense matters: this is not an abstract meditation on order in general but a study of the particular people who share a roof, a budget, a table, and daily responsibility for one another. Jia ren asks what keeps such a group coherent — not affection alone, but roles that are understood, speech that carries real weight, and conduct that can be relied upon day after day.

The image also carries a caution against two opposite failures the line texts name directly: severity pushed so far that it curdles into resentment, and warmth allowed to slide into carelessness. A household, like any close working unit, needs enough firmness to hold its shape and enough tenderness to remain worth holding.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 37 joins Wind over Fire. Fire below gives warmth, light, and a settled center; Wind above rises from that fire and carries its warmth outward through the household and beyond it. Together they describe how domestic order actually spreads: not by decree issued from outside, but by example and honest speech radiating out from a well-tended center, the way wind naturally carries what fire has already kindled.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, a yang line opens the figure, a yin line follows at the second position, yang returns at the third, yin returns at the fourth, and two yang lines close out the fifth and sixth positions at the top. The lower trigram Li, Fire, is clarity and attachment held steady within; the upper trigram Xun, Wind, is gentle, penetrating influence that reaches every corner without needing to force its way in. Held together, the figure carries a warm, discerning core beneath a reach that extends without strain.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 **Boundaries set at the start** BOTTOM LINE

初九：闲有家，悔亡。

Set clear boundaries for the household from the very start: regret disappears.

The first line pictures a household guarded with clear limits from the very beginning, before habits have had the chance to drift into disorder. Wang Fuzhi reads this early discipline as a form of care rather than harshness: naming expectations while everyone is still forming them costs far less than correcting entrenched patterns later. This is not about controlling other people; it is about defining, early and honestly, what the shared structure actually requires. Set the boundary before the need for it becomes urgent. When this line changes, the reading moves toward Hexagram 53, Gradual Advance — steady, patient, one-step-at-a-time progress becomes available once the foundation is properly set.

2 **Tending the center** SECOND LINE

六二：无攸遂，在中馈，贞吉。

She pursues no separate ambition of her own; tending the meals and the home within, staying true brings good fortune.

The second line shows someone who pursues no private ambition apart from the household's own center, tending its daily needs with quiet reliability. Wang Fuzhi treats this as the position of correct devotion: not passivity, but a deliberate choice to invest effort where it sustains something shared rather than where it advances a separate agenda. The good fortune here comes specifically from staying true to that chosen center rather than from any single dramatic act. When this line changes, the reading moves toward Hexagram 9, Small Accumulation — gains arrive gradually, in modest, unglamorous increments rather than all at once.

3 Too stern, or too loose THIRD LINE

九三：家人嗃嗃，悔厉吉。妇子嘻嘻，终吝。

The household grows stern and exacting: regret and severity, yet in the end good fortune. Wife and children giggle without discipline: in the end, humiliation.

The third line names both failures directly: a household run with harsh severity brings regret and strain even though it ultimately holds firm, while one where everyone laughs past real problems ends in lasting humiliation. Wang Fuzhi reads the strict household as flawed but survivable, and the careless one as the greater danger, since laughter that avoids honest correction lets disorder take root unseen. Neither extreme is the goal; the line is a diagnostic question about which failure you are currently closer to. When this line changes, the reading moves toward Hexagram 42, Increase — correcting the imbalance opens the way to genuine, shared growth.

4 Prosperity through quiet restraint FOURTH LINE

六四：富家，大吉。

The household prospers and grows rich: great good fortune.

The fourth line describes a household that grows genuinely rich, and Wang Fuzhi ties that prosperity to the position's yielding, well-placed nature: wealth held by someone who is careful, restrained, and does not turn success into display tends to last. This is not a promise that wealth alone brings good fortune; it is a claim that prosperity paired with humility protects itself, while prosperity paired with boastfulness invites its own unraveling. Ask whether your recent gains are being managed with the same care that built them. When this line changes, the reading moves toward Hexagram 13, Fellowship — shared resources now call for shared purpose with others beyond the household itself.

5 Arriving in true form FIFTH LINE

九五：王假有家，勿恤吉。

The ruler arrives at the household in true and complete form: there is nothing to worry over, good fortune.

The fifth line pictures a ruler, or any figure of real authority, arriving at the household not as an outside inspector but as someone whose virtue already fits the role. Wang Fuzhi notes that this line's strength and correct position reinforce each other: because the fit between person and role is genuine, there is nothing left to worry over. Influence here does not need to be announced; it is simply recognized once it arrives. Examine whether your own presence in a position of responsibility feels earned this way. When this line changes, the reading moves toward Hexagram 22, Adornment — attention turns to how that substance is presented.

6 Sincerity that lasts TOP LINE

上九：有孚威如，终吉。

Sincerity joined with quiet dignity: in the end, good fortune.

The top line closes the hexagram with sincerity joined to quiet dignity, and Wang Fuzhi reads this pairing as the completion of everything the earlier lines built: the early boundaries, the steady devotion, the correction of excess, the careful prosperity, and the well-earned authority all converge here into a constancy that no longer needs proving. The good fortune named at the very end is not a new achievement; it is confirmation that what was built carefully now holds on its own. When this line changes, the reading moves toward Hexagram 63, Already Crossed — the work is complete, and the discipline now required is maintaining it rather than starting something new.

Read hexagram 37 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/37-the-family



HEXAGRAM 38

Opposition

睽 · Kuí

Fire over Lake

Hexagram 38 describes real divergence between people or intentions that still share one situation, and counsels small, patient steps rather than one large move to close the gap.

THE JUDGMENT

睽：小事吉。

Opposition: good fortune in small matters.

THE IMAGE

上火下泽，睽；君子以同而异。

Fire above, lake below: Opposition. The wise person stays joined with others in what is genuinely shared, while keeping what is genuinely different distinct.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received King Wen sequence, Opposition follows Household: when the closeness of family life is pressed to its limit, it turns into its opposite, and difference surfaces where sameness had been assumed. Hexagram 38 opens exactly at that turn — not catastrophe, but the ordinary fact that two things joined at the surface can still be moving in different directions underneath.

The Chinese name 睽, romanized Kuí, is written with the eye radical and originally described eyes that look two ways at once, a divergence of gaze. Some editions translate the hexagram as Estrangement rather than Opposition, since the six lines mostly describe people who suspect, misread, or briefly turn from one another before finding their way back. Both translations name the same core condition: contact without agreement.

The upper trigram is Fire, whose flame naturally reaches upward; the lower is Lake, whose water naturally settles into low ground. Stacked in one figure, they touch without ever meeting in the direction each is moving. The Image reads this as instruction rather than failure: stay joined with others in what is genuinely shared, and let what is genuinely different remain distinct instead of forcing an artificial sameness onto it.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 38 sets Fire above Lake — Li over Dui, in trigram terms. Fire's flame reaches upward and lights whatever is above it; the lake's water settles into its low ground and reflects rather than climbs. Two elements share the same figure without ever meeting at their natural direction of travel, which is why the classical image names divergence, not open conflict, as the defining condition here.

Read from bottom to top, the diagram places a firm line at the base, a second firm line above it, a yielding line at the third position, a firm line at the fourth, a yielding line at the fifth, and a firm line at the top. In classical language the two trigrams that make up this diagram are named, and the six lines trace how divergence is provoked, tested, and — in more than one case — quietly resolved once suspicion is finally set down.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Let the lost horse return BOTTOM LINE

初九：悔亡，丧马勿逐自复，见恶人，无咎。

No regret. The lost horse is not chased — it returns on its own. Meeting a disagreeable person brings no blame.

The first line pictures a minor loss — a horse that wanders off — and counsels against chasing it down. Left alone, it comes back on its own, because the separation was never as serious as the anxious first reaction suggested. The line adds a second test: meeting a genuinely disagreeable person and remaining unharmed simply by not matching their edge with your own. Early opposition rewards restraint far more than pursuit. When this line changes, Hexagram 64, Not Yet Crossed, shows the situation still unresolved but not yet damaged — patience here keeps the crossing possible.

2 Meet in the back lane SECOND LINE

九二：遇主于巷，无咎。

He meets his lord in a back lane: no blame.

At the second line, the front door to a needed audience is closed, so meeting happens instead in a back lane — an informal, unofficial, but genuinely effective encounter with the person who matters. Wang Fuzhi's commentary reads this as the model for handling opposition from below: approach at an angle rather than head-on, and let the relationship form through practical contact instead of formal protocol. There is no blame in taking the indirect route when the direct one is currently unavailable. When this line changes, Hexagram 21, Jaws Closing, points toward decisively clearing away whatever obstruction made the indirect approach necessary in the first place.

3 A hard beginning, a good end THIRD LINE

六三：见舆曳，其牛掣，其人天且劓，无初有终。

He sees his cart dragged back and his ox held from moving; the man is branded and his nose is cut off. No good beginning, but a good end.

The third line is the roughest in the figure: a cart visibly dragged back, an ox that will not move, a person publicly branded and disfigured. Read plainly, this describes real obstruction and real cost, not a minor inconvenience. Yet the line insists on an ending that outweighs the beginning — no good start, but a good finish — because the setback itself, painful as it is, corrects a course that needed correcting. Persistence through visible failure, rather than retreat at the first sign of punishment, is what the line asks for. When this line changes, Hexagram 14, Great Possession, shows real abundance following once the correction has been accepted and absorbed.

4 One trusted ally in isolation FOURTH LINE

九四：睽孤，遇元夫，交孚，厉无咎。

Isolated in opposition, he meets a great-hearted man; the two trust each other. Danger, yet no blame.

The fourth line names the loneliest position in the figure directly: isolated in opposition, cut off from easy allies on either side. The remedy is not to win over everyone but to meet one person of genuine substance and build real, mutual trust with them — a single dependable bond that outweighs a crowd of uncertain ones. The line is honest that this remains a position of danger; it does not promise safety, only that danger met with sincerity brings no lasting fault. When this line changes, Hexagram 41, Decrease, suggests that giving something up now — comfort, certainty, or a wider circle — is what actually funds the trust this line depends on.

5 Kin close the distance FIFTH LINE

六五：悔亡，厥宗噬肤，往何咎。

Regret vanishes. His own kin bite through the skin with ease. Going forward, what blame could there be?

At the fifth line, held by a yielding ruler uneasy about approaching a strong minister directly, regret dissolves once the people already bound by kinship or long loyalty simply act: biting through the skin, an image of a bond so close that reuniting takes no real effort once it is attempted. The line's closing question — going forward, what blame could there be — removes the last excuse for hesitation. This is the figure's clearest promise that closeness, once genuinely tested, reasserts itself faster than fear predicts. When this line changes, Hexagram 10, Treading, shows that same trust becoming careful, deliberate forward movement, one honest step at a time.

6 **Not a raider, a suitor** TOP LINE

上九：睽孤，见豕负涂，载鬼一车，先张之弧，后说之弧，匪寇婚媾，往遇雨则吉。

Isolated in opposition, he sees a pig caked in mud, and a cart that looks loaded with ghosts. First he draws his bow against it, then lowers the bow: it is not a raider but someone coming to marry. Going forward and meeting rain brings good fortune.

The top line stages the figure's sharpest misreading: a pig caked in mud, a cart that looks loaded with ghosts, a bow drawn in fear before it is finally lowered. What appeared to be a threat turns out to be someone approaching in good faith, coming to marry rather than to raid. This is opposition dissolving the moment the approaching party is seen clearly rather than through the distortion of suspicion. Rain, arriving after the bow is set aside, marks the release: two sides finally meeting instead of standing opposed. When this line changes, Hexagram 54, Young Bride, carries that meeting forward into a bond formally, if unevenly, sealed.

Read hexagram 38 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/38-opposition



HEXAGRAM 39

Hardship

蹇 · Jiǎn

Water over Mountain

Hardship shows a real obstacle ahead — a mountain with water pooling above it — and asks you to turn inward and correct your own stance before advancing.

THE JUDGMENT

蹇：利西南，不利东北，利见大人，贞吉。

Hardship: it is fruitful to go southwest; it is not fruitful to go northeast. It is fruitful to see the great person. Holding to what is right brings good fortune.

THE IMAGE

山上有水，蹇；君子以反身修德。

Water lies above the mountain: Hardship. The wise person turns inward and cultivates their own character.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received sequence, Hexagram 39 follows Kui, Opposition: after estrangement has split what should be joined, Hardship names the concrete difficulty that estrangement produces — a way forward that is genuinely blocked. This is not a hexagram about imagined trouble. The obstacle is real, and the question is how to meet it.

The Chinese name 蹇 pictures a lame or limping step, the halting motion of someone who cannot walk freely. Several keyword lists also carry the figure as Obstruction, a fair rendering of the same idea: something in the terrain itself resists your progress. The judgment favors the southwest, the level and open ground, over the northeast, the mountain's steep face — a spatial image for choosing the path that supports movement rather than the one that confronts the barrier head-on. It also insists on seeing a great person and holding to what is right, because getting through Hardship depends less on force than on finding capable help and staying honest about your own part in the difficulty.

Read practically, Hexagram 39 marks a season where pushing straight ahead only tires you against rock. The six lines trace a repeated pattern: going forward meets hardship, coming back meets something better — praise, alliance, the safety of staying near others who share your position. The lesson is not to abandon the goal but to change how you approach it, turning the same obstacle that stops you into an occasion for self-examination.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 39 joins Mountain below and Water above. Mountain is stillness, an unmoving mass in the way; Water above it is danger pooling at height, water that has nowhere easy to drain. Together they describe a path where the ground itself will not yield and the way through is already gathering with risk — the classic image of a crossing that cannot simply be forced.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, a yin line opens the base, a yang line and a yin line alternate through the middle, and the figure closes with a yin line, a yang line, and a yin line at the top. The lower trigram Gen, the Mountain, is a solid stop beneath your feet; the upper

trigram Kan, Water, is the abyss waiting above. Read as a whole, the diagram places danger over an unmoving obstacle, which is exactly why the wise response here is to pause, look inward, and correct one's own bearing rather than charge the slope.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Praise for turning back BOTTOM LINE

初六：往蹇来誉。

Going forward meets hardship; coming back earns praise.

The first line stands at the very base of the obstacle, furthest from the danger above, and its instruction is plain: going forward meets hardship, coming back earns praise. This is not cowardice; it is accurate reading of the terrain from a position that has no advantage yet. A quiet withdrawal at the earliest sign of a blocked path costs little and preserves your standing, while a stubborn early push mainly proves you did not look before stepping. When this line changes, Hexagram 63, Already Crossed, follows: the reward for restraint here is a crossing later completed cleanly, rather than one forced too soon and left unfinished.

2 Loyalty inside real difficulty SECOND LINE

六二：王臣蹇蹇，匪躬之故。

The king's minister meets hardship upon hardship, not for any fault of their own.

The second line describes a minister meeting hardship upon hardship, and adds pointedly that this is through no fault of their own. Positioned centrally in service to the ruler above, this line shows someone doing right by a difficult role even as trouble compounds, without the first line's option to simply come back. The lesson is to separate the hardship of the position from any judgment on your own conduct, and to keep working faithfully rather than blaming yourself for terrain you did not create. When this line changes, Hexagram 48, Village Well, follows: faithful service in a hard post becomes a resource others can draw on.

3 A second warning to turn back THIRD LINE

九三：往蹇来反。

Going forward meets hardship; it is better to turn back.

The third line repeats the pattern of the first with sharper stakes: going forward meets hardship, and it is better to turn back. Positioned at the top of the lower trigram, this line sits closest to the mountain's edge, tempted to press on simply because so much ground has already been covered. But proximity to the barrier is not the same as capacity to clear it, and a second refusal to heed the same warning tends to cost more than the first. When this line changes, Hexagram 8, Alliance, follows: what forceful persistence could not achieve alone, genuine agreement with others makes possible.

4 **Joining others in hardship** FOURTH LINE

六四：往蹇来连。

Going forward meets hardship; coming back joins with others.

The fourth line shifts the pattern's second half: going forward meets hardship, but coming back joins with others rather than simply retreating alone. Positioned just below the ruler, this line has neighbors it can turn to, and its wisdom is choosing connection over isolated struggle. The obstacle has not disappeared, but facing it in company changes what it costs. This is a good line to remember whenever pride makes asking for help feel like defeat. When this line changes, Hexagram 31, Influence, follows: joining honestly with others in hardship is itself a form of mutual influence that carries forward once the obstacle eases.

5 **Companions answer great hardship** FIFTH LINE

九五：大蹇朋来。

Great hardship, yet companions arrive.

The fifth line names the hexagram's most severe difficulty directly — great hardship — and then answers it with an equally direct promise: companions arrive. Positioned as the ruling line, central and strong, this is not a call for solo heroics even at the height of authority; the line's whole meaning depends on the arrival of help. Facing genuine difficulty openly, rather than concealing it to preserve appearances, is exactly what draws that help toward you. When this line changes, Hexagram 15, Humility, follows: a leader who can be visibly humble in hardship is the one companions keep choosing to support.

6 A substantial return TOP LINE

上六：往蹇来硕，吉，利见大人。

Going forward meets hardship; coming back brings something substantial. Good fortune. It is fruitful to see the great person.

The top line closes the sequence with its fullest reward: going forward meets hardship, but coming back brings something substantial, good fortune, and it is fruitful to see the great person. Standing outside the mountain and water altogether, this line has traveled the whole arc from the first line's simple praise to a return that is now solid and complete. The obstacle has done its work; what comes back from meeting it honestly is worth more than what going forward alone could have won. When this line changes, Hexagram 53, Gradual Advance, follows: what hardship taught through repeated retreat now becomes patient, steady, and lasting progress.

Read hexagram 39 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/39-obstruction



HEXAGRAM 40

Release

解 · Jiě

Thunder over Water

Release marks the moment accumulated difficulty finally breaks open into relief — good fortune comes from returning to ordinary life quickly and acting early on whatever genuinely still remains.

THE JUDGMENT

解：利西南，无所往，其来复吉，有攸往，夙吉。

Release: it is fruitful to go toward the southwest. If there is nowhere further to go, returning brings good fortune; if there is somewhere to go, going early brings good fortune.

THE IMAGE

雷雨作，解；君子以赦过宥罪。

Thunder and rain arise: Release. The wise person pardons faults and forgives offenses.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received sequence, Hexagram 40 follows Hardship. The traditional commentary on the sequence explains that difficulty cannot last forever, so release must follow it — Release arrives the way tension breaks after a long storm, not by force but because the pressure has finally found a way out.

The Chinese name 解 means to untie, to loosen, or to set free — the same character used for undoing a knot or unraveling a snarled thread. Some editions also translate the hexagram as Deliverance, and both names describe the same picture: something that was bound is coming loose. As the name of a place the same character is romanized Xie in some references, though as this hexagram's name it is read Jiě, meaning to loosen. The Image pairs thunder with rain, the instant built-up pressure discharges and the air finally clears.

Read as advice, Hexagram 40 does not ask you to force every problem apart at once. The classical commentary on this figure teaches that a knot comes undone by working the near strand before the far one, the easy tangle before the stubborn one — and that a resolved center can afford to pardon old faults rather than keep score.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 40 joins Thunder over Water. The upper trigram Zhen, Thunder, sits above the lower trigram Kan, Water, sometimes rendered the Abyss. Thunder breaks open what has been compressed; water below moves in the dark, patient and hidden until the break finally lets it flow. Together they picture release after strain: pressure that has at last found its outlet.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, a yang line rests between two yin lines to form Kan, Water, the lower trigram; above it another yang line topped by two yin lines forms Zhen, Thunder, the upper trigram. Only the second and fourth positions are yang, surrounded on every side by yielding lines — the shape of a structure that has room, at last, to come loose.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Stillness before the knot loosens BOTTOM LINE

初六：无咎。

No blame.

The first line carries no fault, and the classical commentary reads that plainly: at the very start of Release you are not yet the one doing the untying. Stay soft, stay still, and let the line above act while you hold steady ground beneath it. Forcing an early resolution before the situation is ready only tangles what patience would loosen on its own. Self-examination is the real work here — check that you have caused no part of the difficulty, then let events proceed. When this line changes, it turns into Young Bride, a reminder that timing and proper standing matter more than eagerness when a new arrangement is forming.

2 Clearing the hidden foxes SECOND LINE

九二：田获三狐，得黄矢，贞吉。

In the field he catches three foxes and obtains a yellow arrow: staying true brings good fortune.

The second line catches three foxes in the field and comes away with a yellow arrow — an image of using real strength to root out the lingering doubts and half-hidden schemes that Hardship left behind. The yellow arrow marks centered, upright conduct: the clearing gets done without losing your own integrity in the process. This is active work, not passive waiting, though it stays disciplined rather than reckless. Deal with what is actually undermining the situation, not with every shadow crossing your path. The change to Anticipation suggests that once the underlying obstruction is cleared, there is real cause to prepare with confidence rather than lingering suspicion.

3 **Riding above your station** THIRD LINE

六三：負且乘，致寇至，貞吝。

Carrying a burden on the back while riding in a carriage invites robbers: persisting brings regret.

The third line pictures someone carrying a burden on their back while riding in a carriage — a mismatch between real capacity and the position now being displayed. Such an arrangement invites the very trouble it seems to be escaping: robbers come precisely because what is carried does not match what is claimed. Persisting in the pretense brings regret, and the honest correction is to bring your visible standing back into line with what you actually hold and can defend. When this line changes, the situation moves toward Duration, where the same lesson deepens: only a position you can sustain over time is worth occupying at all.

4 **Freeing the small attachment** FOURTH LINE

九四：解而拇，朋至斯孚。

Free yourself from the big toe, and companions arrive in good faith.

The fourth line speaks of freeing yourself from the big toe — a minor, low-lying attachment that keeps an otherwise capable person from fully committing. As long as you stay tied to that small dependency, allies hold back; once you release it, companions arrive and trust follows naturally, because they can finally see you standing on your own footing. The work here is small in scale but decisive in effect: one honest disentanglement changes how others read your reliability. When this line changes, the reading points toward Troops, where organized cooperation becomes possible only after each part of the structure has first been set free to act on its own.

5 Sincerity that reaches the small-minded FIFTH LINE

六五：君子维有解，吉。有孚于小人。

The wise person achieves deliverance: good fortune. Sincerity reaches even the small-minded.

At the fifth line, the person in the ruling position achieves a genuine release, and that success is not sealed off from those who caused the original difficulty. Sincerity extends outward until even small-minded people feel its effect and begin to change their conduct. This is not naive forgiveness; it is the confidence of a resolved center able to be generous, because the underlying problem is actually settled, not merely suppressed. Good fortune here comes from strength that no longer needs to keep punishing. When this line changes, the reading turns toward Adversity, a caution that confidence achieved too soon can still meet real constraint.

6 The decisive shot from the wall TOP LINE

上六：公用射隼于高墉之上，获之无不利。

The duke shoots a hawk perched on the high wall and takes it: nothing but gain.

The top line pictures a duke, positioned on a high wall, taking a clean, deliberate shot at a bird of prey and hitting it — nothing but gain follows. This is the last stage of Release: after patient waiting, careful clearing, and honest realignment, one final decisive action removes whatever predatory element still threatens the peace already won. The height and preparation matter; this is not an impulsive strike but the fruit of a position built across the whole hexagram. When this line changes, the outcome shifts to Not Yet Crossed, a reminder that even a clean, successful resolution opens onto new, unfinished work rather than a permanent rest.

Read hexagram 40 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/40-deliverance



HEXAGRAM 41

Decrease

损 · Sǔn

Mountain over Lake

Decrease asks you to give up something at the base so that what truly matters higher up can be strengthened and trusted.

THE JUDGMENT

损：有孚，元吉，无咎，可贞，利有攸往，曷之用，二簋可用享。

Decrease: with sincerity, there is great good fortune and no blame. Staying true is possible, and it is fruitful to have somewhere to go. What need is there for elaborate offerings? Two plain bowls are enough for the sacrifice.

THE IMAGE

山下有泽，损；君子以惩忿窒欲。

A lake lies beneath the mountain: Decrease. The wise person checks anger before it spreads and restrains desire before it multiplies.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received sequence, Hexagram 41 follows a run of figures about repair and correction, then turns the lesson inward: after fixing what is broken, something must still be let go so the fix can hold.

The Chinese name 损 means to reduce, to lessen, or to take away from one place in order to strengthen another. Some editions render the hexagram as Diminishing. The judgment does not treat loss as failure; it opens with sincerity and great good fortune, and it even asks what use

elaborate offerings are when two plain bowls of grain, honestly given, are enough for the sacrifice. That image sets the tone for the whole hexagram: value is not measured by volume. A relationship, a budget, a schedule, or a plan can carry excess that looks like abundance but actually crowds out what is essential.

The lower trigram gives something up; the upper trigram is strengthened by what is released. Read this way, Decrease is not about scarcity or punishment. It is a disciplined choice: cut anger, restrain appetite, trim the surplus, and let the remaining, smaller thing be sound rather than merely large.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 41 joins Mountain over Lake. The lake wears itself down against the base of the mountain, giving up its water so the peak stands higher and firmer above it. That is the picture of decrease: the lower level yields, and the upper level gains stature from what it receives.

In the six-line diagram, read from the bottom, three yang lines rise first and three yin lines complete the figure above them. The lower trigram Dui, the Lake, is open and yielding; the upper trigram Gen, the Mountain, is firm and still. Held together, the shape shows movement flowing upward — strength gathering at the top because the base has agreed to release some of its own weight.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Finish, then release BOTTOM LINE

初九：已事遄往，无咎，酌损之。

When the task at hand is finished, move on quickly: no blame. Weigh carefully how much should be given up, then give up only that much.

The first line asks for sequence, not speed for its own sake. Complete the task already in front of you before turning to what should be reduced elsewhere; abandoning unfinished work in the name of simplifying only creates a second mess. Once the immediate obligation is honestly closed, move on promptly and weigh, deliberately, how much of the surrounding excess actually needs to go. This is measured trimming, not a sweeping purge. When this line changes, the reading turns toward Inexperience: acting on incomplete understanding is the risk if you cut before you have finished learning what the situation actually requires.

2 Hold your ground SECOND LINE

九二：利贞，征凶，弗损益之。

Staying true brings benefit; advancing brings misfortune. Do not reduce yourself here — holding steady is itself the true increase.

The second line is a caution against reducing yourself under pressure. Staying centered and true to your own position brings benefit here; advancing to please, appease, or preempt someone else's expectation brings misfortune instead. Not every call for sacrifice deserves compliance — sometimes the most honest form of giving is refusing to be diminished when nothing is actually gained by it. When this line changes, the reading points to Sustenance: the deeper question becomes what is genuinely nourishing you, and whether what looked like a demand for reduction was really a test of what you choose to feed.

3 One loyalty, not three THIRD LINE

六三：三人行则损一人，一人行则得其友。

Three walking together must lose one companion; one walking alone gains a true friend.

The third line pictures three people walking together who inevitably lose one, set against one person walking alone who gains a true friend. Divided attachment weakens every bond it touches; a single, clear commitment lets a real connection take hold. If you are stretched between competing loyalties, obligations, or interests, this line suggests the reduction that matters is choosing one path honestly rather than keeping every option half-open. When this line changes, the reading moves to Great Accumulation: real depth and strength only build once scattered attention has been gathered into a single, sustained direction.

4 Relief through reduction FOURTH LINE

六四：损其疾，使遄有喜，无咎。

Reduce the affliction, and let relief arrive without delay: no blame.

The fourth line names an affliction directly and calls for reducing it rather than tolerating it out of habit or politeness. Whatever the recurring irritation or low-grade harm is — in health, in a working relationship, in a routine — naming it and acting to lessen it brings quick relief and no blame. This line rewards the plain, unglamorous fix over the dramatic overhaul. When this line changes, the reading turns to Opposition: delaying the reduction lets a manageable friction harden into open disagreement, so the value of acting now, while the issue is still small, becomes clear in hindsight.

5 Accept the gift plainly FIFTH LINE

六五：或益之十朋之龟，弗克违，元吉。

Someone enriches this position with a tortoise shell worth ten pairs of currency; no one can refuse such a gift — great good fortune.

The fifth line describes a moment of being enriched by something valuable and unsought — help, recognition, or resources offered by someone who trusts your position. The instruction is simple: do not refuse it out of false modesty or suspicion, because turning away a genuine gift here does not protect your integrity, it just wastes good fortune. Receive it plainly and let it do its work. When this line changes, the reading points to Heartfelt Trust: what allows the gift to be given and accepted so cleanly is the sincerity already established between the parties involved.

6 Give without keeping score TOP LINE

上九：弗损益之，无咎，贞吉，利有攸往，得臣无家。

Not decreasing but increasing others: no blame, and staying true brings good fortune. It is fruitful to have somewhere to go; one gains devoted service from those who no longer count private gain as home.

The top line completes the hexagram by turning decrease outward: rather than reducing yourself, you increase others, and that generosity, offered with staying true, brings good fortune and room to keep moving forward. The reward described is loyalty from people who no longer treat their own private advantage as the only thing worth protecting — trust built by example rather than by instruction. This is the figure's fullest lesson: sincere giving, sustained over time, changes how others act around you. When this line changes, the reading turns to Drawing Near: the closeness this generosity earns becomes a relationship you are now responsible for approaching with the same steadiness.

Read hexagram 41 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/41-decrease



HEXAGRAM 42

Increase

益 · Yi

Wind over Thunder

Increase describes a moment when what is above willingly gives to what is below, so growth becomes real only through honest, well-timed action.

THE JUDGMENT

益：利有攸往，利涉大川。

Increase: it is favorable to have a direction to go, favorable to cross the great river.

THE IMAGE

风雷，益；君子以见善则迁，有过则改。

Wind and thunder together: Increase. The wise person, seeing good, moves toward it, and, seeing fault in themselves, corrects it.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received sequence, Increase follows Hexagram 41, Decrease. The Judgment text notes that giving and taking move in cycles: a long season of restraint eventually turns, and what was withheld begins to flow again. Hexagram 42 marks that turning point, when resources, attention, or opportunity are finally released downward.

The Chinese name 益 means to add, to benefit, or to enrich, and the hexagram is also translated as Gain or Increase throughout most editions.

Its picture is Wind over Thunder: the upper trigram moves down toward the lower, and the lower trigram rises up to meet it, so the exchange runs in both directions rather than trickling from a single source. This is not increase by accumulation. It is increase produced when a superior shares real capacity with those it serves, and that gift is met with genuine effort rather than passive reception.

Because the gain here is earned through use, not stored for its own sake, the hexagram rewards action taken while conditions are favorable. Waiting past the moment when help is offered, or accepting benefit without a plan to apply it, wastes the opportunity the figure describes.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 42 joins Wind above Thunder. Wind is gentle, penetrating movement; Thunder is sudden, energizing force. Together they show two kinds of motion reinforcing each other: what stirs below is carried further by what circulates above, so a single impulse compounds into lasting momentum rather than dissipating.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, one yang line forms the base, three yin lines rise through the middle, and two yang lines close the top. The lower trigram Zhen, Thunder, supplies initiating force; the upper trigram Xun, Wind, supplies sustained, adaptable follow-through. Read together, the figure favors a decisive start that is then carried by patient, continuing effort.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 A bold start earns its gain BOTTOM LINE

初九：利用为大作，元吉，无咎。

It is favorable to undertake great work: supreme good fortune, no blame.

The first line describes the earliest moment of increase, when fresh capacity has just arrived and the field is genuinely open for something substantial. This is not the position for a cautious, half-scaled attempt; the line explicitly favors great work, undertaken while the opening is wide. Hesitation here does not preserve the gain, it forfeits it, since increase offered at the base only becomes good fortune once it is put toward something worth the risk. When this line changes, Observation follows: after the bold beginning, the wiser move is to watch closely, gathering evidence about what actually happened before adding anything further.

2 An unrefusable gift, held with integrity SECOND LINE

六二：或益之十朋之龟，弗克违，永贞吉。王用享于帝，吉。

Someone increases him with a tortoise shell worth ten pairs of cowries, and he cannot refuse it. Lasting steadfastness brings good fortune. The king makes offering to the Supreme Being: good fortune.

At the second line, a gift arrives that is too significant to decline — support, resources, or recognition offered by someone with real standing. The line's counsel is not to earn or negotiate for it, but to receive it and then hold to lasting steadfastness, letting the gift's value be proven through your continued conduct rather than through gratitude performed once. Offering something back in genuine acknowledgment, as the king offers to the Supreme Being, keeps the exchange honest. The change to Heartfelt Trust shows that what is received in good faith should be met with equally sincere, quiet reliability in return.

3 Gain spent on a real emergency THIRD LINE

六三：益之用凶事，无咎。有孚中行，告公用圭。

Increase is used to meet a calamity: no blame. Holding good faith and walking the middle path, one reports to the duke bearing the ceremonial jade tablet.

The third line places increase under pressure: resources here are used to meet a genuine calamity, not banked for comfort. This is not a wasteful use of what has accumulated — meeting real hardship with real support, honestly reported through proper channels, keeps the exchange free of blame. The danger is spending increase on manufactured urgency or private advantage while dressing it as necessity. When this line changes, the result is Household: the discipline learned in meeting one crisis directly translates into the ordinary, daily governance of the people and matters closest to you.

4 Consensus enables a major move FOURTH LINE

六四：中行告公从，利用为依迁国。

Walking the middle path, one reports to the duke and is followed: it is favorable to rely on this to move the capital.

At the fourth line, walking the middle path and reporting honestly wins the following you need, and that following is substantial enough to justify something as large as relocating the capital itself. This line rewards patient consensus-building before a big structural change, rather than pushing a major decision through unilaterally. What makes the move favorable is not authority alone but genuine agreement earned through honest reporting. The change to Genuineness confirms this: once support is real and freely given, the resulting action can proceed from unforced, natural conviction rather than persuasion or pressure.

5 Generosity that needs no proof FIFTH LINE

九五：有孚惠心勿问，元吉。有孚惠我德。

Holding good faith and a generous heart, there is no need to ask: supreme good fortune. Good faith answers my own generous conduct.

The fifth line describes increase at its most complete: a generous heart so evidently sincere that it requires no questioning, no verification, no negotiation. This is the position of someone whose giving is trusted precisely because their conduct has already demonstrated it, so good faith answers good faith without the delay of asking. The line warns implicitly against manufacturing displays of generosity for effect; only conduct proven over time earns this kind of unquestioned trust. When this line changes, Sustenance follows, turning attention toward how that trust is nourished and maintained day to day, not just granted once.

6 Resolve that will not hold TOP LINE

上九：莫益之，或击之，立心勿恒，凶。

No one increases him; someone may even strike him. His resolve is not constant: misfortune.

The top line marks the collapse of increase: no one adds to this person any longer, and some may actively oppose them, because their resolve has stopped being constant. Whatever gain was gathered through the earlier lines is now at risk of being lost entirely, not through bad fortune but through a failure of steady commitment at the very point it mattered most. This line is a direct warning against wavering once the initial support or momentum has faded. The change to Sprouting shows the consequence plainly: what should have been secure growth reverts to the difficult, uncertain conditions of a fresh beginning.

Read hexagram 42 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/42-increase



HEXAGRAM 43

Breakthrough

夬 · Guài

Lake over Heaven

Breakthrough describes a decision that has essentially already been made, five gathered strengths facing one final holdout, calling for the matter to be proclaimed openly rather than forced through in private.

THE JUDGMENT

夬：扬于王庭，孚号，有厉，告自邑，不利即戎，利有攸往。

Breakthrough: proclaimed openly at the royal court, with a sincere warning cry. There is danger. Announce it within your own city; it does not favor resorting to arms. It is fruitful to have somewhere to go.

THE IMAGE

泽上于天，夬；君子以施禄及下，居德则忌。

The lake rises above heaven: Breakthrough. Seeing this, the wise person extends generosity down to those below, and takes care never to settle comfortably into virtue already claimed.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

Hexagram 43 follows Hexagram 42, Increase, in the received sequence: growth that keeps piling up without limit eventually forces a reckoning, and Breakthrough is that reckoning. The figure stacks five unbroken yang lines beneath a single yielding line at the very top — strength massed almost to the ceiling, with only one soft line left holding the summit. It

reads like floodwater risen behind a dike until just the crest of the barrier remains above the surface, close to giving way.

The Chinese name 夬 (guài) means to decide, to break through, or to breach — the character pictures a hand parting or cutting something open, the same sense carried into the hexagram's advice to resolve a matter cleanly rather than let it fester. It is also sometimes rendered as Resolution or Parting, but every version points at the same act: a firm, open decision rather than a quiet, private maneuver. The Judgment insists this decision be proclaimed at the royal court, announced with a sincere warning cry, made known within one's own community — not settled by force of arms, though there is real danger in the moment and it is fruitful to keep moving forward.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 43 pairs Lake over Heaven, one of the sixty-four possible tri-gram pairings. Heaven below is pure creative strength, unified and inexhaustible; Lake above is a body of water gathered at the surface, bright and penetrating but thin compared to what lies beneath it. Together they picture a lake swollen with floodwater sitting directly over solid ground — the water has risen about as high as it can before the ground itself gives way to a genuine breach.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, five unbroken yang lines fill positions one through five and a single yielding yin line closes the figure at the very top. Reading the line structure of the whole diagram shows almost the entire hexagram given over to firm strength, with just one soft line standing between total resolution and total surrender — the clearest possible picture of a decision whose outcome is no longer in serious doubt, only in its timing.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Premature strength at the toes BOTTOM LINE

初九：壮于前趾，往不胜为咎。

Strength surges into the forward toes; advancing before it can prevail brings blame.

The first line shows strength surging into the forward toes before the rest of the body is ready — an eagerness to press against the lone yin line above while the real capacity to prevail is still lacking. Advancing this early only blunts the advantage instead of using it: the push fails, and the yin line above grows only more secure in its place. The lesson is about timing, not doubt — real strength, applied too soon, still counts as a misstep. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 28 — Great Exceeding, warning that pressing forward before support is ready loads a structure it cannot yet carry.

2 A wary cry needs no fear SECOND LINE

九二：惕号，莫夜有戎，勿恤。

A wary, warning cry: even should raiders come in the dead of night, there is nothing to fear.

The second line pairs a wary, watchful cry with real reassurance: even should trouble arrive unannounced, in the dead of night, there is nothing here to fear. Firm in nature but resting in a yielding position, this line describes someone disciplined enough to govern their own conduct rather than rushing to compete with others for credit. Because the danger named here comes from a distant, indirect source rather than a determined opponent, the caution stays proportionate, not alarmed. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 49 — Radical Change, showing that steady self-governance under a vague threat prepares the ground for genuine transformation.

3 Decisive despite quiet attachment THIRD LINE

九三：壮于頄，有凶。君子夬夬，独行遇雨若濡，有愠，无咎。

Strength shows in the cheekbones; there is danger. Yet the noble one decides and decides again — walking alone, caught in rain and soaked through, feeling resentment, but incurring no blame.

The third line names the sharpest tension here: strength shows in the cheekbones, and there is danger, because this is the one yang line still bound by a real correlate to the yin it must part from. Cutting the tie coldly would breed resentment from someone genuinely attached; showing outward resolve while the bond exists is safer than open collusion or a break announced without feeling. Walking alone, soaked by rain and resentful, the discomfort is real, but the intention stays honest, so no blame follows. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 58 — Lake, showing that honest discomfort, once spoken, opens into real exchange.

4 A hesitant step needs guidance FOURTH LINE

九四：臀无肤，其行次且，牵羊悔亡，闻言不信。

The buttocks are without skin, and walking becomes halting; leading a goat along from behind, regret vanishes, yet hearing this advice, no one believes it.

The fourth line pictures an injured, halting walk — buttocks without skin, movement slow and reluctant — because this position sits low in the upper tri-gram, weak in resolve despite gathering strength around it. Following the fifth line's lead, the way one steadies a goat from the rear rather than dragging it, lets the regret dissolve; pushing ahead alone does not. Sharing the same body as the yielding line above, this position is prone to believing sweet reassurance over its allies' plainer warnings, so its trust stays unsettled. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 5 — Patience, showing that a resolve not yet ready still has to wait its moment.

5 Easy resolve on open ground FIFTH LINE

九五：苋陆夬夬，中行无咎。

Like a thin-horned goat crossing open pasture, deciding and deciding again; walking the middle way brings no blame.

The fifth line finds the decision as easy as a thin-horned goat crossing open pasture — a position central, correct, and genuinely at ease even this close to the one line still resisting. Rather than any hard confrontation, this closeness feels almost neighborly, decided again and again without the weight of real danger, because the line holds its authority without favoritism toward what it must eventually release. Its centrality and correctness, not any harshness, are what keep it free of blame. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 34 — Great Vigor, showing that settled, rightly placed strength carries the decision the rest of the way through.

6 No one left to call on TOP LINE

上六：无号，终有凶。

No one left to cry out to; in the end, misfortune comes.

The top line describes the very last of the yielding strength, isolated at the summit with no one left to call on for help; whatever ties still bind it to a sympathetic line below will not survive once the moment for real change arrives. This is a position that has simply run out of time — not swept away by sudden violence, but worn down by five lines steadily gathering against it through the whole figure. In the end, misfortune comes, plainly and without drama. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 1 — Heaven, showing that after the last resistance gives way, only pure strength remains.

Read hexagram 43 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/43-breakthrough



HEXAGRAM 44

Encounter

姤 · Gòu

Heaven over Wind

Encounter shows a single yielding line rising to meet five firm ones below the sky — an unplanned meeting that carries real influence and asks you to name what you will let approach.

THE JUDGMENT

姤：女壯，勿用取女。

Encounter: the woman is strong. It is not advisable to marry a woman such as this.

THE IMAGE

天下有风，姤；后以施命诰四方。

Wind moves beneath the sky: Encounter. Rulers of antiquity took this image and used it to issue their commands, proclaiming them to the four quarters.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received sequence, Hexagram 44 follows Guai, Breakthrough: once a firm decision has finally been resolved, something unplanned arrives to meet it. That is the shape of Encounter — not a meeting you scheduled, but one that finds you at the base of an otherwise settled situation and asks whether you will let it in.

The Chinese name 姤 combines the woman radical with a sense of an unlooked-for meeting, and several keyword lists carry the same figure as Coming to Meet, a fair rendering of the same image. The judgment names the meeting directly: the woman is strong, and marrying such a woman is not advised. Read past the archaic phrasing, the line is a caution about scale — a single vigorous new force meeting a settled order of five, and how quickly its influence can spread if unchecked from the start.

Read practically, Hexagram 44 marks the exact moment something new touches something established, before either side has decided what the contact means. The six lines trace how that first touch grows: tied down safely at the base, guarded with care in the kitchen, hesitant and sore at the third step, careless at the fourth, wrapped with hidden excellence at the fifth, and finally distant, at the horns, by the top. The lesson is to notice an encounter while it is still small, because what begins as one line changes everything above it if left alone.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 44 joins Wind below and Heaven above. Heaven is the settled, unmoving firmness of the sky; Wind beneath it moves everywhere without being seen, touching every surface it passes. Together they describe a single current of influence, quiet and pervasive, meeting a firm order that has not yet decided how to respond — the classic image of an encounter beginning at ground level and reaching upward.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, a single yin line opens the base and five yang lines rise unbroken above it. The lower trigram Xun, Wind, is that one yielding line entering from below; the upper trigram Qian, Heaven, is the solid mass of firmness it has come to meet. Read as a whole, the diagram places one soft, adaptable force at the root

of five hard ones, which is exactly why the wise response to Encounter is to notice the small new thing at the base before it climbs.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 **Restraint at first contact** BOTTOM LINE

初六：系于金柅，贞吉。有攸往，见凶。羸豕孚蹢躅。

Tied to a bronze chock that stops the wheel: holding firm brings good fortune. If it goes forward, it meets misfortune. A lean sow, true to its restless nature, strains and paces at the tether.

The first line sits at the very base where the new, yielding force enters, and its instruction is to hold it in place: tied to a bronze chock, holding firm brings good fortune, while going forward meets misfortune. The image of a lean, restless sow straining at its tether shows how much energy a small new thing can carry even before it moves. This is the moment an encounter is easiest to manage, precisely because so little has happened yet. When this line changes, Hexagram 1, Heaven, follows: restraint at the very start preserves an unbroken, firm footing that a hasty leap forward would have already compromised.

2 Guarding what is kept SECOND LINE

九二：包有鱼，无咎，不利宾。

The wrapping holds a fish: no blame. It is not favorable toward a guest.

The second line pictures a fish kept safely in its wrapping, no blame, but not favorable toward a guest. Positioned centrally within the lower trigram, this line has already accepted the new contact and now protects it deliberately, choosing not to share it indiscriminately with everyone who might ask. The lesson is that acceptance does not mean exposure; something valuable met unexpectedly can still be kept close while its real nature becomes clear. When this line changes, Hexagram 33, Retreat, follows: guarding what has been gained here is itself a form of withdrawal from premature exposure.

3 Sore but not seriously at fault THIRD LINE

九三：臀无肤，其行次且，厉，无大咎。

The buttocks are without skin; walking forward is difficult and hesitant. There is danger, yet no great blame follows.

The third line is physically uncomfortable — the buttocks without skin, walking difficult and hesitant — yet the verdict is measured: there is danger, but no great blame. Positioned at the top of the lower trigram, this line is caught between the settled contact of the second line and the pull of the firm lines above, unable to move freely in either direction. The honest reading is that discomfort here is a symptom of an awkward position, not proof of a serious error. When this line changes, Hexagram 6, Dispute, follows: an unresolved tension at this stage tends to surface as open disagreement if it is not addressed directly.

4

Carelessness invites misfortune FOURTH LINE

九四：包无鱼，起凶。

The wrapping holds no fish: this stirs up misfortune.

The fourth line reverses the second: the wrapping now holds no fish, and this stirs up misfortune. Positioned just below the ruler yet cut off from the yin line at the base by the lines between them, this line has lost contact with what it should have kept, through simple inattention rather than any dramatic failure. The warning is plain — value that is not actively watched tends to slip away quietly, and the resulting trouble is self-inflicted. When this line changes, Hexagram 57, Wind, follows: only a gentle, persistent, and attentive presence can recover what careless distance has already cost.

5

Hidden excellence, unforced FIFTH LINE

九五：以杞包瓜，含章，有陨自天。

Wrapping a melon in willow leaves; excellence held within, unseen. Good fortune falls as though dropped from heaven.

The fifth line wraps a melon in willow leaves, holding excellence within, unseen, and good fortune falls as though dropped from heaven. Positioned as the ruling line, central and strong, this line does not force its quality into view; it simply protects what is genuinely good and lets recognition arrive in its own time, without manufactured display. This is Encounter handled with the most skill: firm, patient, and quietly generous rather than anxious to prove itself. When this line changes, Hexagram 50, Cauldron, follows: what was carefully wrapped and protected here is transformed into something that nourishes others.

6 Distance at the horns TOP LINE

上九：姤其角，吝，无咎。

Encounter at the horns: a mark of regret, yet no blame.

The top line closes the sequence at the horns — the furthest, hardest point of the figure — meeting there is a mark of regret, yet no blame. Standing outside the reach of the original contact altogether, this line has let the encounter pass by, whether through delay, distraction, or genuine unavailability. The regret named here is mild and honest rather than a serious fault, an acknowledgment that not every meeting is meant to be pursued to the end. When this line changes, Hexagram 28, Great Exceeding, follows: distance held too long at the edges can leave a structure overextended and in need of real support.

Read hexagram 44 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/44-coming-to-meet



HEXAGRAM 45

Convergence

萃 · Cui

Lake over Earth

Convergence describes people, resources, or intentions drawing together around a shared center, and it asks whether that center can hold once the excitement of gathering fades.

THE JUDGMENT

萃：亨，王假有庙，利见大人，亨，利贞，用大牲吉，利有攸往。

Convergence: success. The king approaches the ancestral temple. It is fruitful to see the great person; success follows from staying true. A great offering brings good fortune, and it is fruitful to have somewhere to go.

THE IMAGE

泽上于地，萃；君子以除戎器，戒不虞。

The lake gathers on the surface of the earth: Convergence. The wise person keeps weapons in good repair and stays alert to what has not yet been foreseen.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

Hexagram 45 follows Hexagram 44, Encounter, in the received sequence: after a chance meeting comes the deliberate work of assembling a lasting group around it. Where Encounter is a single unplanned contact, Convergence is what happens when many such contacts accumulate into a crowd, a market, a family reunion, or an alliance that now needs structure to survive its own size.

The Chinese name 萃 pictures plants growing thick and close together, and by extension a crowd massed in one place. Some editions also translate the hexagram as Gathering Together, a title that keeps the same physical image of many parts drawn toward one point. The Judgment sets that gathering inside a temple: the king approaches the ancestral hall and offers a great sacrifice, because a crowd without a shared object of reverence disperses as easily as it formed. A convergence needs something worth converging on.

The commentary tradition reads this hexagram as a caution as much as an invitation. People are drawn together by hope, need, or admiration for a capable leader, yet that same density can turn careless or complacent once the initial energy settles. The wise response is neither to refuse every gathering nor to enjoy it passively, but to give the assembly a clear center, a sincere reason for being together, and enough foresight to notice trouble before the crowd itself becomes the risk.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 45 joins Lake over Earth. Earth is the broad, settled ground; Lake is water pooling on its surface, unable to disperse until it rises high enough to spill onward. Together they picture exactly how a gathering forms: people or resources collect on stable common ground until enough of them are present that pressure, purpose, or leadership must finally shape what the pooled water will become.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, three yin lines form the settled ground of Earth, then two yang lines rise together at the fourth and fifth places, and a single yin line opens the crown of the figure. The two strong lines sit close, one holding rank and one holding capability, which is why the classical reading treats their cooperation as the hinge on which the whole assembly turns.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 **Wavering between huddle and hall** BOTTOM LINE

初六：有孚不终，乃乱乃萃。若号，一握为笑，勿恤，往无咎。

Sincerity that does not hold to the end brings confusion, then a scattered gathering. If you call out, a small huddle answers with laughter. Do not let that trouble you; going forward brings no blame.

At the base of the gathering, the first line is pulled two directions: toward the easy laughter of a small circle already close at hand, and toward the wider, more demanding assembly it has a real duty to join. Wang Fuzhi reads the hesitation as immaturity rather than betrayal — nothing is lost by declining to let a private huddle settle the matter. Call out, release the small comfort, and move toward the larger center you actually answer to; no blame follows that choice. Left unresolved, this same divided loyalty becomes the deciding question of Hexagram 17 — Following, where you can no longer avoid choosing whom to follow.

2 Drawn toward the shared center SECOND LINE

六二：引吉，无咎，孚乃利用禴。

Being drawn toward good fortune brings no blame. Sincerity makes even a modest offering fruitful.

The second line already belongs to the group in spirit, soft, central, and well placed, but it must still be actively drawn upward rather than simply waiting to be noticed. Even a modest offering, made with real sincerity, is enough to secure standing here — elaborate gestures are not required, consistent good faith is. The lesson is to respond when called rather than hold back out of caution or false modesty, since withholding participation at this stage reads as distance, not discretion. When this line changes, the situation turns to Hexagram 47 — Adversity, a reminder that guarded sincerity can leave you unsupported instead of gathered in.

3 Sighing at the crowd's edge THIRD LINE

六三：萃如嗟如，无攸利，往无咎，小吝。

Gathering, then sighing: nothing here is gained. Going forward brings no blame, though a small regret remains.

The third line sits among yin companions but lacks a true correspondence above, so it gathers with the group in body while sensing, correctly, that nothing much is gained by staying there. The sigh in the text names that mismatch honestly rather than pretending contentment. Moving forward is still permitted and brings no real blame, but a small regret lingers because this position was never going to be where genuine support arrives. The changing line points to Hexagram 31 — Influence, suggesting the way out of a hollow gathering is not more effort inside it, but a fresh, mutual connection built on its own terms.

4 **Capability serving the center** FOURTH LINE

九四：大吉，无咎。

Great good fortune: no blame.

The fourth line holds real capability and stands closest to the ruler at the fifth place, and its great good fortune comes specifically from using that capability to support rather than to rival the position above it. This is the pivot the whole hexagram depends on: strength offered in service, not competition, is what keeps a large gathering from splitting into factions. No blame follows because the alignment is genuine, not merely convenient. When this line changes, the destination is Hexagram 8 — Alliance, confirming that willing cooperation between capability and leadership is exactly what turns a crowd into a durable bond.

5 **Leadership still earning trust** FIFTH LINE

九五：萃有位，无咎。匪孚，元永贞，悔亡。

Gathering around the one who holds the position: no blame. If trust is not yet complete, lasting steadiness in what is fundamentally right makes regret disappear.

The fifth line holds the rightful position at the center of the gathering, and no blame attaches to holding it. Yet the text is candid that trust is not automatic — some in the assembly are not yet fully persuaded, and that gap has to be closed through lasting steadiness in what is fundamentally right, not through a display of authority. Patience here is not weakness; it is the deliberate work of proving the center is trustworthy over time. When this line changes, the reading moves to Hexagram 16 — Anticipation, where the same patient, well-founded confidence extends outward and prepares the group for what comes next.

6 Grief at the outer edge TOP LINE

上六：賁咨涕洟，无咎。

Sighing and weeping, tears streaming; no blame.

The top line stands outside the main body of the gathering, alone at its furthest edge, and its sighing and tears describe the real cost of that isolation. Yet the text still records no blame, because holding the outer position steady — even in visible sorrow — keeps the assembly's center safe rather than exposed. Wang Fuzhi reads this as a guard who suffers so the group need not; the grief is not failure, it is the price of an exposed post honestly occupied. The change leads to Hexagram 12 — Obstruction, warning that unacknowledged isolation at the margins can, left untended, spread into a stalled and disconnected whole.

Read hexagram 45 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/45-gathering-together



HEXAGRAM 46

Ascending

升 · Shēng

Earth over Wind

Ascending describes growth that succeeds by accumulating small, steady steps rather than by forcing a single dramatic leap toward height.

THE JUDGMENT

升：元亨，用见大人，勿恤，南征吉。

Ascending: great success. It is fitting to seek out the great person; have no anxiety. Advancing toward the south brings good fortune.

THE IMAGE

地中生木，升；君子以顺德，积小以高大。

Wood grows within the earth: Ascending. The wise person accords with virtue, building height from an accumulation of small things.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received sequence, Hexagram 46, pronounced Shēng (often romanized simply as sheng), follows Gathering (Cui), the figure of people massing together. Once a group has assembled and its resources are pooled, the natural next movement is upward: what has gathered can now begin to rise. Ascending answers the question of how that rise should happen.

The Chinese name 升 means to rise, to climb, or to be promoted, and it can also describe grain rising in a measure as it is filled. A common alter-

nate English rendering emphasizes the felt sense of continuous effort against a gentle resistance. Neither word implies a sudden jump. The image is closer to a seedling working through packed soil: invisible for a long time, then abruptly visible, though the growth was never anything but gradual.

Read as guidance, Hexagram 46 favors people and projects still low in standing but sound in method. It rewards patience with process over hunger for immediate recognition. The upward path it describes has no shortcuts, but it also carries little real risk, because each stage is earned before the next begins.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 46 joins Earth above Wind. Wind, in this pairing, stands for Wood: a tree rooted in soil, extending upward through the resistance of the ground above it. Earth receives and nourishes that growth rather than blocking it, so the meeting of the two trigrams describes patient extension supported by an accommodating environment.

In the six-line diagram, read from the bottom, the lowest line is yielding, firm lines follow at the second and third positions, and yielding lines fill the fourth, fifth, and top. Wood pushes from below while the yielding lines above open a way for it, so the whole diagram traces a single unbroken climb rather than a struggle between opposing forces.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Sincerity clears the way BOTTOM LINE

初六：允升，大吉。

Sincere ascending: great good fortune.

At the very bottom of the ascent, the first line describes someone with no rank yet and nothing to prove beyond an honest wish to grow. Its sincerity is not strategy; it is simply the absence of pretense, and that absence is what makes the earliest steps of any climb welcome to others rather than resisted. Trust that you do not need credentials before you begin, only good faith and a willingness to be led by those already established. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 11, Peace: a season of easy exchange between what is low and what is high, where genuine effort meets a correspondingly open reception.

2 A modest offering suffices SECOND LINE

九二：孚乃利用禴，无咎。

Sincerity makes even a simple offering fitting: no blame.

The second line is capable but not yet in a commanding position, and the classical text ties its good fortune to sincerity rather than to display: even a simple seasonal offering, plain and unadorned, is enough when it is genuine. There is no need to overproduce a case for yourself or overspend to look impressive. Consistency and honest intent carry more weight here than polish. When this line changes, the reading becomes Hexagram 15, Humility: the same plain sincerity, now recognized as a durable strength rather than a modest compromise, capable of carrying weight without ever needing to announce itself.

3 The way stands open THIRD LINE

九三：升虛邑。

Ascending into an open, undefended town.

At the third line, firm and rightly placed, the ascent meets no real resistance: it advances into a town as open and undefended as if it had been vacated in advance. This describes a moment when preparation and timing align so well that effort meets almost no friction. It is tempting to read such ease as license to relax, but the figure instead asks you to keep moving with the same steadiness that opened the path. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 7, Troops: open ground still requires organized, disciplined effort to hold and use well, not carelessness simply because resistance has momentarily dropped away.

4 Devotion before ambition FOURTH LINE

六四：王用亨于岐山，吉，无咎。

The king makes an offering at Mount Qi: good fortune, no blame.

The fourth line pictures a figure not yet at the summit, promoted by others' trust rather than by self-assertion, who marks the moment not with a claim to power but with an offering at a sacred mountain. The gesture matters: recognition is met with humility and gratitude directed upward, not with a rush to consolidate personal gain. This is the posture that keeps an ascent legitimate rather than merely successful. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 32, Duration: what was honored in a single grateful act now needs to be sustained as an ongoing, reliable commitment.

5 Arriving by the proper steps FIFTH LINE

六五：贞吉，升阶。

Staying true brings good fortune: ascending by the steps.

At the fifth line, the ascent reaches the stair itself: the climber is near the top, but the classical commentary is clear that this is no place for self-glorification. The line's yielding character is treated as an asset, since that openness lets firmer, capable people below continue supporting the whole structure. Staying true here means remembering that height achieved through others' trust is still owed to them. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 48, Village Well: a resource meant to serve everyone who draws from it, not a private possession of whoever is at the top.

6 Climbing past the point of use TOP LINE

上六：冥升，利于不息之贞。

Ascending into obscurity: fitting only for a steadfastness that does not cease.

The top line warns of ascending into obscurity, pushing beyond the position where more height still does anything useful. Growth that does not know when to stop rising can drift into confusion, isolation, or overreach, losing sight of the purpose that justified the climb in the first place. The text's remedy is not to abandon effort but to redirect it: let steadfastness continue without interruption even as outward advancement stops making sense. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 18, Corruption: unattended decay that has been quietly accumulating now needs direct, patient repair before any further rise is worth pursuing.

Read hexagram 46 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/46-pushing-upward



HEXAGRAM 47

Adversity

困 · Kùn

Lake over Water

Hexagram 47 shows genuine strength hemmed in by real limits: the way through is inner integrity that neither denies the confinement nor collapses under it.

THE JUDGMENT

困：亨，贞，大人吉，无咎，有言不信。

Adversity: success remains possible. Staying true matters. A person of substance meets it with good fortune and no blame. Words offered now will not be believed.

THE IMAGE

泽无水，困；君子以致命遂志。

The lake stands over water yet holds none: Adversity. The wise person, even at the furthest edge of what circumstance allows, holds a course and carries the intention through.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received sequence, Hexagram 47 follows Ascending: a rise that continues without pause eventually spends its own resources and arrives at confinement. That is the classical logic for why Kun comes next — momentum that never rests runs out of ground to climb.

The Chinese name 困 shows a tree boxed inside an enclosure, growth pressed in on every side until it can no longer spread. English editions also translate the figure as Oppression or Exhaustion — this site's own URL reads /47-oppression for the same reason — because the felt experience is being squeezed by circumstance rather than beaten by a single opponent. Some editions favor Adversity to keep the emphasis on inner response rather than outer cause.

Wang Fuzhi's commentary draws a sharp line inside the figure: of the three firm lines caught in Kun, each still finds an occasion, an ending, or a release, while the three yielding lines that try to close the trap end up catching only themselves. Circumstances can genuinely box you in, but a person who tries to box in someone else through manipulation or spite usually finds the confinement closes around their own position first.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 47 joins two trigrams as Lake over Water: Dui, the Lake, rests above; Kan, Water, lies below. Water that should fill the basin has drained beneath it instead, leaving the upper hollow dry while the lower deep keeps flowing out of reach. It is a picture of resources present nearby yet unavailable exactly where you stand.

In the six-line diagram, read from the bottom, a yielding line opens the base, a firm line rises to the second position, a yielding line returns at the third, two firm lines hold the fourth and fifth, and a yielding line closes the top. The three firm lines sit at two, four, and five, genuinely pressured but never isolated, while the three yielding lines bracket them at the base, the middle, and the summit — precisely where the classical reading locates the deepest trouble: not in the firm lines that endure it, but in the positions straining to close around them.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Hiding in the shadow BOTTOM LINE

初六：臀困于株木，入于幽谷，三岁不覿。

Sitting cramped on a bare stump, retreating into a hidden valley: unseen for three years.

The first line pictures someone perched uncomfortably on a bare stump, then withdrawing into a hidden valley where no one sees them for three years. This is confinement chosen rather than imposed: avoidance dressed up as caution. Before treating a limit as absolute, ask whether you have actually tested it or simply retreated from the discomfort of trying. Sitting it out has a cost measured in years, not days. When this line changes, the reading opens into Hexagram 58 — Lake, where open, glad exchange replaces the hidden valley, suggesting that honest engagement, not further withdrawal, is what actually loosens this particular knot.

2 Trapped by comfort's offer SECOND LINE

九二：困于酒食，朱紱方来，利用亨祀，征凶，无咎。

Hemmed in by wine and food, while a scarlet sash of rank is being offered: favorable to hold to ceremony and sincerity; advancing brings misfortune, yet no lasting blame.

At the second line, the confinement arrives disguised as plenty: wine, food, and a scarlet sash of rank are being offered, and accepting them quietly narrows your position even as it feels like relief. The advice is to meet the offer with the same care one would bring to sacrifice and ceremony — respectful, deliberate, not swept along by gratitude or flattery. Pushing forward aggressively while under this kind of obligation brings misfortune, though no lasting blame follows a measured response. The change leads to Hexagram 45 — Convergence: real support does exist nearby, but it is found in honest gathering, not in the comfortable trap.

3 Pressed against stone THIRD LINE

六三：困于石，据于蒺藜，入于其宫，不见其妻，凶。

Pressed against stone, then leaning on brambles for support; entering one's own house and finding the spouse gone: misfortune.

The third line shows someone straining against something as unyielding as stone, then grasping brambles for support and only wounding themselves further. Exhausted, they return home and find the spouse gone — a stark image of effort spent on the wrong obstacle while something that actually needed tending was left unattended. This line warns against forcing a confrontation you cannot win while neglecting the relationship or foundation that could have held you steady. The change points to Hexagram 28 — Great Exceeding, where the load already exceeds what the structure beneath it can bear; the answer is to lighten the burden, not press harder against the stone.

4 Slow approach to the block FOURTH LINE

九四：来徐徐，困于金车，吝，有终。

Approaching slowly, held back by a bronze carriage; difficulty now, yet the matter reaches a good end.

The fourth line describes someone approaching slowly, held back by something as heavy and legitimate as a bronze carriage. There is real difficulty here, not imagined resistance, and rushing it will not make it move faster. The counsel is patient, deliberate pacing: keep coming, without forcing the pace past what the obstruction allows. Held to steadily, the line promises the matter reaches a good end despite the present difficulty. When this line changes, the reading becomes Hexagram 29 — Water, doubled danger that must be met the same way water meets a slope: by finding the course that is actually open, not the one you wish were open.

5 Wounded yet freed by sincerity FIFTH LINE

九五：剿刖，困于赤绂，乃徐有说，利用祭祀。

Wounded and cut off, hemmed in even while wearing the scarlet sash of high office; relief comes gradually — favorable to hold to devotion and ceremony.

The fifth line is striking: even someone wearing the scarlet sash of high office is wounded and hemmed in here, proof that rank alone does not exempt anyone from adversity. Relief is described as coming gradually, through devotion and ceremony rather than through force or complaint. This is the position of someone centrally placed and genuinely capable, who must still wait for confinement to loosen on its own timeline while holding to sincere conduct. The change leads to Hexagram 40 — Release: the pressure described across this whole figure is finally breaking apart, and what eases it is the same patient sincerity this line asks for.

6 Tangled vines, timely move TOP LINE

上六：困于葛藟，于臲臲，曰动悔，有悔，征吉。

Tangled in kudzu vines, standing on unsteady ground: to move is regretted, yet regret is already present — moving forward now brings good fortune.

The top line pictures someone caught in kudzu vines on unsteady, high ground — every movement seems to risk more tangling, more regret. Yet the line's own logic turns this around: regret is already present simply from being stuck, so naming it honestly and then moving is better than staying still out of fear of making things worse. Once the regret is acknowledged rather than avoided, moving forward brings good fortune. The change leads to Hexagram 6 — Dispute, a reminder that the coming release may involve friction or disagreement, and that honest confrontation, entered at the right moment, is not the same danger as the tangle you are leaving.

Read hexagram 47 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/47-oppression



HEXAGRAM 48

Village Well

井 · Jǐng

Water over Wind

Hexagram 48 describes a resource that stays fixed in place while people come and go, and warns that a task left almost finished still fails.

THE JUDGMENT

井：改邑不改井，无丧无得，往来井井，汔至，亦未繙井，羸其瓶，凶。

The Well: a town may be moved, but its well cannot be moved. It is not diminished by drawing and not increased by rest; those who come and those who go all draw from it. But if the rope almost reaches the water and the jug is not yet raised, and the jug breaks, that is misfortune.

THE IMAGE

木上有水，井；君子以劳民劝相。

Water rises above wood: the Well. The wise person organizes the people's labor and encourages them to help one another.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received sequence, Hexagram 48 follows Hexagram 47, Adversity, where a person or a community has been worn down to exhaustion. The Well answers that exhaustion with an image of quiet, renewable supply: dig deep enough, keep the shaft clear, and the water is always there to be drawn.

The Chinese name 井 means well — the village water source everyone depends on. The hexagram is also translated simply as The Well. A town may be rebuilt, its borders redrawn, its people replaced generation after generation, yet the well beneath it stays where it is and keeps giving water to whoever lowers a bucket. That contrast is the whole teaching: value here is not created by moving to a new place or chasing a new opportunity, it is created by maintaining something dependable and returning to it.

The judgment adds a warning that softens the reassurance. Neither drawing water nor leaving it alone changes what the well can give, but if the rope is too short, or the jug breaks just before it clears the rim, the effort is wasted anyway. Hexagram 48 asks you to trust a steady resource and also to finish the ordinary work of reaching it.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 48 joins Water over Wind. Wind, read here as wood, is the bucket and rope lowered into the earth; Water is what that reach draws up. Together they describe a shaft sunk once and used forever after, a structure that turns repeated small effort into a constant supply.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, a yin line opens the base, then two yang lines stack above it, then a yin, a yang, and a yin line closes the top. The lower trigram Xun, Wind or Wood, is the pliant vessel that descends into the ground; the upper trigram Kan, Water, is the depth it reaches. Read bottom to top, the figure traces the whole draw: the buried mud and the empty shaft, the small overflow to what is nearby, the clean but unused source, the careful lining that keeps it sound, the cold clear water fit to drink, and finally the open well-head offered to everyone.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 The silted, disused well BOTTOM LINE

初六：井泥不食，旧井无禽。

The well is silted with mud and cannot be drawn from; an old, disused well attracts no birds at all.

The first line shows a well choked with mud, so long unused that even birds no longer visit it. This is not a well that failed; it is a well that was abandoned, and neglect did the rest. If some part of your life — a skill, a relationship, a routine — has gone quiet from disuse rather than genuine collapse, the fault lies in the abandoning, not in what was abandoned. The remedy is unglamorous: begin clearing the mud rather than searching elsewhere for water. When this line changes, the reading moves to Hexagram 5, Patience, which counsels waiting with nourishment rather than forcing the clearing to happen all at once.

2 Water leaking to the small fish SECOND LINE

九二：井谷射鲋，瓮敝漏。

The well leaks sideways into a hollow, feeding only the small fish there; the jar is cracked and lets its water drain away.

At the second line, the well leaks sideways through a cracked jar, its water reaching only small fish in a nearby hollow instead of rising to where people can use it. Real capacity is present, but it is escaping through a flaw in the vessel that carries it rather than serving its intended purpose. Check the container, not just the source: a good idea poorly presented, a strong effort undermined by a careless habit, a real bond drained by small unaddressed leaks. The change points to Hexagram 39, Hardship, warning that ignoring the leak now invites a harder obstacle later. Patch the jar before the well runs dry from waste.

3 Cleared, clean, and still unused THIRD LINE

九三：井渫不食，为我心恻，可用汲。王明，并受其福。

The well has been cleared and cleaned, yet still no one draws from it; this grieves my heart, for it is fit to be used. When the ruler is clear-sighted, everyone shares in its benefit.

The third line is the hexagram's most pointed image: cleaned and cleared, entirely fit to drink from, and still no one comes to draw. Worth without recognition is a real grief, not a small complaint, and the classical text says so directly. If this describes you, the answer is not to grow bitter but to become visible — make your readiness known rather than waiting to be discovered. If someone capable near you is overlooked, the line is a nudge to notice them yourself. The change leads to Hexagram 29, Water, depth upon depth: real substance is present, so proceed with steady care rather than doubt.

4 Lining the shaft carefully FOURTH LINE

六四：井甃，无咎。

The well is lined and its walls set in order: no blame.

The fourth line turns from drawing water to maintaining the well itself: the shaft is lined, its walls set in order. This is not the moment for output; it is the moment for infrastructure, the quiet, structural work that has no immediate payoff but prevents future collapse. There is no fault in slowing down to reinforce something before asking more of it. The change points to Hexagram 28, Great Exceeding, whose sagging ridgepole warns what happens when a structure is loaded past what its current support can bear — exactly the failure that careful lining, done now, is meant to prevent.

5 Cold, clear water at last FIFTH LINE

九五：井冽，寒泉食。

The well runs clear; its cold spring water is fit to drink.

The fifth line is the well fulfilled: cold, clear water, genuinely fit to drink. This is the payoff for the maintenance described in the lines below it, and it asks mainly for continuity — keep the source clean, keep it accessible, do not let success become an excuse for the neglect that opened the reading. A person or position of real quality at this stage serves others simply by remaining reliably good. The change leads to Hexagram 46, Ascending, extending this quiet strength upward: what has proven trustworthy at the source is now ready to rise and reach further than before.

6 The well-head left open TOP LINE

上六：井收勿幕，有孚元吉。

The well is drawn from and left uncovered, open to all; sincerity brings supreme good fortune.

The top line completes the figure: the well is drawn from and then left uncovered, open to whoever comes next, rather than sealed off to protect it. Sincerity here brings the reading's highest good fortune, because the well's whole value depends on staying available rather than being hoarded. Whatever resource, knowledge, or support you have built by this point should now be offered outward rather than guarded. The change leads to Hexagram 57, Wind, the trigram of gentle, repeated penetration: an open well and a patient, steady influence share the same quiet, unforced way of reaching everyone eventually.

Read hexagram 48 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/48-the-well



HEXAGRAM 49

Radical Change

革 · Gé

Lake over Fire

Radical Change asks whether the old form has stopped serving its purpose and a new one has earned enough trust to replace it.

THE JUDGMENT

革：巳日乃孚，元亨，利贞，悔亡。

Radical Change: only once the appointed day has come does trust follow. Great success. It is fruitful to stay true. Regret fades.

THE IMAGE

泽中有火，革；君子以治历明时。

Fire burns within the lake: Radical Change. The wise person studies the calendar and makes the seasons clear.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received sequence, Hexagram 49 follows Hexagram 48, the Well, whose water stays the same even as dynasties rise and fall. Where the well renews from within a fixed structure, Hexagram 49 asks what happens once the container itself has worn out and needs to be remade.

The Chinese name 革 originally meant the hide of an animal, stripped and tanned until it changes from raw skin into usable leather — a total transformation of substance, not a repair. From that image the character came to mean removal, molting, and reform. In English translation the hexagram is also rendered as Revolution, and that word fits: it points to a

change in the governing pattern itself, the kind that ends one era and opens another, not a small adjustment made within the same arrangement.

Fire sits beneath lake in this figure, two forces that cannot coexist unchanged: water will douse the flame or flame will boil the water away, so something has to give. That tension is the whole teaching. Change of this magnitude is not casual, and the classical text insists it succeeds only after trust has been earned through demonstrated cause — hunger, danger, corruption, or plain uselessness of the old form — never through mere impatience with what already exists.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 49 joins Lake over Fire. The lake presses down from above while fire rises to meet it; each element works to end the other's present state, so the pairing pictures friction that cannot simply be smoothed over — it has to resolve into a different arrangement entirely.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, a yang line opens the base, a single yin line breaks the second position, three yang lines rise through the middle, and a yin line closes the top. The lower trigram Li, Fire, is clarity and attachment; the upper trigram Dui, the Lake, is joy and open exchange. Read together, the diagram shows heat contained by water until pressure forces a genuine change of state.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Hold fast before acting BOTTOM LINE

初九：巩用黄牛之革。

Bind it fast with the hide of a yellow ox.

The first line pictures binding something down with tough yellow-ox hide — not yet cutting or reforming anything, only securing it firmly in place. At the earliest stage of a needed change, the wise move is restraint: gather your resources, hold your position, and resist the urge to act on the very first impulse toward reform. The situation is not ready, and neither, usually, are you. When this line moves, Radical Change turns into Hexagram 31, Influence, suggesting that what looks like a call to overturn something is really an invitation to pay closer attention to how the people and forces around you are actually responding before you commit to anything.

2 The appointed day arrives SECOND LINE

六二：巳日乃革之，征吉，无咎。

Only once the appointed day has come does he change it. To advance now brings good fortune; there is no blame.

By the second line, the case for change has matured. This position sits at the center of the lower trigram, clear-sighted and well placed, and the text says plainly that once the appointed day comes, advancing brings good fortune and no blame. The lesson is recognition as much as timing: know the difference between wishing for change and the day when the ground has actually shifted underneath you. When this line moves, Radical Change turns into Hexagram 43, Breakthrough, showing that a well-timed reform can gather enough momentum to clear away what has been resisting it.

3 The case argued three times THIRD LINE

九三：征凶，贞厉。革言三就，有孚。

To advance brings misfortune; even staying true is dangerous. Only when the case for change has been argued three times over does trust arrive.

The third line is the hexagram's sharpest warning: advancing now is dangerous, and even holding steady carries risk, because the change has been proposed but not yet proven. Only once the argument for reform has been made and reheard three times does trust finally settle around it. This is not a call to abandon the cause; it is a call to keep explaining it rather than forcing it through on the strength of your own conviction alone. When this line moves, Radical Change turns into Hexagram 17, Following, suggesting that genuine support arrives only after people have chosen, of their own will, to follow the reasoning you have laid out.

4 The mandate renewed FOURTH LINE

九四：悔亡，有孚改命，吉。

Regret fades. Trust is present; the mandate is renewed. Good fortune.

At the fourth line, doubt lifts. Trust has been established, and the text says the mandate itself is renewed — an old commission or arrangement is replaced by a new one, and this brings good fortune with no lingering regret. This is the moment where preparation and patient argument finally convert into authority to act differently going forward. When this line moves, Radical Change turns into Hexagram 63, Already Crossed, showing that the reform has taken hold and the task now shifts from winning approval to managing the new order carefully so early success does not unravel.

5 Change like a tiger FIFTH LINE

九五：大人虎变，未占有孚。

The great person changes like a tiger renewing its stripes; before any divination is asked, trust is already there.

The fifth line describes transformation so complete and so visible that no one needs to ask for confirmation — trust arrives before any divination could even be sought, the way a tiger's coat renews itself into fresh, unmistakable stripes. This is leadership-level change: decisive, evident in action rather than announcement, carried out from a position others already look toward. When this line moves, Radical Change turns into Hexagram 55, Plenty, suggesting that reform enacted this openly can bring a season of real abundance, provided it is not allowed to grow careless at its height.

6 Stripes, spots, and mere faces TOP LINE

上六：君子豹变，小人革面，征凶，居贞吉。

The wise person changes like a leopard renewing its spots; the common person merely changes face. To advance brings misfortune; to stay settled and true brings good fortune.

The top line separates three responses to a completed change: the wise person's transformation is thorough and visible, like a leopard's fresh spots; the common person merely changes face, adjusting appearance without truly changing underneath; and further advancing at this late stage brings misfortune, while settling into what has already been achieved brings good fortune. The work of reform is finishing, not restarting. When this line moves, Radical Change turns into Hexagram 13, Fellowship, showing that consolidating trust with others, rather than pushing for one more revolution, is what the moment now asks for.

Read hexagram 49 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/49-revolution



HEXAGRAM 50

Cauldron

鼎 · Dǐng

Fire over Wind

Hexagram 50 describes a vessel set upright and fed from below, turning raw material into something refined enough to nourish others.

THE JUDGMENT

鼎：元吉，亨。

The Cauldron: supreme good fortune. Success.

THE IMAGE

木上有火，鼎；君子以正位凝命。

Fire rests above wood: the Cauldron. The wise person settles into a rightful position and holds firm to what has been entrusted.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received sequence, Hexagram 50 follows Hexagram 49, Radical Change, where an old order has already been overturned. The Cauldron answers that upheaval with the next necessary act: build the vessel that will hold and transform what comes after the break, rather than leaving the change to sit raw and unusable.

The Chinese name 鼎 refers to the bronze tripod used in ancient ritual to cook offerings and, by extension, to the authority of the state itself — a new ruler's legitimacy was said to rest on possessing the cauldrons. Its

pinyin, sometimes written without tone marks as simply Ding, is also translated as The Caldron. That double sense matters here. A cauldron does nothing on its own; it must stand on firm legs, hold real contents, and sit over a fire before it produces anything worth serving. Hexagram 50 asks what structure you are building to convert effort, ingredients, or a new mandate into something that can actually feed and support other people.

The judgment's plain grant of supreme good fortune reflects the trigram picture beneath it: wood entering fire is the oldest way of cooking, and cooking is the plainest way of turning what is inedible into what nourishes. Before asking whether the outcome will be good, this hexagram asks whether the vessel itself — its legs, its ears, its balance — is sound enough to carry the work.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 50 joins Fire over Wind. Wind, read here as wood, feeds the flame from below; Fire, above, is what that fuel becomes once it burns. These two trigrams together describe the oldest transformation there is — raw material fed into heat and returned as something cooked, refined, and shareable.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, a yin line opens the base, three yang lines rise through the middle, then a yin line, and a yang line closes the top. The lower trigram Xun, Wind or Wood, is the fuel drawn up into the fire; the upper trigram Li, Fire, is the brightness that results. Read as the shape of an actual cauldron, the bottom yin line is the legs planted on the ground, the three yang lines are the solid body holding the contents, the fifth line is the ears through which the carrying rod passes, and the top yang line is that rod itself, lifted clear of the flame once the work is done.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 The cauldron tips to empty out BOTTOM LINE

初六：鼎颠趾，利出否，得妾以其子，无咎。

The cauldron tips over on its legs; but this is useful for pouring out what had gone stale inside it. It is like taking a concubine for the sake of the son she bears: no blame.

The first line shows the cauldron overturned on its legs, an image that looks like failure but is read here as useful: whatever had gone stale inside is poured out before anything fresh can be cooked. The classical text compares this to taking a lowly wife for the sake of the worthy son she will bear, worth measured by what is produced, not by starting status. If part of your situation looks upended right now, ask whether it is clearing out something that needed to go. When this line changes, Great Possession follows: a wide, well-stocked abundance becomes available once the cauldron has been emptied and readied.

2 Real substance, no rival close enough SECOND LINE

九二：鼎有实，我仇有疾，不我能即，吉。

The cauldron holds real substance. My rival is troubled by an ailment and cannot come near me: good fortune.

At the second line, the cauldron holds genuine substance, and a rival troubled by its own difficulty cannot come near to contest it. This is a line of quiet strength: you are not being tested by direct opposition, you simply need to keep what you have filled the vessel with rather than grow careless. Guard real capability with steadiness, not vigilance against a threat that has already stalled. The change leads to Sojourning, where a traveler holds no fixed base; carry substance carefully, since strength away from home ground still needs tact and cannot rely on established standing.

3 Good contents, a broken handle THIRD LINE

九三：鼎耳革，其行塞，雉膏不食，方雨亏悔，终吉。

The cauldron's ears are altered, so it cannot be carried; its rich pheasant meat goes unserved. But when the rain finally comes, the regret lessens, and the end is good fortune.

The third line describes real capability going unused: the cauldron's ears are altered so it cannot be lifted, and rich food inside it goes unserved despite being ready. The obstruction is not the contents but the means of carrying them, a broken connection between what you have to offer and the people positioned to receive it. The line does not end in failure; once the rain comes, the blockage eases and the outcome turns favorable, so the answer is patience through the stall rather than force. The change points to Not Yet Crossed, a reminder that the work is genuinely unfinished and still asks for care.

4 Legs break under too much weight FOURTH LINE

九四：鼎折足，覆公餗，其形渥，凶。

The cauldron's legs break, spilling the ruler's stew; it is soaked and ruined: misfortune.

The fourth line is the hexagram's clearest warning: the cauldron's legs snap, its contents spill, and the ruler's own stew is ruined and soaked into the ground. This is what happens when a structure is asked to carry more than its current foundation can support, whether that load is responsibility, trust, or resources taken on faster than capacity was actually built. The failure is structural, not moral, but it is still severe, and it argues for checking the base before adding weight rather than after. The change leads to Corruption, decay that has set in and now needs deliberate correction rather than another attempt to push forward as before.

5 Yellow ears, a golden rod FIFTH LINE

六五：鼎黃耳金鉉，利貞。

The cauldron has yellow ears and a golden carrying rod: it is fruitful to stay true.

The fifth line reaches the cauldron's working ideal: yellow ears, the color of the center and of balance, fitted with a golden rod strong enough to lift the whole vessel safely. This is capability matched to the means of using it well, asking mainly that you stay true to the position rather than seek something more dramatic. A structure this sound rewards continued fidelity over reinvention. The change leads to Encounter, an unplanned meeting that arrives on its own; because the vessel here is already well fitted, an unexpected contact or opportunity can be received and carried rather than mishandled through poor preparation.

6 A jade rod completes the work TOP LINE

上九：鼎玉铉，大吉，无不利。

The cauldron has a jade carrying rod: supreme good fortune, nothing that is not beneficial.

The top line closes the hexagram at its highest point: the carrying rod is jade, and the reading grants supreme good fortune with nothing left unfavorable. Jade is prized for being firm yet not brittle, an image of strength that has learned restraint after passing through every stage below it, from tipped legs to broken supports to a well-fitted golden rod. What was built and tested through the earlier lines is now trusted to carry real weight without further proof. The change leads to Duration, where what has been established through this process settles into something meant to last rather than to be rebuilt again soon.

Read hexagram 50 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/50-the-cauldron



HEXAGRAM 51

Shock

震 · Zhèn

Thunder over Thunder

Shock strikes without warning and shakes you loose from routine, and the figure's whole counsel is to let the startle sharpen your attention rather than scatter it.

THE JUDGMENT

震：亨，震来虩虩，笑言哑哑，震惊百里，不丧匕鬯。

Shock: success. When the thunder comes, it startles and startles again; then laughter and easy talk follow. The shock terrifies for a hundred miles, and still the sacrificial ladle and wine are not spilled.

THE IMAGE

洊雷，震；君子以恐惧修省。

Repeated thunder: Shock. The wise person, in fear and trembling, examines and cultivates themselves.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received sequence, Hexagram 51 opens the second half of the classic, following the pairing of the well and the cauldron with a figure of sudden disruption: once order has been refined and vessels have been set in place, something must shake the arrangement to keep it alive rather than stale. Shock is that shaking — thunder doubled, rolling and returning, arriving twice before it settles.

The Chinese name 震 (romanized without tone marks simply as zhen) means to shake, to quake, or to startle, and it names both the sound of thunder and the tremor it sends through the body. It is also translated as The Arousing, because the figure's trigram, doubled top and bottom, is thunder itself: the eldest son among the eight trigrams, associated with sudden movement and the crack that wakes a sleeping house. The Judgment pictures a person so composed under the crash that fear gives way to laughter and easy talk, even as the thunder rolls on for a hundred miles without spilling the sacrificial wine from their hand.

Read this way, Hexagram 51 is not a hexagram of disaster. It is instruction on how to meet sudden alarm — a piece of news, a reversal, a jolt out of complacency — so that the startle becomes the occasion for self-examination rather than panic, and steadiness under noise becomes the very thing that lets ordinary life, and ordinary responsibility, continue unspilled.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 51 stacks Thunder above Thunder. Thunder is the trigram of sudden, decisive movement, the crack of energy breaking upward from below; doubled, it becomes a rolling peal that returns on itself, one shock following another before the sound finally dies away. Nothing in the figure is still: both halves are the same restless, awakening force.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, each trigram begins with a single yang line rising beneath two yin lines above it — the image of movement breaking out from underneath a settled surface. Reading the whole figure, this pattern repeats once at the base and once again at the fourth line, so the diagram shows two separate outbreaks of the same startling energy, first low and then rising again higher up, exactly the doubled crash of thunder the name describes.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 The first crack, then laughter BOTTOM LINE

初九：震来虩虩，后笑言哑哑，吉。

The thunder comes and startles deeply; afterward come laughter and easy talk: good fortune.

The lowest line is the thunder at its freshest — the startle lands hard, and only afterward does the text place laughter and easy talk. This line owns the origin of the whole figure's movement: the initial jolt is meant to be felt fully, not suppressed, and good fortune belongs to whoever lets the fear pass through rather than pretending it never landed. The order matters — fright first, composure after — because skipping straight to forced calm denies the shock its useful work. When this line changes, the figure becomes Hexagram 16, Anticipation: a startle correctly absorbed settles into the confident, well-prepared ease that lets you move forward without further alarm.

2 Climbing clear of a loss SECOND LINE

六二：震来厉，亿丧贝，跻于九陵，勿逐，七日得。

The thunder comes with danger; a great store of goods seems lost, and one climbs to the ninth hill to escape it. Do not chase after the loss — in seven days it is recovered.

The second line meets danger directly: something of real value seems gone, and the response is to climb to high ground rather than chase after it. The text's instruction not to pursue the loss is the line's whole teaching — things recovered by patience are lost forever if grasped at in panic, and seven days is named as the natural span for the return. This line asks for a trust that feels counterintuitive mid-alarm: retreat first, let time do the recovering. When this line changes, it becomes Hexagram 54, Young Bride: an apparent loss can still settle, given the deference of time, into a bond that holds.

3 Moving forward through the daze THIRD LINE

六三：震苏苏，震行无眚。

The thunder leaves one dazed and unsteady; if one moves forward because of the shock rather than freezing before it, there is no fault.

The third line describes the aftershock's disorientation — a lingering unsteadiness, not the sharp first crack but its lasting tremor. The text's counsel is precise: motion undertaken because of the shock, rather than despite it, carries no fault. This line distinguishes paralysis from disorientation; you do not need to feel fully composed to act correctly, you only need to let the shock itself supply the momentum rather than resisting it. When this line changes, it becomes Hexagram 55, Plenty: disoriented motion, kept going, can open directly into a season of real abundance and fullness.

4 The shock that sinks into mud FOURTH LINE

九四：震遂泥。

The thunder ends by sinking into the mud.

The fourth line is the figure's caution: a second wave of thunder that simply loses itself in soft ground, producing noise without movement. Starting the upper trigram's own repetition of the pattern, this line shows what happens when the energy of shock is not channeled — it dissipates, and a moment that could have sharpened you instead exhausts itself. The lesson is to notice when repeated alarm has stopped teaching you anything and started merely draining you. When this line changes, it becomes Hexagram 24, Return: even energy sunk into the mud can gather itself and turn back toward the right path.

5 Danger recurring, nothing truly lost FIFTH LINE

六五：震往来厉，亿无丧，有事。

The thunder goes and comes, each time with danger; yet nothing of great value is actually lost, and there is still work to attend to.

The fifth line sits at the figure's center of authority and meets the thunder's coming and going more than once, each pass carrying real danger. Yet the text is explicit that nothing of great value is lost, and that work — real responsibility — still waits once the tremor passes. This line models endurance without denial: the danger is acknowledged fully, and the response is simply to remain at the post and keep the work moving. When this line changes, it becomes Hexagram 17, Following: a leader who holds steady through repeated shocks earns the trust that makes others willing to follow.

6 Trembling at the edge TOP LINE

上六：震索索，视矍矍，征凶。震不于其躬，于其邻，无咎。婚媾有言。

The thunder leaves one trembling and drained, glancing about wide-eyed; to press forward now brings misfortune. But if the thunder strikes one's neighbor and not oneself directly, there is no blame — though there will be talk between the parties bound by marriage.

The top line is exhaustion — trembling, wide-eyed, drained by shock upon shock, and the text warns plainly that pressing forward now brings misfortune. But it draws a careful distinction: if the thunder strikes one's neighbor rather than oneself, there is no blame, though those bound to you by marriage will have something to say about it. This line's counsel is to recognize your own depletion honestly and stop advancing, while staying alert to how the shock lands on those nearby. When this line changes, it becomes Hexagram 21, Jaws Closing: exhausted vigilance, once it stops merely reacting, can harden into the judgment needed to bite through what is causing the trouble.

Read hexagram 51 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/51-the-arousing-thunder



HEXAGRAM 52

Stillness

艮 · Gèn

Mountain over Mountain

Stillness asks you to stop moving on cue, the way a back cannot see the body it belongs to, so attention settles inward instead of chasing every passing stimulus.

THE JUDGMENT

艮：艮其背，不获其身，行其庭，不见其人，无咎。

Stillness: still the back, so the body itself is not seen. Walking through the courtyard, one does not notice the people there. No blame.

THE IMAGE

兼山，艮；君子以思不出其位。

Mountains joined together: Stillness. The wise person keeps thought from wandering beyond one's own place.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received sequence, Hexagram 52 follows Shock, the figure of sudden movement and startled alarm. The traditional commentary on the sequence explains that things cannot keep shaking forever, so stillness must follow — Stillness arrives the way a startled body finally stops trembling and returns to its own quiet center.

The Chinese name 艮 names a mountain, and by extension the act of halting, resting, or keeping still — the same character that gives the tri-

gram its identity as immovable rock rather than restless water. Some editions also translate the hexagram as Keeping Still or Mountain. That is a useful reminder: the figure is not about paralysis but about a specific, disciplined kind of stopping. The Judgment's image is deliberately strange — stilling the back, so that the body is not seen even while walking through a courtyard full of people. Attention that is genuinely settled does not depend on shutting the eyes or leaving the room; it depends on no longer being pulled by whatever crosses in front of you.

Read as advice, Hexagram 52 does not ask you to withdraw from life. It asks you to notice where your attachment or your role is currently doing the moving, then to stop acting from that place and act instead from a center that is not swayed by whatever is nearest. Stillness of this kind is earned by practice at each stage of the body, from toe to crown, not declared once and assumed to hold.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 52 joins Mountain over Mountain. Two identical trigrams of stillness stack directly on each other, with nothing above or below to interrupt the shape. A mountain does not chase what passes near it, and it does not resent what leaves; it simply holds its own outline against the sky. Doubled, that quality becomes total: Stillness is what remains when nothing further is added and nothing is taken away.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, two yin lines rise to a yang line at the third position, forming Gen, the Mountain, as the lower trigram; the same pattern of two yin lines under one yang line repeats at positions four through six, forming Gen again as the upper trigram. Each trigram ends in an unmoving yang line capping two yielding lines beneath it — the shape of weight settled at the top, holding everything under it at rest.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Stillness at the very first step BOTTOM LINE

初六：艮其趾，无咎，利永贞。

Still the toes: no blame. It is fruitful to stay true over the long term.

The first line stills only the toes, the smallest and earliest part of the body to move. At the very start of a situation, before any real step has been taken, halting costs almost nothing and prevents a great deal — a habit worth committing to over the long term rather than treating as a one-time correction. This is the easiest place to practice stillness precisely because so little momentum has built up yet. When this line changes, Adornment follows, suggesting that a well-placed early pause leaves room for care and refinement rather than a rushed, unconsidered start.

2 Unable to rescue what it follows SECOND LINE

六二：艮其腓，不拯其随，其心不快。

Still the calves, but cannot rescue what they are meant to follow: the heart is not at ease.

The second line stills the calves, the muscles that carry the body along whatever the legs above decide. Here stillness is not fully chosen: the calves cannot rescue or redirect the thigh they are bound to follow, and the heart feels the discomfort of that limited authority. This describes situations where you can restrain your own conduct but cannot control the larger course a person or process above you has already set. The change to Corruption warns that neglected influence, left unaddressed for too long, tends to decay rather than resolve on its own — passive discomfort is not the same as genuine stillness.

3 Forcing a halt at the center THIRD LINE

九三：艮其限，列其夤，厉薰心。

Still the waist, splitting the spine along its length: danger scorches the heart.

The third line stills the waist, the body's hinge, and in doing so splits the spine along its length — danger that scorches the heart. This is the warning line of the hexagram: forcing an artificial stop at the very center of something still in motion strains the whole structure rather than protecting it. Real stillness cannot be imposed by rigid willpower alone at a joint meant to bend. The change to Stripping Away shows what happens when that pressure continues unchecked — a structure worn down piece by piece rather than settled.

4 Stillness reaches the whole body FOURTH LINE

六四：艮其身，无咎。

Still the torso: no blame.

The fourth line stills the torso, the body as a whole rather than one isolated part. No blame follows, because at this stage restraint has matured past forcing individual limbs and has become a settled quality of the whole person. This is stillness achieved through steady practice rather than sudden effort — the natural result of the discipline built at the earlier positions. When this line changes, the reading points toward Sojourning, a reminder that even a well-settled center will soon be tested by unfamiliar, temporary ground.

5 Ordered words, fading regret FIFTH LINE

六五：艮其辅，言有序，悔亡。

Still the jaw: words come in proper order, and regret fades.

The fifth line stills the jaw, the source of speech, so that words come out in proper order and old regret fades. This is stillness applied specifically to communication: not silence, but speech that has been settled and considered before it is released, rather than reactive or scattered. The regret named here belongs to an earlier stage — poorly timed words already spoken — and it dissolves once expression itself becomes disciplined. The change to Gradual Advance suggests that careful, well-ordered speech now opens onto steady, patient progress rather than any further setback.

6 Generous stillness at the summit TOP LINE

上九：敦艮，吉。

Generous stillness: good fortune.

The top line names generous stillness, and simple good fortune follows without qualification. This is the completed form of the discipline practiced through every line below it: not a strained or grudging halt but an ample, unforced steadiness that has room for others rather than shutting them out. Having settled from the toes upward, the person at this position can afford real warmth, because nothing further needs defending. When this line changes, the reading turns toward Humility, showing that a stillness this complete naturally makes space for others rather than standing over them.

Read hexagram 52 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/52-keeping-still-mountain



HEXAGRAM 53

Gradual Advance

渐 · Jiàn

Wind over Mountain

Gradual Advance asks whether you are willing to let a goal arrive in its proper stages instead of forcing it before the ground beneath it is ready.

THE JUDGMENT

渐：女归吉，利贞。

Gradual Advance: a woman's marriage brings good fortune, when each stage is allowed its proper order. It is fruitful to stay true.

THE IMAGE

山上有木，渐；君子以居贤德善俗。

A tree grows on the mountain: Gradual Advance. The wise person settles into worthy character and steadily improves the customs around them.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received sequence, Hexagram 53 follows Hexagram 52, Stillness, whose mountain teaches how to stop cleanly. Once a person has learned to stop, the next lesson is how to start again — not in a rush, but in the unhurried, staged manner this hexagram pictures. Movement resumes, but it resumes on a schedule the situation sets, not one impatience sets.

The Chinese name 渐 means to soak in gradually, to advance by degrees, the way water seeps into cloth or a season turns without a single visible

hinge. The character carries no drama in it; it describes progress so steady that no single day looks like the turning point, though the whole distance covered is real. In English translation the hexagram is also rendered as Gradual Progress or Development, and each name points at the same fact: this is advance measured in stages, not leaps.

Wind rests above mountain in this figure — a tree taking root on a slope and growing upward slowly, season after season, rather than springing up overnight. The Judgment ties this pattern to marriage, the clearest example of a bond that only holds when each step of courtship, consent, and settling in has been allowed to happen in its proper order. Skip a stage and the bond is thin no matter how sincere the feeling; complete each stage and what forms is durable.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 53 joins Wind over Mountain. The mountain stays fixed and rooted while wind moves steadily across its slope, neither force overwhelming the other — a picture of motion that takes its pace from something stable underneath it rather than rushing ahead on its own.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, a yin line opens the base, a yin line follows it, then a yang line, a yin line, and two yang lines close the top. The lower trigram Gen, Mountain, is stillness and a firm boundary; the upper trigram Xun, Wind, is gentle, penetrating influence. This line structure — visible in the diagram above — shows steady movement built on a foundation that does not shift, each position a further stage in one continuous advance.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 The young goose at the riverbank BOTTOM LINE

初六：鸿渐于干，小子厉，有言，无咎。

The wild goose advances gradually to the riverbank. The young one is exposed to danger; there is talk about it, but no blame.

The first line pictures the wild goose reaching only the riverbank, the lowest and least secure resting place in its journey. The young or inexperienced party in any new advance is exposed here — there will be talk, doubt, even open criticism — and the text still calls it blameless, because early-stage exposure is not failure, only the natural cost of being at the start. When this line moves, Gradual Advance turns into Hexagram 37, Household, showing that the right response to early doubt is to steady the people closest to you rather than push further out before you are ready.

2 Resting on the flat rock SECOND LINE

六二：鸿渐于磐，饮食衎衎，吉。

The wild goose advances gradually to the flat rock. It eats and drinks in quiet contentment. Good fortune.

By the second line, the goose has reached a broad, stable rock and settles into it with visible contentment — eating, drinking, at ease. This position sits centered within the lower trigram, and its good fortune comes from accepting a genuinely secure stage rather than restlessly pressing on before it has been enjoyed and consolidated. When this line moves, Gradual Advance turns into Hexagram 57, Wind, suggesting that the quiet influence built during this settled stage will keep working gently on the situation even after you move on from it.

3 The plain reached too soon THIRD LINE

九三：鴻漸于陸，夫征不复，妇孕不育，凶，利御寇。

The wild goose advances gradually to the high plain — too quickly for its stage. The husband goes forth and does not return; the wife conceives but does not carry to term. Misfortune. It is fruitful to guard against plunderers.

The third line is the hexagram's sharpest warning: the goose reaches the high plain, a stage meant for later, and the household breaks under the strain — a husband who does not return, a pregnancy that does not carry to term. Advancing out of sequence, even toward a real goal, produces real damage; the only fruitful move left is defensive, guarding what remains rather than pressing further. When this line moves, Gradual Advance turns into Hexagram 20, Observation, showing that the corrective here is to step back and watch the pattern clearly before attempting to advance again.

4 A level branch in the tree FOURTH LINE

六四：鴻漸于木，或得其桷，无咎。

The wild goose advances gradually to the tree. It may find a level branch to rest on. No blame.

At the fourth line, the goose — a ground-and-water bird, ill-suited to trees — nonetheless finds a level branch and rests on it without blame. This is an unglamorous but genuinely adequate stage: not the perch you expected, but stable enough to hold you until the next one opens. When this line moves, Gradual Advance turns into Hexagram 33, Retreat, suggesting that accepting this modest resting place, rather than forcing a better one, is itself the wise withdrawal the moment calls for.

5 The long wait on the ridge FIFTH LINE

九五：鴻漸于陵，婦三岁不孕，終莫之胜，吉。

The wild goose advances gradually to the high ridge. For three years the wife does not conceive, but in the end nothing overcomes her. Good fortune.

The fifth line describes a wait that would discourage most people — three years without the hoped-for outcome — and still ends in good fortune, because nothing in the end overcomes the patience that held the proper order in place. Positioned centrally in the upper trigram, this is the figure's model of mature constancy: the goal was never abandoned, only allowed its true span of time. When this line moves, Gradual Advance turns into Hexagram 52, Stillness, showing that the discipline to stop and wait is precisely what this stage has been asking of you all along.

6 Feathers fit for ceremony TOP LINE

上九：鴻漸于陸，其羽可用为仪，吉。

The wild goose advances gradually into the high cloud paths. Its feathers can be used for ceremony. Good fortune.

The top line completes the journey at the highest, clearest height, where the goose's own feathers — the marks of everything it has become through the whole gradual ascent — are fit to be used in ceremony. Nothing here is claimed suddenly; the honor belongs to a process fully finished, visible now because every earlier stage was actually completed. When this line moves, Gradual Advance turns into Hexagram 39, Hardship, suggesting that even a journey this well finished opens onto new difficulty, and the patience just proven is exactly what the next obstacle will require again.

Read hexagram 53 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/53-development



HEXAGRAM 54

Young Bride

归妹 · Guīmèi

Thunder over Lake

The marrying maiden warns that a bond formed out of its proper order or season rarely holds, and asks you to test form and timing before committing further.

THE JUDGMENT

归妹：征凶，无攸利。

Young Bride: to press forward brings misfortune; no gain lies in continued pursuit.

THE IMAGE

泽上有雷，归妹；君子以永终知敝。

Thunder over the lake: Young Bride. The wise person, looking toward what should last to the end, learns to recognize what will wear thin and fail.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received sequence, Hexagram 54 follows Gradual Advance, the figure of a courtship that builds correctly step by step. Young Bride reverses that patience: it pictures a marriage entered in the wrong order, a younger woman married off under an older sister's arrangement, or a bond formed because circumstance demanded it rather than because the proper season had arrived.

The Chinese name 归妹, romanized without tone marks as *gui mei*, combines 归, to return home — the classical word for a woman's marriage, since she was said to "return" to her true household — with 妹, younger sister. It is also translated as *The Marrying Maiden*, the title this page's own address preserves. Read together, the name points to a union that skips ahead of its rightful place: something is joined before the ceremony, the consent, or the season has fully caught up with it.

The Judgment is unusually blunt for the I Ching: going forward brings misfortune, and no gain lies in continued pursuit. That is not a verdict on marriage itself but on marriage, or any bond, pursued out of impatience, convenience, or borrowed status rather than earned standing. The figure's counsel throughout is to notice when a relationship's form has run ahead of its substance, and to let the slower, correct order catch up before treating the arrangement as settled.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 54 joins Thunder above Lake. Thunder is sudden, assertive movement; Lake is open, yielding exchange. Together they describe a union where the more active party sets the pace and the more yielding party is carried along by it — a picture the classical commentators read directly as a young woman swept into marriage by another's arrangement rather than her own unfolding consent.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, the lower trigram Dui, the Lake, opens with two yang lines and a yielding line above them; the upper trigram Zhen, Thunder, rises with a yang line at its base beneath two yielding lines. This line structure — reading the binary lines from bottom to top — places movement above and openness below, so the diagram shows the upper figure setting the bond in motion while the lower

figure is drawn to follow, exactly the imbalance the hexagram's name and Judgment both warn against.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 A modest role well filled BOTTOM LINE

初九：归妹以娣，跛能履，征吉。

The bride is married off as an attendant to her sister; like someone lame who can still walk, going forward brings good fortune.

The lowest line pictures the bride married off not as the principal wife but as an attendant to her elder sister — a lesser position, yet one that, like someone lame who can still walk, carries her forward well enough when accepted honestly. The teaching is that standing firm in a modest, clearly understood role beats overreaching for a grander one you cannot yet hold. Good fortune comes from staying steady within your actual position rather than resenting its limits. When this line changes, the figure becomes Hexagram 40, Release: accepting a real but modest place is what finally loosens the tension a bigger ambition would have kept wound.

2 Seeing clearly despite limits SECOND LINE

九二：眇能视，利幽人之贞。

Like someone with impaired sight who can still see, it is fruitful for a person living apart from the crowd to hold to what is correct.

The second line likens itself to someone with impaired sight who can still see enough to judge rightly, and it is fruitful for a person set apart from the crowd's noise to hold to what is correct. This line values discernment over full information: you do not need every fact to tell a genuine offer from a hollow one, only honest looking and independence from pressure. It rewards quiet integrity over visible participation in whatever momentum surrounds you. When this line changes, the figure becomes Hexagram 51, Shock: clear-eyed steadiness, held through limited visibility, is what lets a sudden jolt be met with composure.

3 Waiting, then settling for less THIRD LINE

六三：归妹以须，反归以娣。

The bride waits as one still unclaimed, and turns back to be married off only as an attendant after all.

The third line describes a bride left waiting, still unclaimed, who finally turns back and accepts a lesser role as an attendant after all. This line names the cost of impatience mismanaged: rather than holding a dignified wait or actively securing better standing, the position is abandoned to whatever remains once urgency takes over. It is a caution against letting anxious waiting curdle into a rushed, diminished settlement. When this line changes, the figure becomes Hexagram 34, Great Vigor: raw strength returns, but it must now be disciplined by correct form rather than spent on forcing a belated, second-best arrangement into being.

4 **A late marriage has its time** FOURTH LINE

九四：归妹愆期，迟归有时。

The bride's marriage passes its expected date; a late marriage still has its proper time.

The fourth line reframes delay itself: a marriage that passes its expected date is not therefore ruined, because a late union still has its own proper time. This line pushes against the impulse to seize a premature opening rather than wait for a genuine one, insisting that correct timing, even arriving later than hoped, is worth more than an arrangement built on shaky order. Patience here is not resignation; it is trust that the right season has not closed. When this line changes, the figure becomes Hexagram 19, Drawing Near: what waits for its proper time can open into a closer approach than any rushed alternative would allow.

5 **Plain sleeves, real virtue** FIFTH LINE

六五：帝乙归妹，其君之袂，不如其娣之袂良，月几望，吉。

When Emperor Yi married off his younger sister, the princess's own sleeves were plainer than her attendant's; like the moon nearly at its full, this brings good fortune.

The fifth line pictures Emperor Yi marrying off his younger sister with the princess dressed more plainly than her own attendant — restraint chosen over display — and likens the outcome to the moon nearly at its fullest, bringing good fortune. This line locates value in unassuming sincerity rather than outward show: a bond, an offer, or a position earns good standing through genuine substance, not the most impressive presentation available. Modesty held at the point of real authority is itself the strength. When this line changes, the figure becomes Hexagram 58, Lake: restrained, sincere conduct opens naturally into shared joy, the pleasure that follows honesty rather than performance.

6 An empty basket, a bloodless offering TOP LINE

上六：女承筐无实，士刲羊无血，无攸利。

The woman holds up a basket that has nothing in it; the man cuts the sheep and draws no blood — no gain lies in this at all.

The top line is the hexagram's starkest image: a woman holds up a basket with nothing in it, a man cuts the sheep and draws no blood, and the text states flatly that no gain lies in this at all. This line names commitment performed as pure form — the ceremony completed, the substance behind it absent. It is the clearest warning in the figure: once a bond's outward gestures persist after its content has emptied out, no further pursuit restores what was never there. When this line changes, the figure becomes Hexagram 38, Opposition: an emptied bond hardens into open estrangement, the visible falling-apart of what had already failed inwardly.

Read hexagram 54 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/54-the-marrying-maiden



HEXAGRAM 55

Plenty

丰 · Fēng

Thunder over Fire

Hexagram 55 describes a moment of full plenty that carries its own shadow, calling for clear judgment and decisive action before brightness dims.

THE JUDGMENT

丰：亨，王假之，勿忧，宜日中。

Plenty: success. The ruler arrives at this moment fully. Do not be anxious; it suits the brightness of the sun at noon.

THE IMAGE

雷电皆至，丰；君子以折狱致刑。

Thunder and lightning arrive together: Plenty. The wise person settles disputes and carries out judgments with the same combined clarity and resolve.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received sequence, Hexagram 55 follows Marrying Maiden: once a household has found its proper place, the classical commentators note, it naturally grows great. That growth is a season of harvest, recognition, or achievement large enough to gather everyone's attention. The hexagram does not treat plenty as a resting point. It treats it as a test of judgment, because everything that swells this large also casts a longer shadow.

The Chinese name 丰 (Feng) pictures grain heaped high in a vessel — a bountiful, overflowing measure. It is commonly rendered in English as Abundance. The character carries both meanings at once: fullness as a reward and fullness as a weight that must be managed with a level head, the way a bright noon sun still throws a shadow.

Thunder and lightning arrive together in the hexagram's picture, and both are sudden, brief, and consequential. Hexagram 55 asks you to act with that same combination of clarity and decisiveness while conditions are favorable, because a peak this full rarely holds still. The lines below trace what happens to brightness as it is variously screened, restored, and, at the extreme, shut away behind walls of its own making.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 55 joins Thunder over Fire. Fire below gives clarity, illumination, and discernment; Thunder above gives movement, decisiveness, and the shock that turns judgment into action. Together they describe a moment when insight and resolve arrive at once — the classical image for a ruler capable of settling disputes and enforcing verdicts justly, precisely because clear sight and firm motion are both present.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, the lower trigram Li (Fire) forms lines one through three and the upper trigram Zhen (Thunder) forms lines four through six, with a broken line at the second and fifth positions and solid lines everywhere else. Reading the diagram bottom to top traces brightness climbing toward action: clarity forms first, then movement carries it outward, which is why later lines dwell so often on how much of that light actually reaches the world.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 An early, well-matched partner BOTTOM LINE

初九：遇其配主，虽旬无咎，往有尚。

He meets his matching partner. Even through a full ten-day span there is no blame; moving forward earns recognition.

The first line meets this fullness at its very start, before scale has created any distance. A capable counterpart appears — someone whose strengths complement yours closely enough that even a long stretch of working together, a full ten-day cycle, produces no fault. The advice is to move forward together rather than hesitate over a partnership this well suited. When this line changes, the reading turns toward Small Exceeding, where the same energy narrows: success now depends on attending to small, precise details rather than the large plans that felt so natural at the outset.

2 Brightness screened, then restored SECOND LINE

六二：丰其蔀，日中见斗，往得疑疾，有孚发若，吉。

His plenty is screened by matted awning; at noon the Dipper is seen. Advancing meets suspicion and distress, yet sincerity, once it shines through, brings good fortune.

At the second line, this fullness has been partly screened, as if matted awning were dimming noon into something closer to starlight. Moving forward under these conditions invites suspicion, and it would be easy to read the dimness as failure. But the line insists that sincerity, offered honestly and long enough to be recognized, breaks through the screen and brings good fortune. The lesson is patience with a trust that has been clouded rather than broken. This line's change leads to Great Vigor, where restored clarity meets real strength — power that must still be used carefully rather than simply flexed.

3 A costly loss, no blame THIRD LINE

九三：丰其沛，日中见沬，折其右肱，无咎。

His plenty is curtailed by heavy drapery; at noon faint stars are seen. He breaks his right arm: no blame.

The third line describes a heavier screen — thick drapery rather than a light awning — and a real cost: a broken right arm, the very limb most people rely on to act. Even so, the line records no blame, because the loss was not caused by carelessness but by circumstances too obscured to navigate cleanly. If a plan or partnership at its peak now costs you real capacity, this line counsels against self-recrimination; assess what remains usable and adapt. Changing here leads to Shock, where sudden disruption is met not with panic but with composure that steadies everyone around you.

4 An equal, not a superior FOURTH LINE

九四：丰其蔀，日中见斗，遇其夷主，吉。

His plenty is screened by matted awning; at noon the Dipper is seen. He meets an equal partner: good fortune.

The fourth line repeats the screened brightness of the second, but the resolution differs: here the encounter is with an equal partner rather than a distant authority, and the line calls this meeting good fortune outright. Plenty grows soundest when it is shared between peers who can see each other clearly, not concentrated under one person casting a shadow over everyone else. If plenty has made you harder to approach, look for the colleague or ally who can meet you on level ground. Changing here leads to Dimmed Light, a caution that visible brilliance can attract exactly the resentment or interference that makes discretion the wiser near-term posture.

5 Inviting brilliance in FIFTH LINE

六五：来章，有庆誉，吉。

He brings in brilliance; blessing and praise follow: good fortune.

The fifth line is this hexagram's clearest good fortune: bringing brightness inward, welcoming talent, insight, or help from outside rather than trying to generate everything alone, produces blessing and genuine praise. This is the ruler's seat, and the line's counsel for anyone in a position of real influence is to actively invite capable people closer rather than let success narrow into self-reliance. Changing here leads to Radical Change, the hexagram of deliberate reform: once new brilliance has entered, the structure around it may need to be reshaped to hold what it has gained.

6 A grand house, empty inside TOP LINE

上六：丰其屋，蔀其家，窥其户，阒其无人，三岁不覿，凶。

He enlarges his house until it screens his own household. Peering through the door, he finds it silent and empty; for three years no one is seen: misfortune.

The top line is this hexagram's sharpest warning: a house built so large that it screens its own household, so that peering through the door finds only silence, and three years pass with no one seen. This is plenty turned entirely inward, mistaking scale and appearance for substance while the people the achievement was meant to serve have quietly drifted away. If success has left you more impressive and more alone, this line asks you to notice before the isolation becomes permanent. Changing here leads to Fire, where clarity must be rebuilt from attentive, deliberate illumination rather than borrowed size.

Read hexagram 55 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/55-abundance



HEXAGRAM 56

Sojourning

旅 · Lǚ

Fire over Mountain

Sojourning describes a traveler with no fixed base: modest conduct, tact, and staying true earn only a small, provisional success until you find firm ground again.

THE JUDGMENT

旅：小亨，旅贞吉。

Sojourning: modest success. Staying true while traveling brings good fortune.

THE IMAGE

山上有火，旅；君子以明慎用刑，而不留狱。

Fire rests on the mountain: Sojourning. Seeing this, the wise person applies judgment with clarity and caution, and lets no case linger unresolved.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

Hexagram 56 sits near the close of the received sequence, right after Hexagram 55, Plenty. The classical order reads this as cause and effect: a season of abundance and full display cannot last forever, and whoever exhausts a home, a position, or a store of goodwill eventually finds themselves without a fixed place to stand — a traveler with no home base. The name 旅 means a traveler, a lodger, someone away from their own household and dependent on the hospitality of strangers.

In some editions the hexagram is also translated as The Wanderer, and both names point at the same condition: no rank, no established base, and only the standing that your own conduct earns moment to moment. The judgment promises small success, not large success, because a guest's position is never as secure as a host's. Staying correct is what makes even that small success possible; a traveler who is greedy, careless, or arrogant among strangers loses the goodwill that a stranger cannot survive without.

Read as a whole, Sojourning asks what you rely on when the usual supports — home, title, long-standing relationships — are not available. The answer the hexagram gives is tact, restraint, and clear judgment: qualities that travel with you no matter where you land, unlike possessions or status that depend on a fixed place.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 56 joins Fire over Mountain. The mountain is still and rooted, staying exactly where it is; fire, resting on its slope, does not root itself the way it would around a hearth's fuel — it moves along the ridge, catching one patch of brush and then the next, never settling on any single spot for long. That image of a bright, restless light passing over an unmoving base is the hexagram's picture of the traveler: visible, even admired, but never actually at home.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, two yielding yin lines open the figure and one firm yang line closes it below the middle, then the pattern shifts again as the upper trigram completes it. The lower trigram Gen, the Mountain, gives stillness and a clear stopping point; the upper trigram Li, Fire, gives brightness and attachment without permanence. Read together in the diagram, a traveler's whole situation appears:

solid ground beneath the journey, but a light on top that must keep moving to keep burning.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Petty conduct invites trouble BOTTOM LINE

初六：旅琐琐，斯其所取灾。

Sojourning, petty and small-minded. This is exactly what invites misfortune.

The first line pictures a traveler behaving in a small, petty, small-minded way — hoarding trivial advantages, haggling over scraps, treating strangers with suspicion instead of courtesy. This line sits at the very bottom of the figure, the least secure position a traveler can occupy, and it warns that misfortune here is not bad luck but a direct consequence of the traveler's own narrow conduct. A guest who acts small is treated accordingly. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 30 — Fire, showing that petty caution, if corrected, can still kindle into a genuine, sustained brightness once it finds something worth attaching to.

2 Provisions and a loyal ally SECOND LINE

六二：旅即次，怀其资，得童仆，贞。

Sojourning, reaching a lodging. Carrying enough provisions, gaining a loyal attendant. Staying true.

The second line shows a far steadier picture: the traveler reaches a proper lodging, carries enough resources to be self-sufficient, and gains a loyal attendant who can be trusted. Centered within the lower trigram, this line describes preparation meeting circumstance well — the traveler has not presumed on anyone's charity, and the goodwill earned is therefore real rather than borrowed. This is the hexagram's model of sojourning done correctly. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 50 — The Cauldron, showing that steady provisioning and a dependable companion are exactly what allow patient, transformative work to begin.

3 The lodging burns down THIRD LINE

九三：旅焚其次，丧其童仆，贞厉。

Sojourning, the lodging burns down. Losing the loyal attendant. Even staying true, there is danger.

The third line reverses the second line's security: the shelter burns, the loyal attendant is lost, and even staying true to one's principles cannot prevent real danger. Positioned at the top of the lower trigram and pressing forward too aggressively, this line describes a traveler who oversteps — asserting authority a guest does not have, or forcing a pace the situation cannot support — and loses the very footing that made the journey viable. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 35 — Advance, showing that after this loss, the only way forward is deliberate, visible progress rebuilt in full view rather than another private overreach.

4 Provisioned, yet uneasy FOURTH LINE

九四：旅于处，得其资斧，我心不快。

Sojourning, finding a place to stay. Gaining provisions and a hatchet, yet my heart is not at ease.

The fourth line finds a place to stay and gains both resources and a useful tool, yet the heart remains unsettled. This line sits just past the boundary between the two trigrams, materially adequate but not truly at rest, and it names a condition many travelers know well: the practical needs are met, but belonging has not yet arrived, and pretending otherwise would be dishonest. The discomfort itself is accurate information, not a flaw to suppress. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 52 — Stillness, showing that the answer to this unease is not more acquiring but a deliberate pause to let the ground settle beneath you.

5 A costly effort, honored FIFTH LINE

六五：射雉，一矢亡，终以誉命。

Shooting a pheasant, one arrow lost. In the end this brings honor and recognition.

The fifth line shows the traveler shooting at a pheasant and losing the arrow, yet ultimately winning honor and recognition. Seated in the place of authority within the upper trigram, this line describes skillful, well-aimed effort that costs something in the moment — a resource spent, a risk taken — but demonstrates real competence to onlookers who did not yet know what the traveler could do. Partial material loss and eventual standing are not contradictions here; they are the same event seen at two different times. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 33 — Retreat, showing that once recognition is secured, a timely, composed withdrawal protects what has just been earned.

6 Laughter turns to loss TOP LINE

上九：鸟焚其巢，旅人先笑后号咷，丧牛于易，凶。

The bird's nest burns. The traveler first laughs, then wails and weeps.
Losing the ox at the border. Misfortune.

The top line shows the traveler's nest burning, laughter turning to wailing, and an ox lost right at the border — the sharpest warning in the figure. Positioned at the very peak, past the point of caution, this line describes someone who mistakes an early success for permanent security, celebrates too soon, and then loses something valuable at the exact threshold where care was most needed. Misfortune follows because a traveler at the extreme of the journey has the least margin left for error. When this line changes, the reading points toward Hexagram 62 — Small Exceeding, showing that only close attention to small details can recover ground after so steep a loss.

Read hexagram 56 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/56-the-wanderer



HEXAGRAM 57

Wind

巽 · Xùn

Wind over Wind

Wind asks whether an intention can spread the way moving air does — gently, repeatedly, entering every gap — instead of forcing itself through by a single loud command.

THE JUDGMENT

巽：小亨，利有攸往，利见大人。

Wind: modest success. It is fruitful to have somewhere to go. It is fruitful to see the great person.

THE IMAGE

随风，巽；君子以申命行事。

Wind follows wind: this is Wind. The wise person repeats the instruction and carries it into action.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received sequence, Hexagram 57 follows Hexagram 56, the Wanderer, whose traveler has arrived somewhere new with nothing yet established. Once a person has landed, the next need is influence that actually takes hold in unfamiliar ground — not a decree issued once, but a presence that keeps entering, gently and repeatedly, until it is absorbed.

The Chinese name 巽 names both the trigram Wind and the disposition of gentle penetration: yielding, compliant, able to slip through what re-

sists a direct push. In some editions the hexagram is also translated as the Gentle or Penetrating. Wind carries nothing by force; it works by repetition and by finding the smallest opening, which is exactly the discipline this hexagram teaches for command, persuasion, and any instruction meant to actually change behavior rather than simply be issued.

Wind rests above wind in this figure — two identical gentle forces doubled, so the same quality of address happens twice, layer upon layer, the way a policy has to be explained more than once before it is truly followed. The Judgment allows only modest success and calls for a clear direction and a person worth following, because gentleness without a defined aim scatters instead of accomplishing anything.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 57 joins Wind over Wind. Two identical trigrams of gentle, penetrating movement are stacked directly on each other, so the same quality repeats at both levels — a picture of influence that works precisely because it does not stop after a single pass.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, a yin line opens the base, two yang lines follow, then a second yin line, and two more yang lines close the top. Each trigram places a single yielding yin line beneath a pair of firm yang lines — softness that enters first and strength that follows through it. Read together, the diagram shows how a gentle opening, repeated at two levels, is what lets an instruction actually take hold rather than merely being spoken.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Hesitating at the threshold BOTTOM LINE

初六：进退利武人之贞。

Advancing and retreating: it is fruitful to hold the steadiness of a soldier.

The first line pictures a hesitation between advancing and retreating, the natural uncertainty of someone just beginning to test how much influence they actually have. The text's advice is to hold the steadiness of a soldier: not recklessness, but a disciplined readiness that neither rushes forward nor collapses into retreat before the situation has declared itself. When this line moves, Wind turns into Hexagram 9, Small Accumulation, showing that this early hesitation is meant to be resolved by gathering small, real gains rather than by forcing a decision before you have enough to act on.

2 Thorough attention under the bed SECOND LINE

九二：巽在床下，用史巫纷若，吉，无咎。

Gentleness reaches under the bed. Using diviners and priests in great number brings good fortune and no blame.

The second line reaches gentleness into the most hidden, overlooked place — under the bed — and pairs it with the elaborate thoroughness of diviners and priests consulted in number. Nothing here is left unexamined; the very excess of care, which might look like anxiety, instead produces good fortune because it is calm, centered attention rather than nervous repetition. When this line moves, Wind turns into Hexagram 53, Gradual Advance, confirming that this thorough, unhurried attentiveness is exactly the discipline that lets a goal arrive in its proper stages.

3 Repetition born of anxiety THIRD LINE

九三：頻巽，吝。

Repeated, anxious gentleness: regret.

The third line names the failure mode of gentleness: repeating an instruction or an appeal so often, and so visibly worried each time, that the anxiety itself becomes the message people receive. What should build trust through consistency instead erodes it through obvious unease, and the line calls this plainly a source of regret. When this line moves, Wind turns into Hexagram 59, Scattering, warning that anxious, over-repeated gentleness does not hold a situation together — it disperses whatever cohesion had been gathered, and a calmer approach is needed to gather it again.

4 The hunt rewards patience FOURTH LINE

六四：悔亡，田获三品。

Regret fades. On the hunt, three grades of game are taken.

The fourth line lets earlier regret fade and shows a concrete return for patient effort: on the hunt, three grades of game are taken, a full and varied harvest rather than a single lucky catch. This is the figure's clearest picture of gentle, repeated effort finally paying off in something visible and useful. When this line moves, Wind turns into Hexagram 44, Encounter, suggesting that this harvest brings you into contact with people or circumstances you did not deliberately seek, and meeting them well matters as much as the gain itself.

5 A weak start, a strong finish FIFTH LINE

九五：贞吉，悔亡，无不利，无初有终。先庚三日，后庚三日，吉。

Staying true brings good fortune; regret fades; nothing is without benefit. There is no good beginning, but there is a good end. Three days before the turning point and three days after it: good fortune.

The fifth line is this hexagram's fullest good fortune: staying true, regret fading, nothing without benefit, though there is no strong beginning — only a strong end, achieved by preparing three days before the turning point and reinforcing three days after it. Change that is announced, allowed to settle, and then confirmed succeeds where change that is simply declared once does not. When this line moves, Wind turns into Hexagram 18, Corruption, showing that even a well-managed transition uncovers old neglect that now needs honest repair.

6 Gentleness past its limit TOP LINE

上九：巽在床下，丧其资斧，贞凶。

Gentleness reaches under the bed; its resources and its resolve are lost. Persisting brings misfortune.

The top line repeats the second line's image — gentleness reaching under the bed — but here it has gone too far: resources and resolve are lost, and persisting brings misfortune. Deference carried past the point of usefulness stops being a strategy and becomes depletion; there is nothing left to give and no firm ground left to stand on. When this line moves, Wind turns into Hexagram 48, Village Well, suggesting that the remedy is to return to a shared, dependable source and replenish what has been spent, rather than continuing to bend.

Read hexagram 57 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/57-the-gentle-wind



HEXAGRAM 58

Lake

兑 · Dui

Lake over Lake

Hexagram 58 shows joy that spreads outward like two lakes feeding each other: lasting pleasure comes from sincerity and mutual exchange, not from chasing approval or flattering what pleases you.

THE JUDGMENT

兑：亨，利贞。

Lake: success. It is fruitful to stay true.

THE IMAGE

丽泽，兑；君子以朋友讲习。

Two lakes joined together, each feeding the other without draining it: Lake. The wise person gathers friends to talk through what has been learned and to practice it together.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received King Wen sequence, Hexagram 58 follows Hexagram 57, Wind, and closes one of the paired figures that lead toward the book's final measures: where gentle penetration works by entering unseen, open joy works by showing itself and inviting a response.

The Chinese name 兑 pictures an opening mouth and gives its name to the trigram of the lake, of speech, and of shared pleasure; it is also translated as The Joyous, Joy, or Delight, and each rendering points to the

same fact — feeling that is real wants to move outward and meet another feeling halfway. Two lakes side by side, each replenishing the other, is the hexagram's own image for that exchange.

The judgment's warning is not against pleasure itself but against joy that has nowhere sincere to land. A gathering, a courtship, or a piece of good news can be genuine or merely performed, and Hexagram 58 asks you to notice which one you are looking at before you join in.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 58 joins Lake over Lake. A single trigram doubled has no upper voice correcting a lower one; instead, one open surface answers another, and whatever quality fills the lower lake is amplified, not balanced, by the lake above it. The figure describes joy meeting joy, for better or worse, depending on what each side is bringing to the exchange.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, a yang line sits at the base of each trigram with a second yang line above it, and a single yin line opens each trigram at the top. That yin line at positions three and six is the trigram's soft, outward-facing surface — the visible smile — resting on a firm, sincere interior of paired yang lines beneath it.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Joy with no agenda BOTTOM LINE

初九：和兑，吉。

Joy in harmony: good fortune.

The first line describes joy that asks nothing of anyone: harmonious, self-contained, unconnected yet to any particular person or outcome. This is the steadiest form the hexagram offers, because nothing is being extracted from another person to sustain it. Notice good feeling that arises simply from being where you are, doing honest work, without needing an audience or a partner to complete it. That kind of contentment is worth protecting rather than immediately spending on the first person who shows interest. When this line changes, the reading turns toward Hexagram 47, Adversity — a reminder that joy untested by hardship has not yet proven how durable it really is.

2 Sincerity outlasts doubt SECOND LINE

九二：孚兑，吉，悔亡。

Joy held in sincerity: good fortune, and regret fades.

At the second line, joy is held with sincerity even though the position is not textbook-correct, and the classical text still calls this good fortune with regret fading. What matters more than perfect circumstance is whether your intentions toward the other person or the situation are honest ones. If you have been second-guessing a friendship or a commitment because it does not look ideal on paper, this line suggests the sincerity underneath it may matter more than the imperfection on the surface. The change leads to Hexagram 17, Following — trust that has proven itself can be safely given more room to guide your next steps.

3 Chased joy turns hollow THIRD LINE

六三：来兑，凶。

Joy that comes seeking you out: misfortune.

The third line is the hexagram's clearest warning: joy that comes seeking you out, rather than joy you meet on equal footing, is called misfortune. This is the person, offer, or feeling that arrives specifically because you are known to be easy to please, and accepting it uncritically hands your judgment over to whoever is doing the pursuing. Ask what the pursuit is actually offering beyond the flattery of being pursued. When this line changes, the situation moves toward Hexagram 43, Breakthrough — a moment for a clean, decisive break from whatever has been courting your approval instead of your judgment.

4 Weighing where joy belongs FOURTH LINE

九四：商兑未宁，介疾有喜。

Weighing where joy truly lies brings no rest; guarding against the flaw brings gladness.

The fourth line sits between the sincere joy below and the eroding trust above, and it is restless for good reason: it is actively weighing where its loyalty truly belongs. That unease is not a flaw to fix quickly; it is the discipline of refusing an easy answer before you have tested it. Guarding against the flaw — the tempting but unsound option — is what earns the gladness the line promises. When this line changes, it points to Hexagram 60, Restraint, suggesting that a clear limit, not more deliberation, is what finally settles the question.

5 Trust placed in decline FIFTH LINE

九五：孚于剝，有厉。

Trusting what is already eroding: danger.

The fifth line carries real authority and real danger together: trust extended toward something that is already eroding. This can be a relationship, an agreement, or a source of pleasure that once deserved your confidence but has quietly begun to weaken, while you continue treating it as sound. Strength of position does not protect you from this; it can make the erosion easier to overlook. The honest response is to look plainly at what is declining rather than defend it by habit. When this line changes, it leads to Hexagram 54, Young Bride — a caution about entering a mismatched arrangement with open eyes rather than blind hope.

6 Joy drawn to its edge TOP LINE

上六：引兑。

Joy drawn onward.

The top line shows joy drawn onward past its natural stopping point — pleasure extended and extended again because stopping feels like a loss. Nothing in the classical text calls this outright misfortune, but the image carries its own quiet caution: enjoyment that keeps being pulled further has left the question of sincerity behind. Consider whether you are continuing something because it still nourishes you or simply because momentum makes stopping feel awkward. When this line changes, it becomes Hexagram 10, Treading — carefully placing each step matters more now than the momentum that got you here.

Read hexagram 58 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/58-the-joyous-lake



HEXAGRAM 59

Scattering

涣 · Huàn

Wind over Water

Scattering describes breaking up a frozen or divided condition — dispersing the ice around a stuck situation so trust and movement can flow again.

THE JUDGMENT

涣：亨，王假有庙，利涉大川，利贞。

Scattering: success. The king approaches his ancestral temple. It is fruitful to cross the great river. It is fruitful to stay true.

THE IMAGE

风行水上，涣；先王以享于帝立庙。

Wind moves over water: Scattering. The ancient kings made offerings to the Highest and established the ancestral temple.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received sequence, Hexagram 59 follows Dui, Joy, and precedes Jié, Restraint — after satisfaction can turn people inward and complacent, something has to break the crust before it hardens into permanent division.

The Chinese name 涣 (huàn) means to scatter, disperse, or melt away, the way ice breaks apart on a river in early spring. Some editions translate the hexagram as Dispersion or Dissolution. The image is not chaos; it is

release. A blockage — frozen feeling, a splintered group, hoarded resources, an unspoken grievance — has kept people apart from what they need. Scattering names the moment that blockage gives way, whether through a decisive gesture, an honest word, or simply time and warmth doing their patient work.

The hexagram also insists that dispersal needs a center. Ice does not melt into nothing; it becomes water that can be gathered, channeled, and used. Wind over water blows the surface into motion, but a river still has banks. Read together with the classical image of the ancient kings offering sacrifice at the temple, Hexagram 59 suggests that scattering people or resources without a unifying point — a shared purpose, a trusted figure, a common ritual — turns dispersal into loss rather than renewal.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 59 joins Wind above Water. Water pools, freezes, and resists; Wind moves without obstruction and carries warmth or motion into whatever it touches. Their meeting describes exactly how a stuck condition breaks apart: not by force applied to the block itself, but by something lighter moving steadily over and through it until the surface gives way.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, one yang line rises through yin, another yin sits above it, then two yang lines climb through the center, closing in a final yang line beneath a yielding top. The lower trigram Kǎn, Water, holds danger and depth; the upper trigram Xùn, Wind, is gentle penetration. Danger below and gentle movement above is the shape of a difficult situation that responds not to confrontation but to patient, permeating effort.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Rescue at the first sign BOTTOM LINE

初六：用拯马壮，吉。

Using a strong horse to give rescue: good fortune.

The first line arrives right as a division is beginning, before it has hardened into habit. A strong horse — decisive, capable help, or your own prompt effort — can still turn things around cheaply here. Waiting costs more the longer a rift sits untreated. Move early, while the scattering is only starting and a small, well-timed intervention is enough. Ask who or what can carry you or the relationship past this first crack before it widens. When this line changes, it points toward Hexagram 61, Heartfelt Trust: quick rescue at the outset is what makes real, sincere trust possible later.

2 Running toward shelter SECOND LINE

九二：涣奔其机，悔亡。

In the scattering, hurrying to a resting post: regret fades.

The second line describes fleeing the open danger of Water toward something that can hold you — a resting post, a steady person, a familiar practice. This is not retreat in defeat; it is the sensible move of finding footing in the middle of dispersal so regret has no chance to take root. You do not have to solve everything from open water. Find the nearest stable place, gather yourself there, and let the larger scattering continue around you without panic. The change to Hexagram 20, Observation, suggests that once you reach solid footing, the next task is simply to watch clearly before you act again.

3 Letting go of self-interest THIRD LINE

六三：涣其躬，无悔。

Scattering what concerns only oneself: no regret.

The third line asks you to scatter what concerns only yourself — private comfort, personal credit, a narrow stake — for the sake of something larger. Because the concern being released is purely your own, there is no one to blame and nothing to regret in giving it up. This is the line of quiet sacrifice: stepping back from what you could rightfully claim so the group, the relationship, or the larger purpose can move forward unobstructed. The change to Hexagram 57, Wind, shows that a willingness to disperse self-interest is exactly what lets gentle, penetrating influence take hold afterward.

4 Dissolving the faction FOURTH LINE

六四：涣其群，元吉。涣有丘，匪夷所思。

Scattering the clique: great good fortune. The scattering gathers into a hill — a result beyond ordinary reckoning.

The fourth line brings great good fortune for breaking up a clique — even one you belong to — in favor of the whole. What scatters here does not vanish; it gathers into a hill, a result beyond ordinary reckoning, because loyalty to the larger whole outperforms loyalty to a narrow in-group every time it is tested. This is not betrayal; it is choosing the coalition that actually serves everyone over the comfortable clique that serves a few. The change to Hexagram 6, Dispute, warns that dissolving a faction can provoke real friction from those who preferred the old boundaries, so proceed with clear, defensible intent.

5 The king's own hoard FIFTH LINE

九五：涣汗其大号，涣王居，无咎。

Scattering like sweat with a great proclamation; scattering the king's own hoard: no blame.

The fifth line shows scattering coming from the top with full authority: a great proclamation moves like sweat spreading through the body, and the king disperses his own stores rather than hoarding them. No blame falls on generosity exercised from genuine position. If you hold real authority here — as a leader, an elder, the person others look to — the most unifying act available to you is visible, voluntary release of something you could have kept. The change to Hexagram 4, Inexperience, suggests that after such an act, patient teaching and honest guidance of those still finding their footing becomes the next real work.

6 Scattering the blood, withdrawing far TOP LINE

上九：涣其血去，遯出，无咎。

Scattering the blood, letting it go, withdrawing far off: no blame.

The top line describes the last and most costly form of scattering: letting go of blood ties, old injuries, or a conflict that has drawn real harm, and withdrawing far enough that it cannot reignite. No blame attaches to this distance once the dispersal is complete; the danger has been fully released rather than merely postponed. This line asks whether you have actually let something go or only stepped a few paces back from it. The change to Hexagram 29, Water, reminds you that the original danger this whole hexagram has been dispersing does not disappear from the world — only from your immediate entanglement with it.

Read hexagram 59 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/59-dispersion



HEXAGRAM 60

Restraint

节 · Jié

Water over Lake

Restraint describes success that depends on a measured limit: a boundary held with proportion protects a resource, while a boundary held too hard turns bitter.

THE JUDGMENT

节：亨，苦节不可贞。

Restraint: success. A bitter restraint cannot be sustained.

THE IMAGE

泽上有水，节；君子以制数度，议德行。

Water rests above the lake: Restraint. The wise person sets clear measures and standards, and weighs conduct and character against them.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received sequence, Hexagram 60 follows Scattering (Huàn), the figure of what has scattered and spread thin. Once something has spread outward without check, the next need is a boundary that can hold it together again. Restraint answers that need: it is the figure of the dam, the joint, the measure, and the season, all of which succeed by marking where one thing ends and another begins.

The Chinese name 节 originally named a bamboo joint, the hard ring that divides one hollow segment from the next and gives the whole stalk its

strength. From that image the word extended to mean a limit, a measured allowance, a festival marking the turn of a season, and moral integrity held under pressure. The hexagram is also translated in places as Limitation or Moderation. None of these English words fully carries the bamboo image, but all point at the same fact: a structure gains strength from its joints, not from being one undivided length.

Read as guidance, Hexagram 60 does not simply recommend saying no. The judgment itself warns that a restraint held too bitterly cannot be sustained. The figure asks for a limit set at the right size for what it contains — spending measured against income, speech measured against occasion, ambition measured against season — so that the joint holds the stalk together instead of snapping it.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 60 joins Water above Lake. A lake is itself a bounded body of water, held within a shore; when a river of water pours down into that basin from above, the shore must be firm enough to gather what arrives without either running dry or overflowing. The pairing describes containment as an active relationship between an incoming supply and a fixed edge, not containment as mere absence of movement.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, two yang lines form the base, one yin line sits at the third position, one yin line follows at the fourth, a yang line holds the fifth position, and one yin line closes the top. The lower trigram Duì, the Lake, is open and joyous within its banks; the upper trigram Kǎn, Water, is danger and depth pressing from above. Read together, the diagram shows firmness low, softness gathering in the middle, and a single strong line ruling the fifth position — the picture of a measure kept by a steady center rather than by blunt force at every point.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Staying inside the inner door BOTTOM LINE

初九：不出户庭，无咎。

Not going out beyond the inner door and courtyard: no blame.

At the very base of the figure, the situation is still forming, and the wisest move is to remain close to home, quiet and unseen, rather than push outward before the moment is ready. The classical commentary reads this line as a capable presence guarding against a weakness not yet declared, holding back so abundance can accumulate before it is spent. There is no failure in this stillness; restraint at the start of a matter is prudence, not timidity, and it costs nothing to wait one stage longer. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 29, Water: the same watchfulness must continue against a genuinely deep and repeated danger.

2 Staying in past the moment SECOND LINE

九二：不出门庭，凶。

Not going out beyond the outer gate and courtyard: misfortune.

One stage further out, the posture that was wise at the inner door becomes a misfortune at the outer gate. The moment for preparation has passed, and engagement is now needed, yet this line still refuses to step beyond the courtyard. The classical text reads it as a strong line out of place, capable of movement but choosing closure instead of connection, holding a restraint whose usefulness already expired. A limit is not a virtue by itself; it must answer the moment it is applied to. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 3, Sprouting: a difficult beginning that needs decisive, well-supported action.

3 Regret at a restraint not kept THIRD LINE

六三：不节若则嗟若，无咎。

Failing to restrain oneself brings sighing and regret; no blame follows once the fault is felt.

At the third line, the figure shows what happens when limits have not been kept at all: two firm lines below have already accumulated more than this weaker position can hold, and the failure to set an earlier boundary now produces open sighing and regret. This is not restraint applied wrongly but restraint absent altogether, and the resulting distress, however uncomfortable, is at least honest — it registers that something has gone too far. Because the regret is genuine, the classical reading finds no blame in it. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 5, Patience: the discomfort of an unmet limit gives way to waiting for the right moment.

4 A boundary kept without strain FOURTH LINE

六四：安节，亨。

Restraint held at ease: success.

The fourth line describes restraint at its most sustainable: a yielding line correctly placed, supporting the strong ruler above it and matching its limit to its own real capacity, so the boundary feels less like a fence and more like a settled agreement. There is no tension between what is required and what is possible, and the classical text credits exactly this fit between firmness and softness with the line's success. This is what the earlier lines were reaching toward without yet finding it. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 58, Lake: the ease of a well-kept boundary opens naturally into shared, joyous exchange.

5 A restraint held sweetly FIFTH LINE

九五：甘节，吉，往有尚。

A sweet restraint: good fortune. Moving forward brings esteem.

At the center of the upper trigram, the strong, correctly placed fifth line sets its own limit not by decree from outside but from settled inner strength, and the classical commentary calls this a restraint that suits reason and matches genuine feeling — a measure others find agreeable rather than imposed. Because the standard is sound and freely accepted, moving forward from this position earns real esteem rather than resistance. This is authority used well: a rule people want to keep because it was set with their good in view. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 19, Drawing Near: sound strength extends into active, encouraging oversight of what lies below.

6 A restraint gripped too hard TOP LINE

上六：苦节，贞凶，悔亡。

A bitter restraint: persisting in it brings misfortune, yet regret fades.

At the very top, restraint has hardened past usefulness. The classical commentary reads this line as one who judges the fifth line's measure still insufficient and tightens it further, to a degree ordinary feeling cannot bear; even without excess to correct, the severity itself becomes the fault, working against the very people it was meant to protect. Persisting in such bitterness invites misfortune, yet the text allows that regret fades, because a person who erred toward too much strictness, rather than indulgence, carries no real shame. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 61, Heartfelt Trust: a rigid limit gives way to a bond held by genuine sincerity.

Read hexagram 60 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/60-limitation



HEXAGRAM 61

Heartfelt Trust

中孚 · Zhōngfú

Wind over Lake

Heartfelt Trust describes a sincerity so genuine it can move even the simplest creatures, asking you to prove conviction through patient, consistent contact rather than persuasion.

THE JUDGMENT

中孚：豚鱼吉，利涉大川，利贞。

Heartfelt Trust: even pigs and fish respond — good fortune. It is fruitful to cross the great river. It is fruitful to stay true.

THE IMAGE

泽上有风，中孚；君子以议狱缓死。

Wind moves over the lake: Heartfelt Trust. The wise person reviews judgments with care and delays a sentence of death.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received King Wen sequence, Hexagram 61 follows Hexagram 60, Restraint. The traditional Sequence explains this pairing directly: once limits are genuinely accepted rather than merely obeyed, trust naturally follows — Heartfelt Trust completes what Restraint begins.

The Chinese name 中孚 joins 中, the center or inward place, with 孚, a character built around a hand held over an egg — the patient warmth of incubation, the sincerity that hatches trust rather than announcing it. In

some renderings the hexagram is also translated as Inner Truth, a name pointing to the same quality: conviction so genuine it needs no performance. This hexagram measures sincerity by its effect rather than its volume — the Judgment claims that even pigs and fish, creatures with no reason to be persuaded by rhetoric, respond to it.

That claim sets the standard for everything else in the figure. If trust can move creatures incapable of being talked into anything, it can only be built through conduct that stays the same whether or not anyone is watching. The hexagram then extends that grounded conviction toward real risk, picturing a great river worth crossing once sincerity has actually been earned.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 61 joins Wind above Lake below. Wind, gentle and penetrating, moves without forcing; Lake, open and glad, receives without resistance. Together they picture an influence that travels quietly into a space already willing to hold it — trust that persuades through steady presence rather than pressure.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, two solid yang lines form the base, two yielding yin lines sit at the center, and two more yang lines close the top. Firm conviction anchors both the floor and the ceiling of the figure, while a soft, hollow center holds the actual space of trust — open enough that sincerity is not clouded by rigid certainty, solid enough at each end that the trust it carries is not weightless.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Watchful stillness below BOTTOM LINE

初九：虞吉，有他不燕。

Vigilance brings good fortune; turning toward another brings no rest.

The first line sits at the base of the figure, not yet in open contact with anything above. Vigilance brings good fortune here: staying close to what is genuinely near, rather than reaching toward a more distant, unproven connection, keeps trust simple and intact. The line warns that looking elsewhere for a different kind of assurance brings no real rest, because sincerity cannot be split between two objects at once. Settle first into the bond already within reach before testing wider claims. When this line changes, Hexagram 59 — Scattering follows, showing how unfocused attention can dissolve trust that was never fully gathered.

2 A genuine call answered SECOND LINE

九二：鸣鹤在阴，其子和之，我有好爵，吾与尔靡之。

A crane calls in the shade; its young answers it. I have a fine cup; let us share it together.

The second line pictures a crane calling from the shade, answered at once by its young — trust so genuine it does not need to be seen in order to work. The line adds an image of shared pleasure: a fine cup enjoyed together, not hoarded. Sincerity here is generous; it draws others toward the same trust rather than keeping the good only for oneself. Extend what you have earned instead of guarding it, and let a doubtful neighbor be invited in rather than left out. Changing here leads to Hexagram 42 — Increase, where this generosity returns to you multiplied.

3 Unsteady between drumming and song THIRD LINE

六三：得敌，或鼓或罢，或泣或歌。

Meeting a rival: now advancing, now stopping; now weeping, now singing.

The third line describes an unsettled heart: now advancing like a drum, now re-treating; now weeping, now singing. Seeing a near equal as a rival rather than a companion, this position swings between assertion and despair because its trust has no fixed center yet. The lesson is not to condemn the instability but to recognize it as the ordinary turbulence of sincerity still forming, not yet anchored by the steadier lines around it. Let the mood pass without mistaking it for the whole truth. Changing here leads to Hexagram 9 — Small Accumulation, where patient, modest restraint gathers what scattered feeling could not.

4 Letting go of the old pair FOURTH LINE

六四：月几望，马匹亡，无咎。

The moon nearly full; the paired horse is lost: no blame.

The fourth line receives the sincerity of the line above it and yields to it completely, like the moon nearly full, brightening because it faithfully reflects a stronger light. To do this cleanly, it must release the horse that once matched it — an old alliance or rivalry that no longer serves the larger trust now forming. Giving up that familiar pairing looks like a loss, yet the line insists there is no blame in it. What matters is the willingness to belong fully to the more essential bond. This change leads to Hexagram 10 — Treading, which asks for careful, respectful conduct on ground that is no longer familiar.

5 Trust that binds firmly FIFTH LINE

九五：有孚挛如，无咎。

Sincerity binds firmly together: no blame.

At this fifth line dynamic, a strong and central presence holds those below firmly together, the way sincerity binds people who might otherwise drift apart under pressure. This is the harder kind of trust to build: it is comparatively easy to draw those already inclined to agree, but binding those who differ, or who sit above easy reach, tests conviction fully. No blame comes to steady effort here, even when full agreement is not achieved. The line counsels patience with what resists connection rather than force. Changing here leads to Hexagram 41 — Decrease, where giving something up strengthens the bond that firm insistence could not.

6 A voice that outruns its ground TOP LINE

上九：翰音登于天，贞凶。

The cock's crow rises toward heaven; persisting in this brings misfortune.

At the top, a cock's crow rises toward heaven — a voice loud and confident, but no longer connected to the ground that gave it meaning. This position is capable and sincere in its own conviction, yet it refuses to bend toward what is below and so mistakes stubborn insistence for genuine trust. Persisting in this posture brings misfortune, not because conviction itself is wrong, but because sincerity divorced from real contact becomes only noise, however honest its source. The line calls for humility before more speaking. Changing here leads to Hexagram 60 — Restraint, where accepted limits restore the ground this line had lost.

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HEXAGRAM 62

Small Exceeding

小过 · Xiǎoguò

Thunder over Mountain

Small Exceeding favors modest, careful action inside a limited scope: attend closely to small matters, stay near the ground, and let bigger ambitions wait for firmer support.

THE JUDGMENT

小过：亨，利贞，可小事，不可大事，飞鸟遗之音，不宜上宜下，大吉。

Small Exceeding: success. It is fruitful to stay true. Fitting for small matters, not fitting for great undertakings. A flying bird leaves behind only its cry: not fitting to rise, fitting to descend. Great good fortune.

THE IMAGE

山上有雷，小过；君子以行过乎恭，丧过乎哀，用过乎俭。

Thunder above the mountain: Small Exceeding. In conduct, the wise person leans toward too much reverence; in mourning, leans toward too much grief; in spending, leans toward too much frugality.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received sequence, Hexagram 62 follows Hexagram 61, Heartfelt Trust: once genuine sincerity is established, it has to be carried into action, and Small Exceeding shows what that action should look like here — modest, attentive, and scaled to the moment rather than to ambition.

The Chinese name 小过 joins 小, small, with 过, to exceed or pass by. It points to a slight overshoot in small matters — care pressed a little further than usual — not a grand transgression. Older editions also translate the figure as The Preponderance of the Small, since yielding lines outnumber the firm ones at this point in the sequence. Read that way, Xiao Guo is not permission to overreach; it describes a season when caution and close attention to detail carry more authority than bold, visible action.

The Judgment's flying bird makes the point visually: a bird calling out as it climbs draws attention to itself and loses cover, while one that stays low and quiet moves safely. Small Exceeding favors staying near the ground of a situation — finishing the small task, checking the small promise, tending the detail — over reaching for height, scale, or acclaim before the moment can support it.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 62 joins Thunder resting above Mountain. Thunder moves and sounds, but here it is checked by the stillness of the mountain beneath it, so its energy stays close and contained rather than spreading outward. The image favors motion kept modest — small, careful adjustments rather than sweeping gestures — because the ground underneath is not yet firm enough to carry anything larger.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, two firm lines sit at the center flanked by two yielding lines below and two yielding lines above, so yin outnumbers yang four to two and gives the figure its off-balance, small-heavy character. This line structure pairs Gen, the Mountain, below with Zhen, Thunder, above: the two trigrams meet without truly overlapping, which is why the classical text calls for small, grounded action rather than a bold advance.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 A bird that flies too far BOTTOM LINE

初六：飞鸟以凶。

The flying bird brings misfortune.

The first line pictures a bird already aloft and calling out before the ground beneath it is prepared. Acting first, drawing attention first, or claiming credit first may look bold, but it exposes you before your position is secure and works against the grain of Small Exceeding, which favors staying low. Whatever momentum you feel, let it settle before you rise. The change to Hexagram 55, Plenty, warns that visible abundance and recognition have their own season: claimed too early, brightness draws exposure rather than lasting reward, so let the moment ripen before you climb toward it.

2 Meeting the fitting rank SECOND LINE

六二：过其祖，遇其妣，不及其君，遇其臣，无咎。

Passing the grandfather, meeting the grandmother; not reaching the ruler, meeting the minister: no blame.

The second line finds a yielding, well-centered position: rather than reaching past the grandfather to claim senior standing, or past the ruler to claim high favor, it meets the grandmother and the minister, figures suited to its actual place. This is not settling; it is accuracy. Matching your effort to your real standing, instead of the standing you wish you held, removes blame entirely. The change to Hexagram 32, Duration, shows what this accuracy earns over time: a bond or role that holds steady precisely because it was built to the true scale of the relationship, not to an imagined, grander one.

3 A guard that is not thorough THIRD LINE

九三：弗过防之，从或戕之，凶。

Without guarding thoroughly enough against it, one may be followed and struck down: misfortune.

The third line sits under pressure from the small, encroaching forces around it and tries to defend against them, but its guard is not thorough enough: relaxed caution invites the very harm it hoped to prevent. This is the danger of a strong position surrounded by weaker ones it underestimates, where confidence substitutes for real vigilance. The change to Hexagram 16, Anticipation, names the fix: build genuine readiness and shared preparation before trouble arrives, rather than reacting only once pressure has already closed in and left little room to respond well.

4 Restraint that avoids the clash FOURTH LINE

九四：无咎，弗过遇之，往厉必戒，勿用，永贞。

No blame. Not overreaching, one meets circumstances as they are. To advance now brings danger — stay on guard. Do not act. Persevere in constancy.

The fourth line holds a firm, capable position without forcing a confrontation: no blame comes because it declines to overreach, meeting circumstances as they are rather than pressing past them. Moving forward now would be dangerous, so the line counsels vigilance and inaction over any attempt to force resolution — hold your ground, stay correct, and let the moment pass rather than testing it directly. The change to Hexagram 15, Humility, extends the same lesson: an unassuming, steady bearing accomplishes what pressure and demand cannot, because it gives the opposing force no reason to resist.

5 Clouds that will not yet break FIFTH LINE

六五：密云不雨，自我西郊。公弋取彼在穴。

Dense clouds, no rain, gathering from our western outskirts. The duke shoots and takes the one hidden in the cave.

The fifth line pictures dense clouds gathering from the western outskirts that still will not release rain: the conditions for union are present, but the two sides have not truly met, so effort produces only preparation, not results. Even the duke's arrow, shot toward what hides in the cave, cannot force what is not ready to answer. Patience, not additional force, is the honest response here. The change to Hexagram 31, Influence, points toward what is missing: real, mutual response. Only when both sides can genuinely meet will the gathered effort finally resolve into rain.

6 Flying past the point of return TOP LINE

上六：弗遇过之，飞鸟离之，凶，是谓灾眚。

Failing to be met, one exceeds it still; the flying bird departs from it: misfortune. This is called calamity and disaster.

The top line describes a bird that has flown so far past its proper place that it can no longer be met or answered: rejecting caution entirely and pressing beyond every reasonable limit turns ordinary excess into open misfortune, a calamity brought on by one's own overreaching rather than by chance. There is no ground left underfoot to return to safely. The change to Hexagram 56, Sojourning, completes the image: having exceeded the place that once held you, you become a traveler without settled standing, needing to rebuild trust and belonging from unfamiliar ground.

Read hexagram 62 online, with the same text plus a reading written for your own question: www.youriching.com/hexagrams/62-small-exceeding



HEXAGRAM 63

Already Crossed

既济 · Jìjì

Water over Fire

Already Crossed describes a task just finished and working well, which succeeds now only because small, steady care keeps the early order from sliding back into disorder.

THE JUDGMENT

既济：亨，小利贞，初吉终乱。

Already Crossed: success, small gains from persisting. Good fortune at the start, disorder at the end.

THE IMAGE

水在火上，既济；君子以思患而预防之。

Water rests above fire: Already Crossed. The wise person thinks ahead to what could go wrong and guards against it before it arrives.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

In the received sequence, Hexagram 63 follows Small Exceeding (Xiǎoguò), the figure of small matters carried just far enough to succeed. Once that small, careful excess has done its work, the crossing is complete: a river once feared to cross has been crossed, a difficult task once feared to finish has been finished. Already Crossed names this exact moment — the river bank reached, the goal achieved, everything in its proper place at last.

The Chinese name 既济 pairs 既, meaning already or having already happened, with 济, meaning to ford a river or to help something across. Together the two characters describe an action completed rather than one still underway. The hexagram is also commonly translated as After Completion, and its pinyin, Jìjì, is often written without tone marks as Ji Ji, but every rendering keeps the same sense: a task standing just past its finish line, not still in progress.

Read as guidance, Hexagram 63 does not simply celebrate arrival. Its judgment opens with success but closes with a warning that what begins in order ends in confusion if left untended. The figure asks for exactly the vigilance that success tends to erode: the danger of Already Crossed is not the river still ahead but the current still capable of pulling a finished crossing back apart.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 63 joins Water above Fire. Water pours naturally downward and fire naturally rises, so here the two elements move directly toward each other and meet, rather than drifting apart the way they do when fire sits above water. That meeting is what makes a crossing, a marriage, a settlement — two forces brought into working contact, each supplying what the other lacks, water supplying flow and fire supplying warmth.

In the six-line diagram, counted from the bottom, every position holds exactly the line its place calls for: yang at the odd positions, yin at the even ones, an alignment no other hexagram in the sequence achieves in full. The lower trigram Lí, Fire, brings clarity and forward motion; the upper trigram Kǎn, Water, brings depth and hidden risk. Read together, the diagram shows a structure so correctly ordered that it has nowhere left to grow — which is itself the seed of the warning the judgment gives.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Holding the wheel back BOTTOM LINE

初九：曳其轮，濡其尾，无咎。

Dragging back the wheel, wetting the tail: no blame.

At the very base of the figure, the crossing has only just begun, and the wisest move is to slow it deliberately — dragging back the wheel, letting the tail trail wet — rather than driving forward at full speed. The classical commentary reads this as a firm line holding its position quietly, restraining a softer line above from rushing the crossing before the moment is ready. Nothing is lost by this caution; a crossing begun too fast risks capsizing, so no blame attaches to going slowly. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 39, Hardship: the same careful pace must continue against an obstructed path.

2 Losing something small, not chasing it SECOND LINE

六二：妇丧其茀，勿逐，七日得。

The woman loses the screen of her carriage; do not chase after it — within seven days it is recovered.

One stage further in, a minor loss occurs — the woman's carriage screen goes missing, a small piece of what completeness requires. The instruction is explicit: do not give chase. The classical text reads this as a central, sincere line caught between stronger positions, needing simple patience rather than pursuit; what is genuinely owed returns within seven days regardless of whether it is chased. This line teaches that not every gap in an otherwise finished order needs forcing shut at once — some close themselves given time. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 5, Patience: not chasing becomes the wider discipline of waiting for the right moment.

3 A long campaign against real resistance THIRD LINE

九三：高宗伐鬼方，三年克之，小人勿用。

High Zong campaigns against the Devil's Land; three years pass before it is conquered. Do not employ small-minded people in it.

At the third line, the figure recalls a historical campaign: a strong ruler needing three full years to subdue a distant, entrenched enemy, with a caution not to entrust that work to small-minded people. The classical commentary places this line at the boundary between the clarity of the lower trigram and the danger above, where a genuinely difficult remnant of resistance has to be met with sustained effort, not a quick gesture. Even inside a mostly completed order, some problems are large and take real time. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 3, Sprouting: hard-won ground gives way to a new, tender beginning needing careful support.

4 Guarding the leak all day FOURTH LINE

六四：繻有衣袽，终日戒。

Fine silk kept next to old patched rags for stopping a leak: stay on guard the whole day through.

The fourth line pictures fine cloth kept beside old rags, ready to stuff into the first sign of a leak, a person staying alert all day rather than trusting a well-built vessel to need no further watching. The classical reading places this soft, correctly positioned line just inside the danger above, aware a well-made crossing can spring a small failure, and that awareness keeps it small. This is the figure's clearest image of maintenance: steady attention, kept up without lapse. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 49, Radical Change: patched vigilance is no longer enough, and the moment calls for an open, decisive break instead of repair.

5 A modest offering outweighs display FIFTH LINE

九五：东邻杀牛，不如西邻之禴祭，实受其福。

The eastern neighbor slaughters an ox; it is not equal to the western neighbor's modest offering, which truly receives the blessing.

At the center of the upper trigram, the strong, well-placed fifth line contrasts two gestures of gratitude: an eastern neighbor's costly, showy sacrifice of an ox against a western neighbor's plain, timely, sincere offering. The classical commentary reads this as genuine versus merely impressive devotion — the modest gift, given at the right moment from real feeling, receives the blessing the extravagant one fails to earn. Applied to a position of success, the lesson is that sustaining what has been achieved depends on quiet sincerity, not grand display. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 36, Dimmed Light: true intent must be carried forward carefully while conditions turn unfavorable to display.

6 The wet head of neglect TOP LINE

上六：濡其首，厉。

The head gets wet: danger.

At the very top, the crossing that began so carefully ends in exactly the danger the judgment warned against: the water rises high enough to wet the head, read by the classical commentary as the natural conclusion once order has run its course and started to tip back toward its opposite. There is no failure of effort here, only the fact that nothing finished stays finished without continued care — the greater danger, once a task is done, is complacency, not the river itself. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 37, Household: vigilance must be rebuilt in a smaller, closer group.

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HEXAGRAM 64

Not Yet Crossed

未济 · Wèiji

Fire over Water

Not Yet Crossed describes a task or goal close to succeeding but not there yet, warning that a crossing almost made can still fail in its very last, overconfident step.

THE JUDGMENT

未济：亨，小狐汔济，濡其尾，无攸利。

Not Yet Crossed brings success, yet caution is required: a small fox wades nearly all the way across the stream, then wets its tail at the very end — nothing is gained by rushing the last step.

THE IMAGE

火在水上，未济；君子以慎辨物居方。

Fire sits above water: this is the image of Not Yet Crossed. Seeing it, the wise person carefully distinguishes each thing and settles it in its rightful place.

WHAT THIS HEXAGRAM MEANS

Hexagram 64 closes the received King Wen sequence, following directly after Hexagram 63, Already Crossed. Where that hexagram pictures a river successfully forded, Hexagram 64 pictures the same river still ahead — the crossing wanted but not yet made. The Chinese name 未济 (wèiji) joins 未, meaning not yet, with 济, meaning to ford a river or bring something safely across, so the name describes an action still incomplete

rather than one already finished. The hexagram is also commonly translated as Before Completion, a rendering that keeps the same sense of a goal standing just short of its finish line.

Ending the sequence on Not Yet Crossed rather than Already Crossed is deliberate: completion is never the true final state, because every finished crossing opens onto another river still to be forded. The judgment's small fox — bold enough to wade nearly all the way across, then careless enough to wet its tail at the very end — captures how most failures happen not at the start of an effort but in its final, overconfident stretch.

The image's instruction, to carefully distinguish each thing and settle it in its proper place, points toward the hexagram's real counsel: progress here depends less on force than on sequencing, patience, and knowing which piece belongs where before pushing further. Wei Ji does not forecast failure — it forecasts an unfinished situation that can still turn out well if the final steps are taken with the same care as the first ones.

THE FIGURE

Hexagram 64 stacks six lines that alternate yin and yang at every position — yielding at the first, third, and fifth places, firm at the second, fourth, and sixth — the exact mirror, line for line, of Hexagram 63 immediately before it. Where that hexagram achieves the one arrangement in which every line sits in its ideally matched position, Hexagram 64 achieves the opposite: every line is technically out of its proper place, yet the resulting structure is not chaos so much as unfinished business, each piece present but not yet correctly seated.

In the diagram, fire over water — Lí, the upper trigram, above Kǎn, the lower trigram — fire naturally rising and water naturally sinking, so the two elements move apart rather than meet, unlike the settled contact of Hexagram 63. This is the structural picture of effort not yet connecting

with its object: heat and depth, clarity and danger, present together but still working past each other rather than through each other.

THE SIX LINES

Read a line only if it came out moving (a 6 or a 9 in the coin method).

1 Wetting the Tail Too Soon BOTTOM LINE

初六：濡其尾，吝。

Wetting its tail: a small regret.

At the very bottom of the figure, this weak line is eager to cross but lacks the strength to do it well, and the classical commentary reads its wetting of the tail as the mark of a soft position trying to finish a crossing it cannot yet complete. Nothing serious is lost — the text calls it only a small regret, not misfortune — because the fault is timing rather than direction. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 38, Opposition: the mismatch between wanting to cross and being ready to cross opens into a wider rift between two sides that no longer see the crossing the same way.

2 **Braking the Wheel** SECOND LINE

九二：曳其轮，贞吉。

Dragging back its wheel: firm and fortunate.

One stage up, this firm, centered line does the opposite of line one: rather than pushing forward, it deliberately drags the wheel and holds its pace back. The classical commentary reads this restraint as the firm line checking the softer one below from rushing ahead, refusing to let eagerness govern the timing of a crossing not yet ready. Because it holds its position with correctness rather than forcing the pace, the text calls it firm and fortunate. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 35, Advance: the same discipline that once braked the wheel now clears the way for a steady rise.

3 **Forcing the Crossing** THIRD LINE

六三：未济征凶，利涉大川。

Not yet crossed — advancing brings misfortune, yet it is fitting to cross the great river.

At the third position, a weak line rides directly on top of danger, wanting badly to advance but lacking the strength to match its ambition, and the classical commentary is blunt that forcing the crossing on these terms brings misfortune. Yet the same line is told that it is fitting to cross the great river — at the very edge of danger, waiting no longer changes the odds, so committing wholeheartedly, trusting the firm line above rather than calculating safety, becomes the only real option left. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 50, Cauldron: raw daring is transformed into something that can actually nourish and hold steady once it lands.

4

Campaign Against the Distant Foe FOURTH LINE

九四：贞吉，悔亡。震用伐鬼方，三年有赏于大国。

Firm and fortunate, regret dissolving: a campaign stirred up against the distant tribes of Guifang, and in three years reward comes from the great state.

The fourth line sits firm in a yielding place — not perfectly matched to its position, so some regret would be natural, but its integrity lets that regret dissolve. The classical commentary reads its restlessness as a line hemmed in between two yielding neighbors, unable to stay quiet, so it turns that unrest into a disciplined campaign against a stubborn, distant enemy, much as a ruler subdues the far-off tribes of Guifang. Because the effort is measured, victory comes slowly and is genuinely rewarded. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 4, Inexperience: hard-won ground gives way to something new that again needs patient instruction.

5

Central Brightness at Rest FIFTH LINE

六五：贞吉，无悔。君子之光，有孚，吉。

Firm and fortunate, without regret: the brightness of a person of true character, sincerity held true — good fortune.

At the honored central place of the upper trigram, this yielding line does not push to advance further, and the classical commentary praises exactly that restraint: content in its position and aware of when to stop, it earns firm good fortune and no regret without needing to strive for more. Its emptiness of ambition lets it attach itself sincerely to the firm brightness around it, giving off the quiet radiance of real character even short of true greatness. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 6, Dispute: the same restraint is tested by open disagreement.

6 Trust Turning to Excess TOP LINE

上九：有孚于饮酒，无咎。濡其首，有孚失是。

Trust shared over wine: no blame. But wetting the head loses exactly what that trust was for.

At the very top, this firm line sits well with the weak third line far below, and their mutual trust is pictured as sharing wine together — in itself no fault at all, the classical commentary says. But perched high with no real office to anchor it, that same trust can slide past its proper limit: without the restraint the second and fourth lines practiced, it risks being drawn in by the yielding line beneath it until it wets its own head, the very image of excess. When this line changes, the situation becomes Hexagram 40, Release: the excess finally breaks, and what was tangled loosens into open relief.

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