Read together, five minutes at a time.

You do not need to speak Chinese to use these books. Every page carries pinyin above the characters and a natural English line underneath. This guide shows you how to read a page, how to say the sounds, and where to start.

1. How to read a page

Point at the pinyin above a character, say the syllable, then read the English line to confirm the meaning. Do not translate word by word. The illustration carries the sentence.

2. The four tones

First tone is high and flat (mā). Second rises (má). Third dips and rises (mǎ). Fourth falls sharply (mà). The tone mark is printed above the vowel.

When you are not sure, skip it and keep the story moving. The same word will return in another book.

3. Letters that surprise English readers

c	“ts”, as in cats
q	“ch” with a smile
x	“sh” with a smile
zh	“j”, as in judge
r	softer than English r
ü	“ee” with rounded lips

4. A five-minute routine

1. Choose one book at the child’s level. 2. Read the English line first. 3. Read the pinyin aloud together. 4. Let the child find one character they recognise. 5. Stop while it is still fun.

5. Which level should we start with?

LEVEL	AGE	NEW WORDS	PAGES	START HERE IF…
Seedling 种子级	3–4	27	19	brand new to Chinese
Sprout 嫩芽级	4–5	35	19	knows a few characters
Bud 花苞级	5–6	52	27	can read a Seedling book
Bloom 开花级	6–7	72	27	reads short sentences
Branch 树枝级	7–8	91	27	reads longer stories
Root 树根级	8+	89	27	ready for real reading

> **Decision rule:** read the first three pages of the free 你好 · Hello book. If the child asks to keep going, the level is right. If they lose interest, go one level down. If they read it fluently, go one

> level up.

Three small habits that compound.

Reread the same book

Rereading is more valuable than finishing a new book. Vocabulary returns across levels by design; the second reading is where recognition happens.

Let them see you try

You are allowed to be a beginner. Say the pinyin badly, laugh, try again. The child learns that Chinese is something the family does together, not something they are tested on.

Stop while it is still fun

Five good minutes beat twenty tired ones. A child who asks for “one more page” is learning more than a child who is being finished.

Do not translate every word

Meaning comes from the English line and the picture. Translation interrupts the story and makes the Chinese feel like homework.

What Little NiHao is — and is not

It is a reading library: 42 illustrated stories and 19 companion workbooks, sequenced across six levels, with pinyin on every character. It is not an audio course or a speaking tutor. If your priority is spoken Mandarin, pair the books with a tutor or a class. If your priority is a reading habit and character recognition, the books do that well.

Where to go next

Free starter book	littlenihao.com/free/hello/
Which level?	littlenihao.com/learn/which-level/
Pinyin for parents	littlenihao.com/learn/pinyin-for-parents/
All 61 PDFs	littlenihao.com/books/