

Comparing similar time words

HSK 4

Original teaching practice. Read one pattern, cover its model and try the questions before checking the separate answer section. Examples adapted from Chinese Grammar Wiki (AllSet Learning, CC BY-NC-SA) retain the course-reference provenance.

以后 vs 的时候 (after vs when)

■ When or after?

- You tell a friend about last night: you were cooking when he called, and you called back after dinner.
- 你打电话的时候我在做饭，吃完饭以后我给你回了电话。** – “When you called, I was cooking; after dinner I called you back.”

■ 的时候 = at the same time

- A 的时候, B** = when A (is happening), B: the two overlap.
- 我到的时候，他正在吃饭 – “When I arrived, he was eating.”

我到的时候，他正在吃饭。

wǒ dào de shí hou tā zhèng zài chī fàn

Word guide: 我 – I; 到 – arrive; 的时候 – when; 他 – he; 正在 – was; 吃饭 – eating.

...的时候: while · ...以后: after

when

你打电话的时候

nǐ dǎ diànhuà de shíhou

when you called

verb

我在做饭

wǒ zài zuò fàn

I was cooking

■ 以后 = after, one then the other

- A 以后, B** = after A has finished, B: the second follows the first.
- 下课以后，我们去打球 – “After class, we’ll go and play ball.”

下课以后，我们去打球。

xià kè yǐ hòu wǒ men qù dǎ qiú

Word guide: 下课 – class ends; 以后 – after; 我们 – we; 去 – go; 打球 – play ball.

■ Overlap or sequence?

- If B happens during A, use 的时候; if B happens after A ends, use 以后.
- 吃饭的时候别看手机 (during the meal) is different from 吃饭以后别马上睡觉 (after the meal).

■ With completed verbs

- Verb + 了 + 以后 stresses completion: 你到了以后给我打电话.
- For one finished event followed by another, 以后 is the safe choice: 我做完作业以后去睡觉.

你到了以后给我打电话。

nǐ dào le yǐ hòu gěi wǒ dǎ diàn huà

Word guide: 你 – you; 到 – arrive; 以后 – after; 给 – to; 我 – me; 打 – make; 电话 – a call.

■ Recap

- 的时候 = when (overlapping time); 以后 = after (one event follows another).
- Ask: does B happen during A or after it?

Practise this pattern step by step.

Practice without the models

Choose a pattern, cover its teaching examples, and attempt its questions. Use the labels to find feedback in the separate key.

■ 以后 vs 的时候 (after vs when)

3001.1 During the meal: “Don’t look at your phone while eating.” 吃饭 别看手机。

3001.2 “After eating, don’t go to bed straight away.” Which fits? 吃饭 _____ 别马上睡觉。

- A. 以前
- B. 时候
- C. 的时候
- D. 以后

3001.3 Build: “After class, we’ll go and play ball.”

Arrange all chunks: 打球。 / 下课以后 / , / 我们去

3001.4 我到的时候, 他正在吃饭 means he was eating when I arrived.

True or false? Explain or repair the statement.

3001.5 You tell a friend about last night: you were cooking when he called, and you called back after dinner. Close the examples. Say a Mandarin response, then write it in Chinese. Explain briefly in English what the lesson’s pattern adds. Compare with

the model, then change one detail and try again.

Write or say your own response before reading the key.

A fresh situation

R1. Interpret and repair. A learner translates 下课的时候 as after class. What timing difference is lost?

R2. Use it yourself. Say you will phone after arriving and that you were tired when you arrived yesterday.

Write your responses before opening the key. Compare meaning as well as form; a different valid answer need not copy the model.

Answers and explanations

Check after your attempt. For open tasks, compare the message and the stated criteria, then revise one detail.

■ 以后 vs 的时候 (after vs when)

3001.1 的时候

Overlapping time takes 的时候.

3001.2 D. 以后

After the meal has finished = 以后.

3001.3 下课以后, 我们去打球。

A 以后, B.

3001.4 True.

True. ... 的时候 marks time that overlaps with the main event: when I arrived, he was in the middle of eating. 以后 would mean he ate after I arrived.

3001.5 One possible response: 你打电话的时候我在做饭, 吃完饭以后我给你回了电话。

Check meaning and form:

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- If B happens during A, use 的时候; if B happens after A ends, use 以后.
- 吃饭的时候别看手机 (during the meal) is different from 吃饭以后别马上睡觉 (after the meal).
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

This is supported productive practice. Compare meaning and structure; your answer need not copy the model. A partner or teacher must hear the spoken response to comment on pronunciation.

■ Fresh-situation answers

R1. 下课的时候 means when class ends or at that time; 下课以后 means after class. They can be close in a situation but are not identical time relations.

R2. One possible response. 我到家以后给你打电话。昨天到家的时候, 我很累。以后 locates the later call; 的时候 supplies the time at which the tiredness held.

Recall later. Tomorrow, draw an event and a later action before choosing 以后 or 的时候.