

HSK 4 Grammar 29: Comparing Similar Words I

HSK 4 反而/相反, 肯定/确定/一定, 适合/合适 pairs, taught from the reviewed topic handout; classroom examples, not official exam items.

The grammar job decides

Two “opposite”s, three “sure”s, two “suit”s — in every pair, the grammar job decides which word you need.

反而 vs 相反

反而 — the adverb, inside the clause

熬夜复习不但没好处，反而有坏处。
(Áoyè fùxí búdàn méi hǎochu, fǎn'ér yǒu huàichu.) — Staying up to revise not only does no good — instead it does harm.

相反 — the adjective, describing or linking

我的想法跟他相反。(Wǒ de xiǎngfǎ gēn tā xiāngfǎn.) — My idea is the opposite of his.

Try it: the backfiring advice

- 1 **The situation** You told him to rest; it backfired.
- 2 **Build the setup** 我劝他休息 (wǒ quàn tā xiūxi) — I advised him to rest.
- 3 **Land the contrary result** 他反而更生气了 (tā fǎn'ér gèng shēngqì le).
- 4 **Check the slot** 反而 sits before the verb — the adverb's home.

Decision

I told him to rest, and he got even angrier instead.

肯定 / 确定 / 一定

Word	Kind of certainty	Signature
肯定	A confident assertion	他肯定会来。 — He'll definitely come.
确定	Certainty you have checked	你确定他会来吗？ — Are you sure (have you checked)?
一定	Expectation or insistence	一定要小心！ — Be sure to take care!

适合 vs 合适: the flipped characters

- 1 **The verb: 适合** Takes an object: 这个颜色不适合他。 — This colour doesn't suit him.
- 2 **The adjective: 合适** Describes, no object: 黑色才是最合适的。 — Black is the most suitable.
- 3 **The memory hook** 适 ** 合 ** ends like a verb taking a thing; 合 ** 适 ** ends like 舒适 — a describing word.
- 4 **Correct the slip** 这个合适你 × → 这个对你很合适 / 这个很合适.

Decision

The character order is the giveaway: verb, then adjective.

Check yourself

Your turn

Which pair is right? (1) Which sits before the verb inside a clause? (2) Correct 这双鞋合适你。

- A. 相反; 这双鞋很合适你
- B. 反而; 这双鞋适合你
- C. 反而; 这双鞋合适得你
- D. 相反; 这双鞋适合于你