HSK 5 Grammar 4: 要不 + Suggestion + 吧

HSK 5 要不 … 吧 suggestion pattern; classroom examples, not official exam items.

要不 … 吧: floating plan B

> 要不 puts an alternative on the table and quietly asks whether the other person agrees — “how about”, “why don’t we”.

- Casual speech only — too casual for a notice, contract or report.
- 吧 supports the inviting tone; a question mark suits a clear wait for an answer.

Form: two orders, one invitation

1. **Situation first** 这家咖啡馆里人太多了，要不我们去对面那家吧。— This café is too crowded; how about the one across?
2. **Plan first** 要不我们把野餐改到室内吧，下午可能下雨。— How about moving the picnic indoors? It might rain.
3. **The rule** 要不 stays before the suggestion; 吧 closes it.
4. **Try it** Suggest moving to the courtyard (the upstairs room is being painted).

Decision

The idea under 要不: "if not this, then that" — testing plan B, leaving the decision open.

要不 vs 要不是 vs 要不然

Word	Job	Example
要不 … 吧	Float plan B, invite agreement	要不我们去对面那家吧。— How about across the street?
要不是	Counterfactual: "if it were not for"	要不是你提醒我，我就忘了。— If you hadn't reminded me…
要不然	"Otherwise" — a consequence to avoid	现在不出发，要不然就赶不上了。

Practice check

Your turn

Which pair is right? (1) 今天的会议开得太久了，要不我们提前结束吧？— the speaker is doing what? (2) Which sentence is the counterfactual "if it were not for the map"?

A. Sorry; 要不我们看看手机里的地图吧。
B. Suggesting early end; 要不是你手机里有地图，我们就迷路了。
C. Warning; 要不然你手机里有地图。
D. Suggesting early end; 要不我们看看手机里的地图吧。

Check yourself

> Every answer traces to the same distinction: 要不 floats plan B, 要不是 is counterfactual, 要不然 warns of a consequence.

- 路很远，要不我们明天早点出发吧。— the assembled answer for item 4.
- 要不我们点一道不辣的菜吧，有人不能吃辣椒。— the suggestion-first answer for item 6.