HSK 5 Grammar 25: Comparing similar auxiliary words

HSK 5 总算 and 终于, taught from the reviewed topic handout; classroom examples, not official exam items.

Phew, or at last?

总算 — informal relief

雨下了一整天，我们总算回到宿舍了。

Finally — phew.

终于 — neutral ‘at last’

代表们讨论了五个小时，终于通过了这项规定。

A calm report that the wait ended.

终于 can carry bad news

1. **Good news, relief** 孩子的烧退了，妈妈总算能睡觉了。
2. **Bad news, reported** 资金不够，新桥修了两年，终于停工了。
3. **Why not 总算 here?** 总算 would sound glad; a glad tone clashes with a shortage of money.

Decision

News and formal writing use 终于 for good and bad results; 总算 is a personal, relieved voice.

Where the adverb goes

1. **The frame** Subject + 总算 / 终于 + verb (+ 了).
2. **Right** 我总算把报告交给经理了。
3. **Uncommon or wrong** 总算我把报告交给经理了 is rare; 我把报告交给经理总算了 is wrong.

Decision

Learn 总算 after the subject; 终于 usually sits there too and only sometimes opens a sentence.

Your turn: the home team

Your turn

You support the home team and are unhappy that they lost after three hours. Choose the best sentence.

A. 比赛进行了三个小时，主队总算输了。
B. 比赛进行了三个小时，主队终于输了。
C. 比赛进行了三个小时，总算主队输了。

Your turn: the queue

Your turn

排队排了四十分钟，我们 _____ 坐上地铁了。You are texting a friend, relieved.

A. 终于
B. 总算

Answers: relief or report

1. **The lost match** 比赛进行了三个小时，主队终于输了。
2. **The queue** 排队排了四十分钟，我们总算坐上地铁了。
3. **The library** 我总算在图书馆借到那本书了。
4. **Same event, two voices** 学校的食堂终于关闭了。· 学校的食堂总算关闭了。

Decision

The canteen user who is unhappy reports with **终于**; the neighbour who hated the noise feels relief with **总算**.

Check yourself

Your turn

A news report: after ten years of debate, the old stadium was finally demolished. Which word fits the report?

A. 经过十年的讨论，老体育场终于被拆除了。
B. 经过十年的讨论，老体育场总算被拆除了。