

English Grammar · A2

English edition

Contents

1 Present simple

1.1 Habits & Facts

Present simple - a repeated habit



Present simple: a repeated habit: tense timeline

The present simple tense is used to talk about **things that happen regularly** and **facts that are always true**: daily habits, schedules, scientific facts.

Structure: +

I drink coffee every morning.

I drink coffee every morning.

We live in Shanghai.

We live in Shanghai.

Scientific facts also use the present simple:

Water boils at one hundred degrees.

Water boils at one hundred degrees Celsius.

It is often used with **adverbs of frequency**: always, usually, often, sometimes, never.

She always takes the bus.

She always takes the bus.

Note

- When talking about current habits, **do not** add a be verb: ~~I am drink coffee~~
× → I drink coffee ✓.
- Adverbs of frequency usually go **before the main verb**, but **after the be verb**:
She is **often** late.

1.2 Third person singular -s

When the subject is **he** / **she** / **it** (third person singular), the verb takes **-s** or **-es**.

Structure: He / She / It + + -s

He works in a bank.

He works at a bank.

My sister likes music.

My sister likes music.

Spelling rules:

- Generally add **-s** directly: work → works, play → plays.
- Ends in **-s** / **-sh** / **-ch** / **-x** / **-o**, add **-es**: watch → watches, go → goes.
- Consonant letter + **-y** ending, change **y** to **i** and add **-es**: study → studies, fly → flies.

She watches TV at night.

She watches TV at night.

Note

- Only he / she / it takes -s; I / you / we / they do **not take** it: ~~They likes~~ ×
→ They like ✓.
- have is special: he / she / it uses **has** (not ~~haves~~).

1.3 Negatives & questions

For negative and interrogative forms in the Present Simple, use the auxiliary verb **do** / **does**. Use **does** for he / she / it, and **do** for other subjects.

Negative structure: + don't / doesn't +

I don't eat meat.

I don't eat meat.

He doesn't like coffee.

He doesn't like coffee.

Interrogative structure: Do / Does + + ?

Do you speak English?

Do you speak English?

Does she work here?

Does she work here?

Short answers: **Yes, I do.** / **No, he doesn't.**

Note

- After using do / does, the **verb returns to its base form** (no longer adds -s):
~~He doesn't likes~~ × → He doesn't like ✓.
- Don't forget the auxiliary verb: in formal contexts say **Do you...?**, not just ~~You speak English?~~.

Common Errors

- × ~~She don't like it.~~ → ✓ She **doesn't** like it. — For third-person singular negatives, use doesn't, not don't.
- × ~~Does he has a car?~~ → ✓ Does he **have** a car? — When using does, even has reverts to the base form have.
- × ~~Everyone know the answer.~~ → ✓ Everyone **knows** the answer. — everyone / everybody / nobody are treated as **singular**, so add -s to the verb.
- × ~~I am usually going to school by bike.~~ → ✓ I usually **go** to school by bike. — Repeated habits use the Present Simple, not the continuous tense.

2 Present continuous

2.1 Structure (be + V-ing)



The Present Continuous tense describes actions that are **happening right now**.

Structure: + am / is / are + -ing (I → am; he / she / it → is; you / we / they → are)

I am reading a book.

I am reading a book.

They are playing football.

They are playing football.

Spelling of -ing:

- Generally add -ing directly: read → reading.
- End in silent -e, drop e and add -ing: make → making, write → writing.
- Stressed closed syllable (consonant + vowel + consonant), double the final consonant: run → running, sit → sitting.

She is writing an email.

She is writing an email.

Note

- Don't forget the be verb: ~~I reading~~ × → I am reading ✓.

- State verbs (like, know, want, have = possess) generally do **not** use the continuous tense: ~I am knowing~ × → I know ✓.

2.2 Present Continuous vs. Present Simple

Both tenses relate to “now,” but their meanings differ:

- **Present Simple:** Habits or repeated actions.
- **Present Continuous:** Actions happening at this very moment.

He usually walks to work.

He usually walks to work. (Habit → Present Simple)

Today he is taking the bus.

He is taking the bus today. (Right now → Present Continuous)

Time expressions help distinguish them:

- Present Simple: every day, usually, often, always.
- Present Continuous: now, right now, at the moment, today.

Note

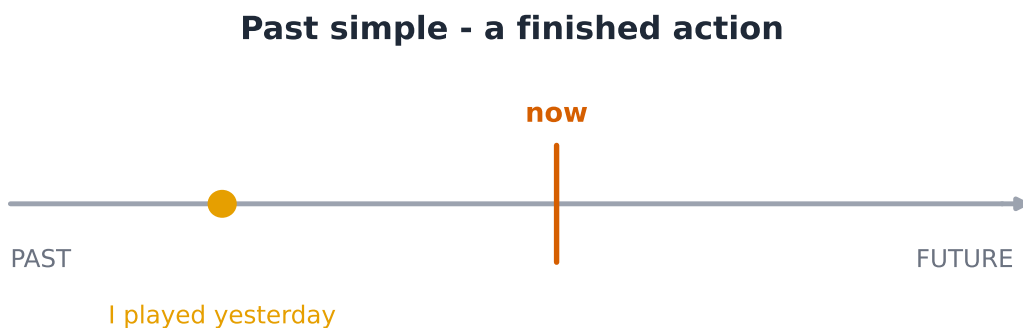
- Temporary situations use the continuous tense: *She is living with her aunt this month.* (She is temporarily staying with her aunt this month.)
- Long-term facts use the Present Simple: *She lives in Beijing.* (She lives in Beijing.)

Common Errors

- × ~They are play football now.~ → ✓ They are **playing** football now. — With be, the verb must also take -ing; both elements are required.
- × ~She is cooking every day.~ → ✓ She **cooks** every day. — every day signals a habit, so use the Present Simple.
- × ~Where is Tom? — He plays football.~ → ✓ He **is playing** football. — To answer “what is he doing right now?”, use the continuous tense.
- × ~He is writeing a letter.~ → ✓ He is **writing** a letter. — Verbs ending in a silent -e drop the e before adding -ing.

3 Past simple

3.1 Regular Verbs (-ed)



Past simple: a finished action: tense timeline

The Past Simple tense describes actions or states that were **completed in the past**. Regular verbs add **-ed** to the end.

Structure: + **-ed**(same for all persons)

I watched a film yesterday.

I watched a movie yesterday.

We played basketball last week.

We played basketball last week.

Spelling of -ed:

- Generally add -ed directly: work → worked, play → played.
- End in -e, only add -d: like → liked, live → lived.
- Consonant + -y ending, change y to i and add -ed: study → studied, try → tried.
- Stressed closed syllable, double the final consonant: stop → stopped, plan → planned.

Note

- The past tense form does **not change** based on person: I worked, she worked (no -s).
- Often used with past time markers: yesterday, last week, in 2019, two days ago.

3.2 Irregular Verbs

Many common verbs are **irregular**; their past forms must be memorized individually without adding -ed.

I went to Beijing last month.

I went to Beijing last month.

She saw her friends.

She met her friend.

High-frequency irregular verbs you must memorize:

- go → **went**, have → **had**, do → **did**, make → **made**.
- see → **saw**, come → **came**, get → **got**, take → **took**.
- eat → **ate**, buy → **bought**, think → **thought**, say → **said**.

We had a big dinner.

We had a big dinner.

Note these follow no pattern; practice reading and memorizing them frequently.

3.3 Negatives & questions (did)

For negative and interrogative forms in the Past Simple, use the auxiliary **did** (past form). The following verb **returns to its base form**.

Negative structure: + didn't +

I didn't go to school.

I didn't go to school.

Interrogative structure: Did + + ?

Did you see the film?

Did you see that movie?

Short answers: **Yes, I did.** / **No, I didn't.**

Note

- After using did / didn't, the verb must be in the **base form**: ~~I didn't went~~
× → I didn't go ✓.
- The past tense of the be verb (was / were) does **not** use did: *Were you tired?*
(Were you tired?)

Common Errors

- × ~~I go to Beijing last month.~~ → ✓ I **went** to Beijing last month. — Chinese verbs do not change form, but in English, once a past time marker is present, you must switch to the past tense. This is the most common error.
- × ~~She buyed a new phone.~~ → ✓ She **bought** a new phone. — Irregular verbs cannot simply add -ed.
- × ~~I didn't was hungry.~~ → ✓ I **wasn't** hungry. — For negative sentences with the verb 'be', use wasn't / weren't directly, not didn't.
- × ~~yesterday night~~ → ✓ **last night** — Fixed expression: 'last night' is used for last evening, not 'yesterday night' (though 'yesterday morning/afternoon' is correct).

4 Past continuous

4.1 Structure (was / were + V-ing)

Past continuous

was + -ing I / he / she / it <i>I was cooking</i>	were + -ing you / we / they <i>they were playing</i>
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Past continuous: reference card grid

The past continuous tense describes an action **in progress at a specific moment in the past**.

Structure: + was / were + -ing (I / he / she / it → was; you / we / they → were)

At eight I was cooking.

I was cooking at eight o'clock.

They were watching TV.

They were watching TV at that time.

Note

- Don't mix up was and were: Use **was** for I / he / she / it; use **were** for you / we / they.
- Negative: wasn't / weren't + V-ing. Question: Was / Were + subject + V-ing?

4.2 when and while

The past continuous is often used with the simple past to describe “an ongoing action interrupted by another event”.

- **while + past continuous** (the longer background action).
- **when + simple past** (the sudden, short action).

While I was sleeping, the phone rang.

The phone rang while I was sleeping.

She was cooking when I arrived.

When I arrived, she was cooking.

Compare the two tenses:

- The ongoing background action → Past continuous (was cooking).
- The short action that interrupts it → Simple past (arrived).

Note

- Two long actions happening simultaneously both use the past continuous: *While I was reading, she was writing* (I was reading, and she was writing).
- 'when' can also be followed by the past continuous, but the meaning changes. Beginners should first memorize the common collocations mentioned above.

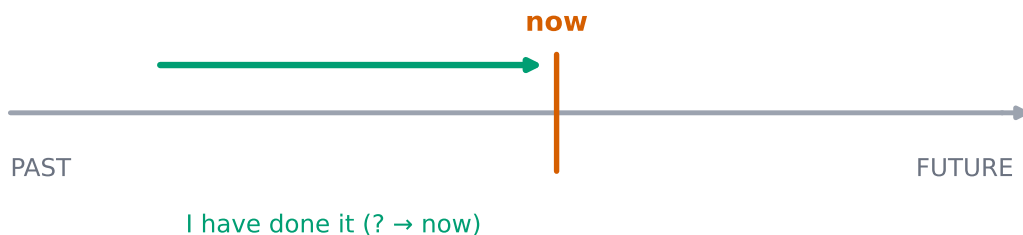
Common Errors

- × ~~I was watch TV when he called.~~ → ✓ I was **watching** TV when he called. — After was / were, you must use the -ing form.
- × ~~They was playing games.~~ → ✓ They **were** playing games. — Use were for you / we / they.
- × ~~When I was arriving, she was cooking.~~ → ✓ **When I arrived**, she was cooking. — Arriving is a brief, instantaneous action, so use the simple past; only the longer background action uses the continuous form.
- × ~~I was knowing the answer.~~ → ✓ I **knew** the answer. — Stative verbs (know, like, want) are also generally not used in the continuous form in the past tense.

5 Present perfect

5.1 Structure (have / has + past participle)

Present perfect - past, linked to now



Present perfect: past, linked to now: tense timeline

The present perfect tense **connects the past and the present**: a past action has an effect on the present now, or it refers to life experience.

Structure: + have / has + (he / she / it → has)

I have finished my homework.

I have finished my homework. (So I am free now)

She has lost her keys.

She has lost her keys. (She hasn't found them yet)

Past Participle:

- Regular verbs = -ed: work → worked, finish → finished.
- Irregular verbs must be memorized: go → **gone**, see → **seen**, do → **done**, be → **been**, eat → **eaten**.

Note: Present perfect usually does not specify **exact times**. If you mention a specific past time (yesterday, in 2019), use the simple past instead.

5.2 ever / never / just / already / yet

These words are frequently used with the present perfect tense:

- **ever:** Used in questions to mean “at any time.” **never:** “not ever.”
- **just:** “just now.” **already:** “already.” **yet:** Used at the end of negative or interrogative sentences to mean “not yet.”

Have you ever been to London?

Have you ever been to London?

I have just eaten lunch.

I have just had lunch.

He hasn't finished yet.

He hasn't finished yet.

5.3 for and since

To say how long something has “continued,” use **for** or **since**:

- **for** + **a period of time**: for three years, for a week.
- **since** + **starting point**: since 2020 (from the year 2020), since Monday (from Monday).

I have lived here for five years.

I have lived here for five years. (And I still live here)

We have known each other since 2018.

We have known each other since 2018.

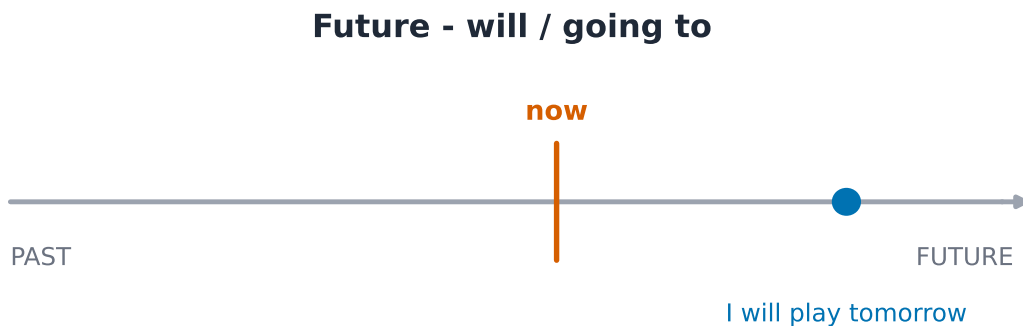
Note: Use 'for' with duration and 'since' with a starting point; don't mix them up: ~for 2018~ × → since 2018 ✓.

Common Errors

- × ~I have seen him yesterday.~ → ✓ I **saw** him yesterday. — Once a specific past time is mentioned (yesterday, last week, in 2019), switch to the simple past.
- × ~I live here for ten years.~ → ✓ I **have lived** here for ten years. — “Lived here for ten years and still live here” requires the present perfect. Chinese lacks this distinction, making it easy to overlook.
- × ~She has go home.~ → ✓ She has **gone** home. — After have / has, use the past participle, not the base form.
- × ~Have you ever went to Beijing?~ → ✓ Have you ever **been** to Beijing? — Use have been to for “visited a place.”
- Distinguish gone and been: He has **gone** to Beijing. (He went there and hasn't returned yet) vs He has **been** to Beijing. (He visited there and has come back).

6 Talking about the future

6.1 will



will is used to talk about the future, especially **spontaneous decisions**, **predictions**, and **promises**.

Structure: + **will** + (Same for all persons; will not = won't)

I will call you tonight.

I will call you tonight.

It will rain tomorrow.

It will rain tomorrow.

Note

- Use the **base form** of the verb after will: *~~will to go~~* × → *will go* ✓.
- Negative uses won't: *I won't be late.* (I will not be late.)

6.2 be going to

be going to is used to talk about **plans** and **predictions based on current evidence**.

Structure: + **am / is / are** + **going to** +

We are going to visit our grandma.

We are going to visit Grandma. (A plan already made)

Look at the clouds! It is going to rain.

Look at those clouds! It's going to rain. (Based on current signs)

will or going to?

- Spontaneous decision → **will**: *The phone is ringing. I'll get it.* (Phone rings, I decide now to answer.)
- Pre-planned intention → **going to**: *I'm going to study tonight.* (I have planned to study tonight.)

6.3 Present continuous for future plans

The present continuous can also express **scheduled future events** (especially when there is a definite time or place).

Structure: + am / is / are + -ing +

I am meeting Tom tomorrow.

I am meeting Tom tomorrow. (An appointment has been set)

We are flying to Tokyo on Friday.

We are flying to Tokyo on Friday. (Tickets are booked)

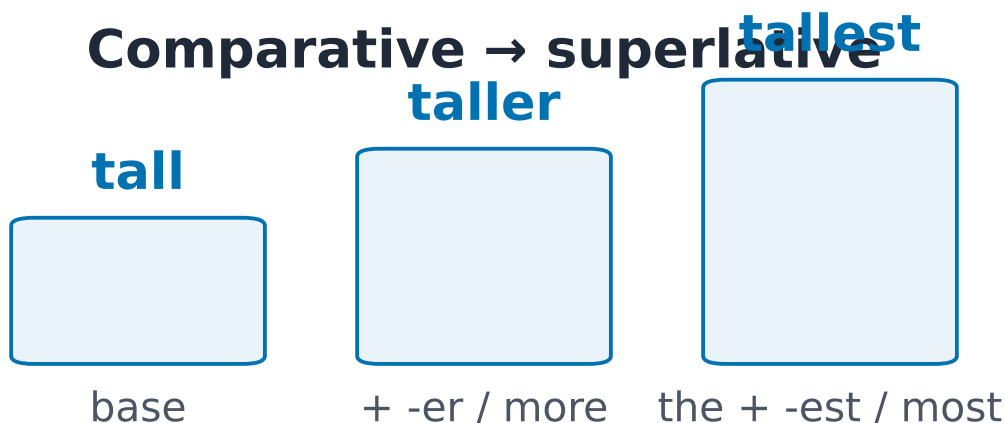
Note: This usage emphasizes that something is “already arranged,” which is similar to ‘be going to’; the key factor is having a **definite future time**.

Common Errors

- × ~~I go to Shanghai tomorrow.~~ → ✓ I **am going** to Shanghai tomorrow. / I **will go**... — The Chinese “I go to Shanghai tomorrow” lacks a future marker; English requires adding (will / going to / present continuous).
- × ~~We will going to visit grandma.~~ → ✓ We **are going to** visit... / We **will** visit... — will and be going to are separate structures and cannot be combined.
- × ~~She will comes tomorrow.~~ → ✓ She will **come** tomorrow. — After will, use the base form of the verb; no -s is added for any person.
- Exception: Timetables (trains, flights, classes) can use the simple present to express the future: *The train **leaves** at 9.* (The train leaves at nine o'clock.)

7 Comparatives and superlatives

7.1 Comparatives



Comparative and superlative as growing bars

Comparatives are used to compare **two things**, often used with **than** (compared to).

Short adjectives + -er; long adjectives use more + adjective.

My bag is bigger than yours.

My bag is bigger than yours.

This book is more interesting than that one.

This book is more interesting than that one.

Formation Rules:

- Monosyllabic: add -er → tall → taller, fast → faster.
- Ending in consonant + y: change y to i and add -er → happy → happier, easy → easier.
- Two or more syllables: use more → expensive → more expensive.
- Irregular: good → **better**, bad → **worse**, far → **further**.

Note: Avoid “double comparison”: ~~more bigger~~ × → bigger ✓.

7.2 Superlatives

Superlatives indicate “**the most ...**” (three or more), preceded by **the**.

Short adjectives + -est; long adjectives use the most + adjective.

He is the tallest in the class.

He is the tallest in the class.

This is the most expensive phone.

This is the most expensive phone.

Formation Rules:

- Monosyllabic: the + -est → fast → the fastest.
- Long adjectives: the most → the most beautiful.
- Irregular: good → **the best**, bad → **the worst**.

Note: Do not forget **the** before superlatives: ~~he is tallest~~ → he is **the** tallest.

7.3 as ... as

as + adjective + as means “as ... as ...”.

She is as tall as her mother.

She is as tall as her mother.

Negative **not as ... as** means “not as ... as ...”:

Today is not as hot as yesterday.

It is not as hot today as yesterday.

Note: Place the **base form of the adjective** (not the comparative) in the middle: ~~as taller as~~ × → as tall as ✓.

Common Errors

- × ~~It is more cheap.~~ → ✓ It is **cheaper**. — Use -er for monosyllabic adjectives, not more.
- × ~~He is taller than me a lot.~~ → ✓ He is **much taller** than me. — “A lot” translates to much, which goes **before** the comparative.
- × ~~My bag is bigger than your.~~ → ✓ ...bigger than **yours**. — Use yours / mine / hers (nominal possessive pronouns) after than.
- × ~~Beijing is bigger than any city in China.~~ → ✓ ...than any **other** city in China. — Do not forget other, otherwise it implies comparing itself to itself.

8 Articles

8.1 a / an

Choosing an article

a / an	the	(none)
one, not specific	the specific one	general / names
<i>a book · an apple</i>	<i>close the door</i>	<i>I like music</i>

Choosing an article: reference card grid

a and **an** are indefinite articles, used before **singular countable nouns** to mean “one (non-specific)”.

- **a** is used before **consonant sounds**: a book, a car, a university (pronounced /j/ sound).
- **an** is used before **vowel sounds**: an apple, an hour (h is silent).

I have a question.

I have a question.

She is an engineer.

She is an engineer.

Note: Look at the **pronunciation**, not the letter: an **hour** (h is silent → an), a **university** (pronounced /j/ → a).

8.2 the

the is the definite article, indicating **specificity** — both speaker and listener know exactly which one.

Please close the door.

Please close (this) door.

Common uses of the:

- When mentioned previously or referred to again: *I saw a cat. The cat was black.* (I saw a cat. That cat was black.)
- For unique things in the world: the sun, the moon.
- Before superlatives: the best, the tallest.

The sun is very bright today.

The sun is very bright today.

8.3 Zero Article

Sometimes **no article** (zero article) is placed before a noun:

- **Plural / uncountable nouns** expressing generalization: *I like music.* (I like music.) *Cats are cute.* (Cats are cute.)
- **Proper nouns**: names, most countries, cities: China, Tom, Beijing.
- Some fixed phrases: go to **school** / **bed** / **work** (indicating purpose, without the).

I go to school by bike.

I go to school by bike.

Water is important.

Water is important.

Note: Do not use **the** when plural / uncountable nouns express generalization: ~I like the music~~ (general sense) × → I like music ✓.

Common Errors

- × ~I want to be teacher.~ → ✓ I want to be **a** teacher. — Add a / an before professions; direct translation of Chinese “to be a teacher” often omits this.
- × ~I went to home.~ → ✓ I went **home**. — home is used as an adverb here: go home, get home; do not use to or the before it.
- × ~He plays the football.~ → ✓ He plays **football**. — No the before sports; but add the for instruments: play **the** piano / violin.
- Distinguish: go to **school** (attend school, purpose) vs go to **the** school (go to the school building, e.g., parents attending a meeting). Same logic applies to bed / hospital / work.

9 Countable and uncountable nouns

9.1 Countable vs Uncountable

Two kinds of noun

Countable	Uncountable
can be counted	no plural
<i>a book · two books</i>	<i>water · music</i>

Two kinds of noun: reference card grid

English nouns are divided into two categories:

- **Countable nouns:** can be counted, have singular and plural forms. a book → two books.
- **Uncountable nouns:** cannot be directly counted, have no plural form. water, music, money, information.

I bought three apples.

I bought three apples. (Countable)

I need some water.

I need some water. (Uncountable, no ~waters~)

Note

- Uncountable nouns take a **singular verb**: *The news is good.* (The news is good.)
- To count uncountable nouns, use measure words: a **glass of** water, a **piece of** information.

9.2 some and any



some and **any** mean “some”, used before plurals or uncountable nouns:

- **some**: used in **affirmative sentences** (also used in polite requests / invitations).
- **any**: used in **negative sentences** and **interrogative sentences**.

There are some eggs in the fridge.

There are some eggs in the fridge.

There isn't any milk.

There is no milk left.

Do you have any questions?

Do you have any questions?

Note: When offering drinks to others, *some* is commonly used to sound polite: *Would you like some tea?*

9.3 much / many / a lot of

Used to express “a lot”:

- **many** + **countable plural**: many books.
- **much** + **uncountable**: much water (mostly used in negative sentences / questions).
- **a lot of** + **both types** (most common in positive sentences).

There are many people here.

There are many people here.

We don't have much time.

We don't have much time left.

She has a lot of friends.

She has a lot of friends.

Note: In positive sentences, *much* is rarely used; instead use **a lot of**: ~I have much money~ → I have **a lot of** money.

Common Errors

- × ~informations / advices / homeworks / furnitures~ → ✓ information / advice / homework / furniture — These words are **uncountable** in English (although Chinese can say “several pieces of advice” or “pieces of furniture”). They never take a plural form.
- × ~a bread / a paper~ → ✓ **a piece of** bread / **a piece of** paper — Uncountable nouns require measure words to be counted.
- × ~How much apples do you want?~ → ✓ How **many** apples...? — Use *many* for countable plurals and *much* only for uncountable nouns.
- × ~There aren't some eggs.~ → ✓ There aren't **any** eggs — Replace *some* with *any* in negative sentences.

10 Modal verbs

10.1 can could ()

What the modal does

can	should	must
ability	advice	obligation
<i>I can swim</i>	<i>you should rest</i>	<i>you must stop</i>

What the modal does: reference card grid

can expresses **ability** or **possibility**; **could** is the past tense of *can*, and is also used for **more polite requests**. All modal verbs are followed by the **base form** of the verb.

I can swim.

I can swim.

She could read at four.

She could read at the age of four. (Past ability)

Could you help me, please?

Could you please help me? (Polite request)

Note

- After a modal verb, use the **base form**: ~can to swim~ × → can swim ✓.
- Negative: cannot / can't, could not / couldn't.

10.2 should ()

should expresses **advice** or “should”.

You should see a doctor.

You should see a doctor.

We shouldn't waste water.

We shouldn't waste water.

Note: *should* gives advice and is less forceful than *must*; it is also followed by the **base form** of the verb.

10.3 must have to ()

Both express “**must**”:

- **must**: Often indicates something the speaker considers **important**, or a rule.
- **have to**: Often indicates an **external requirement** (regulation, objective necessity).

You must wear a seatbelt.

You must wear a seatbelt.

I have to get up early.

I have to get up early.

Note

- **mustn't** = “**prohibited**”: *You mustn't smoke here.* (Smoking is prohibited here.)
- **don't have to** = “**not necessary**”: *You don't have to come.* (You don't need to come.)
- Note that their meanings are completely different: one means “forbidden,” the other means “not necessary.”

Common Errors

- × *~~You must to wear a helmet.~~* → ✓ You must **wear** a helmet — All modal verbs (*can* / *could* / *should* / *must*) are followed directly by the base form and never take *to*.
- × *~~She musts study harder.~~* → ✓ She **must** study harder — Modal verbs do not take a third-person singular *-s*.
- × Wanting to say “you don't need to come” but saying *~~You mustn't come.~~* → ✓ You **don't have to** come — *mustn't* means “forbidden,” while *don't have to* means “not necessary.” Their meanings are exactly opposite.
- × *~~Yesterday I must work late.~~* → ✓ Yesterday I **had to** work late — *must* has no past tense; use *had to* for past obligations.

11 Prepositions

11.1 (at / in / on)

Prepositions of time

at	on	in
a clock time	a day / date	month / year
<i>at 7 o'clock</i>	<i>on Monday</i>	<i>in July</i>

Prepositions of time: reference card grid

When indicating time, **at** / **in** / **on** each have specific uses:

- **at** + **specific time** / **point**: at 7 o'clock, at night, at the weekend.
- **on** + **specific day** / **date**: on Monday, on May 1st, on my birthday.
- **in** + **longer period**: in the morning, in July, in 2020, in winter.

The class starts at nine.

This class starts at nine o'clock.

We met on Friday.

We met on Friday.

My birthday is in May.

My birthday is in May.

Note: The scope increases from small to large: at (point) → on (day) → in (month / year / period).

11.2 (at / in / on)

When indicating location:

- **at** + **a specific point** / **place**: at the bus stop, at home, at school.
- **in** + **interior space**: in the room, in China, in a box.
- **on** + **surface** / **line**: on the table, on the wall, on the second floor.

She is at home.

She is at home.

The book is on the table.

The book is on the table.

There are fish in the river.

There are fish in the river.

11.3 (Prepositions of movement)

Indicating **direction** / **movement**:

- **to**: Towards a place. **into**: Entering inside. **out of**: Coming out from inside.
- **up** (upward) / **down** (downward) / **across** (cross over) / **through** (pass through the interior).

I go to work by bus.

I go to work by bus.

The cat jumped into the box.

The cat jumped into the box.

Note: *to* indicates “going somewhere,” so do not confuse it with *at* (being somewhere): go **to** school (go to school) vs be **at** school (be at school).

Common Errors

- × *in Monday* → ✓ **on Monday**; × *at July* → ✓ **in July** — Use *on* for specific days and *in* for months / years.
- × *in the morning of Monday* → ✓ **on Monday morning** — When referring to the morning / evening of a specific day, the preposition upgrades to *on*.
- × *I arrived to Beijing.* → ✓ I arrived **in** Beijing. / I arrived **at** the station — *arrive* does not take *to*; use *in* for large places and *at* for small locations.
- × *listen music* / *look the picture* / *wait him* → ✓ listen **to** music / look **at** the picture / wait **for** him — Although these verbs may not take prepositions in Chinese, the corresponding prepositions in English cannot be omitted.

12 Connecting ideas

12.1 and / but / or / so / because

Connecting words

and / but / or	so	because
join ideas	result	reason
<i>tea and coffee</i>	<i>tired, so I slept</i>	<i>... because it rained</i>

Connecting words: reference card grid

Conjunctions link two ideas together:

- **and** (and): Parallel, additive. **but** (but): Contrast, opposite.
- **or** (or): Choice. **so** (so): Result. **because** (because): Reason.

I was tired, so I went to bed.

I was tired, so I went to bed.

She stayed home because it was raining.

She stayed at home because it was raining.

Note: *so* introduces a **result**, while *because* introduces a **reason**; do not mix them up: Tired → **so** go to sleep; Slept → **because** tired.

12.2

Conditional sentences express “if... then...”:

- **Zero Conditional** (universal facts): If + , .
- **First Conditional** (future possibilities): If + , will + .

If you heat ice, it melts.

If you heat ice, it melts. (Universal fact → Zero Conditional)

If it rains, we will stay home.

If it rains, we will stay at home. (Future possibility → First Conditional)

Note: In clauses introduced by **if**, use the **present simple** even when referring to the future: ~~If it will rain~~ × → If it rains ✓.

12.3 Adverbs of Frequency

Adverbs of frequency indicate “how often”: always (100%) > usually > often > sometimes > rarely > never (0%).

Position Rules:

- Place them **before the main verb**.
- But place them **after the be verb**.

I always brush my teeth.

I always brush my teeth. (Before a lexical verb)

He is never late.

He is never late. (After a be verb)

Note: Adverbs of frequency go **before** lexical verbs and **after** be verbs: I **often** read; She is **often** busy.

Common Errors

- × ~~Because it was raining, so we stayed home.~~ → ✓ Because it was raining, we stayed home. / It was raining, **so** we stayed home. — In Chinese, “because... so...” appears as a pair, but in English, you can only keep **one** of *because* or *so*.
- × ~~Although he is rich, but he is not happy.~~ → ✓ Although he is rich, he is not happy. — Similarly, in the Chinese structure “although... but...”, you can only choose one of *although* or *but*.
- × ~~I like apples and I like bananas and I like oranges.~~ → ✓ I like apples, bananas **and** oranges. — When listing multiple items, separate them with commas and use *and* only before the final item.
- × ~~I play sometimes football.~~ → ✓ I **sometimes** play football. / I play football **sometimes**. — An adverb cannot be placed between a verb and its object.