

Verb phrases

HSK 3 Grammar

Use the examples with their context and limits. Recall a sentence before reading the model. Original teaching additions accompany examples adapted from Chinese Grammar Wiki (AllSet Learning, CC BY-NC-SA); see the course reference provenance.

难 + Verb (unpleasant to ...)

■ Bad taste differs from physical difficulty

- A drink tastes unpleasant although swallowing it is easy.
- **这个药很难喝。** – 难喝 evaluates the unpleasant taste.

■ Build the form

- The pattern in this lesson is **难 + Verb (unpleasant to ...)**. Locate it in the original interlinear examples below.
- Keep the words in their demonstrated positions; the pattern must fit the intended situation as well as the sentence form.

这个药很难吃。

zhè ge yào hěn nán chī

Word guide: 这 – this; 个 – (measure word); 药 – medicine; 很 – very; 难吃 – bad-tasting.

■ Read examples in context

这首歌很好听。

zhè shǒu gē hěn hǎo tīng

Word guide: 这 – this; 首 – (measure word); 歌 – song; 很 – very; 好听 – nice to hear.

- In the opening example, **这个药很难喝。**: 难喝 evaluates the unpleasant taste.
- Explain who acts, what is described and which time or group is relevant before choosing an English paraphrase.

■ Know the boundary

- 难喝 is an established word, not a promise that every 难 +verb means unpleasant.
- 难学 means difficult to learn; distinguish conventional evaluations such as 难听 from task difficulty.

■ Use the distinction

- 难喝 evaluates the unpleasant taste.
- 难喝 is an established word, not a promise that every 难 +verb means unpleasant. 难学 means difficult to learn; distinguish conventional evaluations such as 难听 from task difficulty.

■ Try it with help closed

A drink tastes unpleasant although swallowing it is easy. 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.

One possible response: 这个药很难喝。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 难喝 is an established word, not a promise that every 难 + verb means unpleasant.
- 难学 means difficult to learn; distinguish conventional evaluations such as 难听 from task difficulty.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

Verb + 了 + Duration (did for a length of time)

■ A duration differs from a clock time

- You describe the length of yesterday's sleep.
- 我睡了八个小时。 – 八个小时 measures how long the sleeping lasted.

■ Build the form

- The pattern in this lesson is **Verb + 了 + Duration (did for a length of time)**. Locate it in the original interlinear examples below.
- Keep the words in their demonstrated positions; the pattern must fit the intended situation as well as the sentence form.

我学了三年中文。

wǒ xué le sān nián Zhōng wén

Word guide: 我 – I; 学 – study; 三 – three; 年 – year; 中文 – Chinese.

■ Read examples in context

他睡了八个小时。

tā shuì le bā ge xiǎo shí

Word guide: 他 – he; 睡 – sleep; 八 – eight; 个 – (measure word); 小时 – hour.

- In the opening example, 我睡了八个小时。: 八个小时 measures how long the sleeping lasted.
- Explain who acts, what is described and which time or group is relevant before choosing an English paraphrase.

■ Know the boundary

- 八点 names a clock time instead.
- A completed duration alone does not determine whether a longer habit continues: 我学了三年中文 reports three years without automatically proving that study has ended forever.

■ Use the distinction

- 八个小时 measures how long the sleeping lasted.
- 八点 names a clock time instead. A completed duration alone does not determine whether a longer habit continues: 我学了三年中文 reports three years without automatically proving that study has ended forever.

■ Try it with help closed

You describe the length of yesterday's sleep. 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.

One possible response: 我睡了八个小时。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 八点 names a clock time instead.
- A completed duration alone does not determine whether a longer habit continues: 我学了三年中文 reports three years without automatically proving that study has ended forever.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

Verb + 了 + Duration + 了 (have been ...-ing)

■ A duration is relevant up to now

- You have studied Chinese for three years and are still studying.
- 我学了三年中文了。 – The final 了 makes the elapsed three-year period relevant now; continued study is natural here.

■ Build the form

- The pattern in this lesson is **Verb + 了 + Duration + 了 (have been ...-ing)**. Locate it in the original interlinear examples below.
- Keep the words in their demonstrated positions; the pattern must fit the intended situation as well as the sentence form.

我学了三年中文了。

wǒ xué le sān nián Zhōng wén le

Word guide: 我 – I; 学 – study; 三 – three; 年 – year; 中文 – Chinese.

■ Read examples in context

- In the opening example, 我学了三年中文了。: The final 了 makes the elapsed three-year period relevant now; continued study is natural here.
- Explain who acts, what is described and which time or group is relevant before choosing an English paraphrase.

■ Know the boundary

- The context supplies continuation.
- Compare 我等了一个小时了, 现在终于等到了: the wait can end at the reference point. Two 了 do not guarantee that an action continues indefinitely afterward.

■ Use the distinction

- The final 了 makes the elapsed three-year period relevant now; continued study is natural here.
- The context supplies continuation. Compare 我等了一个小时了, 现在终于等到了: the wait can end at the reference point. Two 了 do not guarantee that an action continues indefinitely afterward.

■ Try it with help closed

You have studied Chinese for three years and are still studying. 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.

One possible response: 我学了三年中文了。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- The context supplies continuation.
- Compare 我等了一个小时了, 现在终于等到了: the wait can end at the reference point. Two 了 do not guarantee that an action continues indefinitely afterward.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

没办法 + Verb (no way to / can't)

■ A refusal names a practical constraint

- You would like to help but cannot leave work today.
- 今天我没办法帮你。 – The speaker presents helping today as unavailable under the circumstances.

■ Build the form

- The pattern in this lesson is **没办法 + Verb (no way to / can't)**. Locate it in the original interlinear examples below.
- Keep the words in their demonstrated positions; the pattern must fit the intended situation as well as the sentence form.

我没办法帮你。

wǒ méi bàn fǎ bāng nǐ

Word guide: 我 – I; 没办法 – no way; 帮 – help; 你 – you.

■ Read examples in context

没办法，只能等。

méi bàn fǎ zhǐ néng děng

Word guide: 没办法 – nothing to be done; 只能 – can only; 等 – wait.

- In the opening example, **今天我没办法帮你。**: The speaker presents helping today as unavailable under the circumstances.
- Explain who acts, what is described and which time or group is relevant before choosing an English paraphrase.

■ Know the boundary

- 没办法 does not necessarily describe permanent inability.
- 没办法，我只好等 may accept a current constraint; explain the obstacle where the listener needs it.

■ Use the distinction

- The speaker presents helping today as unavailable under the circumstances.
- 没办法 does not necessarily describe permanent inability. 没办法，我只好等 may accept a current constraint; explain the obstacle where the listener needs it.

■ Try it with help closed

You would like to help but cannot leave work today. 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.

One possible response: 今天我没办法帮你。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 没办法 does not necessarily describe permanent inability.
- 没办法，我只好等 may accept a current constraint; explain the obstacle where the listener needs it.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

Verb reduplication (do a bit / give it a try)

■ A short trial is offered politely

- You ask a friend to look briefly at a draft.
- 你看看这个吧。 – Reduplication presents looking as a brief, lighter action.

■ Build the form

- The pattern in this lesson is **Verb reduplication (do a bit / give it a try)**. Locate it in the original interlinear examples below.
- Keep the words in their demonstrated positions; the pattern must fit the intended situation as well as the sentence form.

你看看这个。

nǐ kàn kan zhè ge

Word guide: 你 – you; 看看 – have a look; 这 – this; 个 – (measure word).

■ Read examples in context

我们休息休息吧。

wǒ men xiū xi xiū xi ba

Word guide: 我们 – we; 休息 – rest; 休息 – rest.

- In the opening example, 你看看这个吧。: Reduplication presents looking as a brief, lighter action.
- Explain who acts, what is described and which time or group is relevant before choosing an English paraphrase.

■ Know the boundary

- Use 看看 or 看一看 for this single-syllable verb, and 休息休息 for 休息.
- Not every verb naturally reduplicates; completed trials can use 看了看 rather than adding 了 anywhere.

■ Use the distinction

- Reduplication presents looking as a brief, lighter action.
- Use 看看 or 看一看 for this single-syllable verb, and 休息休息 for 休息. Not every verb naturally reduplicates; completed trials can use 看了看 rather than adding 了 anywhere.

■ Try it with help closed

You ask a friend to look briefly at a draft. 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.

One possible response: 你看看这个吧。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- Use 看看 or 看一看 for this single-syllable verb, and 休息休息 for 休息.
- Not every verb naturally reduplicates; completed trials can use 看了看 rather than adding 了 anywhere.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

很 + Verb (feeling verbs with 很)

■ A feeling can take a degree word

- You express how much you like a new subject.
- **我很喜欢中文。** – 很 modifies the degree of liking, not the number of lessons taken.

■ Build the form

- The pattern in this lesson is **很 + Verb (feeling verbs with 很)**. Locate it in the original interlinear examples below.
- Keep the words in their demonstrated positions; the pattern must fit the intended situation as well as the sentence form.

我很喜欢你。

wǒ hěn xǐ huan nǐ

Word guide: 我 – I; 很 – really; 喜欢 – like; 你 – you.

■ Read examples in context

我很想家。

wǒ hěn xiǎng jiā

Word guide: 我 – I; 很 – really; 想 – miss; 家 – home.

- In the opening example, **我很喜欢中文。**: 很 modifies the degree of liking, not the number of lessons taken.
- Explain who acts, what is described and which time or group is relevant before choosing an English paraphrase.

■ Know the boundary

- Some mental or evaluative verbs take degree words, including 了解 as well as 喜欢.
- A plain physical action such as 吃 does not take 很 in the same degree pattern.

■ Use the distinction

- 很 modifies the degree of liking, not the number of lessons taken.
- Some mental or evaluative verbs take degree words, including 了解 as well as 喜欢.
A plain physical action such as 吃 does not take 很 in the same degree pattern.

■ Try it with help closed

You express how much you like a new subject. 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.

One possible response: 我很喜欢中文。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- Some mental or evaluative verbs take degree words, including 了解 as well as 喜欢.
- A plain physical action such as 吃 does not take 很 in the same degree pattern.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.