

Comparing similar time words

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.

以后 vs 然后 vs 后来 (then / after)

■ A plan's next step differs from a later story

- You first eat and then plan to study; later you describe what actually happened.
- **先吃饭，然后学习。后来我们又复习了一遍。** – 然后 gives the next step, while 后来 introduces the later part of the account.

■ Build the form

- The pattern in this lesson is **以后 vs 然后 vs 后来 (then / after)**. 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.

先吃饭，然后睡觉。

xiān chī fàn rán hòu shuì jiào

Word guide: 先 – first; 吃饭 – eat; 然后 – then; 睡觉 – sleep.

■ Read examples in context

后来我们没去。

hòu lái wǒ men méi qù

Word guide: 后来 – later; 我们 – we; 没 – not; 去 – go.

- In the opening example, **先吃饭，然后学习。后来我们又复习了一遍。**: 然后 gives the next step, while 后来 introduces the later part of the account.
- Explain who acts, what is described and which time or group is relevant before choosing an English paraphrase.

■ Know the boundary

- 以后 can follow a reference event: 吃饭以后学习.
- A future plan does not normally use 后来 to mean next; choose from temporal relationship, not the shared English word then.

■ Use the distinction

- 然后 gives the next step, while 后来 introduces the later part of the account.
- 以后 can follow a reference event: 吃饭以后学习. A future plan does not normally use 后来 to mean next; choose from temporal relationship, not the shared English word then.

■ Try it with help closed

You first eat and then plan to study; later you describe what actually happened. 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: 先吃饭，然后学习。后来我们又复习了一遍。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 以后 can follow a reference event: 吃饭以后学习.
- A future plan does not normally use 后来 to mean next; choose from temporal relationship, not the shared English word then.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.