

Verbs

Ref Hsk4 Grammar

让 / 叫 / 请 / 使—making someone do something

These **causative** verbs slot a **person** between the verb and what they end up doing —”make / let / ask / cause someone to ….” Sort them by tone: 让 (everyday ”make / let”), 叫 (colloquial ”tell”), 请 (polite ”ask / invite”), 使 (formal ”cause”). At HSK 4 the result can be a verb *or* an adjective.

Structure: Subject + 让 / 叫 / 请 / 使 + Person + Predicate

{zh: 你 |nǐ|you / 为什么 |wèi shén me|why / 不 |bù|not / 让 |ràng|let / 我 |wǒ|me / 去 |qù|go / ? }

Why won't you let me go?

{zh: 这部 |zhè bù|this / 电影 |diàn yǐng|film / 让 |ràng|makes / 人 |rén|people / 很 |hěn|very / 感动 |gǎn dòng|moved / 。 }

This film is really moving.

{zh: 他 |tā|his / 的 |de / 演讲 |yǎn jiǎng|speech / 使 |shǐ|made / 听众 |tīng zhòng|the audience / 非常 |fēi cháng|very / 激动 |jī dòng|excited / 。 }

His speech made the audience very excited.

Remember: four causatives, sorted by politeness: **使 (formal)** → **让 (neutral)** → **叫 (casual)** → **请 (polite)**. New at HSK 4: the result can be an **adjective** of feeling — 让人感动 (”makes people moved”), 使人激动 (”excites people”).

Watch out

- 让 covers **both** ”make” and ”let” —context decides which.

要看 / 得看—”it depends on”

得看 / 要看—literally ”have to look at”—is the everyday ”it depends on ….” The factor it hinges on usually carries a question word.

Structure: 这 / 那 + 要看 / 得看 + Factor

{zh: 这 |zhè|that / 得看 |děi kàn|depends on / 你 |nǐ|your / 的 |de / 时间 |shí jiān|schedule / 。 }

That depends on your schedule.

{zh: 去不去 |qù bu qù|whether I go / 得看 |děi kàn|depends on / 我 |wǒ|my / 的 |de / 心情 |xīn qíng|mood / 。 }

Whether I'll go depends on my mood.

Remember: 得看 = ”(I’ll) have to look at…” = ”it depends on…”. The deciding factor almost always holds a question word: 得看天气怎么样, 得看他愿不愿意. Quick fixed reply: 看情况 (”depends on the situation”).

Watch out

- 得 here is *děi* (”have to”), not the structural 得 (*de*) of complements.

好像—”it seems, as if”

好像 softens a statement to an **impression** —”it seems, looks like, as if.” With a subject it’s ”X seems …”; with no subject it’s ”it seems that ….” It can pair with 似的 (”as if”) at the end.

Structure: (Subject +) 好像 + Predicate

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 好像 |hǎo xiàng|seems / 是 |shì|to be / 英国人 |Yīng guó rén|British / 。 }

He seems to be British.

{zh: 好像 |hǎo xiàng|it seems / 要 |yào|going to / 下雨 |xià yǔ|rain / 了 |le / 。 }

It looks like it’s going to rain.

Remember: 好像 = ”seems / as if” —a soft hedge, literally ”much resembles.” No subject → ”it seems that…” (好像有人敲门). Its formal twin is 似乎; don’t mix it up with 以为 (a belief that turned out *wrong*).

Watch out

- It’s softer than a flat statement —it signals you’re not fully sure.

……在于……—”lies in”

在于 pins down where something’s **essence or key** rests —”lies in, consists in, is a matter of.” It’s a formal, essay-style verb.

Structure: Topic + 在于 + Key Point

{zh: 成功 |chéng gōng|success / 在于 |zài yú|lies in / 坚持 |jiān chí|perseverance / 。 }

Success lies in perseverance.

{zh: 礼物 |lǐ wù|a gift / 在于 |zài yú|is about / 心意 |xīn yì|the thought / , 不 |bù|not / 在于 |zài yú|about / 贵重 |guì zhòng|how costly / 。 }

A gift is about the thought, not how costly it is.

Remember: 在于 = ”the key lies IN…” (在”at” + 于”in”) —points to where the heart of the matter sits. With a *person* it means ”is up to”: 去不去在于你自己 (”whether to go is up to you”).

Watch out

- Formal and written —in speech you'd say 主要是 or 看 instead.

以为—”(mistakenly) think, assume”

Chinese has a dedicated verb for a belief that turned out **wrong**: 以为. Whatever follows 以为 is the *incorrect* idea you held —the sentence usually carries a quiet ”…but I was wrong.”

Structure: Subject + 以为 + (wrong belief)

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 以为 |yǐ wéi|thought / 他 |tā|he / 是 |shì|was / 德国人 |Dé guó rén|German / 。 }

I thought he was German (he isn't).

{zh: 别 |bié|don't / 以为 |yǐ wéi|think / 我 |wǒ|I / 不 |bù|don't / 知道 |zhī dào|know / 。 }

Don't think I don't know.

Remember: 以为 = a belief that proved **WRONG** (”I thought X…turns out not”). For a belief you simply hold, use 觉得 / 想. The giveaway opener: 我还以为… (”I'd assumed (wrongly) that…”).

Watch out

- Swapping 以为 for 觉得 changes the meaning —觉得 makes no claim that you were mistaken.

通过—”through; to pass”

通过 wears two hats: as a **verb**, ”go through (a place) / pass (an exam)” ; as a **preposition**, ”by means of, via.”

Structure: 通过 + Place / Exam (verb) · 通过 + Method / Agent , …… (preposition)

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 通过 |tōng guò|passed / 了 |le / 这个 |zhè ge|this / 考试 |kǎo shì|exam / 。 }

I passed this exam.

{zh: 我们 |wǒ men|we / 通过 |tōng guò|through / 他 |tā|his / 的 |de / 朋友 |péng you|friend / 找到 |zhǎo dào|found / 了 |le / 他 |tā|him / 。 }

We found him through his friend.

Remember: 通过 = ”pass through” —through an *exam/place* (verb: 通过考试) or through a *method/middleman* (preposition: 通过朋友”via a friend”). Compare 经过, which leans on ”after a process.”

Watch out

- As a preposition it sets up a means before the main clause: 通过努力, 他成功了.

来自—”come from”

来自 is one compact verb for a source or origin —”come / originate from.” It’s more formal than 从…来, perfect for introductions, and it stretches to abstract sources too.

Structure: Subject + 来自 + Place / Source

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 来自 |lái zì|come from / 中国 |Zhōng guó|China / 。 }

I’m from China.

{zh: 我 |wǒ|my / 的 |de / 这个 |zhè ge|this / 想法 |xiǎng fǎ|idea / 来自 |lái zì|comes from / 生活 |shēng huó|everyday life / 。 }

This idea of mine comes from everyday life.

Remember: 来自 = ”comes from” in one tidy word (来”come” + 自”from”). Great for intros (我来自…) and abstract origins (灵感来自…, ”inspiration comes from…”). Casual version: 从…来.

Watch out

- It takes its source *directly*, with no 从: 来自中国, not 从来自中国.

来—the ”dummy” verb

A bare 来 can stand in for a more specific verb —”(let me) do it, your turn, have a go” — when the real action is obvious from context. It’s a short phrase ending in 来 (sometimes 吧), usually with 我 or 你.

Structure: (让 +) Subject + 来 (+ 吧)

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 来 |lái|do it / 吧 |ba / 。 }

Let me do it.

{zh: 你 |nǐ|you / 写 |xiě|write / 得 |de / 好看 |hǎo kàn|nicely / , 你 |nǐ|you / 来 |lái|do it / 吧 |ba / 。 }

You write nicely —you do it.

Remember: this 来 does NOT mean ”come” —it’s a placeholder for the obvious verb, like English ”I’ll get this.” 我来 (”I’ll do it”), 你来 (”your turn”), 让他自己来 (”let him have a go”).

Watch out

- Only use it when the real action is clear from context —otherwise name the verb.