

Auxiliary verbs

Ref Hsk4 Grammar

不用 — “don’t need to, no need”

不用 means “(there’s) no need to, don’t have to” — it lifts an obligation. The classic trap: the negative of 要 (“need to”) is 不用, *not* 不要 (which means “don’t / don’t want”).

Structure: Subject + 不用 + Verb Phrase

{zh: 不用 |bú yòng|no need to / 担心 |dān xīn|worry / 。 }

No need to worry.

{zh: 孩子 |hái zi|children / 不用 |bú yòng|don’t need to / 买 |mǎi|buy / 票 |piào|a ticket / 。 }

Children don’t need to buy a ticket.

Remember: 要 (“need to”) → 不用 (“needn’t”), NOT 不要. 不用 cancels a *need*; 不要 is a *prohibition* (“don’t”); 不能 = “can’t”; 不应该 = “shouldn’t.” Pick by which one you’re denying.

Watch out

- 不用谢 (“you’re welcome”) is literally “no need to thank” — the same 不用.

得 + 动词 — “have to, must”

The auxiliary 得 — read **děi** here — is a blunt, spoken “have to, must,” a practical necessity.

Structure: Subject + 得 + Verb Phrase

{zh: 我们 |wǒ men|we / 得 |děi|have to / 走 |zǒu|go / 了 |le / 。 }

We have to go now.

{zh: 时间 |shí jiān|the time / 不早 |bù zǎo|getting late / 了 |le / , 我 |wǒ|I / 得 |děi|have to / 回家 |huí jiā|go home / 了 |le / 。 }

It’s getting late — I have to head home.

Remember: 得 = **děi** = “gotta.” Its negative borrows 不用 (“needn’t”), *not* 不得. And mind the reading: this is **děi** (“must”), a world away from the *de* of complements (跑得快) or the particles 的 / 地.

Watch out

- One character, three readings: děi (must), de (complement marker), dé (得到 “obtain”). Context picks it.