

Verb phrases

Ref Hsk4 Grammar

并 + 动词—”and (also)”

Between two verb phrases, **并** links them as ”and, and also.” It’s picky: it joins **verbs or clauses** (never nouns —that’s 和’s job), usually two-syllable verbs, with a considered, written ring.

Structure: Verb Phrase 1 + 并 + Verb Phrase 2

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 同意 |tóng yì|agree with / 并 |bìng|and / 支持 |zhī chí|support / 你 |nǐ|your / 的 |de / 决定 |jué dìng|decision / 。 }

I agree with and support your decision.

{zh: 会议 |huì yì|the meeting / 讨论 |tǎo lùn|discussed / 并 |bìng|and / 通过 |tōng guò|approved / 了 |le / 计划 |jì huà|the plan / 。 }

The meeting discussed and approved the plan.

Remember: **并** joins verbs/clauses, **和** joins nouns. ”Discussed 并 approved” (verbs) ; ”tea 和 coffee” (nouns) . 并 is the formal ”and” for actions.

Watch out

- Don’t use 并 between nouns —茶并咖啡 .

少 + 动词—”do …less”

少 before a verb means do **less** of it —the staple of advice and gentle scolding. The bit that flips for English speakers: 少 comes **before** the verb, where English puts ”less” after.

Structure: 少 + Verb (+ Object)

{zh: 请 |qǐng|please / 少 |shǎo|less / 放 |fàng|add / 点 |diǎn|a bit of / 盐 |yán|salt / 。 }

Use a bit less salt, please.

{zh: 少 |shǎo|less / 说 |shuō|talk / 废话 |fèi huà|nonsense / ! }

Quit the babbling!

Remember: 少 / 多 go **BEFORE** the verb —少喝水 (”drink less water”), the reverse of English order. It softens a blunt ”don’t”: 少管闲事 (”mind your own business,” lit. ”meddle less”).

Watch out

- Never 喝少水—the amount-word leads: 少喝水, 多吃饭.

多 + 动词—”do ... more”

多 before a verb means do **more** of it. Like its twin 少, it sits **before** the verb —exactly where English puts ”more” *after* (”eat more” → 多吃).

Structure: 多 + Verb (+ Object)

{zh: 多 |duō|more / 吃 |chī|eat / 点 |diǎn|a bit / 。 }

Eat a bit more.

{zh: 爷爷 |yé ye|grandpa / , 你 |nǐ|you / 要 |yào|should / 多 |duō|more / 出去 |chū qù|go out / 走走 |zǒu zou|for walks / 。 }

Grandpa, you should go out for walks more.

Remember: ”eat more” flips to ”more-eat” (多吃). 多 and 少 both lead the verb —that front position is the whole trick, and it’s the opposite of English.

Watch out

- It’s the mirror of 少—both are everyday advice words (多喝水, 少熬夜).

由 + Person + 动词—naming who does it

由 spotlights **who is responsible** for an action —”(it’s) for X to do, handled by X.” It’s at home in formal and business contexts.

Structure: Topic + 由 + Person + Verb

{zh: 这 |zhè|this / 件 |jiàn / 事 |shì|matter / 由 |yóu / 我 |wǒ|me / 负责 |fù zé|is handled by / 。 }

I’m responsible for this matter.

{zh: 这个 |zhè ge|this / 项目 |xiàng mù|project / 由 |yóu|by / 小李 |Xiǎo Lǐ|Xiao Li / 来 |lái / 完成 |wán chéng|to be done / 。 }

This project is to be done by Xiao Li.

Remember: 由 X = ”it’s X’s to handle.” It assigns the doer or the responsibility —这事由我负责 (”I’ll take care of it”), 由你做主 (”it’s your call”). Formal in tone.

Watch out

- Don’t confuse it with the passive 被—由 assigns *responsibility*, not ”suffered by.”

并且—”moreover, and also”

并且 joins verb phrases or clauses —”and, moreover.” Plain, it just means ”and” (like 并); with 也 / 还 it means ”**moreover**,” pushing the first idea a step further.

Structure: VP1 + 并且 + VP2 · VP1 + 并且 + 也 / 还 + VP2

{zh: 这个 |zhè ge|this / 方法 |fāng fǎ|method / 简单 |jiǎn dān|simple / , 并且 |bìng qiě|and also / 有效 |yǒu xiào|effective / 。 }

This method is simple, and effective too.

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 通知 |tōng zhī|told / 了 |le / 所有人 |suǒ yǒu rén|everyone / , 并且 |bìng qiě|moreover / 还 |hái|also / 准备 |zhǔn bèi|prepared / 了 |le / 材料 |cái liào|the materials / 。 }

I told everyone, and moreover prepared the materials.

Remember: 并且 = "and (what's more)." With 也 / 还 it escalates ("moreover, on top of that"). It's the more written cousin of 而且.

Watch out

- In the 并且...也/还 escalation, you can't shrink it to a bare 并.

从来 + 不 / 没—"never"

从来 with a negative means "never"—and the choice of negative matters. 从来 + 不 = "never (as a rule, by habit)"; 从来 + 没 (有) + Verb + 过 = "have never (done it in my life)." In speech both shorten to 从.

Structure: Subject + 从来 + 不 + VP · Subject + 从来 + 没 (有) + Verb + 过

{zh: 她 |tā|she / 从来 |cóng lái|never / 不 |bù / 喝酒 |hē jiǔ|drinks / 。 }

She never drinks.

{zh: 她 |tā|she / 从来 |cóng lái|never / 没 |méi|has / 见 |jiàn|met / 过 |guo / 她 |tā|her / 妈妈 |mā ma|mother / 。 }

She has never met her mother.

Remember: 从来不 = "never (habit/rule)"; 从来没...过 = "never (in experience)," with the experiential 过. Habit → 不; lifetime experience → 没...过. Both can shrink to 从不 / 从没.

Watch out

- Don't drop the 过 in the experience version: 从来没见过 , not 从来没见.

值得 + 动词—"worth ...ing"

值得 says an action is **worth** doing—it goes before a verb. Keep it apart from money: 值得 is about whether *doing* something pays off; for cash value you want plain 值.

Structure: (Subject +) 值得 + Verb

{zh: 这个 |zhè ge|this / 想法 |xiǎng fǎ|idea / 值得 |zhí de|worth / 考虑 |kǎo lù|considering / 。 }

This idea is worth considering.

{zh: 这 |zhè|this / 本 |běn / 书 |shū|book / 很 |hěn|well / 值得 |zhí de|worth / 一看 |yí kàn|a read / 。 }

This book is well worth a read.

Remember: 值得 = worth DOING (an action); 值 = worth MONEY. 值得一看 (“worth a look”), 值得学习 (“worth learning from”) —but 这个值一百块 (“this is worth 100 kuai”).

Watch out

- Follow 值得 with a verb, not a price —for price, use 值.

动词 + 到 + Time —“(do) until”

到 after a verb, plus a time or event, works like “**until**.” It often takes 一直 to stress the unbroken stretch. The structural catch: when the verb has an object, you **repeat the verb**.

Structure: (一直 +) Verb + 到 + Time / Event · Verb + Obj + Verb + 到 + Time

{zh: 我们 |wǒ men|we / 在 |zài|at / 酒吧 |jiǔ bā|the bar / 一直 |yì zhí|right / 聊 |liáo|chatted / 到 |dào|until / 半夜 |bàn yè|midnight / 。 }

We chatted at the bar until midnight.

{zh: 她 |tā|she / 写 |xiě|did / 作业 |zuò yè|homework / 写 |xiě|until / 到 |dào / 十二点半 |shí èr diǎn bàn|12:30 / 。 }

She did homework until 12:30.

Remember: with an object, repeat the verb: 写作业**写**到十二点 (do-homework, do-until-12). A bare 写作业到…is wrong. 一直…到 underlines that the action ran the whole way to that point.

Watch out

- The repeated-verb rule trips everyone —say the verb once for the object, once for the 到 + time.

害得—“cause (trouble), make (badly)”

害得 (or just 害) pins the blame on something for a **bad outcome** —“(it) caused / led to (something bad) for me.” There’s always a note of complaint, and the cause comes before 害得.

Structure: Reason , 害 (得) + Undesirable Situation

{zh: 下午 |xià wǔ|in the afternoon / 喝 |hē|drank / 了 |le / 两 |liǎng|two / 杯 |bēi / 咖啡 |kā fēi|coffees / , 害得 |hài de|which kept / 我 |wǒ|me / 晚上 |wǎn shang|at night / 睡不着 |shuì bu zháo|from sleeping / 。 }

I had two coffees, which kept me from sleeping at night.

{zh: 你 |nǐ|you / 害得 |hài de|made / 我们 |wǒ men|us / 都 |dōu|all / 迟到 |chí dào|late / 了 |le / 。 }

You made us all late.

Remember: 害 = "harm," so 害得 always blames —"…which (annoyingly) made me…" Reserve it for *bad* results; the 得 can drop (害我迟到了).

Watch out

- Never use it for a good outcome —for a neutral "make/cause," use 让 / 使.

离合词—separable (verb-object) words

A surprising number of "verbs" are secretly **verb + object** pairs —见面 ("meet" = see-face), 睡觉 ("sleep" = sleep-a-sleep), 帮忙 ("help" = do-a-favour), 结婚 ("marry" = tie-marriage). Other words slot **between** the two halves, and you **can't** add another object after the whole word.

Structure: Verb + (insert) + Object

{zh: 我们 |wǒ men|we / 见 |jiàn|have met / 过 |guo / 面 |miàn / 。 }

We've met before.

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 帮 |bāng|did / 了 |le / 我 |wǒ|me / 一个 |yí ge|a / 忙 |máng|favour / 。 }

He did me a favour.

Remember: a separable word is **verb + its own object stuck together** (见 + 面). Inserts (了 / 过 / a number-phrase) go *between* the halves —睡了一觉, 结过婚—and you **can't** bolt a new object on the end: 跟你见面, never 见面你.

Watch out

- This is *the* classic error: 我想见面你 → 我想跟你见面. The "object" slot is already taken by 面.

动词 + 着 + 动词 + 着 + 就…—"while …ing, suddenly"

Double up **Verb + 着** to set a rolling background action; **就** then springs the next event —"as one was …ing, …(suddenly) happened." It catches a turn that sneaks up *during* the action, often before you notice.

Structure: Verb + 着 + Verb + 着 + 就 + Result + 了

{zh: 走 |zǒu|walking / 着 |zhe / 走 |zǒu|walking / 着 |zhe / , 就 |jiù|then / 到家 |dào jiā|got home / 了 |le / 。 }

Walking along, before we knew it we were home.

{zh: 她 |tā|she / 说 |shuō|talking / 着 |zhe / 说 |shuō|talking / 着 |zhe / , 就 |jiù|suddenly / 哭 |kū|cried / 了 |le / 。 }

As she talked, she suddenly started crying.

Remember: V 着 V 着就... = "as I kept ...ing, before I knew it ...!" The doubled 着 keeps an action rolling; 就 + 了 springs the surprise that crept up during it (走着走着就到了).

Watch out

- Both 着 verbs are the *same* ongoing action; 就 introduces the new thing that emerged from it.