

# Complements

Ref Hsk4 Grammar

## 动词 + 起来—”up; gather; start to”

The complement **起来** does three everyday jobs. Literally **”up”** (站起来”stand up”); figuratively **”gather / put away”** (收起来”tidy away,” 存起来”save up,” 藏起来”hide”); and **”start to”** (唱起来”burst into song”). The **”gather”** sense loves a **把** sentence.

**Structure:** Verb + 起来 · 把 + Object + Verb + 起来

{zh: 把 |bǎ / 你 |nǐ|your / 的 |de / 玩具 |wán jù|toys / 都 |dōu|all / 收 |shōu|put / 起来 |qǐ lái|away / 。 }

*Put all your toys away.*

{zh: 大家 |dà jiā|everyone / 唱 |chàng|start / 起来 |qǐ lái|singing / , 跳 |tiào|start / 起来 |qǐ lái|dancing / ! }

*Everyone, start singing and dancing!*

**Remember:** picture 起来 as **”up and into action”**: literal up (站起来), gather *up* and stow away (收起来, 藏起来), and *kick off* an action (唱起来, 想起来”it comes *up* to mind = recall”). The gather sense pairs with **把**.

### Watch out

- 想起来 (”recall”) vs 想出来 (”think up”) —the complement changes the meaning; don’t swap them.

## 动词 + 来 / 去—direction complements

Add **来** (”towards me”) or **去** (”away from me”) to show **which way** the action moves relative to the speaker. They fuse into compounds 一进来, 出去, 过来, 回去.

**Structure:** Verb + 来 / 去 · Verb + compound

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I’m / 在 |zài / 楼上 |lóu shàng|upstairs / , 你 |nǐ|you / 上来 |shàng lái|come up / 。 }

*I’m upstairs —come up.*

{zh: 可以 |kě yǐ|may / 带 |dài|bring / 朋友 |péng you|friends / 过来 |guò lái|over / 吗 |ma / ? }

*Can I bring some friends over?*

**Remember:** **来** = toward me, **去** = away from me (进来”come in” / 进去”go in”). The trap: a **place** object slots *between* the verb and 来 / 去—回美国去 / 回美国, never 回去美国.

### Watch out

- That place-in-the-middle rule is the classic slip: 回家来 , 回来家 .

## 动词 / 形容词 + 起来—”start to / seems”

A second life for **起来**. After an **adjective**, it marks a quality **beginning to set in** — ”starts to get ….” After a **perception verb**, it means ”(seems) …when you do it” — 看起来 (”looks”), 听起来 (”sounds”), 吃起来 (”tastes”).

**Structure:** Adjective + 起来 + 了 · Perception verb + 起来 + Adjective

{zh: 天气 |tiān qì|the weather / 热 |rè|hot / 起来 |qǐ lái|getting / 了 |le / 。 }

*The weather’s starting to get hot.*

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 看 |kàn|looks / 起来 |qǐ lái / 很 |hěn|very / 友好 |yǒu hǎo|friendly / 。 }

*He looks very friendly.*

**Remember:** Adj + 起来 = a change **CATCHING** (热起来了”turning hot”); 看/听/吃 + 起来 = ”looks/sounds/tastes.” The first catches 越来越 right at the moment it starts; the second is the sense-verb frame.

### Watch out

- Adj + 起来 marks the *onset*, so it usually closes with 了 (”starting to…now”).

## 动词 + 得 / 不 + 结果—potential complements

Slot **得** (”can”) or **不** (”can’t”) between a verb and its result to say whether that result is **achievable**. They’re built from result complements (懂, 完, 到, 见, 清楚). The object can follow the complement or be fronted.

**Structure:** Verb + 得 / 不 + Complement

{zh: 你 |nǐ|you / 听 |tīng|hear / 得 |de|can / 懂 |dǒng|understand / 上海话 |Shàng hǎi huà|Shanghainese / 吗 |ma / ? }

*Can you understand Shanghainese?*

{zh: 这种 |zhè zhǒng|this kind of / 手机 |shǒu jī|phone / 现在 |xiàn zài|now / 买 |mǎi|buy / 不 |bù|can’t / 到 |dào|get / 了 |le / 。 }

*You can’t get this kind of phone any more.*

**Remember:** 得 = can, 不 = can’t, **wedged into the verb** (听得懂 / 听不懂, 做得完 / 做不完). It asks whether you can *reach the result* —different from 能 (”be allowed / have the chance”).

### Watch out

- Negate with the 不 form, not 不能 + verb: 看不懂 (more natural than 不能看懂).