

Basic/Simple Sentence Patterns

Ref Hsk4 Grammar

连…都…—”even”

连…都 (也) spotlights a surprising case —”even ….” The catch English speakers miss: you must keep **both** parts (English drops to just ”even”). The highlighted item —even an object —jumps to the **front**.

Structure: 连 + Subject / Object + 都 (+ 不 / 没) + Verb

{zh: 这个 |zhè ge|this / 问题 |wèn tí|question / 太 |tài|so / 简单 |jiǎn dān|simple / 了 |le / , 连 |lián|even / 三岁 |sān suì|a three-year-old / 小孩 |xiǎo hái|child / 都 |dōu|even / 知道 |zhī dào|knows / 。 }

This is so easy that even a three-year-old knows it.

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 什么 |shén me|anything / 都 |dōu / 吃 |chī|eats / , 连 |lián|even / 狗肉 |gǒu ròu|dog meat / 都 |dōu|even / 吃 |chī|eats / 。 }

He eats anything —even dog meat.

Remember: 连 X 都 = ”even X” —and you need **BOTH** words. English keeps only ”even”; Chinese frames it as 连 (the surprising item) …都 (sweeps it in). The item leaps to the front: 连狗肉都吃, never 吃连狗肉.

Watch out

- Dropping the 都 breaks it —连 always needs its 都 / 也 partner.

疑问词 + 都—”every / any”

A question word + 都 sweeps over **all** cases —”everyone, anything, anywhere, whenever.” Add 不 / 没 and it flips to the total negative: ”none, nothing, nowhere.”

Structure: Question Word + 都 + Predicate

{zh: 谁 |shéi|everyone / 都 |dōu / 喜欢 |xǐ huan|likes / 美食 |měi shí|good food / 。 }

Everyone loves good food.

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 哪儿 |nǎr|anywhere / 都 |dōu / 不 |bù|don't / 想 |xiǎng|want / 去 |qù|to go / 。 }

I don't want to go anywhere.

Remember: question word + 都 = ”all / every”; + 不 / 没 = ”none / nothing.” 谁都 (everyone), 什么都 (everything), 哪儿都 (everywhere), 怎么都 (no matter how) — then a 不 / 没 turns each into its negative (什么都不知道).

Watch out

- The question word here is the indefinite ”any,” not a real question —no question mark.

A + 是 + B + 的 + Number + 倍 — ”N times as much”

倍 counts multiples — ”A 是 B 的 N 倍” = ”A is N times B.” Watch the maths: **N 倍 is the total**, ×N — 三倍 is ”three times (as much),” *not* ”three times more.”

Structure: A + 是 + B + 的 + Number + 倍

{zh: 他 |tā|his / 现在 |xiàn zài|now / 的 |de / 工资 |gōng zī|salary / 是 |shì|is / 两年前 |liǎng nián qián|two years ago / 的 |de / 三倍 |sān bèi|three times / 。 }

His salary is now three times what it was two years ago.

{zh: 这个 |zhè ge|this / 城市 |chéng shì|city's / 的 |de / 人口 |rén kǒu|population / 是 |shì|is / 那个 |nà ge|that one's / 的 |de / 两倍 |liǎng bèi|twice / 。 }

This city's population is twice that one's.

Remember: N 倍 = the TOTAL (×N), **not** ”N times more.” 三倍 = 3×, 两倍 = 2× (twice). The 是…的 frame brackets the two things compared.

Watch out

- 增加了三倍 (”increased threefold”) is read ambiguously in real life — be careful with it in maths contexts.

一点 + 也 / 都 + 不… — ”not …at all”

一点 + 也 / 都 + 不 / 没 is the emphatic, absolute negative — ”not (even) …at all, not one bit.”

Structure: Subject + 一点 + 也 / 都 + 不 / 没 + Adjective / Verb

{zh: 你 |nǐ|you / 一点 |yì diǎn|at all / 也 |yě / 不 |bù|not / 胖 |pàng|fat / 。 }

You're not fat at all.

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 一点 |yì diǎn|at all / 都 |dōu / 没 |méi|didn't / 听懂 |tīng dǒng|understand / 。 }

I didn't understand a single bit.

Remember: it's the 也 / 都 sitting between 一点 and 不 / 没 that makes it absolute — ”not even the smallest bit.” A bare 一点不 / 一点没 (no 也/都) is noticeably weaker.

Watch out

- Keep all the pieces: 一点 + 也/都 + 不/没 — drop the 也/都 and the ”at all” force fades.

不知道…好 — ”not sure what's best”

End a clause with 好 after 不知道 and you get ”(I) don't know what would be best” — that stuck, can't-decide feeling. It's often 才好.

Structure: Subject + 不知道 + Question Phrase + (才) 好

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 真的 |zhēn de|really / 不知道 |bù zhī dào|don't know / 怎么办 |zěn me bàn|what to do / 才 |cái / 好 |hǎo|best / 。 }

I really don't know what would be best to do.

{zh: 不知道 |bù zhī dào|not sure / 送 |sòng|to give / 什么 |shén me|what / 礼物 |lǐ wù|gift / 好 |hǎo|best / 。 }

Not sure what gift would be best.

Remember: the trailing 好 = "…would be best" —不知道怎么办才好 ("don't know what on earth to do for the best"). The 才 sharpens the dilemma.

Watch out

- The 好 sits at the very end, after the question phrase —it's "what's *best*," not "good."

对…来说 / 一般来说—”for …, generally speaking”

对 + person + 来说 means "for / as far as someone is concerned"; 一般来说 means "generally speaking." Both open a sentence to frame the viewpoint that follows.

Structure: 对 + Person + 来说, …… . 一般来说, ……

{zh: 对 |duì|for / 我 |wǒ|me / 来说 |lái shuō|as far as concerned / , 健康 |jiàn kāng|health / 最 |zuì|the most / 重要 |zhòng yào|important / 。 }

For me, health matters most.

{zh: 一般来说 |yì bān lái shuō|generally speaking / , 私立学校 |sī lì xué xiào|private schools / 都 |dōu / 比较 |bǐ jiào|fairly / 贵 |guì|expensive / 。 }

Generally speaking, private schools are fairly pricey.

Remember: 对 X 来说 = "from X's angle"; 一般来说 = "as a rule." Both are sentence-openers that set the frame. A cousin: 拿…来说 = "take …as an example."

Watch out

- It's 对…来说, not 对…说—the 来 is part of the fixed frame.