

Comparing similar adverbs

HSK 4 Grammar

Use the examples with their context and limits. Recall a sentence before reading the model. Original teaching additions accompany examples adapted from Chinese Grammar Wiki (AllSet Learning, CC BY-NC-SA); see the course reference provenance.

本来 vs 原来 (originally vs it turns out)

■ An earlier state differs from a new discovery

- You had intended to go, while a friend's identity has just become clear.
- 我本来想去；原来是你。** – 本来 marks the earlier intention and 原来 marks the discovery in these contexts.

■ Build the form

- The pattern in this lesson is **本来 vs 原来 (originally vs it turns out)**. Locate it in the original interlinear examples below.
- Keep the words in their demonstrated positions; the pattern must fit the intended situation as well as the sentence form.

我本来想去的。

wǒ běn lái xiǎng qù de

Word guide: 我 – I; 本来 – originally; 想 – want; 去 – go.

■ Read examples in context

原来是你！

yuán lái shì nǐ

Word guide: 原来 – so it turns out; 是 – is; 你 – you.

- In the opening example, **我本来想去；原来是你。**：本来 marks the earlier intention and 原来 marks the discovery in these contexts.
- Explain who acts, what is described and which time or group is relevant before choosing an English paraphrase.

■ Know the boundary

- 原来 can also mean originally, and 本来 can mark an inherent fact.
- These useful examples are not mutually exclusive dictionary definitions.

■ Use the distinction

- 本来 marks the earlier intention and 原来 marks the discovery in these contexts.
- 原来 can also mean originally, and 本来 can mark an inherent fact. These useful examples are not mutually exclusive dictionary definitions.

■ Try it with help closed

You had intended to go, while a friend's identity has just become clear. Close the examples. Say a Mandarin response, then write it in Chinese. Explain briefly in English what the lesson's pattern adds. Compare with the model, then change one detail and try again.

One possible response: 我本来想去；原来是你。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 原来 can also mean originally, and 本来 can mark an inherent fact.
- These useful examples are not mutually exclusive dictionary definitions.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

常常 vs 往往 (often vs tends to)

■ Frequency and a tendency can overlap

- You observe that weekends tend to be busy.
- 周末往往很忙。** – 往往 presents a recurring tendency tied to weekends.

■ Build the form

- The pattern in this lesson is **常常 vs 往往 (often vs tends to)**. Locate it in the original interlinear examples below.
- Keep the words in their demonstrated positions; the pattern must fit the intended situation as well as the sentence form.

他常常迟到。

tā cháng cháng chí dào

Word guide: 他 – he; 常常 – often; 迟到 – be late.

■ Read examples in context

周末往往很忙。

zhōu mò wǎng wǎng hěn máng

Word guide: 周末 – weekends; 往往 – tend to; 很 – very; 忙 – busy.

- In the opening example, **周末往往很忙。**：往往 presents a recurring tendency tied to weekends.
- Explain who acts, what is described and which time or group is relevant before choosing an English paraphrase.

■ Know the boundary

- 常常 can also describe frequent busy weekends.
- 往往 is unsuitable for a single intended action such as 我明天往往去, but the words can overlap in repeated-event contexts.

■ Use the distinction

- 往往 presents a recurring tendency tied to weekends.
- 常常 can also describe frequent busy weekends. 往往 is unsuitable for a single intended action such as 我明天往往去, but the words can overlap in repeated-event contexts.

■ Try it with help closed

You observe that weekends tend to be busy. Close the examples. Say a Mandarin response, then write it in Chinese. Explain briefly in English what the lesson's pattern adds. Compare with the model, then change one detail and try again.

One possible response: 周末往往很忙。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 常常 can also describe frequent busy weekends.
- 往往 is unsuitable for a single intended action such as 我明天往往去, but the words can overlap in repeated-event contexts.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

刚 vs 刚才 (adverb vs time-word)

■ An adverb differs from a time expression

- A friend left recently, and you describe the timing.
- 他刚走；刚才他在这儿。 – 刚 modifies the departure, while 刚才 names a recent time.

■ Build the form

- The pattern in this lesson is **刚 vs 刚才 (adverb vs time-word)**. Locate it in the original interlinear examples below.
- Keep the words in their demonstrated positions; the pattern must fit the intended situation as well as the sentence form.

他刚走。

tā gāng zǒu

Word guide: 他 – he; 刚 – just; 走 – leave.

■ Read examples in context

刚才他在这儿。

gāng cái tā zài zhèr

Word guide: 刚才 – a moment ago; 他 – he; 在 – was; 这儿 – here.

- In the opening example, 他刚走；刚才他在这儿。: 刚 modifies the departure, while 刚才 names a recent time.
- Explain who acts, what is described and which time or group is relevant before choosing an English paraphrase.

■ Know the boundary

- 刚才 can move before the subject or after it in suitable sentences.
- 刚 is not a standalone time noun, and 了 is not universally forbidden after a 刚-modified verb.

■ Use the distinction

- 刚 modifies the departure, while 刚才 names a recent time.
- 刚才 can move before the subject or after it in suitable sentences. 刚 is not a standalone time noun, and 了 is not universally forbidden after a 刚-modified verb.

■ Try it with help closed

A friend left recently, and you describe the timing. Close the examples. Say a Mandarin response, then write it in Chinese. Explain briefly in English what the lesson's pattern adds. Compare with the model, then change one detail and try again.

One possible response: 他刚走；刚才他在这儿。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 刚才 can move before the subject or after it in suitable sentences.
- 刚 is not a standalone time noun, and 了 is not universally forbidden after a 刚-modified verb.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.