

HSK 4 语法

中文版

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1 形容词

1.1 全 + 名词—“the whole, entire”

全 in front of a noun scoops up “the whole, entire” thing in one sweep. It bonds to a small set of “whole-able” nouns 身 (body), 家 (family), 国 (country), 世界 (world), 校 (school), 年 (year) —and calls for a 都 in the predicate. The one rule to burn in: **全 takes no 的**.

Structure: 全 + Noun + 都 + Predicate

{zh: 我们 |wǒ men|our / 全家 |quán jiā|whole family / 都 |dōu|all / 去过 |qù guo|have been to / 北京 |Běi jīng|Beijing / 。 }

Our whole family has been to Beijing.

{zh: 这个 |zhè ge|this / 地方 |dì fang|place / 全年 |quán nián|all year / 都 |dōu / 很 |hěn|very / 热 |rè|hot / 。 }

This place is hot all year round.

Remember: 全 = the whole thing in one sweep —and never 的 (全家, 全的家). It almost always sends a 都 downstream to echo the “all.”

Watch out

- It attaches only to “whole” nouns (身, 家, 国, 校, 年…).
- Advanced flip: 全都不去 = “none go at all”; 不全都去 = “not all go” —where 不 sits changes everything.

1.2 形容词 + 死了—“…to death, extremely”

死了 after an adjective cranks it to the limit —“…to death, extremely.” It’s the exact match of English “scared to death,” “bored to death”: vivid, casual, and slanted toward **unpleasant** feelings. The subject is optional.

Structure: (Subject +) Adjective + 死了

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I’m / 饿 |è|hungry / 死了 |sǐ le|to death / ! }

I’m starving!

{zh: 今天 |jīn tiān|today / 累 |lè|tired / 死了 |sǐ le|to death / ! }

I’m exhausted today!

{zh: 这件 |zhè jiàn|this / 衣服 |yī fu|outfit / 丑 |chǒu|ugly / 死了 |sǐ le|to death / 。 }

This outfit is hideous.

Remember: 死了 = English “…to death” (累死了 = “dead tired”). It’s the drama-queen cousin of 极了—louder, more informal, mostly for misery (累, 饿, 热, 丑) —and it attaches **bare**, no 得.

Watch out

- Reach for it when the feeling is bad and you want to exaggerate; for neutral praise, 极了 or 得很 fit better.

2 副词

2.1 差不多——“about the same, more or less”

Read 差不多 literally and it explains itself: 差 (difference) + 不 (not) + 多 (much) = “not much difference.” Hence “about the same, more or less, almost.” It can stand alone as a predicate, link two things (A 跟 B 差不多), or work as an adverb before a quantity.

Structure: Subject + 差不多 · A + 跟 / 和 + B + 差不多

{zh: 这 |zhè|these / 两个 |liǎng ge|two / 词 |cí|words / 的 |de / 意思 |yì si|meanings / 差不多 |chà bu duō|about the same / 。 }

These two words mean about the same thing.

{zh: 上海 |Shàng hǎi|Shanghai / 和 |hé|and / 纽约 |Niǔ yuē|New York / 差不多 |chà bu duō|much the same / 。 }

Shanghai and New York are much the same.

Remember: 差 (difference) 不 (not) 多 (much) —“not much off.” Decode the three characters and the meaning (“about the same / almost there”) falls out for free.

Watch out

- As an adverb it also means “almost (there)”: 差不多了 (“that’s about enough”), 差不多十点 (“around ten”).
- For several items, add 都: 这几个都差不多.

2.2 看来——“it seems, apparently”

看来 offers up the speaker’s **read of a situation** —“it seems, apparently.” Use 在 + person + 看来 for “in someone’s view.” The pitfall is confusing it with 看起来 (“it looks like” from physical appearance): 看来 is a *judgement in your head*, 看起来 is *what your eyes report*.

Structure: 看来 + Judgement · 在 + Person + 看来

{zh: 看来 |kàn lái|it seems / 他 |tā|he / 不 |bù|not / 来 |lái|coming / 了 |le / 。 }

It seems he’s not coming.

{zh: 在 |zài|in / 我 |wǒ|my / 看来 |kàn lái|view / , 这个 |zhè ge|this / 计划 |jì huà|plan / 行不通 |xíng bu tōng|won’t work / 。 }

In my view, this plan won’t work.

Remember: 看来 = “drawing it together, I reckon…” (a conclusion); 看起来 = “it appears to the eye.” 来 is the “arriving at a verdict” part —you’ve weighed things and landed on a view.

Watch out

- 在我看来 is “in my opinion” —a personal verdict, not a fact.

2.3 正好—“just right, as it happens”

正好 is a happy bullseye — 正 (exactly) + 好 (right) — “just right” (in size, time, or amount) or “as it happens, happen to.” It plays both adjective and adverb.

Structure: Subject + 正好 + Verb Phrase · · · 正好 (adjective)

{zh: 你 |nǐ|you / 来 |lái|came / 了 |le / ! 我 |wǒ|I / 正好 |zhèng hǎo|was just about to / 要 |yào / 找 |zhǎo|look for / 你 |nǐ|you / 。 }

You're here! I was just about to look for you.

{zh: 这件 |zhè jiàn|this / 衣服 |yī fu|outfit / 的 |de / 大小 |dà xiǎo|size / 正好 |zhèng hǎo|just right / 。 }

This outfit is just the right size.

Remember: 正 (exactly) 好 (right) = a lucky bullseye — the right size, the right moment, the right amount, all landing at once.

Watch out

- Adverb (正好要走 “just about to leave”) and adjective (大小正好 “just the right size”) — same word, two roles.

2.4 只好—“have no choice but to”

只好 is the **only option left** — 只 (only) + 好 (good/workable) — “the only workable choice, so I'll take it (reluctantly).” English: “have no choice but to, can only, had to.”

Structure: (Situation,) (Subject +) 只好 + Verb Phrase

{zh: 餐厅 |cān tīng|the restaurants / 都 |dōu|all / 关门 |guān mén|closed / 了 |le / , 我们 |wǒ men|we / 只好 |zhǐ hǎo|had no choice but to / 去 |qù|go / 吃 |chī|eat / 快餐 |kuài cān|fast food / 。 }

The restaurants were all closed, so we had no choice but to get fast food.

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 忘 |wàng|forgot / 了 |le / 预约 |yù yuē|to book / , 只好 |zhǐ hǎo|so had to / 去 |qù|go / 排队 |pái duì|queue / 。 }

I forgot to book, so I had to queue.

Remember: 只好 = “the **ONLY** good option left” — you do it, but you'd rather not. For a stronger, more forced “have to,” step up to 不得不.

Watch out

- It always carries a whiff of **reluctance** — the choice isn't a happy one.

2.5 又 + 不 / 没—emphatic negation

This 又 has nothing to do with “again.” In front of 不 / 没 it adds a **defensive, argumentative** kick — “(but) it's not even / it's not as if ...” You'll hear it constantly with 干吗 / 干嘛 (“why on earth”).

Structure: 又 + 不 / 没 + Predicate

{zh: 问 |wèn|ask / 我 |wǒ|me / 干吗 |gàn má|why / ? 我 |wǒ|I / 又 |yòu|it's not as if / 不 |bù|don't / 知道 |zhī dào|know / 。 }

Why ask me? It's not as if I'd know.

{zh: 这些 |zhè xiē|these / 菜 |cài|dishes / 又 |yòu|it's not as if / 没 |méi|haven't / 坏 |huài|gone off / , 为什么 |wèi shén me|why / 要 |yào / 扔 |rēng|throw out / ? }

The food hasn't even gone off —why throw it out?

Remember: 又 + 不/没 = the "it's-not-as-if" shrug (又不是, 又没…) —a verbal eye-roll defending yourself. It is *not* the "again" 又, even though it's the same character.

Watch out

- It needs that defensive context —without an implied "so why…?", it reads as plain "again."

2.6 可 + 形容词 + 了—emphatic "really, so"

The adverb 可 slams an adjective home —"really, so" —usually against what you'd expect. It's informal and northern-flavoured, and it almost always closes with 了.

Structure: 可 + Adjective + 了

{zh: 这只 |zhè zhī|this / 小狗 |xiǎo gǒu|puppy / 可 |kě|so / 淘气 |táo qì|naughty / 了 |le / ! }

This puppy is so naughty!

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 可 |kě|really / 优秀 |yōu xiù|impressive / 了 |le / ! }

He's really impressive!

Remember: 可…了 wraps an adjective in a "wow, really!" (可爱了, 可贵了). It nearly always bookends with 了, and has a chatty, northern ring.

Watch out

- 可 also means "but," can stress a verb (我可没说), or mean "finally" —context picks the sense.

2.7 原来—"originally; so it turns out"

原来 wears two hats: "original(ly), former" (原来的 + noun), and "so it turns out / all along" —that lightbulb moment when you suddenly grasp something you'd missed.

Structure: 原来 + 的 + Noun · Subject + 原来 + Predicate

{zh: 原来 |yuán lái|so / 你 |nǐ|you / 是 |shì|are / 老师 |lǎo shī|a teacher / 啊 |a / ! }

Oh, so you're a teacher!

{zh: 我们 |wǒ men|we / 原来 |yuán lái|originally / 住 |zhù|lived / 在 |zài|in / 浦东 |Pǔ dōng|Pudong / 。 }

We originally lived in Pudong.

Remember: both senses share "the way things really were all along." Realisation: 原来如此 ("ah, *so that's* it!"). "Former": 原来的价格 ("the original price"). Contrast 本来 ("originally, *but it changed*") at the end of this level.

Watch out

- The "aha!" sense is the one that surprises learners — 原来 "originally" there, it's "it turns out."

2.8 差点 (儿) — "almost (and didn't)"

差点 = "off by a hair" — something **nearly happened**, usually something **bad**, and the feeling is relief that it didn't. The iron rule: whatever follows 差点 **did not** actually happen.

Structure: Subject + 差点 (+ 就) + Predicate (+ 了)

{zh: 车 |chē|the car / 差点 |chà diǎn|almost / 撞到 |zhuàng dào|hit / 我 |wǒ|me / 。 }

The car almost hit me (it didn't).

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 今天 |jīn tiān|today / 差点 |chà diǎn|almost / 迟到 |chí dào|was late / 了 |le / 。 }

I was almost late today.

Remember: 差点 = "missed it by **THAT much**" → the thing did *not* happen (and good thing too). The famous quirk: 差点没摔倒 *still* means "almost fell" — the 没 adds feeling, not logic.

Watch out

- For a *wanted* outcome, 差点没 flips to relief it *did* happen: 差点没赶上 ("only just caught it").

2.9 从来 + 都 — "always, all along"

从来 ("from the very start") with **都 (是)** means "always, have always." But you'll meet it far more often in the **negative** — 从来不 / 从来没 = "never (not once)."

Structure: Subject + 从来 + 都 (是) + Predicate

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 从来 |cóng lái|always / 都 |dōu|has / 这样 |zhè yàng|been like this / 。 }

He's always been like this.

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 从来 |cóng lái|never / 不 |bù / 喝酒 |hē jiǔ|drink / 。 }

I never drink.

Remember: 从来 = "from the beginning until now." Positive form needs 都 (从来都...); negative is the everyday one — 从来不 / 从来没 = "never, not a single time."

Watch out

- Don't drop the 都 in the positive: 从来都很努力 , not 从来很努力.

2.10 结果—“as a result, in the end”

As a connector, **结果** (“result”) means “as a result, and in the end” —and it usually drags in an **unexpected or unwelcome** outcome. It opens the second clause with a twist.

Structure: Reason / Situation , 结果 + Result

{zh: 她 |tā|she / 穿 |chuān|dressed / 得 |de / 很 |hěn|very / 少 |shǎo|lightly / , 结果 |jié guǒ|as a result / 感冒 |gǎn mào|caught a cold / 了 |le / 。 }

She dressed too lightly and ended up catching a cold.

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 开 |kāi|drove / 得 |de / 太 |tài|too / 快 |kuài|fast / , 结果 |jié guǒ|as a result / 撞到 |zhuàng dào|hit / 了 |le / 人 |rén|someone / 。 }

He drove too fast and ended up hitting someone.

Remember: 结果 = “the (often nasty) upshot.” It sets up a payoff that’s usually bad or surprising —“…and as a result, *of course*, X.”

Watch out

- It’s also a plain noun (“result”): 考试结果 (“the exam results”).

2.11 够—“enough”

够 means “enough, sufficient.” Its trick is that **position flips the mood**: before a verb/adjective it’s “enough to …” (够吃, 够大); after certain verbs it’s “fed up” (受够了). It often takes 了.

Structure: 够 + Verb / Adjective (+ 了) · Verb + 够 + 了

{zh: 我们 |wǒ men|we / 买 |mǎi|bought / 的 |de / 菜 |cài|food / 够 |gòu|enough / 吃 |chī|to eat / 了 |le / 。 }

We bought enough food.

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 受 |shòu|put up with it / 够 |gòu|enough / 了 |le / ! }

I’ve had enough!

Remember: 够 before = “enough to” (够高); 受够了 / V 够了 after = “had enough **OF** it.” Same word, opposite feeling, decided by which side of the verb it sits.

Watch out

- 吃够了 = “sick of eating it” (fed up), not “ate enough” —mind that “fed-up” tilt.

2.12 甚至—“even, to the point that”

甚至 hauls in the most **extreme or surprising** case —“even, so much that.” It frequently links arms with 连…都 / 也 for extra punch.

Structure: …… , 甚至 (连) + Extreme Case + 都 / 也…

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 太 |tài|too / 忙 |máng|busy / 了 |le / , 甚至 |shèn zhì|even / 吃 |chī|to eat / 午饭 |wǔ fàn|lunch / 的 |de / 时间 |shí jiān|time / 都 |dōu / 没有 |méi yǒu|hasn't / 。 }

He's so busy he doesn't even have time for lunch.

{zh: 这个 |zhè ge|this / 问题 |wèn tí|question / 很 |hěn|very / 简单 |jiǎn dān|simple / , 甚至 |shèn zhì|even / 连 |lián / 孩子 |hái zi|a child / 都 |dōu / 知道 |zhī dào|knows / 。 }

It's so simple even a child knows the answer.

Remember: 甚至 = "…even THIS!" —it reaches for the most extreme example to drive a point home, often hand-in-hand with 连…都.

Watch out

- It escalates —the thing after 甚至 should be the *most* surprising item, not just another one.

2.13 还是 + 动词 + 吧—"had better, after all"

Beyond "or," 还是 before a verb settles on the **choice you prefer after weighing things up** —"had better, I'd rather (after all)." It loves to close with 吧.

Structure: Subject + 还是 + Verb Phrase + 吧

{zh: 还是 |hái shì|after all / 明天 |míng tiān|tomorrow / 去 |qù|go / 吧 |ba / 。 }

Let's go tomorrow after all.

{zh: 你 |nǐ|you / 还是 |hái shì|had better / 别 |bié|not / 去 |qù|go / 了 |le / 。 }

You'd better not go.

Remember: 还是…吧 = "on reflection, better to…" —a verdict reached after mulling it over. Distinct from 还是 = "or" (in questions) or "still."

Watch out

- The 吧 softens it into a gentle suggestion —dropping it makes the decision sound firmer.

2.14 最好—"had better, best to"

最好 ("best") moonlights as an adverb to give **gentle advice** —"had better, it would be best to."

Structure: Subject + 最好 + Predicate

{zh: 你 |nǐ|you / 最好 |zuì hǎo|had better / 先 |xiān|first / 休息 |xiū xi|rest / 一下 |yí xià|a bit / 。 }

You'd better rest a bit first.

{zh: 外面 |wài miàn|outside / 冷 |lěng|cold / , 最好 |zuì hǎo|best to / 多 |duō|more / 穿 |chuān|wear / 点 |diǎn / 。 }

It's cold out —best wear a bit more.

Remember: 最好 = "the best thing would be..." —advice with a soft touch, gentler than 应该 or 得. Negative: 最好别 ("had best not").

Watch out

- It's a suggestion, not a rule —for an obligation use 得 / 必须 instead.

2.15 不得不—"have to, can't but"

不得不 stacks a double negative —"not (不) able to not (得不) do" —into a **reluctant, unavoidable** "have to." It's more forced and grudging than 必须.

Structure: Subject + 不得不 + Verb

{zh: 电梯 |diàn tī|the lift / 又 |yòu|again / 坏 |huài|broke / 了 |le / , 我们 |wǒ men|we / 不得不 |bù dé bù|had to / 爬 |pá|climb / 楼梯 |lóu tī|the stairs / 。 }

The lift broke again, so we had to take the stairs.

{zh: 你 |nǐ|you / 太 |tài|too / 厉害 |lì hai|good / 了 |le / , 我 |wǒ|I / 不得不 |bù dé bù|have to / 承认 |chéng rèn|admit it / 。 }

You're so good —I have to admit it.

Remember: 不得不 = "can't NOT do it" (two negatives cancelling to a grudging yes). It shouts *no way out*; 必须 is the calmer, neutral "must / it's required."

Watch out

- Don't miscount the negatives —不得不去 means "have to go," not "can't go."

2.16 到底—"on earth / after all / finally"

到底 = "all the way to the bottom" —and it digs for the real answer. Three jobs: pressing in a question ("on earth, exactly"), "after all / in the end," and "finally" (like 终于).

Structure: ……到底…… . 到底 + Verb + 了

{zh: 你 |nǐ|you / 到底 |dào dǐ|on earth / 想 |xiǎng|want / 说 |shuō|to say / 什么 |shén me|what / ? }

What on earth are you trying to say?

{zh: 天气 |tiān qì|the weather / 到底 |dào dǐ|finally / 暖和 |nuǎn huo|warmed up / 了 |le / 。 }

The weather has finally warmed up.

Remember: 到底 = "get to the BOTTOM of it." In a *question* → "on earth / exactly" (你到底去不去?); in a *statement* → "after all / finally."

Watch out

- In a yes-no question, use the V-not-V form: 你到底去不去? ("are you going *or not*?").

2.17 究竟—“exactly, on earth” (formal)

究竟 is the more **formal** twin of 到底—it sharpens a question hunting for a specific fact (a name, a time, a reason): “exactly, on earth.”

Structure: 究竟 + Question Word ...

{zh: 这个 |zhè ge|this / 人 |rén|person / 究竟 |jiū jìng|on earth / 是 |shì|is / 谁 |shéi|who / ? }

Who on earth is this person?

{zh: 我们 |wǒ men|we / 究竟 |jiū jìng|exactly / 还 |hái|still / 要 |yào|have to / 等 |děng|wait / 多久 |duō jiǔ|how long / ? }

Exactly how much longer do we have to wait?

Remember: 究竟 = 到底 in a suit. Same “on earth / exactly” in questions, just a more written, formal register.

Watch out

- Both press a question; 究竟 simply sounds more bookish than the everyday 到底.

2.18 刚—“just (a moment ago)”

The adverb 刚 (or 刚刚) marks an action that happened **a short time ago** —“just.” It sits right before the verb, and with a duration it needs no “ago” word.

Structure: Subject + 刚 + Verb

{zh: 我们 |wǒ men|we / 刚 |gāng|just / 知道 |zhī dào|found out / 。 }

We just found out.

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 刚 |gāng|just / 来 |lái|came to / 中国 |Zhōng guó|China / 两个 |liǎng ge|two / 月 |yuè|months ago / 。 }

He came to China just two months ago.

Remember: 刚 = adverb “just,” glued to the verb (刚到) —and “two months ago” needs no extra word: 刚来两个月. Don’t mix it up with the *noun* 刚才 (“a moment ago”) —see the comparison file later.

Watch out

- 刚 + duration measures time from *now*; 刚才 marks a *point* in the recent past.

2.19 一 + 量词 + 一 + 量词—“one by one”

Double up 一 + **measure word** and you get something happening **one unit at a time** —“one by one, step by step.” 个 is the default measure word, but slot in whichever fits the noun.

Structure: 一 + MW + 一 + MW (+ Noun)

{zh: 别 |bié|don't / 吵 |chǎo|all shout / , 一个 |yí ge|one / 一个 |yí ge|by one / 说 |shuō|speak / 。 }

Don't all talk at once —one at a time.

{zh: 孩子 |hái zi|the child / 一天 |yì tiān|day / 一天 |yì tiān|by day / 长大 |zhǎng dà|grows up / 。 }

The child grows up day by day.

Remember: repeat the measure word → **"one ____ at a time"**: 一个一个 (one by one), 一步一步 (step by step), 一天一天 (day by day), 一遍一遍 (over and over).

Watch out

- Match the measure word to the noun —一步一步 for steps, 一个一个 for countable things.

2.20 本来—"originally (but it changed)"

本来 means "originally, in the first place" —and it usually sets up that things **later changed course**. It often runs with 是…的 plus a 但是 / 可是 clause; with 就 it flips to "of course (it always was)."

Structure: Subject + 本来 (+ 是) …的, 但是… · 本来就…

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 本来 |běn lái|originally / 要 |yào|meant / 去 |qù|to go / 的 |de / , 可是 |kě shì|but / 后来 |hòu lái|then / 病 |bìng|got sick / 了 |le / 。 }

I'd meant to go, but then I got sick.

{zh: 搬家 |bān jiā|moving house / 本来 |běn lái|to begin with / 就 |jiù / 很 |hěn|very / 麻烦 |má fan|troublesome / 。 }

Moving house is a hassle to begin with.

Remember: 本来 sets up a U-turn —"originally X…but then Y." Contrast 原来 (a sudden *realisation*). And 本来就 = "of course / obviously —it always was."

Watch out

- If nothing changed and you mean "it turns out," you want 原来, not 本来.

2.21 就 + 主语—"only (this one)"

Park **就** in front of the subject or quantity and it spotlights how **little** there is —"only, just (this one)." It often rides with 一个 / 一次.

Structure: 就 + Subject + Predicate · 就 + Verb + Number + MW

{zh: 大家 |dà jiā|everyone / 都 |dōu / 下班 |xià bān|left work / 了 |le / , 就 |jiù|only / 老板 |lǎo bǎn|the boss / 还 |hái|still / 没 |méi|hasn't / 走 |zǒu|left / 。 }

Everyone's left work; only the boss is still here.

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 就 |jiù|only / 去过 |qù guo|been there / 一次 |yí cì|once / 。 }

I've only been there once.

Remember: like 才 + number, this 就 **shrinks things to "only / just"** (就老板, 就一次), underlining smallness. It's a different 就 from the "right away / as early as" one.

Watch out

- Context tells the two 就's apart: a small *quantity* nearby → "only"; a *time* → "as early as / then."

2.22 千万—"be sure to, whatever you do"

千万 (literally "thousand ten-thousand") is an **urgent plea**—"be sure to / whatever you do (don't) ...". The huge numbers *are* the emphasis. It almost always heads a command, paired with 别 / 不要 / 要.

Structure: 千万 + (别 / 不要 / 要) + Verb Phrase

{zh: 千万 |qiān wàn|whatever you do / 别 |bié|don't / 忘 |wàng|forget / 了 |le / 带 |dài|to bring / 护照 |hù zhào|your passport / 。 }

Whatever you do, don't forget your passport.

{zh: 路上 |lù shàng|on the way / 千万 |qiān wàn|do be sure to / 要 |yào / 小心 |xiǎo xīn|be careful / 。 }

Do be careful on the way.

Remember: big numbers = big urgency. 千万 piles "thousand" on "ten-thousand" to mean "I really, *really* mean it." The go-to shape is 千万别... ("whatever you do, DON'T ...").

Watch out

- It belongs in pleas and warnings—not a neutral statement.

2.23 恐怕—"I'm afraid (that), probably"

恐怕 has 恐 ("fear") right in it, and that's the feel: a **likely but unwelcome** prediction softened with "I'm afraid that, I worry that." It opens the clause, ideally before the subject, often with 要 / 会.

Structure: (Reason,) 恐怕 + Subject + Predicate

{zh: 今天 |jīn tiān|today / 恐怕 |kǒng pà|I'm afraid / 要 |yào|going to / 下雨 |xià yǔ|rain / 。 }

I'm afraid it's going to rain today.

{zh: 恐怕 |kǒng pà|I'm afraid / 我 |wǒ|I / 明天 |míng tiān|tomorrow / 不能 |bù néng|can't / 来 |lái|come / 。 }

I'm afraid I can't come tomorrow.

Remember: 恐怕 hides 恐 (fear)—it's a worried "I'm afraid..." about something *unwelcome*, never a cheerful guess. Place it **before** the subject for the most natural ring.

Watch out

- For a neutral “probably” (no dread), use 可能 instead.

2.24 竟然—“unexpectedly, actually”

竟然 (or just 竟) flags something **surprising or hard to believe** —“unexpectedly, actually, of all things.” It sits after the subject. It’s a near-match for 居然, just a touch milder.

Structure: Subject + 竟然 + Predicate

{zh: 这么 |zhè me|such a / 难 |nán|hard / 的 |de / 题 |tí|problem / , 他 |tā|he / 竟然 |jìng rán|actually / 做 |zuò|got it / 对 |duì|right / 了 |le / 。 }

Such a hard problem —and he actually got it right!

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 竟然 |jìng rán|unexpectedly / 把 |bǎ / 这 |zhè|this / 件 |jiàn / 事 |shì|matter / 忘 |wàng|forgot / 了 |le / 。 }

He actually forgot all about it!

Remember: 竟然 = a **jaw-drop** —“...and yet, of all things, X!” Best rendered “actually / of all things.” 居然 (slightly stronger), opposite of 果然 (“sure enough, as expected”).

Watch out

- It needs genuine surprise —drop it into a humdrum statement and it sounds off.

2.25 难道—rhetorical-question marker

难道 turns a sentence into a **rhetorical question** of disbelief —“don’t tell me ...?, surely you don’t ...?”. It usually closes with 吗 and fishes for **agreement, not an answer**. English has no single word for it.

Structure: 难道 + Rhetorical Question + 吗?

{zh: 难道 |nán dào|don’t tell me / 你 |nǐ|you / 真的 |zhēn de|really / 相信 |xiāng xìn|believe / 他 |tā|him / 吗 |ma / ? }

You don’t actually believe him, do you?

{zh: 今天 |jīn tiān|today / 是 |shì|is / 我 |wǒ|my / 的 |de / 生日 |shēng rì|birthday / , 难道 |nán dào|don’t tell me / 你 |nǐ|you / 不 |bù|don’t / 知道 |zhī dào|know / 吗 |ma / ? }

It’s my birthday —don’t tell me you forgot?

Remember: 难道 = a **built-in “surely not...?!”** It marks the whole sentence as rhetorical —you’re pressing for the listener to *agree*, not to inform you. Usually 难道...吗? .

Watch out

- Don’t answer a 难道 question literally —it’s making a point, not seeking facts.

2.26 先…，再…—“first …then …”

先…再… lines two actions up **in sequence** —“first A, then B.” As in HSK 3, the catch is that 再 here means “(and) then,” **not** “again.” Chain longer runs with 然后 / 接着.

Structure: 先 + Verb 1 , 再 + Verb 2

{zh: 先 |xiān|first / 洗手 |xǐ shǒu|wash hands / , 再 |zài|then / 吃饭 |chī fàn|eat / 。 }

Wash your hands first, then eat.

{zh: 你 |nǐ|you / 要 |yào|should / 先 |xiān|first / 做 |zuò|do / 作业 |zuò yè|homework / , 再 |zài|then / 看 |kàn|watch / 电视 |diàn shì|TV / 。 }

Do your homework first, then watch TV.

Remember: in 先…再…, 再 = “and then” (the next stepping stone), **not** “again.” Extend the chain with 然后 / 接着 for three or more steps.

Watch out

- Out of this pairing, 再 *does* mean “again / more” —it’s the 先…再…frame that fixes the “then” reading.

2.27 也都—“all …too”

Stack 也 (“also”) and 都 (“all”) to sweep up a **whole group as well** —“all …too.” The order is locked: 也 comes before 都.

Structure: Subject + 也都 + Predicate

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I’m / 很 |hěn|very / 好 |hǎo|well / , 我 |wǒ|my / 的 |de / 家人 |jiā rén|family / 也都 |yě dōu|all too / 很 |hěn|very / 好 |hǎo|well / 。 }

I’m well, and so is all my family.

{zh: 大人 |dà rén|adults / 喜欢 |xǐ huan|like / 这个 |zhè ge|this / 餐厅 |cān tīng|restaurant / , 孩子们 |hái zi men|the kids / 也都 |yě dōu|all too / 喜欢 |xǐ huan|like it / 。 }

The adults like this restaurant, and the kids all do too.

Remember: 也 (also) + 都 (all) in a **FIXED** order —也都, never 都也. Think “also-all”: the whole group does it too.

Watch out

- Both adverbs sit before the verb together; you can’t split them around it.

3 副词与形容词

3.1 挺 + 形容词 + 的—”quite, pretty”

挺…的 is a laid-back ”quite, pretty, rather” —a relaxed, conversational intensifier that almost always wraps up with 的. It’s softer than 很 and pops up constantly in everyday chat.

Structure: 挺 + Adjective + 的

{zh: 你 |nǐ|your / 男朋友 |nán péng you|boyfriend / 挺 |tǐng|pretty / 帅 |shuài|handsome / 的 |de / 。 }

Your boyfriend is pretty handsome.

{zh: 最近 |zuì jìn|lately / 大家 |dà jiā|everyone / 都 |dōu / 挺 |tǐng|quite / 忙 |máng|busy / 的 |de / 。 }

Everyone’s been quite busy lately.

Remember: 挺 wants its 的—挺好的, never bare 挺好. Think of 挺…的 as a matched pair of bookends around the adjective. It’s the casual, easygoing ”pretty / quite,” softer than 很 / 非常.

Watch out

- Leave off the 的 and it sounds unfinished to a native ear.

4 Auxiliary Words

4.1 ……什么的—”and so on, and the like”

什么的 rounds off an **informal** list with a casual wave of the hand —”and so on, and stuff like that.” It can even trail a single item when it’s obvious what else belongs in the group.

Structure: Noun 1、Noun 2 (+ Noun 3) + 什么的

{zh: 我 |wǒ|my / 奶奶 |nǎi nai|grandma / 只 |zhǐ|only / 吃 |chī|eats / 蔬菜 |shū cài|vegetables / 、豆腐 |dòu fu|tofu / 什么的 |shén me de|and so on / 。 }

My grandma only eats vegetables, tofu, and the like.

{zh: 数学 |shù xué|maths / 、物理 |wù lǐ|physics / 什么的 |shén me de|and so on / , 我 |wǒ|I’m / 都 |dōu / 不 |bù|not / 感兴趣 |gǎn xìng qù|interested / 。 }

Maths, physics and so on —I’m not interested in any of it.

Remember: 什么的 = the chatty ”…and stuff” —it waves at the rest without listing it. Its formal, neutral twin is 等 / 等等 (next).

Watch out

- It’s casual —fine in speech, too loose for formal writing.

4.2 ……等 / 等等—”etc.”

等 or **等等** closes a list more **formally** —”etc., and so forth.” One thing to unlearn from English: there’s **no comma** before it. It can also sit before a summarising noun (”…等 + category”).

Structure: A、B、C + 等 / 等等 · A、B 等 + Category

{zh: 西瓜 |xī guā|watermelon / 、葡萄 |pú tao|grapes / 等等 |děng děng|and so on / , 我 |wǒ|I / 都 |dōu|all / 喜欢 |xǐ huan|like / 吃 |chī|to eat / 。 }

Watermelon, grapes and so on —I like them all.

{zh: 北京 |Běi jīng|Beijing / 、上海 |Shàng hǎi|Shanghai / 等 |děng|and other / 城市 |chéng shì|cities }

cities such as Beijing and Shanghai

Remember: 等 / 等等 = formal ”etc.” —and **NO comma before it** (Chinese writes 苹果、香蕉等, not 苹果、香蕉, 等). It’s the written, neutral counterpart to the casual 什么的.

Watch out

- 等 can also wrap up *before* a category noun: 北京、上海等城市 (”cities such as …”).

5 连词

5.1 不过—a softer “but”

不过 means “but, however” —the gentlest of the “but” family, lighter and chattier than 但是 / 可是. It often just tacks a small qualification onto something otherwise positive.

Structure: …… , 不过……

{zh: 这件 |zhè jiàn|this / 衣服 |yī fu|outfit / 我 |wǒ|I / 很 |hěn|really / 喜欢 |xǐ huan|like / , 不过 |bú guò|but / 有点 |yǒu diǎn|a bit / 贵 |guì|pricey / 。 }

I really like this outfit, but it's a bit pricey.

{zh: 这家 |zhè jiā|this / 餐厅 |cān tīng|restaurant / 我 |wǒ|I / 没 |méi|haven't / 去过 |qù guo|been to / , 不过 |bú guò|but / 听说 |tīng shuō|I hear / 不错 |bú cuò|it's good / 。 }

I've never been to this restaurant, but I hear it's good.

Remember: 不过 = the lightest “but” —不 (not) 过 (get past), a small snag you can't quite step over. Softer than 但是 / 可是, and very conversational.

Watch out

- 不过 can also mean “only, merely” in other contexts (不过是个误会, “it's only a misunderstanding”).

5.2 于是—“and so, thereupon”

于是 chains a cause to the action it **triggers** —“and so, thereupon.” The second event follows straight from the first. It's a **storytelling, past-tense** word, usually with 了, and often with 就.

Structure: …… , 于是……+ 了

{zh: 昨天 |zuó tiān|yesterday / 突然 |tū rán|suddenly / 下雨 |xià yǔ|rained / 了 |le / , 于是 |yú shì|and so / 我们 |wǒ men|we / 取消 |qǔ xiāo|cancelled / 了 |le / 野餐 |yě cān|the picnic / 。 }

It suddenly rained yesterday, so we cancelled the picnic.

{zh: 票 |piào|the tickets / 卖光 |mài guāng|sold out / 了 |le / , 于是 |yú shì|so / 我们 |wǒ men|we / 买 |mǎi|bought / 了 |le / 黄牛票 |huáng niú piào|scalped tickets / 。 }

The tickets sold out, so we bought scalped ones.

Remember: 于是 = **past-tense “and so”** —it narrates “X happened, *whereupon* Y followed.” For a timeless, logical cause→effect (“because X, therefore Y”), use 所以 / 因此 instead.

Watch out

- It belongs to narration of completed events —it pairs with 了 (and often 就), not with future plans.

5.3 还有一”also, and another thing”

还有 tacks on a further point as an **afterthought** —”also, plus, and another thing.” It tends to open a fresh sentence after a comma or full stop, the spoken ”oh, and…”.

Structure: ……。还有，……

{zh: 你 |nǐ|you / 需要 |xū yào|need to / 吃药 |chī yào|take medicine / 。还有 |hái yǒu|also / , 要 |yào|should / 多 |duō|more / 休息 |xiū xi|rest / 。 }

You need to take medicine. Also, get plenty of rest.

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 要 |yào|want / 大杯 |dà bēi|a large / , 不要 |bú yào|no / 冰 |bīng|ice / , 还有 |hái yǒu|and / , 少 |shǎo|easy on the / 放 |fàng / 糖 |táng|sugar / 。 }

Large, no ice —and go easy on the sugar.

Remember: 还有 = ”oh, and also…” —the casual afterthought, literally ”still have (more to say).” Order-a-coffee energy: one more thing, then one more.

Watch out

- It’s informal —for a weightier ”in addition,” reach for 另外.

5.4 另外—”in addition, besides”

另外 brings in a **separate, additional** point —”in addition, besides.” It’s a notch more formal than 还有 and usually teams up with 还 / 也 in the clause it adds. (It also means ”another, separate.”)

Structure: ……。另外, (Subject) 还 / 也……

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 没 |méi|don’t have / 时间 |shí jiān|time / 参加 |cān jiā|to join / 。另外 |lìng wài|besides / , 我 |wǒ|I / 也 |yě|also / 不太 |bú tài|not really / 感兴趣 |gǎn xìng qù|interested / 。 }

I don’t have time to join. Besides, I’m not really interested.

{zh: 这个 |zhè ge|this / 航班 |háng bān|flight / 经常 |jīng cháng|often / 晚点 |wǎn diǎn|delayed / 。另外 |lìng wài|in addition / , 飞机餐 |fēi jī cān|the meals / 也 |yě|also / 很 |hěn|very / 难吃 |nán chī|bad / 。 }

This flight is often late. On top of that, the food is awful too.

Remember: 另外 = a **SEPARATE** extra point (另 = ”other / separate”) —more formal than 还有, and it likes a 还 / 也 to echo it. It also means ”another (separate) one”: 另外一个人.

Watch out

- The added clause usually carries 还 / 也—另外, 我也…, not a bare 另外, 我….

5.5 再说—”besides, what’s more”

再说 piles on an extra, often **clinching** reason to back a decision —”besides, what’s more, anyway.” It’s the ”and another thing…” that seals the argument.

Structure: ……，再说……

{zh: 太 |tài|too / 远 |yuǎn|far / 了 |le / , 再说 |zài shuō|besides / 我 |wǒ|I / 也 |yě|also / 没 |méi|have no / 时间 |shí jiān|time / 。 }

It's too far —besides, I've no time anyway.

{zh: 别 |bié|don't / 买 |mǎi|buy it / 了 |le / , 再说 |zài shuō|anyway / 你 |nǐ|you / 也 |yě / 不 |bù|don't / 缺 |quē|need it / 。 }

Don't buy it —anyway, you don't need it.

Remember: 再说 = "and what's MORE…" —it adds a reason that clinches what you just said. Don't confuse it with the 再说 in 先…再说 ("do X first, deal with it later").

Watch out

- It reinforces a *decision* —it adds backing, not just a neutral extra fact.

5.6 可是 / 但是—"but"

可是 and 但是 are the bread-and-butter words for "but." 但是 is a shade more **formal** and emphatic; 可是 is a touch softer. Otherwise they swap freely, and both happily follow 虽然 ("although").

Structure: Statement , 可是 / 但是 + Contrary Statement

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 喜欢 |xǐ huan|like / 他 |tā|him / , 可是 |kě shì|but / 他 |tā|he / 不 |bù|doesn't / 喜欢 |xǐ huan|like / 我 |wǒ|me / 。 }

I like him, but he doesn't like me.

{zh: 这个 |zhè ge|this / 工作 |gōng zuò|job / 很 |hěn|very / 累 |lèi|tiring / , 但是 |dàn shì|but / 我 |wǒ|I / 很 |hěn|really / 喜欢 |xǐ huan|like it / 。 }

This job is tiring, but I really like it.

Remember: 但是 = firmer/formal, 可是 = softer/casual —twins otherwise. Both pair with 虽然 (虽然…但是…), and Chinese happily keeps *both* halves, unlike English ("Although…but…" is fine in Chinese).

Watch out

- Don't drop the 但是 after 虽然—Chinese likes the matching pair where English uses only one.

5.7 而—joining contrasting ideas

而 links two related clauses, often pointing up a **contrast** —"but rather, while, and yet." It's an elegant, semi-written connector. Learn it through its two workhorse frames: 不是 A 而是 B and 是 A 而不是 B.

Structure: Sentence 1 + 而 + Sentence 2 · 不是 A , 而是 B

{zh: 我们 |wǒ men|we / 是 |shì|are / 来 |lái|here to / 办事 |bàn shì|work / 的 |de / , 而 |ér|not / 不是 |bú shì / 来 |lái|to / 玩 |wán|have fun / 的 |de / 。 }

We're here to work, not to have fun.

{zh: 后悔 |hòu huǐ|regret it / 的 |de / 人 |rén|the one to / 不是 |bú shì|isn't / 我 |wǒ|me / , 而是 |ér shì|but / 你 |nǐ|you / 自己 |zì jǐ|yourself / 。 }

The one who'll regret it isn't me —it's you.

Remember: learn 而 through its frames: 不是 A 而是 B = "not A but (rather) B"; 是 A 而不是 B = "A, not B." Master those two and most uses of 而 click into place.

Watch out

- It's formal/literary in flavour but common in speech too, especially in those set frames.

5.8 用 / 通过…来 + 动词—"use X to do Y"

The 来 here is a tiny bridge from a **method to its purpose** —"(use / by means of X) to do Y." It typically follows 用 or 通过 + a method, then 来 + the goal.

Structure: 用 / 通过 + Method + 来 + Verb Phrase

{zh: 很多 |hěn duō|many / 年轻人 |nián qīng rén|young people / 用 |yòng|use / 手机 |shǒu jī|phone / APP / 来 |lái|to / 点 |diǎn|order / 外卖 |wài mài|takeaway / 。 }

Lots of young people use phone apps to order takeaway.

{zh: 我们 |wǒ men|we / 应该 |yīng gāi|should / 想 |xiǎng|find / 办法 |bàn fǎ|a way / 来 |lái|to / 解决 |jiě jué|solve / 这个 |zhè ge|this / 问题 |wèn tí|problem / 。 }

We should find a way to solve this problem.

Remember: 来 = "in order to" —it joins the *means* (用/通过 X) to the *goal* (来 + verb). "Use the app 来 order food." The first half is the how, the 来 half is the why.

Watch out

- The 来 is optional but it makes the "so as to" link explicit and natural.

6 名词

6.1 其中—“among them, of which”

其中 reaches back into a **group you’ve just named** —“among them, of which, of these.” It’s the Chinese “of which / of whom,” so it can’t stand without a group already on the table for it to point at.

Structure: Group , 其中……

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 有 |yǒu|have / 四 |sì|four / 辆 |liàng / 汽车 |qì chē|cars / , 其中 |qí zhōng|of which / 三 |sān|three / 辆 |liàng / 是 |shì|are / 宝马 |Bǎo mǎ|BMWs / 。 }

I have four cars, three of which are BMWs.

{zh: 这么 |zhè me|so / 多 |duō|many / 项目 |xiàng mù|projects / , 其中 |qí zhōng|of which / 最 |zuì|the most / 难 |nán|difficult / 的 |de / 是 |shì|is / 环境 |huán jìng|the environmental / 项目 |xiàng mù|one / 。 }

Of all these projects, the hardest is the environmental one.

Remember: **其中** = “**within that (group)**” —其 (“that”) + 中 (“inside”). It always looks *backward* to a set already mentioned; 其中一个 = “one of them.”

Watch out

- It can’t open a brand-new topic —name the group first, then 其中.

7 数词

7.1 ……分之……—fractions and percentages

Chinese builds a fraction **back to front: denominator + 分之 + numerator** —the **bottom number comes first**. It fits the language's big-to-small habit (whole first, then the slice). Percentages are just "out of 100" fractions: 百分之 + number.

Structure: Denominator + 分之 + Numerator

{zh: 这个 |zhè ge|this / 文件 |wén jiàn|file / 已经 |yǐ jīng|already / 下载 |xià zǎi|downloaded / 了 |le / 三分之二 |sān fēn zhī èr|two-thirds / 。 }

This file is already two-thirds downloaded.

{zh: 我 |wǒ|my / 的 |de / 手机 |shǒu jī|phone / 只 |zhǐ|only / 有 |yǒu|has / 百分之五 |bǎi fēn zhī wǔ|five percent / 了 |le / 。 }

My phone's down to five percent.

Remember: bottom first, top last —read 分之 as "out of": 四分之三 = "of four parts (四分), three (之三)" = $\frac{3}{4}$. Percent is just 百分之 ("out of 100") + the number: 百分之五十 = 50%.

Watch out

- $\frac{3}{4}$ is 四分之三, *never* 三分之四—getting the order backwards flips the fraction.

8 助词

8.1 知道…疑问词…吗? —embedding a question inside a 吗 question

Here's a structure that looks like two questions but is really one. 吗 can close a clause that **embeds a question word** —"do you know *who / what / where* ...?" The front carries a verb of knowing (知道, 了解, 认识), and the whole thing stays a plain yes/no question.

Structure: Confirmation (知道…) + embedded Question + 吗?

{zh: 你 |nǐ|you / 知道 |zhī dào|know / 他 |tā|he / 是 |shì|is / 谁 |shéi|who / 吗 |ma / ? }

Do you know who he is?

{zh: 她 |tā|she / 说过 |shuō guo|did say / 她 |tā|she / 住 |zhù|lives / 在 |zài / 哪儿 |nǎr|where / 吗 |ma / ? }

Did she say where she lives?

Remember: the 吗 makes it yes/no; the 谁 / 哪儿 inside is just part of the embedded clause. "Do you know [who he is]?" —you're asking *whether* they know, not "who?". Answer 知道 / 不知道.

Watch out

- The lead verb is one of knowing/saying: 知道, 了解, 明白, 认识, 说过.

8.2 …吧, ……; …吧, ……—weighing two options

Echo 吧 across two options and you lay out a **dilemma** —"if A …, but if B …." It has an indecisive, no-win ring, and the two options are usually both unappealing.

Structure: Option 1 + 吧, ……; Option 2 + 吧, ……

{zh: 冬天 |dōng tiān|in winter / 去 |qù|go / 吧 |ba / , 太 |tài|too / 冷 |lěng|cold / ; 夏天 |xià tiān|in summer / 去 |qù|go / 吧 |ba / , 太 |tài|too / 热 |rè|hot / 。 }

Go in winter and it's too cold; go in summer and it's too hot.

{zh: 不 |bù|not / 说 |shuō|tell him / 吧 |ba / , 他 |tā|he / 会 |huì|will / 做错 |zuò cuò|get it wrong / ; 说 |shuō|tell him / 吧 |ba / , 他 |tā|he / 不 |bù|won't / 高兴 |gāo xìng|be happy / 。 }

If I don't tell him he'll get it wrong; if I do, he'll be upset.

Remember: doubled 吧 = a no-win fork —"do A 吧, downside; do B 吧, downside." Picture a shrug at each branch: whichever you pick, it stings.

Watch out

- Both options should carry a drawback —that's what gives the pattern its trapped, can't-win feel.

8.3 ……的—the modal particle 的

A sentence-final 的 can add a tone of **certainty or reassurance** —“(it) definitely (is / will be).” It often rides with 会 or 一定会, sealing a promise or a confident prediction.

Structure: Statement (+ 会…) + 的

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 不 |bù|won't / 会 |huì / 骗 |piàn|lie to / 你 |nǐ|you / 的 |de / 。 }

I would never lie to you.

{zh: 你们 |nǐ men|you / 会 |huì|will / 成功 |chéng gōng|succeed / 的 |de / 。 }

You will succeed.

Remember: this 的 = a **spoken full stop of conviction** —“trust me, it’s so.” It’s *not* the possessive 的. It loves a 会 / 一定会 ahead of it: 会成功的 (“you *will* make it”).

Watch out

- Don’t read this 的 as “of / ’s” —here it carries tone, not ownership.

9 介词

9.1 随着——“along with, as”

随着 ties one thing to another that **moves in step with it** —“along with, as, in the wake of.” 随 means “follow,” so the 随着 clause sets a *moving backdrop* and the main clause tracks it. It’s formal in flavour and translates a dozen different ways.

Structure: 随着 + Noun (+ 的 + change) , Subject + Predicate

{zh: 随着 |suí zhe|as / 经济 |jīng jì|the economy / 的 |de / 发展 |fā zhǎn|develops / , 生活 |shēng huó|life / 越来越 |yuè lái yuè|more and more / 好 |hǎo|comfortable / 。 }

As the economy develops, life keeps getting better.

{zh: 孩子们 |hái zi men|the children / 随着 |suí zhe|along to / 音乐 |yīn yuè|the music / 跳 |tiào|started / 起 |qǐ / 了 |le / 舞 |wǔ|dancing / 。 }

The children started dancing along to the music.

Remember: 随 = “follow” —随着 X means “keeping pace with X.” Picture two things moving together: as the economy rises, life rises *with* it. The 随着 part is the lead, the main clause follows.

Watch out

- It’s written/formal —in casual speech you’d often just use 越来越 or a plain cause clause.

9.2 在…上 / 在…下——“in terms of” / “under (conditions)”

These look like “on” and “under,” but here they’re **abstract** brackets. 在…上 frames the **field or aspect** something holds in —“in (the area of), in terms of, on the matter of.” Its sibling 在…下 frames a **condition** —“under (such circumstances).”

Structure: 在 + Topic + 上, …… · 在 + Condition + 下, ……

{zh: 在 |zài|on / 这个 |zhè ge|this / 问题 |wèn tí|matter / 上 |shàng / , 我们 |wǒ men|our / 的 |de / 看法 |kàn fǎ|views / 一样 |yí yàng|are the same / 。 }

On this matter, our views are the same.

{zh: 在 |zài|under / 这种 |zhè zhǒng|these kinds of / 情况 |qíng kuàng|circumstances / 下 |xià / , 你 |nǐ|you / 会 |huì|would / 怎么 |zěn me|how / 做 |zuò|act / ? }

Under these circumstances, what would you do?

Remember: these are **abstract, not literal**: 在…上 = “in the area of” (在历史上 “in history,” 在语法上 “grammatically”); 在…下 = “under (conditions)” (在帮助下 “with help”). Nothing is physically on top of or beneath anything.

Watch out

- Don’t read them as real positions —在这个问题上 is “on this *issue*,” not “on top of a problem.”

10 句型

10.1 并 + 不 / 没—emphatic negation

并 in front of a negative **pushes back against an expectation** —“(it’s) actually *not*, contrary to what you’d think.” Because it counters an assumption, it’s the go-to for disagreeing or correcting. It only pairs with 不 or 没.

Structure: Subject + 并 + 不 / 没 + Verb / Adjective

{zh: 在 |zài|in / 中国 |Zhōng guó|China / 创业 |chuàng yè|starting a business / 并 |bìng|actually / 不 |bù|not / 容易 |róng yì|easy / 。 }

Starting a business in China actually isn’t easy.

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 并 |bìng|actually / 没 |méi|didn’t / 说过 |shuō guo|say / 这 |zhè|this / 句 |jù / 话 |huà / 。 }

I never actually said that.

Remember: 并不 / 并没 = “actually NOT —despite what you assume.” Use it whenever you’re correcting a wrong impression: “you think it’s easy? 并不.” It’s a firm, slightly defensive negative.

Watch out

- It only attaches to 不 or 没 (并不, 并没) —never to a bare verb on its own.

11 Sentence patterns

11.1 以…为…—”take A as B”

The elegant, semi-classical frame 以 A 为 B means ”take / regard A as B” —treating one thing as your basis, standard, or focus. It rings formal, and it’s the engine behind a whole family of set phrases.

Structure: 以 + A + 为 + B

{zh: 我们 |wǒ men|our / 公司 |gōng sī|company / 以 |yǐ|takes / 亚洲 |Yà zhōu|the Asian / 市场 |shì chǎng|market / 为 |wéi|as / 主 |zhǔ|its focus / 。 }

Our company focuses mainly on the Asian market.

{zh: 许多 |xǔ duō|many / 企业 |qǐ yè|firms / 发展 |fā zhǎn|grow / 很 |hěn|very / 快 |kuài|fast / , 以 |yǐ|take / 麦当劳 |Mài dāng láo|McDonald’s / 为 |wéi|as / 例 |lì|an example / 。 }

Many firms have grown fast —take McDonald’s as an example.

Remember: 以 A 为 B = ”take A as your B.” Memorise the set phrases and you’ve got it: 以…为主 (”mainly”), 以…为例 (”for example”), 以…为荣 (”proud of”), 以人为本 (”put people first”). The everyday paraphrase is 把 A 当作 B.

Watch out

- It’s formal/written —in casual speech, 把 A 当作 B carries the same idea.

12 动词

12.1 让 / 叫 / 请 / 使—making someone do something

These **causative** verbs slot a **person** between the verb and what they end up doing —”make / let / ask / cause someone to ….” Sort them by tone: 让 (everyday ”make / let”), 叫 (colloquial ”tell”), 请 (polite ”ask / invite”), 使 (formal ”cause”). At HSK 4 the result can be a verb *or* an adjective.

Structure: Subject + 让 / 叫 / 请 / 使 + Person + Predicate

{zh: 你 |nǐ|you / 为什么 |wèi shén me|why / 不 |bù|not / 让 |ràng|let / 我 |wǒ|me / 去 |qù|go / ? }

Why won't you let me go?

{zh: 这部 |zhè bù|this / 电影 |diàn yǐng|film / 让 |ràng|makes / 人 |rén|people / 很 |hěn|very / 感动 |gǎn dòng|moved / 。 }

This film is really moving.

{zh: 他 |tā|his / 的 |de / 演讲 |yǎn jiǎng|speech / 使 |shǐ|made / 听众 |tīng zhòng|the audience / 非常 |fēi cháng|very / 激动 |jī dòng|excited / 。 }

His speech made the audience very excited.

Remember: four causatives, sorted by politeness: **使 (formal)** → **让 (neutral)** → **叫 (casual)** → **请 (polite)**. New at HSK 4: the result can be an **adjective** of feeling — 让人感动 (”makes people moved”), 使人激动 (”excites people”).

Watch out

- 让 covers both ”make” and ”let” —context decides which.

12.2 要看 / 得看—”it depends on”

得看 / 要看—literally ”have to look at”—is the everyday ”it depends on ….” The factor it hinges on usually carries a question word.

Structure: 这 / 那 + 要看 / 得看 + Factor

{zh: 这 |zhè|that / 得看 |děi kàn|depends on / 你 |nǐ|your / 的 |de / 时间 |shí jiān|schedule / 。 }

That depends on your schedule.

{zh: 去不去 |qù bu qù|whether I go / 得看 |děi kàn|depends on / 我 |wǒ|my / 的 |de / 心情 |xīn qíng|mood / 。 }

Whether I'll go depends on my mood.

Remember: **得看** = ”(I'll) have to look at…” = ”it depends on…”. The deciding factor almost always holds a question word: 得看天气怎么样, 得看他愿不愿意. Quick fixed reply: 看情况 (”depends on the situation”).

Watch out

- 得 here is *děi* ("have to"), not the structural 得 (*de*) of complements.

12.3 好像—"it seems, as if"

好像 softens a statement to an **impression** —"it seems, looks like, as if." With a subject it's "X seems ..."; with no subject it's "it seems that ...". It can pair with 似的 ("as if") at the end.

Structure: (Subject +) 好像 + Predicate

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 好像 |hǎo xiàng|seems / 是 |shì|to be / 英国人 |Yīng guó rén|British / 。 }

He seems to be British.

{zh: 好像 |hǎo xiàng|it seems / 要 |yào|going to / 下雨 |xià yǔ|rain / 了 |le / 。 }

It looks like it's going to rain.

Remember: 好像 = "seems / as if" —a soft hedge, literally "much resembles." No subject → "it seems that..." (好像有人敲门). Its formal twin is 似乎; don't mix it up with 以为 (a belief that turned out *wrong*).

Watch out

- It's softer than a flat statement —it signals you're not fully sure.

12.4 ……在于……—"lies in"

在于 pins down where something's **essence or key** rests —"lies in, consists in, is a matter of." It's a formal, essay-style verb.

Structure: Topic + 在于 + Key Point

{zh: 成功 |chéng gōng|success / 在于 |zài yú|lies in / 坚持 |jiān chí|perseverance / 。 }

Success lies in perseverance.

{zh: 礼物 |lǐ wù|a gift / 在于 |zài yú|is about / 心意 |xīn yì|the thought / , 不 |bù|not / 在于 |zài yú|about / 贵重 |guì zhòng|how costly / 。 }

A gift is about the thought, not how costly it is.

Remember: 在于 = "the key lies IN..." (在"at" + 于"in") —points to where the heart of the matter sits. With a *person* it means "is up to": 去不去在于你自己 ("whether to go is up to you").

Watch out

- Formal and written —in speech you'd say 主要是 or 看 instead.

12.5 以为—"(mistakenly) think, assume"

Chinese has a dedicated verb for a belief that turned out **wrong**: 以为. Whatever follows 以为 is the *incorrect* idea you held —the sentence usually carries a quiet "...but I was wrong."

Structure: Subject + 以为 + (wrong belief)

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 以为 |yǐ wéi|thought / 他 |tā|he / 是 |shì|was / 德国人 |Dé guó rén|German / 。 }

I thought he was German (he isn't).

{zh: 别 |bié|don't / 以为 |yǐ wéi|think / 我 |wǒ|I / 不 |bù|don't / 知道 |zhī dào|know / 。 }

Don't think I don't know.

Remember: 以为 = a belief that proved **WRONG** ("I thought X...turns out not"). For a belief you simply hold, use 觉得 / 想. The giveaway opener: 我还以为... ("I'd assumed (wrongly) that...").

Watch out

- Swapping 以为 for 觉得 changes the meaning —觉得 makes no claim that you were mistaken.

12.6 通过—“through; to pass”

通过 wears two hats: as a **verb**, “go through (a place) / pass (an exam)”; as a **preposition**, “by means of, via.”

Structure: 通过 + Place / Exam (verb) · 通过 + Method / Agent , …… (preposition)

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 通过 |tōng guò|passed / 了 |le / 这个 |zhè ge|this / 考试 |kǎo shì|exam / 。 }

I passed this exam.

{zh: 我们 |wǒ men|we / 通过 |tōng guò|through / 他 |tā|his / 的 |de / 朋友 |péng you|friend / 找到 |zhǎo dào|found / 了 |le / 他 |tā|him / 。 }

We found him through his friend.

Remember: 通过 = “pass through” —through an *exam/place* (verb: 通过考试) or through a *method/middleman* (preposition: 通过朋友 “via a friend”). Compare 经过, which leans on “after a process.”

Watch out

- As a preposition it sets up a means before the main clause: 通过努力, 他成功了.

12.7 来自—“come from”

来自 is one compact verb for a source or origin —“come / originate from.” It's more formal than 从…来, perfect for introductions, and it stretches to abstract sources too.

Structure: Subject + 来自 + Place / Source

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 来自 |lái zì|come from / 中国 |Zhōng guó|China / 。 }

I'm from China.

{zh: 我 |wǒ|my / 的 |de / 这个 |zhè ge|this / 想法 |xiǎng fǎ|idea / 来自 |lái zì|comes from / 生活 |shēng huó|everyday life / 。 }

This idea of mine comes from everyday life.

Remember: 来自 = "comes from" in one tidy word (来"come" + 自"from"). Great for intros (我来自…) and abstract origins (灵感来自…, "inspiration comes from…"). Casual version: 从…来.

Watch out

- It takes its source *directly*, with no 从: 来自中国 , not 从来自中国.

12.8 来—the "dummy" verb

A bare 来 can stand in for a more specific verb —"(let me) do it, your turn, have a go" — when the real action is obvious from context. It's a short phrase ending in 来 (sometimes 吧), usually with 我 or 你.

Structure: (让 +) Subject + 来 (+ 吧)

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 来 |lái|do it / 吧 |ba / 。 }

Let me do it.

{zh: 你 |nǐ|you / 写 |xiě|write / 得 |de / 好看 |hǎo kàn|nicely / , 你 |nǐ|you / 来 |lái|do it / 吧 |ba / 。 }

You write nicely —you do it.

Remember: this 来 does NOT mean "come" —it's a placeholder for the obvious verb, like English "I'll *get* this." 我来 ("I'll do it"), 你来 ("your turn"), 让他自己来 ("let him have a go").

Watch out

- Only use it when the real action is clear from context —otherwise name the verb.

13 助动词

13.1 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.

13.2 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.

14 动词短语

14.1 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 .

14.2 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.

14.3 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).

14.4 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."

14.5 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.

14.6 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.

14.7 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 lǜ|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.

14.8 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.

14.9 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.

14.10 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.

14.11 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.

15 “But” Statements

15.1 尽管…但是…—“although, even though”

尽管…但是… concedes a point, then overrides it —“although A, (but) B.” 尽管 is a shade stronger and more formal than 虽然—closer to “despite, even though”—and the second clause often carries 还是 (“still”).

Structure: 尽管 + A , (但是 +) Subject + 还是 + B

{zh: 尽管 |jǐn guǎn|although / 很多 |hěn duō|many / 人 |rén|people / 批评 |pī píng|criticise / 他 |tā|him / , 他 |tā|he / 还是 |hái shì|still / 坚持 |jiān chí|insists on / 这么 |zhè me / 做 |zuò|doing it / 。 }

Although many people criticise him, he still insists on doing it.

{zh: 尽管 |jǐn guǎn|although / 我 |wǒ|I / 很 |hěn|very / 生气 |shēng qì|angry / , 但是 |dàn shì|but / 没 |méi|didn't / 发脾气 |fā pí qì|lose my temper / 。 }

Although I was furious, I didn't lose my temper.

Remember: 尽管 = formal “although / despite” (a notch above 虽然); the second half loves a 还是 / 但是. Don't confuse it with the *other* 尽管 = “go right ahead, feel free” (有问题尽管问, “ask away”).

Watch out

- Like 虽然…但是…, Chinese keeps *both* halves where English uses one.

15.2 倒—“actually, contrary to expectation”

The adverb 倒 flags a **surprising turn** —“actually, on the contrary, if anything.” It usually ushers in a *positive* or unexpected comment, and often pairs with 也 or 又.

Structure: …… , Subject + 倒 (+ 也 / 又) ……

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 不是 |bú shì|isn't / 很 |hěn|very / 努力 |nǔ lì|hard-working / , 成绩 |chéng jì|his grades / 倒 |dào|but actually / 也 |yě / 不错 |bú cuò|aren't bad / 。 }

He's not very hard-working, but his grades actually aren't bad.

{zh: 英语 |Yīng yǔ|English / 不是 |bú shì|isn't / 他 |tā|his / 的 |de / 母语 |mǔ yǔ|native language / , 他 |tā|he / 说 |shuō|speaks / 得 |de / 倒 |dào|actually / 挺 |tǐng|quite / 地道 |dì dào|native-like / 。 }

English isn't his native language, but he actually speaks it quite naturally.

Remember: 倒 = a “huh, actually…” twist —usually a *pleasant* surprise (the bright side). “Actually” almost always works in the English. Contrast its gloomier cousin 却 (the disappointing twist).

Watch out

- Don't confuse this 倒 (dào, “actually”) with 倒 (dǎo, “fall over”) —same character, different reading and meaning.

15.3 却—“however, yet”

The adverb 却 marks a **contrast inside the sentence** —“yet, however.” Crucially it sits **before the verb** (after the subject), never at the start, and it often appears alongside 但是.

Structure: Sentence , (但是 +) Subject + 却……

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 是 |shì|is / 老板 |lǎo bǎn|the boss / , 却 |què|yet / 没有 |méi yǒu|no one / 人 |rén / 听 |tīng|listens to / 他 |tā|him / 的 |de / 。 }

He's the boss, yet nobody listens to him.

{zh: 他 |tā|his / 的 |de / 学历 |xué lì|qualifications / 很 |hěn|very / 高 |gāo|high / , 能力 |néng lì|his ability / 却 |què|however / 很 |hěn|very / 一般 |yì bān|average / 。 }

He's highly qualified, but his ability is only average.

Remember: 却 hides before the verb (他却…, never 却他…) and usually brings the **disappointing** twist —the dark twin of 倒. It teams up with 但是: 但是…却….

Watch out

- Unlike English “however,” 却 can't lead the sentence —it tucks in after the subject.

16 “Even If” Statements

16.1 即使…也…—“even if”

即使…也… grants a **hypothetical** and then says it changes **nothing** —“even if A, still B.” The clause after 即使 is a supposition you’re entertaining; the 也 clause overrides it.

Structure: 即使 + Condition , (Subject +) 也 + Result

{zh: 即使 |jí shǐ|even if / 你 |nǐ|you / 不 |bù|don’t / 想 |xiǎng|want / 让 |ràng|to let / 我 |wǒ|me / 去 |qù|go / , 我 |wǒ|I / 也 |yě|still / 要 |yào|will / 去 |qù|go / 。 }

Even if you don’t want me to go, I’m still going.

{zh: 即使 |jí shǐ|even if / 你 |nǐ|you / 很 |hěn|very / 有钱 |yǒu qián|rich / , 也 |yě|still / 买不到 |mǎi bu dào|can’t buy / 幸福 |xìng fú|happiness / 。 }

Even if you were rich, you couldn’t buy happiness.

{zh: 即使 |jí shǐ|even if / 你 |nǐ|you / 没胃口 |méi wèi kǒu|have no appetite / , 也 |yě|still / 要 |yào|should / 吃 |chī|eat / 一点 |yì diǎn|a little / 。 }

Even if you’ve no appetite, you should still eat a bit.

Remember: 即使 = “even IF” (a supposition); 虽然 = “even THOUGH” (an actual fact). Hypothetical → 即使…也…; real situation → 虽然…但是…。 The 也 in the second clause is non-negotiable.

Watch out

- Close cousins arrive at HSK 5: 就算…也 and 哪怕…也 (both “even if”), a touch more colloquial.

17 假设句

17.1 要是…就…—“if …then …”

要是…就… is the everyday spoken “if …then …” —a casual twin of 如果…就…, especially common in northern China. The 就 opens the result clause.

Structure: 要是 + Condition , 就 + Result

{zh: 你 |nǐ|you / 要是 |yào shì|if / 真 |zhēn|really / 想 |xiǎng|miss / 我 |wǒ|me / , 就 |jiù|then / 给 |gěi / 我 |wǒ|me / 打电话 |dǎ diàn huà|call / 。 }

If you really miss me, then call me.

{zh: 要是 |yào shì|if / 明天 |míng tiān|tomorrow / 不 |bù|doesn't / 下雨 |xià yǔ|rain / , 我们 |wǒ men|we / 就 |jiù|then / 去 |qù|go / 爬山 |pá shān|hiking / 。 }

If it doesn't rain tomorrow, we'll go hiking.

Remember: 要是 = the chatty 如果—same “if,” more spoken (and northern). Both fire 就 in the result. Bonus pattern: 要不是…= “if it weren't for…” (要不是堵车, 我早就到了, “if not for the traffic, I'd be there already”).

Watch out

- After the subject, 要是 can shrink to 要: 你要不来….

18 “No Matter” Statements

18.1 不管…都 / 也…—“no matter” (spoken)

不管…都 / 也… says the outcome holds **whatever** the case — “no matter (what / how) …, still ….” The catch: the first clause must contain an **open variable** — a **choice** (A 还是 B / A-not-A) or a **question word** (谁, 什么, 怎么…). It’s the conversational option.

Structure: 不管 + (Question Word / choice) , (Subject +) 都 / 也 + Result

{zh: 不管 |bù guǎn|no matter / 你 |nǐ|you / 穿 |chuān|wear / 什么 |shén me|what / , 都 |dōu|all / 好看 |hǎo kàn|look good / 。 }

No matter what you wear, it looks good on you.

{zh: 不管 |bù guǎn|no matter / 怎么样 |zěnmeyàng|what happens / , 我们 |wǒmen|we / 都 |dōu|all / 要 |yào|must / 好好 |hǎohǎo|properly / 准备 |zhǔnbèi|prepare / 。 }

No matter what, we must prepare properly.

Remember: 不管 needs something **OPEN** after it — a question word (谁/什么/怎么) or an “A 还是 B / A-not-A” choice — then 都 / 也 nails the result down regardless. 不管 = *spoken*; 无论 / 不论 = *formal* (next).

Watch out

- Without an open variable it’s wrong: 不管你穿什么 , but you can’t say 不管这件衣服….

18.2 无论 / 不论…都 / 也…—“no matter, regardless”

无论 (or 不论) is the more **formal** “no matter, regardless of” — grammatically identical to 不管. The clause after it likewise holds a question word (多么, 什么, 谁…) or a choice.

Structure: 无论 / 不论 + (Question Word / choice) , 都 / 也 + Result

{zh: 无论 |wú lùn|no matter / 多么 |duō me|how / 成功 |chéng gōng|successful / , 他 |tā|he / 都 |dōu|always / 觉得 |jué de|feels / 自己 |zì jǐ|himself / 不够 |bú gòu|not / 好 |hǎo|good enough / 。 }

No matter how successful he is, he always feels he’s not good enough.

{zh: 无论 |wú lùn|no matter / 天 |tiān|the weather / 多 |duō|how / 热 |rè|hot / , 都 |dōu|always / 要 |yào|must / 坚持 |jiān chí|keep going / 。 }

No matter how hot it gets, we have to keep going.

Remember: 无论 / 不论 = the written 不管 — same grammar, same need for an open variable + 都 / 也. Speech → 不管; writing → 无论.

Watch out

- The same rule applies: the following clause needs a question word or a choice, never a flat statement.

19 因果句

19.1 由于——“due to, owing to”

由于 sets up a **cause** at the front of a sentence —“due to, owing to, because of.” It’s more formal than 因为, and it often pairs with 因此 / 所以 in the result clause.

Structure: 由于 + Cause , (因此 / 所以) ……

{zh: 由于 |yóu yú|due to / 天气 |tiān qì|weather / 原因 |yuán yīn|reasons / , 航班 |háng bān|the flight / 取消 |qǔ xiāo|was cancelled / 了 |le / 。 }

Due to the weather, the flight was cancelled.

{zh: 由于 |yóu yú|due to / 意见 |yì jiàn|opinions / 不一致 |bù yí zhì|differing / , 两 |liǎng|the two / 位 |wèi / 老板 |lǎo bǎn|bosses / 吵 |chǎo|started arguing / 了 |le / 起来 |qǐ lái / 。 }

Due to differing opinions, the two bosses started arguing.

Remember: 由于 = the formal 因为—it heads the *cause* and likes to hand off to 因此 / 所以 for the result (由于…, 因此…). One pairing trap: 因为 can pair with 所以, but 由于 leans toward 因此.

Watch out

- It’s written-leaning—in casual speech 因为 is far more common.

19.2 既然…就…——“since, now that”

既然…就… reasons forward from an **accepted fact** —“since / now that A is so, then B.” It stands on something already true and draws a suggestion or inference (often with 那 / 那就). It is **not** a hypothetical.

Structure: 既然 + (given fact) , (那) 就 + Suggestion / Inference

{zh: 既然 |jì rán|since / 你 |nǐ|you / 那么 |nà me|so / 喜欢 |xǐ huan|like it / , 那就 |nà jiù|then just / 买 |mǎi|buy it / 吧 |ba / 。 }

Since you like it so much, just buy it.

{zh: 既然 |jì rán|since / 大家 |dà jiā|everyone / 都 |dōu / 不 |bù|isn’t / 感兴趣 |gǎn xìng qù|interested / , 就 |jiù|then / 换 |huàn|change / 个 |ge / 话题 |huà tí|the topic / 吧 |ba / 。 }

Since no one’s interested, let’s change the subject.

Remember: 既然 = “since (we both know) X is true…” —it builds on a *given fact*, then suggests (那就…). Contrast 如果 / 要是, which build on an *if*. Fact → 既然; supposition → 如果.

Watch out

- The result is a suggestion or inference, usually led by 那 / 那就 / 就.

19.3 因此—“therefore, as a result”

因此 (“because of this”) rolls out a **consequence** — “therefore, as a result, for this reason.” It’s formal and common in writing, pairing naturally with a 由于 / 因为 cause.

Structure: Cause , 因此 + Effect

{zh: 昨天 |zuó tiān|yesterday / 下雨 |xià yǔ|it rained / 了 |le / , 因此 |yīn cǐ|therefore / 我 |wǒ|I / 没有 |méi yǒu|didn’t / 出门 |chū mén|go out / 。 }

It rained yesterday, so I didn’t go out.

{zh: 她 |tā|she / 在 |zài|in / 农村 |nóng cūn|the countryside / 长大 |zhǎng dà|grew up / , 因此 |yīn cǐ|therefore / 很 |hěn|well / 了解 |liǎo jiě|understands / 农民 |nóng mín|farmers’ / 的 |de / 生活 |shēng huó|life / 。 }

She grew up in the countryside, so she understands rural life well.

Remember: 因此 = “because of THIS, therefore…” (因 “because” + 此 “this”) — it introduces the *effect*. Formal cousin of 所以; pairs with a 由于 / 因为 cause.

Watch out

- It leads the *result* clause — the cause comes first, then 因此 + effect.

20 补语

20.1 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.

20.2 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 —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 , 回家 .

20.3 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”).

20.4 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).

21 条件句

21.1 只要…就…—“as long as”

只要…就… gives a **sufficient** condition —“as long as A, then B.” A on its own is **enough** to guarantee B (even if it isn’t the only route there).

Structure: 只要 + Condition , 就 + Result

{zh: 只要 |zhǐ yào|as long as / 你 |nǐ|you / 努力 |nǔ lì|hard / 学习 |xué xí|study / , 就 |jiù|then / 会 |huì|will / 有 |yǒu|make / 进步 |jìn bù|progress / 。 }

As long as you study hard, you’ll make progress.

{zh: 只要 |zhǐ yào|whenever / 下雨 |xià yǔ|it rains / , 她 |tā|she / 就 |jiù|then / 心情 |xīn qíng|mood / 不好 |bù hǎo|bad / 。 }

Whenever it rains, she’s in a bad mood.

Remember: lock the pairs: **只要…就…** = “enough → then” (sufficient); **只有…才…** = “the only way → then” (necessary). 只要 reaches for 就, 只有 reaches for 才.

Watch out

- Swapping 就 for 才 quietly turns “as long as” into “only if” —mind the partner.

21.2 除非…才…/ 否则…—“unless”

除非 means “unless.” Two common frames: **Result, 除非 + Condition** (“won’t X unless Y”), and **除非 X, 才 Y** (“only if X, then Y”). It often partners 否则 / 要不然 (“otherwise”). All the weight falls on the one needed condition.

Structure: Result , 除非 + Condition · 除非 + Condition , 才 + Result

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 不 |bù|won’t / 去 |qù|go / , 除非 |chú fēi|unless / 你 |nǐ|you / 也 |yě|too / 去 |qù|go / 。 }

I won’t go unless you go too.

{zh: 除非 |chú fēi|only if / 老板 |lǎo bǎn|the boss / 给 |gěi|gives / 我 |wǒ|me / 加薪 |jiā xīn|a raise / , 我 |wǒ|I / 才 |cái|then / 会 |huì|will / 留下来 |liú xià lái|stay / 。 }

Only if the boss gives me a raise will I stay.

Remember: **除非** = “the one exception that changes things.” 除非…才… = “only if …then”; 除非…否则… = “unless …, otherwise ….” It’s a close kin of 只有…才…, both spotlighting the single needed condition.

Watch out

- 除非…才 and 除非…否则 point opposite ways —才 leads to the good result, 否则 to the bad alternative.

22 名词短语

22.1 所有 (的) + 名词——“all (the)”

所有 before a noun means “all of, every single” —the whole set, usually a sizable one. It pairs with **都** in the predicate, the **的** is usually present, and —crucially— you negate it with **不是**, not **不**.

Structure: 所有 + (的) + Noun + 都…

{zh: 所有 |suǒ yǒu|all / 人 |rén|the people / 都 |dōu / 走 |zǒu|left / 了 |le / 吗 |ma / ? }

Has everyone left?

{zh: 我们 |wǒ men|our / 学校 |xué xiào|school / 所有 |suǒ yǒu|all / 的 |de / 老师 |lǎo shī|teachers / 都 |dōu / 会 |huì|can / 说 |shuō|speak / 英文 |Yīng wén|English / 。 }

All the teachers at our school can speak English.

Remember: 所有…都 = “every single one” (stronger than a bare 都). To say “not all,” negate the whole with **不是**: 不是所有人都… (“not everyone…”), never 所有人都不… (which means “none of them…”).

Watch out

- 所有人都不去 (“none go”) vs 不是所有人都去 (“not all go”) —where the 不 / 不是 sits flips the meaning.

22.2 ……之一——“one of (the) …”

之一 at the **end** of a noun phrase means “one of the …” —a single member of a named group. It very often follows a **最** (“most”) phrase. The **之** is archaic (“of”), but the phrase is everyday, even in speech.

Structure: Subject + 是 + [Noun Phrase] + 之一

{zh: 她 |tā|she / 是 |shì|is / 我 |wǒ|my / 最好 |zuì hǎo|best / 的 |de / 朋友 |péng you|friends / 之一 |zhī yī|one of / 。 }

She is one of my best friends.

{zh: 这 |zhè|this / 是 |shì|is / 世界上 |shì jiè shàng|in the world / 最 |zuì|biggest / 大 |dà / 的 |de / 城市 |chéng shì|cities / 之一 |zhī yī|one of / 。 }

This is one of the biggest cities in the world.

Remember: 之一 = “one OF (them),” bolted onto the **END** (最好的朋友之一). 之 is old-style “of,” so read it as “[group] —of which, one.” Note the plural noun: “one of my best friends.”

Watch out

- It tacks onto the tail of the phrase, never the front: …城市之一, not 之一…城市.

22.3 另外 + Number + MW + Noun — “the other(s), another”

另外 (or **另**) singles out the **remaining or a different** member — “(the) other, another.” There’s no 的 after it, and it’s often followed by 一个. Use bare **另** for a singular (另一个).

Structure: 另外 + Number + Measure Word + Noun · 另 + 一 + MW + Noun

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 有 |yǒu|have / 两 |liǎng|two / 个 |ge / 手机 |shǒu jī|phones / , 一个 |yí ge|one / 是 |shì|is / 小米 |Xiǎo mǐ|Xiaomi / , 另 |lìng|the other / 一个 |yí ge / 是 |shì|is / iPhone / 。 }

I have two phones —one’s a Xiaomi, the other’s an iPhone.

{zh: 一套 |yí tào|one / 自己 |zì jǐ|herself / 住 |zhù|lives in / , 另 |lìng|the other / 一套 |yí tào / 租 |zū|rents / 出去 |chū qù|out / 了 |le / 。 }

She lives in one (flat) and rents the other out.

Remember: 另外 / 另 = “the OTHER one” —and NO 的 (另外一个 , not 另外的一个). For a singular, just 另: 另一个, 另一种. Pairs beautifully with 一个…另一个 (“one…the other…”).

Watch out

- Don’t add 的: 另外一个人 , 另外的人 means something looser (“other people”).

23 句型

23.1 连 + 动词 + 都 + 不 / 没 + 动词 — “didn’t even”

Repeat a verb around 连…都 + 不 / 没 to stress that the most basic action **didn’t even** happen — “didn’t even ….” Add 就 for “without even …ing, (then) ….”

Structure: 连 + Verb + 都 + 不 / 没 + (same) Verb (, 就……)

{zh: 这个人 |zhè ge rén|this person / 我 |wǒ|I / 连 |lián|even / 见 |jiàn|met / 都 |dōu / 没 |méi|haven’t / 见过 |jiàn guo|met / 。 }

I’ve never even met this person.

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 连 |lián|even / 说 |shuō|say / 都 |dōu / 不 |bù|didn’t / 说 |shuō|say / 就 |jiù|just / 走 |zǒu|left / 了 |le / 。 }

He left without even saying a word.

Remember: 连…都 + the verb REPEATED maxes the emphasis 一见都没见过 (“never even met”). Tack on 就 for “without even …ing, then…”: 连问都不问就走了 (“left without even asking”).

Watch out

- The repeat is what does the work — 连见都没见过, not 连都没见过.

23.2 为…而… — “for the sake of”

为 A 而 B ties a **purpose** to the action done for it — “do B for the sake of A.” It’s formal; the everyday swap is 为 → 为了. Negate with 不为…而….

Structure: Subject + 为 + Goal + 而 + Action

{zh: 我们 |wǒ men|we / 为 |wèi|for / 梦想 |mèng xiǎng|our dreams / 而 |ér / 努力 |nǔ lì|strive / 。 }

We strive for our dreams.

{zh: 不要 |bú yào|don’t / 为了 |wèi le|for / 别人 |bié rén|other people / 而 |ér / 活 |huó|live / 。 }

Don’t live for other people.

Remember: 为 (goal) 而 (action) = “for the sake of …, (one) does …”. 而 elegantly bridges the *why* to the *what*. It’s the formal cousin of 为了; in speech you’d more often just say 为了.

Watch out

- This 为 reads *wèi* (“for”) — the goal comes first, the action after 而.

23.3 任何 + 名词 + 都 / 也 — “any (at all)”

任何 means “any (at all), whatsoever”; with 都 / 也 it sweeps over **every** case — “any …at all.” It takes no 的, and it’s more emphatic and formal than 什么.

Structure: 任何 + Noun + 都 / 也 + Predicate

{zh: 任何 |rèn hé|any / 人 |rén|person / 都 |dōu|at all / 不 |bù|can't / 能 |néng| / 说服 |shuō fú|persuade / 他 |tā|him / 。 }

No one at all can persuade him.

{zh: 这里 |zhè lǐ|here / 任何 |rèn hé|any / 车 |chē|vehicle / 都 |dōu|at all / 不 |bù|can't / 可以 |kě yǐ| / 通过 |tōng guò|pass / 。 }

No vehicle at all may pass here.

Remember: 任何 = emphatic "any whatsoever" + 都 / 也—and NO 的 (任何人, not 任何的人). It's the stronger, more formal sibling of 什么 (任何人 hits harder than 谁/什么人).

Watch out

- It always wants a 都 / 也 to complete the sweep —任何人都..., not a bare 任何人...

23.4 既...又 / 也...—"both ...and ..."

既 A 又 B stacks two qualities that **both** hold —"both ...and ...". A and B should match in form (both adjectives, ideally both the same length). It's a more formal version of 又...又....

Structure: 既 + A + 又 / 也 + B

{zh: 这家 |zhè jiā|this / 餐厅 |cān tīng|restaurant / 既 |jì|both / 便宜 |pián yi|cheap / 又 |yòu|and / 好吃 |hǎo chī|tasty / 。 }

This restaurant is both cheap and tasty.

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 做 |zuò|does / 事情 |shì qing|things / 既 |jì|both / 快 |kuài|fast / 又 |yòu|and / 好 |hǎo|well / 。 }

He does things both quickly and well.

Remember: 既 A 又 B = "both A and B," and A and B should MATCH (same length/type) —既便宜又好吃, 既快又好. It's the dressed-up 又...又...; 既 opens, 又 / 也 follows.

Watch out

- Mismatched halves read awkwardly —keep A and B parallel (both two-syllable, both adjectives).

23.5 在...上 / 下 / 里 / 旁边—locations

在 + place + 上 / 下 / 里 / 旁边 says **where** something sits relative to an object. The position word comes **after** the place noun —English "on the table" becomes 在桌子上 ("at table-on"). Big places (countries, cities) need no position word.

Structure: 在 + Location + 上 / 下 / 里 / 旁边

{zh: 你 |nǐ|your / 的 |de / 手机 |shǒu jī|phone / 在 |zài|is in / 包 |bāo|the bag / 里 |lǐ / 吗 |ma / ? }

Is your phone in the bag?

{zh: 超市 |chāo shì|the supermarket / 在 |zài|is / 我家 |wǒ jiā|my house / 旁边 |páng biān|next to / 。 }

The supermarket is next to my house.

Remember: the position word comes AFTER the place —在桌子上, 在包里, 在床下—the mirror of English "on/in the ...". And **big places take no position word**: 在中国 (never 在中国里).

Watch out

- A bare 在桌子 is incomplete —you need the 上 / 里 / 下 to anchor it.

24 基本句型

24.1 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.

24.2 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.

24.3 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.

24.4 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.

24.5 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."

24.6 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.

25 复合句

25.1 形容词 + 是 + 形容词, 但是...—conceding a point

The frame Adj 是 Adj, 但是... grudgingly **concedes** a quality before pulling back — "(it's) ...alright, but ...". It's a debater's move: admit the point, then keep your reservation.

Structure: Adjective + 是 + (same) Adjective , 但是 / 就是.....

{zh: 工作 |gōng zuò|work / 忙 |máng|busy / 是 |shì / 忙 |máng|busy / , 但是 |dàn shì|but / 我 |wǒ|I'm / 很 |hěn|very / 开心 |kāi xīn|happy / 。 }

Work may be busy, but I'm very happy.

{zh: 这件 |zhè jiàn|this / 衣服 |yī fu|outfit / 好看 |hǎo kàn|nice-looking / 是 |shì / 好看 |hǎo kàn|nice-looking / , 就是 |jiù shì|it's just / 不 |bù|doesn't / 适合 |shì hé|suit / 我 |wǒ|me / 。 }

This outfit looks nice alright —it just doesn't suit me.

Remember: the doubled adjective concedes ("busy, sure..."), the 但是 / 就是 clause delivers the catch. 忙是忙, 但是... = "busy it may be, but...". Note: 就是 here means "it's just (that)," not "is."

Watch out

- The adjective must repeat exactly around 是: 好看是好看, not 好看是漂亮.

25.2 一...就...—"as soon as"

一 A 就 B binds two events tight —"as soon as A, (then) B," with B following A at once or automatically. It doubles as "whenever A, B" for a habitual link.

Structure: Subject + 一 + Event 1 , 就 + Event 2

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 一 |yī|as soon as / 下课 |xià kè|class ends / 就 |jiù|then / 去 |qù|go / 吃 |chī|eat / 午饭 |wǔ fàn|lunch / 。 }

I'll have lunch as soon as class is over.

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 一 |yī|the moment / 喝酒 |hē jiǔ|drinks / 就 |jiù|then / 脸红 |liǎn hóng|goes red / 。 }

He goes red the moment he drinks.

Remember: 一 A 就 B = "the moment A, B" —instant, automatic follow-on (一下课就...). The two clauses can even have different subjects: 老师一来, 大家就安静了 ("the moment the teacher came, everyone went quiet").

Watch out

- Don't read this 一 as "one" —it's the "the instant..." trigger, paired with 就.

25.3 一方面…一方面… — “on one hand …on the other …”

一方面…(另) 一方面… lays out **two sides** of a situation — “on one hand …, on the other ….” The two sides may agree or pull against each other, and the second often takes 又 / 也 / 还.

Structure: 一方面 + A , (另) 一方面 + B

{zh: 自己 |zì jǐ / 做饭 |zuò fàn|cooking for yourself / 一方面 |yì fāng miàn|on one hand / 健康 |jiàn kāng|healthy / , 一方面 |yì fāng miàn|on the other / 还 |hái|also / 能 |néng|can / 省钱 |shěng qián|save money / 。 }

Cooking for yourself is healthy on one hand, and saves money on the other.

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 一方面 |yì fāng miàn|on one hand / 想 |xiǎng|wants to / 改变 |gǎi biàn|change / , 一方面 |yì fāng miàn|on the other / 又 |yòu|yet / 害怕 |hài pà|fears / 改变 |gǎi biàn|change / 。 }

On one hand he wants to change; on the other, he's afraid of it.

Remember: 一方面…一方面…weighs **two sides** — 方面 = “side / aspect.” The sides can agree (two perks) or clash (want vs fear); a clashing second side often carries 又 (“yet”).

Watch out

- The second one can take 另 (另一方面) for extra clarity — both forms are fine.

26 Not only...but also...

26.1 不但 / 不仅 / 不只...而且 / 还 / 也...—"not only ...but also ..."

Several near-identical frames all mean "not only A, but also B": 不但 / 不仅 / 不只 up front, paired with 而且 / 还 / 也 behind. Mix and match freely—they're alike in meaning, and B should push *further* than A.

Structure: Subject + 不但 / 不仅 / 不只 + A , 而且 / 还 / 也 + B

{zh: 王师傅 |Wáng shī fu|Master Wang / 不但 |bú dàn|not only / 会 |huì|can / 开车 |kāi chē|drive / , 还 |hái|but also / 会 |huì|can / 修车 |xiū chē|fix cars / 。 }

Master Wang not only drives—he can repair cars too.

{zh: 我们 |wǒ men|we / 不仅 |bù jǐn|not only / 完成 |wán chéng|finished / 了 |le / 任务 |rèn wù|the task / , 而且 |ér qiě|but also / 提前 |tí qián|ahead of schedule / 了 |le / 十天 |shí tiān|by ten days / 。 }

We not only finished the task, but did so ten days early.

Remember: front + back, pick any pair: 不但 / 不仅 / 不只 ("not only") with 而且 / 还 / 也 ("but also"). 不仅 / 不只 ring a touch more formal; B must *escalate* past A. If the subject changes, put it **after** the conjunction: 不但..., 而且他也....

Watch out

- Keep both halves—Chinese says "not only...but also..." in full, where casual English might drop one.

27 副词辨析

27.1 本来 vs 原来—“originally” two ways

Both can translate as “originally,” but they part ways. **本来** = “originally / in the first place,” usually setting up that things **later changed**. **原来** = “so it turns out” —a fresh realisation —or “(it was) …all along.”

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 本来 |běn lái|originally / 要 |yào|was going / 去 |qù|to go / 上海 |Shàng hǎi|Shanghai / , 但是 |dàn shì|but / 去不了 |qù bu liǎo|couldn't / 了 |le / 。 }

I was originally going to Shanghai, but then I couldn't.

{zh: 原来 |yuán lái|so / 你 |nǐ|you / 是 |shì|are / 老师 |lǎo shī|a teacher / 啊 |a / ! }

Oh, so you're a teacher!

Remember: **本来** looks back at a plan that **CHANGED** (“originally…but”); **原来** reports a **DISCOVERY** (“oh, so that’s it!”). Tagline forms seal it: 本来就是 = “of course, all along”; 原来如此 = “ah, so that’s how it is!”.

Watch out

- If nothing changed and you mean “it turns out,” it’s 原来, never 本来.

27.2 常常 vs 往往—“often” two ways

常常 is plain “often” —a frequency, and it can describe future plans. **往往** is “tend(s) to / as a rule” —a pattern or tendency under certain conditions, and it **can’t** describe a future intention.

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 常常 |cháng cháng|often / 迟到 |chí dào|arrives late / 。 }

He often arrives late.

{zh: 有钱人 |yǒu qián rén|rich people / 往往 |wǎng wǎng|tend to be / 比较 |bǐ jiào|relatively / 迷信 |mí xìn|superstitious / 。 }

Rich people tend to be more superstitious.

Remember: **常常** = “often” (a count, future-friendly); **往往** = “tends to” (a law-like pattern, no future). Test it: 我以后会常常运动 (“I’ll exercise often from now on”), but 往往 there —a tendency can’t be a plan.

Watch out

- 常常 can shorten to 常 (常去); 往往 can’t drop a 往.

27.3 刚 vs 刚才—adverb vs time word

刚 is an **adverb** (“just,” right before the verb); **刚才** is a **time noun** (“a moment ago,” within the last few minutes) that can stand alone and even modify a noun.

{zh: 你 |nǐ|you / 刚才 |gāng cái|a moment ago / 去 |qù|went / 哪儿 |nǎr|where / 了 |le / ? }

Where did you go just now?

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 刚 |gāng|just / 回来 |huí lái|got back / 。 }

I just got back.

Remember: 刚 = adverb, glued to the verb (刚到, often no 了); 刚才 = noun, a point in the recent past (stands alone, takes 了, modifies nouns: 刚才的事). Before an adjective, only 刚 / 刚刚 works (天刚晴, "the sky just cleared").

Watch out

- 刚才 is a *time word* — 刚才的事 ("the thing just now") works, but 刚的事 doesn't.

28 介词辨析

28.1 关于 vs 对于—“about” vs “towards / regarding”

Both point at a person or thing, but from different angles. **关于** introduces the **topic / subject matter** (“about, on the subject of”). **对于** introduces the **target of an attitude or action** (“towards, with regard to”) —usually with a view or conclusion attached.

{zh: 关于 |guān yú|about / 这个 |zhè ge|this / 问题 |wèn tí|question / , 大家 |dà jiā|everyone / 有 |yǒu|has / 什么 |shén me|what / 看法 |kàn fǎ|views / ? }

On this question, what are everyone's thoughts?

{zh: 对于 |duì yú|with / 我们 |wǒ men|our / 的 |de / 工作 |gōng zuò|work / , 老板 |lǎo bǎn|the boss / 很 |hěn|very / 满意 |mǎn yì|satisfied / 。 }

The boss is very satisfied with our work.

Remember: **关于** = the **TOPIC** (“about X”); **对于** = the **TARGET** of a feeling/action (“towards X”). If a view or reaction is attached (satisfied with, strict about), it's **对于**; if you're just naming the subject, it's **关于**.

Watch out

- Where only a topic is meant, the two overlap (关于/对于这个问题…) —the split bites when an attitude is involved.

28.2 离 vs 从—“distance from” vs “starting from”

离 measures the **gap** between two points —“away from” (for distance). **从** marks a **starting point** in space or time —“from” (where motion or time *begins*).

{zh: 从 |cóng|from / 明天 |míng tiān|tomorrow / 开始 |kāi shǐ|on / , 我 |wǒ|I / 不 |bù|won't / 抽烟 |chōu yān|smoke / 了 |le / 。 }

Starting from tomorrow, I'm quitting smoking.

{zh: 我家 |wǒ jiā|my home / 离 |lí|from / 公司 |gōng sī|the office / 很 |hěn|very / 近 |jìn|close / 。 }

My home is very close to the office.

Remember: **离** = the **GAP** (“how far apart,” pairs with 远 / 近); **从** = the **START** (“where it begins”). 我家离公司很近 (“close to”) vs 从明天开始 (“starting tomorrow”). Distance → 离; origin point → 从.

Watch out

- 离 needs two endpoints and a distance word (离…远/近); 从 needs a route or a start time (从…走, 从…开始).

29 Separate Functions 辨析

29.1 反而 vs 相反—“instead” vs “the opposite”

反而 is an **adverb** (“instead, on the contrary”) that sits before the verb inside one sentence. **相反** is an **adjective / conjunction** meaning “(the) opposite” —it links or opens a sentence, or describes a thing as opposite.

{zh: 吃 |chī|eating / 水果 |shuǐ guǒ|fruit / 不但 |bú dàn|not only / 没 |méi|no / 好处 |hǎo chu|benefit / , 反而 |fǎn ér|instead / 有 |yǒu|has / 坏处 |huài chu|harm}

Eating fruit not only does no good —instead it does harm.

{zh: 我 |wǒ|my / 的 |de / 想法 |xiǎng fǎ|idea / 跟 |gēn / 他 |tā|his / 相反 |xiāng fǎn|the opposite / 。 }

My idea is the opposite of his.

Remember: 反而 = an **ADVERB** (“instead,” before the verb), marking a **contrary RESULT**; 相反 = “the opposite” (跟…相反, or 相反, … “on the contrary,”). One does a job inside the clause; the other names or links an opposite.

Watch out

- You can’t swap them: 反而有坏处 (adverb), 跟他相反 (adjective) —but not 跟他反而.

29.2 肯定 vs 确定 vs 一定—“sure / certainly”

Three “certainty” words, three jobs: **肯定** = “definitely / to affirm” (a confident assertion). **确定** = “be sure / confirm” —certainty you’ve **checked**. **一定** = “certainly / be sure to” —an **expectation or insistence**.

{zh: 你 |nǐ|you / 确定 |què dìng|sure / 他 |tā|he / 会 |huì|will / 来 |lái|come / 吗 |ma / ? }

Are you sure he’ll come?

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 肯定 |kěn dìng|definitely / 会 |huì|will / 来 |lái|come / 。 }

He’ll definitely come.

Remember: **肯定** asserts a fact confidently; **确定** is certainty you’ve **VERIFIED**; **一定** is **expectation/insistence**. 一定会来 = “will *surely* come” (expectation); 一定要小心 = “be *sure to* be careful” (insistence); 你确定吗? = “are you *sure* (have you checked)?”.

Watch out

- 确定 is about *your own* checked certainty; 肯定 asserts the fact itself.

29.3 适合 vs 合适—“to suit” vs “suitable”

Same two characters, flipped —and the flip changes the grammar. **适合** is a **verb** (“to suit”) and takes an object. **合适** is an **adjective** (“suitable”) and behaves like other

adjectives (很适合, 最合适的).

{zh: 这个 |zhè ge|this / 颜色 |yán sè|colour / 不 |bù|doesn't / 适合 |shì hé|suit / 他 |tā|him / 。 }

This colour doesn't suit him.

{zh: 黑色 |hēi sè|black / 才 |cái|is / 是 |shì / 最 |zuì|the most / 合适 |hé shì|suitable / 的 |de / 。 }

Black is the most suitable.

Remember: 适合 = VERB + object (适合我, "suits me"); 合适 = ADJECTIVE (很适合, 最合适的, no object). The character order is the giveaway: 适合 takes an object, 合适 describes.

Watch out

- Don't give 合适 an object: 这个适合你 but 这个合适你 → 这个对你很适合 / 这个很合适.

30 时间词辨析

30.1 以后 vs 的时候—”after” vs ”when / while”

Both attach to a time or event, but they pin different moments. **以后** means ”**after** (something)” —the action follows it. **的时候** means ”**when / while** (something is happening)” —the action lands *during* it.

{zh: 打 |dǎ|playing / 篮球 |lán qiú|basketball / 的时候 |de shí hou|while / 会 |huì|will / 出汗 |chū hàn|sweat / 。 }

You sweat while playing basketball.

{zh: 打完 |dǎ wán|after finishing / 篮球 |lán qiú|basketball / 以后 |yǐ hòu|after / 要 |yào|need to / 洗澡 |xǐ zǎo|shower / 。 }

After finishing basketball, you need to shower.

Remember: **的时候** = **DURING** (when/while); **以后** = **AFTER**. The verb tells you which: an *ongoing* verb takes 的时候 (打篮球的时候), a *completed* one takes 以后 (打完以后) —note the result word 完 that signals ”finished.”

Watch out

- 吃饭的时候 (”while eating”) vs 吃完饭以后 (”after eating”) —the 完 is the tell that you’ve crossed into 以后 territory.