

Adverbs

Ref Hsk5 Grammar

都 (advanced) —"even / already / now that"

Beyond "all," 都 moonlights in three ways: "even (to the point that)" (= 甚至); "already" (with a time, plus 了); and a tone of **complaint** ("now that ...!").

Structure: Subject + 都 + Predicate

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 难过 |nán guò|upset / 得 |de / 都 |dōu|even / 哭 |kū|cried / 了 |le / 。 }

He was so upset he even cried.

{zh: 都 |dōu|already / 半夜 |bàn yè|midnight / 了 |le / , 你 |nǐ|you / 怎么 |zěn me|how come / 还 |hái|still / 不 |bù|not / 睡 |shuì|asleep / ? }

It's the middle of the night already —why aren't you asleep?

Remember: three side-jobs for 都: "even" (= 甚至: 难过得都哭了), "already" (time + 了: 都半夜了), and a grumble ("now that...!", 都怪你"it's all your fault").

Watch out

- The "already" sense needs a time phrase and a closing 了一都十点了.

还…呢 (advanced) —sarcasm and reproach

还 + predicate + 呢 drips with **surprise, sarcasm, or reproach** —"some ...you are!, and you call yourself ...!" It flags the gap between claim and reality.

Structure: Subject + 还 + Predicate / Noun + 呢

{zh: 还 |hái|some / 好朋友 |hǎo péng you|"good friend" / 呢 |ne / , 天天 |tiān tiān|every day / 说 |shuō|talks / 我 |wǒ|my / 坏话 |huài huà|behind my back / 。 }

Some "good friend" —bad-mouthing me every day.

{zh: 还 |hái|and he / 留过学 |liú guo xué|studied abroad / 呢 |ne / , 英语 |Yīng yǔ|his English / 这么 |zhè me|this / 差 |chà|bad / ! }

He even studied abroad, yet his English is this bad!

Remember: 还 X 呢 = "call yourself an X?!" —a sarcastic jab at the mismatch between the label and the reality. Almost always sealed with 呢, said with an eye-roll.

Watch out

- Tone is everything —without the mocking delivery it just reads as plain 还 ("still").

总 (advanced) — ”bound to, in the end”

Beyond ”always,” 总 paired with 会 / 得 / 要 / 能 states something **concrete and inevitable** — ”is bound to, will (in the end), has to.” It can’t sit directly after the verb.

Structure: 总 + 会 / 得 / 要 / 能 + Verb Phrase (+ 的 / 吧)

{zh: 这里 |zhè lǐ|here / 是 |shì|is / 他 |tā|his / 家 |jiā|home / , 他 |tā|he / 总 |zǒng|is bound to / 会 |huì / 回来 |huí lái|come back / 的 |de / 。 }

This is his home —he’s bound to come back.

{zh: 咱们 |zán men|we / 总 |zǒng|have got to / 得 |děi / 想 |xiǎng|think of / 个 |ge / 办法 |bàn fǎ|some plan / 吧 |ba / 。 }

We’ve got to come up with some kind of solution.

Remember: 总 + 会/得/要/能 = ”bound to / has got to.” 总会回来的 (”bound to come back”), 总得想办法 (”have got to find a way”) —a settled sense of inevitability.

Watch out

- Pair it with an auxiliary —总 can’t sit bare right before a main verb here.

毕竟—”after all”

毕竟 reaches for a **basic fact** to justify a judgement —”after all, when all’s said and done.” At home in speech and writing alike.

Structure: …… , 毕竟…… . 毕竟……

{zh: 别 |bié|don’t / 骂 |mà|scold / 他 |tā|him / 了 |le / , 他 |tā|he / 毕竟 |bì jìng|after all / 是 |shì|is / 孩子 |hái zi|a child / 。 }

Stop scolding him —he’s only a kid, after all.

{zh: 毕竟 |bì jìng|after all / 是 |shì|it’s / 冬天 |dōng tiān|winter / , 多 |duō|more / 穿 |chuān|wear / 点 |diǎn / 吧 |ba / 。 }

It’s winter, after all —dress more warmly.

Remember: 毕竟 = ”after all” —it pulls out an undeniable fact you shouldn’t forget, to excuse or explain (他毕竟是孩子, ”he’s only a child, after all”).

Watch out

- It justifies, it doesn’t conclude —pair it with the fact, not the result.

差点没 + 动词—”almost didn’t”

差点没 is 差点 + 没—and for a **desired** result it flips to good news: you **nearly failed but pulled it off**. Read the 没 as part of the verb: ”almost didn’t [verb].” No 了 after.

Structure: Subject + 差点 + 没 + Verb Phrase

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 差点 |chà diǎn|almost / 没 |méi|didn't / 赶上 |gǎn shàng|catch / 火车 |huǒ chē|the train / 。 }

I almost missed the train (but caught it).

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 差点 |chà diǎn|barely / 没 |méi / 通过 |tōng guò|passed / 考试 |kǎo shì|the exam / 。 }

He barely passed the exam.

Remember: for a **wanted** outcome, 差点没 = "nearly failed, but made it" (差点没赶上 = *caught* it!). For an **unwanted** one, plain 差点 (no 没) = "nearly happened, didn't" (差点迟到 = wasn't late). The 没 with a good result is the twist.

Watch out

- It's the classic exam trap — 差点没赶上 means you *did* catch it, despite the 没.

反正—“anyway, in any case”

反正 sweeps the alternatives off the table —“anyway, regardless, either way.” Whatever the options, the result stands. It often follows a comma and teams up with 不管.

Structure: [Disregarded situation] , 反正……

{zh: 你 |nǐ|you / 信 |xìn|believe / 不 |bù|or not / 信 |xìn / , 反正 |fǎn zhèng|anyway / 我 |wǒ|I / 信 |xìn|do / 了 |le / 。 }

Believe it or not — anyway, I do.

{zh: 不管 |bù guǎn|however / 多 |duō|far / 远 |yuǎn|it is / , 反正 |fǎn zhèng|anyway / 我 |wǒ|I / 要 |yào|will / 去 |qù|go / 。 }

However far it is, I'm going anyway.

Remember: 反正 = “either way, my mind's made up.” It brushes the options aside —the outcome doesn't depend on them. It pairs naturally with 不管 / 无论 (“no matter …, 反正…”).

Watch out

- It signals a settled decision —don't use it where the choice genuinely matters.

尽量 + 动词—“as much as possible”

尽量 means push something **to the limit of what you can** —“as much as possible, do one's best to.” It sits before a verb or adjective.

Structure: 尽量 + Verb / Adjective

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 会 |huì|will / 尽量 |jǐn liàng|do my best to / 帮 |bāng|help / 你 |nǐ|you / 。 }

I'll do my best to help you.

{zh: 请 |qǐng|please / 尽量 |jǐn liàng|as much as possible / 早 |zǎo|early / 点 |diǎn / 来 |lái|come / 。 }

Please come as early as you can.

Remember: 尽 (exhaust) + 量 (amount) = "give it all you've got." It promises effort within limits — "I'll do what I can." 尽量早点来 = "come as early as you can manage."

Watch out

- It's "as much as possible," not a guarantee — it quietly admits there's a limit.

互相 + 动词 — "each other"

互相 marks a **two-way** action — "(do to) each other, mutually." It usually leads a two-syllable verb; a one-syllable verb needs more material after it.

Structure: 互相 + Verb

{zh: 我们 |wǒ men|we / 应该 |yīng gāi|should / 互相 |hù xiāng|each other / 帮助 |bāng zhù|help / 。 }

We should help each other.

{zh: 同学 |tóng xué|classmates / 之间 |zhī jiān|among / 要 |yào|should / 互相 |hù xiāng|one another / 尊重 |zūn zhòng|respect / 。 }

Classmates should respect one another.

Remember: 互相 = "mutually, each other" — a back-and-forth action, usually with a two-syllable verb: 互相帮助, 互相了解, 互相尊重.

Watch out

- A one-syllable verb after 互相 feels bare — prefer the two-syllable form (互相帮助, not 互相帮).

尽管 + 动词 — "feel free to"

Here **尽管** means "feel free to, go right ahead" — urging someone not to hold back. (A completely different sense from 尽管 = "although.")

Structure: 尽管 + Verb

{zh: 有 |yǒu|if you have / 什么 |shén me|any / 问题 |wèn tí|questions / 尽管 |jǐn guǎn|feel free to / 问 |wèn|ask / 。 }

Feel free to ask if you have any questions.

{zh: 有 |yǒu|if you need / 什么 |shén me|any- / 事 |shì|thing / 尽管 |jǐn guǎn|don't hesitate to / 找 |zhǎo|come to / 我 |wǒ|me / 。 }

Don't hesitate to come to me if you need anything.

Remember: this 尽管 = "go right ahead, don't hold back" (有问题尽管问) — not the "although" of 尽管…但是…。 Same word, two unrelated jobs; context picks.

Watch out

- It's encouragement, so it leads a bare verb —don't pair it with 但是 here.

干脆 + 动词—"just (do it), might as well"

干脆 proposes a **clean, decisive** way out of a fiddly spot —"might as well, just (do this)." The feeling: stop overthinking and *just*.

Structure: Subject + 干脆 + Verb Phrase

{zh: 家里 |jiā lǐ|at home / 什么 |shén me|nothing / 都 |dōu / 没有 |méi yǒu|there is / , 干脆 |gān cuì|let's just / 出去 |chū qù|go out / 吃 |chī|to eat / 吧 |ba / 。 }

There's nothing at home —let's just eat out.

{zh: 这 |zhè|this / 电脑 |diàn nǎo|computer / 又 |yòu|again / 坏 |huài|broke / 了 |le / , 干脆 |gān cuì|might as well / 买 |mǎi|buy / 台 |tái|a / 新的 |xīn de|new one / 吧 |ba / 。 }

This computer broke again —might as well buy a new one.

Remember: 干脆 = "just do it / might as well" —it cuts the dithering and picks the cleanest, most decisive option (干脆买个新的吧).

Watch out

- It's a decisive *suggestion* —it usually closes with 吧.

再也 + 不 / 没…了—"never again"

再也不 / 没…了 slams the door —"never …again." The final 了 (change of state) seals the determination or the settled fact.

Structure: Subject + 再也 + 不 / 没 + Verb Phrase + 了

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 再也 |zài yě|never again / 不 |bù / 想 |xiǎng|want to / 看到 |kàn dào|see / 你 |nǐ|you / 了 |le / ! }

I never want to see you again!

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 走 |zǒu|left / 了 |le / , 再也 |zài yě|never / 没 |méi|did / 回来 |huí lái|come back / 。 }

He left and never came back.

Remember: 再也不…了 = "never AGAIN" (future); 再也没…了 = "never did again" (past). The closing 了 slams the door shut on it.

Watch out

- Match the negative to the time: future intention → 不; past fact → 没.

曾经 + 动词 + 过 — “once, formerly”

曾经 plants an experience **firmly in the past** — “once (upon a time), formerly, ever.” It usually pairs with **过**. To negate, use the formal **不曾 / 未曾** — **never** 没曾经.

Structure: Subject + 曾经 + Verb + 过 · 曾经 + 是 / 在 / 有…

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 曾经 |céng jīng|once / 是 |shì|was / 我 |wǒ|my / 老板 |lǎo bǎn|boss / 。 }

He was once my boss.

{zh: 我们 |wǒ men|we / 曾经 |céng jīng|once / 一起 |yì qǐ|together / 去 |qù|went / 过 |guò| / 。 }

We once went there together.

Remember: **曾经…过** = “once, formerly” — a closed chapter in the past. The negative is the *formal* **不曾 / 未曾**, never 没曾经. With **是 / 在 / 有**, drop the **过** (曾经是…).

Watch out

- 曾经 is more written/weighty than a plain past with **过** — reserve it for “once upon a time” distance.

再三 + 动词 — “repeatedly”

再三 means doing something **again and again** — “repeatedly, time and again.” It’s formal, usually before a two-syllable verb of speech or thought, and usually without **了 / 过**.

Structure: 再三 + Verb Phrase

{zh: 老师 |lǎo shī|the teacher / 再三 |zài sān|repeatedly / 强调 |qiáng diào|stressed / 这次 |zhè cì|this / 考试 |kǎo shì|exam / 很 |hěn|very / 重要 |zhòng yào|important / 。 }

The teacher stressed again and again that this exam matters.

{zh: 这个 |zhè ge|this / 决定 |jué dìng|decision / 是 |shì|was / 经过 |jīng guò|after / 再三 |zài sān|much / 考虑 |kǎo lǜ|deliberation / 做出来 |zuò chū lái|made / 的 |de| / 。 }

This decision was made after much deliberation.

Remember: **再三** = **再** + **三** = “two, three times over” = “again and again.” Formal, and it loves verbs of speech/thought: 再三强调, 再三考虑, 再三感谢.

Watch out

- Keep it for two-syllable verbs in a formal register — in casual speech you’d use **一再** or **老是**.

简直—”simply, literally”

简直 voices **amazement or exaggeration** —”simply, just, downright.” It precedes the over-the-top claim, often with 太…了. With 是 it means ”basically.”

Structure: Subject + 简直 + Predicate · 简直 + 是 + …

{zh: 这里 |zhè lǐ|this place / 简直 |jiǎn zhí|simply / 是 |shì|is / 天堂 |tiān táng|heaven / ! }

This place is simply heaven!

{zh: 你 |nǐ|your / 男朋友 |nán péng you|boyfriend / 简直 |jiǎn zhí|just / 太 |tài|too / 帅 |shuài|handsome / 了 |le / ! }

Your boyfriend is just gorgeous!

Remember: 简直 = a gasp of ”simply / downright / I can’t even.” It signals exaggeration, often with 太…了 (简直太美了). 简直是 = ”basically is / amounts to” (简直是骗人).

Watch out

- It’s for hyperbole —drop it into a measured statement and it sounds overcooked.

顺便 + 动词—”while you’re at it”

顺便 tacks on a **second, convenient** action —”while you’re at it, in passing, on the way.” 顺便说一下 / 顺便问一下 = ”by the way.”

Structure: Subject + Verb Phrase 1 , 顺便 + Verb Phrase 2

{zh: 你 |nǐ|you / 去 |qù|go / 买 |mǎi|buy / 早饭 |zǎo fàn|breakfast / 顺便 |shùn biàn|while you’re at it / 帮 |bāng / 我 |wǒ|me / 带 |dài|grab / 杯 |bēi|a / 咖啡 |kā fēi|coffee / 吧 |ba / 。 }

While you’re out for breakfast, grab me a coffee.

{zh: 顺便 |shùn biàn|by the way / 说 |shuō|mention / 一下 |yí xià / , 我 |wǒ|I / 最近 |zuì jìn|recently / 搬家 |bān jiā|moved / 了 |le / 。 }

By the way, I moved recently.

Remember: 顺便 = ”along the way, no extra trip” —the second action piggybacks on the first. 顺 = ”go with the flow,” so 顺便 = ”while the going’s that way anyway.” 顺便说一下 = ”by the way.”

Watch out

- The two actions must genuinely fit together —顺便 implies *no* extra effort.

再不…就…(了) —“if …not soon, then …”

再不…就… warns of a **closing window** —“act now, or else.” It’s literally future 再 + 就 (“then”), and it carries urgency even without 现在.

Structure: (Subject +) 再不……就…… (了)

{zh: 再不 |zài bù|if …not now / 走 |zǒu|leave / 就 |jiù|then / 迟到 |chí dào|be late / 了 |le / 。 }

If we don't leave now, we'll be late.

{zh: 你 |nǐ|you / 再不 |zài bù|if …not now / 努力 |nǔ lì|work hard / 就 |jiù|then / 考不上 |kǎo bu shàng|won't get in / 了 |le / 。 }

If you don't work hard now, you won't get in.

Remember: 再不…就…了 = “if you don’t …NOW, then …!” —a ticking-clock warning with an implied “now.” 再不走就迟到了 (“if we don’t go now, we’ll be late”).

Watch out

- Different from the “again” 再—here 再不 = “(if) not any longer / not now.”

好(不)容易 + 才 —“with great difficulty”

A genuine head-scratcher: **好容易** and **好不容易** mean the **same** thing —“with great effort, finally managed to (after a struggle).” The 不 is *not* a negative here. It usually pairs with 才.

Structure: Subject + 好(不)容易 + 才 + Result

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 好不容易 |hǎo bù róng yì|after a real struggle / 才 |cái / 买到 |mǎi dào|got / 票 |piào|tickets / 。 }

I only got tickets after a real struggle.

{zh: 好不容易 |hǎo bù róng yì|finally, with great effort / 才 |cái / 到 |dào|reached / 市中心 |shì zhōng xīn|downtown / , 发现 |fā xiàn|realised / 没 |méi|hadn't / 带 |dài|brought / 手机 |shǒu jī|my phone / 。 }

I finally got downtown —then realised I'd left my phone.

Remember: **好容易** = **好不容易**—both mean “only just managed, after a real struggle.” That 不 is a red herring, *not* a negative. Both pair with 才 (好不容易才买到票).

Watch out

- Don't “fix” the 不—好不容易才到 means it was *hard* to arrive, not easy.

白 + 动词 —“in vain, for nothing”

白 before a (usually one-syllable) verb means the effort was **wasted** —“(did) in vain, for nothing.” It often takes 了. (白 can also mean “for free.”)

Structure: 白 + Verb (+ 了)

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 没 |méi|didn't / 来 |lái|come / , 我 |wǒ|I / 白 |bái|in vain / 等 |děng|waited / 了 |le / 一个 |yí ge|an / 小时 |xiǎo shí|hour / 。 }

He didn't come — I waited an hour for nothing.

{zh: 白 |bái|wasted / 花 |huā|spending / 了 |le / 一百 |yì bǎi|a hundred / 块 |kuài|kuai / , 这 |zhè|these / 衣服 |yī fu|clothes / 不能 |bù néng|can't / 穿 |chuān|be worn / 。 }

Wasted a hundred kuai — these clothes can't even be worn.

Remember: 白 + verb = effort that drew a BLANK —白等 (waited for nothing), 白跑 (a wasted trip), 白花钱 (money down the drain). 白 also means "for free" (白吃白住) —context tells which.

Watch out

- Usually one-syllable verbs: 白跑, 白等, 白做, 白花.

动词 + 了 + 又 + 动词 — "over and over (in the past)"

Repeat a single-syllable verb around 了…又… to paint a **drawn-out, repeated** past action —"…ed and …ed." It's often chased by 还是 / 就是 ("but still …").

Structure: Subject + Verb + 了 + 又 + (same) Verb , (还是 / 就是) ……

{zh: 这个人 |zhè ge rén|this person / 我 |wǒ|I / 看 |kàn|looked / 了 |le / 又 |yòu|and / 看 |kàn|looked / , 还是 |hái shì|still / 不 |bù|don't / 认识 |rèn shi|recognise / 。 }

I looked and looked, but still don't know him.

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 想 |xiǎng|thought / 了 |le / 又 |yòu|and / 想 |xiǎng|thought / , 最后 |zùì hòu|in the end / 还是 |hái shì|still / 没 |méi|didn't / 去 |qù|go / 。 }

He thought it over and over, and in the end still didn't go.

Remember: V 了又 V = "…ed and …ed (and still…)" —a single-syllable verb worn down by repetition (看了又看, 想了又想). The 了 sits after the *first* verb; 还是 / 就是 often follows to say nothing changed.

Watch out

- Single-syllable verbs only (看, 想, 问, 找, 试) —the doubling is what shows the repetition.

差很多 — "differ a lot" (opposite of 差不多)

Where 差不多 = "about the same," 差很多 says two things are **far apart** —"very different, not the same at all."

Structure: Subject + 差很多 · A + 跟 / 和 + B + 差很多

{zh: 中 |Zhōng|Chinese / 西方 |xī fāng|and Western / 的 |de / 文化 |wén huà|cultures / 差很多 |chà hěn duō|differ a lot / 。 }

Chinese and Western cultures are very different.

{zh: 这 |zhè|these / 两个 |liǎng ge|two / 词 |cí|words / 意思 |yì si|in meaning / 差不多 |chà bu duō|about the same / , 但 |dàn|but / 用法 |yòng fǎ|in usage / 差很多 |chà hěn duō|differ a lot / 。 }

These two words mean about the same, but are used very differently.

Remember: 差 (difference) 很多 (a lot) = "miles apart" —the exact flip of 差不多 ("not much difference"). Same 差, opposite size of gap.

Watch out

- It's a *gap* word —for "different in kind," 不一样 / 不同 fit better.