

Nouns

Ref Hsk5 Grammar

当中 — “among, in the middle of”

当中 means “among, in the midst of” — picking out a position **within** a group or space. With a group it’s “of all ...”; it can also be physically “in the centre,” or “in the middle of (a process).”

Structure: Group / Place / Process + 当中

{zh: 你 |nǐ|you / 是 |shì|are / 我 |wǒ|my / 所有 |suǒ yǒu|all / 朋友 |péng you|friends / 当中 |dāng zhōng|of / 最 |zuì|the most / 聪明 |cōng míng|clever / 的 |de / 。 }

Of all my friends, you're the cleverest.

{zh: 他们 |tā men|them / 当中 |dāng zhōng|among / 很多 |hěn duō|many / 都 |dōu / 是 |shì|are / 上海人 |Shàng hǎi rén|Shanghainese / 。 }

Many of them are Shanghainese.

Remember: 当中 = “in the midst of” — of a *group* (“of all...”: 朋友当中), a *space* (“in the centre”: 房间当中), or a *process* (“mid-...”: 谈判当中). It always sits *after* what it’s inside.

Watch out

- It comes after the group/place, not before: 朋友当中 ✓, not 当中朋友.

彼此 + 动词 — “each other, one another”

彼此 (literally “that and this”) means “each other, both sides” — a slightly **formal** cousin of 互相. As an object it wants a two-syllable verb; it can also stand alone.

Structure: 彼此 + Verb · Verb + 彼此

{zh: 我们 |wǒ men|we / 只 |zhǐ|only / 见过 |jiàn guo|have met / 一次 |yí cì|once / , 彼此 |bǐ cǐ|each other / 不 |bù|don't / 太 |tài|very / 了解 |liǎo jiě|know / 。 }

We've only met once — we don't know each other well.

{zh: 我们 |wǒ men|we / 应该 |yīng gāi|should / 彼此 |bǐ cǐ|each other / 信任 |xìn rèn|trust / 。 }

We should trust each other.

Remember: 彼此 = “that-and-this” = **each other** — the formal sibling of 互相, with a two-syllable verb (信任, 了解, 尊重). Bonus idiom: 彼此彼此 = “likewise / same to you.”

Watch out

- Formal register — in everyday speech 互相 is more natural.

Time / Event + 以来 — “ever since, since”

以来 marks a stretch of time running **from a past point right up to now** — “(ever) since.” It usually opens the sentence; in formal writing it can be bracketed as 自 (从) ... 以来.

Structure: Time / Event + 以来,

{zh: 结婚 |jié hūn|getting married / 以来 |yǐ lái|since / , 我们 |wǒ men|we / 没 |méi|haven't / 吵过 |chǎo guo|had / 架 |jià|a fight / 。 }

Since we got married, we haven't had a single fight.

{zh: 上 |shàng|starting / 大学 |dà xué|university / 以来 |yǐ lái|since / , 他 |tā|he / 变 |biàn|has changed / 了 |le / 很多 |hěn duō|a lot / 。 }

Since starting university, he's changed a lot.

Remember: 以来 = “from (then) up to NOW” — a continuous run reaching the present (结婚以来, 上大学以来). In writing, wrap it: 自从 ... 以来. Set phrases: 长期以来 (“for ages now”), 有史以来 (“since history began”).

Watch out

- It implies the period reaches the present — for a closed past span, use 的时候 / 那时.

当 ... 的时候 — “when, at the time of”

当 ... 的时候 frames **when** something happens — “when, at the moment that.” 当 opens it; 的时候 (or just 时) closes it.

Structure: 当 + Event + 的时候,

{zh: 当 |dāng|when / 我 |wǒ|I / 看到 |kàn dào|saw / 这 |zhè|this / 张 |zhāng / 照片 |zhào piàn|photo / 时 |shí|when / , 我 |wǒ|I / 就 |jiù|immediately / 想起 |xiǎng qǐ|thought of / 了 |le / 你 |nǐ|you / 。 }

When I saw this photo, I immediately thought of you.

{zh: 当 |dāng|when / 弟弟 |dì dì|my little brother / 饿 |è|is hungry / 的时候 |de shí hou / , 他 |tā|he / 就 |jiù / 会 |huì|will / 大声 |dà shēng|loudly / 哭 |kū|cry / 。 }

When my little brother is hungry, he cries loudly.

Remember: 当 ... 的时候 = a pair of brackets around “when...” (当 opens, 的时候 closes). The 当 is optional but adds a formal, narrative ring; 的时候 can shrink to 时.

Watch out

- Don’t leave 当 dangling without its 的时候 / 时 — they work as a pair.

名词 + 这个 + Category — name-calling with 这个

Slot **这个 + category** after a name or pronoun and it adds a **wry, evaluative** colour — “you, ... of a ..., this so-called ...” It paints the noun with the speaker’s attitude, fond or critical.

Structure: Noun / Pronoun + 这个 + Category

{zh: 你 |nǐ|you / 这个 |zhè ge|this / 人 |rén|person / 啊 |a / , 太 |tài|too / 粗心 |cū xīn|careless / 了 |le / 。 }

You — you’re just too careless.

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 这个 |zhè ge|this / 老师 |lǎo shī|teacher / 当 |dāng / 得 |de / 真 |zhēn|really / 不错 |bú cuò|good / 。 }

As a teacher, he’s really rather good.

Remember: Noun + 这个 + category = identification *with an attitude* — 你这个人啊 ... (“you — honestly!”). It’s not neutral pointing; it carries the speaker’s feeling, affectionate or exasperated.

Watch out

- Very colloquial — 你这个人, 他这个孩子. In neutral identification you’d just drop the 这个.