

Prepositions

Ref Hsk5 Grammar

(自) 从 — “ever since” (a starting point)

自从 (or just **从**) marks a **starting point in past time** — “ever since.” 自从 is the more formal of the two, and the clause often closes with **以后** or **起**.

Structure: 自从 + Starting Point , ……

{zh: 自从 |zì cóng|ever since / 来到 |lái dào|coming to / 湖南 |Hú nán|Hunan / , 我 |wǒ|I / 越来越 |yuè lái yuè|more and more / 能 |néng|can / 吃辣 |chī là|take spice / 了 |le / 。 }

Ever since I came to Hunan, I can take more and more spice.

{zh: 自从 |zì cóng|ever since / 他 |tā|he / 走 |zǒu|left / 了 |le / 以后 |yǐ hòu / , 公司 |gōng sī|the company / 好 |hǎo|better / 多 |duō / 了 |le / 。 }

Ever since he left, the company's much better.

Remember: (自) 从 = the **START POINT** (“ever since…”); 以来 = the **PERIOD running from it**. 自从 he 走了 (“since he left”) sets the point; …以来 stresses the span up to now. 自从 is the formal one.

Watch out

- The clause often closes with 以后 / 起 — 自从…以后, marking the start clearly.

为 + Person + Predicate — “for (someone)”

为 (wèi) marks a **beneficiary** — “for, on behalf of.” Keep it apart from **为了** (“in order to”), which marks a *purpose*.

Structure: 为 + Party + Verb / Adjective

{zh: 我们 |wǒ men|we / 都 |dōu|all / 为 |wèi|for / 你 |nǐ|you / 高兴 |gāo xìng|are happy / 。 }

We're all happy for you.

{zh: 谁 |shéi|who / 为 |wèi|for / 我 |wǒ|me / 考虑 |kǎo lù|has thought / 过 |guo / ? }

Who's ever thought of me?

Remember: 为 + person = “for / on behalf of” (a beneficiary): 为你高兴; 为了 + goal = “in order to” (a purpose). Person who benefits → 为; aim you're chasing → 为了.

Watch out

- 为你 (“for you”) vs 为了钱 (“for money / in order to get money”) — person vs goal.

对 + Person + 而言 — “as far as ... is concerned”

对...而言 frames a **point of view** — “for ..., as far as ... is concerned.” It’s the formal twin of 对...来说.

Structure: 对 + Person / Group + 而言, ...

{zh: 这样 |zhè yàng|this kind of / 的 |de / 工作 |gōng zuò|job / 对 |duì|for / 我 |wǒ|me / 而言 |ér yán / 很 |hěn|very / 重要 |zhòng yào|important / 。 }

This kind of job is very important to me.

{zh: 对 |duì|for / 她 |tā|her / 而言 |ér yán / , 自由 |zì yóu|freedom / 更 |gèng|more / 重要 |zhòng yào|important / 。 }

For her, freedom matters even more.

Remember: 对...而言 = the formal 对...来说 (“from X’s point of view”). Save 而言 for writing; say 来说 in conversation.

Watch out

- It’s 对...而言, a fixed frame — the 而言 closes it, like 来说 does.

(包括) ...在内 — “including”

(包括) ...在内 wraps items **into** a set — “including, ...counted in.” The 在内 closes the bracket.

Structure: (包括) + Items + 在内,, (包括) + Items + 在内

{zh: 包括 |bāo kuò|including / 他 |tā|his / 的 |de / 母语 |mǔ yǔ|native language / 在内 |zài nèi / , 他 |tā|he / 会 |huì|speaks / 说 |shuō / 四种 |sì zhǒng|four / 语言 |yǔ yán|languages / 。 }

Including his native language, he speaks four languages.

{zh: 水电费 |shuǐ diàn fèi|utilities / 在内 |zài nèi|included / , 我 |wǒ|my / 每月 |měi yuè|monthly / 房租 |fáng zū|rent / 三千五 |sān qiān wǔ|3,500 / 。 }

Including utilities, my rent is 3,500 a month.

Remember: 在内 closes the “counted in” bracket — (包括) X 在内 = “with X included.” Negate it with 不包括...在内 (“not counting...”). The 在内 is the lid on the box.

Watch out

- The 在内 is what completes it — 包括...在内, not a bare 包括....

凭 — “on the basis of, by”

凭 introduces **what one relies on or goes by** — “on the basis of, by virtue of, just because of.”

Structure: 凭 + Basis ……

{zh: 凭 |píng|with / 这张 |zhè zhāng|this / 票 |piào|ticket / 可以 |kě yǐ|you can / 进去 |jìn qù|go in / 。 }

With this ticket you can go in.

{zh: 凭 |píng|on what / 什么 |shén me|grounds / 我 |wǒ|I / 要 |yào|have to / 听 |tīng|listen to / 你 |nǐ|you / 的 |de / ? }

On what grounds do I have to listen to you?

Remember: 凭 = "going by / relying on" —凭票进入 ("by ticket"), 凭实力 ("on merit"). And the everyday challenge 凭什么? = "says who? / on what grounds?".

Watch out

- 凭什么 is confrontational —it pushes back, not a neutral "why".

至于—"as for, as to"

至于 swings to a new topic —"as for, when it comes to, as to."

Structure: 至于 + Topic , Comment

{zh: 至于 |zhì yú|as for / 价格 |jià gé|the price / , 我们 |wǒ men|we / 以后 |yǐ hòu|later / 再 |zài|again / 谈 |tán|discuss / 。 }

As for the price, we'll discuss it later.

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 同意 |tóng yì|agree / , 至于 |zhì yú|as for / 怎么 |zěn me|how / 做 |zuò|to do it / , 听 |tīng|it's up to / 你 |nǐ|you / 的 |de / 。 }

I agree; as for how to do it, it's up to you.

Remember: 至于 = a clean topic-switch ("as for X…") —it parks the last point and turns to a fresh one. Like English "as for…", it sits at the head of the new topic.

Watch out

- It introduces a *new* topic, not a contrast —don't use it where you mean "but".

给…给…—passive with 给

A 给 before the doer plus a 给 before the verb makes a colloquial **passive** —"(it) got … ed (by someone)." The second 给 stands in for 被.

Structure: Receiver + 给 + Doer + 给 + Verb Phrase

{zh: 我 |wǒ|my / 的 |de / 蛋糕 |dàn gāo|cake / 给 |gěi|by / 弟弟 |dì dì|little brother / 给 |gěi / 吃 |chī|eaten / 了 |le / 。 }

My cake got eaten by my little brother.

{zh: 杯子 |bēi zi|the cup / 给 |gěi|by / 他 |tā|him / 给 |gěi / 打破 |dǎ pò|broken / 了 |le / 。 }

The cup got broken by him.

Remember: the second 给 被—给 (doer) 给 (verb) is a chatty passive: 蛋糕给弟弟给吃了 (“the cake got eaten by little brother”). Casual speech only.

Watch out

- It’s colloquial—in writing use 被 (蛋糕被弟弟吃了).

就…(来说 / 而言) —“as far as …goes”

就…来说 / 而言 narrows the discussion to one aspect —“as far as …goes, in terms of …”

Structure: 就 + Aspect + 来说 / 而言, ……

{zh: 就 |jiù|in terms of / 质量 |zhì liàng|quality / 来说 |lái shuō / , 这个 |zhè ge|this one / 更 |gèng / 好 |hǎo|better / 。 }

In terms of quality, this one’s better.

{zh: 就 |jiù|as / 目前 |mù qián|things stand now / 而言 |ér yán / , 没有 |méi yǒu|there’s no / 问题 |wèn tí|problem / 。 }

As things stand now, there’s no problem.

Remember: 就 X 来说 / 而言 = “in terms of X” —it zooms the lens onto a single aspect for the comment that follows (就质量来说…, 就目前而言…). This 就 isn’t “then” —it’s “regarding”.

Watch out

- Don’t confuse this 就 with the time/quantity 就—here it’s a topic-narrowing “as regards”.

趁—“while, taking the chance”

趁 grabs a favourable moment or condition —“while, taking advantage of (the chance).”

Structure: 趁 + Situation / Opportunity ……

{zh: 趁 |chèn|while / 天气 |tiān qì|the weather / 好 |hǎo|good / , 我们 |wǒ men|we / 去 |qù|go / 野餐 |yě cān|for a picnic / 吧 |ba / 。 }

While the weather’s good, let’s go for a picnic.

{zh: 趁 |chèn|while / 年轻 |nián qīng|you’re young / , 多 |duō|more / 出去 |chū qù|go out / 走走 |zǒu zou|and see things / 吧 |ba / 。 }

While you’re young, get out and see things.

Remember: 趁 = “seize the moment / while it lasts” —grab the chance before it’s gone. Set phrases nail the feel: 趁热吃 (“eat while it’s hot”), 趁早 (“while there’s still time”), 趁年轻.

Watch out

- It needs a *favourable* window —for a plain "when," use 当…的时候.