

Sentence Patterns

Ref Hsk5 Grammar

要不是……(的话) , ……—”if it weren’t for”

要不是 sets up a **counterfactual** —”if it weren’t for …, (then) …” (如果不是). The second clause says what *would otherwise* have happened.

Structure: 要不是 + Condition (的话) , ……

{zh: 要不是 |yào bú shì|if it weren't for / 你 |nǐ|you / , 我 |wǒ|I / 会 |huì|would / 迷路 |mí lù|get lost / 。 }

If it weren't for you, I'd get lost.

{zh: 要不是 |yào bú shì|if it weren't for / 堵车 |dǔ chē|the traffic / , 我 |wǒ|I / 早就 |zǎo jiù|already / 到 |dào|arrived / 了 |le / 。 }

If not for the traffic, I'd already be here.

Remember: 要不是 = ”if it weren’t for…” (= 如果不是) —an *unreal* condition that didn’t happen, with the result clause spelling out the road not taken. 要不是堵车, 我早就到了 (”if not for the traffic, I’d be there”).

Watch out

- It’s counterfactual —the condition is *contrary to fact* (there *was* traffic), so the result is what would have been.

多亏 (了) —”thanks to, luckily”

多亏 gives **grateful credit** that a bad outcome was dodged —”thanks to, luckily (because of).” It often takes 了 and pairs with 不然 / 否则 (”otherwise”).

Structure: Good Outcome , 多亏 (了) + Lucky Incident

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 没 |méi|wasn't / 迟到 |chí dào|late / , 多亏 |duō kuī|thanks to / 了 |le / 你 |nǐ|you / 开车 |kāi chē|driving / 送 |sòng|me / 我 |wǒ / 。 }

I wasn't late, thanks to you giving me a ride.

{zh: 多亏 |duō kuī|luckily / 你 |nǐ|you / 提醒 |tí xǐng|reminded me / , 不然 |bù rán|otherwise / 我 |wǒ|I / 肯定 |kěn dìng|surely / 忘 |wàng|forget / 了 |le / 。 }

Luckily you reminded me —otherwise I'd definitely have forgotten.

Remember: 多亏 = ”thanks to (you/it), disaster dodged.” It credits a *specific* person or thing (whereas 幸亏 thanks plain luck), and it loves a 不然 / 否则 to spell out the averted bad outcome.

Watch out

- It's gratitude for a near-miss —pair it with the "otherwise..." to show what was avoided.

(仅仅) 是……而已——"that's all, merely"

End a sentence with **而已** to play the matter **down** —"merely ..., that's all, nothing more." It often rides with 只是 / 就是 / 才.

Structure: (只是 / 就是 +) ……+ 而已

{zh: 一杯 |yì bēi|just a / 咖啡 |kā fēi|coffee / 而已 |ér yǐ|that's all / , 别 |bié|don't / 这么 |zhè me|so / 感动 |gǎn dòng|be moved / 。 }

It's just a coffee —don't be so touched.

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 只是 |zhǐ shì|was just / 开 |kāi|making / 个 |ge / 玩笑 |wán xiào|a joke / 而已 |ér yǐ|that's all / 。 }

I was only joking, that's all.

Remember: 而已 deflates: "…and that's ALL, no big deal." It tags the end of a sentence, often after 只是 / 就是 (只是开玩笑而已), shrinking the thing to nothing much.

Watch out

- It minimises —don't use it where you actually want to emphasise.

将—formal 把

In formal or written Chinese, **将** does the job of **把**, moving the object before the verb —"take (object) and …"

Structure: Subject + 将 + Object + Verb Phrase

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 将 |jiāng / 这些 |zhè xiē|all the / 蛋糕 |dàn gāo|cake / 都 |dōu / 吃完 |chī wán|ate up / 了 |le / 。 }

He ate up all the cake.

{zh: 请 |qǐng|please / 将 |jiāng / 手机 |shǒu jī|your phone / 调 |tiáo|set / 成 |chéng|to / 静音 |jìng yīn|silent / 。 }

Please set your phone to silent.

Remember: 将 = the written-Chinese 把—same disposal job, formal register (将手机调成静音 = 把手机调成静音). You'll meet it in notices and announcements. (将 also means future "will / shall" —a separate use.)

Watch out

- Keep it for formal/written contexts —in speech, 把 is the natural choice.