

Verbs

HSK 5 Grammar

Use the examples with their context and limits. Recall a sentence before reading the model. Original teaching additions accompany examples adapted from Chinese Grammar Wiki (AllSet Learning, CC BY-NC-SA); see the course reference provenance.

Verb + 什么 (a rebuke)

■ A challenge is different from choosing a film

- Someone is staring angrily; the other person snaps **看什么看!** – What are you staring at?! The repeated phrase challenges the staring.
- A friend at the cinema asks **你想看什么?** – What would you like to watch? That question asks for a viewing choice.

■ Read the action with 什么

- Verb + 什么** can challenge an action in context: **你急什么!** – What's the rush?! The repeated **verb + 什么 + verb** also appears: **看什么看!**
- Do not treat every 什么 as a rebuke. Read the surrounding exchange and delivery, not just the question word or punctuation.

你急什么!

nǐ jí shén me

Word guide: 你 – you; 急 – rush; 什么 – what for.

■ The same action can have two conversational jobs

- 笑什么笑!** said sharply after unwanted laughter rebukes it. **你在笑什么?** asked with genuine curiosity requests the reason for laughter.
- The action is laughing in both exchanges. The intended response differs: stop or justify the action, versus provide information.

The same action can have two conversational jobs

看什么看! — sharp delivery after staring

Challenge the unwanted action

你想看什么? — choosing a film

Ask for a viewing choice

你急什么? 时间还早。 — reassuring delivery

Calm the rushing person in this exchange

Keep the named property, context and evidence in the answer.

■ A written phrase does not fix one tone

- 你急什么? 时间还早。** can reassure someone who is rushing: there is still time. The opening staring exchange is confrontational.
- A speaker's tone and relationship matter. Do not label every 你急什么 as an angry insult or every question mark as sincere curiosity.

■ Choose a question that fits your purpose

- A teacher wants to know a student's reading choice: **你想看什么书?** makes the information request explicit.
- 看什么看!** would challenge looking instead. Reusing the same 什么 without checking the complete phrase can change the interaction.

■ Use the exchange to interpret the phrase

- Identify the action, repetition, surrounding words and intended response. A sharp challenge and a genuine question can contain the same 什么.
- Preserve context when translating. The phrase alone does not prove universal anger, politeness or a particular speaker relationship.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: A challenge is different from choosing a film. Decide what the speaker wanted to communicate. Close the examples. Say a Mandarin response, then write it in Chinese. Explain briefly in English what the lesson's pattern adds. Compare with the model, then change one detail and try again.

One possible response: 看什么看!

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- **你急什么? 时间还早。** can reassure someone who is rushing: there is still time. The opening staring exchange is confrontational.
- A speaker's tone and relationship matter. Do not label every 你急什么 as an angry insult or every question mark as sincere curiosity.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

不像 ... 那么 ... (not as ... as)

■ Height is one property

- Two classmates measure 170 cm and 180 cm. The shorter one says **我不像他那么高。** – I am not as tall as him.
- The height comparison fits these measurements. It makes no claim about their speed, kindness or grades.

■ Keep the reference and property together

- Use **A + 不像 + B + 那么 / 这么 + adjective**. In 我不像他那么高, 他 supplies the reference and 高 supplies the property.
- **这杯茶不像那杯那么热。** – This tea is not as hot as that tea. Now the property is heat, not height.

我不像他那么高。

wǒ bú xiàng tā nà me gāo

Word guide: 我 – I; 不像 – not as; 他 – him; 那么 – so; 高 – tall.

■ The sentence does not supply the gap

- In the opening measurements, 180 minus 170 is 10 cm. That number comes from the measurements, not from 不像 ... 那么高 alone.
- Without measured values, the sentence gives the comparison but no exact centimetre difference.

Given measurements: height in cm

我



170

他



180



我不像他那么高。 — the stated property is height.

180 – 170 = 10 cm. The numbers supply the exact gap.

■ A different adjective reverses the physical reading

- In a stated two-person height comparison, **我不像他那么矮。** means I am not as short as him. The speaker is taller in that context.
- The pattern compares the adjective's degree. Do not keep a “speaker shorter” answer after 高 changes to 矮.

■ Similarity without a degree is broader

- **我不像他。** says I am unlike him, with the relevant similarity left to context. It does not name height.
- **我不像他那么高。** specifically compares height. Do not invent an adjective when the shorter sentence never supplies one.

■ Follow the property before drawing a conclusion

- Locate A, the reference B, and the adjective. Check whether the sentence compares tallness, shortness, heat or something else.
- Keep other qualities and exact numerical gaps separate unless the situation explicitly gives them.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: Height is one property. Decide what the speaker wanted to communicate. Close the examples. Say a Mandarin response, then write it in Chinese. Explain briefly in English what the lesson's pattern adds. Compare with the model, then change one detail and try again.

One possible response: 我不像他那么高。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- In a stated two-person height comparison, 我不像他那么矮。 means I am not as short as him. The speaker is taller in that context.
- The pattern compares the adjective's degree. Do not keep a “speaker shorter” answer after 高 changes to 矮.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

比起 ... 来 (compared with)

■ An improvement needs a baseline

- A club compares its results with last year and says 比起去年，今年好多了。 – Compared with last year, this year is much better.
- 去年 is the baseline; 今年 is evaluated against it. The sentence gives no score, percentage or exact size of improvement.

■ Name the baseline before the new comment

- Use 比起 + B (+ 来), A + comment. 比起去年 introduces last year; 今年好多了 gives the new comparison.
- In these examples, 比起去年 and 比起去年来 both work. Adding 来 does not swap the years or add a numerical amount.

比起去年，今年好多了。

bǐ qǐ qù nián jīn nián hǎo duō le

Word guide: 比起 – compared with; 去年 – last year; 今年 – this year; 好 – good; 多了 – much more.

■ Numbers come from the stated data

- A fictional score table gives last year 60 and this year 75. 比起去年，今年提高了十五分。 states a fifteen-point increase.
- 75 minus 60 is 15. This measured claim differs from the original 好多了, which supplies no number.

Numbers come from the stated data

比起去年，今年好多了。

Last year: baseline | This year: judged better

Given scores: last year 60 → this year 75

Increase: 15 points, not an invented percentage

比起今年，去年低十五分。

This year: baseline | Last year: 15 points lower

Keep the named property, context and evidence in the answer.

■ Swap the baseline, then check direction

- With the same scores, 比起今年，去年低十五分。 compares last year with this year and reports it fifteen points lower.
- 比起 introduces the reference; the following comment determines higher, lower, better or worse. 比起 alone does not mean improvement.

■ A preference is not every possible comparison

- 比起开车，我更喜欢坐地铁。 – Compared with driving, I prefer taking the metro. This is a personal preference.
- It does not prove the metro is cheaper or faster on every route. A new comparison needs the particular property and relevant evidence.

■ Preserve the baseline and the kind of claim

- Find the item after 比起, then what is compared with it. Read the actual comment rather than automatically adding “better”.
- Distinguish qualitative improvement, a measured gap and a preference. Do not invent a number or universal advantage.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: An improvement needs a baseline. Decide what the speaker wanted to communicate. Close the examples. Say a Mandarin response, then write it in Chinese. Explain briefly in English what the lesson's pattern adds. Compare with the model, then change one detail and try again.

One possible response: 比起去年，今年好多了。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- With the same scores, 比起今年，去年低十五分。 compares last year with this year and reports it fifteen points lower.
- 比起 introduces the reference; the following comment determines higher, lower, better or worse. 比起 alone does not mean improvement.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

A 不如 B (not as good as)

■ Suggest an alternative to a slow bus

- The bus wait is long, and walking is an available option. 不如走路吧。 – We might as well walk. The speaker proposes the alternative.
- The suggestion does not report that anyone has started walking or that everyone agrees.

■ Compare a property or propose an action

- In A + 不如 + B (+ property), A falls short of B in the stated comparison: 这个不如那个好 – this is not as good as that.
- For a suggestion, the other option can be understood: 不如走路吧。 The proposed action follows 不如.

这个不如那个好。

zhè ge bù rú nà ge hǎo

Word guide: 这个 – this; 不如 – not as good as; 那个 – that; 好 – good.

■ A favourable comparison has a named angle

- 这家店不如那家店便宜。 – This shop is not as cheap as that shop. The other shop has the price advantage in this comparison.
- The sentence does not rate service, freshness or distance. Cheaper on this comparison does not mean better in every respect.

A favourable comparison has a named angle

这个不如那个好。

A comparison: this falls short of that on goodness

这家店不如那家店便宜。

A price comparison; service remains unstated

不如走路吧。 → 还是等车吧。

A walking proposal followed by a preference to wait

Keep the named property, context and evidence in the answer.

■ A suggestion can be declined

- A: 不如走路吧。 B: 我太累了，还是等车吧。 The second speaker is tired and prefers waiting for the bus.
- The original proposal remains a suggestion. The reply supplies disagreement rather than evidence that walking already happened.

■ Keep the alternative when the plan changes

- The group is choosing between eating out and cooking. 不如在家做饭吧。 proposes cooking at home instead.
- It does not ban restaurants or prove cooking always costs less. Evaluate the proposal against this particular situation.

■ Read comparison and suggestion separately

- For A 不如 B, preserve the named property. For 不如 + action, recover the alternative from the discussion.
- A comparison is limited to its angle; a proposal is not an order, a completed action or universal agreement.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: Suggest an alternative to a slow bus. Decide what the speaker wanted to communicate. Close the examples. Say a Mandarin response, then write it in Chinese. Explain briefly in English what the lesson's pattern adds. Compare with the model, then change one detail and try again.

One possible response: 不如走路吧。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- A: 不如走路吧。 B: 我太累了，还是等车吧。 The second speaker is tired and prefers waiting for the bus.
- The original proposal remains a suggestion. The reply supplies disagreement rather than evidence that walking already happened.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

Noun / Adj + 化 (-ize / -ify)

■ A process becomes simpler

- An office reduces a process from six steps to four. 流程简化了。 – The process has been simplified. 简化 is an established change word.
- The new process has two fewer steps in this situation. 简化 alone does not state its time saving or whether every user prefers it.

■ Learn established words ending in 化

- 化 appears in established change words: 简化 – simplify; 美化 – beautify; 现代化 – modernise.
- Use complete words in real sentence frames. Do not attach 化 freely to every adjective or assume the English ending always translates directly.

城市现代化了。

chéng shì xiàn dài huà le

Word guide: 城市 – city; 现代化 – modernize.

■ Compare changes rather than equating them

- 简化流程 makes the process simpler. 美化环境 makes the surroundings more attractive. 城市现代化了。 describes modernisation.
- These are different changes. Making a form prettier does not necessarily reduce its steps; reducing steps does not establish prettier design.

Compare changes rather than equating them

简化流程

Make the process simpler

美化环境

Make the surroundings more attractive

城市现代化了。

Modernisation; not a measured time saving

Keep the named property, context and evidence in the answer.

■ The sentence determines the word's job

- 我们简化了流程。 uses 简化 as an action. 推进现代化 treats modernisation as the process being advanced.
- Recognising 化 helps recognise change vocabulary. It does not make every resulting word only a verb in every sentence.

■ A simpler process still needs its checks

- The four-step process keeps an identity check. “Simplified” does not mean that every check was removed or that no mistakes can occur.
- If the user now completes it in eight minutes instead of ten, that separate measurement gives the time saving. The suffix itself supplies no minutes.

■ Check the complete word and its use

- Learn the established change word, its sentence frame and the particular change being described.
- Keep simplification, beautification and modernisation distinct. Count, time and successful outcomes need their own information.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: A process becomes simpler. Decide what the speaker wanted to communicate. Close the examples. Say a Mandarin response, then write it in Chinese. Explain briefly in English what the lesson's pattern adds. Compare with the model, then change one detail and try again.

One possible response: 流程简化了。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 我们简化了流程。 uses 简化 as an action. 推进现代化 treats modernisation as the process being advanced.
- Recognising 化 helps recognise change vocabulary. It does not make every resulting word only a verb in every sentence.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

算 + Adj + 的 (counts as / considered)

■ Tall within a class is a judgement

- A student is fairly tall compared with classmates. 他在班里算高的。 – He counts as tall in the class.
- The speaker places him in a tall category for that group. The sentence does not make him the tallest or compare him with every adult.

■ State the category being assigned

- Use 算 + adjective (+ 的) in this judgement: 算高的. The class phrase gives the reference group.
- 这算便宜。 – This counts as cheap. 的 is not required in that example; do not add it to every 算 expression as a fixed rule.

他在班里算高的。

tā zài bān lǐ suàn gāo de

Word guide: 他 – he; 在 – in; 班里 – the class; 算 – counts as; 高 – tall.

■ A category differs from first place

- A fictional class has heights 168, 175 and 182 cm. In this example the teacher calls both 175 and 182 “tall”.
- The 175 cm student can count as tall without being tallest. Category membership and the maximum height are different claims.

A category differs from first place

Class heights: 168, 175, 182 cm

Teacher's stated tall group: 175 and 182

他在班里算高的。 — student at 175 cm

Counts as tall; 182 cm student is still taller

这算便宜。 / 算一下三加二。

Price judgement / numerical calculation

Keep the named property, context and evidence in the answer.

■ The reference can change the judgement

- The same person joins a group of much taller players. A speaker's judgement of whether he counts as tall may change with that group.
- The person need not have become shorter. The comparison standard changed; 算高的 does not set a universal height threshold.

■ 算 also appears in other constructions

- 这算便宜。 is a judgement about price. 算一下三加二。 asks for a calculation.
- The shared character does not give both sentences a category judgement. Read the surrounding words to identify the job.

■ Keep the category and reference group

- Find the property judged with 算 and the relevant group or comparison standard. Preserve that limit in the paraphrase.
- Counting as tall is not being tallest. A category judgement is also different from calculating a numerical answer.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: Tall within a class is a judgement. Decide what the speaker wanted to communicate. Close the examples. Say a Mandarin response, then write it in Chinese. Explain briefly in English what the lesson's pattern adds. Compare with the model, then change one detail and try again.

One possible response: 他在班里算高的。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- The same person joins a group of much taller players. A speaker's judgement of whether he counts as tall may change with that group.
- The person need not have become shorter. The comparison standard changed; 算高的 does not set a universal height threshold.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

难怪 (no wonder)

■ A reason makes an absence understandable

- A friend did not attend. You learn that he was ill: 难怪他没来，原来病了。 – No wonder he did not come; it turns out he was ill.
- 难怪 expresses the speaker's understanding of the absence. It does not itself rule out every other reason for staying away.

■ React to an observation with 难怪

- Use 难怪 + observation. The reason may appear nearby: 原来他病了，难怪没来。 reverses the order of the two ideas.
- The original 不来 example can describe not coming in its context. For this completed absence, 没来 makes the event's non-occurrence explicit.

难怪他不来。

nán guài tā bù lái

Word guide: 难怪 – no wonder; 他 – he; 不 – not; 来 – come.

■ Name the observation and its explanation

- 原来他考了第一名，难怪这么高兴。 – He came first; no wonder he is so happy. Coming first explains the happiness to the speaker.
- This is a reaction of understanding, not an instruction to be happy or proof that winning is his only source of happiness.

Name the observation and its explanation

Observation: a friend missed the meeting

Something needing an explanation

New information: he was ill

A reason that makes the absence understandable

难怪他没来。

Speaker's reaction; not proof of a sole cause

Keep the named property, context and evidence in the answer.

■ A reaction does not establish the evidence

- Someone guesses the absent friend is ill and says 难怪他没来. The phrase does not turn that guess into a confirmed medical fact.
- Check whether the reason was known or only proposed. A confident reaction and reliable evidence are different things.

■ Choose a real question for missing information

- If you still do not know why he missed the meeting, 他为什么没来? asks for a reason.
- 难怪他没来。 presents the absence as understandable given a reason. It does not simply ask the same question.

■ Separate the reaction from proof

- Locate the observation, the proposed or known reason, and the speaker's reaction of understanding. The reason can precede or follow it.
- Do not infer an order, exclusive causation or verified evidence from 难怪 alone. Ask a reason question when the information is missing.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: A reason makes an absence understandable. Decide what the speaker wanted to communicate. Close the examples. Say a Mandarin response, then write it in Chinese. Explain briefly in English what the lesson's pattern adds. Compare with the model, then change one detail and try again.

One possible response: 难怪他没来，原来病了。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- Someone guesses the absent friend is ill and says 难怪他没来. The phrase does not turn that guess into a confirmed medical fact.
- Check whether the reason was known or only proposed. A confident reaction and reliable evidence are different things.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.