

Sentence Patterns

Ref Hsk5 Grammar

把 (advanced) 一给, 当成, 当回事, 看成

Once the basic 把 sentence clicks, these advanced moves come up constantly: 把 + Obj + 给 + Verb (spoken emphasis, 给 optional); 把 + Obj + 当成 / 看作 + ... ("treat / regard as"); 不把...当回事 ("not take seriously"); and 把 A 看成 / 读成 B ("mistake A for B").

Structure: 把 + Obj + 给 + VP · 把 + Obj + 当成 / 看作 + ... · 把 A + 看成 / 读成 + B

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 把 |bǎ / 这 |zhè|this / 事儿 |shì er|matter / 给 |gěi / 忘 |wàng|forgot / 了 |le / 。 }

I clean forgot about this.

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 一直 |yì zhí|have always / 把 |bǎ / 他 |tā|him / 看作 |kàn zuò|seen as / 我 |wǒ|my / 哥哥 |gē ge|older brother / 。 }

I've always seen him as an older brother.

Remember: a 把 toolkit — 把...给 V (a spoken kick: 把事儿给忘了), 把...当成 / 看作... ("treat/regard as"), 不把...当回事 ("not take seriously"), 把 A 看成 / 读成 B ("mistake A for B"). All still "grab the object, then do something to it."

Watch out

- The 给 here is just emphasis —it doesn't mean "give."

Noun 1 + 不比 + Noun 2 + Adj. —"no more ...than"

不比 is **not** 没有. 没有 = "not as ...as" (definitely less); 不比 = "no more ...than" (we might even be equal). It directly negates 比.

Structure: Noun 1 + 不比 + Noun 2 + Adjective · A + 不比 + B + Verb + 得 + Adj

{zh: 你 |nǐ|you / 不比 |bù bǐ|no ...than / 我 |wǒ|me / 差 |chà|worse / 。 }

You're no worse than me.

{zh: 她 |tā|she / 跳 |tiào|dances / 得 |de / 不比 |bù bǐ|no ...than / 明星 |míng xīng|a star / 差 |chà|worse / 。 }

She dances no worse than a star.

Remember: 不比 = "no more ...than" (maybe equal); 没有 = "not as ...as" (definitely less). 你不比我差 ("you're no worse than me," i.e. just as good). And don't muddle 不比 (bùbǐ) with 不必 (bùbì, "needn't")!

Watch out

- 不比 quietly leaves room for "equal" —it denies "more," not "the same."

要 + 动词 + 就 + 动词—“if you’re going to …, then …”

要 + V + 就 + V lays down a **resolute** condition —“if you’re going to V, then V (and do it properly / now).” The tone is almost a command, so it usually drops the subject, with single-syllable verbs.

Structure: 要 + Verb + 就 + Verb ……

{zh: 要 |yào|if you’re going to / 走 |zǒu|leave / 就 |jiù|then / 走 |zǒu|leave / , 我们 |wǒ men|we / 不 |bù|don’t / 需要 |xū yào|need / 你 |nǐ|you / 。 }

If you’re leaving, then leave —we don’t need you.

{zh: 要 |yào|if you’re going to / 学 |xué|study it / 就 |jiù|then / 好好 |hǎo hǎo|properly / 学 |xué|study / 。 }

If you’re going to study it, study it properly.

Remember: 要 V 就 V = “if you’re gonna do it, then DO it (properly)” —resolute, command-like, usually subjectless (要走就走). Don’t mix it up with the indifferent V 就 V (坏了就坏了, “so be it”) later in this file.

Watch out

- The second verb can take a short modifier: 要去就快点去, 要学就好好学.

少不了—“can’t do without”

少不了 means something is **indispensable or unavoidable** —“can’t do without, bound to involve.” It’s colloquial.

Structure: Subject + 少不了 + Noun / Verb Phrase

{zh: 每年 |měi nián|every / 春节 |Chūn jié|New Year / , 少不了 |shǎo bu liǎo|you can’t do without / 饺子 |jiǎo zi|dumplings / 。 }

New Year just isn’t New Year without dumplings.

{zh: 回家 |huí jiā|getting home / 晚 |wǎn|late / 了 |le / , 少不了 |shǎo bu liǎo|there’s no escaping / 一顿 |yí dùn|a / 骂 |mà|telling-off / 。 }

Get home late and a telling-off is guaranteed.

Remember: 少不了 = “can’t be short of it” = **indispensable / inescapable** — the good kind (过年少不了饺子) or the bad (少不了—一顿骂, “a telling-off is guaranteed”).

Watch out

- 了 is *liǎo* here —少不了 (“can’t do without”), not 少不了 with a *le*.

A , 等于 B —”amounts to, is the same as”

等于 equates two things —”equals, amounts to, is the same as.” Beyond maths, it draws an ”as good as” equivalence, often an **unintended** one.

Structure: A , (就) 等于 B

{zh: 浪费 |làng fèi|wasting / 时间 |shí jiān|time / 等于 |děng yú|is / 浪费 |làng fèi|wasting / 生命 |shēng mìng|life / 。 }

Wasting time is wasting life.

{zh: 你 |nǐ|you / 告诉 |gào su|tell / 小王 |Xiǎo Wáng|Xiao Wang / 就 |jiù / 等于 |děng yú|is as good as / 告诉 |gào su|telling / 了 |le / 大家 |dà jiā|everyone / 。 }

Telling Xiao Wang is as good as telling everyone.

Remember: 等于 = ”= / as good as” —straight from maths (3+2 等于 5) into ”amounts to the same thing” (告诉小王就等于告诉大家). Often a consequence you didn’t intend.

Watch out

- It draws an *equivalence*, not a cause —”X 等于 Y” says they amount to the same, not ”X causes Y.”

从 + 名词 + 中 —”from (a source), …(gained)”

从…中 marks the **source** from which knowledge or experience is drawn —”from (within) …, (I gained) ….” It differs from 从…到 (which spans time or place).

Structure: 从 + Source + 中 + Result

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 从 |cóng|from / 书 |shū|books / 中 |zhōng / 学 |xué|learned / 到 |dào / 了 |le / 很多 |hěn duō|a lot / 。 }

I learned a lot from books.

{zh: 从 |cóng|from / 这件 |zhè jiàn|this / 事 |shì|matter / 中 |zhōng / , 他 |tā|he / 明白 |míng bai|saw / 了 |le / 诚实 |chéng shí|honesty’s / 的 |de / 重要 |zhòng yào|importance / 。 }

From this, he saw the importance of honesty.

Remember: 从…中 = ”from WITHIN (this source), I drew…” —the well you take insight or information out of (从书中学到, 从这件事中明白). Different from 从…到 (a span from A to B).

Watch out

- The 中 closes the bracket —从…中, not a bare 从….

无 + 名词 + 可 + 动词——“no ...to ...”

The formal frame 无 + Noun + 可 + Verb means there's **nothing of that kind to do** —“no ...to ..., nothing to be ...” It's a condensed, classical-flavoured 没有...可以...

Structure: 无 + Noun + 可 + Verb

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 和 |hé|with / 他 |tā|him / 无话可说 |wú huà kě shuō|have nothing to say / 。 }

I have nothing to say to him.

{zh: 公司 |gōng sī|the firm / 倒闭 |dǎo bì|folded / 了 |le / , 他 |tā|he / 无路可走 |wú lù kě zǒu|has nowhere to turn / 。 }

The firm folded —he's nowhere to turn.

Remember: 无 N 可 V = “no N to V” (无 = literary 没有). Learn the set four-character forms whole: 无话可说 (nothing to say), 无路可走 (nowhere to turn), 无处可去 (nowhere to go), 无事可做 (nothing to do).

Watch out

- Formal/literary —in speech you'd say 没有...可以...

不但..., 甚至连...也...——“not only ..., even ...”

This frame escalates: 不但 A, 甚至连 B 也...——“not only A; even B (the extreme case) too.”

Structure: Subject + 不但... , 甚至连 + New Item + 也 + Matching Situation

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 不但 |bú dàn|not only / 不 |bù|doesn't / 知道 |zhī dào|know / 李连杰 |Lǐ Lián jié|Jet Li / , 甚至连 |shèn zhì lián|even / 成龙 |Chéng Lóng|Jackie Chan / 也 |yě / 不 |bù|doesn't / 知道 |zhī dào|know / 。 }

He doesn't know Jet Li —he doesn't even know Jackie Chan.

{zh: 你 |nǐ|your / 男朋友 |nán péng you|boyfriend / 不但 |bú dàn|not only / 做好 |zuò hǎo|planned / 了 |le / 攻略 |gōng lüè|the trip / , 甚至连 |shèn zhì lián|even / 机票 |jī piào|the tickets / 也 |yě / 买好 |mǎi hǎo|bought / 了 |le / 。 }

He not only planned the trip —he even bought the tickets.

Remember: 不但 A, 甚至连 B 也... = “not only A —even B!” It tops off 不但...而且 by reaching for the most striking case (甚至连...也, pulling in the 连...也 “even” frame).

Watch out

- B should be the *more surprising* item —the escalation is the whole point.

(跟 / 和 / 与) …有关的 + 名词 — “…related to …”

跟 / 和 / 与…有关的 builds a modifier meaning “(that is) related to ….” 跟 / 和 are casual (spoken); 与 is formal.

Structure: 跟 / 和 / 与 + Topic + 有关的 + Noun

{zh: 跟 |gēn|to do / 他 |tā|him / 有关的 |yǒu guān de|related / 事情 |shì qing|anything / , 我 |wǒ|I / 都 |dōu / 不 |bù|don't / 想 |xiǎng|want to / 知道 |zhī dào|know / 。 }

Anything to do with him, I don't want to know.

{zh: 与 |yǔ|related to / 疫苗 |yì miáo|the vaccine / 有关的 |yǒu guān de / 研究 |yán jiū|research / 已经 |yǐ jīng|already / 开始 |kāi shǐ|begun / 了 |le / 。 }

Research related to the vaccine has already begun.

Remember: …有关的 + noun = “the noun (that’s) connected to ….” The 的 clips the whole “related to X” phrase onto the noun. Register: 跟 / 和 (spoken) vs 与 (formal).

Watch out

- Keep the 的—it’s what turns “related to X” into a modifier of the noun.

所谓 + (的) Noun Phrase — “so-called”

所谓 flags a term as “so-called”—putting it in mental scare-quotes. It’s often sceptical, but (unlike English) not always negative. The 的 is optional.

Structure: 所谓 + (的) + Noun Phrase

{zh: 没有 |méi yǒu|there’s no / 所谓 |suǒ wèi|so-called / 的 |de / 失败 |shī bài|failure / , 除非 |chú fēi|unless / 你 |nǐ|you / 不 |bù|don't / 再 |zài / 尝试 |cháng shì|try again / 。 }

There’s no such thing as “failure,” unless you stop trying.

{zh: 这 |zhè|this / 就是 |jiù shì|is / 你 |nǐ|your / 所谓 |suǒ wèi|so-called / 的 |de / 帮忙 |bāng máng|“help” / ? }

Is this your so-called help?

Remember: 所谓 = “so-called” (= air-quotes) —names a term while holding it at arm’s length (你所谓的帮忙? “your so-called help?”). Often sceptical, not always damning; the 的 is optional.

Watch out

- It questions the label, not necessarily the thing —context sets how sceptical it sounds.

在 + Time + 内 — “within (a period)”

在…内 sets a **time limit** —“within (a period).” It’s a sandwich frame; the period can be precise or vague.

Structure: 在 + Time + 内

{zh: 在 |zài|in / 短短 |duǎn duǎn|just / 两年 |liǎng nián|two years / 内 |nèi| / , 他 |tā|he / 就 |jiù| / 当上 |dāng shàng|became / 了 |le| / CEO / 。 }

In just two years, he became CEO.

{zh: 请 |qǐng|please / 在 |zài|within / 三天 |sān tiān|three days / 内 |nèi| / 回复 |huí fù|reply / 。 }

Please reply within three days.

Remember: 在 + time + 内 = a sandwich for "within" (在三天内 = "inside three days"). The period can be exact (两年内) or loose (短时间内). Cousin of 以内 (HSK 5, file 07).

Watch out

- It brackets a *duration*, not a deadline point —"within three days," not "by Friday."

宁可…，也不 / 也要…—"would rather"

宁可 states a **deliberate, costly choice**. 宁可 A 也不 B = "would rather A than B" (A is the lesser evil); 宁可 A 也要 B = "would rather A in order to still get B" (accept a cost for B).

Structure: 宁可 + A , 也不 + B · 宁可 + A , 也要 + B

{zh: 我们 |wǒ men|we / 宁可 |nìng kě|would rather / 早到 |zǎo dào|arrive early / , 也不 |yě bù|than / 迟到 |chí dào|be late / 。 }

We'd rather arrive early than late.

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 宁可 |nìng kě|would rather / 熬夜 |áo yè|stay up all night / , 也要 |yě yào|just to / 做完 |zuò wán|finish it / 。 }

I'd rather stay up all night just to finish it.

Remember: 宁可 A 也不 B = "rather A than B" (B is the thing avoided); 宁可 A 也要 B = "rather A, just to still get B" (B is the thing wanted, at A's cost). The 也不 / 也要 flips which side is the goal.

Watch out

- 也不 rejects B; 也要 insists on B —opposite meanings hanging on one character.

动词 + 就 + 动词—expressing indifference

Repeat a verb around 就 to shrug a matter off —"(if it …,) then so be it; fine, …then." It carries an "I don't care" attitude.

Structure: Verb + 就 + (same) Verb

{zh: 坏 |huài|broken / 了 |le| / 就 |jiù|then / 坏 |huài|broken / 了 |le| / , 再 |zài|just / 买 |mǎi|buy / 新的 |xīn de|a new one / 。 }

If it's broken, it's broken —we'll just buy a new one.

{zh: 走 |zǒu|leave / 就 |jiù|then / 走 |zǒu|leave / , 我 |wǒ|I / 早就 |zǎo jiù|long ago / 不 |bù|didn't / 想 |xiǎng|want to / 干 |gàn|do it / 了 |le / ! }

Leave then —I've long wanted to quit anyway!

Remember: V 就 V = a shrug, "so be it." 坏了就坏了 ("if it's broken, it's broken —whatever"). Don't confuse it with 要 V 就 V ("if you're going to V, then *really* V") —that one's resolute, this one's indifferent.

Watch out

- Same verb both sides, with a "couldn't care less" tone 一走就走, 丢就丢.

Action , 好 + Purpose —"so that, in order to"

A clause-medial 好 introduces the **purpose** of the preceding action —"so that, so as to."

Structure: Action , 好 + Purpose

{zh: 请 |qǐng|please / 说 |shuō|speak / 慢 |màn|slowly / 点儿 |diǎnr|a bit / , 我们 |wǒ men|we / 好 |hǎo|so that / 做 |zuò|take / 笔记 |bǐ jì|notes / 。 }

Please speak a little slower, so we can take notes.

{zh: 她 |tā|she / 睡前 |shuì qián|before bed / 喝 |hē|drinks / 牛奶 |niú nǎi|milk / , 好 |hǎo|so as to / 入睡 |rù shuì|fall asleep / 。 }

She drinks milk before bed to help her fall asleep.

Remember: this 好 = "so that / so as to," not "good." It links an action to its purpose: 说慢点, 好做笔记 ("speak slowly, *so that* we can take notes"). Think "do this, the better to...".

Watch out

- Mid-clause 好 + a verb = purpose; don't read it as the adjective "good" there.

一面… , 一面… —"(doing one thing) while (another)"

一面…一面… describes **two simultaneous actions** —"while …, (at the same time) …". It's a formal cousin of 一边…一边….

Structure: 一面 + Verb 1 , 一面 + Verb 2

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 喜欢 |xǐ huan|likes to / 一面 |yí miàn|while / 吃东西 |chī dōng xi|eating / , 一面 |yí miàn|at the same time / 看 |kàn|watch / 电影 |diàn yǐng|films / 。 }

He likes to eat while watching films.

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 一面 |yí miàn|while / 哭 |kū|crying / 一面 |yí miàn|at the same time / 跑 |pǎo|ran off / 。 }

I ran off crying.

Remember: 一面…一面… = the formal 一边…一边… (“doing two things at once”).
面 = “side,” same image as 边—one action on each side, simultaneously.

Watch out

- Reserve it for writing/formal speech; 一边…一边… is the everyday version.

不是…，就是…—“either …or …”

不是 A，就是 B says it must be **one of two** —“(it’s) either A or B.” A and B can be verbs, adjectives, or nouns; it rules out any third option.

Structure: 不是 + A ， 就是 + B

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 整天 |zhěng tiān|all day / 不是 |bú shì|either / 打游戏 |dǎ yóu xì|games
/ 就是 |jiù shì|or / 睡觉 |shuì jiào|sleeping / 。 }

All day it’s either gaming or sleeping.

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 买 |mǎi|buy / 的 |de / 衣服 |yī fu|clothes / 不是 |bú shì|either / 大
|dà|too big / 就是 |jiù shì|or / 小 |xiǎo|too small / 。 }

The clothes I buy are either too big or too small.

Remember: 不是 A 就是 B = “it’s either A or B (no third option)” —often a bit exasperated (不是…就是…, “always one or the other”). Don’t confuse it with 不是 A 而是 B (“not A but rather B”), which *corrects* to B.

Watch out

- 不是…就是… narrows to two; 不是…而是… replaces a wrong A with the right B — the second word (就是 vs 而是) tells them apart.