

Comparing similar time words

Ref Hsk5 Grammar

平时 vs 平常—“usually, ordinarily”

Both mean “usually / ordinarily” and are interchangeable as **adverbs**. The split: 平常 can *also* be an **adjective** meaning “ordinary, common” (很平常); 平时 can't.

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 平时 |píng shí|normally / 很少 |hěn shǎo|rarely / 喝酒 |hē jiǔ|drinks / 。 }

He rarely drinks normally.

{zh: 这 |zhè|this / 是 |shì|is / 很 |hěn|very / 平常 |píng cháng|ordinary / 的 |de / 事 |shì|thing / 。 }

This is a perfectly ordinary thing.

Remember: as adverbs, twins (“usually”); only 平常 doubles as an **ADJECTIVE** (“ordinary”: 很平常的事). 平时 stays an adverb—it can't describe a noun.

Watch out

- For “an ordinary X,” only 平常 works (很平常的事), never 很平时的事.

以后 vs 之后—“after, afterwards”

Both mean “after.” 以后 can stand **alone** meaning “in the future / from now on,” and follows a time or event. 之后 is a touch more **formal** / **written** and usually needs a preceding reference point. After a bare verb-event both work.

{zh: 毕业 |bì yè|graduating / 以后 |yǐ hòu|after / , 我 |wǒ|I / 想 |xiǎng|want / 去 |qù|to go / 国外 |guó wài|abroad / 。 }

After graduating, I want to go abroad.

{zh: 以后 |yǐ hòu|in future / 小心 |xiǎo xīn|careful / 点 |diǎn / 。 }

Be more careful in future.

Remember: 以后 can stand **ALONE** = “from now on / in future” (以后小心点); 之后 leans **formal and needs a reference point in front of it**. After a verb-event (毕业以后 / 毕业之后) both work; only 以后 floats free.

Watch out

- You can't replace the standalone 以后 (“in future”) with 之后—之后小心点 sounds incomplete.