

Comparing similar time words

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.

平时 vs 平常 (usually / ordinary)

■ Usual time differs from an ordinary quality

- You normally get up at seven, without describing the routine as remarkable.
- 平时我七点起床。 – 平时 frames the usual time or circumstances.

■ Build the form

- The pattern in this lesson is 平时 vs 平常 (usually / ordinary). Locate it in the original interlinear examples below.
- Keep the words in their demonstrated positions; the pattern must fit the intended situation as well as the sentence form.

平时我七点起床。

píng shí wǒ qī diǎn qǐ chuáng

Word guide: 平时 – usually; 我 – I; 七点 – seven; 起床 – get up.

■ Read examples in context

这是很平常的事。

zhè shì hěn píng cháng de shì

Word guide: 这 – this; 是 – is; 很 – very; 平常 – ordinary; 事 – thing.

- In the opening example, 平时我七点起床。: 平时 frames the usual time or circumstances.
- Explain who acts, what is described and which time or group is relevant before choosing an English paraphrase.

■ Know the boundary

- 平常 can often express usual circumstances too, and can also be an adjective in 很平常的事.
- 平时 cannot replace that adjective use.

■ Use the distinction

- 平时 frames the usual time or circumstances.
- 平常 can often express usual circumstances too, and can also be an adjective in 很平常的事. 平时 cannot replace that adjective use.

■ Try it with help closed

You normally get up at seven, without describing the routine as remarkable. 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: 平时我七点起床。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 平常 can often express usual circumstances too, and can also be an adjective in 很平常的事.
- 平时 cannot replace that adjective use.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

以后 vs 之后 (after / afterwards)

■ Recover the reference point for afterwards

- You describe returning three days after a departure.
- 三天之后，他回来了。 – The return is placed three days after the relevant starting event.

■ Build the form

- The pattern in this lesson is 以后 vs 之后 (after / afterwards). Locate it in the original interlinear examples below.
- Keep the words in their demonstrated positions; the pattern must fit the intended situation as well as the sentence form.

以后我想当老师。

yǐ hòu wǒ xiǎng dāng lǎo shī

Word guide: 以后 – in the future; 我 – I; 想 – want; 当 – be; 老师 – teacher.

■ Read examples in context

三天之后，他回来了。

sān tiān zhī hòu tā huí lái le

Word guide: 三 – three; 天 – days; 之后 – after; 他 – he; 回来 – come back.

- In the opening example, 三天之后，他回来了。: The return is placed three days after the relevant starting event.
- Explain who acts, what is described and which time or group is relevant before choosing an English paraphrase.

■ Know the boundary

- 以后 can independently refer to the future.
- 之后 needs a reference point, but that point can be supplied by the surrounding discourse rather than repeated immediately before it.

■ Use the distinction

- The return is placed three days after the relevant starting event.
- 以后 can independently refer to the future. 之后 needs a reference point, but that point can be supplied by the surrounding discourse rather than repeated immediately before it.

■ Try it with help closed

You describe returning three days after a departure. 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: 三天之后，他回来了。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 以后 can independently refer to the future.
- 之后 needs a reference point, but that point can be supplied by the surrounding discourse rather than repeated immediately before it.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.