

Basic sentence patterns

HSK 4

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.

连 ... 都 / 也 (even)

■ A child understands the explanation

- A speaker says a child understands a simple explanation.
- **连小孩都懂。** – The child is presented as a surprisingly unlikely person to understand.

■ Build the form

- The pattern in this lesson is **连 ... 都 / 也 (even)**. 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.

连小孩都懂。

lián xiǎo hái dōu dǒng

Word guide: 连 – even; 小孩 – child; 都 – even; 懂 – understand.

■ Read examples in context

- In the opening example, **连小孩都懂。**: The child is presented as a surprisingly unlikely person to understand.
- Explain who acts, what is described and which time or group is relevant before choosing an English paraphrase.

■ Know the boundary

- The speaker implies that more expected cases should understand too.
- This is a rhetorical expectation, not proof about every other person's actual understanding.

■ Use the distinction

- The child is presented as a surprisingly unlikely person to understand.
- The speaker implies that more expected cases should understand too. This is a rhetorical expectation, not proof about every other person's actual understanding.

■ Try it with help closed

A speaker says a child understands a simple explanation. 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: 连小孩都懂。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- The speaker implies that more expected cases should understand too.
- This is a rhetorical expectation, not proof about every other person's actual understanding.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

Question Word + 都 (every)

■ A question word can have a universal reading

- Anyone in the class knows the answer.
- **谁都知道。** – 谁 with 都 includes everyone in the relevant group.

■ Build the form

- The pattern in this lesson is **Question Word + 都 (every)**. 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.

这儿什么都有。

zhèr shén me dōu yǒu

Word guide: 这儿 – here; 什么 – anything; 都 – all; 有 – have.

■ Read examples in context

- In the opening example, **谁都知道。**: 谁 with 都 includes everyone in the relevant group.
- Explain who acts, what is described and which time or group is relevant before choosing an English paraphrase.

■ Know the boundary

- 谁都不知道 instead denies anyone knowing.
- The polarity changes the result, and the relevant group still comes from context.

■ Use the distinction

- 谁 with 都 includes everyone in the relevant group.
- 谁都不知道 instead denies anyone knowing. The polarity changes the result, and the relevant group still comes from context.

■ Try it with help closed

Anyone in the class knows the answer. 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: 谁都知道。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 谁都不知道 instead denies anyone knowing.
- The polarity changes the result, and the relevant group still comes from context.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

A 是 B 的 N 倍 (N times)

■ Separate a multiple from an increase

- Last year's count was ten and this year's is twenty.
- 今年的数量是去年的两倍。 – The new total is twice the old total.

■ Build the form

- The pattern in this lesson is **A 是 B 的 N 倍 (N times)**. 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.

今年是去年的两倍。

jīn nián shì qù nián de liǎng bèi

Word guide: 今年 – this year; 是 – is; 去年 – last year; 两 – two; 倍 – times.

■ Read examples in context

- In the opening example, 今年的数量是去年的两倍。: The new total is twice the old total.
- Explain who acts, what is described and which time or group is relevant before choosing an English paraphrase.

■ Know the boundary

- Two times the total is a one-times increase, or a hundred percent increase.
- Do not read 是两倍 as adding two extra old totals.

■ Use the distinction

- The new total is twice the old total.
- Two times the total is a one-times increase, or a hundred percent increase. Do not read 是两倍 as adding two extra old totals.

■ Try it with help closed

Last year's count was ten and this year's is twenty. 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: 今年的数量是去年的两倍。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- Two times the total is a one-times increase, or a hundred percent increase.
- Do not read 是两倍 as adding two extra old totals.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

一点 + 也 / 都 + 不 (not at all)

■ An emphatic denial differs from a small amount

- You deny being tired at all.
- 我一点都不累。 – 一点都不 makes the negative emphatic: not tired in the slightest.

■ Build the form

- The pattern in this lesson is **一点 + 也 / 都 + 不 (not at all)**. 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.

我一点都不累。

wǒ yì diǎn dōu bù lèi

Word guide: 我 – I; 一点 – a bit; 都 – even; 不 – not; 累 – tired.

■ Read examples in context

- In the opening example, **我一点都不累。**: 一点都不 makes the negative emphatic: not tired in the slightest.
- Explain who acts, what is described and which time or group is relevant before choosing an English paraphrase.

■ Know the boundary

- 一点也不累 can express the same denial.
- The sentence is still a speaker's claim, which may involve exaggeration rather than measurement.

■ Use the distinction

- 一点都不 makes the negative emphatic: not tired in the slightest.
- 一点也不累 can express the same denial. The sentence is still a speaker's claim, which may involve exaggeration rather than measurement.

■ Try it with help closed

You deny being tired at all. 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: 我一点都不累。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 一点也不累 can express the same denial.
- The sentence is still a speaker's claim, which may involve exaggeration rather than measurement.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

不知道 + embedded choice + 好 (unsure what is best)

■ Look for the actual verb and its choice

- Several products are available, and you cannot choose which to buy.
- **我不知道买哪个好。** – The speaker is unsure which purchase would be best.

■ Build the form

- The pattern in this lesson is **不知道 + embedded choice + 好 (unsure what is best)**. 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.

我不知道买哪个好。

wǒ bù zhī dào mǎi nǎ ge hǎo

Word guide: 我 – I; 不 – not; 知道 – know; 买 – buy; 哪个 – which; 好 – best.

■ Read examples in context

- In the opening example, **我不知道买哪个好。**: The speaker is unsure which purchase would be best.
- Explain who acts, what is described and which time or group is relevant before choosing an English paraphrase.

■ Know the boundary

- The question word can appear after the verb, as in 买哪个.
- A formula that always puts the question word before the verb gives the wrong order for this example.

■ Use the distinction

- The speaker is unsure which purchase would be best.
- The question word can appear after the verb, as in 买哪个. A formula that always puts the question word before the verb gives the wrong order for this example.

■ Try it with help closed

Several products are available, and you cannot choose which to buy. 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: 我不知道买哪个好。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- The question word can appear after the verb, as in 买哪个.
- A formula that always puts the question word before the verb gives the wrong order for this example.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

对 ... 来说 (for / as far as ... is concerned)

■ A viewpoint limits an evaluation

- Health matters most to you personally.
- **对我来说, 健康最重要。** – The importance judgment is framed from the speaker's perspective.

■ Build the form

- The pattern in this lesson is **对 ... 来说 (for / as far as ... is concerned)**. 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.

对我来说，健康最重要。

duì wǒ lái shuō jiàn kāng zuì zhòng yào

Word guide: 对 – for; 我 – me; 来说 – as for; 健康 – health; 最 – most; 重要 – important.

■ Read examples in context

- In the opening example, **对我来说，健康最重要。**: The importance judgment is framed from the speaker’s perspective.
- Explain who acts, what is described and which time or group is relevant before choosing an English paraphrase.

■ Know the boundary

- Other people may prioritise differently.
- 一般来说 is a separate fixed expression meaning generally speaking, not a named person’s viewpoint.

■ Use the distinction

- The importance judgment is framed from the speaker’s perspective.
- Other people may prioritise differently. 一般来说 is a separate fixed expression meaning generally speaking, not a named person’s viewpoint.

■ Try it with help closed

Health matters most to you personally. 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: 对我来说，健康最重要。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- Other people may prioritise differently.
- 一般来说 is a separate fixed expression meaning generally speaking, not a named person’s viewpoint.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.