

Adverbs

HSK 5

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.

Advanced 都 (already / even)

■ The group is still working at midnight

- A teammate looks at the clock: 都十二点了，明天再做吧！ – “It is already twelve; let us continue tomorrow!” 都 presents the time as later than the speaker expected or wanted.
- Compare 我们都来了 – “We have all arrived.” The same character can express a reached point, “even,” or “all”; read what it applies to.

■ Emphasise a point already reached

- 都 + time or reached state + 了 often adds surprise, urgency or another evaluation: 都十二点了 / 饭都凉了。
- 已经十二点了 also reports that it is already twelve. 都 often adds emphasis, but the exact attitude depends on the context and voice.

都十二点了！

dōu shí èr diǎn le

Word guide: 都 – already; 十二点 – twelve.

One character, three different uses

All 我们都来了。 All of us arrived.	Already 都十二点了！ Already twelve!	Even 这么简单都不会。 Cannot even do this.
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Identify the group, reached point or unexpected item before translating.

■ Put an unexpected item in focus

- 他急得饭都吃不下。 – “He is so anxious that he cannot even eat.” Eating is presented as something you would normally expect him to manage.
- 这么简单的题都不会做。 – “Cannot even solve such an easy question.” This use is not a clock-time statement and does not mean all questions.

他急得饭都吃不下。

tā jí de fàn dōu chī bu xià

Word guide: 他 – he; 急得 – so anxious that; 饭 – food; 都 – even; 吃不下 – cannot eat.

■ Check the item before 都

- 我们都来了 refers to every member of the relevant “we” group. 连小李都来了 singles out Xiao Li as an unexpected participant: “Even Xiao Li came.”
- 都 does not always begin the sentence. 饭都凉了 and 我们都来了 put the topic or subject before it; do not copy one time expression into every sentence pattern.

■ Contrast a reached point with an ongoing state

- 都十二点了 can remind a friend that it is already late. 他还在工作呢 says he is still working; the state continues.
- Both can appear in one exchange: 都十二点了，他还在工作呢。 – “It is already twelve, and he is still working.” The words contribute different information.

■ Choose the meaning from the whole sentence

- Identify the relevant group, reached point or unexpected item. Then translate the relation instead of replacing every 都 with “all.”
- To express a complaint or surprise accurately, keep the context. The character alone does not prove that the speaker is angry.

我们都来了: all of us. 都十二点了: already twelve, with emphasis. 这么简单的题都不会做: cannot even solve this easy question. Read the scope and context.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: The group is still working at midnight. 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: 都十二点了!

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 我们都来了 refers to every member of the relevant “we” group. 连小李都来了 singles out Xiao Li as an unexpected participant: “Even Xiao Li came.”
- 都 does not always begin the sentence. 饭都凉了 and 我们都来了 put the topic or subject before it; do not copy one time expression into every sentence pattern.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

Advanced 还 ... 呢

■ Someone is sleeping next door

- A friend speaks loudly. You say 小声点, 他还在睡觉呢。 – “Keep your voice down; he is still sleeping.” The continuing state is a reason for the reminder.
- 还 ... 呢 can draw attention to a state, but another spoken pattern can evaluate a claimed role ironically. These are related-looking forms with different uses.

■ Remind the listener that a state continues

- Use **subject + 还 + predicate + 呢**: 他还在睡觉呢 / 时间还早呢。呢 draws attention to the point in this exchange; it is not a past-tense marker.
- 时间还早呢 can reassure someone who is rushing: “It is still early.” The state meaning comes from the sentence, while context and voice shape the tone.

时间还早呢。

shíjiān hái zǎo ne

Word guide: 时间 – time; 还 – still; 早 – early.

Read the situation before choosing the tone

Continuing state	Ironic evaluation
他还在睡觉呢。 He is still sleeping. → Please be quiet.	还专家呢, 连这个都不懂。 An expert, supposedly ... → Performance disappoints.

Similar-looking forms have different meanings in their stated contexts.

■ Recognise an ironic evaluation

- In a critical exchange, 还专家呢, 连这个都不懂。 means roughly “An expert, supposedly – yet you do not even understand this.” It challenges the performance expected of that role.
- Do not read this as “still an expert” in the same way as “still sleeping.” It can be sharp criticism, not automatically friendly teasing.

■ Compare the two complete exchanges

- 小声点, 他还在睡觉呢 draws attention to an ongoing activity. 还专家呢, 连这个都不懂 contrasts a claimed role with disappointing performance.
- 还说呢 is also a context-dependent spoken response, often like “Do not even mention it.” Do not build a universal translation from that short phrase alone.

■ Keep word order and context separate

- For the ongoing-state pattern, place 还 before the predicate and 呢 at the end: 他还在睡觉呢。Keep the activity or state that the listener needs to notice.
- A different ending can make a different sentence rather than a broken one. 他还在睡觉吗? is a question about whether he is still sleeping; it is not the same reminder.

■ Interpret before imitating the tone

- Identify whether the speaker points to a continuing state or evaluates a claim. Use the words around the pattern to justify your choice.
- When giving a considerate reminder, state the situation clearly. Do not use an ironic role comment when your goal is simply to explain why someone should be quiet.

Still sleeping: ongoing state. “An expert, supposedly”: ironic evaluation in the stated context. 呢 is not a tense marker, and the pattern does not guarantee a friendly tone.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: Someone is sleeping next door. 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: 时间还早呢。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 小声点, 他还在睡觉呢 draws attention to an ongoing activity. 还专家呢, 连这个都不懂 contrasts a claimed role with disappointing performance.
- 还说呢 is also a context-dependent spoken response, often like “Do not even mention it.” Do not build a universal translation from that short phrase alone.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

总 (always / keep on)

■ The same teammate keeps arriving late

- After several late arrivals, you say 他总迟到。 – “He is always late.” You describe a repeated pattern, possibly with frustration.
- Compare 他昨天迟到了一次 – “He was late once yesterday.” One reported event is different from a habit.

■ Describe a recurring pattern

- In this use, **subject + 总 + predicate** often works like 总是: 他总迟到 / 他总是迟到。
- Give a suitable time or situation boundary: 周末他总睡到中午。 – “At weekends he keeps sleeping until noon.” It is not a claim about every day of his life.

他总迟到。

tā zǒng chí dào

Word guide: 他 – he; 总 – always; 迟到 – be late.

A habit is different from one event or an expectation

Repeated pattern	One event	Eventual expectation
他总迟到。 He keeps arriving late.	他昨天迟到了一次。 Late once yesterday.	总会好的。 It will get better.

总 overlaps with 总是 in the habit use; do not replace it mechanically.

■ Notice the speaker's evaluation

- 你怎么总玩手机? can sound like a complaint: “Why are you always on your phone?” 总 helps present the behaviour as recurring.
- Recurrence is not always negative: 她总帮助别人。 – “She is always helping others.” Do not assign a complaining tone to every sentence containing 总.

■ Recognise an eventual expectation

- 总会好的。 expresses reassurance that things will become better eventually. It is not a report that things have repeatedly improved in the past.
- Do not replace every 总 with 总是 mechanically. 总是会好的 tends toward a recurring generalization; 总会好的 in this reassuring exchange focuses on an eventual outcome.

■ Match the evidence to the statement

- A diary entry saying “late once yesterday” supports one event. Several records over a term may support a recurring pattern within that term.
- Everyday “always” can be an exaggeration. If exact counts matter, report them rather than treating 总 as a mathematical claim about every possible occasion.

■ Choose the intended time meaning

- For a recurring habit: 他总迟到。For one event: 他昨天迟到了一次。For reassurance about the future: 总会好的。
- Read the situation and predicate before translating. A habit, a single event and an eventual expectation are different meanings to practise.

总 can describe recurrence, as in 总迟到, or an eventual expectation, as in 总会好的. 总 and 总是 overlap in the habit use; they are not interchangeable in every sentence.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: The same teammate keeps arriving late. 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: 他总迟到。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 总会好的. expresses reassurance that things will become better eventually. It is not a report that things have repeatedly improved in the past.
- Do not replace every 总 with 总是 mechanically. 总是会好的 tends toward a recurring generalization; 总会好的 in this reassuring exchange focuses on an eventual outcome.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

毕竟 (after all)

■ A new teammate makes a mistake

- A teammate is still learning. You say 他毕竟是新手, 给他一点时间。 – “He is a beginner, after all; give him some time.”
- 毕竟 reminds the listener of a reason that matters to your judgment. The speaker treats it as relevant; the word does not prove the reason is true.

■ Put the reason inside a clause

- Use **subject + 毕竟 + predicate**, or put 毕竟 at the beginning of the clause: 他毕竟是新手 / 毕竟他是新手。
- Keep 毕竟 together. In the neutral written pattern practised here, put it before the predicate rather than attaching it after a complete sentence.

他毕竟是新手。

tā bìjìng shì xīnshǒu

Word guide: 他 – he; 毕竟 – after all; 是 – is; 新手 – beginner.

■ Connect the reason to the judgment

- 别太严格，他毕竟还是个孩子。 – “Do not be too strict; he is still a child, after all.” The second clause supports the first.
- 毕竟 does not always excuse a mistake. 这毕竟是他的决定，我们应该尊重。 – “It is his decision, after all; we should respect it.” Here the reason supports respect.

Two different connections between ideas

毕竟 · reason

他毕竟是新手。

He is a beginner, after all.

→ Give him time.

反正 · independent point

不管别人去不去，反正我去。

Others' choices may vary.

→ My decision stands.

The words show the speaker's connection, not proof that a claim is true.

■ Contrast 毕竟 with 反正

- 他毕竟是新手，给他一点时间。 focuses on **why** giving time is reasonable. 反正今天不交，明天再检查。 focuses on a point the speaker uses regardless of other discussion.
- Some contexts allow both words, with a different emphasis. Choose from the intended relationship between the clauses; do not translate every English “anyway” as 毕竟.

■ Check a reason without treating it as proof

- A speaker can be mistaken or exaggerate. 他毕竟有经验 does not independently prove that the person has experience or will succeed.
- Read the surrounding exchange. Ask which judgment the reason supports and whether the speaker is reminding, explaining or defending it.

■ Recall the meaning, then transfer it

- To explain patience with a beginner, connect the judgment to the relevant reason: 给他一点时间，他毕竟是新手。
- To show the discussion will not change a point, consider 反正 instead. Use the whole context to decide; word order alone does not settle meaning.

毕竟 highlights a reason relevant to the speaker's judgment. It is a reminder or explanation, not a guarantee of truth and not an automatic synonym for 反正.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: A new teammate makes a mistake. 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: 他毕竟是新手。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 他毕竟是新手，给他一点时间。focuses on **why** giving time is reasonable. 反正今天不交，明天再检查。focuses on a point the speaker uses regardless of other discussion.
- Some contexts allow both words, with a different emphasis. Choose from the intended relationship between the clauses; do not translate every English “anyway” as 毕竟.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

差点没: near misses and context

■ The bus doors close just after you board

- You rush onto the bus and say 我差点没赶上车，幸好司机等了我。 – “I almost missed the bus; luckily the driver waited for me.” The context establishes that you caught it.
- 差点没 can be difficult to interpret without context. Do not decide every outcome by counting negative words or applying one wanted/unwanted shortcut.

■ Read a nearly failed success

- In this complete bus example, 差点没 + 赶上 describes nearly failing to catch the bus. 幸好司机等了我 makes the successful outcome clear.
- Compare 我差点赶上车，可是车开走了。 – “I almost caught the bus, but it left.” Here the next clause establishes failure to catch it.

我差点没赶上车。

wǒ chàdiǎn méi gǎnshàng chē

Word guide: 我 – I; 差点没 – almost failed to; 赶上 – catch; 车 – bus.

The actual outcome belongs in the account

Close call, then success

我差点没赶上……

幸好最后赶上了。

Actual result: caught it.

Explicit failure

我没赶上车……

只好等下一班。

Actual result: missed it.

Read the outcome clause; isolated near-miss expressions can be ambiguous.

■ Recognise a near accident

- 我差点摔倒，幸好扶住了栏杆。 means “I almost fell; luckily I held the rail.” In this account, the fall did not happen.
- Speakers can also say 我差点没摔倒 in such a near-accident context. The 没 does not always work like an ordinary logical negation; uses and readings can vary.

■ Let the surrounding outcome settle the reading

- Ask what almost happened and what actually happened. Phrases such as 幸好赶上了 or 结果还是没赶上 give direct outcome evidence.
- A bare 差点没 sentence may be ambiguous or interpreted differently by speakers. Do not mark every unfamiliar context “grammatically broken” just because it conflicts with a simple shortcut.

■ Make your own account clear

- If the outcome matters, add an explicit clause: 我差点没赶上，幸好最后赶上了。
– “I nearly failed to catch it; luckily I caught it in the end.”
- For a clear failure account, state failure directly: 我没赶上车，只好等下一班。
– “I missed the bus and had to wait for the next one.” Avoid making a listener infer an important outcome from an isolated near-miss phrase.

■ Separate the close call from the result

- In the worked account, nearly missing is the close call and boarding is the actual result. In the rail account, nearly falling is the close call and staying upright is the result.
- Use the whole account to answer an outcome question. If the outcome is not clear, ask what happened rather than inventing certainty from 没 alone.

差点没 is context-sensitive. Read the near event and the actual outcome separately. Wanted/unwanted tendencies can help, but they do not replace an explicit result in an ambiguous account.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: The bus doors close just after you board. 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: 我差点没赶上车。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- Ask what almost happened and what actually happened. Phrases such as 幸好赶上了 or 结果还是没赶上 give direct outcome evidence.
- A bare 差点没 sentence may be ambiguous or interpreted differently by speakers. Do not mark every unfamiliar context “grammatically broken” just because it conflicts with a simple shortcut.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

反正 (anyway / in any case)

■ Two ways to travel, one fixed appointment

- Your friend debates taking a bus or a taxi. You say 坐什么车你决定吧，反正我八点到。 – “You decide how to travel; in any case, I will arrive at eight.”
- 反正 presents a point the speaker treats as holding regardless of the alternatives under discussion. The tone can be practical, reassuring or dismissive.

■ Put 反正 before the point

- In the neutral written patterns here, use **反正 + clause** or **subject + 反正 + predicate**: 反正我不去 / 我反正不去。
- Keep the two characters together. Colloquial afterthoughts can occur in speech; do not turn the classroom pattern into a claim that every other placement is impossible.

反正我八点到。

fǎnzhèng wǒ bā diǎn dào

Word guide: 反正 – in any case; 我 – I; 八点 – eight o'clock; 到 – arrive.

■ Identify which alternatives are set aside

- 不管你信不信，反正我信。 – “Whether you believe it or not, I believe it.” The speaker's belief is presented as independent of yours.
- 反正时间还早，我们慢慢走。 – “There is still time anyway; let us walk slowly.” The point can be a practical circumstance, not only a stubborn refusal.

A travel choice can vary while one point stays fixed

Open alternatives

Bus or taxi?

You choose the transport.



Point held independently

反正我八点到。

In any case, I arrive at eight.

Read the surrounding exchange to identify what varies and what is held fixed.

■ Contrast a reason with a fixed point

- 他毕竟是新手，给他一点时间。uses 毕竟 to support patience with a reason. 不管别人去不去，反正我去。uses 反正 to set aside other people's choices.
- Both words can introduce useful information. The distinction is the speaker's intended connection, not a rule that one word always states a fact and the other never gives a reason.

■ Listen for the social effect

- 反正我不去 can sound firm or dismissive in an argument. A calm explanation may be more considerate when your decision affects someone else.
- The word does not make an uncertain future certain. You can set aside a debate and still express uncertainty: 反正现在还不知道，等通知吧。 – “We do not know yet anyway; wait for the notice.”

■ Recall the point and its boundary

- In the travel example, the transport choice is open while the speaker commits to arriving at eight. Identify those two parts before translating.
- In a new exchange, ask what the speaker sets aside and what remains relevant. Read tone and context instead of treating “mind made up” as the only possible meaning.

反正 presents a point regardless of the alternatives being discussed. It can introduce a decision, circumstance or admitted uncertainty; context controls the emphasis and tone.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: Two ways to travel, one fixed appointment. 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: 反正我八点到。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 他毕竟是新手，给他一点时间。uses 毕竟 to support patience with a reason. 不管别人去不去，反正我去。uses 反正 to set aside other people's choices.
- Both words can introduce useful information. The distinction is the speaker's intended connection, not a rule that one word always states a fact and the other never gives a reason.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

尽量 + Verb (as much as possible)

■ You hope to arrive early, but the bus may be late

- A friend asks for an early arrival. You say 我会尽量早点来。 – “I will try to come as early as possible.” You express an effort within practical limits.
- Compare 我一定八点到 – “I will definitely arrive at eight.” 尽量 by itself does not guarantee the exact outcome.

■ Put the effort modifier before the action

- Use **subject + 尽量 + action or limit**: 你尽量早点来 / 我会尽量帮你。The speaker tries to do what is feasible.
- 尽量 can also limit an unwanted action: 尽量别在晚上喝咖啡。 – “Try not to drink coffee at night.” It does not always mean doing more of an activity.

你尽量早点来。

nǐ jǐnliàng zǎo diǎn lái

Word guide: 你 – you; 尽量 – as much as possible; 早 – early; 点 – a bit; 来 – come.

■ Distinguish effort from a guarantee

- 我会尽量早点来 reports an intention to try. If the bus is late, the outcome may still be late even when the speaker made a real effort.
- If a precise time is essential, state the deadline and discuss whether it is realistic. A hopeful modifier is not a substitute for the actual scheduling information.

Effort differs from certainty

Effort within limits

我会尽量早点来。

I will try to arrive early.

Definite claim

我一定八点到。

I will definitely arrive at eight.

The attempted action can be real even when the intended result is not reached.

■ Contrast 尽量 with permission-giving 尽管

- 尽量早点来 asks for an effort toward an earlier arrival. 有问题尽管问 gives permission or encouragement to ask freely.
- The similar first character does not make the expressions synonyms. Decide whether the speaker asks for feasible effort or removes hesitation about an action.

■ Read what is being increased or reduced

- 上课时尽量用汉语交流 asks learners to use Chinese as much as feasible. 尽量少用手机 asks them to reduce phone use as far as feasible.
- Identify the whole modified phrase, including 早、少 or 别. Translating only 尽量 as “more” can reverse the intended advice.

■ Make a realistic effort statement

- To offer help without guaranteeing success, say 我会尽量帮你。Give the listener any important limits separately.
- In a new example, identify the attempted action and whether its outcome is certain. 尽量 expresses feasible effort, not proof that the action succeeded.

尽量 asks for or offers an effort within limits. It can increase a useful action or reduce an unwanted one; read the whole phrase and distinguish effort from certainty.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: You hope to arrive early, but the bus may be late. 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: 你尽量早点来。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 尽量早点来 asks for an effort toward an earlier arrival. 有问题尽管问 gives permission or encouragement to ask freely.
- The similar first character does not make the expressions synonyms. Decide whether the speaker asks for feasible effort or removes hesitation about an action.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

互相 + Verb (each other)

■ Two partners check each other's drafts

- Mei checks Arun's draft and Arun checks Mei's. You can say 他们互相帮助。 – "They help each other." The relationship goes in both directions.
- If only Mei helps Arun, say 梅帮助阿伦。 That one-way account does not establish mutual help.

■ Place 互相 before the reciprocal action

- Use **participants + 互相 + verb phrase**: 我们互相帮助 / 他们互相看了一眼。 State or recover the people involved from context.
- 我跟他互相帮助 includes both participants. The word 我 does not make the sentence wrong when 跟他 supplies the other participant.

我们应该互相帮助。

wǒmen yīnggāi hùxiāng bāngzhù

Word guide: 我们 – we; 应该 – should; 互相 – each other; 帮助 – help.

■ Reciprocity does not mean equal amounts

- In a group, 互相学习 can mean people learn from one another. It need not describe exactly two people or every possible pair doing the same amount.
- Mei may help with diagrams while Arun helps with language. The actions support one another even though the contributions differ.

Mutual help needs a reciprocal relationship

Reciprocal

Mei $\rightarrow$ Arun

Arun $\rightarrow$ Mei

One stated direction

Mei $\rightarrow$ Arun

No reverse help is stated.

Reciprocity describes the relationship; it does not specify equal quantities.

■ Distinguish 互相 from 都

- 我们都帮助老师 says every person in the relevant group helps the teacher. It does not say they help one another.
- 我们互相帮助 makes the participants both helpers and recipients within the relationship. Read who acts on whom.

■ Check the action and the participants

- A completed mutual glance is possible: 他们互相看了一眼。Reciprocity does not require a repeated habit or a long duration.
- Do not add 互相 to an unrelated one-person activity without a reciprocal partner. Describe the actual relationship rather than using it as a general word for cooperation.

■ Trace the relationship before translating

- For two partners, draw $A \rightarrow B$ and $B \rightarrow A$ to test mutual help. $A \rightarrow$ teacher and $B \rightarrow$ teacher instead represents both helping the same third person.
- For a larger group, use the stated interaction evidence. 互相 signals reciprocity, not a guaranteed equal contribution from every person.

互相 describes a reciprocal relationship. Participants can be expressed in several ways, including 我跟他; mutual actions need not be equal, repeated or limited to two people.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: Two partners check each other's drafts. 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: 我们应该互相帮助。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 我们都帮助老师 says every person in the relevant group helps the teacher. It does not say they help one another.
- 我们互相帮助 makes the participants both helpers and recipients within the relationship. Read who acts on whom.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

尽管 + Verb (feel free to)

■ A learner hesitates to ask a question

- A teacher says 有问题尽管问。 – “If you have questions, feel free to ask.” 尽管 encourages the learner not to hold back in this context.
- Compare 尽管下雨，我们还是去了。 – “Although it rained, we still went.” The same written word has a different use.

■ Give permission or reassurance

- Before an action, **尽管 + verb phrase** can mean “go ahead” or “feel free”: 有问题尽管问 / 想吃什么尽管点。
- 你尽管放心，这件事交给我。 means “Rest assured; leave this to me.” Read it as reassurance, not a statement that an action has already succeeded.

有问题尽管问。

yǒu wèntí jǐnguǎn wèn

Word guide: 有 – have; 问题 – questions; 尽管 – feel free to; 问 – ask.

■ Read the concessive use separately

- 尽管下雨，我们还是去了 acknowledges rain while saying the expected obstacle did not prevent the trip.
- This concessive use can also pair with 但是 or a similar contrast. A sentence with 尽管 is not automatically an invitation just because a verb follows somewhere later.

Two uses of 尽管

Permission

有问题尽管问。

Ask freely if you have questions.

Concession

尽管下雨，我们还是去了。

We went despite the rain.

The following action and surrounding clauses distinguish these meanings.

■ Use the clauses to identify the function

- In 有问题尽管问, the speaker encourages asking. In 尽管有问题, 我们还是完成了任务, the speaker acknowledges problems but reports completion.
- Compare the relation between the clauses. Classifying the second example as broken would confuse a valid different use with a word-order error.

■ Respect the scope of the invitation

- “Feel free to ask” concerns the stated activity in that exchange. It does not grant unlimited permission to unrelated actions.
- A speaker may later qualify or withdraw an invitation. That can be confusing or inconsiderate, but it is a communication issue rather than proof that the original construction is ungrammatical.

■ Choose invitation or contrast from context

- To encourage a hesitant learner, use 有问题尽管问。To acknowledge an obstacle, use a complete contrast such as 尽管下雨, 我们还是去了。
- Identify the intended function before choosing the English wording. 尽量 expresses feasible effort; permission-giving 尽管 encourages an action without hesitation.

尽管 can encourage an action or introduce a concession. Complete clauses show which use is intended; a different valid use is not a broken invitation.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: A learner hesitates to ask a question. 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: 有问题尽管问。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- In 有问题尽管问, the speaker encourages asking. In 尽管有问题, 我们还是完成了任务, the speaker acknowledges problems but reports completion.
- Compare the relation between the clauses. Classifying the second example as broken would confuse a valid different use with a word-order error.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

干脆 (just / simply / might as well)

■ The group stops debating and changes the plan

- Three attempts to repair a bag have failed. Someone says 干脆换一个吧。 – “Let us just replace it, then.” The speaker proposes a direct way forward.
- 干脆 presents a decision as straightforward. It does not prove the choice is cheapest, best or impossible to reverse.

■ Put 干脆 before the proposed action

- Use **subject + 干脆 + verb phrase**, or lead a suggestion with 干脆: 他干脆关了手机 / 干脆别去了。
- Keep 干脆 together. In the neutral written pattern here, it comes before the action or decision it modifies.

干脆别去了。

gāncuì bié qù le

Word guide: 干脆 – just; 别 – do not; 去 – go.

■ Distinguish the decision from its quality

- 修了三次还坏, 干脆换一个吧 presents replacement as a direct response to failed repairs. The sentence does not contain enough information to calculate the best financial choice.
- A reader can understand the proposed decision while disagreeing with it. A decisiveness word is not independent evidence that the action is sensible.

Choice of action

她干脆不回答了。

She decided not to answer.

Manner of response

她回答得很干脆。

She answered decisively.

A direct decision does not itself mean the decision is permanent or optimal.

■ A later reversal is still possible

- 他干脆关了手机，后来又打开了。 can describe a direct initial action followed by a later change.
- The reversal does not automatically make the sentence ungrammatical. Explain the change in context rather than treating 干脆 as a promise that the decision lasts forever.

■ Recognise the descriptive adjective

- 她回答得很干脆。 describes a clear, decisive manner of answering. Here 干脆 is part of a description, not simply “might as well answer.”
- Compare 她干脆不回答了。 – “She simply stopped answering.” Word position and the rest of the sentence distinguish the uses.

■ Interpret a choice without adding a guarantee

- For a direct suggestion, 干脆自己做吧 means “Let us just do it ourselves, then.” State what decision is proposed.
- Keep separate questions separate: is it a direct choice, is it a good choice, and does the person later change it? The modifier answers only part of that account.

干脆 can modify a direct action or describe a decisive manner. It does not guarantee that the choice is objectively best or permanent.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: The group stops debating and changes the plan. 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: 干脆别去了。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 他干脆关了手机，后来又打开了。can describe a direct initial action followed by a later change.
- The reversal does not automatically make the sentence ungrammatical. Explain the change in context rather than treating 干脆 as a promise that the decision lasts forever.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

再也 + 不 / 没 + ... 了 (never again)

■ Two friends have not met since graduation

- 毕业后我们再也见过面。 – “After graduation, we have not met again.” This reports the absence of another meeting during the stated period.
- Compare 我再也不去那家店了。 – “I will never go to that shop again.” That is a strong decision about future visits, not the same kind of past report.

■ Express a strong intention with 不

- **再也 + 不 + verb phrase + 了** can express “never again”: 我再也不去了 / 我再也不买这个了。
- The wording presents a firm stance. It does not make it logically impossible for a person to change their mind later.

我再也不去了。

wǒ zài yě bù qù le

Word guide: 我 – I; 再也 – ever again; 不 – not; 去 – go.

■ Report no repetition with 没

- **再也 + 没 + verb phrase** can report that something did not happen again: 毕业后我们再也见过面。
- This example has 过 and no final 了. Do not require every 再也 sentence to end in 了 or turn a report so far into proof about every future day.

Keep the time boundary

Future intention

我再也不去了。

I will not go again.

Past interval

毕业后我们再也见过。

No meeting since graduation.

A strong stance or past report does not prove every future event.

■ Compare absence, refusal and inability

- 再也没见过面 reports no further meeting. 再也不去那家店了 presents an intention not to visit. 再也找不到那本书了 reports inability to find the book now.
- All concern no recurrence or continuation in context, but their time and reason differ. Read the negative predicate and the stated boundary.

■ State the relevant time boundary

- “After graduation” supplies a starting point for the no-meeting account. It does not by itself state that meeting again is impossible.
- For an outcome question, distinguish what is reported from what is predicted. A sentence about past absence needs additional evidence before a permanent-future claim.

■ Translate the whole negative pattern

- To state a firm decision, use a suitable 不 pattern. To report no further experience, use a suitable 没 pattern with the context.
- Keep 再也 with its negative expression in the patterns taught here. Explain the actual meaning rather than treating all examples as an angry refusal.

再也不 ... 了 can state a strong “never again” intention. 再也没 ... can report no repetition in a stated period. Read the negative predicate and the time boundary; final 了 is not compulsory everywhere.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: Two friends have not met since graduation. 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: 我再也不去了。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 再也没见过面 reports no further meeting. 再也不去那家店了 presents an intention not to visit. 再也找不到那本书了 reports inability to find the book now.
- All concern no recurrence or continuation in context, but their time and reason differ. Read the negative predicate and the stated boundary.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

曾经 + Verb + 过 (once / formerly)

■ A classmate used to live in Shanghai

- 我曾经住在上海。 – “I once lived in Shanghai.” The classmate points to an earlier part of their life.
- Compare 我明年去上海。 – “I will go to Shanghai next year.” A future plan is different from an earlier experience or state.

■ Place 曾经 before the past predicate

- Use **subject + 曾经 + predicate**: 我曾经住在上海 / 她曾经很害羞。 The predicate can describe a past activity or state.
- 曾经 does not require 过 after every predicate. 她曾经很害羞 is a complete past-state example without it.

他曾经当过老师。

tā céngjīng dāng guo lǎoshī

Word guide: 他 – he; 曾经 – once; 当 – work as; 过 – (experience); 老师 – teacher.

■ Use 过 to mark an experience when appropriate

- 他曾经当过老师。 means “He once worked as a teacher.” Here 过 follows 当 and marks experience.
- 我曾经去过上海。 reports having been to Shanghai. “Once” in this translation need not mean exactly one visit; state 去过一次 if that exact count matters.

An earlier state or experience

Past state

她曾经很害羞。

She used to be very shy.

Earlier experience

她曾经当过老师。

She has been a teacher before.

曾经 does not require 过 or specify exactly one occurrence.

■ Distinguish an earlier state from an exact count

- 我曾经在上海工作过 says the work belongs to an earlier experience. 我只去过一次 says the number of visits was one.
- 曾经 alone supplies neither an exact date nor a count. Add those details when they are relevant instead of inferring them from the English word “once.”

■ Read later clauses for the present situation

- 她曾经很害羞，现在能自信地演讲。explicitly contrasts earlier shyness with the present ability to speak confidently.
- Without a present clause, do not invent every detail of the person’s current life. The earlier-state framing does not establish their current address, job or exact feelings.

■ Choose a past example and keep its limits

- For a former role, 他曾经当过老师 is suitable. For an earlier state, 她曾经很害羞 is suitable without 过.
- In a new account, identify the past predicate, whether an experience marker fits, and any explicit count or present contrast. Do not add those facts yourself.

曾经 frames an earlier experience or state. It can combine with 过 after an appropriate verb, but does not require 过 everywhere or mean exactly one occurrence.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: A classmate used to live in Shanghai. 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: 他曾经当过老师。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 我曾经在上海工作过 says the work belongs to an earlier experience. 我只去过一次 says the number of visits was one.
- 曾经 alone supplies neither an exact date nor a count. Add those details when they are relevant instead of inferring them from the English word "once."
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

再三 + Verb (over and over)

■ A safety instruction is easy to miss

- The coach reminds the group several times to bring water: 教练再三提醒我们带水。The repeated reminders show that the point matters.
- 再三 does not tell us an exact count. Do not translate its 三 as proof that there were exactly three reminders.

■ Put 再三 before the repeated action

- Use subject + 再三 + verb phrase: 他再三强调这一点 / 我再三考虑。The familiar examples describe repeated emphasis or consideration.
- 再三感谢 presents repeated thanks. The surrounding account can show earnestness; repetition alone does not prove the listener agreed.

他再三强调这一点。

tā zài sān qiáng diào zhè yì diǎn

Word guide: 他 – he; 再三 – repeatedly; 强调 – stress; 这 – this; 一点 – point.

■ Separate repetition from a counted record

- 她再三提醒我 describes repeated reminders. 她提醒了我三次 explicitly counts three reminders.
- Both can fit the same event, but they contribute different information. Use 次 when the exact number matters.

Repetition is different from an exact count

Repeated emphasis

再三提醒

Repeated reminders

Exact number not stated.

Counted record

提醒了三次

Three reminders

Exact number: 3.

A repeated action does not by itself guarantee its intended effect.

■ Compare an earnest action with a habit

- 再三提醒 highlights repeated attention to a particular point. 他总迟到 describes a recurring lateness pattern.
- Choose the familiar expression for your intended meaning. A less typical pairing is not proof that every possible context is ungrammatical.

■ Repetition does not prove a result

- 老师再三解释，可是我还是不明白。The explanation was repeated, but the learner still did not understand.
- Identify the repeated action and then read the outcome clause. Repeated thanks, warnings or explanations do not guarantee their effect.

■ Report the evidence accurately

- If a log records three reminders, 她提醒了三次 states that count clearly. If the point is repeated emphasis, 她再三提醒 is suitable.
- In a new example, separate the action, any exact count and the actual outcome. Keep unknown details unknown.

In a new example, separate the action, any exact count and the actual outcome. Keep unknown details unknown.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: A safety instruction is easy to miss. 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: 他再三强调这一点。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 再三提醒 highlights repeated attention to a particular point. 他总迟到 describes a recurring lateness pattern.
- Choose the familiar expression for your intended meaning. A less typical pairing is not proof that every possible context is ungrammatical.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

简直: strong evaluation and comparison

■ A beautiful view looks like a painting

- A visitor says 这里的风景简直像画一样。The comparison expresses a strong impression of the view.
- It does not mean the landscape is literally made of paint. Translate the evaluation in context rather than automatically using literally.

■ Place 简直 before the strong description

- 这简直太棒了! expresses strong approval. 我简直不敢相信自己的眼睛 expresses strong disbelief.
- 简直 supports the speaker's emphatic evaluation. It is not a measurement unit or an independent check of the claim.

这简直太棒了!

zhè jiǎn zhí tài bàng le

Word guide: 这 – this; 简直 – simply; 太 – too; 棒 – great.

■ Distinguish comparison from identity

- 这里简直像一幅画 uses 像 to compare the view to a painting. 这是一幅画 identifies an object as a painting.
- The similar English image does not make the two statements equivalent. Read the comparison word as well as 简直.

A vivid comparison is different from identity

Comparison

风景简直像一幅画。

The view looks like a painting.

Identity

这是一幅画。

This object is a painting.

Read 像 as a comparison; strong evaluation is not a literal measurement.

■ Look for the speaker's stance

- 这简直太好了 expresses approval; 这简直太糟了 expresses disapproval. The following description supplies the direction of the evaluation.
- Do not infer whether an event is good or bad from 简直 alone. Voice and irony can also affect the intended stance.

■ Keep evaluation separate from evidence

- 这间屋子简直像冰箱一样 presents an impression of cold. 室温是十摄氏度 reports a measured temperature.
- A comparison can communicate discomfort without stating an exact temperature. A strong description does not prove a literal fact.

■ Translate the whole claim

- For a view compared to a painting, “The scenery looks just like a painting” keeps the comparison. “The scenery is literally a painting” changes it.
- In a new example, identify the description and the speaker's stance, then distinguish figurative emphasis from any measured or literal claim.

In a new example, identify the description and the speaker's stance, then distinguish figurative emphasis from any measured or literal claim.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: A beautiful view looks like a painting. 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: 这简直太棒了!

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 这简直太好了 expresses approval; 这简直太糟了 expresses disapproval. The following description supplies the direction of the evaluation.
- Do not infer whether an event is good or bad from 简直 alone. Voice and irony can also affect the intended stance.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

顺便 (while you're at it / by the way)

■ A library trip can include a second errand

- 我去图书馆，顺便还这本书。The trip provides an opportunity to return the book as an additional action.
- 顺便 presents an action as incidental to another purpose or opportunity. It does not measure the number of minutes or prove the task is easy.

■ Put 顺便 before the additional action

- 你出去，顺便买点菜。The additional request is buying some groceries while the person is going out.
- The main action can be supplied by earlier context. 顺便问一下 introduces a side question without needing a new trip.

你出去顺便买点菜。

nǐ chū qù shùn biàn mǎi diǎn cài

Word guide: 你 – you; 出去 – go out; 顺便 – while at it; 买 – buy; 点 – some; 菜 – food.

■ Name the main purpose and the extra

- 我去看朋友，顺便把书还给她。Visiting the friend is the stated main activity; returning the book is the extra.
- 我专门去还书 presents returning the book as the purpose of a special trip. The difference is the role of the action, not a grammar verdict about the word 专门.

One main purpose can provide an extra opportunity

Main purpose

我专门去银行办事。

Special trip: bank business.

Additional action

顺便买了面包。

Extra: buy some bread.

专门 and 顺便 can describe different purposes in the same account.

■ A special trip can still have an extra

- 我专门去银行办事，顺便买了面包。 A special bank trip can also provide an opportunity to buy bread.
- 专门 and 顺便 can coexist when they describe different purposes. Identify what each word modifies before claiming a contradiction.

■ Do not invent convenience details

- 顺便买了面包 says buying bread was an additional action. It does not state that the shop was next door, the queue was short or the bread was cheap.
- Those details need their own evidence. An incidental task can still take effort or time.

■ Use a side question naturally

- 顺便问一下，你周末有空吗？ introduces an additional question in the exchange. It need not describe physical travel.
- For a new example, identify the existing purpose or conversation and the added action. Translate that relationship instead of adding an unproved easy-task claim.

For a new example, identify the existing purpose or conversation and the added action. Translate that relationship instead of adding an unproved easy-task claim.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: A library trip can include a second errand. 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: 你出去顺便买点菜。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 我专门去银行办事，顺便买了面包。A special bank trip can also provide an opportunity to buy bread.
- 专门 and 顺便 can coexist when they describe different purposes. Identify what each word modifies before claiming a contradiction.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

再不 ... 就 ... 了: a conditional warning

■ The train departure is approaching

- 再不走，我们就迟到了。The speaker warns that further delay in leaving leads to being late.
- This conditional warning presses for timely action. It does not report that the group has already left or already arrived late.

■ Connect continued non-action to a consequence

- Use 再不 + action, subject + 就 + consequence + 了 in the familiar warning: 你不再复习，就来不及了。
- Read 不 as part of the condition: if the action still does not happen soon, the consequence follows. Do not confuse it with 再也不, a strong no-repeat stance.

再不走就晚了。

zài bù zǒu jiù wǎn le

Word guide: 再不 – if ... not now; 走 – leave; 就 – then; 晚 – late.

■ Identify condition and result separately

- In 再不走，我们就迟到了，the condition is not leaving soon; the warned result is lateness.
- The speaker connects the two, but the sentence alone does not give the departure time or prove how many minutes remain.

Continued delay leads to a warned consequence

Condition

再不走

If we still do not leave soon

Warned result

就迟到了

Then we will be late

The warning does not by itself prove that lateness has already occurred.

■ The condition can involve nature

- 再不下雨，庄稼就要干死了。The warning concerns continued lack of rain and damage to crops.
- Rain is not a voluntary action by the listener. The pattern can warn about a developing situation as well as urge someone to act.

■ Contrast urgency with refusal

- 再不去，就来不及了 warns about delaying a visit. 我再也不去了 expresses a strong intention not to go again.
- The forms differ in both structure and purpose. A single English “not go” shortcut hides the distinction.

■ State a useful warning

- If a deadline is essential, state it separately: 火车八点开，再不走就来不及了。The time makes the warning easier to assess.
- In a new example, identify the condition, predicted consequence and any actual deadline. A warning is not proof that the consequence has occurred.

In a new example, identify the condition, predicted consequence and any actual deadline. A warning is not proof that the consequence has occurred.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: The train departure is approaching. 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: 再不走就晚了。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 再不下雨，庄稼就要干死了。The warning concerns continued lack of rain and damage to crops.
- Rain is not a voluntary action by the listener. The pattern can warn about a developing situation as well as urge someone to act.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

好 (不) 容易 (with great difficulty)

■ A ticket took several attempts to obtain

- 我好不容易才买到票。The speaker finally obtained a ticket after difficulty. 买到 states the achieved result.
- The expression highlights a hard-won result; it does not specify an exact number of attempts or hours.

■ Read the whole hard-won construction

- 好不容易才找到 reports finally finding something with difficulty. 才 adds the only-then sense in this example.
- 好不容易找到了一份工作 is also possible without 才. Do not turn a useful model sentence into a rule that every example must contain 才.

我好不容易才买到。

wǒ hǎo bù róng yì cái mǎi dào

Word guide: 我 – I; 好不容易 – with great difficulty; 才 – only then; 买到 – managed to buy.

■ Recognise the matching idiomatic reading

- 我好不容易才买到票 can also use 好容易 in the hard-won sense. The construction and context support that reading.
- 好容易 is not interchangeable with 好不容易 in every possible sentence. In an easy-task context, 这个题好容易 can mean that the question is very easy.

A hard-won result can be followed by a loss

Achieved result

好不容易买到票

Obtained the ticket with difficulty.

Later change

后来把票弄丢了

Lost the ticket afterwards.

The later loss does not undo the earlier purchase.

■ Separate difficulty from the count

- 找了几天，才找到 supplies a search duration. 好不容易找到 emphasises the difficulty without giving that duration.
- Translate finally or with difficulty when it fits, but do not invent three days, ten tries or another precise number.

■ A hard-won result can be lost later

- 我好不容易买到票，后来却把票弄丢了。The ticket was obtained, then lost. The later loss does not undo the earlier achieved result.
- Identify the result at each stage. A difficult process can also achieve avoiding an unwanted event, so a negative word alone is not proof of contradiction.

■ Choose an unambiguous expression

- To say an exercise is very easy, 这道题很容易 is clear. To say a ticket was hard to obtain, 我好不容易才买到票 is clear.
- In a new account, identify the context, the achieved result and any later change before deciding how to translate 好容易.

In a new account, identify the context, the achieved result and any later change before deciding how to translate 好容易.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: A ticket took several attempts to obtain. 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: 我好不容易才买到。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 找了几天, 才找到 supplies a search duration. 好不容易找到 emphasises the difficulty without giving that duration.
- Translate finally or with difficulty when it fits, but do not invent three days, ten tries or another precise number.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

白 + Verb (in vain / for nothing)

■ The office was closed after a long trip

- 办公室关门了, 我白跑了一趟。The trip failed to achieve the intended office errand.
- 白跑 presents the effort as wasted for that purpose. It does not prove that no other useful or pleasant event happened on the trip.

■ Put 白 before the evaluated action

- 他没来, 我们白等了一个小时。The expected person did not arrive, so the waiting failed in its intended purpose.
- 白等、白忙 and 白跑 describe fruitless effort in these contexts. Read what the person hoped to achieve.

我白等了半天。

wǒ bái děng le bàn tiān

Word guide: 我 – I; 白 – in vain; 等 – wait; 半天 – ages.

■ Contrast 白 with 没白

- 这趟没白来, 学到了很多。The trip was worthwhile because the speaker learned a lot.
- 没白 rejects the in-vain evaluation: it was not in vain. It does not mean the person did not come.

Evaluate the intended purpose separately

Intended errand failed

白跑了邮局，没寄成信。

Mailing the letter failed.

A separate benefit

不过在路上见到了朋友。

Met a friend on the way.

Fruitless for one purpose does not prove the whole trip had no benefit.

■ Other uses of 白 need their own context

- 这顿饭是白吃的 in a stated free-meal context can mean no payment was needed. 白纸 uses 白 as the colour white.
- Do not force the wasted-effort reading onto every 白. In ambiguous accounts, clarify the intended meaning rather than counting characters.

■ An intended failure can coexist with another gain

- 我白跑了邮局一趟，没寄成信，不过在路上见到了朋友。The mailing errand failed, while the trip had a separate benefit.
- The extra benefit does not automatically make the first clause broken. Identify which purpose the speaker is evaluating.

■ State the result you mean

- For worthwhile learning, 这趟没白来, 学到了很多 supplies the reason. For a failed errand, 我白跑了一趟, 办公室关门了 supplies the failure.
- In a new example, identify the effort, intended purpose and actual result. Distinguish wasted effort, no payment and colour.

In a new example, identify the effort, intended purpose and actual result. Distinguish wasted effort, no payment and colour.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: The office was closed after a long trip. 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: 我白等了半天。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 这顿饭是白吃的 in a stated free-meal context can mean no payment was needed. 白纸 uses 白 as the colour white.
- Do not force the wasted-effort reading onto every 白. In ambiguous accounts, clarify the intended meaning rather than counting characters.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

Verb + 了 + 又 + Verb (again and again)

■ A message needs a second careful look

- 这封信我看了又看。The same action is repeated: the speaker looked at the letter again.
- The expression highlights repetition. It does not state an exact count or prove that the speaker understood the letter.

■ Repeat the same verb around 了又

- Use 看了又看、想了又想 or 问了又问 for the repeated-action pattern. 又 introduces another occurrence of the action.
- The 了 here is not a universal past-tense ending. The full sentence and time expression place the account in time.

他看了又看。

tā kàn le yòu kàn

Word guide: 他 – he; 看 – look; 又 – again; 看 – look.

■ Contrast repetition with different actions

- 我看了又看 repeats looking. 我看了文字, 又听了录音 sequences reading text and listening to audio.
- The second account can be grammatical; it simply does not use the same-verb repetition pattern. A different construction is not automatically broken.

Repeated action differs from a sequence

Same action repeated

看了又看

Look → look again

Different actions

看文字，又听录音

Read text → listen to audio

Both accounts can be grammatical; only the first repeats the same verb.

■ Repetition does not give an exact count

- 他问了又问 reports repeated asking. 他问了三次 explicitly counts three questions or asking occasions in the context.
- Use the stated count when accuracy matters. Do not infer exactly two or exactly three from the repeated-verb pattern.

■ Read the following outcome

- 他想了又想，还是拒绝了。 Repeated consideration ends in refusal in this account.
- Repeated thought can lead to different decisions. The final clause supplies the decision rather than the repeated-action form itself.

■ Keep action, time and outcome separate

- 昨晚我看了又看，终于发现了错误 supplies a time, repeated action and eventual discovery. Each part contributes its own information.
- In a new example, identify which verb repeats, what time is stated and what outcome follows. Avoid adding a count or successful result that is absent.

In a new example, identify which verb repeats, what time is stated and what outcome follows. Avoid adding a count or successful result that is absent.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: A message needs a second careful look. 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: 他看了又看。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 他问了又问 reports repeated asking. 他问了三次 explicitly counts three questions or asking occasions in the context.
- Use the stated count when accuracy matters. Do not infer exactly two or exactly three from the repeated-verb pattern.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

差很多 (differ a lot)

■ Two fares can have very different prices

- A ticket costs 20 yuan and another costs 80 yuan. 这两张票的价格差很多 presents their price gap as large.
- State the dimension: price, quality or another measure. 差很多 alone does not tell the listener which item costs more.

■ Name the things and the comparison dimension

- 这两个牌子的价格差很多 compares the prices of two brands. 我们俩的想法差很多 compares two people's ideas.
- 差不多 can mean about the same in a comparison. Do not mechanically substitute it for 差很多 or confuse either expression with 差点, nearly.

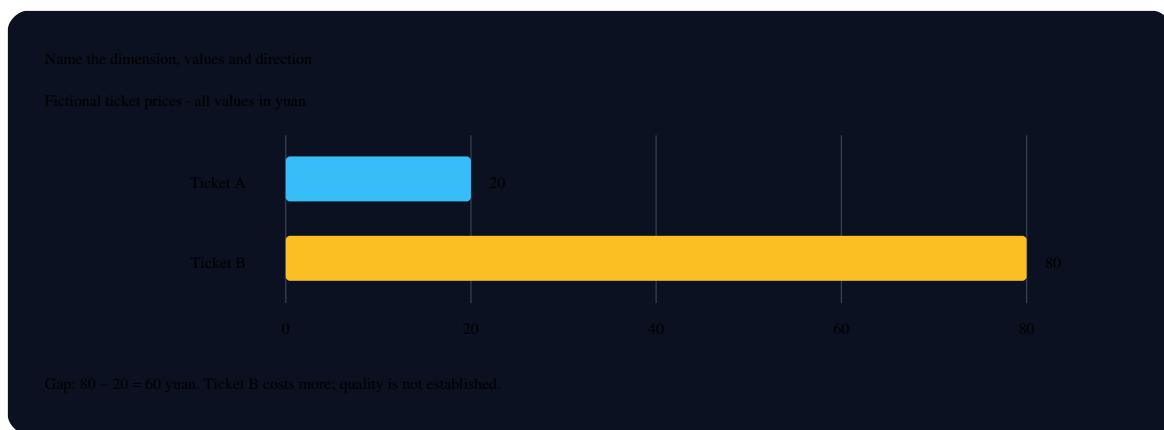
这两个差很多。

zhè liǎng ge chà hěn duō

Word guide: 这 – these; 两 – two; 个 – (measure word); 差很多 – differ a lot.

■ Distinguish a difference from poor quality

- 这两个产品的质量差很多 says their qualities differ greatly. 这个产品的质量很差 evaluates one product as poor.
- A difference does not by itself identify the better product. 很差 and 差很多 make different claims.



■ Use numbers to make the gap checkable

- For 20 and 80 yuan, the absolute gap is 60 yuan. For 45 and 47 yuan, it is 2 yuan.
- Whether a gap counts as large depends on the task and scale. These examples provide the numbers instead of treating 很多 as an exact threshold.

■ Do not infer direction from the gap

- 两家的价格差很多 does not say which seller is cheaper. A clear account can add 第一家便宜六十元.
- A price comparison also does not prove a quality difference. Keep the measured dimension and direction explicit.

■ Make a useful comparison

- 这两张票分别是二十元和八十元，价格差六十元 gives both prices and an exact gap. 价格差很多 adds the speaker's scale judgement.
- In a new example, name the pair, dimension, values and direction where relevant. Separate the numerical evidence from a judgement about how large it feels.

In a new example, name the pair, dimension, values and direction where relevant. Separate the numerical evidence from a judgement about how large it feels.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: Two fares can have very different prices. 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: 这两个差很多。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- For 20 and 80 yuan, the absolute gap is 60 yuan. For 45 and 47 yuan, it is 2 yuan.
- Whether a gap counts as large depends on the task and scale. These examples provide the numbers instead of treating 很多 as an exact threshold.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.