

Prepositional phrases

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.

以上 / 以下 (and above / and below)

■ One more visitor, or two?

- A fictional room notice says **三十人以下，包括三十人**。 – thirty people or fewer, including thirty. There are twenty-nine people inside.
- One more person reaches the limit. Two more make thirty-one: beyond this notice's allowed range.

■ Put the unit before the range word

- Use **number + unit + 以上 / 以下**: 十八岁以上 – eighteen years old and above; 三十人以下 – thirty people and below.
- In the age example, 才能 makes the age a required condition. It does not tell us whether every other entry condition is satisfied.

十八岁以上才能看。

shí bā suì yǐ shàng cái néng kàn

Word guide: 十八 – eighteen; 岁 – years; 以上 – and above; 才 – only then; 能 – can; 看 – watch.

■ Separate an included limit from a strict one

- Our notice explicitly includes thirty. **不到三十人** – fewer than thirty people – excludes thirty; **超过三十人** – more than thirty – also excludes thirty.
- For whole people, the largest count below thirty is twenty-nine. Read a notice's explicit definition before deciding whether its endpoint is included.

Headcounts at a boundary

Explicitly inclusive: **三十人以下，包括三十人**

29 allowed | 30 allowed | 31 beyond the limit

Strictly below: **不到三十人**

29 below thirty | 30 excluded | 31 excluded

Strictly above: **超过三十人**

29 excluded | 30 excluded | 31 above thirty

The wording of the actual notice defines its endpoint.

■ Keep the number and unit together

- **十八岁以上，包括十八岁** includes age eighteen in this fictional clip rule. It does not mean eighteen people, or under eighteen.
- **三十元以下，包括三十元** sets a money limit. The same number with 人 sets a headcount limit: units change what is counted.

■ Recalculate when the notice changes

- A new notice says **二十五人以下，包括二十五人**. With twenty-four people inside, one more fits; two more do not.
- The old thirty-person answer cannot be reused. Identify the new limit, whether it is included, and the current count.

■ Make a decision from the full notice

- For the original inclusive thirty-person notice, compare the final count with thirty: twenty-nine plus one is allowed; twenty-nine plus two is not.
- **以上 / 以下** give a range. They do not establish whether a room is open, a ticket is available, or another condition is met.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: One more visitor, or two?. 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: 三十人以下，包括三十人。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 十八岁以上，包括十八岁 includes age eighteen in this fictional clip rule. It does not mean eighteen people, or under eighteen.
- 三十元以下，包括三十元 sets a money limit. The same number with 人 sets a headcount limit: units change what is counted.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.