

Prepositions

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.

自从 (ever since)

■ A report needs a starting event

- A student moved here in March. In an April conversation, they say **自从来这儿，我很开心。** – Since coming here, I have been happy.
- The arrival is earlier than the report. The sentence connects a later state to that starting event; it does not describe a route from a place.

■ Introduce the earlier starting point

- Use **自从 + earlier time / event, later situation**. 自从来这儿 supplies the starting event; 我很开心 gives the later state.
- **自从三月搬来，我去过图书馆三次。** – Since moving here in March, I have visited the library three times. Repeated events also fit.

自从来这儿，我很开心。

zì cóng lái zhèr wǒ hěn kāi xīn

Word guide: 自从 – ever since; 来 – come; 这儿 – here; 我 – I; 很 – very; 开心 – happy.

■ Keep the report's endpoint

- The April report counts three visits between the March move and that conversation. It does not mean three visits every day.
- A copy of that April report read in June is still an April report. Do not silently add two more months or claim three is the June total.

Keep the report's endpoint

March: moved here

Starting event

April: reported three library visits

Count belongs to the March–April interval

June: someone reads the old report

Reading date does not update the original total

Read the whole sentence and the stated context.

■ Compare time, place and a future plan

- 从明天开始，我每天走路上学。 starts a future plan. 从学校走到车站。 starts a route at the school. Use plain 从 in these examples.
- 自从 highlights an earlier time or event leading into a later situation. It cannot replace 从 in every route or future-start expression.

■ A sequence is not proof of cause

- 自从换了座位，我看黑板清楚多了。 reports clearer vision after changing seats. It connects the observations in time.
- To claim the seat was the only cause, we would need more evidence. 自从 alone does not rule out a new pair of glasses or another change.

■ Read the start, report and later situation

- Find the earlier starting point, then the situation or events reported after it. Repeated visits need their own count and endpoint.
- Keep 自从 distinct from a place route and a future plan. A time connection does not automatically prove an exclusive cause.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: A report needs a starting event. 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: 自从来这儿，我很开心。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- **从明天开始，我每天走路上学。** starts a future plan. **从学校走到车站。** starts a route at the school. Use plain 从 in these examples.
- 自从 highlights an earlier time or event leading into a later situation. It cannot replace 从 in every route or future-start expression.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

为 + Person (for someone's sake)

■ Work for the people using the service

- A community team helps residents. **我们为大家服务。** – We serve everyone. 我们 names the workers; 大家 names the people served.
- The sentence states whom the service is for. It does not prove every resident used it or was satisfied.

■ Place the person before the action

- In this pattern, use **subject + 为 + person + action**. 为 is read **wèi**: 为大家服务, 为朋友准备晚饭 – prepare dinner for a friend.
- The friend receives the intended benefit. The cook and the friend are different roles; do not swap them when translating.

我们为大家服务。

wǒ men wèi dà jiā fú wù

Word guide: 我们 – we; 为 – for; 大家 – everyone; 服务 – serve.

■ For someone can have different jobs

- **我为你高兴。** – I am happy for you. Your situation is the reason for my happiness; this is not a service delivered to you.
- **我为朋友准备晚饭。** names the friend for whom dinner is prepared. Read 为 with its surrounding action rather than assigning one role everywhere.

For someone can have different jobs

我们为大家服务。

我们: workers | 大家: people served

我为你高兴。

你: person whose situation prompts happiness

为了早点到，我坐了地铁。

早点到: goal | 坐地铁: action toward it

Read the whole sentence and the stated context.

■ Compare a person with an explicit goal

- 为了早点到，我坐了地铁。 – To arrive earlier, I took the metro. 为了 introduces the goal of arriving earlier.
- 为 and 为了 can overlap in purpose meanings. “为 always means a person; 为了 always means a non-person goal” is too rigid; learn each complete construction.

■ Purpose does not guarantee success

- The cook says 我为朋友准备了晚饭，但朋友没来。 Dinner was prepared for the friend, but the friend did not come.
- The stated purpose remains even when the intended recipient does not eat. 为朋友 does not prove a successful delivery or a return favour.

■ Identify who acts and why

- In 为大家服务, locate the workers, the people served and the action. In 为你高兴, locate whose situation prompts the happiness.
- For an explicit goal, read the whole 为了 phrase. Do not turn a purpose or intended benefit into a guaranteed outcome.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: Work for the people using the service. 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: 我们为大家服务。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- **为了早点到, 我坐了地铁。** – To arrive earlier, I took the metro. 为了 introduces the goal of arriving earlier.
- 为 and 为了 can overlap in purpose meanings. “为 always means a person; 为了 always means a non-person goal” is too rigid; learn each complete construction.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

对 ... 而言 (as far as ... is concerned)

■ The same task can feel different

- Beginners find an assignment hard; experienced users find it easy. **对新手而言, 这很难。** – For beginners, this is difficult.
- The sentence takes the beginners' perspective. It does not say experts must share that experience.

■ Name whose perspective comes first

- Use **对 + person / group + 而言, comment.** 对我而言 makes the following importance judgement personal.
- **对我来说, 这很重要。** is a common alternative. Keep the named viewpoint when paraphrasing instead of turning it into “important for everyone”.

对我而言, 这很重要。

duì wǒ ér yán zhè hěn zhòng yào

Word guide: 对 – for; 我 – me; 而言 – as for; 这 – this; 很 – very; 重要 – important.

■ Different viewpoints can coexist

- **对新手而言, 这很难; 对熟练的人而言, 这很容易。** The two comments concern the same task and different groups.
- The difference need not be a contradiction. Skill and experience can change a judgement of difficulty.

Different viewpoints can coexist

对新手而言，这很难。

Beginners' viewpoint: difficult

对熟练的人而言，这很容易。

Experienced users' viewpoint: easy

对我而言，这很重要。

My judgement; not a universal agreement report

Read the whole sentence and the stated context.

■ Perspective is not a quoted speech report

- 对学生而言，这个安排很方便。 evaluates the arrangement for students. It does not say every student has personally spoken or agreed.
- 学生说这个安排很方便。 explicitly reports what students said. A viewpoint phrase and a speech report provide different information.

■ Keep a changed group in the answer

- A school starts lessons earlier. 对住得远的学生而言，这不方便。 refers to students living far away.
- Do not infer that nearby students find it equally inconvenient. The new group limits this comment even if both groups attend the same school.

■ Keep the viewpoint with the judgement

- Identify the person or group after 对, then the comment. Preserve both in your English paraphrase.
- A viewpoint is not evidence of universal agreement or a direct quotation. Check a second group separately.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: The same task can feel different. 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: 对新手而言，这很难。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- **对学生而言，这个安排很方便。** evaluates the arrangement for students. It does not say every student has personally spoken or agreed.
- **学生说这个安排很方便。** explicitly reports what students said. A viewpoint phrase and a speech report provide different information.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

... 在内 (including)

■ Reserve five seats, not six

- A group organiser says **包括我在内，一共五个人。** – Including me, there are five people in all. The organiser is already one of the five.
- Reserve five seats if each person needs one. Adding the organiser again would count the same person twice.

■ Put the included member before 在内

- Use **包括 + member / items + 在内, whole set:** 包括我在内. 在内 places the named member inside the stated set.
- The original sentence's total is five. The remaining people number four, because five includes the speaker.

包括我在内，一共五个人。

bāo kuò wǒ zài nèi yí gòng wǔ gè rén

Word guide: 包括 – including; 我 – me; 在内 – included; 一共 – in total; 五 – five; 个人 – people.

■ Compare included and additional members

- **包括我在内，一共五个人。** gives five total. **除了我，还有五个人。** in this stated counting contrast gives five others plus me: six total.
- Do not carry the second total into the first sentence. Look at whether the five already includes the speaker.

Count the speaker once

包括我在内，一共五个人。

5 total



me



other



other



other



other

除了我，还有五个人。

6 total



me



other



other



other



other



other

Inside five: 1 + 4. Five others plus me: 1 + 5.

■ Inclusion also works without a count

- 包括周末在内，每天都开放。 – Open every day, including weekends. The claim includes weekend days.
- It does not state the opening hours or the ticket price. Membership in the open-day set is different from those details.

■ Change the included group

- 包括两位老师在内，一共八个人。 – Including two teachers, there are eight people in all. The teachers occupy two of the eight places.
- There are six other people in this situation, not eight others plus two teachers. Recalculate from the new total and included number.

■ Count each included person once

- For five including me, subtract one to find four others. For eight including two teachers, subtract two to find six others.
- For a non-numerical set, identify what is included without inventing a count, schedule or price.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: Reserve five seats, not six. 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: 包括我在内，一共五个人。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- **包括周末在内，每天都开放。** – Open every day, including weekends. The claim includes weekend days.
- It does not state the opening hours or the ticket price. Membership in the open-day set is different from those details.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

凭 (on the basis of / by)

■ A ticket is an entry credential

- A fictional venue notice says **凭票入场**。 – Admission by ticket. Visitors are asked to show a ticket as the basis for entry.
- The phrase does not name the price, performance time or whether the ticket must be for today. Read any additional rules too.

■ Name the basis before the action

- Use **凭 + credential / resource / basis + action**. 凭票入场 names a ticket; 凭经验判断 names experience used to make a judgement.
- In the original 凭努力，他成功了, the speaker credits effort in an actual success. This is not a promise that every attempt succeeds.

凭努力，他成功了。

píng nǚ lì tā chéng gōng le

Word guide: 凭 – by; 努力 – effort; 他 – he; 成功 – succeed.

■ Keep extra conditions visible

- The full notice says **凭当天有效票入场**。 – Enter with a ticket valid for that day. An expired ticket does not meet this stated rule.
- 凭 introduces the basis, while 当天有效 narrows which ticket counts. “I have a ticket” alone is not enough to evaluate this full notice.

Keep extra conditions visible

凭票入场。

Ticket: stated basis for admission

凭当天有效票入场。

Today-valid ticket: a narrower stated requirement

凭经验判断。

Experience: a basis, not proof of a measured check

Read the whole sentence and the stated context.

■ Asking for grounds can be a challenge

- In an argument, 你凭什么决定? – On what grounds do you decide? – challenges someone's basis or authority.
- It is not a thank-you. A phrase about grounds can be neutral or challenging in context; this argument supplies the challenging reading.

■ A basis can still be weak

- 凭经验，他觉得这台机器没问题。 reports a judgement based on experience. It does not establish that the machine passed a measured safety check.
- Ask what evidence was actually used. The presence of 凭 names a basis without proving that basis is sufficient or the conclusion is correct.

■ Read the basis and its limits

- Locate the ticket, experience or effort introduced by 凭, then the action or judgement it supports.
- Additional requirements and evidence quality still matter. A named basis does not guarantee access, universal success or a correct conclusion.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: A ticket is an entry credential. 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: 凭票入场。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- In an argument, **你凭什么决定?** – On what grounds do you decide? – challenges someone's basis or authority.
- It is not a thank-you. A phrase about grounds can be neutral or challenging in context; this argument supplies the challenging reading.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

至于 (as for / when it comes to)

■ Price is raised but left unresolved

- A buyer and seller finish discussing quality. **至于价格，以后再说。** – As for the price, we will discuss it later.
- 至于 raises price as a separate issue. 以后再说 postpones it; no price is agreed in this sentence.

■ Add a comment to the named topic

- Use **至于 + topic, comment**. 至于价格 names the issue, and 以后再说 tells what the speaker proposes to do about it.
- **至于送货时间，明天确认。** – As for delivery time, confirm it tomorrow. This postpones confirmation, not necessarily delivery itself.

至于价格，以后再说。

zhì yú jià gé yǐ hòu zài shuō

Word guide: 至于 – as for; 价格 – price; 以后 – later; 再 – again; 说 – discuss.

■ Different issues can have different states

- Quality may be accepted while price remains unresolved. Delivery time may still need tomorrow's confirmation.
- Changing to a topic is not the same as settling it. Read the comment after that topic before deciding what is known.

Different issues can have different states

Quality: already discussed

A comment on one issue

至于价格，以后再说。

Price: discussion postponed

至于送货时间，明天确认。

Delivery time: confirmation tomorrow; date unstated

Read the whole sentence and the stated context.

■ Keep other uses separate

- 至于价格，我们还没决定。 leaves the price undecided. 不至于这么贵吧。 suggests it should not be so expensive.
- The second construction does not introduce price as a fresh discussion topic. Learn 不至于 as its own expression instead of translating every 至于 as “as for”.

■ Transfer to who will do the work

- 至于谁来负责，我们还没决定。 – As for who will be responsible, we have not decided yet.
- The responsibility question is now on the agenda, but no person is named as the chosen organiser. Topic selection is not person selection.

■ Separate the issue from the decision

- Name the issue after 至于, then read its actual comment: postponed, undecided or confirmed.
- Do not infer a price, delivery date or responsible person from a topic phrase alone. Keep 不至于 separate from the topic-changing use.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: Price is raised but left unresolved. 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: 至于价格，以后再说。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 至于价格,我们还没决定。leaves the price undecided. 不至于这么贵吧。suggests it should not be so expensive.
- The second construction does not introduce price as a fresh discussion topic. Learn 不至于 as its own expression instead of translating every 至于 as “as for”.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

给 (colloquial passive)

■ The cup is affected, not the doer

- You find a broken cup and report 杯子给打破了。 – The cup got broken. The sentence uses colloquial passive 给.
- 杯子 is what was broken. The sentence names no doer; it does not identify who broke it or whether it was intentional.

■ Read the affected thing before 给

- In this passive pattern, use **affected thing + 给 + (doer) + action / result**. 杯子给打破了 leaves the doer out.
- 杯子给小李打破了。 names Xiao Li as the doer. The cup still receives the effect of 打破.

杯子给打破了。

bēi zi gěi dǎ pò le

Word guide: 杯子 – cup; 给 – (passive); 打破 – break.

■ Follow the action across three forms

- 小李打破了杯子。 names Xiao Li as the doer first. 杯子给小李打破了。 names the affected cup first.
- 杯子给打破了。 preserves the broken-cup report without naming Xiao Li. Removing a name removes information, not the breaking event.

Follow the action across three forms

小李打破了杯子。

Doer 小李 → breaking → affected cup

杯子给小李打破了。

Affected cup → 给 → named doer 小李 → breaking

杯子给打破了。

Affected cup → 给 → breaking; doer unnamed

Read the whole sentence and the stated context.

■ 给 can give rather than mark a passive

- 我给他一个杯子。 – I give him a cup. 我 gives, 他 receives, and 一个杯子 is the item transferred.
- Compare this with 杯子给打破了. Giving a cup and reporting a broken cup are different actions; 给 alone does not identify the sentence's role.

■ Do not invent the unnamed doer

- 门给关上了。 – The door got closed. No doer is named in this report.
- It does not prove the speaker closed it, or that someone closed it deliberately. Add those details only when the context supplies them.

■ Locate the affected object and the doer

- In this passive use, find what was affected and whether a doer is explicitly named. A missing doer remains unknown from the sentence.
- Compare complete constructions: 给 can also transfer an item or introduce a recipient. Keep the action and result in the interpretation.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: The cup is affected, not the doer. 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: 杯子给打破了。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 我给他一个杯子。 – I give him a cup. 我 gives, 他 receives, and 一个杯子 is the item transferred.
- Compare this with 杯子给打破了. Giving a cup and reporting a broken cup are different actions; 给 alone does not identify the sentence's role.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

就 ... 来说 (as far as ... goes)

■ An affordable price is one aspect

- A buyer has checked the price but not tested the item. 就价格来说, 不贵。 – As far as the price goes, it is not expensive.
- The evaluation concerns price. Quality, durability and whether the item meets the buyer's need remain separate questions.

■ Frame an aspect before its comment

- Use 就 + aspect + 来说, comment. 就价格来说 selects price as the angle for 不贵.
- 就质量来说, 还需要检查。 – As far as quality goes, it still needs checking. A different aspect needs its own evidence.

就价格来说, 不贵。

jiù jià gé lái shuō bù guì

Word guide: 就 – as for; 价格 – price; 来说 – speaking of; 不 – not; 贵 – expensive.

■ Split an overall choice into aspects

- Price: not expensive. Quality: not yet tested. Delivery: takes a week. These three comments can all be true of the same item.
- A favourable price does not cancel the unknown quality or the wait. Combine the relevant facts before deciding whether to buy.

Split an overall choice into aspects

就价格来说，不贵。

Price: not expensive

就质量来说，还需要检查。

Quality: needs checking

对我而言，还是太贵。

Personal budget: may still be too expensive

Read the whole sentence and the stated context.

■ Contrast an aspect with a person

- 就价格来说，不贵。 frames the price aspect. 对我而言，还是太贵。 frames my judgement given my situation.
- Those comments need not conflict: a price can compare well with similar goods and still exceed a person's budget. The reference for the judgement matters.

■ The other 就 needs its own context

- 我吃完饭就走。 – I will leave after finishing the meal. Here 就 connects events; it does not frame the meal's price or quality.
- In 就价格来说, read 就 with 价格来说. Do not assign “immediately” to this scope phrase just because another use of 就 can concern timing.

■ Keep the comment within its angle

- Identify the aspect after 就, then its particular evaluation. Check price, quality and delivery separately.
- A favourable comment on one angle does not prove an overall recommendation, everyone's agreement or a rapid sequence of events.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: An affordable price is one aspect. 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: 就价格来说，不贵。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 就价格来说，不贵。 frames the price aspect. 对我而言，还是太贵。 frames my judgement given my situation.
- Those comments need not conflict: a price can compare well with similar goods and still exceed a person's budget. The reference for the judgement matters.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

趁 (while / taking advantage of)

■ Eat during the useful window

- A meal is ready and still pleasantly hot. 趁热吃吧。 – Eat it while it is hot. The speaker recommends using that favourable state.
- This is a suggestion, not a report that eating already happened. The state may not last, which makes the timing useful.

■ Put the opportunity before the action

- Use 趁 + available time / situation + action. 趁热吃 uses the hot state; 趁午休去银行 uses the lunch break for a bank visit.
- The phrase names an opportunity for the action. It is more specific than merely saying two events happened at the same time.

趁热吃吧。

chèn rè chī ba

Word guide: 趁 – while; 热 – hot; 吃 – eat.

■ Follow the available window

- A student has a lunch break from 12:00 to 12:30 and plans a twenty-minute task. 趁午休 ... connects the task with that available break.
- Starting at 12:20 would finish at 12:40: outside the stated break. 趁 does not make the task shorter or guarantee that it fits.

Follow the available window

趁热吃吧。

Use the hot state: a suggestion to eat

Break: 12:00–12:30; task starts 12:20

Twenty-minute task finishes at 12:40

雨停的时候，我们在车站。

Neutral timing: location when rain stopped

Read the whole sentence and the stated context.

■ Compare opportunity with neutral timing

- 趁雨停了，赶快回家。 uses a pause in the rain as an opportunity to go home. The action is recommended during that window.
- 雨停的时候，我们在车站。 only locates us at the station when the rain stopped. It does not itself say we used that moment for an action.

■ A lost opportunity changes the advice

- The food has already cooled. Do not describe that present state as 热 just to reuse 趁热吃吧。 The original hot window has ended.
- One might reheat the food and make a new suggestion. The original sentence alone does not report reheating or show that it will happen.

■ Check the window before using the advice

- Identify the available situation and the proposed action. Check the actual state, timing and practical duration.
- 趁 recommends or describes using an opportunity. It does not prove that the action happened, succeeded or fits an invented deadline.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: Eat during the useful window. 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: 趁热吃吧。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 趁雨停了，赶快回家。 uses a pause in the rain as an opportunity to go home. The action is recommended during that window.
- 雨停的时候，我们在车站。 only locates us at the station when the rain stopped. It does not itself say we used that moment for an action.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.