

”If” statements

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.

假如 ... , 就 ... (if / supposing)

■ Try when an opportunity arises

- A friend wants to join a workshop but does not yet have a place. **假如有机会，就去试试。** – if there is an opportunity, give it a try.
- The advice sets a possible condition. It does not announce that a place has already been offered or that trying guarantees success.

■ Put the condition before the response

- **假如 + condition, ... 就 + response** links a supposed situation with a result, plan or suggestion.
- In the original example, 有机会 is the condition and 去试试 is the suggested response. Read the response as advice, not as an action already completed.

假如有机会，就去试试。

jiǎ rú yǒu jī huì jiù qù shì shì

Word guide: 假如 – supposing; 有 – have; 机会 – chance; 就 – then; 去 – go; 试试 – try.

■ Update the actual condition

- **假如明天有空，我们就去参观。** – if we are free tomorrow, we will go and visit – uses tomorrow’s availability.
- A later message says everyone is free today but busy tomorrow. Today’s free time does not establish the tomorrow condition.

Update the actual condition

假如明天有空，我们就去参观。

Condition: free tomorrow; response: go and visit

Free today; busy tomorrow

Today’s availability does not meet tomorrow’s condition

假如你有空，我们一起去吧。

Conditional invitation; no compulsory 就

Keep the named condition separate from an observed result.

■ Do not require 就 everywhere

- **假如你有空，我们一起去吧。** – if you have free time, let us go together – is an invitation without 就.
- 就 is a common partner, not a compulsory word in every conditional. The complete second clause still supplies a meaningful response.

■ Separate if from even if

- **假如下雨，我就不去。** changes the plan if it rains. **就是下雨，我也去。** keeps going despite possible rain.
- A plain if-condition does not report that rain is certain. It also does not list every possible reason a person might choose not to go.

■ Read condition, response and evidence

- Identify the supposed case and the proposed result or action. Check that any later evidence concerns the same people, time and condition.
- Keep advice separate from guaranteed success. Do not require 就 everywhere or turn an if-condition into a weather report or a complete list of causes.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: Try when an opportunity arises. 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: 假如有机会，就去试试。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- **假如你有空，我们一起去吧。** – if you have free time, let us go together – is an invitation without 就.
- 就 is a common partner, not a compulsory word in every conditional. The complete second clause still supplies a meaningful response.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

万一 ... 怎么办? (what if)

■ Ask for a backup before the picnic

- A picnic group asks **万一下雨怎么办?** – what should we do if it rains? They raise rain as a possible problem to prepare for.
- The question asks for a response. It supplies neither a rain forecast nor a ready-made backup location.

■ Give the question a response

- **万一 + possible problem + 怎么办?** asks what to do if the problem occurs. A response can give a separate conditional plan.
- For this fictional group, **万一下雨, 我们就去室内活动。** means they plan an indoor activity in that case. It does not say the activity has happened.

万一下雨怎么办?

wàn yī xià yǔ zěn me bàn

Word guide: 万一 – what if; 下雨 – rain; 怎么办 – what to do.

■ Check whether a backup is usable

- The group suggests a school room, but its booking has not been confirmed. **万一下雨怎么办?** does not itself grant permission to use that room.
- A complete plan needs the room's availability and the group's agreed action. Asking the contingency question is only the start.

Check whether a backup is usable

万一下雨怎么办?

Ask for a response to possible rain

万一下雨, 我们就去室内活动。

State a backup plan; not completed action

Room booking still unconfirmed

The question does not establish room availability

Keep the named condition separate from an observed result.

■ Prepare without pretending to measure

- **万一我晚到了, 你先进去吧。** – in case I arrive late, go in first – prepares for lateness without making it certain.
- 万一 commonly raises a possibility the speaker treats as unlikely or troublesome. It gives no measured rate and need not mean the worst event imaginable.

■ A question and a report do different jobs

- **万一下雨怎么办?** raises a contingency. **已经下雨了。** reports that rain has started.
- If a later report confirms rain, use the agreed response and check current facts. The earlier question alone was not evidence of rain.

■ Separate possibility from preparation

- Name the possible problem, then distinguish asking what to do from specifying an action and confirming it can be carried out.
- Do not turn 万一 into exactly one chance in ten thousand, a forecast, permission to use a room or proof that the backup has already happened.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: Ask for a backup before the picnic. 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: 万一下雨怎么办?

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
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- **万一我晚到了, 你先进去吧。** – in case I arrive late, go in first – prepares for lateness without making it certain.
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Clause + 的话 (if / conditional frame)

■ Ask to be told if a friend goes

- A friend has not decided whether to join a visit. **你说的话, 叫我一声。** – if you go, let me know.
- The speaker asks for a message in the going case. The sentence does not confirm the friend's decision or require a telephone call.

■ Place 的话 after the condition

- **Condition clause + 的话, response** puts 的话 after the case being supposed: **你说的话, 叫我一声。**
- **如果你去的话, 叫我一声。** can add 如果 before the same condition. The two markers can work together.

你说的话, 叫我一声。

nǐ qù de huà jiào wǒ yì shēng

Word guide: 你 – you; 去 – go; 的话 – if; 叫 – call; 我 – me; 一声 – (a shout).

■ Read a changed condition

- 你不去的话，告诉我。 – if you do not go, tell me – attaches the request to not going.
- Keep 不 inside the condition. It does not mean do not tell me; the requested response remains 告诉我.

Read a changed condition

你去的的话，叫我一声。

Going condition; request to be told

你不去的话，告诉我。

Not-going condition; telling remains requested

我听懂了他的话。

His words: noun phrase, not an if-condition

Keep the named condition separate from an observed result.

■ Do not mistake someone's words for if

- 我听懂了他的话。
wǒ tīng dǒng le tā de huà
Word guide: 我 – I; 听懂 – understood what was said; 了 – completed action; 他 – his (here); 的 – possessive marker; 话 – words. – I understood his words – uses a possessive phrase meaning his words. There is no conditional response here.
- A phrase such as 价格的话，我觉得太高了。 can frame price as the topic. Its context differs from a complete going condition followed by a request.

■ Keep tone and timing in context

- The conditional marker 的话 alone does not make every request polite. Tone, the request itself and the relationship still matter.
- 叫我一声 asks to be told in this conversation. It does not specify an exact minute, promise that a message was sent or prove that the friend already went.

■ Locate the whole condition

- Read the clause before 的话, including any negative word, and the response after it. 如果 may appear before that clause too.
- Use the complete sentence to separate a condition, a topic frame and a noun phrase meaning someone's words. None alone proves completed action.

■ Try it with help closed

Recall the situation: Ask to be told if a friend goes. 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.

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Word guide: 我 – I; 听懂 – understood what was said; 了 – completed action; 他 – his (here); 的 – possessive marker; 话 – words. – I understood his words – uses a possessive phrase meaning his words. There is no conditional response here.

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