

Either... or...

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.

或者 ... , 或者 ... (either ... or ...)

■ Offer alternatives rather than ask someone to select one

- You state that either tea or coffee is acceptable.
- 或者喝茶,或者喝咖啡,都可以。 – The statement offers two acceptable alternatives.

■ Build the form

- The pattern in this lesson is 或者 ... , 或者 ... (either ... or ...). Locate it in the original interlinear examples below.
- Keep the words in their demonstrated positions; the pattern must fit the intended situation as well as the sentence form.

或者喝茶, 或者喝咖啡。

huò zhě hē chá huò zhě hē kā fēi

Word guide: 或者 – either; 喝茶 – drink tea; 或者 – or; 喝咖啡 – drink coffee.

■ Read examples in context

- In the opening example, 或者喝茶, 或者喝咖啡, 都可以。: The statement offers two acceptable alternatives.
- Explain who acts, what is described and which time or group is relevant before choosing an English paraphrase.

■ Know the boundary

- Use 还是 for a direct alternative question such as 喝茶还是咖啡? A yes/no question can still contain 或者, so punctuation alone does not decide the word..

■ Use the distinction

- The statement offers two acceptable alternatives.
- Use 还是 for a direct alternative question such as 喝茶还是咖啡? A yes/no question can still contain 或者, so punctuation alone does not decide the word.

■ Try it with help closed

You state that either tea or coffee is acceptable. 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: 或者喝茶, 或者喝咖啡, 都可以。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- Use 还是 for a direct alternative question such as 喝茶还是咖啡? A yes/no question can still contain 或者, so punctuation alone does not decide the word..
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.