

Comparing similar 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.

常常 vs 经常 (often / regularly)

■ Choose an often-word without inventing a fixed schedule

- A person is frequently late.
- 他常常迟到，也可以说他经常迟到。 – Both adverbs can describe frequent lateness in this example.

■ Build the form

- The pattern in this lesson is **常常 vs 经常 (often / regularly)**. 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.

他常常迟到。

tā cháng cháng chí dào

Word guide: 他 – he; 常常 – often; 迟到 – be late.

■ Read examples in context

我经常运动。

wǒ jīng cháng yùn dòng

Word guide: 我 – I; 经常 – regularly; 运动 – exercise.

- In the opening example, 他常常迟到，也可以说他经常迟到。: Both adverbs can describe frequent lateness in this example.
- Explain who acts, what is described and which time or group is relevant before choosing an English paraphrase.

■ Know the boundary

- Neither word specifies an exact number of occasions.
- 经常 can also appear in adjectival expressions such as 经常性工作, where 常常 is not interchangeable.

■ Use the distinction

- Both adverbs can describe frequent lateness in this example.
- Neither word specifies an exact number of occasions. 经常 can also appear in adjectival expressions such as 经常性工作, where 常常 is not interchangeable.

■ Try it with help closed

A person is frequently late. 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: 他常常迟到，也可以说他经常迟到。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- Neither word specifies an exact number of occasions.
- 经常 can also appear in adjectival expressions such as 经常性工作, where 常常 is not interchangeable.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.