

Comparing similar auxiliary words

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.

总算 vs 终于 (finally)

■ Relief and an endpoint can overlap

- A friend arrives after a long anxious wait.
- 他总算来了；他终于来了。 – Both phrases can mark the arrival after the wait, with 总算 foregrounding relief.

■ Build the form

- The pattern in this lesson is 总算 vs 终于 (finally). 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.

他终于来了。

tā zhōng yú lái le

Word guide: 他 – he; 终于 – finally; 来 – come.

■ Read examples in context

总算结束了。

zǒng suàn jié shù le

Word guide: 总算 – finally; 结束 – end.

- In the opening example, 他总算来了；他终于来了。: Both phrases can mark the arrival after the wait, with 总算 foregrounding relief.
- Explain who acts, what is described and which time or group is relevant before choosing an English paraphrase.

■ Know the boundary

- 终于 can also occur with relief, or with an unwelcome outcome.
- Avoid treating the two as mutually exclusive labels for emotion.

■ Use the distinction

- Both phrases can mark the arrival after the wait, with 总算 foregrounding relief.
- 终于 can also occur with relief, or with an unwelcome outcome. Avoid treating the two as mutually exclusive labels for emotion.

■ Try it with help closed

A friend arrives after a long anxious wait. 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: 他总算来了；他终于来了。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 终于 can also occur with relief, or with an unwelcome outcome.
- Avoid treating the two as mutually exclusive labels for emotion.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.