

Particles

HSK 6

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.

是否 (whether or not)

■ A formal reply must answer either way

- A form asks the recipient to confirm whether they agree.
- **请确认您是否同意。** – Both agreement and disagreement are possible responses.

A formal reply must answer either way

SITUATION

A form asks the recipient to confirm whether they agree.

SPEAKER MEANING

Both agreement and disagreement are possible responses.

CHECK THE LIMIT

是否 goes before the predicate.

■ Locate the pattern in real examples

- **是否 (whether or not):** 请问您是否满意?; 我们在讨论是否需要改期。
- Read the whole clause before choosing a translation. The examples show the pattern in use; the context below determines what the speaker claims.

■ Follow the speaker

请确认您是否同意。

qǐng què rèn nín shì fǒu tóng yì

Word guide: 请 – please; 确认 – confirm; 您 – you; 是否 – whether; 同意 – agree.

- In the opening situation: **请确认您是否同意。**
- Both agreement and disagreement are possible responses.

■ Check the limit of the explanation

- 是否 goes before the predicate.
- In this direct request, it already frames the yes-or-no issue; adding 吗 is unnecessary. 是否 does not imply agreement.

■ Repair the form before interpreting it

- The form 您同意是否 needs repair here. Write 您是否同意 instead; keep the word or frame in its demonstrated order.
- Form and meaning are separate checks. After the repair, explain the sentence in its situation rather than treating a familiar translation as a universal rule.

■ Keep the distinction

- Both agreement and disagreement are possible responses. Check the relevant speaker, time or group in the surrounding context.
- 是否 goes before the predicate. In this direct request, it already frames the yes-or-no issue; adding 吗 is unnecessary. 是否 does not imply agreement.

■ Try it with help closed

A form asks the recipient to confirm whether they agree. 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: 请确认您是否同意。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 是否 goes before the predicate.
- In this direct request, it already frames the yes-or-no issue; adding 吗 is unnecessary. 是否 does not imply agreement.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

... 与否 (whether ... or not)

■ An attendance decision becomes the topic

- An organiser needs a reply even from people who cannot attend.
- 参加与否，都请尽快回复。 – Whether attending or not is the issue; everyone should reply.

An attendance decision becomes the topic

SITUATION

An organiser needs a reply even from people who cannot attend.

SPEAKER MEANING

Whether attending or not is the issue; everyone should reply.

CHECK THE LIMIT

与否 follows the action or property; 是否 precedes it.

■ Locate the pattern in real examples

- ... 与否 (whether ... or not): 成功与否, 就看这一次。; 参加与否, 请尽快回复。
- Read the whole clause before choosing a translation. The examples show the pattern in use; the context below determines what the speaker claims.

■ Follow the speaker

成功与否, 取决于努力。

chéng gōng yǔ fǒu qǔ jué yú nǚ lì

Word guide: 成功 – success; 与否 – or not; 取决于 – depends on; 努力 – effort.

- In the opening situation: 参加与否, 都请尽快回复。
- Whether attending or not is the issue; everyone should reply.

■ Check the limit of the explanation

- 与否 follows the action or property; 是否 precedes it.
- 参加与否 and 是否参加 frame the same two possibilities, rather than two successive actions.

■ Repair the form before interpreting it

- The form 与否参加 needs repair here. Write 参加与否 instead; keep the word or frame in its demonstrated order.
- Form and meaning are separate checks. After the repair, explain the sentence in its situation rather than treating a familiar translation as a universal rule.

■ Keep the distinction

- Whether attending or not is the issue; everyone should reply. Check the relevant speaker, time or group in the surrounding context.
- 与否 follows the action or property; 是否 precedes it. 参加与否 and 是否参加 frame the same two possibilities, rather than two successive actions.

■ Try it with help closed

An organiser needs a reply even from people who cannot attend. 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: 参加与否，都请尽快回复。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 与否 follows the action or property; 是否 precedes it.
- 参加与否 and 是否参加 frame the same two possibilities, rather than two successive actions.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

Noun + 之 + Noun (a literary 的)

■ Choose a proverb's established wording

- A writer quotes the familiar expression about learning from failure.
- 失败是成功之母。 – 之 links 成功 to 母 in an established literary expression.

Choose a proverb's established wording

SITUATION

A writer quotes the familiar expression about learning from failure.

SPEAKER MEANING

之 links 成功 to 母 in an established literary expression.

CHECK THE LIMIT

This use is similar to 的, but 之 has other classical uses.

■ Locate the pattern in real examples

- Noun + 之 + Noun (a literary 的): 失败是成功之母。; 这是人生之路的起点。
- Read the whole clause before choosing a translation. The examples show the pattern in use; the context below determines what the speaker claims.

■ Follow the speaker

失败是成功之母。

shī bài shì chéng gōng zhī mǔ

Word guide: 失败 – failure; 是 – is; 成功 – success; 之 – of; 母 – mother.

- In the opening situation: 失败是成功之母。
- 之 links 成功 to 母 in an established literary expression.

■ Check the limit of the explanation

- This use is similar to 的, but 之 has other classical uses.
- Do not replace every spoken 的 mechanically; 我的书 remains the natural everyday form.

■ Repair the form before interpreting it

- The form 成功的之母 needs repair here. Write 成功之母 instead; keep the word or frame in its demonstrated order.
- Form and meaning are separate checks. After the repair, explain the sentence in its situation rather than treating a familiar translation as a universal rule.

■ Keep the distinction

- 之 links 成功 to 母 in an established literary expression. Check the relevant speaker, time or group in the surrounding context.
- This use is similar to 的, but 之 has other classical uses. Do not replace every spoken 的 mechanically; 我的书 remains the natural everyday form.

■ Try it with help closed

A writer quotes the familiar expression about learning from failure. 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: 失败是成功之母。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- This use is similar to 的, but 之 has other classical uses.
- Do not replace every spoken 的 mechanically; 我的书 remains the natural everyday form.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

Statement + 嘛 (self-evident)

■ Explain the obvious reason without asking

- A beginner is slow, and you remind a colleague that this is the first attempt.
- 第一次嘛, 慢一点很正常。 – 嘛 marks the first attempt as an understood explanation.

Explain the obvious reason without asking

SITUATION

A beginner is slow, and you remind a colleague that this is the first attempt.

SPEAKER MEANING

嘛 marks the first attempt as an understood explanation.

CHECK THE LIMIT

嘛 differs from the yes-or-no question particle 吗.

■ Locate the pattern in real examples

- **Statement + 嘛 (self-evident):** 孩子嘛, 都爱玩。; 第一次嘛, 慢一点很正常。
- Read the whole clause before choosing a translation. The examples show the pattern in use; the context below determines what the speaker claims.

■ Follow the speaker

有意见就说嘛。

yǒu yì jiàn jiù shuō ma

Word guide: 有 – have; 意见 – opinions; 就 – then; 说 – say.

- In the opening situation: 第一次嘛, 慢一点很正常。
- 嘛 marks the first attempt as an understood explanation.

■ Check the limit of the explanation

- 嘛 differs from the yes-or-no question particle 吗.
- It can follow a topic as well as a full statement, and may sound impatient if the listener does not share the assumption.

■ Repair the form before interpreting it

- The form 嘛第一次, 慢一点很正常 needs repair here. Write 第一次嘛, 慢一点很正常 instead; keep the word or frame in its demonstrated order.
- Form and meaning are separate checks. After the repair, explain the sentence in its situation rather than treating a familiar translation as a universal rule.

■ Keep the distinction

- 嘛 marks the first attempt as an understood explanation. Check the relevant speaker, time or group in the surrounding context.
- 嘛 differs from the yes-or-no question particle 吗. It can follow a topic as well as a full statement, and may sound impatient if the listener does not share the assumption.

■ Try it with help closed

A beginner is slow, and you remind a colleague that this is the first attempt. 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: 第一次嘛，慢一点很正常。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 嘛 differs from the yes-or-no question particle 吗.
- It can follow a topic as well as a full statement, and may sound impatient if the listener does not share the assumption.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

Sentence + 呗 (a casual shrug)

■ Offer a simple solution with care

- A friend says they are tired. You suggest resting in a casual conversation.
- 累了就休息呗。 – 呗 presents resting as a straightforward available solution.

Offer a simple solution with care

SITUATION

A friend says they are tired. You suggest resting in a casual conversation.

SPEAKER MEANING

呗 presents resting as a straightforward available solution.

CHECK THE LIMIT

The same words can sound reassuring or dismissive depending on voice and relationship.

■ Locate the pattern in real examples

- **Sentence + 呗 (a casual shrug):** 不会就学呗。; 他不来就算了呗。
- Read the whole clause before choosing a translation. The examples show the pattern in use; the context below determines what the speaker claims.

■ Follow the speaker

不会就学呗。

bú huì jiù xué bei

Word guide: 不 – not; 会 – can; 就 – then; 学 – learn.

- In the opening situation: 累了就休息呗。
- 呗 presents resting as a straightforward available solution.

■ Check the limit of the explanation

- The same words can sound reassuring or dismissive depending on voice and relationship.
- Use a plain polite suggestion with a customer or in a formal report.

■ Repair the form before interpreting it

- The form 呗累了就休息 needs repair here. Write 累了就休息呗 instead; keep the word or frame in its demonstrated order.
- Form and meaning are separate checks. After the repair, explain the sentence in its situation rather than treating a familiar translation as a universal rule.

■ Keep the distinction

- 呗 presents resting as a straightforward available solution. Check the relevant speaker, time or group in the surrounding context.
- The same words can sound reassuring or dismissive depending on voice and relationship. Use a plain polite suggestion with a customer or in a formal report.

■ Try it with help closed

A friend says they are tired. You suggest resting in a casual conversation. 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: 累了就休息呗。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- The same words can sound reassuring or dismissive depending on voice and relationship.
- Use a plain polite suggestion with a customer or in a formal report.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.