

Comparing similar adverbs

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.

按照 vs 根据 (in accordance with vs based on)

■ A rule can be followed and cited

- A notice cites the parking rule, while an instruction tells staff to follow a procedure.
- **请按照规定办理。** – 按照 highlights acting in accordance with the rule.

A rule can be followed and cited

SITUATION

A notice cites the parking rule, while an instruction tells staff to follow a procedure.

SPEAKER MEANING

按照 highlights acting in accordance with the rule.

CHECK THE LIMIT

根据规定办理 can also be natural.

■ Locate the pattern in real examples

- **按照 vs 根据 (in accordance with vs based on):** 他的话毫无 ____。； ____ 调查，多数人支持这个计划。
- 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

按照规定办理。

àn zhào guī dìng bàn lǐ

Word guide: 按照 – according to; 规定 – the rules; 办理 – handle.

- In the opening situation: **请按照规定办理。**
- 按照 highlights acting in accordance with the rule.

■ Check the limit of the explanation

- 根据规定办理 can also be natural.
- The useful contrast is following a model versus reasoning from evidence; the two words overlap with rules. 根据 can also be a noun: 有根据.

■ Repair the form before interpreting it

- The form **请规定按照办理** needs repair here. Write **请按照规定办理** 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

- 按照 highlights acting in accordance with the rule. Check the relevant speaker, time or group in the surrounding context.
- 根据规定办理 can also be natural. The useful contrast is following a model versus reasoning from evidence; the two words overlap with rules. 根据 can also be a noun: 有根据.

■ Try it with help closed

A notice cites the parking rule, while an instruction tells staff to follow a procedure. 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: 请按照规定办理。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 根据规定办理 can also be natural.
- The useful contrast is following a model versus reasoning from evidence; the two words overlap with rules. 根据 can also be a noun: 有根据.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

不得不 vs 只好 (forced to vs only option)

■ Pressure and a last resort can overlap

- The last bus has left, leaving walking as the available way home.
- **末班车走了，我只好走回家。** – 只好 highlights accepting the remaining option.

Pressure and a last resort can overlap

SITUATION

The last bus has left, leaving walking as the available way home.

SPEAKER MEANING

只好 highlights accepting the remaining option.

CHECK THE LIMIT

我不得不走回家 also fits this situation, stressing necessity.

■ Locate the pattern in real examples

- **不得不 vs 只好 (forced to vs only option):** 由于台风，航班 ____ 取消。；医生说必须休息，他 ____ 放下工作。
- 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

我不得不同意。

wǒ bù dé bù tóng yì

Word guide: 我 – I; 不得不 – have to; 同意 – agree.

- In the opening situation: 末班车走了，我只好走回家。
- 只好 highlights accepting the remaining option.

■ Check the limit of the explanation

- 我不得不走回家 also fits this situation, stressing necessity.
- Do not label one option impossible just because the other emphasises resignation more clearly.

■ Repair the form before interpreting it

- The form 我好只走回家 needs repair here. Write 我只好走回家 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

- 只好 highlights accepting the remaining option. Check the relevant speaker, time or group in the surrounding context.
- 我不得不走回家 also fits this situation, stressing necessity. Do not label one option impossible just because the other emphasises resignation more clearly.

■ Try it with help closed

The last bus has left, leaving walking as the available way home. 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: 末班车走了，我只好走回家。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 我不得不走回家 also fits this situation, stressing necessity.
- Do not label one option impossible just because the other emphasises resignation more clearly.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

不断 vs 不停 (continually vs non-stop)

■ Repeated progress is not a stopwatch rule

- A report describes technology continuing to improve over time.
- 技术在不断进步。 – 不断 presents continuing development.

Repeated progress is not a stopwatch rule

SITUATION

A report describes technology continuing to improve over time.

SPEAKER MEANING

不断 presents continuing development.

CHECK THE LIMIT

不断 can describe repeated or continuous activity; it does not guarantee gaps.

■ Locate the pattern in real examples

- **不断 vs 不停 (continually vs non-stop):** 科技在 ____ 发展。；我们要 ____ 学习新知识。
- 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

技术不断进步。

jì shù bú duàn jìn bù

Word guide: 技术 – technology; 不断 – continually; 进步 – advance.

- In the opening situation: 技术在不断进步。

- 不断 presents continuing development.

■ Check the limit of the explanation

- 不断 can describe repeated or continuous activity; it does not guarantee gaps.
- 不停 highlights not stopping, and 响个不停 is an established result pattern. Choose by phrasing and focus, not an invented gap rule.

■ Repair the form before interpreting it

- The form 技术在断不进步 needs repair here. Write 技术在不断进步 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

- 不断 presents continuing development. Check the relevant speaker, time or group in the surrounding context.
- 不断 can describe repeated or continuous activity; it does not guarantee gaps. 不停 highlights not stopping, and 响个不停 is an established result pattern. Choose by phrasing and focus, not an invented gap rule.

■ Try it with help closed

A report describes technology continuing to improve over time. 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: 技术在不断进步。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 不断 can describe repeated or continuous activity; it does not guarantee gaps.
- 不停 highlights not stopping, and 响个不停 is an established result pattern. Choose by phrasing and focus, not an invented gap rule.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

反而 vs 却 (instead vs however)

■ Identify the expectation that was reversed

- Someone tries to help but makes the situation more confusing.
- 他想帮忙，反而添了乱。 – The actual result runs opposite to the expected helpful result.

Identify the expectation that was reversed

SITUATION

Someone tries to help but makes the situation more confusing.

SPEAKER MEANING

The actual result runs opposite to the expected helpful result.

CHECK THE LIMIT

却 can also mark an unexpected contrast.

■ Locate the pattern in real examples

- 反而 vs 却 (instead vs however): 风不但没停，_____ 越来越大。; 吃了药，病不但没好，_____ 更重了。
- 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

病反而更重了。

bìng fǎn ér gèng zhòng le

Word guide: 病 – illness; 反而 – instead; 更 – more; 重 – serious.

- In the opening situation: 他想帮忙，反而添了乱。
- The actual result runs opposite to the expected helpful result.

■ Check the limit of the explanation

- 却 can also mark an unexpected contrast.
- 反而 makes reversal explicit; 却 is not limited to ordinary or mild contrasts. Both can stand before adjective predicates as well as verbs.

■ Repair the form before interpreting it

- The form 他想帮忙，添了乱反而 needs repair here. Write 他想帮忙，反而添了乱 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

- The actual result runs opposite to the expected helpful result. Check the relevant speaker, time or group in the surrounding context.
- 却 can also mark an unexpected contrast. 反而 makes reversal explicit; 却 is not limited to ordinary or mild contrasts. Both can stand before adjective predicates as well as verbs.

■ Try it with help closed

Someone tries to help but makes the situation more confusing. 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: 他想帮忙，反而添了乱。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 却 can also mark an unexpected contrast.
- 反而 makes reversal explicit; 却 is not limited to ordinary or mild contrasts. Both can stand before adjective predicates as well as verbs.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

根本 vs 到底 (at all vs on earth)

■ A denial differs from a demand for an answer

- A speaker firmly denies knowing someone, then asks what the listener wants.
- **我根本不认识他。你到底想说什么？** – 根本 strengthens the denial; 到底 presses for the actual answer.

A denial differs from a demand for an answer

SITUATION

A speaker firmly denies knowing someone, then asks what the listener wants.

SPEAKER MEANING

根本 strengthens the denial;
到底 presses for the actual answer.

CHECK THE LIMIT

到底 also occurs in affirmative statements such as 他到底是老师.

■ Locate the pattern in real examples

- **根本 vs 到底 (at all vs on earth):** 我 ____ 不认识他。; 这件事他 ____ 没听说过。
- 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

我根本不知道。

wǒ gēn běn bù zhī dào

Word guide: 我 – I; 根本 – at all; 不 – not; 知道 – know.

- In the opening situation: **我根本不认识他。你到底想说什么？**
- 根本 strengthens the denial; 到底 presses for the actual answer.

■ Check the limit of the explanation

- 到底 also occurs in affirmative statements such as 他到底是老师.
- 根本 can name a foundation as a noun, so its meaning is not limited to negative sentences.

■ Repair the form before interpreting it

- The form **我不认识他根本** needs repair here. Write **我根本不认识他** 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

- 根本 strengthens the denial; 到底 presses for the actual answer. Check the relevant speaker, time or group in the surrounding context.
- 到底 also occurs in affirmative statements such as 他到底是老师. 根本 can name a foundation as a noun, so its meaning is not limited to negative sentences.

■ Try it with help closed

A speaker firmly denies knowing someone, then asks what the listener wants. 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: 我根本不认识他。你到底想说什么？

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 到底 also occurs in affirmative statements such as 他到底是老师.
- 根本 can name a foundation as a noun, so its meaning is not limited to negative sentences.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

根据 vs 据 (based on vs formal shorthand)

■ Compact reporting can still take an object

- A report introduces a conclusion based on a survey.
- 据调查，多数人支持这个计划。 – 据 names the source in compact written style.

Compact reporting can still take an object

SITUATION A report introduces a conclusion based on a survey.	SPEAKER MEANING 据 names the source in compact written style.	CHECK THE LIMIT 据 is not limited to set phrases: 据调查 and 据最新统计 take objects.
--	---	---

■ Locate the pattern in real examples

- 根据 vs 据 (based on vs formal shorthand): 大家的意见，我们修改了计划。；这种说法没有科学。
- 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

根据调查，大家都同意。

gēn jù diào chá dà jiā dōu tóng yì

Word guide: 根据 – based on; 调查 – the survey; 大家 – everyone; 都 – all; 同意 – agrees.

- In the opening situation: 据调查，多数人支持这个计划。
- 据 names the source in compact written style.

■ Check the limit of the explanation

- 据 is not limited to set phrases: 据调查 and 据最新统计 take objects.
- 根据 also forms the noun for a basis, as in 这种说法没有根据; 据 alone does not replace it there.

■ Repair the form before interpreting it

- The form 这种说法没有科学据 needs repair here. Write 这种说法没有科学根据 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

- 据 names the source in compact written style. Check the relevant speaker, time or group in the surrounding context.
- 据 is not limited to set phrases: 据调查 and 据最新统计 take objects. 根据 also forms the noun for a basis, as in 这种说法没有根据; 据 alone does not replace it there.

■ Try it with help closed

A report introduces a conclusion based on a survey. 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: 据调查，多数人支持这个计划。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 据 is not limited to set phrases: 据调查 and 据最新统计 take objects.
- 根据 also forms the noun for a basis, as in 这种说法没有根据; 据 alone does not replace it there.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

恢复 vs 还原 (recover vs restore to original)

■ A service returns; a scene is reconstructed

- An internet connection works again after an outage.
- 网络恢复正常了。 – 恢复 highlights the return of a former state or function.

A service returns; a scene is reconstructed

SITUATION An internet connection works again after an outage.	SPEAKER MEANING 恢复 highlights the return of a former state or function.	CHECK THE LIMIT 恢复 is not restricted to a good state: 恢复原价 returns to the earlier price.
--	--	---

■ Locate the pattern in real examples

- 恢复 vs 还原 (recover vs restore to original): 他身体已经 ____ 了。；网络 ____ 正常了。
- 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

他恢复了健康。

tā huī fù le jiàn kāng

Word guide: 他 – he; 恢复 – recover; 健康 – health.

- In the opening situation: 网络恢复正常了。
- 恢复 highlights the return of a former state or function.

■ Check the limit of the explanation

- 恢复 is not restricted to a good state: 恢复原价 returns to the earlier price.
- 还原 emphasises original form or reconstruction, as in 还原现场; context matters where restoration overlaps.

■ Repair the form before interpreting it

- The form 网络复恢正常了 needs repair here. Write 网络恢复正常了 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

- 恢复 highlights the return of a former state or function. Check the relevant speaker, time or group in the surrounding context.
- 恢复 is not restricted to a good state: 恢复原价 returns to the earlier price. 还原 emphasises original form or reconstruction, as in 还原现场; context matters where restoration overlaps.

■ Try it with help closed

An internet connection works again after an outage. 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: 网络恢复正常了。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 恢复 is not restricted to a good state: 恢复原价 returns to the earlier price.
- 还原 emphasises original form or reconstruction, as in 还原现场; context matters where restoration overlaps.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

居然 vs 反而 (surprisingly vs instead)

■ Surprise and reversal can describe one event

- Someone tries to help but unexpectedly makes a mess.
- 他想帮忙，居然添了乱。 – 居然 highlights the speaker’s surprise at the result.

Surprise and reversal can describe one event

SITUATION

Someone tries to help but unexpectedly makes a mess.

SPEAKER MEANING

居然 highlights the speaker's surprise at the result.

CHECK THE LIMIT

反而添了乱 can describe the same event with emphasis on reversal.

■ Locate the pattern in real examples

- 居然 vs 反而 (surprisingly vs instead): 这么简单的题，他 ____ 做错了。; 他 ____ 忘了自己的生日。
- 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

他居然成功了。

tā jū rán chéng gōng le

Word guide: 他 – he; 居然 – surprisingly; 成功 – succeed.

- In the opening situation: 他想帮忙，居然添了乱。
- 居然 highlights the speaker’s surprise at the result.

■ Check the limit of the explanation

- 反而添了乱 can describe the same event with emphasis on reversal.
- The words differ in focus; they are not two mutually exclusive categories of event.

■ Repair the form before interpreting it

- The form 他想帮忙，添了乱居然 needs repair here. Write 他想帮忙，居然添了乱 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

- 居然 highlights the speaker’s surprise at the result. Check the relevant speaker, time or group in the surrounding context.
- 反而添了乱 can describe the same event with emphasis on reversal. The words differ in focus; they are not two mutually exclusive categories of event.

■ Try it with help closed

Someone tries to help but unexpectedly makes a mess. 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: 他想帮忙，居然添了乱。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 反而添了乱 can describe the same event with emphasis on reversal.
- The words differ in focus; they are not two mutually exclusive categories of event.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

一度 vs 一时 (at one time vs for the moment)

■ A brief mistake can belong to the past

- A person once made a hasty decision while briefly excited.
- 他一时高兴，答应得太快了。 – 一时 describes a passing state of excitement at that earlier moment.

A brief mistake can belong to the past

SITUATION A person once made a hasty decision while briefly excited.	SPEAKER MEANING 一时 describes a passing state of excitement at that earlier moment.	CHECK THE LIMIT 一时 is not restricted to now.
---	---	---

■ Locate the pattern in real examples

- 一度 vs 一时 (at one time vs for the moment): 他曾 ____ 想放弃，后来坚持了下来。; 这首歌前几年 ____ 很流行，现在没人听了。
- 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

这首歌一度很流行。

zhè shǒu gē yí dù hěn liú xíng

Word guide: 这 – this; 首 – (measure word); 歌 – song; 一度 – at one time; 很 – very; 流行 – popular.

- In the opening situation: 他一时高兴，答应得太快了。
- 一时 describes a passing state of excitement at that earlier moment.

■ Check the limit of the explanation

- 一时 is not restricted to now.
- 一度 highlights a period or occasion, as in 曾一度想放弃, without specifying how long the phase lasted.

■ Repair the form before interpreting it

- The form 他时一高兴 needs repair here. Write 他一时高兴 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

- 一时 describes a passing state of excitement at that earlier moment. Check the relevant speaker, time or group in the surrounding context.
- 一时 is not restricted to now. 一度 highlights a period or occasion, as in 曾一度想放弃, without specifying how long the phase lasted.

■ Try it with help closed

A person once made a hasty decision while briefly excited. 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: 他一时高兴，答应得太快了。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 一时 is not restricted to now.
- 一度 highlights a period or occasion, as in 曾一度想放弃, without specifying how long the phase lasted.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.

一直 vs 一向 (continuously vs habitually)

■ A continuous action differs from a usual habit

- You have been waiting throughout the morning for a reply.
- **我一直在等你的消息。** – 一直 describes the continuing waiting during a particular span.

A continuous action differs from a usual habit

SITUATION	SPEAKER MEANING	CHECK THE LIMIT
You have been waiting throughout the morning for a reply.	一直 describes the continuing waiting during a particular span.	A lasting preference can take either 一直 or 一向.

■ Locate the pattern in real examples

- **一直 vs 一向 (continuously vs habitually):** 雨 ____ 下到今天早上。; 我 ____ 在等你的消息。
- 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

我一直在等你。

wǒ yì zhí zài děng nǐ

Word guide: 我 – I; 一直 – continuously; 在 – (doing); 等 – wait; 你 – you.

- In the opening situation: **我一直在等你的消息。**
- 一直 describes the continuing waiting during a particular span.

■ Check the limit of the explanation

- A lasting preference can take either 一直 or 一向.
- 一向 also describes service or other recurring conditions; it is not limited to personal traits. 一直往前走 uses the spatial meaning straight ahead.

■ Repair the form before interpreting it

- The form **我直一在等你的消息** needs repair here. Write **我一直在等你的消息** 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

- 一直 describes the continuing waiting during a particular span. Check the relevant speaker, time or group in the surrounding context.
- A lasting preference can take either 一直 or 一向. 一向 also describes service or other recurring conditions; it is not limited to personal traits. 一直往前走 uses the spatial meaning straight ahead.

■ Try it with help closed

You have been waiting throughout the morning for a reply. 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: 我一直在等你的消息。

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- A lasting preference can take either 一直 or 一向.
- 一向 also describes service or other recurring conditions; it is not limited to personal traits. 一直往前走 uses the spatial meaning straight ahead.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

Practise this pattern step by step.