

Adjectives

Ref Hsk3 Grammar

+ — “...to the max” ()

When something is **off the charts** — the best, the worst, the most you’ve ever seen — tack (jǐle) onto the adjective. means “**the furthest point, the extreme**” (it’s the of , the North *Pole*), so reads literally as “*good — all the way to the pole.*” It works for praise and complaints alike, and it lives in casual, spoken Chinese.

Unusually for a degree phrase, clamps **straight onto the adjective with no** — and the is **welded on**: drop it and the sentence is simply wrong.

Structure: Subject + Adjective + *Literally: “[subject is] adjective — to the extreme.”*

{zh: |zhè ge|this / |zhǔ yi|idea / |hǎo|good / |jí le|extremely / 。 }

This idea is perfect.

{zh: |gāo kǎo|the college exam / |nà tiān|that day / , |wǒ|I / |jǐn zhāng|nervous / |jí le|extremely / 。 }

I was incredibly nervous on the day of the gaokao.

{zh: |nà ge|that / |nán hái|boy / |tǎo yàn|annoying / |jí le|extremely / ! }

That boy is unbelievably annoying!

Remember: = pole, the furthest point (= North Pole). pushes “good” all the way to the pole — and never travels without its .

Watch out

- The **is non-negotiable**: ✓, never .
- **No** — it attaches bare (), unlike most degree complements ().
- already carries the emphasis, so don’t pile on or : , never .

— doubling adjectives for warmth (AA / AABB)

Repeat an adjective and it turns **soft, warm, and vivid** — less a cold fact, more a fond little picture. This doubling runs all through friendly, natural Chinese, especially for **physical descriptions**: colours, sizes, shapes.

A **one-syllable** adjective doubles as **AA**, usually with before the noun — (“big”) → (“nice and big, big and round”):

Structure: A + A + (+ Noun)

{zh: |bǎo bao|the baby / |de / |yǎn jīng|eyes / |dà dà de|big and round / 。 }

The baby has big, round eyes.

{zh: |jīn wǎn|tonight / |de / |yuè liàng|moon / |yuán yuán de|nice and round / 。 }

The moon is lovely and round tonight.

A **two-syllable** adjective doubles as **AABB** — repeat each character, not the whole word: → , → , → . Used as an **adverb**, the AABB form takes before the verb:

{zh: |wǒ|I / |xiǎng|want to / |shū shū fú fú|comfortably / |de / |tǎng|lie / |zài|on / |shā fā shàng|the sofa / 。 }

I just want to lie comfortably on the sofa.

Remember: doubling **softens and warms** — isn't a flat “big eyes,” it's the affectionate “lovely big eyes” a parent would coo. AA + paints a noun; AABB + colours a verb.

Watch out

- **Not every adjective doubles** — , , are never said as / . Stick to common physical descriptors until you've heard a form used for real.
- A doubled adjective is **already emphatic** — never put in front (is wrong).

+ + — turning an adjective into “-ly” ()

To say **how** an action is done, park the particle (de) after an adjective — it is Chinese's “-ly.” (“happy”) → (“happily”); (“careful”) → (“carefully”). The adverb always sits **in front of** the verb.

Structure: Adjective + + Verb *Literally:* “happy-ly — smiled.”

{zh: |tā|he / |gāo xìng|happy / |de / |xiào|smiled / |le / 。 }

He smiled happily.

{zh: |lǎo shī|the teacher / |rèn zhēn|careful / |de / |kàn|read / |le / |wǒ de|my / |zuò wén|essay / 。 }

The teacher read my essay carefully.

Remember: = “-ly”. Three *de*'s sound identical but split the work: owns a noun (), drives a verb (), rates the result (). The here even carries “earth” on its left — picture an adverb *grounding* how the verb is done.

Watch out

- This is read **de**, not *dì* — same sound as and , different job.
- The adverb phrase comes **before** the verb, never after it.