

Particles

Ref Hsk3 Grammar

+ — an ongoing state

(zhe) after a verb freezes the action into a **lingering state** — the door *is* (standing) open, you *are* holding it. Think of 开 as a clip that keeps the verb “switched on.” A second, very common use is **Verb 1 + 着 + Verb 2**: V1 开 sets the posture or manner, and V2 is the real action done in that state.

Structure: Verb + 着 · Verb 1 + 着 + Verb 2

{zh: 你 |nǐ men|you all / 坐 |zuò|sit / 着 |zhe / , 我 |wǒ|I / 回 |mǎ shàng|right away / 来 |huí lái|come back / 着 }.

Stay seated — I’ll be right back.

{zh: 她 |tā|she / 喜 |xǐ huan|likes to / 站 |zhàn|stand / 着 |zhe / 吃 |chī fàn|eat / 着 }.

She likes to eat standing up.

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 笑 |xiào|smiling / 着 |zhe / 说 |shuō|said / 对 |duì bu qǐ|sorry / 着 }.

Smiling, he said sorry.

Remember: 开 = the verb **held on, lingering** (开 = “the door stays open”); for an action actively *in progress*, use 着 (开). In V1 开 V2, V1 is the **backdrop**, V2 the **real action** — 吃 = “eat *while* standing.”

Watch out

- 开 is a state, not a play-by-play — pair it with 正在 / 正 only when you really mean “is currently ...”.

..... — a change of state

Sentence-final 了 can announce a **new situation** — something has *become* the case that wasn’t before. This “change” 了 (often called 了₂) is a different beast from the 了 that marks a *completed action*; here it means “**now**.”

Structure: Subject + Adjective + 了 · Subject + Verb + 了

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 饿 |è|hungry / 了 |le / 了 }.

I’m hungry (now).

{zh: 下 |xià yǔ|raining / 了 |le / 了 }.

It’s raining (it wasn’t before).

{zh: 宝 |bǎo bao|the baby / 会 |huì|can / 说 |shuō huà|talk / 了 |le / 了 }.

The baby can talk now.

Remember: this 了 = “**now, a new state**” (饿 = “hungry *now*”), **not** “did and finished.” Whenever you’d add “now” in English, this is the 了 you want: (“he’s a manager now”).

Watch out

- Same character, two jobs: change-of-state 了 (会) vs completed-action 了 (会). Context and position tell them apart.

..... ? — “and you? / what about ...?”

了 at the end lobs a question **back** without you having to repeat it — “and ...? what about ...?” A neat extra: a bare noun + 了 (with no prior question) asks “**where is ...?**”

Structure: Topic + 了 ?

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 很 |hěn|very / 好 |hǎo|well / , 你 |nǐ|you / 呢 |ne / ? }.

I’m well — and you?

{zh: 我 |wǒ|my / 的 |de / 手 |shǒu jī|phone / 呢 |ne / ? }.

Where’s my phone?

Remember: 了 = “**...and X?**” — it bounces the last question back (你 ? “and you?”). With nothing asked before, noun + 了 means “**where is X?**” (你 ? “where’s the money?”).

Watch out

- It rides on context — without a prior question or a “where is” sense, a bare 了 has nothing to bounce off.

/ / — the three structural “de”

Three different characters, all pronounced **de**, each with exactly one job. Keeping them straight is the single most common slip in written Chinese — so sort them by **what comes next**.

Structure: + Noun · Verb + + Complement · Adjective + + Verb

{zh: |nǐ|you / |zuò|did / |de / |hěn|very / |hǎo|well / , |yīn
wèi|because / |nǐ|you / |rèn zhēn|carefully / |de / |tīng kè|listened /
。 }

You did well, because you listened attentively in class.

{zh: |mā ma|Mom / |de / |xīn|new / |shǒu jī|phone / |pǎo|runs /
 |de / |tè bié|especially / |kuài|fast / 。 }

Mom’s new phone runs especially fast.

Remember: sort them by what **follows**: → a **noun** (); → a **verb**,
building an adverb (); → sits **after** a verb, rating the result ().
Tip: has “earth” (it *grounds* the verb); leans on the verb to tell you *how well*.

Watch out

- A true adverb (, ,) needs **no** — only an *adjective* used adverbially does
(, but just , never).