

Complements

Ref Hsk3 Grammar

+ / — direction complements

Tag (“towards me”) or (“away from me”) onto a verb to show **which way** the action moves relative to *you, the speaker*. These build into handy compounds — (“come in”), (“go out”), (“up”), (“over here”).

Structure: Verb + / · Verb + compound (/ ...)

{zh: |wǒ|I’m / |zài / |lóu shàng|upstairs / , |nǐ|you / |shàng
lái|come up / 。 }

I’m upstairs — come up.

{zh: |qǐng|please / |zhàn|stand / |qǐ lái|up / 。 }

Please stand up.

Remember: = toward me, = away from me — anchored to wherever the speaker stands. (“come in,” I’m inside) vs (“go in,” I’m outside).

Watch out

- With a **place** object, the place sits *between* the verb and / : /
— never .

+ / + — potential complements

Slot (“can”) or (“can’t”) between a verb and its result to ask whether that result is **achievable** — (“can understand”) vs (“can’t”). They’re built straight from result complements (, , ...).

Structure: Verb + / + Complement

{zh: |nǐ|you / |tīng|hear / |de|can / |dǒng|understand / |Shàng
hǎi huà|Shanghainese / |ma / ? }

Can you understand Shanghainese?

{zh: |zhè zhǒng|this kind of / |shǒu jī|phone / |xiàn zài|now /
|mǎi|buy / |bù|can’t / |dào|get / |le / 。 }

You can’t get this kind of phone any more.

Remember: = **can**, = **can't**, wedged right after the verb (/). It asks about *reaching a result* — subtly different from (“be allowed / have the chance to”).

Watch out

- The negative form is far more common in speech than the form — you’ll hear constantly.

+ — “keep on ...ing”

The complement means **carry on** with something already under way — “keep ...ing, go on ...ing.” Picture the action continuing *downward and onward* into the future.

Structure: Subject + Verb +

{zh: |shuō|talk / |xià qù|keep on / 。 }

Keep talking.

{zh: |nǐ|you / |zài|keep / |hē|drinking / |xià qù|on / |jiù|then /
|zuì|drunk / |le / 。 }

If you keep drinking, you’ll get drunk.

Remember: = “**carry on from here**” with something already started. Its potential form = “can’t carry on”: (“I can’t bear to keep listening”).

Watch out

- It’s specifically about *continuing* — don’t use it to *start* something.

+ / / — result complements

A short word right after the verb tells you **how it turned out** — (“finished”), (“done well / ready”), (“wrong”). It usually takes a , and the object is often pulled to the front as a topic.

Structure: Verb + / / (+)

{zh: |zhè ge|this / |zì|character / |xiě|wrote / |cuò|wrong / |le / 。 }

You wrote this character wrong.

{zh: |fáng jiān|the room / |dǎ sǎo|cleaned / |gān jìng|spotless / |le
/ |ma / ? }

Is the room all cleaned up?

Remember: the verb is the action, the complement is the outcome. =
 “write,” but = “wrote *wrong*,” = “wrote *to the finish*.” Common ones: , , , , , , , .

Watch out

- Negate the *whole* thing with (, “didn’t finish writing”), not .