

Sentence Patterns

Ref Hsk3 Grammar

+ + / + / ... — “not even one”

To say **not a single one**, build a total, emphatic negative: + **measure word** (+ **noun**) + / + / + **verb**. The / is the muscle here — it's what turns “one” into “not even one.” The object can also be pulled to the front as a topic.

Structure: (Topic +) + MW + (Noun) + / + / + Verb

{zh: |tā|he / |yí jù|a single / |huà|word / |dōu|even / |méi|didn't / |shuō|say / 。 }

He didn't say a single word.

{zh: |zhè ge rén|this person / |wǒ|I / |yí cì|even once / |yě|even / |méi|haven't / |jiàn guo|met / 。 }

I've never met this person, not even once.

Remember: the shape is “one ... not even ...” — sets up the smallest possible amount, and / + negative knocks even *that* out. Drop the / and the “not even” force collapses.

Watch out

- and are interchangeable here; for an uncountable “not at all,” use .

... ... — “the more ... the more ...”

A B ties two things that **rise together** — “the more A, the more B.” Picture two dials geared to the same shaft: turn one up and the other climbs with it. Both halves take , and the two clauses can even have different subjects.

Structure: Subject + + Verb + + Adjective / Verb

{zh: |wǒ|I / |yuè|the more / |kàn|look / |yuè|the more / |xǐ huan|like it / 。 }

The more I look at it, the more I like it.

{zh: |nǐ|you / |yuè|the more / |ràng|push / |hái zi|the kid / |xué|to study / , |hái zi|the kid / |yuè|the less / |bù xiǎng|wants to / |xué|study / 。 }

The more you push the kid to study, the less he wants to.

Remember: two 's, **rising together**. Don't confuse it with (“more and more *over time*,” next file): links *two things*, tracks *one thing across time*.

Watch out

- Both halves need ; the second names what **grows** as the first does.
- The two halves can have different subjects: .

— “take it and...” (the construction)

Chinese grammar’s famous hurdle — but the core idea is simple. Literally means “**take / grab**,” so a sentence is just “**take [this specific thing] and [do something] to it.**” Reach for it when you want to spotlight **what happens to an object** — where it ends up, how it’s changed, what’s done with it.

The trap for English speakers: the object jumps **in front of** the verb, and the verb can never stand alone — it must be followed by the **result** (a complement, , a location...). “” lands on a Chinese ear like “put the book...” and then trailing off.

Structure: Subject + + Object + Verb + (result) *Literally:* “I — take — the book — put — on the table.” ()

{zh: |qǐng|please / |bǎ / |mén|the door / |guān shàng|close / 。 }

Please close the door.

{zh: |tā|she / |bǎ / |wǒ|my / |de / |shǒu jī|phone / |fàng|put / |zài|in / |bāo lǐ|her bag / |le / 。 }

She put my phone in her bag.

Remember: carries the **hand radical** — picture a hand reaching out, **grabbing** the object, and dragging it in front of the verb. Grab it → then say what you did to it.

Watch out

- The object must be **specific / known** (the door, *my* phone), and the verb must report **what happened to it** — a bare verb won’t do: ✓.
- Negation goes **before** : , — never inside the phrase.
- Feeling / perception verbs (, , ,) **can’t** take — there’s no “result” to a feeling.
- (is also a measure word for handled things — “an umbrella” — a different word entirely.)

— “got done to” (the passive)

A sentence flips the focus to the **receiver**: “(it) got ...ed (by ...).” The thing acted upon becomes the subject, and the doer is optional. Like , the verb can’t stand bare — it needs a result — and sentences lean toward **unfortunate** events (things done *to* you).

Structure: Receiver + + (Doer) + Verb + (/ result)

{zh: |wǒ|my / |de / |shǒu jī|phone / |bèi|got / |tōu|stolen / |le / 。 }

My phone got stolen.

{zh: |tā|he / |bèi|by / |jǐng chá|the police / |zhuā|caught / |le / 。 }

He was caught by the police.

Remember: leads with the doer, leads with the victim. (“the thief took the phone”) ↔ (“the phone got taken by the thief”). even hides (a quilt/cover) — picture the action *laid over* the subject.

Watch out

- The verb can’t be **bare** — it needs a or result: ✓, not .
- The **doer is optional**: (“I was tricked”), doer unknown or unimportant.
- Negate **before** : (“wasn’t discovered”).
- These sentences usually report something **bad** happening to the subject.