

Basic/Simple Sentence Patterns

Ref Hsk3 Grammar

Place + + + — saying what's where

To paint **what is where**, Chinese runs **place** — **verb** — — **thing**: “(at the place) there sits / lies / hangs a” The verb tells you *how* the thing is positioned (lying, standing, hanging). A close cousin is **Place** + + **thing**, meaning “all there is at the place is”

Structure: Place + Verb + + Noun Phrase

{zh: |zhuō zi shàng|on the table / |fàng|lies / |zhe / |yì běn|a /
|shū|book / 。 }

There's a book lying on the table.

{zh: |dà tīng lǐ|in the hall / |zhàn|are standing / |zhe / |yì xiē|some
/ |jǐng chá|police / 。 }

Some police are standing in the hall.

Remember: the **place comes first** (the camera pans to a spot), then the verb + freezes how the thing sits there. English starts with “there's a ...”; Chinese starts with the *location*.

Watch out

- The verb is **stative** (, , ,) — it describes a position, not an active action.
- The version says the place holds *only* that: (“the wall is all photos”).

+ + + — “do whatever you like”

Echo a question word on both sides of and you get “(do) **whatever** / **wherever** / **whenever** you like.” The **same** question word appears twice — once setting the choice, once cashing it in.

Structure: + Verb + QW + + Verb + QW

{zh: |xiǎng|want / |chī|eat / |shén me|what / |jiù|then / |chī|eat /
|shén me|whatever / 。 }

Eat whatever you want.

{zh: |xiǎng|want / |qù|go / |nǎr|where / |jiù|then / |qù|go /
|nǎr|wherever / 。 }

Go wherever you like.

Remember: the **same question word both times** — ... , ...
... , Read it as “whatever you pick, that’s what you get.” It’s the language of total freedom.

Watch out

- Keep the question word identical on both sides — mixing with breaks it.

+ / — “**every / any**”

A question word + (or) sweeps over **all** cases — “everyone, anything, anywhere.” Add a / and it flips to the total negative: “none, nothing, nowhere.”

Structure: Question Word + / + Predicate

{zh: |shéi|everyone / |dōu|all / |xǐ huan|likes / |měi shí|good food /
。 }

Everyone loves good food.

{zh: |wǒ|I / |shén me|anything / |dōu|at all / |bù|don’t / |xiǎng|want
/ |chī|to eat / 。 }

I don’t want to eat anything.

Remember: question word + = “**all / every**”; add / = “**none / nothing**.” (“everyone likes”) → (“nobody believes”). stands in for , especially in negatives (, “said nothing”).

Watch out

- The question word here is *not* asking anything — it’s the indefinite “any,” swept up by / .

+ — “**more and more**”

before an adjective (or verb) means a quality **keeps climbing as time passes** — “more and more ...” Literally “more-comes-more.” It usually closes with to mark the change in motion.

Structure: Subject + + Adjective +

{zh: |tiān qì|the weather / |yuè lái yuè|more and more / |lěng|cold /
|lě / 。 }

The weather is getting colder and colder.

{zh: |wǒ|I / |yuè lái yuè|more and more / |bù|don't / |xiāng
xìn|trust / |tā|him / |lě / 。 }

I trust him less and less.

Remember: = “**more-comes-more**” — one thing changing over *time*. Its look-alike ... (previous file) links *two* things (“the more A, the more B”). Time → ; pairing → ...

Watch out

- With a **negative** verb, English flips to “less and less”: (“understand less and less”).

— “some / a certain”

A bare question word can quietly mean a vague “**some / a certain**” — (“somewhere”), (“someone”), (“something”), (“sometime”). It isn’t a question at all; tone and small cues (, ,) flag the difference.

Structure: Question Word (used as “some”)

{zh: |zhè ge rén|this person / |wǒ|I / |zài / |nǎr|somewhere /
|jiàn guo|have met / 。 }

I’ve met this person somewhere before.

{zh: |wǒ men|we / |yīng gāi|should / |zuò|do / |diǎnr|a bit of /
|shén me|something / 。 }

We should do something.

Remember: a question word with no rising “question” tone = “some.” (“who?”) vs (“someone”); (“what?”) vs (“something”). Cues like , , or confirm the “some” reading — ... = “sometime,” not “when?”.

Watch out

- Context does the work — there’s no extra word; only the falling tone and the cues distinguish “some” from a real question.

— “in order to, for the sake of”

spells out a **purpose** or beneficiary — “in order to, for the sake of.” It usually opens the sentence (“In order to X, ...”), or appears as “... ..” (“the reason is to ...”).

Structure: + Purpose , Subject + Action · Action + + Purpose

{zh: |wèi le|for the sake of / |qián|money / |tā|he / |shén me|anything
/ |dōu|at all / |yuàn yì|is willing / |zuò|to do / 。 }

For money, he'll do anything.

{zh: |wǒ|I / |zhè me / |zuò|did this / |shì / |wèi le|in order to /
 |bāng|help / |nǐ|you / 。 }

I did all this in order to help you.

Remember: = the goal you're aiming AT (forward-looking); =
the cause you're coming FROM (backward-looking). “ health, I exercise”
(purpose) vs “ I'm ill, I rest” (reason). The here is glued into the word — not
the aspect particle.

Watch out

- The phrase usually sits at the **front** of the sentence.