

Complex Sentence Patterns

Ref Hsk3 Grammar

... () — “except” or “besides”

Here’s a word that means **two opposite things** depending on its partner. **X** () sets X aside; then the adverb in the second clause decides what happens to it. With , X is **left out** (“everyone *except* X”); with / , X is **kept and more is piled on** (“*besides* X, also ...”). The is optional.

Structure: + X (+) , Subject + / / ...

{zh: |chú le|except for / |tā|him / , |wǒ men|we / |dōu|all / |qù guo|have been / 。 }

Except for him, we’ve all been there.

{zh: |chú le|besides / |Zhōng wén|Chinese / , |tā|he / |hái|also / |huì|can / |shuō|speak / |Rì yǔ|Japanese / 。 }

Besides Chinese, he also speaks Japanese.

Remember: the second word flips the meaning. ... = “except” (X is thrown out); ... / = “besides” (X stays, plus more). Read on to the / before you decide which “” it is.

Watch out

- (or) is optional and changes nothing.

... — “if”

... wraps a condition — “if ...” Think of as a spoken bracket that **closes** the *if*-clause: opens it, shuts it. The is conversational and **optional** — and it can even appear with no at all.

Structure: + Condition + , () + Result

{zh: |rú guǒ|if / |míng tiān|tomorrow / |xià yǔ|rains / |de huà / , |wǒ men|we / |jiù|then / |bù|not / |qù|go / |le / 。 }

If it rains tomorrow, we won’t go.

{zh: |bù|not / |xiǎng|want to / |qù|go / |de huà|if / |jiù|then / |bié|don’t / |qù|go / |le / 。 }

If you don’t feel like going, then don’t.

Remember: and are a **pair of brackets** around the condition — and Chinese lets you use *either or both*. You can even drop both and just imply the “if”: (“call me if anything comes up”).

Watch out

- is conversational — fine to drop it and keep just

... — “if ... then ...”

The backbone conditional is ... — “if A, then B.” The key placement rule: lives in the **second** clause, opening the result — not next to .

Structure: + Condition , + Result

{zh: |rú guǒ|if / |yǒu|have / |kùn nán|difficulty / , |jiù|then / |gěi / |wǒ|me / |dǎ diàn huà|call / 。 }

If you run into any trouble, then call me.

{zh: |rú guǒ|if / |tā|he / |zhī dào|knew / , |nà|then / |tā|he / |yí dìng|surely / |huì|would / |gào su|tell / |wǒ|me / 。 }

If he knew, he’d surely tell me.

Remember: opens the “if,” opens the “then” — and always rides with the *result*, hugging its verb. () can stand in for with an “in that case” flavour.

Watch out

- Don’t park next to — it belongs in the second clause, before its verb.

... — “not only ... but also ...”

... stacks a second, stronger point on the first — “not only A, but also B.” The two halves share the **same subject**, and B should push *further* than A (more extreme, more surprising).

Structure: Subject + + A , + B

{zh: |zhè ge|this / |dōng xi|thing / |bú dàn|not only / |guì|expensive / , |ér qiě|but also / |nán|hard / |mǎi|to buy / 。 }

This thing is not only expensive, but also hard to get.

{zh: |zhè dào|this / |cài|dish / |bú dàn|not only / |hǎo kàn|pretty / , |yě|also / |hǎo chī|tasty / 。 }

This dish isn’t only pretty, it’s tasty too.

Remember: = “**not only,**” = “**but also,**” and B must out-do A (escalate, don’t just repeat). swaps freely for / :,

Watch out

- Keep **one subject** across both halves (... , ...); if the subject changes, moves in front of the subject (...).