Prepositions

HSK 3 Grammar

Original teaching practice. Read one pattern, cover its model and try the questions before checking the separate answer section. Examples adapted from Chinese Grammar Wiki (AllSet Learning, CC BY-NC-SA) retain the course-reference provenance.

关于 + Topic (about / regarding)

A book about China

- In the library you find a book that explains Chinese history for beginners.
- **这是一本关于中国历史的书。** – "This is a book about Chinese history."

关于 + topic

- **关于 + topic** = "about, regarding". Before a noun it takes 的: 关于中国的书.
- At the start of a sentence it introduces the topic: 关于这个问题，我们明天再讨论.

关于这个问题，我们明天再讨论。
guān yú zhè ge wèn tí wǒ men míng tiān zài tǎo lùn
Word guide: 关于 – about; 这个 – this; 问题 – question; 我们 – we; 明天 – tomorrow; 再 – then; 讨论 – discuss.



Topics of talks, books and news

- **我看了一个关于熊猫的节目。** – "I watched a programme about pandas."
- **关于考试的时间，老师还没说。** – "The teacher hasn't said anything yet about the exam time."

我看了一个关于熊猫的节目。
wǒ kàn le yí gè guān yú xióng māo de jié mù
Word guide: 我 – I; 看 – watched; 一个 – a; 关于 – about; 熊猫 – pandas; 节目 – programme.

Placement

- A 关于 phrase describing a noun needs 的: 关于中国的书, not 关于中国书.
- As a topic, 关于 … comes first, before the subject: 关于这件事，我不知道, not 我关于这件事不知道.

关于 versus 对

- 关于 introduces a topic: 关于环境的文章 – "an article about the environment".
- 对 shows the target of an attitude: 他对中国文化很感兴趣 – "He's very interested in Chinese culture."

他对中国文化很感兴趣。
tā duì Zhōng guó wén huà hěn gǎn xìng qù
Word guide: 他 – he; 对 – in; 中国 – Chinese; 文化 – culture; 很 – very; 感兴趣 – interested.

Recap

- **关于 + topic (+ 的 + noun)** = about …; as a topic marker it starts the sentence.
- 对 marks the target of feelings (对 … 感兴趣), not the topic of a book or talk.

Practise this pattern step by step.

直到 … ，… 才 … (all the way until)

Waiting until midnight

- You stayed up for your sister's flight to land; she only messaged you at midnight.
- **我一直等到十二点，她才给我发消息。** – "I waited right up until twelve before she messaged me."

直到 + time / event，… 才 …

- **直到 + time/event** = "right up until"; the result follows with **才**: something happened only then.
- 直到 often comes first: 直到昨天，我才知道这件事.

直到昨天，我才知道这件事。
zhí dào zuó tiān wǒ cái zhī dào zhè jiàn shì
Word guide: 直到 – not until; 昨天 – yesterday; 我 – I; 才 – only then; 知道 – knew; 这件事 – this.



Late discoveries and long waits

- **直到毕业，他才明白老师的话。** – “It wasn’t until he graduated that he understood what the teacher meant.”
- With 一直 … 到: **雨一直下到晚上。** – “The rain kept falling until the evening.”

雨一直下到晚上。
yǔ yì zhí xià dào wǎn shang
Word guide: 雨 – the rain; 一直 – continuously; 下 – fall; 到 – until; 晚上 – the evening.

Use 才 for the delayed result

- The result clause takes 才 (it was late): 直到十点他才来, not 直到十点他就来了.
- This short result model uses 才知道. Do not infer from it that 了 is impossible in all other 才 constructions.

直到 versus 到

- 到 alone after a verb gives the end point: 我们玩到十点 – “We played until ten.”
- 直到 stresses how long it took before something finally happened.

我们玩到十点。
wǒ men wán dào shí diǎn
Word guide: 我们 – we; 玩 – play; 到 – until; 十点 – ten o’clock.

Recap

- **直到 + time/event，Subject + 才 + Verb** = not until then did …
- 才 highlights the delayed result in this model. Verb + 到 + time gives an endpoint; 了 is not universally banned with 才.

Practise this pattern step by step.

向 + Direction / Person + Verb (towards)

Which way?

- You are lost in an old town, and a shopkeeper points down the street.
- **你向前走，然后向右拐。** – “Walk forward, then turn right.”

向 + direction / person + Verb

- **向 + direction** = towards: 向前走, 向左拐, 向东开.
- **向 + person** = to, towards someone: 向老师问好 – “say hello to the teacher”.

向左拐。
xiàng zuǒ guǎi
Word guide: 向 – towards; 左 – the left; 拐 – turn.

向 + direction + verb



Actions aimed at people

- **我向他借了一本书。** – “I borrowed a book from him.”
- **我们应该向她学习。** – “We should learn from her.”

我们应该向她学习。
wǒ men yīng gāi xiàng tā xué xí
Word guide: 我们 – we; 应该 – should; 向 – from; 她 – her; 学习 – learn.

向 goes before the verb

- Put 向 + direction before the verb: 向右拐, not 拐向右 in everyday directions.
- “Borrow from someone” is 向 + person + 借, not 借向 + person.

向 versus 往

- 往 also means “towards” for movement: 往前走, 往左拐. In directions the two are interchangeable.
- Only 向 works with people: 向他道歉 – “apologise to him”, not 往他道歉.

我向他道歉。
wǒ xiàng tā dào qiàn
Word guide: 我 – I; 向 – to; 他 – him; 道歉 – apologise.

Recap

- **向 + direction + Verb** = towards (向前走); **向 + person + Verb** = to/from someone (向他借, 向她学习).
- 往 = towards in directions only; people take 向.

Practise this pattern step by step.

Practice without the models

关于 + Topic (about / regarding)

0705.1 Complete: “I want to buy a book about cooking.” 我想买一本 …… 做饭的书。

0705.2 “She is very interested in music.” Which word fits? 她 _____ 音乐很感兴趣。

- A. 向
- B. 对
- C. 跟
- D. 关于

0705.3 Build: “I watched a programme about pandas.”

Arrange all chunks: 关于熊猫的 / 一个 / 节目。/ 我看了

0705.4 关于中国书 is a correct phrase for “a book about China”.

True or false? Explain or repair the statement.

0705.5 In the library you find a book that explains Chinese history for beginners. Close the examples. Say a Mandarin response, then write it in Chinese. Explain briefly in English what the lesson’s pattern adds. Compare with the model, then change one detail and try again.

Write or say your own response before reading the key.

■ 直到 … ，… 才 … (all the way until)

0706.1 Complete: “It wasn’t until yesterday that I knew.” 直到昨天，我 …… 知道。

0706.2 Which sentence is correct?

- A. 直到十一点，他才睡觉。
- B. 他才直到十一点睡觉。
- C. 直到十一点，他就睡觉了。
- D. 直到十一点，他才睡觉了。

0706.3 Build: “The rain kept falling until the evening.”

Arrange all chunks: 一直 / 晚上。/ 下到 / 雨

0706.4 我们玩到十点 means “We played until ten.”

True or false? Explain or repair the statement.

0706.5 You stayed up for your sister’s flight to land; she only messaged you at midnight. Close the examples. Say a Mandarin response, then write it in Chinese. Explain briefly in English what the lesson’s pattern adds. Compare with the model, then change one detail and try again.

Write or say your own response before reading the key.

■ 向 + Direction / Person + Verb (towards)

0707.1 Complete: “Turn left at the crossroads.” 到了路口 …… 左拐。

0707.2 Which says “I want to apologise to her.”?

- A. 我想她向道歉。
- B. 我想道歉向她。
- C. 我想向她道歉。
- D. 我想往她道歉。

0707.3 Build: “I borrowed a book from him.”

Arrange all chunks: 借了 / 我 / 一本书。/ 向他

0707.4 往前走 and 向前走 both mean “walk forward”.

True or false? Explain or repair the statement.

0707.5 You are lost in an old town, and a shopkeeper points down the street. Close the examples. Say a Mandarin response, then write it in Chinese. Explain briefly in English what the lesson’s pattern adds. Compare with the model, then change one detail and try again.

Write or say your own response before reading the key.

Answers and explanations

■ 关于 + Topic (about / regarding)

0705.1 关于

关于 + topic + 的 + noun.

0705.2 B. 对

对 … 感兴趣 marks the target of interest.

0705.3 我看了一个关于熊猫的节目。

关于 + topic + 的 + noun.

0705.4 False.

The 关于 phrase needs 的 before the noun: 关于中国的书.

0705.5 One possible response: 这是一本关于中国历史的书。

Check meaning and form:

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- A 关于 phrase describing a noun needs 的: 关于中国的书, not 关于中国书.
- As a topic, 关于 … comes first, before the subject: 关于这件事，我不知道, not 我关于这件事不知道.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

This is supported productive practice. Compare meaning and structure; your answer need not copy the model. A partner or teacher must hear the spoken response to comment on pronunciation.

■ 直到 … ，… 才 … (all the way until)

0706.1 才

直到 … 才 ….

0706.2 A. 直到十一点，他才睡觉。

直到十一点，他才睡觉 is right: 直到 … 才 means “not until”, and this simple 才 pattern takes no final 了. 就 would mean “as early as”, which contradicts 直到.

0706.3 雨一直下到晚上。

一直 + Verb + 到 + time.

0706.4 True.

Verb + 到 + time gives the end point.

0706.5 One possible response: 我一直等到十二点，她才给我发消息。

Check meaning and form:

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- The result clause takes 才 (it was late): 直到十点他才来, not 直到十点他就来了.
- This short result model uses 才知道. Do not infer from it that 了 is impossible in all other 才 constructions.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

This is supported productive practice. Compare meaning and structure; your answer need not copy the model. A partner or teacher must hear the spoken response to comment on pronunciation.

■ 向 + Direction / Person + Verb (towards)

0707.1 向

向/往 + direction + verb.

0707.2 C. 我想向她道歉。

With people, only 向 works, before the verb.

0707.3 我向他借了一本书。

向 + person + 借.

0707.4 True.

In directions 往 and 向 are interchangeable.

0707.5 One possible response: 你向前走，然后向右拐。

Check meaning and form:

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- Put 向 + direction before the verb: 向右拐, not 拐向右 in everyday directions.
- “Borrow from someone” is 向 + person + 借, not 借向 + person.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

This is supported productive practice. Compare meaning and structure; your answer need not copy the model. A partner or teacher must hear the spoken response to comment on pronunciation.