

Complements

Ref Hsk3 Grammar

动词 + 来 / 去 — direction complements

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

Structure: Verb + 来 / 去 · Verb + compound (上来 / 出去 ...)

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I'm / 在 |zài / 楼上 |lóu shàng|upstairs / , 你 |nǐ|you / 上来 |shàng lái|come up / 。 }

I'm upstairs — come up.

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

Please stand up.

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

Watch out

- With a **place** object, the place sits *between* the verb and 来 / 去: 回美国去 / 回美国 — never 回去美国.

动词 + 得 / 不 + 结果 — potential complements

Slot 得 (“can”) or 不 (“can’t”) between a verb and its result to ask whether that result is **achievable** — 看得懂 (“can understand”) vs 看不懂 (“can’t”). They’re built straight from result complements (懂, 完, 到, 见 ...).

Structure: Verb + 得 / 不 + Complement

{zh: 你 |nǐ|you / 听 |tīng|hear / 得 |de|can / 懂 |dǒng|understand / 上海话 |Shàng hǎi huà|Shanghainese / 吗 |ma / ? }

Can you understand Shanghainese?

{zh: 这种 |zhè zhǒng|this kind of / 手机 |shǒu jī|phone / 现在 |xiàn zài|now / 买 |mǎi|buy / 不 |bù|can't / 到 |dào|get / 了 |le / 。 }

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

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

Watch out

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

动词 + 下去 — “keep on ...ing”

The complement 下去 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 + 下去

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

Keep talking.

{zh: 你 |nǐ|you / 再 |zài|keep / 喝 |hē|drinking / 下去 |xià qù|on / 就 |jiù|then / 醉 |zuì|drunk / 了 |le / 。 }

If you keep drinking, you’ll get drunk.

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

Watch out

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

动词 + 好 / 完 / 错 — result complements

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

Structure: Verb + 好 / 完 / 错 (+ 了)

{zh: 这个 |zhè ge|this / 字 |zì|character / 写 |xiě|wrote / 错 |cuò|wrong / 了 |le / 。 }

You wrote this character wrong.

{zh: 房间 |fáng jiān|the room / 打扫 |dǎ sǎo|cleaned / 干净 |gān jìng|spotless / 了 |le / 吗 |ma / ? }

Is the room all cleaned up?

Remember: the **verb is the action, the complement is the outcome.** 写 = “write,” but 写错 = “wrote *wrong*,” 写完 = “wrote *to the finish*.” Common ones: 完, 好, 错, 懂, 到, 见, 干净, 清楚.

Watch out

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