

Sentence Patterns

Ref Hsk3 Grammar

一 + 量词 + 也 / 都 + 不 / 没 ... — “not even one”

To say **not a single one**, build a total, emphatic negative: 一 + **measure word** (+ **noun**) + 也 / 都 + 不 / 没 + **verb**. The 也 / 都 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 +) 一 + MW + (Noun) + 也 / 都 + 不 / 没 + Verb

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 一句 |yí jù|a single / 话 |huà|word / 都 |dōu|even / 没 |méi|didn't / 说 |shuō|say / 。 }

He didn't say a single word.

{zh: 这个人 |zhè ge rén|this person / 我 |wǒ|I / 一次 |yí cì|even once / 也 |yě|even / 没 |méi|haven't / 见过 |jiàn guo|met / 。 }

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

Remember: the shape is “**one ... not even ...**” — 一 sets up the smallest possible amount, and 也 / 都 + negative knocks even *that* out. Drop the 也 / 都 and the “not even” force collapses.

Watch out

- 也 and 都 are interchangeable here; for an uncountable “not at all,” use 一点也不.

越 ... 越 ... — “the more ... the more ...”

越 A 越 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 越, and the two clauses can even have different subjects.

Structure: Subject + 越 + Verb + 越 + Adjective / Verb

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

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

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

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

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

Watch out

- Both halves need 越; the second names what **grows** as the first does.
- The two halves can have different subjects: 你越说, 他越不听.

把 — “take it and...” (the 把 construction)

Chinese grammar's famous hurdle — but the core idea is simple. 把 literally means “**take / grab**,” so a 把 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, 了, a location...). “把书放” lands on a Chinese ear like “put the book...” and then trailing off.

Structure: Subject + 把 + Object + Verb + (result) *Literally:* “I — take — the book — put — on the table.” (我把书放在桌子上。)

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

Please close the door.

{zh: 她 |tā|she / 把 |bǎ / 我 |wǒ|my / 的 |de / 手机 |shǒu jī|phone / 放 |fàng|put / 在 |zài|in / 包里 |bāo lǐ|her bag / 了 |le / 。 }

She put my phone in her bag.

Remember: 把 carries the **hand radical** 扌 — 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: 把书放在桌子上 ✓.
- Negation goes **before** 把: 别把它扔了, 没把作业做完 — never inside the 把 phrase.
- Feeling / perception verbs (喜欢, 想, 看见, 听) **can't** take 把 — there's no “result” to a feeling.
- (把 is also a measure word for handled things — 一把伞 “an umbrella” — a different word entirely.)

被 — “got done to” (the passive)

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

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

{zh: 我 |wǒ|my / 的 |de / 手机 |shǒu jī|phone / 被 |bèi|got / 偷 |tōu|stolen / 了 |le / 。 }

My phone got stolen.

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 被 |bèi|by / 警察 |jǐng chá|the police / 抓 |zhuā|caught / 了 |le / 。 }

He was caught by the police.

Remember: **把** leads with the doer, **被** leads with the victim. 小偷把手机偷了 (“the thief took the phone”) ↔ 手机被小偷偷了 (“the phone got taken by the thief”). **被** even hides 衣 (a quilt/cover) — picture the action *laid over* the subject.

Watch out

- The verb can’t be **bare** — it needs a 了 or result: 咖啡被我喝完了 ✓, not 咖啡被我喝.
- The **doer is optional**: 我被骗了 (“I was tricked”), doer unknown or unimportant.
- Negate **before 被**: 没被发现 (“wasn’t discovered”).
- These sentences usually report something **bad** happening to the subject.