

Complex Sentence Patterns

Ref Hsk3 Grammar

除了 ... (以外) — “except” or “besides”

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

Structure: 除了 + X (+ 以外) , Subject + 都 / 也 / 还 ...

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

Except for him, we've all been there.

{zh: 除了 |chú le|besides / 中文 |Zhōng wén|Chinese / , 他 |tā|he / 还 |hái|also / 会 |huì|can / 说 |shuō|speak / 日语 |Rì yǔ|Japanese / 。 }

Besides Chinese, he also speaks Japanese.

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

Watch out

- 以外 (or 之外) is optional and changes nothing.

如果 ... 的话 — “if”

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

Structure: 如果 + Condition + 的话, (就) + Result

{zh: 如果 |rú guǒ|if / 明天 |míng tiān|tomorrow / 下雨 |xià yǔ|rains / 的话 |de huà| / , 我们 |wǒ men|we / 就 |jiù|then / 不 |bù|not / 去 |qù|go / 了 |le / 。 }

If it rains tomorrow, we won't go.

{zh: 不 |bù|not / 想 |xiǎng|want to / 去 |qù|go / 的话 |de huà|if / 就 |jiù|then / 别 |bié|don't / 去 |qù|go / 了 |le / 。 }

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

Remember: 如果 and 的话 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”: 有事给我打电话 (“call me if anything comes up”).

Watch out

- 的话 is conversational — fine to drop it and keep just 如果 ... 就 ...

如果 ... 就 ... — “if ... then ...”

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

Structure: 如果 + Condition , 就 + Result

{zh: 如果 |rú guǒ|if / 有 |yǒu|have / 困难 |kùn nán|difficulty / , 就 |jiù|then / 给 |gěi / 我 |wǒ|me / 打电话 |dǎ diàn huà|call / 。 }

If you run into any trouble, then call me.

{zh: 如果 |rú guǒ|if / 他 |tā|he / 知道 |zhī dào|knew / , 那 |nà|then / 他 |tā|he / 一定 |yí dìng|surely / 会 |huì|would / 告诉 |gào su|tell / 我 |wǒ|me / 。 }

If he knew, he'd surely tell me.

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

Watch out

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

不但 ... 而且 ... — “not only ... but also ...”

不但 ... 而且 ... 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 + 不但 + A , 而且 + B

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

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

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

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

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

Watch out

- Keep **one subject** across both halves (他不但 ..., 而且 ...); if the subject changes, **不但** moves in front of the subject (不但他来了, 而且 ...).