

Verbs

Ref Hsk4 Grammar

/ / / — making someone do something

These **causative** verbs slot a **person** between the verb and what they end up doing — “make / let / ask / cause someone to ...” Sort them by tone: (everyday “make / let”), (colloquial “tell”), (polite “ask / invite”), (formal “cause”). At HSK 4 the result can be a verb *or* an adjective.

Structure: Subject + / / / + Person + Predicate

{zh: |nǐ|you / |wèi shén me|why / |bù|not / |ràng|let / |wǒ|me / |qù|go / ? }

Why won't you let me go?

{zh: |zhè bù|this / |diàn yǐng|film / |ràng|makes / |rén|people / |hěn|very / |gǎn dòng|moved / 。 }

This film is really moving.

{zh: |tā|his / |de / |yǎn jiǎng|speech / |shǐ|made / |tīng zhòng|the audience / |fēi cháng|very / |jī dòng|excited / 。 }

His speech made the audience very excited.

Remember: four causatives, sorted by politeness: **(formal)** → **(neutral)** → **(casual)** → **(polite)**. New at HSK 4: the result can be an **adjective** of feeling — (“makes people moved”), (“excites people”).

Watch out

- covers both “make” and “let” — context decides which.

/ — “it depends on”

/ — literally “have to look at” — is the everyday “it depends on” The factor it hinges on usually carries a question word.

Structure: / + / + Factor

{zh: |zhè|that / |děi kàn|depends on / |nǐ|your / |de / |shí jiān|schedule / 。 }

That depends on your schedule.

{zh: |qù bu qù|whether I go / |děi kàn|depends on / |wǒ|my / |de / |xīn qíng|mood / 。 }

Whether I'll go depends on my mood.

Remember: = “(I’ll) have to look at...” = “it depends on...”. The deciding factor almost always holds a question word: , . Quick fixed reply: (“depends on the situation”).

Watch out

- here is *děi* (“have to”), not the structural (*de*) of complements.

— “it seems, as if”

softens a statement to an **impression** — “it seems, looks like, as if.” With a subject it’s “X seems ...”; with no subject it’s “it seems that ...” It can pair with (“as if”) at the end.

Structure: (Subject +) + Predicate

{zh: |tā|he / |hǎo xiàng|seems / |shì|to be / |Yīng guó rén|British / 。 }

He seems to be British.

{zh: |hǎo xiàng|it seems / |yào|going to / |xià yǔ|rain / |le / 。 }

It looks like it’s going to rain.

Remember: = “seems / as if” — a soft hedge, literally “much resembles.” No subject → “it seems that...” (). Its formal twin is ; don’t mix it up with (a belief that turned out *wrong*).

Watch out

- It’s softer than a flat statement — it signals you’re not fully sure.

..... — “lies in”

pins down where something’s **essence or key** rests — “lies in, consists in, is a matter of.” It’s a formal, essay-style verb.

Structure: Topic + + Key Point

{zh: |chéng gōng|success / |zài yú|lies in / |jiān chí|perseverance / 。 }

Success lies in perseverance.

{zh: |lǐ wù|a gift / |zài yú|is about / |xīn yì|the thought / , |bù|not / |zài yú|about / |guì zhòng|how costly / 。 }

A gift is about the thought, not how costly it is.

Remember: = “the key lies **IN**...” (“at” + “in”) — points to where the heart of the matter sits. With a *person* it means “is up to”: (“whether to go is up to you”).

Watch out

- Formal and written — in speech you’d say or instead.

— “(mistakenly) think, assume”

Chinese has a dedicated verb for a belief that turned out **wrong**: 错. Whatever follows is the *incorrect* idea you held — the sentence usually carries a quiet “...but I was wrong.”

Structure: Subject + + (wrong belief)

{zh: |wǒ|I / |yǐ wéi|thought / |tā|he / |shì|was / |Dé guó rén|German / 。 }

I thought he was German (he isn’t).

{zh: |bié|don’t / |yǐ wéi|think / |wǒ|I / |bù|don’t / |zhī dào|know / 。 }

Don’t think I don’t know.

Remember: = a belief that proved **WRONG** (“I thought X... turns out not”). For a belief you simply hold, use / . The giveaway opener: ... (“I’d assumed (wrongly) that...”).

Watch out

- Swapping for changes the meaning — makes no claim that you were mistaken.

— “through; to pass”

wears two hats: as a **verb**, “go through (a place) / pass (an exam)”; as a **preposition**, “by means of, via.”

Structure: + Place / Exam (verb) · + Method / Agent , (preposition)

{zh: |wǒ|I / |tōng guò|passed / |le / |zhè ge|this / |kǎo shì|exam / 。 }

I passed this exam.

{zh: |wǒ men|we / |tōng guò|through / |tā|his / |de / |péng you|friend / |zhǎo dào|found / |le / |tā|him / 。 }

We found him through his friend.

Remember: = “pass through” — through an *exam/place* (verb: 通过) or through a *method/middleman* (preposition: 通过 “via a friend”). Compare 经过, which leans on “after a process.”

Watch out

- As a preposition it sets up a means before the main clause: .

— “come from”

is one compact verb for a source or origin — “come / originate from.” It’s more formal than ... , perfect for introductions, and it stretches to abstract sources too.

Structure: Subject + + Place / Source

{zh: |wǒ|I / |lái zì|come from / |Zhōng guó|China / 。 }

I’m from China.

{zh: |wǒ|my / |de / |zhè ge|this / |xiǎng fǎ|idea / |lái zì|comes from / |shēng huó|everyday life / 。 }

This idea of mine comes from everyday life.

Remember: = “comes from” in one tidy word (“come” + “from”). Great for intros (...) and abstract origins (... , “inspiration comes from...”). Casual version:

Watch out

- It takes its source *directly*, with no : ✓, not .

— the “dummy” verb

A bare can stand in for a more specific verb — “(let me) do it, your turn, have a go” — when the real action is obvious from context. It’s a short phrase ending in (sometimes), usually with or .

Structure: (+) Subject + (+)

{zh: |wǒ|I / |lái|do it / |ba / 。 }

Let me do it.

{zh: |nǐ|you / |xiě|write / |de / |hǎo kàn|nicely / , |nǐ|you / |lái|do it / |ba / 。 }

You write nicely — you do it.

Remember: this **does NOT mean “come”** — it’s a placeholder for the obvious verb, like English “I’ll *get* this.” (“I’ll do it”), (“your turn”), (“let him have a go”).

Watch out

- Only use it when the real action is clear from context — otherwise name the verb.