

Verb phrases

Ref Hsk4 Grammar

+ — “and (also)”

Between two verb phrases, links them as “and, and also.” It’s picky: it joins **verbs or clauses** (never nouns — that’s ’s job), usually two-syllable verbs, with a considered, written ring.

Structure: Verb Phrase 1 + + Verb Phrase 2

{zh: |wǒ|I / |tóng yì|agree with / |bìng|and / |zhī chí|support /
|nǐ|your / |de / |jué dìng|decision / 。 }

I agree with and support your decision.

{zh: |huì yì|the meeting / |tǎo lùn|discussed / |bìng|and / |tōng
guò|approved / |le / |jì huà|the plan / 。 }

The meeting discussed and approved the plan.

Remember: joins verbs/clauses, joins nouns. “Discussed approved” (verbs) ✓; “tea coffee” (nouns) ✓. is the formal “and” for actions.

Watch out

- Don’t use between nouns — ×.

+ — “do ... less”

before a verb means do **less** of it — the staple of advice and gentle scolding. The bit that flips for English speakers: comes **before** the verb, where English puts “less” after.

Structure: + Verb (+ Object)

{zh: |qǐng|please / |shǎo|less / |fàng|add / |diǎn|a bit of / |yán|salt /
。 }

Use a bit less salt, please.

{zh: |shǎo|less / |shuō|talk / |fèi huà|nonsense / ! }

Quit the babbling!

Remember: / go **BEFORE** the verb — (“drink less water”), the reverse of English order. It softens a blunt “don’t”: (“mind your own

business,” lit. “meddle less”).

Watch out

- Never — the amount-word leads: , .

+ — “do ... more”

before a verb means do **more** of it. Like its twin , it sits **before** the verb — exactly where English puts “more” *after* (“eat more” →).

Structure: + Verb (+ Object)

{zh: |duō|more / |chī|eat / |diǎn|a bit / 。 }

Eat a bit more.

{zh: |yé ye|grandpa / , |nǐ|you / |yào|should / |duō|more / |chū
qù|go out / |zǒu zou|for walks / 。 }

Grandpa, you should go out for walks more.

Remember: “eat more” flips to “more-eat” (). and both lead the verb — that front position is the whole trick, and it’s the opposite of English.

Watch out

- It’s the mirror of — both are everyday advice words (,).

+ Person + — naming who does it

spotlights **who is responsible** for an action — “(it’s) for X to do, handled by X.” It’s at home in formal and business contexts.

Structure: Topic + + Person + Verb

{zh: |zhè|this / |jiàn / |shì|matter / |yóu / |wǒ|me / |fù zé|is
handled by / 。 }

I’m responsible for this matter.

{zh: |zhè ge|this / |xiàng mù|project / |yóu|by / |Xiǎo Lǐ|Xiao Li
/ |lái / |wán chéng|to be done / 。 }

This project is to be done by Xiao Li.

Remember: **X = “it’s X’s to handle.”** It assigns the doer or the responsibility — (“I’ll take care of it”), (“it’s your call”). Formal in tone.

Watch out

- Don't confuse it with the passive — assigns *responsibility*, not “suffered by.”

— “moreover, and also”

joins verb phrases or clauses — “and, moreover.” Plain, it just means “and” (like); with / it means “**moreover**,” pushing the first idea a step further.

Structure: VP1 + + VP2 · VP1 + + / + VP2

{zh: |zhè ge|this / |fāng fǎ|method / |jiǎn dān|simple / , |bìng qiě|and also / |yǒu xiào|effective / 。 }

This method is simple, and effective too.

{zh: |wǒ|I / |tōng zhī|told / |le / |suǒ yǒu rén|everyone / , |bìng qiě|moreover / |hái|also / |zhǔn bèi|prepared / |le / |cái liào|the materials / 。 }

I told everyone, and moreover prepared the materials.

Remember: = “and (what’s more).” With / it escalates (“moreover, on top of that”). It’s the more written cousin of .

Watch out

- In the ... / escalation, you can’t shrink it to a bare .

+ / — “never”

with a negative means “never” — and the choice of negative matters. + = “never (as a rule, by habit);” + () + Verb + = “have never (done it in my life).” In speech both shorten to .

Structure: Subject + + + VP · Subject + + () + Verb +

{zh: |tā|she / |cóng lái|never / |bù / |hē jiǔ|drinks / 。 }

She never drinks.

{zh: |tā|she / |cóng lái|never / |méi|has / |jiàn|met / |guo / |tā|her / |mā ma|mother / 。 }

She has never met her mother.

Remember: = “never (habit/rule);” ... = “never (in experience),” with the experiential . Habit → ; lifetime experience → Both can shrink to / .

Watch out

- Don’t drop the in the experience version: ✓, not .

+ — “worth ...ing”

says an action is **worth** doing — it goes before a verb. Keep it apart from money: is about whether *doing* something pays off; for cash value you want plain .

Structure: (Subject +) + Verb

{zh: |zhè ge|this / |xiǎng fǎ|idea / |zhí de|worth / |kǎo lǜ|considering / 。 }

This idea is worth considering.

{zh: |zhè|this / |běn / |shū|book / |hěn|well / |zhí de|worth / |yí kàn|a read / 。 }

This book is well worth a read.

Remember: = worth DOING (an action); = worth MONEY. (“worth a look”), (“worth learning from”) — but (“this is worth 100 kuai”).

Watch out

- Follow with a verb, not a price — for price, use .

+ + Time — “(do) until”

after a verb, plus a time or event, works like “**until**.” It often takes to stress the unbroken stretch. The structural catch: when the verb has an object, you **repeat the verb**.

Structure: (+) Verb + + Time / Event · Verb + Obj + Verb + + Time

{zh: |wǒ men|we / |zài|at / |jiǔ bā|the bar / |yì zhí|right / |liáo|chatted / |dào|until / |bàn yè|midnight / 。 }

We chatted at the bar until midnight.

{zh: |tā|she / |xiě|did / |zuò yè|homework / |xiě|until / |dào / |shí èr diǎn bàn|12:30 / 。 }

She did homework until 12:30.

Remember: with an object, repeat the verb: (do-homework, do-until-12). A bare ... is wrong. ... underlines that the action ran the whole way to that point.

Watch out

- The repeated-verb rule trips everyone — say the verb once for the object, once for the + time.

— “cause (trouble), make (badly)”

(or just) pins the blame on something for a **bad outcome** — “(it) caused / led to (something bad) for me.” There’s always a note of complaint, and the cause comes before .

Structure: Reason , () + Undesirable Situation

{zh: |xià wǔ|in the afternoon / |hē|drank / |le / |liǎng|two / |bēi / |kā fēi|coffees / , |hài de|which kept / |wǒ|me / |wǎn shang|at night / |shuì bu zháo|from sleeping / 。 }

I had two coffees, which kept me from sleeping at night.

{zh: |nǐ|you / |hài de|made / |wǒ men|us / |dōu|all / |chí dào|late / |le / 。 }

You made us all late.

Remember: = “harm,” so **always blames** — “...which (annoyingly) made me...” Reserve it for *bad* results; the can drop ().

Watch out

- Never use it for a good outcome — for a neutral “make/cause,” use / .

— separable (verb-object) words

A surprising number of “verbs” are secretly **verb + object** pairs — (“meet” = see-face), (“sleep” = sleep-a-sleep), (“help” = do-a-favour), (“marry” = tie-marriage). Other words slot **between** the two halves, and you **can’t** add another object after the whole word.

Structure: Verb + (insert) + Object

{zh: |wǒ men|we / |jiàn|have met / |guo / |miàn / 。 }

We’ve met before.

{zh: |tā|he / |bāng|did / |le / |wǒ|me / |yí ge|a / |máng|favour / 。 }

He did me a favour.

Remember: a separable word is **verb + its own object stuck together** (+). Inserts (/ / a number-phrase) go *between* the halves — , — and you **can’t** bolt a new object on the end: ✓, never .

Watch out

- This is *the* classic error: × → ✓. The “object” slot is already taken by .

+ + + + ... — “while ...ing, suddenly”

Double up **Verb** + to set a rolling background action; then springs the next event — “as one was ...ing, ... (suddenly) happened.” It catches a turn that sneaks up *during* the action, often before you notice.

Structure: Verb + + Verb + + + Result +

{zh: |zǒu|walking / |zhe / |zǒu|walking / |zhe / |jiù|then / |dào jiā|got home / |le / 。 }

Walking along, before we knew it we were home.

{zh: |tā|she / |shuō|talking / |zhe / |shuō|talking / |zhe / , |jiù|suddenly / |kū|cried / |le / 。 }

As she talked, she suddenly started crying.

Remember: V V ... = “as I kept ...ing, before I knew it ...!” The doubled keeps an action rolling; + springs the surprise that crept up during it ().

Watch out

- Both verbs are the *same* ongoing action; introduces the new thing that emerged from it.