

Complements

Ref Hsk4 Grammar

+ — “up; gather; start to”

The complement does three everyday jobs. Literally “**up**” (“stand up”); figuratively “**gather** / **put away**” (“tidy away,” “save up,” “hide”); and “**start to**” (“burst into song”). The “gather” sense loves a sentence.

Structure: Verb + . + Object + Verb +

{zh: |bǎ / |nǐ|your / |de / |wán jù|toys / |dōu|all / |shōu|put / |qǐ lái|away / 。 }

Put all your toys away.

{zh: |dà jiā|everyone / |chàng|start / |qǐ lái|singing / , |tiào|start / |qǐ lái|dancing / ! }

Everyone, start singing and dancing!

Remember: picture as “**up and into action**”: literal up (), gather *up* and stow away (,), and *kick off* an action (, “it comes up to mind = recall”). The gather sense pairs with .

Watch out

- (“recall”) vs (“think up”) — the complement changes the meaning; don’t swap them.

+ / — direction complements

Add (“towards me”) or (“away from me”) to show **which way** the action moves relative to the speaker. They fuse into compounds — , , , .

Structure: Verb + / . Verb + compound

{zh: |wǒ|I’m / |zài / |lóu shàng|upstairs / , |nǐ|you / |shàng lái|come up / 。 }

I’m upstairs — come up.

{zh: |kě yǐ|may / |dài|bring / |péng you|friends / |guò lái|over / |ma / ? }

Can I bring some friends over?

Remember: = toward me, = away from me (“come in” / “go in”). The trap: a **place** object slots *between* the verb and / — / , never .

Watch out

- That place-in-the-middle rule is the classic slip: ✓, ×.

/ + — “start to / seems”

A second life for . After an **adjective**, it marks a quality **beginning to set in** — “starts to get ...” After a **perception verb**, it means “(seems) ... when you do it” — (“looks”), (“sounds”), (“tastes”).

Structure: Adjective + + . Perception verb + + Adjective

{zh: |tiān qì|the weather / |rè|hot / |qǐ lái|getting / |le / 。 }

The weather’s starting to get hot.

{zh: |tā|he / |kàn|looks / |qǐ lái / |hěn|very / |yǒu hǎo|friendly / 。 }

He looks very friendly.

Remember: Adj + = a change **CATCHING** (“turning hot”); / / + = “looks/sounds/tastes.” The first catches right at the moment it starts; the second is the sense-verb frame.

Watch out

- Adj + marks the *onset*, so it usually closes with (“starting to...now”).

+ / + — potential complements

Slot (“can”) or (“can’t”) between a verb and its result to say whether that result is **achievable**. They’re built from result complements (, , ,). The object can follow the complement or be fronted.

Structure: Verb + / + Complement

{zh: |nǐ|you / |tīng|hear / |de|can / |dǒng|understand / |Shàng hǎi huà|Shanghainese / |ma / ? }

Can you understand Shanghainese?

{zh: |zhè zhǒng|this kind of / |shǒu jī|phone / |xiàn zài|now / |mǎi|buy / |bù|can’t / |dào|get / |le / 。 }

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

Remember: = can, = can't, **wedged into the verb** (/ , /). It asks whether you can *reach the result* — different from (‘‘be allowed / have the chance’’).

Watch out

- Negate with the form, not + verb: ✓ (more natural than).