

Basic/Simple Sentence Patterns

Ref Hsk4 Grammar

... — “even”

... () spotlights a surprising case — “even ...” The catch English speakers miss: you must keep **both** parts (English drops to just “even”). The highlighted item — even an object — jumps to the **front**.

Structure: + Subject / Object + (+ /) + Verb

{zh: |zhè ge|this / |wèn tí|question / |tài|so / |jiǎn dān|simple /
|le / , |lián|even / |sān suì|a three-year-old / |xiǎo hái|child /
|dōu|even / |zhī dào|knows / 。 }

This is so easy that even a three-year-old knows it.

{zh: |tā|he / |shén me|anything / |dōu / |chī|eats / , |lián|even /
|gǒu ròu|dog meat / |dōu|even / |chī|eats / 。 }

He eats anything — even dog meat.

Remember: **X** = “even X” — **and you need BOTH words.** English keeps only “even”; Chinese frames it as (the surprising item) ... (sweeps it in). The item leaps to the front: , never .

Watch out

- Dropping the breaks it — always needs its / partner.

+ — “every / any”

A question word + sweeps over **all** cases — “everyone, anything, anywhere, whenever.” Add / and it flips to the total negative: “none, nothing, nowhere.”

Structure: Question Word + + Predicate

{zh: |shéi|everyone / |dōu / |xǐ huan|likes / |měi shí|good food / 。 }

Everyone loves good food.

{zh: |wǒ|I / |nǎr|anywhere / |dōu / |bù|don’t / |xiǎng|want /
|qù|to go / 。 }

I don’t want to go anywhere.

Remember: question word + = “all / every”; + / = “none / nothing.” (everyone), (everything), (everywhere), (no matter how) — then a / turns each into its negative ().

Watch out

- The question word here is the indefinite “any,” not a real question — no question mark.

A + + B + + Number + — “N times as much”

counts multiples — “A B N” = “A is N times B.” Watch the maths: **N is the total**, $\times N$ — is “three times (as much),” *not* “three times *more*.”

Structure: A + + B + + Number +

{zh: |tā|his / |xiàn zài|now / |de / |gōng zī|salary / |shì|is /
|liǎng nián qián|two years ago / |de / |sān bèi|three times / 。 }

His salary is now three times what it was two years ago.

{zh: |zhè ge|this / |chéng shì|city’s / |de / |rén kǒu|population /
|shì|is / |nà ge|that one’s / |de / |liǎng bèi|twice / 。 }

This city’s population is twice that one’s.

Remember: **N = the TOTAL ($\times N$), not “N times more.”** = $3\times$, = $2\times$ (twice). The ... frame brackets the two things compared.

Watch out

- (“increased threefold”) is read ambiguously in real life — be careful with it in maths contexts.

+ / + ... — “not ... at all”

+ / + / is the emphatic, absolute negative — “not (even) ... at all, not one bit.”

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

{zh: |nǐ|you / |yì diǎn|at all / |yě / |bù|not / |pàng|fat / 。 }

You’re not fat at all.

{zh: |wǒ|I / |yì diǎn|at all / |dōu / |méi|didn’t / |tīng
dǒng|understand / 。 }

I didn't understand a single bit.

Remember: it's the / **sitting between** and / that makes it absolute — “not even the smallest bit.” A bare / (no /) is noticeably weaker.

Watch out

- Keep all the pieces: + / + / — drop the / and the “at all” force fades.

... — “not sure what’s best”

End a clause with after and you get “(I) don’t know what would be best” — that stuck, can’t-decide feeling. It’s often .

Structure: Subject + + Question Phrase + ()

{zh: |wǒ|I / |zhēn de|really / |bù zhī dào|don’t know / |zěn me bàn|what to do / |cái / |hǎo|best / 。 }

I really don't know what would be best to do.

{zh: |bù zhī dào|not sure / |sòng|to give / |shén me|what / |lǐ wù|gift / |hǎo|best / 。 }

Not sure what gift would be best.

Remember: the trailing = “...would be best” — (“don’t know what on earth to do for the best”). The sharpens the dilemma.

Watch out

- The sits at the very end, after the question phrase — it’s “what’s *best*,” not “good.”

... / — “for ..., generally speaking”

+ **person** + means “for / as far as someone is concerned”; means “generally speaking.” Both open a sentence to frame the viewpoint that follows.

Structure: + Person + , ,

{zh: |duì|for / |wǒ|me / |lái shuō|as far as concerned / , |jiàn kāng|health / |zuì|the most / |zhòng yào|important / 。 }

For me, health matters most.

{zh: |yì bān lái shuō|generally speaking / , |sī lì xué xiào|private schools / |dōu / |bǐ jiào|fairly / |guì|expensive / 。 }

Generally speaking, private schools are fairly pricey.

Remember: X = “from X’s angle”; = “as a rule.” Both are sentence-openers that set the frame. A cousin: ... = “take ... as an example.”

Watch out

- It’s ... , not ... — the is part of the fixed frame.