”But” Statements

HSK 4 Grammar

Original teaching practice. Read one pattern, cover its model and try the questions before checking the separate answer section. Examples adapted from Chinese Grammar Wiki (AllSet Learning, CC BY-NC-SA) retain the course-reference provenance.

尽管 … ，但是 … (although)

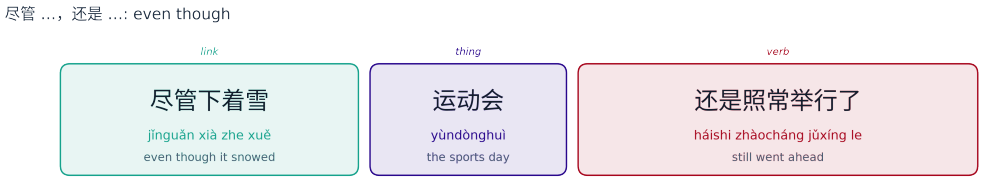
Despite the snow

- The school sports day went ahead even though it was snowing.
- **尽管下着雪，运动会还是照常举行了。** – “Although it was snowing, the sports day still went ahead as planned.”

尽管 A，但是 / 可是 / 还是 B

- **尽管 A，(但是) B** = “although / despite A, B”: the fact A does not stop B.
- The second clause often has 但是, 可是, 还是, 也 or 却.

尽管很累，但是他还是坚持跑完了。
jǐn guǎn hěn lèi dàn shì tā hái shi jiān chí pǎo wán le
Word guide: 尽管 – although; 很 – very; 累 – tired; 但是 – but; 他 – he; 还是 – still; 坚持 – kept; 跑 – running; 完 – to the end.



A fact, not a possibility

- **尽管他很努力，可是成绩还是不太好。** – “Although he works hard, his grades still aren’t very good.”
- 尽管 states something true; for “even if” (maybe true), use 即使.

尽管他很努力，可是成绩还是不太好。
jǐn guǎn tā hěn nǔ lì kě shì chéng jì hái shi bú tài hǎo
Word guide: 尽管 – although; 他 – he; 很 – very; 努力 – hard-working; 可是 – but; 成绩 – grades; 还是 – still; 不太 – not very; 好 – good.

尽管 versus 尽管 + Verb

- 尽管 at the start of a clause = “although”. Before a verb, 尽管 = “feel free to”: 有问题尽管问.
- Do not combine 尽管 with 即使 or 虽然 in the same clause; one is enough.

尽管 versus 虽然

- 虽然 is the everyday “although”: 虽然下雨，我们还是去了.
- 尽管 is a bit stronger and more formal, and stresses that the fact really holds.

虽然下雨，我们还是去了。
suī rán xià yǔ wǒ men hái shi qù le
Word guide: 虽然 – although; 下雨 – it rained; 我们 – we; 还是 – still; 去 – went.

Recap

- **尽管 A，但是 / 还是 B** = although A (a fact), B anyway.
- 尽管 + Verb = feel free to; 即使 = even if (hypothetical).

Practise this pattern step by step.

倒 (actually / on the contrary)

Not what you’d expect

- Your friend expected the small restaurant to be cheap, but it was pricey and the fancy one was cheap.
- **这家小饭馆倒挺贵的。** – “This little restaurant is actually quite expensive (surprisingly).”

倒 + predicate = actually, contrary to expectation

- **倒** marks a result opposite to what you would expect: “actually, on the contrary”.
- It sits after the subject, before the verb or adjective: 他倒不着急.

大家都很担心，他倒不着急。
dà jiā dōu hěn dān xīn tā dào bù zháo jí
Word guide: 大家 – everyone; 都 – all; 很 – very; 担心 – worried; 他 – he; 倒 – actually; 不 – not; 着急 – anxious.

倒: contrary to what you'd expect



Softening or conceding

- **东西倒是不错，就是太贵了。** – "The goods are fine, it's just that they're too expensive." (倒是 concedes a point before a "but")
- **你说得倒容易！** – "That's easy for you to say!" (ironic)

东西倒是不错，就是太贵了。
dōng xi dào shì bú cuò jiù shì tài guì le
Word guide: 东西 – the goods; 倒是 – admittedly; 不错 – fine; 就是 – it's just that; 太 – too; 贵 – expensive.

Contrast with an expectation

- 倒 needs an expectation to go against (stated or obvious); without one it sounds odd.
- It goes after the subject: 他倒不着急, not 倒他不着急.

倒 versus 却 and 反而

- 却 = "but, yet", a plain contrast: 他很累，却睡不着.
- 反而 = "on the contrary, instead", stronger: 吃了药，病反而更重了.

吃了药，病反而更重了。
chī le yào bìng fǎn ér gèng zhòng le
Word guide: 吃 – take; 药 – medicine; 病 – the illness; 反而 – instead; 更 – even more; 重 – serious.

Recap

- **倒 + predicate** = actually (contrary to expectation); **倒是 …，就是 …** = granted …, but ….
- 却 = plain contrast; 反而 = the opposite happened.

Practise this pattern step by step.

却 + Predicate (however / yet)

Tired but awake

- After a long day you lie in bed, exhausted, but your mind won't stop.
- **我很累，却睡不着。** – "I'm exhausted, yet I can't sleep."

Subject + 却 + predicate = yet, however

- **却** marks a contrast and goes after the subject of the second clause, before the verb.
- 他很有钱，却不快乐 – "He's rich, but he isn't happy."

他很有钱，却不快乐。
tā hěn yǒu qián què bú kuài lè
Word guide: 他 – he; 很 – very; 有钱 – rich; 却 – yet; 不 – not; 快乐 – happy.

却: but, yet (before the verb)



With 但是 / 可是

- It can follow 但是: **我想帮他，但是他却不需要。** – "I wanted to help him, but he didn't need it."
- It often appears in writing and stories.

我想帮他，但是他却不需要。
wǒ xiǎng bāng tā dàn shì tā què bù xū yào
Word guide: 我 – I; 想 – wanted to; 帮 – help; 他 – him; 但是 – but; 他 – he; 却 – yet; 不 – not; 需要 – need it.

却 never comes first

- 却 is an adverb: it goes after the subject, never at the start: 他却不来, not 却他不来.
- 但是 starts the clause; 却 follows the subject. They can be used together.

■ 却 versus 但是

- 但是 is the general “but” and opens the clause.
- 却 stresses the surprising contrast and sits inside the clause: 天很冷，他却只穿了一件 T 恤.

天很冷，他却只穿了一件 T 恤。
tiān hěn lěng tā què zhǐ chuān le yí jiàn T xù
Word guide: 天 – it; 很 – very; 冷 – cold; 他 – he; 却 – yet; 只 – only; 穿 – wore; 一件 – a; T 恤 – T-shirt.

■ Recap

- **Subject + 却 + predicate** = yet, however (a surprising contrast).
- After the subject, never first; can combine with 但是 / 可是.

Practise this pattern step by step.

Practice without the models

■ 尽管 … ，但是 … (although)

1501.1 Complete: “Although it was late, he was still working.” …… 很晚了，他还在工作。

1501.2 In 有问题尽管问我, what does 尽管 mean?

- A. because
- B. although
- C. even if
- D. feel free to

1501.3 Build: “Although he works hard, his grades still aren’t good.”

Arrange all chunks: 成绩还是 / 不太好。/ 尽管他很努力 / ，可是

1501.4 尽管 introduces something that is actually true.

True or false? Explain or repair the statement.

1501.5 The school sports day went ahead even though it was snowing. Close the examples. Say a Mandarin response, then write it in Chinese. Explain briefly in English what the lesson’s pattern adds. Compare with the model, then change one detail and try again.

Write or say your own response before reading the key.

■ 倒 (actually / on the contrary)

1502.1 Complete: “Everyone was nervous; he, surprisingly, was calm.” 大家都很紧张，他 …… 很平静。

1502.2 What does 你说得倒容易 suggest?

- A. You said it again.
- B. You spoke slowly.
- C. It’s easy for you to say (but hard to do).
- D. The speaker agrees it is easy.

1502.3 Build: “The goods are fine, it’s just that they’re too expensive.”

Arrange all chunks: ，/ 就是 / 太贵了。/ 东西倒是不错

1502.4 反而 is stronger than 却.

True or false? Explain or repair the statement.

1502.5 Your friend expected the small restaurant to be cheap, but it was pricey and the fancy one was cheap. Close the examples. Say a Mandarin response, then write it in Chinese. Explain briefly in English what the lesson’s pattern adds. Compare with the model, then change one detail and try again.

Write or say your own response before reading the key.

■ 却 + Predicate (however / yet)

1503.1 Complete: “It’s spring, yet it’s still very cold.” 已经是春天了，天气 …… 还很冷。

1503.2 Which sentence is correct?

- A. 他很聪明，他却不努力。
- B. 却他很聪明，不努力。
- C. 他很聪明，不努力却。
- D. 他很聪明，却他不努力。

1503.3 Build: “I wanted to help him, but he didn’t need it.”

Arrange all chunks: ，但是 / 他却 / 我想帮他 / 不需要。

1503.4 却 can open a clause on its own, like 但是.

True or false? Explain or repair the statement.

1503.5 After a long day you lie in bed, exhausted, but your mind won’t stop. Close the examples. Say a Mandarin response, then write it in Chinese. Explain briefly in English what the lesson’s pattern adds. Compare with the model, then change one detail and try again.

Write or say your own response before reading the key.

Answers and explanations

■ 尽管 … ，但是 … (although)

1501.1 尽管

尽管 + fact, then the result despite it.

1501.2 D. feel free to

Before a verb, 尽管 = feel free to.

1501.3 尽管他很努力，可是成绩还是不太好。

尽管 A，可是 … 还是 B.

1501.4 True.

For a hypothetical "even if", use 即使.

1501.5 One possible response: 尽管下着雪，运动会还是照常举行了。

Check meaning and form:

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 尽管 at the start of a clause = "although". Before a verb, 尽管 = "feel free to": 有问题尽管问.
- Do not combine 尽管 with 即使 or 虽然 in the same clause; one is enough.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

This is supported productive practice. Compare meaning and structure; your answer need not copy the model. A partner or teacher must hear the spoken response to comment on pronunciation.

■ 倒 (actually / on the contrary)

1502.1 倒

倒 marks a result against expectation.

1502.2 C. It's easy for you to say (but hard to do).

Ironic 倒: easy to say, not to do.

1502.3 东西倒是不错，就是太贵了。

倒是 …，就是 ….

1502.4 True.

反而 says the opposite of what you'd expect actually happened.

1502.5 One possible response: 这家小饭馆倒挺贵的。

Check meaning and form:

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 倒 needs an expectation to go against (stated or obvious); without one it sounds odd.
- It goes after the subject: 他倒不着急, not 倒他不着急.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

This is supported productive practice. Compare meaning and structure; your answer need not copy the model. A partner or teacher must hear the spoken response to comment on pronunciation.

■ 却 + Predicate (however / yet)

1503.1 却

却 after the subject marks the contrast.

1503.2 A. 他很聪明，他却不努力。

他很聪明，他却不努力 is right: 却 is an adverb, so it goes after the subject of its clause. Unlike 但是, it can never start the clause.

1503.3 我想帮他，但是他却不需要。

但是 + subject + 却 + predicate.

1503.4 False.

却 is an adverb after the subject.

1503.5 One possible response: 我很累，却睡不着。

Check meaning and form:

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- 却 is an adverb: it goes after the subject, never at the start: 他却不来, not 却他不来.
- 但是 starts the clause; 却 follows the subject. They can be used together.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

This is supported productive practice. Compare meaning and structure; your answer need not copy the model. A partner or teacher must hear the spoken response to comment on pronunciation.