Complements

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.

Verb + 起来 (in terms of doing it)

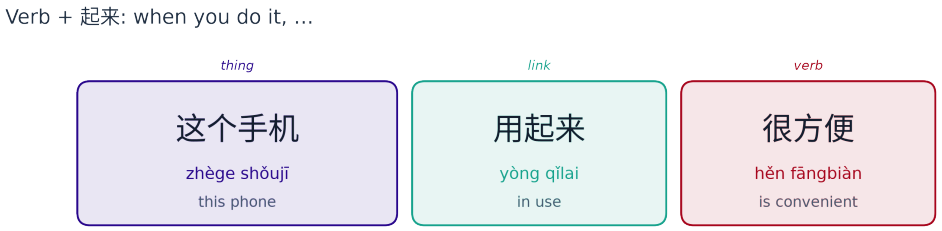
Easy to use?

- A friend asks what you think of your new phone after a week.
- **这个手机用起来很方便。** – "This phone is very convenient to use."

Verb + 起来 + comment = when you do it

- **Verb + 起来** = "when it comes to doing it, in the doing": the comment judges the experience.
- 说起来容易，做起来难 – "Easier said than done."

说起来容易，做起来难。
shuō qǐ lai róng yì zuò qǐ lai nán
Word guide: 说 – say; 起来 – (in doing); 容易 – easy; 做 – do; 起来 – (in doing); 难 – hard.



Senses and experience

- **这个菜吃起来有点儿辣。** – "This dish tastes a bit spicy."
- **这首歌听起来很熟悉。** – "This song sounds familiar."

这首歌听起来很熟悉。
zhè shǒu gē tīng qǐ lai hěn shú xī
Word guide: 这 – this; 首 – (measure word); 歌 – song; 听 – listen; 起来 – (when); 很 – very; 熟悉 – familiar.

The thing judged comes first

- Put what you are judging first: 这本书读起来很有意思, not 读起来这本书很有意思 in most speech.
- 起来 here does not mean "get up" or "start"; it marks the experience of doing.

Three uses of 起来

- Judging: 用起来很方便. Starting: 他笑了起来 – "He started laughing."
- Upward movement: 站起来 – "stand up". Context and the following comment tell you which.

他笑了起来。
tā xiào le qi lai
Word guide: 他 – he; 笑 – laugh; 起来 – (start).

Recap

- **Thing + Verb + 起来 + comment** = it is … to do: 用起来方便, 说起来容易.
- Other 起来: start (笑起来), upward (站起来).

Practise this pattern step by step.

Direction complement 来 / 去 (HSK 4)

Bring it in, take it out

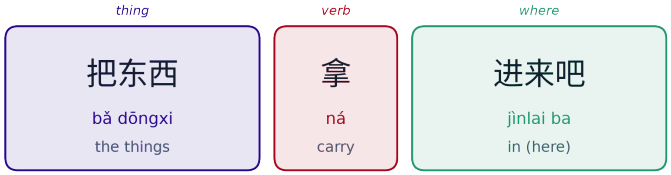
- You ask your brother to carry the shopping bags from the car into the kitchen.
- **把东西拿进来吧。** – "Bring the things in."

Verb + direction + 来 / 去

- **Verb + 上/下/进/出/回/过/起 + 来/去** shows how an action moves: 拿进来, 走出去, 跑回来, 站起来.
- 来 = towards the speaker; 去 = away from the speaker.

他从教室里走出来了。
tā cóng jiào shì li zǒu chū lai le
Word guide: 他 – he; 从 – out of; 教室 – the classroom; 里 – (inside); 走 – walk; 出来 – come out.

Verb + 进来 / 出去: direction of the movement



Where the place and object go

- **A place** goes before 来/去: **他走进教室来了。** – "He walked into the classroom."
- **A thing** can go before 来/去 or after the whole complement: 拿出一本书来 / 拿出来一本书.

他拿出一本书来。
tā ná chū yì běn shū lái
Word guide: 他 – he; 拿 – took; 出 – out; 一 – a; 本 – (measure word); 书 – book; 来 – (towards me).

Place before 来 / 去

- 走进教室来, not 走进来教室: a place never follows 来 / 去.
- Pick 来 or 去 by where the speaker is: inside the room → 进来; outside → 进去.

Abstract meanings

- 想起来 = remember: 我想起来了! – "I've remembered!"
- 看出来 = make out, notice: 我看出来他不高兴 – "I could tell he wasn't happy."

我想起来了!
wǒ xiǎng qǐ lai le
Word guide: 我 – I; 想 – think; 起来 – (recall).

Recap

- **Verb + direction + 来/去** = movement towards / away from the speaker: 拿进来, 走出去.
- A place goes before 来/去; abstract uses: 想起来, 看出来.

Practise this pattern step by step.

Verb / Adj + 起来 (start to ...)

The music starts

- At a party, the band plays a favourite song and the room comes alive.
- **音乐一响，大家都跳起来了。** – "As soon as the music played, everyone started dancing."

Verb / Adj + 起来 = start to, begin to

- **Verb + 起来** = an action starts and continues: 笑起来, 哭起来, 下起雨来.
- **Adj + 起来** = a state begins to develop: 天气热起来了, 他胖起来了.

天气慢慢热起来了。
tiān qì màn màn rè qi lai le
Word guide: 天气 – the weather; 慢慢 – slowly; 热 – hot; 起来 – (start to).

一 ...，(就) ...: as soon as



With an object: split 起 ... 来

- The object goes **between** 起 and 来: **下起雨来了。** – "It started to rain." 唱起歌来 – "start singing".
- Without an object: 下起来了.

外面下起雨来了。
wài miàn xià qǐ yǔ lái le
Word guide: 外面 – outside; 下 – fall; 起 – (start); 雨 – rain; 来 – (start).

Object in the middle

- 下起雨来, not 下起来雨: the object sits between 起 and 来.
- Adj + 起来 usually describes a change towards more: 热起来, 好起来; "getting cold" is often 冷下来 / 凉下来.

起来 versus 下去

- 起来 = start something new: 他们聊起来了.
- 下去 = continue something already going: 请说下去.

请说下去。
qǐng shuō xià qu

Word guide: 请 – please; 说 – speak; 下去 – (continue).

Recap

- **Verb / Adj + 起来** = start to, begin to (笑起来, 热起来).
- Object goes between: 下起雨来; 下去 = continue.

Practise this pattern step by step.

Potential complement 得 / 不 (HSK 4)

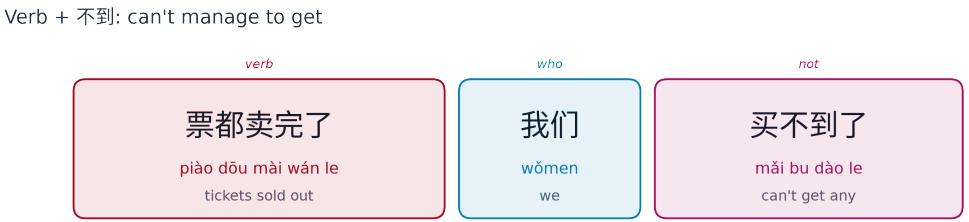
Sold out

- You try to book concert tickets online, but they are gone in minutes.
- **票都卖完了，我们买不到了。** – "The tickets are sold out; we can't get any."

Verb + 得 / 不 + result / direction

- **Verb + 得 + complement** = can; **Verb + 不 + complement** = can't: 买得到 / 买不到, 拿得动 / 拿不动.
- It says whether the result is possible in the situation.

这个箱子太重，我拿不动。
zhè ge xiāng zi tài zhòng wǒ ná bu dòng
Word guide: 这个 – this; 箱子 – box; 太 – too; 重 – heavy; 我 – I; 拿 – lift; 不 – (cannot); 动 – move.



Common HSK 4 pairs

- **来得及 / 来不及** = there is / isn't enough time: 现在出发还来得及.
- **受不了** = can't stand; **听不清楚** = can't hear clearly; **记不住** = can't remember.

现在出发还来得及。
xiàn zài chū fā hái lái de jí
Word guide: 现在 – now; 出发 – set off; 还 – still; 来得及 – in time.

Not the same as 不能

- 不能 is about permission or general ability: 这里不能停车. Potential complements are about whether the result can be achieved: 我听不懂.
- Put the object after the complement or before as a topic: 我听不懂他的话 / 他的话我听不懂.

不了 = can't (at all)

- **Verb + 不了 (liǎo)** = unable to do it: 我去不了 – "I can't make it." 吃不了 – "can't finish eating."
- Positive: 去得了 – "able to go".

明天我去不了。
míng tiān wǒ qù bu liǎo
Word guide: 明天 – tomorrow; 我 – I; 去 – go; 不了 – can't.

Recap

- **Verb + 得/不 + complement** = can / can't achieve it (买不到, 拿不动, 来得及).
- Verb + 不了 = unable to; 不能 = not allowed / generally can't.

Practise this pattern step by step.

Practice without the models

Verb + 起来 (in terms of doing it)

2001.1 Complete: "This method sounds simple but is hard to do." 这个方法听 …… 简单，做起来难。

2001.2 Match each sentence to the use of 起来.

- 1. 这个包背起来很舒服。
- 1. 大家都笑起来了。
- 1. 请站起来。
- A. judging the experience
- B. upward movement
- C. starting an action

2001.3 Build: "This song sounds familiar."

Arrange all chunks: 这首歌 / 很熟悉。/ 听起来

2001.4 说起来容易，做起来难 means "easier said than done".

True or false? Explain or repair the statement.

2001.5 A friend asks what you think of your new phone after a week. 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.

■ Direction complement 来 / 去 (HSK 4)

2002.1 You are inside. Ask a friend: “Bring the chairs in.” 把椅子搬进 …… 吧。

2002.2 Which sentence is correct?

- A. 他走进来教室了。
- B. 他进来走教室了。
- C. 他走教室进来了。
- D. 他走进教室来了。

2002.3 Build: “He took a book out.”

Arrange all chunks: 来。 / 一本书 / 拿出 / 他

2002.4 我看出来他不高兴 means “I could tell he was unhappy.”

True or false? Explain or repair the statement.

2002.5 You ask your brother to carry the shopping bags from the car into the kitchen. 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.

■ Verb / Adj + 起来 (start to ...)

2003.1 Complete: “The baby suddenly started crying.” 宝宝突然哭 …… 了。

2003.2 Which says “It started to snow”?

- A. 雪下起了来。
- B. 下起雪来了。
- C. 下起来雪了。
- D. 起来下雪了。

2003.3 Build: “They started singing.”

Arrange all chunks: 唱起 / 来了。 / 他们 / 歌

2003.4 请说下去 asks someone to start speaking.

True or false? Explain or repair the statement.

2003.5 At a party, the band plays a favourite song and the room comes alive. 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.

■ Potential complement 得 / 不 (HSK 4)

2004.1 Complete: “The box is too heavy; I can’t lift it.” 箱子太重了，我拿 …… 动。

2004.2 A sign forbids parking. Which fits? 这里 _____ 停车。

- A. 不能
- B. 不了
- C. 停不到
- D. 停不了

2004.3 Match each form to its meaning.

- 1. 来不及
- 1. 受不了
- 1. 记不住
- 1. 买不到
- A. not enough time
- B. can’t remember
- C. can’t stand it
- D. can’t get hold of

2004.4 Build: “I’ve got something on tomorrow; I can’t make it.”

Arrange all chunks: 不了。 / 我明天 / ， 去 / 有事

2004.5 You try to book concert tickets online, but they are gone in minutes. 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

■ Verb + 起来 (in terms of doing it)

2001.1 起来

Verb + 起来 + comment.

2001.2 1–A: 这个包背起来很舒服。= judging the experience; 2–C: 大家都笑起来了。= starting an action; 3–B: 请站起来。= upward movement

The comment and the verb tell you which use it is.

2001.3 这首歌听起来很熟悉。

Thing + Verb + 起来 + comment.

2001.4 True.

It judges saying versus doing.

2001.5 One possible response: 这个手机用起来很方便。

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.
- Put what you are judging first: 这本书读起来很有意思, not 读起来这本书很有意思 in most speech.
- 起来 here does not mean "get up" or "start"; it marks the experience of doing.
- 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.

■ Direction complement 来 / 去 (HSK 4)

2002.1 来

Towards the speaker: 进来.

2002.2 D. 他走进教室来了。

他走进教室来了 is right: with a place word, the place goes between 进 and 来 (走进 + 教室 + 来).

2002.3 他拿出一本书来。

Verb + 出 + object + 来.

2002.4 True.

True. 看出来 means "can tell, make out" from what you see: 我看出来他不高兴 "I could tell he was unhappy."

2002.5 One possible response: 把东西拿进来吧。

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.
- 走进教室来, not 走进来教室: a place never follows 来 / 去.
- Pick 来 or 去 by where the speaker is: inside the room → 进来; outside → 进去.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

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■ Verb / Adj + 起来 (start to ...)

2003.1 起来

Verb + 起来 = start to.

2003.2 B. 下起雪来了。

The object goes between 起 and 来.

2003.3 他们唱起歌来了。

Verb + 起 + object + 来.

2003.4 False.

下去 = continue; starting is 起来.

2003.5 One possible response: 音乐一响，大家都跳起来了。

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.
- 下起雨来, not 下起来雨: the object sits between 起 and 来.
- Adj + 起来 usually describes a change towards more: 热起来, 好起来; "getting cold" is often 冷下来 / 凉下来.
- 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.

■ Potential complement 得 / 不 (HSK 4)

2004.1 不

Verb + 不 + 动 = can't move it.

2004.2 A. 不能

Prohibition is 不能 (a formal sign may also write 不得); potential complements are about whether a result is achievable, and 不了 cannot stand before a verb.

2004.3 1–A: 来不及 = not enough time; 2–C: 受不了 = can't stand it; 3–B: 记不住 = can't remember; 4–D: 买不到 = can't get hold of

Verb + 不 + complement = the result can't be achieved.

2004.4 我明天有事，去不了。

Verb + 不了 = unable to.

2004.5 One possible response: 票都卖完了，我们买不到了。

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.
- 不能 is about permission or general ability: 这里不能停车. Potential complements are about whether the result can be achieved: 我听不懂.
- Put the object after the complement or before as a topic: 我听不懂他的话 / 他的话我听不懂.
- 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.