

Conditional Statements

Ref Hsk4 Grammar

只要 ... 就 ... — “as long as”

只要 ... 就 ... gives a **sufficient** condition — “as long as A, then B.” A on its own is **enough** to guarantee B (even if it isn’t the only route there).

Structure: 只要 + Condition , 就 + Result

{zh: 只要 |zhǐ yào|as long as / 你 |nǐ|you / 努力 |nǔ lì|hard / 学习 |xué xí|study / , 就 |jiù|then / 会 |huì|will / 有 |yǒu|make / 进步 |jìn bù|progress / 。 }

As long as you study hard, you’ll make progress.

{zh: 只要 |zhǐ yào|whenever / 下雨 |xià yǔ|it rains / , 她 |tā|she / 就 |jiù|then / 心情 |xīn qíng|mood / 不好 |bù hǎo|bad / 。 }

Whenever it rains, she’s in a bad mood.

Remember: lock the pairs: 只要 ... 就 ... = “enough → then” (sufficient); 只有 ... 才 ... = “the only way → then” (necessary). 只要 reaches for 就, 只有 reaches for 才.

Watch out

- Swapping 就 for 才 quietly turns “as long as” into “only if” — mind the partner.

除非 ... 才 ... / 否则 ... — “unless”

除非 means “unless.” Two common frames: **Result, 除非 + Condition** (“won’t X unless Y”), and **除非 X, 才 Y** (“only if X, then Y”). It often partners 否则 / 要不然 (“otherwise”). All the weight falls on the one needed condition.

Structure: Result , 除非 + Condition · 除非 + Condition , 才 + Result

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 不 |bù|won’t / 去 |qù|go / , 除非 |chú fēi|unless / 你 |nǐ|you / 也 |yě|too / 去 |qù|go / 。 }

I won’t go unless you go too.

{zh: 除非 |chú fēi|only if / 老板 |lǎo bǎn|the boss / 给 |gěi|gives / 我 |wǒ|me / 加薪 |jiā xīn|a raise / , 我 |wǒ|I / 才 |cái|then / 会 |huì|will / 留下来 |liú xià lái|stay / 。 }

Only if the boss gives me a raise will I stay.

Remember: 除非 = “the one exception that changes things.” 除非 ... 才 ... = “only if ... then”; 除非 ... 否则 ... = “unless ..., otherwise ...” It’s a close kin of 只有 ... 才 ..., both spotlighting the single needed condition.

Watch out

- 除非 ... 才 and 除非 ... 否则 point opposite ways — 才 leads to the good result, 否则 to the bad alternative.