Complex Sentence Patterns

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.

Adj + 是 + Adj，但是 … (concede, then object)

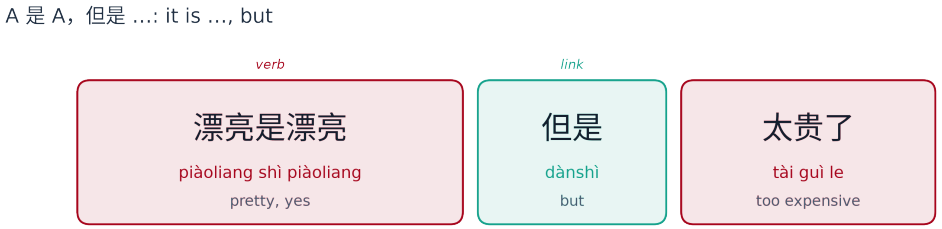
Nice, but …

- Your friend loves a jacket in a shop. You agree it's pretty, but the price is crazy.
- **漂亮是漂亮，但是太贵了。** – "It's pretty, all right, but it's too expensive."

A 是 A，但是 / 可是 / 就是 …

- **Adj 是 Adj** concedes a point ("it is …, admittedly"); then 但是 / 可是 / 就是 brings the objection.
- The same word repeats on both sides of 是: 好是好, 便宜是便宜.

好是好，就是太远了。
hǎo shì hǎo jiù shì tài yuǎn le
Word guide: 好 – good; 是 – (it is); 好 – good; 就是 – it's just that; 太 – too; 远 – far.



Verbs work too

- **去是想去，可是没时间。** – "I do want to go, but I don't have time."
- **这本书我看是看了，但是没看懂。** – "I did read the book, but I didn't understand it."

去是想去，可是没时间。
qù shì xiǎng qù kě shì méi shí jiān
Word guide: 去 – go; 是 – (it is); 想 – want to; 去 – go; 可是 – but; 没 – have no; 时间 – time.

Repeat the same word

- Use the identical word on both sides: 贵是贵, not 贵是很贵.
- The second clause must object; 好是好，而且 … does not work.

Versus 虽然 … 但是 …

- 虽然很漂亮，但是太贵了 is neutral.
- 漂亮是漂亮，但是 … sounds more conversational and shows you have considered the point.

虽然很漂亮，但是太贵了。
suī rán hěn piào liang dàn shì tài guì le
Word guide: 虽然 – although; 很 – very; 漂亮 – pretty; 但是 – but; 太 – too; 贵 – expensive.

Recap

- **A 是 A，但是 / 可是 / 就是 …** = it's A, admittedly, but ….
- Same word twice; the second part must object.

Practise this pattern step by step.

一 … 就 … (as soon as / whenever)

The moment you arrive

- Your friend's dog gets excited every time someone rings the doorbell.
- **门铃一响，它就跑过去。** – "As soon as the doorbell rings, it runs over."

一 A，就 B = as soon as A, B

- **一 + verb A，(Subject) 就 + verb B** = B happens immediately after A.
- 一 and 就 each go after their own subject: 我一到，他就走了.

我一到家，就下雨了。
wǒ yí dào jiā jiù xià yǔ le
Word guide: 我 – I; 一 – as soon as; 到 – arrived; 家 – home; 就 – then; 下雨 – rain.



Whenever: a habit

- **他一喝咖啡就睡不着。** – “Whenever he drinks coffee, he can’t sleep.”
- **我一看就懂了。** – “I understood the moment I looked.”

他一喝咖啡就睡不着。
tā yì hē kā fēi jiù shuì bu zháo
Word guide: 他 – he; 一 – whenever; 喝 – drinks; 咖啡 – coffee; 就 – then; 睡不着 – can’t sleep.

Placement of 一 and 就

- 一 goes before the first verb, after its subject: 我一到, not 一我到.
- 就 goes after the second subject: 他就走了, not 就他走了.

一 … 就 … versus 刚 … 就 …

- 一 … 就 … = whenever / as soon as (also habits).
- 刚 … 就 … = had only just … when (a single past event): 我刚到，他就走了.

我刚到，他就走了。
wǒ gāng dào tā jiù zǒu le
Word guide: 我 – I; 刚 – just; 到 – arrived; 他 – he; 就 – then; 走 – left.

Recap

- **一 A，就 B** = as soon as / whenever A, B.
- 一 and 就 each after their own subject; 刚 … 就 … for a single just-happened event.

Practise this pattern step by step.

一方面 … ，一方面 … (on one hand / on the other)

Two sides of the story

- In a class debate, you explain why many young people move to big cities.
- **一方面，大城市机会多；另一方面，生活也更方便。** – “On the one hand, big cities have more opportunities; on the other, life is more convenient.”

一方面 …，(另) 一方面 …

- **一方面 …，一方面 … / 另一方面 …** presents two aspects or reasons side by side.
- Each 一方面 starts its clause, usually with a comma or semicolon in between.

一方面，工资高；另一方面，离家近。
yì fāng miàn gōng zī gāo lìng yì fāng miàn lí jiā jìn
Word guide: 一方面 – on one hand; 工资 – the pay; 高 – high; 另一方面 – on the other; 离 – from; 家 – home; 近 – close.

一方面 …，另一方面 …: on one hand, on the other



Two reasons or a contrast

- Two reasons in the same direction: **一方面是为了学习，一方面是为了交朋友。** – “Partly to study, partly to make friends.”
- A contrast: **一方面我想去，另一方面又担心花钱太多。** – “On the one hand I want to go; on the other, I worry about spending too much.”

一方面是为了学习，一方面是为了交朋友。
yì fāng miàn shì wèi le xué xí yì fāng miàn shì wèi le jiāo péng you
Word guide: 一方面 – partly; 是 – is; 为了 – for; 学习 – study; 一方面 – partly; 是 – is; 为了 – for; 交 – make; 朋友 – friends.

Parallel halves

- Keep both halves in the same shape: 一方面是 …，一方面是 ….
- Do not use 一方面 alone; it needs its partner.

Versus 不但 … 而且 …

- 不但 … 而且 … builds up: the second point is stronger.
- 一方面 … 一方面 … weighs two points equally, often in an argument or explanation.

不但便宜，而且好吃。
bú dàn pián yi ér qiě hǎo chī
Word guide: 不但 – not only; 便宜 – cheap; 而且 – but also; 好吃 – tasty.

Recap

- **一方面 …，(另) 一方面 …** = on the one hand …, on the other ….
- Two parallel aspects or a contrast; always used as a pair.

Practise this pattern step by step.

Practice without the models

■ Adj + 是 + Adj，但是 … (concede, then object)

2501.1 Complete: “It’s cheap, all right, but the quality is poor.” 便宜是 ……，但是质量不好。

2501.2 Which sentence is correct?

- A. 是好吃好吃，但是太辣了。
- B. 好吃是好吃，但是太辣了。
- C. 好吃是好吃，而且太辣了。
- D. 好吃是很好吃，但是太辣了。

2501.3 Build: “I do want to go, but I don’t have time.”

Arrange all chunks: 可是 / ， / 去是想去 / 没时间。

2501.4 漂亮是漂亮，但是 … concedes a point before objecting.

True or false? Explain or repair the statement.

2501.5 Your friend loves a jacket in a shop. You agree it’s pretty, but the price is crazy. 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.

■ 一 … 就 … (as soon as / whenever)

2502.1 Complete: “As soon as class ended, he left.” 一下课，他 …… 走了。

2502.2 Which sentence is correct?

- A. 一我到家，就他走了。
- B. 我到家一，他走就了。
- C. 我一到家，他就走了。
- D. 我一到家，就他走了。

2502.3 Build: “Whenever he drinks coffee, he can’t sleep.”

Arrange all chunks: 睡不着。/ 他 / 就 / 一喝咖啡

2502.4 一 … 就 … can describe a habit.

True or false? Explain or repair the statement.

2502.5 Your friend’s dog gets excited every time someone rings the doorbell. 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.

■ 一方面 … ，一方面 … (on one hand / on the other)

2503.1 Complete: “On the one hand it’s cheap; on the other, it’s close to home.” 一方面很便宜，另 …… 离家很近。

2503.2 What is wrong with 一方面我想去。?

- A. It needs 吗
- B. Nothing
- C. 一方面 needs its partner clause
- D. 一方面 must come last

2503.3 Build: “Partly to study, partly to make friends.”

Arrange all chunks: 交朋友。/ 一方面是为了 / ， / 一方面是为了学习

2503.4 一方面 … 一方面 … weighs two points equally.

True or false? Explain or repair the statement.

2503.5 In a class debate, you explain why many young people move to big cities. 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

■ Adj + 是 + Adj，但是 … (concede, then object)

2501.1 便宜

The same word repeats on both sides of 是.

2501.2 B. 好吃是好吃，但是太辣了。

好吃是好吃，但是太辣了 is right: X 是 X repeats the same word with no 很, then a contrast with 但是. 而且 adds a point instead of objecting.

2501.3 去是想去，可是没时间。

A 是 A，可是 ….

2501.4 True.

That is the purpose of the pattern.

2501.5 One possible response: 漂亮是漂亮，但是太贵了。

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.
- Use the identical word on both sides: 贵是贵, not 贵是很贵.
- The second clause must object; 好是好，而且 … does not work.
- 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.

■ 一 … 就 … (as soon as / whenever)

2502.1 就

一 A，就 B.

2502.2 C. 我一到家，他就走了。

我一到家，他就走了 is right: 一 and 就 each come after their own subject (我一 …, 他就 …).

2502.3 他一喝咖啡就睡不着。

Subject + 一 + verb, 就 + result.

2502.4 True.

It means whenever as well as as soon as.

2502.5 One possible response: 门铃一响，它就跑过去。

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.
- 一 goes before the first verb, after its subject: 我一到, not 一我到.
- 就 goes after the second subject: 他就走了, not 就他走了.
- 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.

■ 一方面 … ，一方面 … (on one hand / on the other)

2503.1 一方面

一方面 …，另一方面 ….

2503.2 C. 一方面 needs its partner clause

一方面 introduces one side and needs its partner: 一方面我想去，另一方面我没有时间. On its own the sentence is incomplete.

2503.3 一方面是为了学习，一方面是为了交朋友。

Parallel halves.

2503.4 True.

不但 … 而且 … builds up instead.

2503.5 One possible response: 一方面，大城市机会多；另一方面，生活也更方便。

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.
- Keep both halves in the same shape: 一方面是 …，一方面是 ….
- Do not use 一方面 alone; it needs its partner.
- 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.