Comparing similar prepositions

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.

关于 vs 对于 (about vs regarding)

A book about it, an attitude towards it

- You write a report on a documentary about climate change and how students feel about it.
- **这是一部关于气候变化的纪录片。对于这个问题，大家的看法不同。** – "This is a documentary about climate change. On this issue, opinions differ."

关于 = about (the topic)

- **关于** introduces the topic or content: 关于中国历史的书, 关于这件事.
- As a topic at the start of a sentence: 关于考试，老师还没通知.

关于考试，老师还没通知。
guān yú kǎo shì lǎo shī hái méi tōng zhī
Word guide: 关于 – about; 考试 – the exam; 老师 – the teacher; 还 – still; 没 – hasn't; 通知 – announced.



对于 = regarding (the target of an attitude)

- **对于** introduces what a judgement or action is directed at: **对于这个决定，我很满意。** – "I'm very satisfied with this decision."
- It can follow the subject: 我对于这件事没有意见.

对于这个决定，我很满意。
duì yú zhè ge jué dìng wǒ hěn mǎn yì
Word guide: 对于 – regarding; 这个 – this; 决定 – decision; 我 – I; 很 – very; 满意 – satisfied.

The subject's position

- 关于 phrases do not go after the subject: 关于这件事，我不知道, not 我关于这件事不知道.
- 对于 can go either before or after the subject: 对于他，… / 他对于 ….

Titles use 关于

- A book, talk or article title takes 关于: 《关于环境保护》.
- 对于 suits opinions and attitudes: 对于学生来说, 对于这个问题，我的看法是 ….

一篇关于环保的文章。
yì piān guān yú huán bǎo de wén zhāng
Word guide: 一 – a; 篇 – (measure word); 关于 – about; 环保 – the environment; 文章 – article.

Recap

- **关于** = about, introducing a topic. It often starts a topic phrase and can also occur inside a noun phrase; the whole construction controls its position.
- **对于** = regarding (target of an attitude or judgement); before or after the subject.

Practise this pattern step by step.

离 vs 从 (gap from vs starting point)

How far, and from where?

- A new classmate asks where you live and how you get to school.
- **我家离学校很近，我每天从家走路来。** – "My home is close to school; every day I walk here from home."

离 = distance from

- **A 离 B + 远 / 近 / distance** = how far A is from B: 我家离学校很近.
- Also for time: 离考试还有三天 – "There are still three days until the exam."

离考试还有三天。
lí kǎo shì hái yǒu sān tiān
Word guide: 离 – until; 考试 – the exam; 还有 – there are still; 三天 – three days.

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离: distance from · 从: starting from



■ 从 = starting point

- **从 + place / time** = from (the starting point of movement or time): 从北京出发, 从八点开始.
- Often with 到: 从家到学校要二十分钟.

从家到学校要二十分钟。
cóng jiā dào xué xiào yào èr shí fēn zhōng
Word guide: 从 – from; 家 – home; 到 – to; 学校 – school; 要 – takes; 二十 – twenty; 分钟 – minutes.

■ Distance or starting point?

- A gap (远, 近, how many km) takes 离: 离这儿很远, not 从这儿很远.
- Movement or a beginning takes 从: 从这儿走, not 离这儿走.

■ One sentence, both words

- **从我家到公司很远，因为公司离市中心很远。** – "It's a long way from my home to the office, because the office is far from the city centre."
- 从 … 到 … measures a route; 离 measures a gap.

公司离市中心很远。
gōng sī lí shì zhōng xīn hěn yuǎn
Word guide: 公司 – the office; 离 – from; 市中心 – the city centre; 很 – very; 远 – far.

■ Recap

- **离** = the gap between two points (place or time): 离学校很近, 离考试三天.
- **从** = the starting point of movement or time: 从家出发, 从八点开始.

Practise this pattern step by step.

Practice without the models

■ 关于 vs 对于 (about vs regarding)

2801.1 Complete: “an article about the environment” 一篇 …… 环境的文章

2801.2 Which sentence is correct?

- A. 我关于这件事很满意。
- B. 关于这件事，我不知道。
- C. 我这件事关于不知道。
- D. 我关于这件事不知道。

2801.3 Build: “I’m very satisfied with this decision.”

Arrange all chunks: 我 / 对于这个决定 / 很满意。/ ，

2801.4 对于 can come after the subject.

True or false? Explain or repair the statement.

2801.5 You write a report on a documentary about climate change and how students feel about it. 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.

■ 离 vs 从 (gap from vs starting point)

2802.1 Complete: “The station is very close to here.” 车站 …… 这儿很近。

2802.2 “The meeting runs from nine to eleven.” Which fits? 会议 _____ 九点开到十一点。

- A. 从
- B. 在
- C. 向
- D. 离

2802.3 Build: “It takes twenty minutes from home to school.”

Arrange all chunks: 二十分钟。/ 从家 / 要 / 到学校

2802.4 离考试还有三天 uses 离 for time.

True or false? Explain or repair the statement.

2802.5 A new classmate asks where you live and how you get to school. 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.

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Answers and explanations

■ 关于 vs 对于 (about vs regarding)

2801.1 关于

Topic and content take 关于.

2801.2 B. 关于这件事，我不知道。

关于这件事，我不知道 is right: a 关于 phrase ("about …") goes at the start, before the subject. For an attitude such as 满意, use 对 instead.

2801.3 对于这个决定，我很满意。

对于 + target, then the attitude.

2801.4 True.

True. 对于 can follow the subject: 他对于这件事没有意见. 关于 cannot; it normally starts the sentence or comes before 的 + noun (关于环境的文章).

2801.5 One possible response: 这是一部关于气候变化的纪录片。对于这个问题，大家的看法不同。

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.
- 关于 phrases do not go after the subject: 关于这件事，我不知道, not 我关于这件事不知道.
- 对于 can go either before or after the subject: 对于他，… / 他对于 ….
- 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.

■ 离 vs 从 (gap from vs starting point)

2802.1 离

A gap takes 离.

2802.2 A. 从

A starting point paired with 到 takes 从 (从 … 到 …). 在 marks a single point in time, so it cannot open a span.

2802.3 从家到学校要二十分钟。

从 … 到 … + time needed.

2802.4 True.

离 can measure the gap until an event.

2802.5 One possible response: 我家离学校很近，我每天从家走路来。

Check meaning and form:

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- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- A gap (远, 近, how many km) takes 离: 离这儿很远, not 从这儿很远.
- Movement or a beginning takes 从: 从这儿走, not 离这儿走.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

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