Comparing similar separate functions

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.

反而 vs 相反 (instead vs on the contrary)

The opposite happened

- You took medicine for a headache, but it got worse.
- **吃了药，头疼反而更厉害了。** – "After taking the medicine, my headache actually got worse."

反而 = instead, on the contrary (adverb)

- **反而** goes after the subject, before the verb: the result is the opposite of what was expected.
- It often follows 不但没 / 不但不: 他不但没生气，反而笑了.

他不但没生气，反而笑了。
tā bú dàn méi shēng qì fǎn ér xiào le
Word guide: 他 – he; 不但 – not only; 没 – didn't; 生气 – get angry; 反而 – instead; 笑 – laughed.



相反 = the opposite (adjective / linker)

- **相反** describes opposition: 意见相反 – "opposite opinions"; 正好相反 – "exactly the opposite".
- **相反，...** starts a sentence: "On the contrary, …": 他不懒。相反，他很努力。

他不懒。相反，他很努力。
tā bù lǎn xiāng fǎn tā hěn nǔ lì
Word guide: 他 – he; 不 – not; 懒 – lazy; 相反 – on the contrary; 他 – he; 很 – very; 努力 – hard-working.

Position decides

- Inside a clause, before the verb, use 反而: 病反而重了, not 病相反重了.
- Starting a new sentence with a comma, or as "opposite", use 相反: 相反，…; 方向相反.

Together in a paragraph

- **我以为他会很难过，相反，他看起来很轻松。** – "I thought he'd be upset; on the contrary, he looked relaxed."
- Or with 反而: 我以为他会难过，他反而很轻松.

他反而很轻松。
tā fǎn ér hěn qīng sōng
Word guide: 他 – he; 反而 – instead; 很 – very; 轻松 – relaxed.

Recap

- **反而** = instead (adverb, after the subject, before the verb).
- **相反** = the opposite / on the contrary (adjective, or 相反，… starting a sentence).

Practise this pattern step by step.

肯定 vs 确定 vs 一定 (sure / certain)

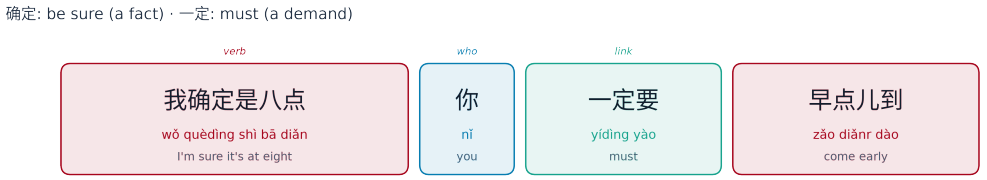
How sure are you?

- Your friend asks if the train leaves at eight. You checked the ticket twice.
- **我确定是八点，你一定要早点儿到。** – "I'm sure it's eight; you really must get there early."

一定 = certainly, must

- **一定 + verb** = certainly will / must: 他一定会来, 你一定要去.
- 不一定 = not necessarily: 贵的不一定好.

贵的不一定好。
guì de bù yí dìng hǎo
Word guide: 贵 – expensive; 的 – (ones); 不 – not; 一定 – necessarily; 好 – good.



■ 肯定 = definitely (confident judgement)

- **肯定** = definitely, surely: 他肯定忘了 – "He's definitely forgotten."
- It can also be an adjective / verb of affirming: 老师肯定了我的想法 – "The teacher approved my idea."

他肯定忘了。
tā kěn dìng wàng le
Word guide: 他 – he; 肯定 – definitely; 忘 – forgot.

■ 确定 = be sure, confirm (a verb)

- **确定** is a verb: be sure of, confirm, fix: 你确定吗? – "Are you sure?" 时间还没确定 – "The time hasn't been fixed."
- 确定 does not go before another verb as "certainly": 他一定会来, not 他确定会来 in that sense.

■ Which word when?

- Predicting or requiring: 一定 (一定要, 一定会). Guessing confidently: 肯定.
- Checking or deciding: 确定 (确定时间, 我不确定).

你确定吗?
nǐ què dìng ma
Word guide: 你 – you; 确定 – sure.

■ Recap

- **一定** = must / certainly (不一定 = not necessarily). **肯定** = definitely (confident guess; also "affirm").
- **确定** = be sure / confirm / fix (a verb).

Practise this pattern step by step.

适合 vs 合适 (to suit vs suitable)

■ Does it fit?

- You are trying on a jacket and ask your friend's opinion.
- **这件衣服很合适，颜色也很适合你。** – "This jacket fits well, and the colour suits you too."

■ 适合 = to suit (a verb with an object)

- **适合 + object** = suit, be suitable for: 适合你, 适合学生, 适合跑步.
- It needs an object: 这个工作很适合他.

这个工作很适合他。
zhè ge gōng zuò hěn shì hé tā
Word guide: 这个 – this; 工作 – job; 很 – very; 适合 – suits; 他 – him.



■ 合适 = suitable (an adjective)

- **合适** describes something as fitting, right: 大小合适, 时间合适, 很合适.
- It takes no object: 这双鞋不太合适 – "These shoes don't fit well."

这双鞋不太合适。
zhè shuāng xié bú tài hé shì
Word guide: 这 – these; 双 – (pair of); 鞋 – shoes; 不太 – not very; 合适 – suitable.

■ Object or no object?

- With an object, use 适合: 适合你, not 合适你.
- Without an object, use 合适: 这个时间很合适, not 这个时间很适合.

■ 对 … 合适 and 的

- To name the person with 合适, use 对: 对你来说很合适 – "very suitable for you".
- Both can describe a noun: 合适的工作 / 适合我的工作.

我在找一个合适的工作。
wǒ zài zhǎo yí gè hé shì de gōng zuò
Word guide: 我 – I; 在 – am; 找 – looking for; 一个 – a; 合适 – suitable; 工作 – job.

■ Recap

- **适合 + object** = to suit (适合你). **合适** = suitable, no object (很合适).
- 对 …(来说) 合适 names the person; both can describe a noun.

Practise this pattern step by step.

Practice without the models

■ 反而 vs 相反 (instead vs on the contrary)

2901.1 Complete: "He didn't get angry; instead he laughed." 他没生气，…… 笑了。

2901.2 "Our opinions are exactly the opposite." Which fits? 我们的意见正好 _____。

- A. 相反
- B. 反而
- C. 倒

- D. 却

2901.3 Build: “After the medicine, the headache actually got worse.”

Arrange all chunks: ， 头疼 / 反而 / 更厉害了。/ 吃了药

2901.4 相反 can start a sentence followed by a comma.

True or false? Explain or repair the statement.

2901.5 You took medicine for a headache, but it got worse. 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.

■ 肯定 vs 确定 vs 一定 (sure / certain)

2902.1 Ask: “Are you sure?” 你 …… 吗?

2902.2 “Expensive things aren’t necessarily good.” Which fits? 贵的 _____ 好。

- A. 一定不
- B. 不肯定
- C. 不确定
- D. 不一定

2902.3 Match each sentence to its meaning.

- 1. 你一定要来。
- 1. 他肯定忘了。
- 1. 时间还没确定。
- A. He’s definitely forgotten.
- B. You really must come.
- C. The time hasn’t been fixed yet.

2902.4 老师肯定了我的想法 means the teacher approved my idea.

True or false? Explain or repair the statement.

2902.5 Your friend asks if the train leaves at eight. You checked the ticket twice. 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.

■ 适合 vs 合适 (to suit vs suitable)

2903.1 Complete: “This colour really suits you.” 这个颜色很 …… 你。

2903.2 Which sentence is correct?

- A. 这个时间很适合。
- B. 这个时间很适合合适。
- C. 这个时间合适你。
- D. 这个时间很合适。

2903.3 Build: “I’m looking for a suitable job.”

Arrange all chunks: 一个 / 我在找 / 工作。/ 合适的

2903.4 合适你 is correct.

True or false? Explain or repair the statement.

2903.5 You are trying on a jacket and ask your friend’s opinion. 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

■ 反而 vs 相反 (instead vs on the contrary)

2901.1 反而

反而 before the verb = instead.

2901.2 A. 相反

As the predicate meaning "opposite", use 相反: 我们的意见正好相反. 反而, 却 and 倒 are adverbs that need a verb after them.

2901.3 吃了药，头疼反而更厉害了。

Subject + 反而 + verb phrase.

2901.4 True.

True. 相反 can start a sentence, followed by a comma, to mean "on the contrary": 他没生气，相反，他很高兴.

2901.5 One possible response: 吃了药，头疼反而更厉害了。

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.
- Inside a clause, before the verb, use 反而: 病反而重了, not 病相反重了.
- Starting a new sentence with a comma, or as "opposite", use 相反: 相反，…; 方向相反.
- 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.

■ 肯定 vs 确定 vs 一定 (sure / certain)

2902.1 确定

确定 is the verb "be sure".

2902.2 D. 不一定

不一定 means "not necessarily": 贵的不一定好. 一定不 means "definitely not", which is a different claim, and 不确定 / 不肯定 mean "unsure".

2902.3 1–B: 你一定要来。= You really must come.; 2–A: 他肯定忘了。= He's definitely forgotten.; 3–C: 时间还没确定。= The time hasn't been fixed yet.

一定 = must, 肯定 = definitely, 确定 = fix / be sure.

2902.4 True.

肯定 can be a verb meaning "affirm".

2902.5 One possible response: 我确定是八点，你一定要早点儿到。

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.
- **确定** is a verb: be sure of, confirm, fix: 你确定吗? – "Are you sure?" 时间还没确定 – "The time hasn't been fixed."
- 确定 does not go before another verb as "certainly": 他一定会来, not 他确定会来 in that sense.
- 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.

■ 适合 vs 合适 (to suit vs suitable)

2903.1 适合

With an object, 适合.

2903.2 D. 这个时间很合适。

这个时间很合适 is right: 合适 is an adjective with no object. 适合 is a verb and needs one (适合你), so 很适合 alone is incomplete.

2903.3 我在找一个合适的工作。

合适的 + noun.

2903.4 False.

合适 takes no object; say 适合你 or 对你合适.

2903.5 One possible response: 这件衣服很合适，颜色也很适合你。

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.
- With an object, use 适合: 适合你, not 合适你.
- Without an object, use 合适: 这个时间很合适, not 这个时间很适合.
- 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.