

Nouns

Ref Hsk5 Grammar

— “among, in the middle of”

means “among, in the midst of” — picking out a position **within** a group or space. With a group it’s “of all ...”; it can also be physically “in the centre,” or “in the middle of (a process).”

Structure: Group / Place / Process +

{zh: |nǐ|you / |shì|are / |wǒ|my / |suǒ|you|all / |péng you|friends / |dāng zhōng|of / |zuì|the most / |cōng míng|clever / |de / 。 }

Of all my friends, you’re the cleverest.

{zh: |tā men|them / |dāng zhōng|among / |hěn duō|many / |dōu / |shì|are / |Shàng hǎi rén|Shanghainese / 。 }

Many of them are Shanghainese.

Remember: = “in the midst of” — of a *group* (“of all...”:), a *space* (“in the centre”:), or a *process* (“mid-...”:). It always sits *after* what it’s inside.

Watch out

- It comes after the group/place, not before: ✓, not .

+ — “each other, one another”

(literally “that and this”) means “each other, both sides” — a slightly **formal** cousin of . As an object it wants a two-syllable verb; it can also stand alone.

Structure: + Verb · Verb +

{zh: |wǒ men|we / |zhǐ|only / |jiàn guo|have met / |yí cì|once / , |bǐ cǐ|each other / |bù|don’t / |tài|very / |liǎo jiě|know / 。 }

We’ve only met once — we don’t know each other well.

{zh: |wǒ men|we / |yīng gāi|should / |bǐ cǐ|each other / |xìn rèn|trust / 。 }

We should trust each other.

Remember: = “that-and-this” = **each other** — the formal sibling of , with a two-syllable verb (, ,). Bonus idiom: = “likewise / same to you.”

Watch out

- Formal register — in everyday speech is more natural.

Time / Event + — “ever since, since”

marks a stretch of time running **from a past point right up to now** — “(ever) since.” It usually opens the sentence; in formal writing it can be bracketed as ()

Structure: Time / Event + ,

{zh: |jié hūn|getting married / |yǐ lái|since / , |wǒ men|we / |méi|haven’t / |chǎo guo|had / |jià|a fight / 。 }

Since we got married, we haven’t had a single fight.

{zh: |shàng|starting / |dà xué|university / |yǐ lái|since / , |tā|he / |biàn|has changed / |le / |hěn duō|a lot / 。 }

Since starting university, he’s changed a lot.

Remember: = “from (then) up to NOW” — a continuous run reaching the present (,). In writing, wrap it: Set phrases: (“for ages now”), (“since history began”).

Watch out

- It implies the period reaches the present — for a closed past span, use / .

... — “when, at the time of”

... frames **when** something happens — “when, at the moment that.” opens it; (or just) closes it.

Structure: + Event + ,

{zh: |dāng|when / |wǒ|I / |kàn dào|saw / |zhè|this / |zhāng / |zhào piàn|photo / |shí|when / , |wǒ|I / |jiù|immediately / |xiǎng qǐ|thought of / |le / |nǐ|you / 。 }

When I saw this photo, I immediately thought of you.

{zh: |dāng|when / |dì dì|my little brother / |è|is hungry / |de shí hou / , |tā|he / |jiù / |huì|will / |dà shēng|loudly / |kū|cry / 。 }

When my little brother is hungry, he cries loudly.

Remember: ... = a pair of brackets around “when...” (opens, closes). The is optional but adds a formal, narrative ring; can shrink to .

Watch out

- Don't leave dangling without its / — they work as a pair.

+ + Category — name-calling with

Slot + **category** after a name or pronoun and it adds a **wry, evaluative** colour — “you, ... of a ..., this so-called ...” It paints the noun with the speaker's attitude, fond or critical.

Structure: Noun / Pronoun + + Category

{zh: |ní|you / |zhè ge|this / |rén|person / |a / , |tài|too / |cū xīn|careless / |le / 。 }

You — you're just too careless.

{zh: |tā|he / |zhè ge|this / |lǎo shī|teacher / |dāng / |de / |zhēn|really / |bú cuò|good / 。 }

As a teacher, he's really rather good.

Remember: Noun + + category = identification *with an attitude* — ... (“you — honestly!”). It's not neutral pointing; it carries the speaker's feeling, affectionate or exasperated.

Watch out

- Very colloquial — , . In neutral identification you'd just drop the .