

Complements

Ref Hsk5 Grammar

+ + / / / — advanced degree complements

After **Adj** + , a fixed phrase like / / / cranks the quality to an extreme — “... terribly, ... like crazy.” (You already know - and - ; these are the other common ones.)

Structure: Adjective + + / / /
{zh: |zhè ge|this / |hái zi|child / |zì sī|selfish / |de hěn|terribly / 。 }

This child is terribly selfish.

{zh: |wǒ|my / |bà ba|father / |gù zhí|stubborn / |de / |bù dé liǎo|awfully / 。 }

My father is awfully stubborn.

Remember: a kit of “...like crazy” tails after **Adj** + : , , , (all “... to death / unbearably”). They sit alongside the - / - you already know.

Watch out

- These all need the (); the - / - forms attach bare.

+ / — advanced potential complements

/ (here reads **liǎo**) after a verb asks whether the action **can be managed or pulled off** — often hinting at an outside factor. ≈ “can’t (because of circumstances).”

Structure: Verb + /
{zh: |zhè me|so / |duō|much / |cài|food / , |wǒ|I / |chī|eat / |bù liǎo|can’t manage / 。 }

So much food — I can’t finish it all.

{zh: |tā|he / |nà me|so / |lǎo|old / , |zǒu|walk / |de liǎo|can manage / |nà me|that / |duō|far / |lù / |ma / ? }

He’s so old — can he walk that far?

Remember: here = **liǎo** (“manage / finish”) — V / V = “can / can’t *pull it off*,” usually due to circumstances (“can’t finish,” “can’t make it”). Different from (“not allowed”).

Watch out

- Mind the reading: = *liǎo* here, not the *le* of completion.

+ / / () — advanced result complements

Three handy result complements: = hold firm / come to a halt (,); = apart / away, or relief from a worry (, “let it go”); () = come into being / figure out (,).

Structure: Verb + / / ()

{zh: |wǒ|I / |jì|remember / |bù|can’t / |zhù|hold / |zhè me|so / |duō|many / |shēng cí|new words / 。 }

I can’t retain so many new words.

{zh: |xiǎng|let / |kāi|it go / |yì diǎn|a bit / , |bié|don’t / |nán guò|be sad / |le / 。 }

Try to let it go — don’t be sad.

Remember: picture each complement: = grip/stop (“hold in memory,” “halt”); = part/away (“go away,” “open up the knot = get over it”); () = bring forth (“think up,” “make out”).

Watch out

- (“let it go”) vs (“think up”) — same , opposite results from the complement.

+ — “... terribly, ... to bits”

The complement (like) means a feeling has hit an **overwhelming** pitch — “... terribly, ... to bits.” Despite (“bad”), it just means “extremely,” and can even be positive.

Structure: Adjective / psych-Verb +

{zh: |dà jiā|everyone / |dōu / |lèi|tired / |huài le|out / 。 }

Everyone was worn out.

{zh: |hái zi|the child / |bú jiàn|went missing / |le / , |mā ma|the mother / |jí|frantic / |huài le / 。 }

The child went missing — the mother was frantic.

Remember: = “...to bits,” not “broken” — pure intensity, even for good feelings: (worn out), (starving), (frantic), (thrilled to bits).

Watch out

- Don’t read as “happiness broke” — is just “extremely.”

+ — the result complement (zháo)

(read **zháo**) after a verb means the action **hit its mark** — “succeeded in, managed to.” Don’t confuse it with the aspect particle (*zhe*). Its potential forms are / .

Structure: Verb + (zháo)

{zh: |bǎo bao|the baby / |gāng|just / |shuì zháo|fell asleep / 。 }

The baby just fell asleep.

{zh: |zuó wǎn|last night / |wǒ|I / |méi|didn’t / |shuì zháo|manage to sleep / 。 }

I couldn’t fall asleep last night.

Remember: = zháo here = “hit the target, succeeded” — (managed to sleep), (found), (can’t get hold of). A world away from the *zhe* of an ongoing state ().

Watch out

- Two readings, two jobs: (*zháo*, “fell asleep,” a result) vs (*zhe*, “is open,” a state).

+ — tricky uses of

after a verb makes **achievement** explicit: (“look for”) vs (“find”); vs (“accomplish”); vs (“succeed in buying”). Without , a verb can shade into “try to.”

Structure: Verb +

{zh: |nǐ|you / |yí dìng|must / |yào / |zhǎo dào|find it / 。 }

You must find it.

{zh: |wǒ|I / |méi|didn’t / |xiǎng dào|expect / |nǐ|you / |yě|too / |lái|came / |le / 。 }

I didn’t expect you’d come too.

Remember: stamps “achieved” onto the verb: (search) → (find), → (succeed in buying), → (think of / expect). A bare verb can mean just “try to.”

Watch out

- vs is the classic pair: (“searched for ages”) doesn’t say you (“found”) it.

+ + + — “...ing this way and that”

Wrap one verb in ... to paint a **repeated, aimless** action — “...ing back and forth, over and over.” The same single-syllable verb repeats on both sides.

Structure: Verb + + (same) Verb +

{zh: |tā|he / |zài / |kǎo chǎng|the exam hall / |wài miàn|outside / |zǒu lái zǒu qù|paced back and forth / 。 }

He paced back and forth outside the exam hall.

{zh: |wǒ|I / |xiǎng lái xiǎng qù|thought it over and over / |dōu|still / |xiǎng bù míng bai|couldn’t work it out / 。 }

I thought it over and over but still couldn’t work it out.

Remember: V V = “back and forth, round and round” — the same one-syllable verb on both sides, painting restless repetition: (pacing), (mulling), (going on about it), (tossing and turning).

Watch out

- It carries a faintly *futile / restless* tone — lots of motion, often no result.