

Sentence Patterns

Ref Hsk5 Grammar

(advanced) — , , ,

Once the basic sentence clicks, these advanced moves come up constantly: + **Obj** + + **Verb** (spoken emphasis, optional); + **Obj** + / + ... (“treat / regard as”); ... (“not take seriously”); and **A** / **B** (“mistake A for B”).

Structure: + **Obj** + + **VP** · + **Obj** + / + ... · **A** + / + **B**

{zh: |wǒ|I / |bǎ / |zhè|this / |shì er|matter / |gěi / |wàng|forgot / |le / 。 }

I clean forgot about this.

{zh: |wǒ|I / |yì zhí|have always / |bǎ / |tā|him / |kàn zuò|seen as / |wǒ|my / |gē ge|older brother / 。 }

I've always seen him as an older brother.

Remember: a toolkit — ...**V** (a spoken kick:), ... / ... (“treat/regard as”), ... (“not take seriously”), **A** / **B** (“mistake A for B”). All still “grab the object, then do something to it.”

Watch out

- The here is just emphasis — it doesn't mean “give.”

Noun 1 + + Noun 2 + Adj. — “no more ... than”

is **not** . = “not as ... as” (definitely less); = “**no more** ... than” (we might even be equal). It directly negates .

Structure: Noun 1 + + Noun 2 + Adjective · **A** + + **B** + Verb + + Adj

{zh: |nǐ|you / |bù bǐ|no ... than / |wǒ|me / |chà|worse / 。 }

You're no worse than me.

{zh: |tā|she / |tiào|dances / |de / |bù bǐ|no ... than / |míng xīng|a star / |chà|worse / 。 }

She dances no worse than a star.

Remember: = “**no more** ... than” (maybe equal); = “not as ... as” (definitely less). (“you're *no worse* than me,” i.e. just as good). And don't muddle (bùbǐ) with (bùbì, “needn't”)!

Watch out

- quietly leaves room for “equal” — it denies “more,” not “the same.”

+ + + — “if you’re going to ..., then ...”

+ V + + V lays down a **resolute** condition — “if you’re going to V, then V (and do it properly / now).” The tone is almost a command, so it usually drops the subject, with single-syllable verbs.

Structure: + Verb + + Verb

{zh: |yào|if you’re going to / |zǒu|leave / |jiù|then / |zǒu|leave / , |wǒ men|we / |bù|don’t / |xū yào|need / |nǐ|you / 。 }

If you’re leaving, then leave — we don’t need you.

{zh: |yào|if you’re going to / |xué|study it / |jiù|then / |hǎo hǎo|properly / |xué|study / 。 }

If you’re going to study it, study it properly.

Remember: VV = “if you’re gonna do it, then **DO** it (properly)” — resolute, command-like, usually subjectless (). Don’t mix it up with the indifferent VV (, “so be it”) later in this file.

Watch out

- The second verb can take a short modifier: , .

— “can’t do without”

means something is **indispensable or unavoidable** — “can’t do without, bound to involve.” It’s colloquial.

Structure: Subject + + Noun / Verb Phrase

{zh: |měi nián|every / |Chūn jié|New Year / , |shǎo bu liǎo|you can’t do without / |jiǎo zi|dumplings / 。 }

New Year just isn’t New Year without dumplings.

{zh: |huí jiā|getting home / |wǎn|late / |le / , |shǎo bu liǎo|there’s no escaping / |yí dùn|a / |mà|telling-off / 。 }

Get home late and a telling-off is guaranteed.

Remember: = “can’t be short of it” = **indispensable / inescapable** — the good kind () or the bad (, “a telling-off is guaranteed”).

Watch out

- is *liǎo* here — (“can’t do without”), not with a *le*.

A , B — “amounts to, is the same as”

equates two things — “equals, amounts to, is the same as.” Beyond maths, it draws an “as good as” equivalence, often an **unintended** one.

Structure: A , () B

{zh: |làng fèi|wasting / |shí jiān|time / |děng yú|is / |làng fèi|wasting / |shēng mìng|life / 。 }

Wasting time is wasting life.

{zh: |nǐ|you / |gào su|tell / |Xiǎo Wáng|Xiao Wang / |jiù / |děng yú|is as good as / |gào su|telling / |le / |dà jiā|everyone / 。 }

Telling Xiao Wang is as good as telling everyone.

Remember: = “= / as good as” — straight from maths (3+2 5) into “amounts to the same thing” (). Often a consequence you didn’t intend.

Watch out

- It draws an *equivalence*, not a cause — “X Y” says they amount to the same, not “X causes Y.”

+ + — “from (a source), ... (gained)”

... marks the **source** from which knowledge or experience is drawn — “from (within) ..., (I gained) ...” It differs from ... (which spans time or place).

Structure: + Source + + Result

{zh: |wǒ|I / |cóng|from / |shū|books / |zhōng / |xué|learned / |dào / |le / |hěn duō|a lot / 。 }

I learned a lot from books.

{zh: |cóng|from / |zhè jiàn|this / |shì|matter / |zhōng / , |tā|he / |míng bai|saw / |le / |chéng shí|honesty’s / |de / |zhòng yào|importance / 。 }

From this, he saw the importance of honesty.

Remember: ... = “from WITHIN (this source), I drew...” — the well you take insight or information out of (,). Different from ... (a span from A to B).

Watch out

- The closes the bracket — ..., not a bare

+ + + — “no ... to ...”

The formal frame + **Noun** + + **Verb** means there’s **nothing of that kind to do** — “no ... to ..., nothing to be ...” It’s a condensed, classical-flavoured

Structure: + Noun + + Verb

{zh: |wǒ|I / |hé|with / |tā|him / |wú huà kě shuō|have nothing to say / 。 }

I have nothing to say to him.

{zh: |gōng sī|the firm / |dǎo bì|folded / |le / , |tā|he / |wú lù kě zǒu|has nowhere to turn / 。 }

The firm folded — he’s nowhere to turn.

Remember: N V = “no N to V” (= literary). Learn the set four-character forms whole: (nothing to say), (nowhere to turn), (nowhere to go), (nothing to do).

Watch out

- Formal/literary — in speech you’d say

... , ... — “not only ..., even ...”

This frame escalates: **A, B ...** — “not only A; even B (the extreme case) too.”

Structure: Subject + , + New Item + + Matching Situation

{zh: |tā|he / |bú dàn|not only / |bù|doesn’t / |zhī dào|know / |Lǐ Lián jié|Jet Li / , |shèn zhì lián|even / |Chéng Lóng|Jackie Chan / |yě / |bù|doesn’t / |zhī dào|know / 。 }

He doesn’t know Jet Li — he doesn’t even know Jackie Chan.

{zh: |nǐ|your / |nán péng you|boyfriend / |bú dàn|not only / |zuò hǎo|planned / |le / |gōng lüè|the trip / , |shèn zhì lián|even / |jī piào|the tickets / |yě / |mǎi hǎo|bought / |le / 。 }

He not only planned the trip — he even bought the tickets.

Remember: A, B ... = “not only A — **even B!**” It tops off ... by reaching for the most striking case (... , pulling in the ... “even” frame).

Watch out

- B should be the *more surprising* item — the escalation is the whole point.

(/ /) ... + — “... related to ...”

/ / ... builds a modifier meaning “(that is) related to ...” / are casual (spoken); is formal.

Structure: / / + Topic + + Noun

{zh: |gēn|to do / |tā|him / |yǒu guān de|related / |shì qíng|anything / , |wǒ|I / |dōu / |bù|don't / |xiǎng|want to / |zhī dào|know / 。 }

Anything to do with him, I don't want to know.

{zh: |yǔ|related to / |yì miáo|the vaccine / |yǒu guān de / |yán jiū|research / |yǐ jīng|already / |kāi shǐ|begun / |le / 。 }

Research related to the vaccine has already begun.

Remember: ... + noun = “the noun (that's) connected to ...” The clips the whole “related to X” phrase onto the noun. Register: / (spoken) vs (formal).

Watch out

- Keep the — it's what turns “related to X” into a modifier of the noun.

+ () Noun Phrase — “so-called”

flags a term as “so-called” — putting it in mental scare-quotes. It's often sceptical, but (unlike English) not always negative. The is optional.

Structure: + () + Noun Phrase

{zh: |méi yǒu|there's no / |suǒ wèi|so-called / |de / |shī bài|failure / , |chú fēi|unless / |nǐ|you / |bù|don't / |zài / |cháng shì|try again / 。 }

There's no such thing as “failure,” unless you stop trying.

{zh: |zhè|this / |jiù shì|is / |nǐ|your / |suǒ wèi|so-called / |de / |bāng máng|“help” / ? }

Is this your so-called help?

Remember: = “so-called” (= air-quotes) — names a term while holding it at arm's length (? “your *so-called* help?”). Often sceptical, not always damning; the is optional.

Watch out

- It questions the label, not necessarily the thing — context sets how sceptical it sounds.

+ Time + — “within (a period)”

... sets a **time limit** — “within (a period).” It’s a sandwich frame; the period can be precise or vague.

Structure: + Time +

{zh: |zài|in / |duǎn duǎn|just / |liǎng nián|two years / |nèi / , |tā|he / |jiù / |dāng shàng|became / |le / CEO / 。 }

In just two years, he became CEO.

{zh: |qǐng|please / |zài|within / |sān tiān|three days / |nèi / |huí fù|reply / 。 }

Please reply within three days.

Remember: + time + = a sandwich for “within” (= “inside three days”). The period can be exact () or loose (). Cousin of (HSK 5, file 07).

Watch out

- It brackets a *duration*, not a deadline point — “within three days,” not “by Friday.”

... , / ... — “would rather”

states a **deliberate, costly choice**. **A B** = “would rather A than B” (A is the lesser evil); **A B** = “would rather A in order to still get B” (accept a cost for B).

Structure: + A , + B · + A , + B

{zh: |wǒ men|we / |nìng kě|would rather / |zǎo dào|arrive early / , |yě bù|than / |chí dào|be late / 。 }

We’d rather arrive early than late.

{zh: |wǒ|I / |nìng kě|would rather / |áo yè|stay up all night / , |yě yào|just to / |zuò wán|finish it / 。 }

I’d rather stay up all night just to finish it.

Remember: **A B** = “rather A than B” (B is the thing avoided); **A B** = “rather A, just to still get B” (B is the thing wanted, at A’s cost). The / flips which side is the goal.

Watch out

- rejects B; insists on B — opposite meanings hanging on one character.

+ + — expressing indifference

Repeat a verb around to shrug a matter off — “(if it ...,) then so be it; fine, ... then.”
It carries an “I don’t care” attitude.

Structure: Verb + + (same) Verb

{zh: |huài|broken / |le / |jiù|then / |huài|broken / |le / , |zài|just / |mǎi|buy / |xīn de|a new one / 。 }

If it's broken, it's broken — we'll just buy a new one.

{zh: |zǒu|leave / |jiù|then / |zǒu|leave / , |wǒ|I / |zǎo jiù|long ago / |bù|didn't / |xiǎng|want to / |gàn|do it / |le / ! }

Leave then — I've long wanted to quit anyway!

Remember: VV = a shrug, “so be it.” (“if it’s broken, it’s broken — whatever”). Don’t confuse it with VV (“if you’re going to V, then *really* V”) — that one’s resolute, this one’s indifferent.

Watch out

- Same verb both sides, with a “couldn’t care less” tone — , .

Action , + Purpose — “so that, in order to”

A clause-medial introduces the **purpose** of the preceding action — “so that, so as to.”

Structure: Action , + Purpose

{zh: |qǐng|please / |shuō|speak / |màn|slowly / |diǎnr|a bit / , |wǒ men|we / |hǎo|so that / |zuò|take / |bǐ jì|notes / 。 }

Please speak a little slower, so we can take notes.

{zh: |tā|she / |shuì qián|before bed / |hē|drinks / |niú nǎi|milk / , |hǎo|so as to / |rù shuì|fall asleep / 。 }

She drinks milk before bed to help her fall asleep.

Remember: this = “so that / so as to,” not “good.” It links an action to its purpose: (“speak slowly, *so that* we can take notes”). Think “do this, the better to...”.

Watch out

- Mid-clause + a verb = purpose; don't read it as the adjective “good” there.

... , ... — “(doing one thing) while (another)”

... ... describes **two simultaneous actions** — “while ..., (at the same time) ...” It's a formal cousin of

Structure: + Verb 1 , + Verb 2

{zh: |tā|he / |xǐ huan|likes to / |yí miàn|while / |chī dōng xi|eating / , |yí miàn|at the same time / |kàn|watch / |diàn yǐng|films / 。 }

He likes to eat while watching films.

{zh: |wǒ|I / |yí miàn|while / |kū|crying / |yí miàn|at the same time / |pǎo|ran off / 。 }

I ran off crying.

Remember: = **the formal** (“doing two things at once”). = “side,” same image as — one action on each side, simultaneously.

Watch out

- Reserve it for writing/formal speech; is the everyday version.

... , ... — “either ... or ...”

A, B says it must be **one of two** — “(it's) either A or B.” A and B can be verbs, adjectives, or nouns; it rules out any third option.

Structure: + A , + B

{zh: |tā|he / |zhěng tiān|all day / |bú shì|either / |dǎ yóu xì|games / |jiù shì|or / |shuì jiào|sleeping / 。 }

All day it's either gaming or sleeping.

{zh: |wǒ|I / |mǎi|buy / |de / |yī fu|clothes / |bú shì|either / |dà|too big / |jiù shì|or / |xiǎo|too small / 。 }

The clothes I buy are either too big or too small.

Remember: A B = “it's either A or B (no third option)” — often a bit exasperated (....., “always one or the other”). Don't confuse it with A B (“not A but rather B”), which *corrects* to B.

Watch out

- narrows to two; replaces a wrong A with the right B — the second word (vs) tells them apart.