

Comparing similar prepositions

Ref Hsk5 Grammar

vs vs — “towards, facing”

All three mark **direction**. **Before** a verb in plain directional use they’re interchangeable (/ /). **After** a verb (,), marks the **destination** and is the most common; marks direction; can’t go after a verb. Only stretches to abstract aims (...).

{zh: |wǎng / |qián|forward / |zǒu|walk / |shí|ten / |fēn zhōng|minutes / 。 }

Walk forward for ten minutes.

{zh: |zhè ge|this / |dì tiě|train / |shì|is / |kāi wǎng|bound for / |Pǔ dōng|Pudong / |jī chǎng|Airport / |de / |ma / ? }

Is this train bound for Pudong Airport?

Remember: before the verb, all three tie (/ /); after the verb, only (**destination:**) or — can’t follow a verb. And abstract “learn from / turn toward” is alone:

Watch out

- is the most restricted — keep it *before* the verb.

vs — “towards, regarding”

Near-synonyms for “towards / regarding.” is flexible and can mark a person you *act on* (“smile at him”). is more formal, frames only a **topic or object of attitude**, and can’t take a direct personal target. Rule of thumb: anywhere fits, fits too — not the reverse.

{zh: |duì yú|regarding / |zhè ge|this / |wèn tí|question / , |wǒ|I / |méi yǒu|have no / |kàn fǎ|view / 。 }

As for this question, I’ve no opinion.

{zh: |tā|he / |duì|at / |wǒ|me / |xiào|smiled / |le / 。 }

He smiled at me.

Remember: fits $\implies$ fits — but NOT the reverse. A personal target (, “smile at him”) needs ; only frames a topic/attitude (). When in doubt, is the safer, broader one.

Watch out

- Don’t put a person straight after as a target — ×, ✓.

vs vs — three “regarding”s

= the **topic / subject matter** (“about, on”); = the **target of an attitude** (“towards, regarding”); = a **transition** to a new topic (“as for, as to”).

{zh: |guān yú|about / |zhè|this / |běn / |shū|book / , |wǒ|I / |yǒu|have / |xiē / |xiǎng fǎ|thoughts / 。 }

About this book, I have some thoughts.

{zh: |zhì yú|as for / |jià gé|the price / , |yǐ hòu|later / |zài / |shuō|we’ll talk / 。 }

As for the price, we’ll discuss it later.

Remember: three jobs — = the **subject** (“about X”); = **an attitude aimed at X** (“towards X”); = a **switch to a new topic** (“as for X...”). Subject / attitude / topic-shift.

Watch out

- changes topic, it doesn’t just name one — don’t swap it in for .

vs — “for, to”

Both mean “for / to (someone).” marks the **recipient** of a concrete action (“call him”); marks the **beneficiary or reason**, more abstract (“happy for him”). can’t replace in a “hand-to / call” action.

{zh: |qǐng|please / |gěi|to / |wǒ|me / |ná|pass / |yì shuāng|a pair of / |kuài zi|chopsticks / 。 }

Please pass me a pair of chopsticks.

{zh: |wǒ men|we / |dōu|all / |wèi|for / |nǐ|you / |gāo xìng|are happy / 。 }

We’re all happy for you.

Remember: = the **RECIPIENT** of a concrete action (**hand to / call**); ; = the **BENEFICIARY or reason, abstract:** . Something physically goes *to* someone $\rightarrow$; you feel/act *on behalf of* someone $\rightarrow$.

Watch out

- sounds off for “call him” — a concrete handover/call wants .