Conjunctions

HSK 5 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.

要不 ... 吧 (how about ...)

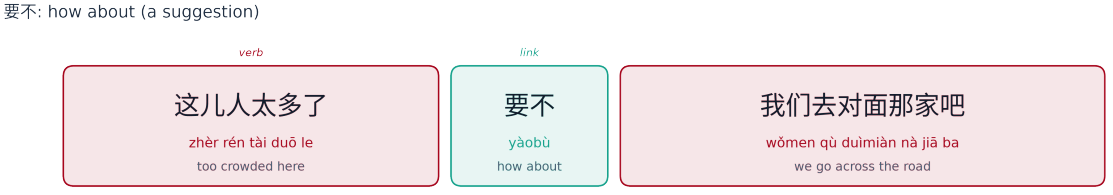
Too crowded here

- You and a friend walk into a café, and every table is taken.
- **这儿人太多了，要不我们去对面那家吧。** – "It's too crowded here; how about we go to the one across the road?"

要不 + suggestion + 吧

- **要不** at the start of a clause offers an alternative: "how about …, or else …".
- 吧 at the end keeps it a soft suggestion: 要不明天再说吧.

要不我们明天再说吧。
yào bù wǒ men míng tiān zài shuō ba
Word guide: 要不 – how about; 我们 – we; 明天 – tomorrow; 再 – then; 说 – talk about it.



After a problem

- **下午可能下雨，要不我们把野餐改到室内吧。** – "It might rain this afternoon; how about moving the picnic indoors?"
- 要不 often follows a reason why the original plan doesn't work.

要不我们把野餐改到室内吧。
yào bù wǒ men bǎ yě cān gǎi dào shì nèi ba
Word guide: 要不 – how about; 我们 – we; 野餐 – the picnic; 改到 – move to; 室内 – indoors.

■ **要不 versus 要不是**

- **要不是** = “if it weren’t for”: 要不是你提醒我，我就忘了 – “If you hadn’t reminded me, I’d have forgotten.”
- **要不然** = “otherwise”: 快走，要不然就迟到了. Different from the suggestion 要不.

■ **要不 versus 还是 … 吧**

- 还是 … 吧 recommends after weighing options: 还是坐地铁吧.
- 要不 … 吧 tentatively offers a new idea: 要不我们坐地铁吧?

我们还是坐地铁吧。
wǒ men hái shi zuò dì tiě ba
Word guide: 我们 – we; 还是 – had better; 坐 – take; 地铁 – the subway.

■ **Recap**

- **要不 + suggestion + 吧** = how about …? (a soft new idea).
- 要不是 = if it weren’t for; 要不然 = otherwise.

Practise this pattern step by step.

Practice without the models

■ **要不 … 吧 (how about …)**

0401.1 Suggest: “How about we take a taxi?” …… 我们打车吧。

0401.2 What does 要不是你帮我，我就完了 mean?

- A. I didn’t need your help.
- B. If you hadn’t helped me, I’d have been done for.
- C. Help me, or else.
- D. How about you help me?

0401.3 Build: “It might rain; how about moving the picnic indoors?”

Arrange all chunks: 我们把野餐 / 改到室内吧。/ 可能下雨 / ，要不

0401.4 要不然 means “otherwise”.

True or false? Explain or repair the statement.

0401.5 You and a friend walk into a café, and every table is taken. 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

■ 要不 … 吧 (how about …)

0401.1 要不

要不 + suggestion + 吧.

0401.2 B. If you hadn't helped me, I'd have been done for.

要不是 means "if it weren't for": it introduces a condition contrary to fact. 要不是你帮我，我就完了 "If you hadn't helped me, I'd have been done for."

0401.3 可能下雨，要不我们把野餐改到室内吧。

Reason, then 要不 + suggestion.

0401.4 True.

True. 要不然 (also 要不) means "otherwise": 快走，要不然就迟到了 "Hurry up, otherwise we'll be late."

0401.5 One possible response: 这儿人太多了，要不我们去对面那家吧。

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.
- **要不是** = "if it weren't for": 要不是你提醒我，我就忘了 – "If you hadn't reminded me, I'd have forgotten."
- **要不然** = "otherwise": 快走，要不然就迟到了. Different from the suggestion 要不.
- 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.