Particles

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.

Final 了: change and completion in context

The same ending can change the lunch conversation

- A friend offers lunch after you return from the canteen. **我吃饭了。** tells them you have eaten in this situation. It changes whether another meal is needed; it does not specify how many bowls you ate.
- At home, a parent calls **吃饭了！** while putting food on the table. Here the call announces mealtime. Treating every final 了 as "already finished" would reverse the intended action.

Locate final 了 before deciding its job

- In **我吃饭了。**, 了 follows the verb and its object at the end of the sentence. The original example below keeps that position. Final 了 can present a changed or newly relevant situation.
- Compare **我吃了三碗饭。**: 了 directly follows 吃, before the counted object. This presents the eating as carried out. Position and context both matter; an object alone does not ban final 了.

我吃饭了。
wǒ chī fàn le
Word guide: 我 – I; 吃 – eat; 饭 – meal.

A changed state need not be a finished action

- A visitor removes a coat: **现在不冷了。** means it is no longer cold in this situation. The sentence describes a changed state rather than a completed act of being cold.
- **要下雨了。** warns that rain is approaching; it does not report that the rain has already ended. Read the words around 了 instead of adding one English past-tense ending everywhere.

Final 了 needs its situation

After lunch: 我吃饭了。
An eating report in this conversation

A call to the table: 吃饭了！
Mealtime is announced; eating need not be finished

A visitor removes a coat: 现在不冷了。
A changed state, rather than a completed act

Position, surrounding words and context work together.

Negation can preserve a change

- **我没吃饭。** denies that the eating happened in the stated period. In this ordinary completed-action negative, 没 replaces the positive action report; do not mechanically append verb-了.
- A diner says they used to eat at this shop but have changed their habit: **我不在这里吃饭了。** means they no longer eat here. 不 and final 了 fit this changed situation; the sentence does not report a finished meal here today.

Two positions can appear together

- **我吃了三碗饭了。** can report three bowls eaten as a now-relevant total. The first 了 follows the verb; the second ends the sentence. The presence of a counted object does not force one position to disappear.
- The total still does not tell you whether a fourth bowl will follow. Ask for the relevant context instead of turning a count or particle into a guarantee that the speaker will never eat more.

Transfer the meaning before choosing a translation

- Change the lunch offer to a call to the table, or change eating to a weather state. Identify what is newly relevant, then check whether an action has been carried out, is approaching or is not the point.
- Compare this lesson with verb-了 and duration. The forms can work together; the practical question is what this speaker communicates here.
- Final 了 is not a universal "finished" or past-tense label. Keep its position, the surrounding words and the conversational situation together.
- A changed habit, an approaching event and a completed-action report need different English paraphrases.

Practise this pattern step by step.

Verb + 了 + Complement (le after the verb)

Two hours of reading is not two hours ago

- At a break, a reader reports **我看了两个小时。** The two hours measure the reading they carried out. They do not locate its starting time two hours before this conversation.
- The reader can later resume. Reporting this stretch of reading does not mean the whole book is finished or that all future reading has stopped.

Put verb-了 before the duration

- In the original example, 了 directly follows 看; **两个小时** supplies the duration. With a counted object, **我买了三本书。** presents a purchase of three books as carried out.
- The particle describes how the action is presented, rather than serving as a general English past tense. Time phrases and the larger sentence locate the event.

我看了两个小时。
wǒ kàn le liǎng ge xiǎo shí
Word guide: 我 – I; 看 – read; 两 – two; 个 – (measure word); 小时 – hours.

Change the time without changing the particle into a tense

- **昨天我看了两个小时。** locates the reported reading yesterday. **两个小时前我开始看书。** instead locates the start two hours ago; 前 makes that relationship explicit.
- In a plan, **等我看了这本书，再和你讨论。** means to discuss it after the reading is done. The reading is a future condition here; 了 does not force it into the past.

Duration differs from event time

我看了两个小时。
Two hours measures the reading carried out

两个小时前我开始看书。
Two hours ago locates the start

等我看了这本书，再和你讨论。
Reading is a future condition for discussion

A duration alone does not establish whole-book completion.

■ A current stretch can use both positions

- A friend asks how long you have been reading while you are still at the book. **我看了两个小时了，现在还在看。** reports a two-hour stretch up to now and explicitly says the reading continues.
- Compare the break report without that continuing context. Do not infer "stopped forever" from one 了 or "still doing it" from a duration alone; the surrounding statement supplies evidence.

■ Change a positive report into a negative carefully

- **我买了三本书。** reports buying three books. **我没买书。** denies buying books in the stated period; this ordinary negative does not keep verb-了 after 买.
- **我没看两个小时，只看了一个小时。** denies a two-hour duration and reports one hour instead. It does not deny all reading: the correction explicitly supplies some.

■ Identify what the quantity actually measures

- A duration answers "how long"; a counted object answers "how many"; a phrase with 前 can answer "how long ago". Find which question the sentence answers before calculating or translating it.
- Change the report to tomorrow's plan or change two hours to one. Keep the action, quantity and time relation separate; none of these examples alone proves that an entire book was finished.
- Verb-了 presents the action as carried out within its context. It can occur in a future condition as well as a report about yesterday.
- Duration, event time and whether activity continues are separate claims that need their own evidence.

Practise this pattern step by step.

Statement + 嘛 (obviously / you know)

■ A beginner's mistake receives an explanation

- A new team member misses a step. A colleague says **他是新手嘛。** to present being a beginner as an understood explanation. It can support giving help, without deciding that every mistake is acceptable.
- Another colleague may still disagree about the explanation. 嘛 shows how the speaker presents the claim; it does not prove that the listener shares it or that the claim is objectively settled.

Attach 嘛 to the statement being presented

- The original **这很简单嘛。** presents this task as easy in the speaker's view. 嘛 is at the end of the statement; it is not the yes/no-question particle 吗 in this example.
- Translate the conversational effect where helpful: "it's simple, you know" may fit. A fixed "obviously" can sound too strong in some English contexts; there is no one translation for every delivery.

这很简单嘛。
zhè hěn jiǎn dān ma
Word guide: 这 – this; 很 – very; 简单 – simple.

Keep the speaker's assumption separate from evidence

- If the listener replies **对我来说不简单。**, they say it is not easy for them. That response can challenge the original assumption without making the first utterance ungrammatical.
- Evidence might show that beginners need instructions; the particle itself supplies no measurements of skill or task difficulty. Discuss the reason, rather than treating 嘛 as proof.

Presenting an assumption does not prove agreement

这很简单嘛。
The speaker presents this task as easy and understood

Listener: 对我来说不简单。
The listener says it is not easy for them

这很简单吗？
A different job: ask whether the task is easy

Check the claim and response as well as the particle.

Compare 嘛, 吗 and 呢 in an actual exchange

- **这很简单吗?** asks whether this is easy. **这很简单嘛。** presents that judgement as understood. Changing the character changes the conversational job, even though both can be transcribed ma without tone marks.
- After giving your view, **你觉得呢?** invites the other person's opinion. It is a follow-up on the shared topic, rather than a substitute spelling for the statement particle 嘛.

A reason can reassure or sound impatient

- A patient colleague may use **他是新手嘛。** to explain why help is needed. An impatient response with the same particle may sound dismissive; surrounding words and delivery matter.
- The written check can identify the stated reason. It cannot certify a kind tone from 嘛 alone or assess the actual sound of a recording that was not supplied.

Test the explanation in a changed situation

- If the teammate is experienced, "he is a beginner" no longer fits the stated facts. Choose a reason supported by the new situation instead of keeping the particle and repeating the old claim.
- If you do not know whether the task is easy, **这很简单吗?** can ask about it. Decide whether you are making an understood claim or requesting information before selecting the particle.
- In these statements, 嘛 presents an explanation or judgement as understood. A listener can question the assumption.
- Keep statement 嘛, yes/no 吗 and follow-up 呢 distinct; written particles do not prove agreement, evidence or tone.

Practise this pattern step by step.

呢: follow-up questions and shared context

Your view makes room for another person's view

- You say that the morning session suits you, then ask **你觉得呢?** The friend is invited to give their view about that shared plan. The question does not supply their opinion in advance.
- After **我午饭吃米饭。**, **你呢?** asks about the other person's lunch in this exchange. After **我住上海。**, the same short question asks where the other person lives. The topic supplies what is left unstated.

Use 呢 within the question's structure

- The original **你觉得呢?** keeps the verb 觉得 and ends with 呢. A short follow-up can use **你呢?** when the shared topic makes the intended question clear.
- **这很简单吗?** directly asks whether this is easy. Do not mechanically replace 吗 with 呢 in every yes/no question; question words, structure and context have their own jobs.

你觉得呢?
nǐ jué de ne
Word guide: 你 – you; 觉得 – think.

A missing object can prompt a different follow-up

- While searching for a phone, **我的手机呢?** asks where it is or what has happened to it. It asks about the missing phone, rather than requesting someone's opinion.
- In a shoe shop, you ask one pair's price, point to another pair and ask **这个呢?** The shared price question makes this "and this one?"; the isolated words do not decide whether you mean price, size or colour.

Shared context supplies the missing question

After 我午饭吃米饭。→你呢？
Ask about the other person's lunch

After 我住上海。→你呢？
Ask where the other person lives

A missing phone: 我的手机呢？
Ask where it is or what happened to it

呢 also occurs in statements: 我正在看书呢。

Conversational does not guarantee gentle

- In a friendly planning exchange, **你觉得呢?** can sound open and conversational. The same words with an impatient tone can challenge someone to respond.
- If the topic is unclear, name it: **你觉得这个计划怎么样呢?** asks about this plan. Adding 呢 does not replace the information needed to understand the question.

Not every sentence with 呢 is a question

- **我正在看书呢。** is a statement about reading in progress here. It has no missing opinion or location to answer; 呢 also appears in statements beyond this lesson's main question pattern.
- Compare **你在看什么呢?**: 什么 asks what is being read. Identify the sentence's structure and situation instead of using 呢 alone as a question detector.

Restore the shared question before answering

- For **你呢?** or **这个呢?**, recover the previous topic and what changed: the person or item. Answer that question, rather than always translating the particle as "what about".
- Change the topic from lunch to residence, or from shoe price to colour. The appropriate answer changes even though the short follow-up stays the same.

- 呢 can help frame a question or follow-up, but shared context supplies its missing content. It also occurs in statements.
- The written form does not guarantee politeness or identify the intended question without its surrounding exchange.

Practise this pattern step by step.

Practice without the models

■ Final 了: change and completion in context

0601.1 Using the lesson pattern in this demonstrated example: I've eaten: 我吃饭……。

0601.2 Which sentence directly reports eating three bowls as a carried-out action?

- A. 打算吃三碗饭
- B. 吃了三碗饭

0601.3 A sentence can contain both verb-了 and sentence-final 了.

True or false? Explain or repair the statement.

0601.4 Someone asks whether you still need lunch; you say you have eaten. What does 我吃饭了。communicate?

- A. Every sentence ending in 了 reports an already completed action.
- B. In this context, the speaker reports that eating has happened.

0601.5 In the coat-removal example, 现在不冷了。describes a changed state rather than a completed act of being cold.

True or false? Explain or repair the statement.

0601.6 Match the stated situation to what final 了 communicates.

- 1. A parent puts the meal on the table: 吃饭了!
- 1. After a meal, a friend offers lunch: 我吃饭了。
- 1. A visitor removes a coat: 现在不冷了。
- A. A changed state: no longer cold
- B. A report that eating has happened
- C. An announcement to come and eat

0601.7 A diner used to eat at this shop but changed their habit. 我不在这里吃饭了。reports that they finished a meal here today.

True or false? Explain or repair the statement.

0601.8 我吃了三碗饭了。reports a now-relevant total. What remains unstated?

- A. Whether a fourth bowl will follow
- B. Whether 了 follows 吃
- C. Whether the sentence includes three bowls

0601.9 Recall the situation: The same ending can change the lunch conversation. Decide what the speaker wanted to communicate. 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.

■ Verb + 了 + Complement (le after the verb)

0602.1 Using the lesson pattern in this demonstrated example: I read for two hours: 我看 …… 两个小时。

0602.2 In 买了三本书, what does the verb-了 mark?

- A. The purchase is merely a future intention
- B. The purchase is presented as carried out

0602.3 Here 了 sits right after the verb, before the quantity.

True or false? Explain or repair the statement.

0602.4 You report two hours of reading before a break. What does 我看了两个小时。 communicate?

- A. 两个小时 says the reading happened two hours ago.
- B. Verb-了 presents the reading as an action carried out, with its duration.

0602.5 In the break report 我看了两个小时。, the duration establishes that the whole book was finished.

True or false? Explain or repair the statement.

0602.6 In the plan 等我看了这本书，再和你讨论。, 了 shows the book was read before this conversation.

True or false? Explain or repair the statement.

0602.7 The reader reports 我看了两个小时。Using 60 minutes per hour, how many minutes of reading are reported?

0602.8 我没看两个小时，只看了一个小时。What does the correction support?

- A. The whole book was completed
- B. One hour of reading happened
- C. No reading happened

0602.9 Recall the situation: Two hours of reading is not two hours ago. Decide what the speaker wanted to communicate. 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.

■ Statement + 嘛 (obviously / you know)

0603.1 Use the statement particle taught here: 这很简单 ……。(The speaker presents the task as easy.)

0603.2 In the statement 这很简单嘛。, how is the judgement presented?

- A. As understood or expected in the speaker's view
- B. As a yes/no question

0603.3 In 这很简单嘛。, 嘛 does the same job as 吗 in 这很简单吗？.

True or false? Explain or repair the statement.

0603.4 A beginner apologises for a mistake; you explain why it is understandable. What does 他是新手嘛。communicate?

- A. 嘛 presents being a beginner as an understood explanation.
- B. 嘛 turns this statement into a yes/no question.

0603.5 In the beginner example, 嘛 shows the colleague's delivery was patient and kind.

True or false? Explain or repair the statement.

0603.6 Match each turn to its job in the exchange.

- 1. 这很简单嘛。
- 1. 这很简单吗?
- 1. 你觉得呢?
- A. Ask whether the task is easy
- B. Invite the other person's view
- C. Present the task as easy and understood

0603.7 After 这很简单嘛。, a listener replies 对我来说不简单。. The listener agrees the task is easy for them.

True or false? Explain or repair the statement.

0603.8 The new situation states that the teammate is experienced. Which claim needs revision before reusing 他是新手嘛。?

- A. The claim that the teammate needs help
- B. The 嘛 that marks the reason as obvious
- C. The unsupported description of the teammate as a beginner

0603.9 Recall the situation: A beginner's mistake receives an explanation. Decide what the speaker wanted to communicate. 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.

■ 呢: follow-up questions and shared context

0604.1 Use the follow-up particle taught here: 你觉得 ……?

0604.2 In the friendly question 你觉得呢？, what is the conversational effect?

- A. harsher / more demanding
- B. softer / more open

0604.3 呢 can also mean "and …?" (这个呢?).

True or false? Explain or repair the statement.

0604.4 You have given your view and ask a friend for theirs. What does 你觉得呢? communicate?

- A. The question invites the friend's opinion using the shared topic.
- B. Adding 呢 guarantees that any question sounds kind.

0604.5 After discussing shoe prices, 这个呢? asks about the shoe's colour.

True or false? Explain or repair the statement.

0604.6 Match the short question to its stated context.

- 1. After 我午饭吃米饭。: 你呢?
- 1. After asking one pair's price, point to another: 这个呢?
- 1. While searching for a missing phone: 我的手机呢?
- A. Ask about the other person's lunch
- B. Ask where the phone is or what happened to it
- C. Ask the other pair's price

0604.7 我正在看书呢。must be a question because it ends in 呢.

True or false? Explain or repair the statement.

0604.8 You say 我住上海。and then ask 你呢? Which reply addresses the shared topic?

- A. 我午饭吃面条。
- B. 我住北京。
- C. 这双鞋三百元。

0604.9 Recall the situation: Your view makes room for another person's view. Decide what the speaker wanted to communicate. 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

■ Final 了: change and completion in context

0601.1 了

In this lunch context, 吃饭了 reports having eaten. Final 了 is not restricted to completion; context can make 吃饭了 an announcement to start eating.

0601.2 B. 吃了三碗饭

Verb-了 presents the action as carried out. 吃三碗饭了 can be natural with a changed-situation context; it is not banned by the quantified object.

0601.3 True.

我吃了三碗饭了。can present eating three bowls as a now-relevant total. The two positions have different jobs.

0601.4 B. In this context, the speaker reports that eating has happened.

In this context, the speaker reports that eating has happened. Sentence-final 了 often marks a newly relevant situation. 吃饭了 can also announce that it is time to eat; context prevents a simple completion-only rule.

0601.5 True.

The state is no longer cold in this situation. Final 了 need not mark a finished action.

0601.6 1–C: A parent puts the meal on the table: 吃饭了！ = An announcement to come and eat; 2–B: After a meal, a friend offers lunch: 我吃饭了。= A report that eating has happened; 3–A: A visitor removes a coat: 现在不冷了。= A changed state: no longer cold

The situations supply different interpretations. The shared final particle does not make them all completed meals.

0601.7 False.

In the stated context, the sentence says they no longer eat here. It reports a changed habit, not today's completed meal.

0601.8 A. Whether a fourth bowl will follow

The total is three so far in this report. The sentence does not guarantee that another bowl will or will not follow.

0601.9 One possible response: 我吃饭了。

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.
- **我没吃饭。** denies that the eating happened in the stated period. In this ordinary completed-action negative, 没 replaces the positive action report; do not mechanically append verb-了.

- A diner says they used to eat at this shop but have changed their habit: **我不在这里吃饭了。** means they no longer eat here. 不 and final 了 fit this changed situation; the sentence does not report a finished meal here today.
- 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.

■ Verb + 了 + Complement (le after the verb)

0602.1 了

看了两个小时 measures the duration of reading that was carried out. It does not state that reading can never resume.

0602.2 B. The purchase is presented as carried out

In this example, 买了三本书 reports the purchase. Verb-了 is an aspect marker rather than a general past tense.

0602.3 True.

Yes – 看了两个小时, 买了三本书.

0602.4 B. Verb-了 presents the reading as an action carried out, with its duration.

Verb-了 presents the reading as an action carried out, with its duration. The duration measures the action, not how long ago it happened. This form alone does not rule out doing more reading later.

0602.5 False.

Two hours measures reading time. The book's length and how much was read remain unstated.

0602.6 False.

The reading is a future condition for discussing the book. Verb-了 does not impose past time on this plan.

0602.7 120

Two hours × 60 minutes per hour = 120 minutes of reading. This duration does not locate the event 120 minutes ago.

0602.8 B. One hour of reading happened

The speaker denies the two-hour duration and reports one hour. The denial does not remove all reading or establish whole-book completion.

0602.9 One possible response: 我看了两个小时。

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.

- A friend asks how long you have been reading while you are still at the book. **我看了两个小时了，现在还在看。** reports a two-hour stretch up to now and explicitly says the reading continues.
- Compare the break report without that continuing context. Do not infer "stopped forever" from one 了 or "still doing it" from a duration alone; the surrounding statement supplies evidence.
- 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.

■ Statement + 嘛 (obviously / you know)

0603.1 嘛

嘛 presents the statement as understood in the speaker's view. It does not prove that the task is easy for every listener.

0603.2 A. As understood or expected in the speaker's view

This statement presents the judgement as understood. Compare the question 这很简单吗？ ; the listener can still disagree with the statement.

0603.3 False.

The first turn presents a judgement; the second asks whether it is true. These examples have different conversational jobs.

0603.4 A. 嘛 presents being a beginner as an understood explanation.

嘛 presents being a beginner as an understood explanation. The listener may not actually share the assumption. 嘛 is different from 吗, which forms a yes/no question.

0603.5 False.

The stated explanation concerns being a beginner. Delivery and surrounding words are needed to judge whether it reassures or sounds dismissive.

0603.6 1–C: 这很简单嘛。= Present the task as easy and understood; 2–A: 这很简单吗？ = Ask whether the task is easy; 3–B: 你觉得呢？ = Invite the other person's view

These turns present a statement, ask a yes/no question and invite a follow-up view. They do not establish identical effects.

0603.7 False.

The listener explicitly says it is not easy for them. 嘛 presents the first speaker's assumption; it does not guarantee shared agreement.

0603.8 C. The unsupported description of the teammate as a beginner

An experienced teammate does not fit the stated beginner explanation. A particle cannot make that reason consistent with the new facts.

0603.9 One possible response: 他是新手嘛。

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.
- **这很简单吗?** asks whether this is easy. **这很简单嘛。** presents that judgement as understood. Changing the character changes the conversational job, even though both can be transcribed ma without tone marks.
- After giving your view, **你觉得呢?** invites the other person's opinion. It is a follow-up on the shared topic, rather than a substitute spelling for the statement particle 嘛.
- 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.

■ 呢: follow-up questions and shared context

0604.1 呢

呢 closes this invitation for the other person's view. Its effect depends on the shared topic and delivery; it does not guarantee a gentle tone.

0604.2 B. softer / more open

It invites the other view on the shared topic. Tone can still make a question challenging; 呢 alone does not guarantee politeness.

0604.3 True.

Yes – 这个呢? = and this one?

0604.4 A. The question invites the friend's opinion using the shared topic.

The question invites the friend's opinion using the shared topic. 呢 can make a question more conversational. A harsh tone can still make it challenging; the particle is not a politeness guarantee.

0604.5 False.

In the stated exchange, the prior price question supplies the topic. In a colour discussion the same short form could ask about colour instead.

0604.6 1–A: After 我午饭吃米饭。: 你呢? = Ask about the other person's lunch; 2–C: After asking one pair's price, point to another: 这个呢? = Ask the other pair's price; 3–B: While searching for a missing phone: 我的手机呢? = Ask where the phone is or what happened to it

The prior topic and situation supply the missing content. The particle alone does not choose lunch, price or location.

0604.7 False.

In this example it is a statement about reading in progress. 呢 also occurs in statements; 什么 in 你在看什么呢? supplies a question word.

0604.8 B. 我住北京。

The shared topic is residence, so 我住北京。responds to it. The lunch and shoe-price replies fit different exchanges.

0604.9 One possible response: 你觉得呢?

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.
- In a friendly planning exchange, **你觉得呢?** can sound open and conversational. The same words with an impatient tone can challenge someone to respond.
- If the topic is unclear, name it: **你觉得这个计划怎么样呢?** asks about this plan. Adding 呢 does not replace the information needed to understand the question.
- 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.