

Verbs

Ref Hsk5 Grammar

动词 + 什么 — challenging an action

A verb followed by 什么 (often the **same verb** again) is a **rhetorical, annoyed** pushback — “what are you ...ing for? / stop ...ing!” With a separable verb, 什么 splits the two halves.

Structure: Verb + 什么 + (same) Verb · Verb + 什么 + Object

{zh: 你 |nǐ|you / 哭 |kū|crying / 什么 |shén me|what for / 哭 |kū / , 又 |yòu|it's not as if / 不是 |bú shì / 没有 |méi yǒu|there's no / 你 |nǐ|your / 的 |de / 礼物 |lǐ wù|gift / 。 }

What are you crying for? It's not as if there's no gift for you.

{zh: 离 |lí|divorce / 什么 |shén me|what / 婚 |hūn / ! 你们 |nǐ men|you / 才 |cái|only / 结婚 |jié hūn|married / 三个月 |sān ge yuè|three months / 。 }

Divorce?! You've only been married three months!

Remember: V + 什么 (+ V) = an irritated “what are you ...ing for?!” — 哭什么哭 (“quit crying!”), 急什么 (“what's the rush?!”). Separable verbs split around it: 离什么婚, 道什么歉.

Watch out

- It's blunt and familiar — fine between close friends/family, rude to strangers.

不像 ... 这么 / 那么 ... — “not as ... as”

像 means “(just) like”; 不像 + B + 这么 / 那么 + Adj says A falls **short of B** on some quality — “not as ... as B.”

Structure: Noun 1 + 像 + Noun 2 + 一样 + Adj · Noun 1 + 不像 + Noun 2 + 这么 / 那么 + Adj

{zh: 她 |tā|she / 有时候 |yǒu shí hou|sometimes / 像 |xiàng|like / 小孩 |xiǎo hái|a child / 一样 |yí yàng|just / 天真 |tiān zhēn|naive / 。 }

She's sometimes as naive as a child.

{zh: 今天 |jīn tiān|today / 不像 |bú xiàng|not as ... as / 昨天 |zuó tiān|yesterday / 那么 |nà me|so / 冷 |lěng|cold / 。 }

Today isn't as cold as yesterday.

Remember: 像 ... 一样 = “just like”; 不像 ... 那么 ... = “not as ... as.” 今天不像昨天那么冷 (“today isn’t as cold as yesterday”). The 这么 / 那么 carries the degree being fallen short of.

Watch out

- It’s a near-twin of the 没有 ... 那么 ... comparison (HSK 3) — both say “falls short of.”

比起 + B (+ 来) , A ~ — “compared with B, A ...”

比起 ... (来) opens a **comparison frame** — “compared with B, A is ...” It puts B forward as the yardstick. A variant is (**跟 / 和 / 与**) B 相比.

Structure: 比起 + B (+ 来) , A + Comment · (与) B 相比, A ~

{zh: 比起 |bǐ qǐ|compared with / 上海 |Shàng hǎi|Shanghai / , 我 |wǒ|my / 老家 |lǎo jiā|hometown / 的 |de / 物价 |wù jià|prices / 便宜 |pián yi|cheaper / 多 |duō|much / 了 |le / 。 }

Compared with Shanghai, my hometown’s prices are much cheaper.

{zh: 与 |yǔ|compared with / 网络 |wǎng luò|online / 教学 |jiào xué|teaching / 相比 |xiāng bǐ / , 我 |wǒ|I / 更 |gèng / 喜欢 |xǐ huan|prefer / 面对面 |miàn duì miàn|face-to-face / 。 }

Compared with online teaching, I prefer face-to-face.

Remember: 比起 B (来) / 与 B 相比 = “set against B, ...” — it foregrounds the *yardstick* B, then delivers the verdict on A. The everyday cousin is 跟 ... 比起来 (HSK 3).

Watch out

- It frames the comparison; for a plain “A is more X than B,” a bare 比 (A 比 B...) is enough.

不如 — “not as good as / better to”

不如 has two jobs: “A 不如 B (+ Adj)” = “A isn’t as (good / ...) as B”; and “(与其 ...,) 不如 ...” = “(rather than ...,) better to ...”. Drop the adjective and 不如 just means “not as good as.”

Structure: A + 不如 + B (+ Adj) · (与其 ...,) 不如 ...

{zh: 这件 |zhè jiàn|this / 裙子 |qún zi|dress / 不如 |bù rú|isn’t as ... as / 那件 |nà jiàn|that one / 好看 |hǎo kàn|pretty / 。 }

This dress isn't as pretty as that one.

{zh: 与其 |yǔ qí|rather than / 空想 |kōng xiǎng|daydream / , 不如 |bù rú|better to / 马上 |mǎ shàng|right away / 行动 |xíng dòng|act / 。 }

Rather than daydreaming, better to act right away.

Remember: 不如 = “falls short of / better to.” A 不如 B = “A isn’t as good as B” (我不如他, “I’m no match for him”); 与其 ... 不如 ... = “rather than..., better to...”. With no adjective, it’s plain “inferior to.”

Watch out

- 与其 sets up the rejected option, 不如 the preferred one — keep that order.

名词 / 形容词 + 化 — “-ize, -ify”

The suffix 化 turns a noun or adjective into a **process verb** — “-ize, -ify, become.”

Structure: Noun / Adjective + 化

{zh: 城市 |chéng shì|cities / 现代化 |xiàn dài huà|are modernising / 得 |de / 很 |hěn|very / 快 |kuài|fast / 。 }

Cities are modernising fast.

{zh: 我们 |wǒ men|we / 要 |yào|want to / 把 |bǎ / 流程 |liú chéng|the process / 自动化 |zì dòng huà|automate / 。 }

We want to automate the process.

Remember: 化 = English “-ize / -ify” — bolt it on to get a “turn into” verb: 现代化 (modernize), 美化 (beautify), 自动化 (automate), 国际化 (internationalize), 多样化 (diversify).

Watch out

- It’s a productive academic suffix — great for abstract/process nouns, odd on everyday ones.

算 — “count as, consider”

算 judges that something **counts as** a category — “count as, be considered, qualify as.” On its own, 算了 = “forget it.”

Structure: Subject + 算 + Adjective / Category + 的

{zh: 在 |zài|in / 我们 |wǒ men|our / 班 |bān|class / , 他 |tā|he / 算 |suàn|counts as / 高 |gāo|tall / 的 |de / 。 }

In our class, he counts as tall.

{zh: 这 |zhè|this / 点 |diǎn|bit of / 钱 |qián|money / 不 |bù|isn't / 算 |suàn|counted as / 多 |duō|a lot / 。 }

This bit of money isn't much.

Remember: 算 = “reckons as / counts as” — 算 (“calculate”) used to *judge a category*: 他算高的 (“counts as tall”). And the everyday 算了 on its own = “forget it, let it go.”

Watch out

- The category form often closes with 的: 算高的, 算便宜的.

难怪 — “no wonder”

难怪 voices a sudden **realisation** — “no wonder, that explains why.” It precedes the now-understood fact and often pairs with 原来.

Structure: 难怪 + Person / Fact

{zh: 难怪 |nán guài|no wonder / 他 |tā|he / 没 |méi|didn't / 来 |lái|come / , 原来 |yuán lái|it turns out / 生病 |shēng bìng|he's sick / 了 |le / 。 }

No wonder he didn't come — turns out he's ill.

{zh: 你 |nǐ|you / 是 |shì|are / 新来 |xīn lái|new / 的 |de / , 难怪 |nán guài|no wonder / 我 |wǒ|I / 不 |bù|don't / 认识 |rèn shi|know / 你 |nǐ|you / 。 }

You're new — no wonder I don't know you.

Remember: 难怪 = “no wonder!” — the moment the penny drops. Literally 难 (hard) + 怪 (to blame): “can't blame it, given that...”. It loves a 原来 to deliver the reason (难怪 ..., 原来 ...).

Watch out

- It introduces the *thing now explained*; the explanation follows (often with 原来).