

Comparing similar adverbs

Ref Hsk5 Grammar

常常 vs 经常 — “often”

Both mean “often” and overlap heavily as **adverbs**. The split is about word-class: **经常** can *also* be an **adjective** (“regular”: 经常的事), and its negative is clean (不经常). **常常** is purely an adverb, and 不常常 grates — use 不常 instead.

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 常常 |cháng cháng|often / 收到 |shōu dào|get / 垃圾 |lā jī|spam / 短信 |duǎn xìn|texts / 。 }

I often get spam texts.

{zh: 她 |tā|her / 忘 |wàng|forgetting / 带 |dài|to bring / 钥匙 |yào shi|her keys / 是 |shì|is / 经常 |jīng cháng|a regular / 的 |de / 事 |shì|thing / 。 }

Forgetting her keys is a regular thing for her.

Remember: as adverbs, twins; only **经常** also works as an **ADJECTIVE** (经常的事, “a regular occurrence”). And negate with 不常 / 不经常 — never the clunky 不常常.

Watch out

- If it modifies a *noun* (经常的事), only 经常 fits.