Comparing similar adverbs

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.

常常 vs 经常 (often / regularly)

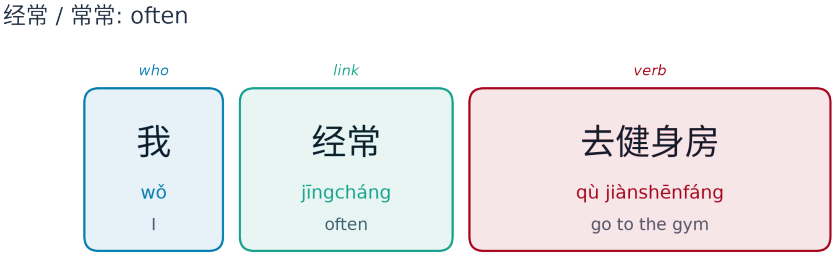
How often?

- A new friend asks about your exercise habits.
- **我经常去健身房，周末也常常去游泳。** – "I go to the gym regularly, and at weekends I often go swimming too."

Both mean "often"

- **常常** and **经常** both describe frequent actions: 我常常 / 经常喝茶.
- In many sentences they are interchangeable.

他经常加班。
tā jīng cháng jiā bān
Word guide: 他 – he; 经常 – regularly; 加班 – works overtime.



Where they differ

- **经常** can be an adjective before a noun: 经常性的问题 – "a recurring problem". 常常 cannot.
- **常常** has a negative 不常: 我不常去. 经常's negative 不经常 is fine too; 不常常 is not used.

我不常去电影院。
wǒ bù cháng qù diàn yǐng yuàn
Word guide: 我 – I; 不常 – not often; 去 – go; 电影院 – the cinema.

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■ Negatives

- Say 不常 or 不经常, not 不常常.
- Both go before the verb, after the subject and time words: 他周末经常加班.

■ Versus 往往

- 常常 / 经常 = often, simply a frequency.
- 往往 = tends to, under a stated condition: 下雨天往往堵车.

下雨天往往堵车。
xià yǔ tiān wǎng wǎng dǔ chē
Word guide: 下雨天 – on rainy days; 往往 – tends to; 堵车 – have traffic jams.

■ Recap

- **常常 / 经常** = often (mostly interchangeable); 经常 can also describe nouns (经常性).
- Negatives: 不常 / 不经常, never 不常常. 往往 needs a condition.

Practise this pattern step by step.

Practice without the models

■ 常常 vs 经常 (often / regularly)

2401.1 Complete: "I don't often go to the cinema." 我不 …… 去电影院。

2401.2 Which form is NOT used?

- A. 不常
- B. 不常常
- C. 经常
- D. 不经常

2401.3 Build: "He regularly works overtime at weekends."

Arrange all chunks: 他周末 / 加班。/ 经常

2401.4 往往 needs a condition, unlike 常常.

True or false? Explain or repair the statement.

2401.5 A new friend asks about your exercise habits. 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

■ 常常 vs 经常 (often / regularly)

2401.1 常

不常 or 不经常; 不常常 is not used.

2401.2 B. 不常常

The negative of 常常 is 不常 or 不经常; 不常常 is not used. 经常 itself is fine but is positive.

2401.3 他周末经常加班。

Subject + time + 经常 + verb.

2401.4 True.

True. 往往 describes what tends to happen under a condition, so it needs one: 下雨天往往堵车. 常常 can describe simple frequency or the future: 以后常常来.

2401.5 One possible response: 我经常去健身房，周末也常常去游泳。

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.
- Say 不常 or 不经常, not 不常常.
- Both go before the verb, after the subject and time words: 他周末经常加班.
- 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.