Comparing similar auxiliary words

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.

总算 vs 终于 (finally)

At long last

- After three failed attempts, your cousin has finally passed her driving test.
- **她考了四次，总算通过了！** – "She took it four times and finally passed!"

终于 = finally, after a long process

- **终于 + verb (+ 了)** = at last, after waiting or effort; the result can be good or bad: 他终于来了, 他终于病倒了.
- Neutral in tone; common in narration and writing.

等了两个小时，车终于来了。
děng le liǎng gè xiǎo shí chē zhōng yú lái le
Word guide: 等 – waited; 两个 – two; 小时 – hours; 车 – the bus; 终于 – finally; 来 – came.



总算 = finally (with relief)

- **总算** also means "finally", with relief or satisfaction that a wanted result arrived: 总算到家了!
- It can also mean "more or less, considered as": 这次考得总算还可以 – "This time the result was at least OK."

总算到家了!
zǒng suàn dào jiā le
Word guide: 总算 – at last; 到家 – home.

exercises.lol exercises.com.cn

■ Bad outcomes take 终于

- 总算 is for welcome results; for an unwelcome one, use 终于: 他终于累病了, not 他总算累病了.
- Both go after the subject, before the verb.

■ Side by side

- **雨终于停了。** – "The rain finally stopped" (neutral report).
- **雨总算停了！** – "Thank goodness, the rain has finally stopped!" (relief).

雨总算停了。
yǔ zǒng suàn tíng le
Word guide: 雨 – the rain; 总算 – at last; 停 – stop.

■ Recap

- **终于** = finally (neutral, good or bad outcomes); **总算** = finally, with relief (welcome outcomes) / at least.
- Unwelcome results: 终于 only.

Practise this pattern step by step.

Practice without the models

■ 总算 vs 终于 (finally)

2501.1 With relief: "Phew, I'm finally home!" …… 到家了！

2501.2 "After a month of overwork he finally fell ill." Which fits?

- A. 他终于累病了。
- B. 他总算累病了。
- C. 他总算病好了。
- D. 他终于不病了。

2501.3 Build: "After two hours, the bus finally came."

Arrange all chunks: 来了。/ 等了两个小时 / ， / 车终于

2501.4 雨总算停了 sounds relieved.

True or false? Explain or repair the statement.

2501.5 After three failed attempts, your cousin has finally passed her driving test. 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

■ 总算 vs 终于 (finally)

2501.1 总算

总算 adds relief.

2501.2 A. 他终于累病了。

An unwelcome outcome takes 终于.

2501.3 等了两个小时，车终于来了。

Wait, then 终于 + result.

2501.4 True.

总算 expresses relief at a welcome result.

2501.5 One possible response: 她考了四次，总算通过了！

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.
- 总算 is for welcome results; for an unwelcome one, use 终于: 他终于累病了, not 他总算累病了.
- Both go after the subject, before the verb.
- 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.