

Particles

Ref Hsk6 Grammar

+ / — “whether (or not)”

is a formal, written — “whether (or not).” It forms or embeds a yes-no question, before a verb or adjective.

Structure: + Verb / Adjective

{zh: |qǐng|please / |què rèn|confirm / |xìn xī|the details / |shì fǒu|whether / |zhèng què|correct / 。 }

Please confirm whether the details are correct.

{zh: |nǐ|your / |fù mǔ|parents / |shì fǒu|whether / |tóng yì|agree to / |nǐ men|you / |zhù|living / |zài yì qǐ|together / ? }

Do your parents agree to you living together?

Remember: = **the written (“whether”)**. Same job, formal register — natural in a form or report, stiff in chat (where you’d say).

Watch out

- It sits before the verb/adjective: , not (that “...or not” tail is , below).

/ + — “whether or not”

is a classical particle for “... **or not**” — it nominalises a yes-no question into an abstract phrase, sitting at the end of a clause. It’s highly formal.

Structure: Verb / Adjective +

{zh: |chéng gōng|success / |yǔ fǒu|or not / , |yào / |kào|is down to / |zì jǐ|yourself / 。 }

Whether or not you succeed is down to you.

{zh: |zhè|this / |jiàn / |shì|matter / |zhòng yào|important / |yǔ fǒu|or not / , |qǔ jué yú|depends on / |nǐ|how you / |zěn me / |kàn|see it / 。 }

Whether this matters depends on how you see it.

Remember: = “... **or not**,” tacked on the **END** to make a topic — (“the matter of whether you succeed”). It turns a yes-no question into a noun-like phrase. Highly formal; leads, trails.

Watch out

- It comes *after* the verb/adjective () — the front-position version is .

+ + — literary

is the **classical** / **written** equivalent of possessive , found in set phrases, titles, and formal documents. It can’t replace every — it’s fixed to certain pairings.

Structure: Noun + + Noun

{zh: |hài rén|to harm others / |zhī / |xīn|a mind / |bù kě yǒu|one must not have / 。 }

Never mean harm to others.

{zh: |zhè xiē|these / |fāng shì|methods / |réng|still / |yǒu|have / |bù zú|short- / |zhī / |chù|comings / 。 }

These methods still have shortcomings.

Remember: = **the literary** — but *fixed* to set expressions, not a free swap: (a third), (as expected), (shortcomings). Learn the phrases whole.

Watch out

- You can’t sprinkle in for any — is wrong; it’s .

Statement + — “obviously, of course”

The particle marks something as **self-evident** from the speaker’s point of view — “obviously, of course.” (Same sound as the yes-no , but a different job.)

Structure: Statement +

{zh: |bù|if you don’t / |xiǎng|want to / |qù|go / |jiù|then / |bú yào|don’t / |qù|go / |ma / 。 }

If you don’t want to go, then don’t — obviously.

{zh: |tā|he / |tǐng|pretty / |yǒu qián|well-off / |de / |ma / 。 }

He’s clearly pretty well-off.

Remember: = “obviously, of course” — **frames the point as self-evident** (, “then just don’t go, *obviously*”). Same sound as the question , opposite job: *asserts, asks*.

Watch out

- Don’t mishear it as — makes a (slightly impatient) statement, not a question.

Sentence + — “(so) obviously, then”

The casual particle signals that something is **obvious or simply how it is** — “well, obviously; then just ...; so be it.” It can also carry resignation or a lack of enthusiasm.

Structure: Sentence +

{zh: |bú huì|if you can’t / |jiù|then / |hǎo hǎo|just / |xué|learn it / |bei / 。 }

If you can’t, then just learn it — simple.

{zh: |bù|if you don’t / |xiǎng|want to / |qù|go / |jiù|then / |bù|don’t / |qù|go / |bei / 。 }

If you don’t want to go, then don’t, then.

Remember: = a shrug: “well, obviously / then just... / so be it.” Very colloquial, often a touch resigned (, “if you can’t, then just learn it — what else”). It waves the matter away as plain.

Watch out

- It’s very casual and can sound dismissive — read the resignation in its tone.