

Comparing similar adverbs

Ref Hsk6 Grammar

vs. — “in accordance with” vs. “on the basis of”

Both mean “according to,” but they look at different things. means following a **rule, plan, order or standard** to the letter — “in accordance with.” means drawing on **evidence, grounds or a source** — “on the basis of, going by”; it can also be a noun (= “well-grounded”), which cannot.

Structure: + rule / plan + Action . + evidence / source + Conclusion

{zh: |qǐng|please / |àn zhào|in accordance with / |guī dìng|the rules /
|pái duì|queue up / 。 }

Please queue up in accordance with the rules.

{zh: |gēn jù|going by / |tiān qì|the weather / |yù bào|forecast / ,
|míng tiān|tomorrow / |huì|will / |xià yǔ|rain / 。 }

Going by the forecast, it'll rain tomorrow.

Remember: = follow a **RULE/plan** (“by the book”); = reason from **EVIDENCE** (“going by the data”). (per the rules) vs (per the forecast). Only doubles as a noun (, “groundless”).

Watch out

- A rule to obey → ; grounds to infer from → .

vs. — “have no choice” vs. “have no better choice”

Both say you're forced into something unwanted, but the squeeze differs. = there is **no other** choice at all — you simply can't avoid it (stronger, like).
= there is **no better** choice — you settle for the least-bad option. Also, must be followed by a positive verb; can take / .

Structure: + positive Verb . + Verb (/)

{zh: |chū mén|going out / |méi|without / |dài|bringing / |qián|money /
 , |bù dé bù|I had no choice but to / |xiàng|from / |péng you|a friend

/ |jiè|borrow / 。 }

I went out without money, so I had no choice but to borrow from a friend.

{zh: |wài mian|outside / |xià|it's / |dà yǔ|pouring / |le / , |wǒ|I
/ |zhǐ hǎo|had no better option than to / |bù|not / |chū qù|go out /
|le / 。 }

It's pouring outside, so I'll just not go out.

Remember: = NO OTHER choice (forced, no escape); = NO
BETTER choice (settle for least-bad). And the grammar tell: takes only
a *positive* verb, while can take / ().

Watch out

- You can't say — for “had to *not* do,” use .

vs. — “unceasingly” vs. “without stopping”

Both describe something that keeps going. = “continually, again and again” —
a process that repeats or grows over time (it can imply increase), and as an adverb
it often takes . = “without a pause” — the action literally never stops for a
moment, often as **V** + or + **V**.

Structure: () + Verb . + Verb / Verb +

{zh: |kē jì|technology / |zài|is / |bú duàn|continually / |de /
|jìn bù|advancing / 。 }

Technology is continually advancing.

{zh: |tā|she / |jī dòng|was so excited / |de|that she / |shuō|talked /
|gè bù tíng|without stopping / 。 }

She was so excited she talked non-stop.

Remember: = “again and again / growing over time” (= “break,”
so = “unbroken, recurring”); = “no pause at all” (= “stop”).
(keeps advancing) vs (talks non-stop). clips onto the verb:

Watch out

- allows gaps that keep recurring; means *literally* no pause.

vs. — “on the contrary” vs. “but, yet”

Both mark a turn, but with different force. = “on the contrary, instead” — the result is the **opposite** of what you’d expect, and it can sit before **or** after the subject.

= a milder “but, yet,” and it can only come **after** the subject. often completes the pattern / ..., ...

Structure: (Subj.) + opposite outcome · Subj. + + contrast

{zh: |wǒ|I / |bāng|helped / |le / |tā|him / |tā|yet he / |fǎn ér|on
the contrary / |shēng qì|got angry / |le / 。 }

I helped him, yet he got angry instead.

{zh: |tā|she / |xǐ huan|likes / |tián shí|sweets / , |què|but /
|cóng bù|never / |chī|eats / |qiǎo kè lì|chocolate / 。 }

She likes sweets, but never eats chocolate.

Remember: = the **OPPOSITE** of what you’d expect (a reversal);
= a plain “but / yet” (a contrast). can go before or after the subject and
completes ...; only sits *after* the subject.

Watch out

- can’t lead the clause — ..., never ...; is freer.

vs. — “(not) at all” vs. “in the end, on earth”

= “(not) at all, simply, fundamentally” — it intensifies a **negation** (/), flatly denying something. = “after all, in the end” or, in a question, “on earth / exactly” — it presses for the **final result or truth**. You can’t swap them.

Structure: + / + Verb · + Question

{zh: |wǒ|I / |gēn běn|simply / |méi|didn’t / |chū qù|go out / ,
|nǐ|how / |zěn me / |huì|could / |kàn dào|have seen / |wǒ|me / ? }

I didn’t go out at all — how could you have seen me?

{zh: |nǐ|you / |dào dǐ|on earth / |xiǎng|what do you want / |zěn
me yàng / ? }

What on earth do you want?

Remember: intensifies a **NEGATION** (“not at all”: /);
presses for an **ANSWER** (“on earth / in the end”). One flatly *denies*, the

other *demands the truth*. In a statement, = “after all, it turned out...”.

Watch out

- leans on a following / ; leans on a question word or a result.

vs. — “according to” (long vs. short)

These overlap in meaning — “according to, on the basis of” — but differ in style. is terse and literary, and pairs with **single-character or short** items (, ,). is the everyday word, takes **two-or-more-character** objects, and can also act as a noun.

Structure: + short word + Clause · + (longer) source + Clause

{zh: |jù|it is / |shuō|said / , |tā|he / |yǐ jīng|has already / |chū guó|gone abroad / |le / 。 }

It's said he's already gone abroad.

{zh: |gēn jù|according to / |diào chá|the survey / |jié guǒ|results / , |dà jiā|everyone / |dōu / |hěn|is very / |mǎn yì|satisfied / 。 }

According to the survey results, everyone is very satisfied.

Remember: = terse/literary + **SHORT** items (, ,); = everyday + longer objects, and a noun too. Same idea, opposite ends of the formality scale.

Watch out

- wants a tight, short partner (✓); a longer source takes ().

vs. — “recover / restore” vs. “return to the original”

Both mean returning to a former state, but with a different feel. = “recover, restore” something that was **damaged, disrupted or lost** — health, order, normal service. = “return to the **exact** original state, reset, reduce” — it stresses going back precisely to how it was (it's also the chemistry term “reduce”).

Structure: + Noun (health / order) · ... (...)

{zh: |jīng guò|after / |zhì liáo|treatment / |tā|he / |de / |shēn tǐ|health / |màn màn|slowly / |huī fù|recovered / |le / 。 }

After treatment, his health slowly recovered.

{zh: |nǐ|you / |kě yǐ|can / |bǎ / |shè zhì|the settings / |huán
yuán|restore / |chéng|to / |mò rèn zhí|the defaults / 。 }

You can reset the settings to the defaults.

Remember: = bring back something **DAMAGED/lost (health, order);**
= **return to the EXACT original / reset.** (recover) vs
(reset to factory). stresses *precisely as before*, with no “was broken” overtone.

Watch out

- For health/order coming back, it's — sounds like a reset/reduction.

vs. — “surprisingly” vs. “on the contrary”

Both flag the unexpected, but differently. = “surprisingly, to one’s astonishment”
— it simply marks the event as **astonishing**, often letting the speaker tack on a
comment. = “on the contrary” — it marks a **reversal**, the opposite of what
should have followed, and pairs with / ..., ..., where can’t.

Structure: + astonishing fact (+ comment) . / ...,
...

{zh: |tā|he / |zhè me|so / |xiǎo|young / |jū rán|astonishingly /
|néng|can / |bèi|recite / |jǐ bǎi|hundreds of / |shǒu / |Táng shī|Tang
poems / , |zhēn|truly / |liǎo bu qǐ|remarkable / 。 }

So young, yet he can recite hundreds of Tang poems — truly remarkable.

{zh: |chī|after taking / |le / |zhè xiē|these / |yào|pills / |tā|he /
|bú dàn|not only / |méi|didn’t / |hǎo|get better / , |fǎn ér|but instead
/ |gèng|got even / |yán zhòng|worse / |le / 。 }

After taking these pills, not only did he not improve — he got worse.

Remember: = “astonishingly!” (just marks surprise, + optional com-
ment); = “on the contrary” (a reversal). Only completes /
..., ... is amazement; is a flip.

Watch out

- A surprise that isn’t a *reversal* takes ; the “opposite happened” twist takes

vs. — “at one time” vs. “for a (short) while”

Both touch on time but mean different spans. = “once, at one time” — a **past phase** (often a difficult one:), and it appears in (“annual”).

= “for a short while, momentarily, for the moment” — brief or sudden, often “can’t ... right now” ().

Structure: + past Verb phrase . + () Verb

{zh: |tā|he / |guò qù|in the past / |yí dù|at one time / |xiǎng|wanted to / |fàng qì|give up / 。 }

At one point in the past he wanted to give up.

{zh: |wǒ|I / |yì shí|for the moment / |xiǎng bu qǐ lái|can’t recall / |tā|his / |de / |míng zì|name / 。 }

I can’t recall his name for the moment.

Remember: = “once, at one time” (a PAST phase; also = “annual”); = “for a brief moment / right now” (). = a stretch/opportunity; = a moment.

Watch out

- is the “can’t ... *just now*” word — don’t use for a momentary lapse.

vs. — “all along (continuously)” vs. “all along (habitually)”

Both mean “all along,” but one is an unbroken stretch and the other a long-standing habit. = “continuously, the whole time” — an unbroken action from some point, and it can even run **into the future** (). = “consistently, habitually up to now” — a settled trait, and it only reaches up to the **present**.

Structure: + Verb (can be future) + habit / trait (up to now)

{zh: |wǒ|I / |huì|will / |yì zhí|always / |zhī chí|support / |nǐ|you / 。 }

I will always support you.

{zh: |tā|he / |yí xiàng|has always / |hěn|been very / |shǒu shí|punctual / 。 }

He’s always been punctual.

Remember: = an **UNBROKEN** stretch (can extend into the **FUTURE**:
); = a **HABITUAL** trait, only up to **NOW** ().
Continuous line vs settled habit.

Watch out

- For a promise reaching forward, only works — can't point to the future.