

HSK 6 Grammar

English edition

Contents

1 Adverbs

1.1 + + + — the rebuking

Tucked inside a complement, turns the comment **sour** — “easy for *you* to say.” It implies the opposite of reality and is aimed mostly at the listener, with / .

Structure: Subject + Verb + + + Adjective

{zh: |shuō|saying it / |de / |dào|easy enough / |róng yì / , |nà|then / |nǐ|you / |lái|do it / ! }

Easy for you to say — you do it then!

{zh: |nǐ|you / |xiǎng|wish / |de / |dào|nicely / |měi / ! |bù|don’t / |gōng zuò|work / |hái|yet / |xiǎng|want / |ná|to be paid / |gōng zī / ? }

You wish! Get paid without working?

Remember: + = a sarcastic jab — “” = “easy enough for *you* to say.” Reach for it to push back at the other person’s / . (= “you wish!”)

Watch out

- This (dào, “but / contrary”) rebukes; don’t confuse it with (dǎo, “fall over”).

1.2 + — “very, quite” (literary)

is a dressed-up — the same “very,” but with a formal, literary flavour you’ll meet in writing rather than everyday speech. The extra makes the emphasis feel weightier.

Structure: Subject + + Adjective

{zh: |nǐ|your / |de / |biǎo xiàn|performance / |ràng|made / |lǐng dǎo|the boss / |hěn shì|very / |mǎn yì|pleased / 。 }

Your performance pleased the boss greatly.

{zh: |zhè yàng|doing it this way / |zuò / |hěn shì|quite / |bì yào|necessary / 。 }

Doing it this way is quite necessary.

Remember: = in its Sunday best — a written, weightier “very,” pairing with two-syllable adjectives (,). If it sounds too formal to say out loud, that’s exactly the right feel.

Watch out

- Keep it for writing — in speech, plain / is natural.

1.3 + — “a full, all of”

stresses that an amount is **fully that much** — “a full, all of, every bit of.” It always pairs with a number, often with or .

Structure: + Verb (+ Number) · Verb +

{zh: |wǒ|I / |děng|waited / |le / |tā|for her / |zú zú|a full / |liǎng ge|two / |xiǎo shí|hours / 。 }

I waited a full two hours for her.

{zh: |tā|he / |zài|in / |Zhōng guó|China / |zhù|lived / |le / |zú zú|all of / |shí nián|ten years / 。 }

He lived in China for all of ten years.

Remember: = “a FULL, every bit of” (= “enough / full”) — it always rides a number and underlines that the amount is *large*: (“a *whole* two hours”), (“all of ten years”).

Watch out

- It needs a quantity — with no number to amplify is incomplete.

1.4 + — “again and again, repeatedly”

means doing something **insistently, again and again** — “repeatedly, time and again.” It precedes a two-syllable verb (often of speech or request), and can take .

Structure: Subject + + Verb

{zh: |wǒ|I / |yí zài|again and again / |gēn / |nǐ|you / |shuō|told / , |chū mén|out and about / |yào|to be / |xiǎo xīn|careful / 。 }

I’ve told you again and again to be careful when you’re out.

{zh: |lǎo shī|the teacher / |yí zài|repeatedly / |qiáng diào|stressed / |zhè|this / |yì diǎn|point / 。 }

The teacher stressed this point over and over.

Remember: = “time and again, insistently” — formal, with two-syllable verbs of speech/thought (, ,). It’s the close cousin of .

Watch out

- Reserve it for repeated *deliberate* acts — not a plain “often” (that’s).

1.5 + + / / — “all, every (no exception)”

sweeps over **every member** of a category — “any, every, whoever / whatever” (=). It opens the sentence and pairs with / / .

Structure: + Noun + / / + Predicate

{zh: |fán shì|all / |huì yuán|members / |dōu / |yǒu|get / |zhé kòu|a discount / 。 }

All members get a discount.

{zh: |fán shì|any / |bù / |tīng huà|disobedient / |de / |hái zi|child / |dōu / |méi|gets no / |táng|sweets / |chī / 。 }

Any child who misbehaves gets no sweets.

Remember: = “any and every, without exception” (=) — it states a blanket rule and pairs with / / to nail it down (...). Use it to leave *no* member out.

Watch out

- It needs the / / downstream to complete the “every” sweep.

1.6 () + — “always, all along”

describes a **long-standing habit or trait** — “always, has always, all along.” It’s very close to .

Structure: Subject + () + Verb / Adjective

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

He’s always been punctual.

{zh: |wǒ|I / |xiàng lái|have never / |bù / |xǐ huan|liked / |diǎn|ordering / |wài mài|takeaway / 。 }

I’ve never liked ordering takeaway.

Remember: = a settled, unchanging pattern over time (“has always been this way”) — interchangeable with (further down this file). It looks back over the long run.

Watch out

- It’s for *long-held* traits — not a one-off recent stretch (that’s).

1.7 — “sure enough, as expected”

confirms a **prediction came true** — “sure enough, just as expected.” It’s the opposite of / (“unexpectedly”).

Structure: Subject + + Predicate · /

{zh: |dì yī míng|first place / |guǒ rán|sure enough / |shì|is / |tā|her / ! |wǒ|I / |jiù / |zhī dào|knew it / 。 }

First place is her, sure enough — I knew it!

{zh: |tiān qì yù bào|the forecast / |shuō|said / |xià yǔ|rain / , |guǒ rán rú cǐ|and so it did / 。 }

The forecast said rain, and sure enough it did.

Remember: = “sure enough, just as I foresaw” — it *confirms* a prediction (, “just so”). It’s the mirror image of / (“and yet, unexpectedly”): foreseen vs surprising.

Watch out

- If the outcome *surprised* you, you want / , not .

1.8 — “it seems, as if”

hedges toward an **impression** — “it seems, apparently, as if.” It’s a formal cousin of , used for an uncertain judgement, or to flag “seems X but actually Y.”

Structure: Subject +

{zh: |lǎo bǎn|the boss / |jīn tiān|today / |sì hū|seems / |bú tài|not very / |gāo xìng|happy / 。 }

The boss seems a little upset today.

{zh: |tā|she / |sì hū|seems to be / |yǐn mán|hiding / |le / |shén me|something / 。 }

She seems to be hiding something.

Remember: = the formal (“it seems, as if”) — a hedged, uncertain impression. It can quietly set up “.....” (“seems so, but actually...”).

Watch out

- It’s writing-leaning — in casual speech is the natural choice.

1.9 — “contrary to expectation, of all things”

marks a frustrating **clash with what was required or hoped** — “of all things, just had to.” It can also mean “only ... (annoyingly),” singling out the one exception.

Structure: A , Subject + + B

{zh: |bù|we told him not to / |jiào / |tā / |qù|go / , |tā|he / |piān piān|of all things / |yào|insisted on / |qù|going / 。 }

We told him not to go, and of course he insisted.

{zh: |bié rén|everyone else / |dōu / |zǎo|early / |dào|arrived / |le / , |piān piān|only / |tā|he / |yí ge rén|alone / |chí dào|was late / 。 }

Everyone else was early — only he was late.

Remember: = a frustrated “of all things / just HAD to” — things go *against* what you wanted (, “told him not to, and *of course* he insisted”). It can also single out the one annoying exception (“only he...”).

Watch out

- It always carries *annoyance* — things deliberately not going your way.

1.10 , — “even the most ..., still”

Here concedes an extreme — “however un-... one is, still” It grants the unfavourable case and overrides it (≈).

Structure: + Adjective , + Result

{zh: |zài bù|however un- / |xǐ huan|fond / , |nǐ|you / |yě|still / |děi|have to / |qù|go / |yí tàng|once / 。 }

However little you like it, you still have to go.

{zh: |zài bù|even if not / |è|hungry / , |yě|still / |chī|eat / |diǎn|a little / |ba / 。 }

Even if you’re not hungry, eat a bit.

Remember: X Y = “however un-X, still Y” — it grants even the unfavourable extreme and holds the result firm (, “however little you like it, you still have to go”). ≈

Watch out

- This (“however not...”) differs from the warning (“if not now, then...!”) in HSK 5.

1.11 — “uniformly, without exception”

means a rule applies **to all alike** — “uniformly, across the board, without exception.” It’s written / official, often pairs with , and is mostly for people.

Structure: (+) + Verb / Adjective

{zh: |míng tiān|tomorrow’s / |de / |huì yì|meeting / |yí lǜ|without exception / |dōu / |yào|must / |cān jiā|attend / 。 }

Everyone must attend tomorrow’s meeting.

{zh: |qī shí suì|over-seventies / |yǐ shàng / |zuò|ridding / |gōng jiāo|the bus / |yí lǜ|all / |miǎn fèi|free / 。 }

Over-70s ride the bus free, no exceptions.

Remember: = “one treatment for ALL, across the board” — official/written, often with (, “free for everyone, no exceptions”). Picture a single rule stamped on every case alike.

Watch out

- It’s for *uniform treatment*, mostly of people — heavier and more official than a plain .

1.12 () — “nothing but, merely”

plays a matter **down to its essentials** — “nothing more than, merely, only.” It often ends with or . The is optional with a verb, but **required** with a noun.

Structure: + () + Verb / Noun (+ /)

{zh: |wǒ|I / |wú fēi|only / |pī píng|told off / |le / |tā|him / |jǐ jù|a bit / , |tā|he / |zěn me|why / |kū|crying / |le / ? }

I only told him off a little — why’s he crying?

{zh: |hái zi|the child / |xiǎng|wants / |dé dào / |de / |wú fēi|is nothing but / |shì / |nǐ|your / |de / |guān xīn|attention / |bà le / 。 }

All the child wants is your attention, nothing more.

Remember: = “nothing more than, merely” — it strips a thing to its plain core, often capped with / (“...that’s all”). The is optional before a verb, but **required** before a noun ().

Watch out

- It deflates (“it’s only...”) — don’t use it where you mean to emphasise.

1.13 — “always, all along”

marks a **consistent, long-held** habit or attitude — “always, all along.” The feeling is “it’s always been this way.”

Structure: Subject + + Habit / Attitude

{zh: |Xiǎo Wáng|Xiao Wang / |yí xiàng|has always / |shàng bān|come to work / |hěn|very / |zǎo|early / , |zhè cì|this time / |zěn me|what’s / |le|wrong / ? }

Xiao Wang’s always early to work — what happened this time?

{zh: |mā ma|mum / |yí xiàng|has always / |zhī chí|backed / |wǒ|my / |de / |jué dìng|decisions / 。 }

Mum has always backed my decisions.

Remember: = “it’s always been this way” — a settled disposition over the long run. It’s the twin of (earlier in this file); both look back over a long, unbroken habit.

Watch out

- For one *recent* unbroken stretch (“the whole time lately”), use , not .

1.14 — “when the time comes”

points to a **future moment** when something will apply — “when the time comes, by then.”

Structure: , +

{zh: |xiàn zài|now / |bù|if you don’t / |hǎo hǎo|properly / |zhǔn bèi|prepare / , |dào shí hou|when the time comes / |kěn dìng|surely / |kǎo bu hǎo|do badly / 。 }

If you don’t prepare now, you’ll do badly when the time comes.

{zh: |nǐ|you / |xiān|first / |zì jǐ|yourself / |shì shi|try / , |dào shí hou|then / |wǒ|I / |zài / |jiāo|teach / |nǐ|you / 。 }

Try it yourself first; I’ll teach you when the time comes.

Remember: = “when the time comes, by then” — it points ahead to a future moment. Handy set phrases: (“see you then”), (“we’ll see then”).

Watch out

- It looks *forward* — don’t use it for “at that (past) time,” which is .

1.15 — “why bother, there’s no need”

is a **rhetorical** “why (must) ...?” — arguing that something is **unnecessary**. It often ends with , and can stand alone for “why bother?”

Structure: Subject + + Predicate (+)

{zh: |tā|he / |yǐ jīng|already / |dào qiàn|apologised / |le / , |nǐ|you / |hé bì|why / |hái|still / |shēng qì|be angry / ? }

He’s already apologised — why stay angry?

{zh: |dōu shì|we’re all / |yì jiā rén|family / , |hé bì|why bother / |zhè me|being so / |kè qì|formal / ? }

We’re all family — no need to be so formal.

Remember: = a rhetorical “why (must) you...?” = “there’s no need.” It nudges someone to drop a pointless effort (“why be angry?”); alone = “why bother?”. Proverb: (“if you’d known, why do it in the first place?”).

Watch out

- It’s not a real question — it’s arguing that the thing is *unnecessary*.

2 Auxiliary Words

2.1 Sentence + — “(was just) ..., what was it again?”

tags onto a sentence to recall **what was happening or said a moment ago** — “(someone) was just ..., what was it again?” It’s casual and spoken. It has **no negative form** (never /), and in a question it appears only with , , or .

Structure: Sentence +

{zh: |zuó tiān|yesterday / |yǒu|someone / |rén / |lái|came / |zhǎo|looking for / |nǐ|you / |lái zhe / 。 }

Someone came looking for you yesterday.

{zh: |nǐ|you / |gāng cái|just now / |shuō|were saying / |shén me|what / |lái zhe / ? }

What were you just saying again?

Remember: = “...what was it again?” — a casual tag for recalling the just-past (?). Two limits: **no negative** (never), and in questions only with / / .

Watch out

- It’s purely for the *recent* past — not the distant past, and not future.

3 Conjunctions

3.1 + — “so as to avoid, lest”

introduces an **unwanted outcome to prevent** — “so as to avoid, in order not to, lest.” (It’s a shortened .) The first clause gives a warning; the clause names the bad result. It needs a **complete verb phrase**, not a bare word.

Structure: Action , + Undesirable Result

{zh: |zhèr|there are / |yǒu / |gāo yā diàn xiàn|high-voltage wires here / , |qǐng|please / |bú yào|don’t / |kào jìn|go near / , |yǐ miǎn|lest / |fā shēng|something / |wēi xiǎn|dangerous happen / 。 }

There are high-voltage wires — please keep away, lest something dangerous happen.

{zh: |nǐ|you / |gǎn jǐn|hurry up and / |zǒu|go / , |yǐ miǎn|so as not to / |wǎn|be late / |le / 。 }

Hurry up and go, so you’re not late.

Remember: = (“so as to”) + (“avoid”) = “lest / so as to avoid.” The clause names the *bad* thing you’re heading off (). It needs a full verb phrase: ✓, not .

Watch out

- It always introduces the *unwanted* outcome — for a *wanted* purpose, use (“so as to”).

3.2 — “as well as, and”

links **nouns or phrases** (chiefly in writing), often appending less-central items at the end — “as well as, along with, and.” The part **before** is usually the main one. It can also join clauses. It’s more formal than .

Structure:

{zh: |tīng jué|hearing / 、 |shì jué|sight / |yǐ jí|as well as / |chù jué|touch / |dōu|are all / |shǒu yú / |gǎn guān|senses / 。 }

Hearing, sight, as well as touch are all senses.

{zh: |yuàn zi lǐ|the yard / |zhòng zhe|has growing / |méi gui|roses / 、 |mò lì|jasmine / |yǐ jí|and / |qí tā|other / |huā cǎo|plants / 。 }

The yard has roses, jasmine, and other plants.

Remember: = a formal “and / as well as,” with the **MAIN** items before it and secondary ones after (). More formal than , and it can also join clauses.

Watch out

- Put the central items *before* — what follows reads as an add-on.
- It sits after the second subject, before the verb — ..., not

3.3 — “in short, in a word”

sums up what came before — “in short, in a word, all in all.” It introduces a wrapping-up conclusion.

Structure: (.....),
{zh: |tā|he / |jīng cháng|often / |chí dào|late / , |gōng zuò|with work / |yě|also / |bù|not / |fù zé|responsible / , |zǒng zhī|in short / , |gōng sī|the firm / |bì xū|must / |jiě gù|let go of / |tā|him / 。 }

He’s often late and not responsible — in short, the firm has to let him go.

{zh: |bù guǎn|whatever / |lǐ yóu|reason / |shì / |shén me / , |zǒng zhī|in short / |wǒ|I / |bú huì|won’t / |zài|again / |xiāng xìn|trust / |tā|him / |le / 。 }

Whatever his reasons, in short I won’t trust him again.

Remember: = (“sum up”) + = “in a word, to sum up.” It gathers the scattered points into one bottom line — the verbal “long story short.”

Watch out

- It needs preceding points to gather — it caps an argument, it doesn’t open one.

3.4 — “whereas, while (contrast)”

marks a **contrast between two clauses** — “whereas, while” (the same idea as). It’s formal and written, sits at the head of the second clause’s predicate, and often appears with .

Structure: Clause 1 , () + Subject + + Predicate

{zh: |nán fāng rén|southerners / |xǐ huan|like / |chī|eating / |tián|sweet / |de / , |běi fāng rén|northerners / |zé|whereas / |xǐ huan|like / |chī|eating / |xián|salty / |de / 。 }

Southerners like sweet food, whereas northerners like salty.

{zh: |wǒ|my / |lǎo po|wife / |xí guàn|is used to / |xiāng cūn|country / |shēng huó|life / , |wǒ|I / |zé|whereas / |xí guàn|am used to / |chéng shì|city / |shēng huó|life / 。 }

My wife is used to country life, whereas I’m used to the city.

Remember: = formal “whereas” — it heads the *second* clause’s predicate (...) to set two cases side by side. It often pairs with (.....). Same contrast as , dressier register.

Watch out

4 Nouns

4.1 + — “this, one’s own”

In formal written Chinese, means “**this (very) / one’s own**” — always the speaker’s own side. It pairs with single-syllable nouns (, , , , ,) and a few two-syllable ones (,). = “I, myself” (common on résumés).

Structure: + Noun

{zh: |gù kè zhì shàng|customer-first / |shì|is / |běn|our / |gōng sī|company’s / |de / |lǐ niàn|ethos / 。 }

“Customer first” is our company’s ethos.

{zh: |běn|this / |xiào|school / |bù|doesn’t / |yǔn xǔ|allow / |wài xiào|outside / |xué shēng|students / |suí biàn|to freely / |jìn chū|come and go / 。 }

This school doesn’t allow outside students to come and go freely.

Remember: = “**this very / our own (side)**” — the voice of notices and officialese: (“our company”), (“this school”), (“I, myself”). It always speaks from the in-group.

Watch out

- It’s self-referential and formal — for a plain “this,” use .

4.2 + — “-ness, -ity” (a quality)

The suffix turns a word into an **abstract quality** — “-ness, -ity, -ability” (also “-ic”). Like , it’s a productive suffix: , , , .

Structure: Word +

{zh: |zhè ge|this / |fāng àn|plan / |méi yǒu|has no / |kě xíng xìng|feasibility / 。 }

This plan isn’t feasible.

{zh: |nǐ|your / |de / |zuò pǐn|work / |yuè lái yuè|more and more / |yǒu|has / |chuàng zào xìng|creativity / 。 }

Your work is more and more creative.

Remember: = “**-ness / -ity**” — turns a word into an abstract *quality*: (possibility), (importance), (feasibility), (creativity). It’s the noun-making sibling of the verb-making .

Watch out

- It builds a *noun of quality* — pair it with / (), not used like an adjective.

5 Particles

5.1 + / — “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).

5.2 / + — “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 .

5.3 + + — 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 .

5.4 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.

5.5 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.

6 Prepositions

6.1 + Observation , Conclusion — “in light of, in view of”

introduces a **consideration that grounds a decision** — “in light of, in view of, seeing that.” It’s formal and official, and opens the sentence.

Structure: + Observation , Conclusion / Suggestion

{zh: |jiàn yú|in view of / |shì|it’s / |jǐn jí|an emergency / |qíng kuàng / , |wǒ men|we / |yīng gāi|should / |jǐn kuài|as soon as possible / |zuò chū|make / |jué dìng|a decision / 。 }

Given it’s an emergency, we should decide as soon as possible.

{zh: |jiàn yú|in view of / |shàng zhōu|last week’s / |de / |shì jiàn|incident / , |zhèng fǔ|the government / |jiā qiáng|tightened / |le / |ān bǎo|security / 。 }

In view of last week’s incident, the government tightened security.

Remember: = “in light of, given that...” (= “examine / consider”) — it cites the *basis* for the decision that follows. Formal, official, sentence-opening: ..., () we should.... It’s the weightier cousin of .

Watch out

- It grounds a *decision/conclusion* on a consideration — heavier and more official than a plain .

7 Sentence patterns

7.1 + Rhetorical Question — “wouldn’t that be ...?”

asks a **rhetorical** question expecting agreement — “wouldn’t that be ...?, isn’t that ...?” The speaker already knows the answer.

Structure: + Rhetorical Question

{zh: |tā men|they / |bù|don’t / |lái|come / |qǐ bú shì|wouldn’t that be / |gèng|even / |hǎo|better / ? }

Wouldn’t it be even better if they didn’t come?

{zh: |nǐ|you / |zhè yàng|doing it / |zuò|this way / |qǐ bú shì|aren’t you just / |gěi|making / |zì jǐ|yourself / |zhǎo / |má fan|trouble / ? }

Aren’t you just making trouble for yourself?

Remember: = a literary “wouldn’t that be...?!” (= “how could it not”) — the answer is taken for granted, so it argues a point rather than asks (= “surely that’d be better”).

Watch out

- It’s rhetorical — don’t expect (or give) a literal yes/no.

7.2 () — “simply must, insist on”

() ... marks **strong determination** — “simply must, insist on.” The can drop when the speaker **dislikes** the action (). The frame + ... + also means “is bound to (happen).”

Structure: Subject + () + Verb Phrase +

{zh: |zhè ge|this / |xiàng mù|project / |fēi|simply has to / |tā|him / |lái / |zuò|be done by / |bù kě / 。 }

This project simply has to be done by him.

{zh: |jīn tiān|today / |nà me|so / |lěng|cold / , |wǒ|my / |nǚ ér|daughter / |fēi yào|insists on / |chuān|wearing / |qún zi|a skirt / 。 }

It’s so cold, yet my daughter insists on wearing a skirt.

Remember: ... = a double-negative lock: “must / insist on.” (“not unless”) + (“can’t not”) clamp shut on “simply have to.” The can drop when you *disapprove* (). It also means “bound to”:

Watch out

- Don’t read as plain “not” here — ... is a positive “must,” via two negatives.

7.3 — “concurrently, and also”

means holding **two roles or jobs at once** — “and also, doubling as, concurrently.” It can come before or after the verb.

Structure: Subject + + Role / Verb + A B · + N1 + + N2

{zh: |tā|he / |shì|is / |zhè|this / |shǒu / |gē|song’s / |de / |zhǔ chàng|lead singer / |jiān|and also / |cí / |zuò zhě|lyricist / 。 }

He’s both the lead singer and the lyricist of this song.

{zh: |zài|in / |nà|that / |bù / |diàn yǐng|film / |lǐ / , |tā|he / |jiān|was both / |zuò / |dǎo yǎn|director / |hé|and / |nán zhǔ jué|lead actor / 。 }

In that film he was both director and lead actor.

Remember: = “doubling as, both ... and ...” — one person, two hats at once: (“lead singer *and* lyricist”). It compactly joins two simultaneous capacities.

Watch out

- It joins *roles/jobs*, not random nouns — for plain “and” between things, use .

7.4 — “could it be that ...?”

voices a **dawning suspicion** as a guess or rhetorical question — “could it be that ...?, don’t tell me ...” It’s like , usually opens the second clause, and is optional.

Structure: Fact , + conjecture (+)? · + rhetorical question

{zh: |zhè me|so / |wǎn|late / |tā|he / |hái|still / |méi|hasn’t / |huí lái|come back / , |mò fēi|could it be / |chū|something / |le / |shén me / |shì|happened / ? }

So late and he’s not back — could something have happened?

{zh: |mò fēi|don’t tell me / |nǐ|you / |zhēn de|really / |xiāng xìn|believe / |tā|him / ? }

Don’t tell me you actually believe him?

Remember: = a worried “could it be...? / don’t tell me...” — a suspicion dawning on the speaker (≈). The tail is optional. Picture the penny *starting* to drop with unease.

Watch out

- It floats a *guess*, not a fact — the answer is feared/suspected, not known.

7.5 + — “from this, hence”

draws a consequence **from a reason or situation** — “from this, hence, thereby.” It usually pairs with / / .

Structure: Reasons , + Result / Implication

{zh: |yóu cǐ|from this / |kě jiàn|it’s clear / , |gǎi gé|reform / |shì|is / |duō me|how / |bì yào|necessary / 。 }

From this we can see how necessary reform is.

{zh: |rén men|people / |làn yòng|overuse / |nóng yào|pesticides / , |yóu cǐ|and from this / |chǎn shēng|came / |le / |shí pǐn|food- / |ān quán|safety / |wèn tí|problems / 。 }

People overuse pesticides, and food-safety problems have come from this.

Remember: = “from this (it follows)...” (“from” + “this”) — and the set wrap-ups / / = “from this we can see / it would seem...”. A formal “therefore, from the above.”

Watch out

- It points *back* to what was just said as the basis — it can’t open with no prior reason.

7.6 A + + B — “nothing is more ... than B”

(literally “none surpasses”) singles out the **utmost case** — “nothing is more ... than B.” It’s literary and emphatic.

Structure: Topic / Question + + Answer

{zh: |rén shēng|in life / |zuì|the saddest / |bēi shāng / |de / |shì|thing / |mò guò yú|is nothing more than / |shī qù|losing / |nǐ|you / |ài|love / |de / |rén|someone / 。 }

Nothing in life is sadder than losing someone you love.

{zh: |zhè lǐ|here / |zuì|the best / |hǎo / |de / |dà xué|university / |mò guò yú|is none other than / |Běi Dà|Peking University / 。 }

The best university here is none other than Peking University.

Remember: = “none surpasses” = “nothing is more ... than B.” It crowns B the supreme example, usually after a phrase (.....). Literary and emphatic.

Watch out

- B is the *peak* case — don’t follow with a middling example.

7.7 A , B — “rather than A, better to B”

A, B weighs two options and **picks B** — “rather than A, better to B.” You can add / / before . The variant A, B means “more B than A.”

Structure: + A , () + B · A , B

{zh: |yǔ qí|rather than / |zài|at / |jiā|home / |kàn|watch / |diàn shì|TV / , |bù rú|better to / |chū qù|go out / |zǒu zou|for a walk / 。 }

Rather than watch TV at home, better to go out for a walk.

{zh: |yǔ qí shuō|more than / |tā|he / |shì|is / |wǒ|my / |lǎo shī|teacher / , |bù rú shuō|rather / |tā|he / |shì|is / |wǒ|my / |péng you|friend / 。 }

He’s more a friend than a teacher.

Remember: A B = “rather than A, better B” — it rejects A, picks B. The sets up the option you drop, the one you take. Variant A B = “more B than A” (recasting a description).

Watch out

- Order is fixed: + the rejected option first, + the chosen one second.

7.8 + + — “just like, as if”

... draws a **vivid comparison** — “just like, as if (it were) ...” (the same as ...). It’s common in descriptive writing. The can be read shì or sì.

Structure: + Noun / Pronoun / Adjective +

{zh: |tā men|the two of them / |liǎ / |hǎo|are as close / |de / |gēn|as / |qīn jiě mèi|real sisters / |shì de / 。 }

The two of them are as close as real sisters.

{zh: |zuì jìn|lately / |tiān qì|the weather / |rè|is as hot / |de / |gēn|as / |zhēng lóng|a steamer / |lǐ / |shì de / 。 }

It’s been as hot as a steamer lately.

Remember: ... = ... (“just like, as if”) — a vivid simile (, “hot as a steamer”). caps the comparison; reads shì or sì.

Watch out

- It’s a simile frame — pair it with a vivid image, not a literal fact.

7.9 + — “truly worthy of, lives up to”

(or) praises someone as **fully deserving a title** — “truly is a ..., lives up to the name of.” It carries praise, so you use it of **others, not yourself**.

Structure: Subject + / + reputation

{zh: |tā|he / |bú kuì shì|truly is / |yì míng|an / |yōu xiù|excellent / |de / |lǎo shī|teacher / 。 }

He truly is an excellent teacher.

{zh: |tā|her / |de / |biǎo yǎn|acting / |tài|so / |bàng|superb / |le / , |bú kuì shì|no wonder she’s / |ná guo|won / |Ào sī kǎ|an Oscar / |de / 。 }

Her acting was superb — no wonder she’s an Oscar winner.

Remember: = “nothing to be ashamed of = truly lives up to it” (= “ashamed”). It praises — “no wonder he’s a top teacher.” Reserve it for **others**, never yourself. swaps freely for .

Watch out

- It’s a compliment — saying ... of yourself sounds boastful and odd.

7.10 + Person + — “be in charge, decide”

... assigns **decision-making authority** — “(it’s) for ... to decide, ... is in charge.”

Structure: Area of responsibility + + Person +

{zh: |wǒ men|our / |jiā|household / |yóu / |wǒ|my / |mā ma|mum / |zuò zhǔ|runs / , |tā|she / |shuō|says / |shén me|whatever / |wǒ men|we / |jiù|just / |zuò|do / |shén me / 。 }

In our house, my mum’s the boss — whatever she says, we do.

{zh: |suǒ yǒu|everything / |de / |shì / |dōu / |yóu|is / |nǐ|your / |zuò zhǔ|call / , |chū|if something / |le / |shì qīng|goes wrong / |yě|also / |yóu / |nǐ|you / |fù zé|are responsible / 。 }

Everything’s your call — and you’re responsible if anything goes wrong.

Remember: X = “it’s X’s call, X is the boss” — (assigns the doer) + (“be master of it”). (“at home, mum’s in charge”). It hands the decision firmly to X.

Watch out

- It assigns authority, not just action — the named person decides, not merely does.

7.11 + Action + / / — “must, have to”

... / / is an emphatic **necessity** — “(one) simply has to, must.” It’s the fuller form of ..., with stressing the obligation.

Structure: Statement , () + Action + / /

{zh: |xiàn zài|now / |shì|it’s / |jǐn jí|an emergency / |qíng kuàng / , |fēi děi|simply must / |mǎ shàng|at once / |dòng / |shǒu shù|operate / |bù kě / 。 }

It’s an emergency — we simply have to operate at once.

{zh: |yǒu|if you have / |huà|something to say / |hǎo hǎo|just say it / |shuō / , |gàn má|why / |fēi děi|must you / |chǎo jià|argue / ? }

Talk it out properly — why must you argue?

Remember: ... = “**simply HAVE to**” — the fuller, more insistent ..., with (*děi*, “must”) driving the obligation home (). It leaves *no* alternative.

Watch out

- The closing / / are interchangeable — keep one of them to seal the “no choice” frame.

7.12 , — “firstly ..., secondly ...”

... ... lists **two (or more) reasons or aims** — “for one thing ..., for another ...” The and are optional.

Structure: + Reason 1 , + Reason 2

{zh: |zhè cì|this time / |lái|coming to / |Zhōng guó|China / , |yì lái|for one thing / |shì / |tí gāo|to improve / |Zhōng wén|my Chinese / , |èr lái|for another / |shì / |liǎo jiě|to understand / |Zhōng guó|Chinese / |wén huà|culture / 。 }

I came to China to improve my Chinese, and to understand its culture.

{zh: |bié|don’t / |qù|go / |nà|there / |lǚ yóu|travelling / , |yì lái|for one thing / |bīn guǎn|hotels / |guì|are pricey / , |èr lái|for another / |méi|there’s no / |shén me / |fēng jǐng|scenery / 。 }

Don’t go there — for one thing the hotels are pricey, for another there’s no scenery.

Remember: = “**for one thing..., for another...**” — a tidy way to count off reasons or aims (... , ... , ...). The / are optional padding.

Watch out

- It enumerates *reasons/purposes*, not a time sequence — that’s

8 Verbs

8.1 + Subject + Verb Phrase — “I bet (you wouldn’t dare)”

In spoken Chinese, voices a confident, slightly challenging bet — “I bet ..., I’m sure ..., you wouldn’t dare.” The speaker is daring the other person, so it almost always comes with / plus , and the speaker is usually .

Structure: + Subject + + / + Verb Phrase

{zh: |liàng|I bet / |tā|he / |yě / |bù gǎn|wouldn’t dare / ! }

I bet he wouldn’t dare!

{zh: |wǒ|I / |liàng|bet / |nǐ|you / |yě / |bù gǎn|wouldn’t dare / |qù|go and / |tóu sù|complain / 。 }

I bet you wouldn’t dare go and complain.

Remember: = a daring “**I bet you wouldn’t...**” — a confident challenge, leaning on + / (, “bet he wouldn’t dare”). The speaker is usually , sizing up the other person.

Watch out

- It’s spoken and a touch confrontational — it almost always carries the / + , not a plain positive.

9 Verb phrases

9.1 Subject + () + Verb — “won’t stoop to, disdain to”

means thinking an action is **beneath one’s dignity** — “disdain to, won’t lower oneself to, can’t be bothered with.” There’s clear contempt in it: the subject looks down on doing the thing. You can say or, more literary, .

Structure: Subject + () + Verb / Verb Phrase

{zh: |tā|he / |shì|is / |gè|a / |chéng shí|honest / |de / |rén|man / , |bú xiè|won’t stoop to / |shuō huǎng|lying / 。 }

He’s an honest man — he won’t stoop to lying.

{zh: |tā|he / |bú xiè yú|is above / |shuō|saying / |bié rén|other people’s / |de / |huài huà|bad things / 。 }

He’s above bad-mouthing other people.

Remember: = “it’s beneath me” — **disdain to do it** (= “worth bothering with,” so = “not worth my while”). = “won’t stoop to lying.” is the more literary variant.

Watch out

- It carries *contempt* — the subject feels the action is below them, not merely declines it.

9.2 Action + (+) + Outcome — “so that, in order to”

is a formal “in order to, so as to (make it easier to).” It links an action to the **desired outcome** that action makes possible, and often takes a following .

Structure: Action , (+) + Outcome

{zh: |wǒ men|we / |hěn|very / |zǎo|early / |jiù / |qù|went to / |le / |jī chǎng|the airport / , |yǐ biàn|so that / |néng|we could / |gǎn shàng|catch / |zui|the / |zǎo|earliest / |de / |fēi jī|flight / 。 }

We went to the airport very early so we could catch the earliest flight.

{zh: |qǐng|please / |liú xià|leave / |diàn huà|your number / , |yǐ biàn|so that / |wǒ men|we / |lián xì|can contact / |nín|you / 。 }

Please leave your number so we can contact you.

Remember: = “so as to (make it easier to)” — **names a WANTED outcome** the action enables (). Its mirror is (“so as to *avoid*” a bad one): chases the good, dodges the bad.

Watch out

- Formal/written — in speech use or the mid-clause .

10 “If” Statements

10.1 , — “if ... then ...”

is a formal, written word for “if, supposing, in the event that.” It opens a hypothetical condition, and the result clause usually carries (or). It’s a close sibling of / / — the difference is register, not meaning.

Structure: + Condition , (/) + Result

{zh: |jiǎ shǐ|if / |méi yǒu|there were no / |shuǐ|water / , |shēng mìng|life / |jiù|then / |wú fǎ|couldn’t / |cún zài|exist / 。 }

If there were no water, life couldn’t exist.

{zh: |jiǎ shǐ|if / |nǐ|you / |shì|were / |wǒ|me / , |nǐ|you / |huì|would / |zěn me|how / |zuò|do it / ? }

If you were me, what would you do?

Remember: = a formal/written “if, supposing” (= “suppose”) — same meaning as / / , just dressier; the result takes / . Climb the register ladder: (casual) → → → / (literary).

Watch out

- In everyday speech it sounds bookish — use / .

11 Cause/Effect Statements

11.1 () , — “because ..., (one) thereby ...”

() is a formal cause-and-effect frame: states the cause, and introduces the resulting action or state — “because of X, (one) therefore Y.” In this written style often shortens to just , giving a tighter sentence.

Structure: Subject + () + Cause + + Result

{zh: |wǒ|I / |yīn wèi|because / |shēng bìng|got ill / |ér|so / |qǐng jià|took leave / 。 }

Because I got ill, I took time off.

{zh: |Ōu zhōu|Europe’s / |de / |jīng jì|economy / |yīn wèi|because of / |zhài wù|the debt / |wēi jī|crisis / |ér / |xiàn rù|fell into / |shuāi tuì|recession / 。 }

Europe’s economy fell into recession because of the debt crisis.

Remember: () — is the hinge swinging from cause to effect (“because X, thereby Y”). In careful writing, contracts to a tight (, “took leave due to illness”).

Watch out

- Keep the — it’s what links the effect to the cause in this frame.

12 Sentence Patterns

12.1 + Noun + — “in the name of, under the guise of”

... means doing one thing under the cover of another — “in the name of, under the pretext of, using ... as an excuse.” It usually hints that the stated name is just a **front** for a hidden motive.

Structure: Subject + + Noun + + Situation

{zh: |yǒu xiē|some / |rén|people / |jiè|in / |cí shàn|charity’s / |zhī míng|name / |piàn qián|swindle money / 。 }

Some people swindle money in the name of charity.

{zh: |tā|he / |jiè|under the pretext / |kāi huì|of a meeting / |zhī míng / , |qù|went / |lǚ yóu|travelling / 。 }

Under the pretext of a meeting, he went off travelling.

Remember: X = “**borrowing X’s name as a cover**” (= “borrow”) — it hints the name is a *front* masking the real aim (). Contrast the neutral ... (“in the name of,” below).

Watch out

- It implies a *pretext* — for a neutral “in the name of,” use ...

12.2 + Action , + Result — “through ..., cause ...”

... , ... is a formal cause-and-effect pair: names the **means** (an action or process), and names the **effect** it brings about — “by means of ..., it makes / causes ...”

Structure: + Verb (situation) , + Result

{zh: |tōng guò|through / |duàn liàn|exercise / , |shǐ|the / |shēn tǐ|body / |gèng|becomes / |jiàn kāng|healthier / 。 }

Through exercise, the body is made healthier.

{zh: |tōng guò|through / |zhè|this / |jiàn / |shì|matter / , |shǐ|it made / |wǒ|me / |míng bai|understand / |le / |hěn duō|a great deal / 。 }

Through this affair, I came to understand a great deal.

Remember: = the **MEANS**, = the **EFFECT** — “by way of X, it brings about Y” (). Keep the two halves balanced: process first, result second.

Watch out

- Don’t give *both* halves their own subject — it’s the means-clause that acts on, not a new actor.

12.3 + Body + — “in the name of, on behalf of”

... states the **authority or capacity** an act is carried out under — “in the name of, on behalf of.” Unlike ..., it’s neutral: it simply names whose name is being used.

Structure: + Person / Body + + Action

{zh: |bié|don’t / |yǐ|in / |wǒ|my / |de míng yì|name / |gěi / |gōng sī|the company / |xiě xìn|write to / 。 }

Don’t write to the company in my name.

{zh: |fǎ yuàn|the court / |yǐ|in / |zhèng fǔ|the government’s / |de míng yì|name / |qǐ sù|sued / |le / |tā|him / 。 }

He was sued in the name of the government.

Remember: ... = “**in X’s name / on behalf of**” — **NEUTRAL**. It simply states the capacity an act is done under (). Its shady cousin is ... (“under the *pretext* of”): same idea, opposite tone.

Watch out

- No hidden agenda implied — for “under the guise of,” you want ...

12.4 — “inevitably, be bound to”

(literally “the situation must ...”) asserts that circumstances make an outcome **certain** — “is bound to, will inevitably.” It introduces the unavoidable result and is formal in tone.

Structure: , + inevitable result

{zh: |zhè yàng|carrying on / |xià qù|like this / , |shì bì|is bound to / |shī bài|fail / 。 }

Carry on like this and failure is inevitable.

{zh: |wù jià|prices / |shàng zhǎng|rising / , |shì bì|will inevitably / |yǐng xiǎng|affect / |rén men|people’s / |de / |shēng huó|lives / 。 }

Rising prices are bound to affect people’s lives.

Remember: = (the circumstances) + (must) = “**the situation makes it inevitable.**” Stronger than a plain — it claims the *circumstances themselves* force the result. Formal.

Watch out

- It pins the certainty on *circumstances* — for a personal “definitely will,” / fit better.
- It adds formality, not meaning — the plain says the same thing in speech.

12.5 + Condition , (/) — “if, supposing”

is a highly literary “if, supposing, in the event that.” Like , it opens a hypothetical, with the result clause often taking or . It belongs to formal prose and set polite phrases.

Structure: + Condition , (/) + Result

{zh: |tǎng ruò|if / |yǒu|there is / |bù|any- / |zhōu dào|thing overlooked / |zhī chù / , |qǐng|please / |duō / |bāo hán|bear with us / 。 }

If anything has been overlooked, please bear with us.

{zh: |tǎng ruò|if / |shī bài|it fails / , |wǒ men|we / |zài|will then / |xiǎng|think of / |bié de|another / |bàn fǎ|way / 。 }

If it fails, we’ll think of another way.

Remember: = the most literary “if” — even dressier than , at home in formal prose and set courtesies (, “if anything’s been overlooked”). Result takes / .

Watch out

- Reserve it for writing and polite set phrases — in speech use / .

12.6 + Verb + — the literary structure

The + **Verb** + frame turns a verb into a formal noun phrase — “that which is ...ed, what (one) ...s.” It names the **object** of the action in a measured, written tone. Dropping it () means the same thing more plainly.

Structure: (Subject +) + Verb + (+ Noun)

{zh: |zhè|this / |jiù shì|is exactly / |wǒ|what I / |suǒ / |xiǎng|want / |shuō|to say / |de / 。 }

This is exactly what I want to say.

{zh: |tā|he / |suǒ / |zuò|everything he / |de|does / |yí qiè / |dōu|is all / |shì / |wèi le|for / |nǐ|you / 。 }

Everything he does is for you.

Remember: + verb + = “that which is ...ed” — a formal dressing-up. = (“what I want to say”), just more literary. flags the verb’s *object*, so the verb is transitive.

Watch out

13 Let alone

13.1 () , — “even ..., let alone ...”

means “let alone, much less, all the more so.” It pairs with a ... () ... clause: first you state an extreme case (even A is true), then pushes to a case that’s all the more so (so of course B). It’s often a **rhetorical** question, closed with ; adding / before sharpens it.

Structure: Subject + + A + () + Verb , () + B +

{zh: |lián|even / |dà rén|adults / |dōu / |jué de|find it / |nán|hard / , |hé kuàng|let alone / |hái zi|children / |ne / ? }

Even adults find it hard, let alone children.

{zh: |zhè|this / |diǎn|bit of / |qián|money / |lián|even / |chī fàn|for food / |dōu / |bú gòu|isn’t enough / , |hé kuàng|let alone / |mǎi|buying / |fáng|a house / ? }

This bit of money isn’t even enough for food, let alone buying a house.

Remember: A ..., () B = “even A..., LET ALONE B!” — it climbs from a strong case to an even stronger one (= “how much more so”). Usually rhetorical, sealed with ; / before add punch.

Watch out

- It runs *small* → *big* (like): A the lesser case, B the greater — don’t flip them.

14 Comparing similar adverbs

14.1 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 → .

14.2 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 .

14.3 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.

14.4 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.

14.5 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 *demand*s the *truth*. In a statement, = “after all, it turned out...”.

Watch out

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

14.6 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 ().

14.7 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.

14.8 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 comment); = “**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 .

14.9 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 zi|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.

14.10 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.

15 Comparing similar nouns

15.1 vs. — “each other” vs. “the other party”

Both can translate as “each other,” but they pull in different directions. is **reciprocal** — “one another, both sides, mutually” — and can sit right before a verb like (= “trust each other”). points to **the other specific party** — the single counterpart facing you — and can’t go before a verb that way. may follow / / ; cannot.

Structure: + Verb · + Noun (= the other side)

{zh: |wǒ men|we / |yīng gāi|should / |bǐ cǐ|each other / |xìn rèn|trust / 。 }

We should trust each other.

{zh: |nǐ|you / |yào|should / |tīng ting|listen to / |duì fāng|the other side’s / |de / |yì jiàn|view / 。 }

You should hear the other side’s view.

Remember: = reciprocal “each other” (works before a verb, like :); = the one SPECIFIC counterpart (“the other side”:). = mutual flow both ways; = the person across the table.

Watch out

- is a *noun* (the other party) — it can’t sit before a verb the way / do.

15.2 vs. — “others / them” vs. “other people”

Both refer to people other than the speaker, but is the neutral one — “other people, someone else.” is colloquial and often **specific or emotionally coloured**: it can mean “they / that person (you know who),” and even a coy “I / me.” In plain “other people” sentences the two are interchangeable; only carries the extra coloured uses.

Structure: + ... (neutral) · + ... (colloquial, often specific / coy)

{zh: |bié rén|other people’s / |de / |shì|business / |nǐ|you / |bié|don’t / |guǎn|meddle in / 。 }

Don’t meddle in other people’s business.

{zh: |rén jia|they’ve / |dōu|already / |bù|stopped / |lǐ|paying attention to / |nǐ|you / |le / , |nǐ|and you / |hái|still / |shuō|keep talking / 。 }

They’ve already stopped paying you any attention, and you keep on.

Remember: = neutral “other people”; = colloquial & often SPECIFIC or charged (“they / that person — you know who,” even a coy “me”). (anyone’s business) vs (*they* — pointedly — ignore you). carries feeling; doesn’t.

Watch out

- can mean a coy “I / me” (, “I don’t want to”) — never can.