

HSK 6 Grammar

English edition

Contents

1	Adverbs	3
1.1	动词 + 得 + 倒 + 形容词 — the rebuking 倒	3
1.2	很是 + 形容词 — “very, quite” (literary)	3
1.3	足足 + 数量 — “a full, all of”	4
1.4	一再 + 动词 — “again and again, repeatedly”	4
1.5	凡是 + 名词 + 都 / 就 / 一律 — “all, every (no exception)”	5
1.6	向来 (都) + 动词 — “always, all along”	5
1.7	果然 — “sure enough, as expected”	6
1.8	似乎 — “it seems, as if”	6
1.9	偏偏 — “contrary to expectation, of all things”	7
1.10	再不 , 也 — “even the most . . . , still”	7
1.11	一律 — “uniformly, without exception”	8
1.12	无非 (是) — “nothing but, merely”	8
1.13	一向 — “always, all along”	9
1.14	到时候 — “when the time comes”	9
1.15	何必 — “why bother, there’s no need”	10
2	Auxiliary Words	11
2.1	Sentence + 来着 — “(was just) . . . , what was it again?”	11
3	Conjunctions	12
3.1	以免 + 动词短语 — “so as to avoid, lest”	12
3.2	以及 — “as well as, and”	12
3.3	总之 — “in short, in a word”	13
3.4	则 — “whereas, while (contrast)”	13
4	Nouns	15
4.1	本 + 名词 — “this, one’s own”	15
4.2	词 + 性 — “-ness, -ity” (a quality)	15
5	Particles	17
5.1	是否 + 动词 / 形容词 — “whether (or not)”	17
5.2	动词 / 形容词 + 与否 — “whether or not”	17
5.3	名词 + 之 + 名词 — literary 的	18
5.4	Statement + 嘛 — “obviously, of course”	18
5.5	Sentence + 呗 — “(so) obviously, then”	19
6	Prepositions	20
6.1	鉴于 + Observation , Conclusion — “in light of, in view of”	20
7	Sentence patterns	21
7.1	岂不是 + Rhetorical Question — “wouldn’t that be . . . ?”	21

7.2	非 (要) 不可 — “simply must, insist on”	21
7.3	兼 — “concurrently, and also”	22
7.4	莫非 — “could it be that ...?”	22
7.5	由此 + 动词 — “from this, hence”	23
7.6	A + 莫过于 + B — “nothing is more ... than B”	23
7.7	与其 A, 不如 B — “rather than A, better to B”	24
7.8	跟 + 名词 + 似的 — “just like, as if”	24
7.9	不愧是 + 名词 — “truly worthy of, lives up to”	25
7.10	由 + Person + 做主 — “be in charge, decide”	25
7.11	非得 + Action + 不可 / 不行 / 不成 — “must, have to”	26
7.12	一来 , 二来 — “firstly ..., secondly ...”	26
8	Verbs	28
8.1	谅 + Subject + Verb Phrase — “I bet (you wouldn’t dare)”	28
9	Verb phrases	29
9.1	Subject + 不屑 (于) + Verb — “won’t stoop to, disdain to”	29
9.2	Action + 以便 (+ 能) + Outcome — “so that, in order to”	29
10	“If” Statements	31
10.1	假使 , 就 — “if ... then ...”	31
11	Cause/Effect Statements	32
11.1	因 (为) , 而 — “because ..., (one) thereby ...”	32
12	Sentence Patterns	33
12.1	借 + Noun + 之名 — “in the name of, under the guise of”	33
12.2	通过 + Action, 使 + Result — “through ..., cause ...”	33
12.3	以 + Body + 的名义 — “in the name of, on behalf of”	34
12.4	势必 — “inevitably, be bound to”	34
12.5	倘若 + Condition, (就 / 便) — “if, supposing”	35
12.6	所 + Verb + 的 — the literary 所 structure	35
13	Let alone	37
13.1	连 都 (也) , 何况 — “even ..., let alone ...”	37
14	Comparing similar adverbs	38
14.1	按照 vs. 根据 — “in accordance with” vs. “on the basis of”	38
14.2	不得不 vs. 只好 — “have no choice” vs. “have no better choice”	38
14.3	不断 vs. 不停 — “unceasingly” vs. “without stopping”	39
14.4	反而 vs. 却 — “on the contrary” vs. “but, yet”	40
14.5	根本 vs. 到底 — “(not) at all” vs. “in the end, on earth”	40
14.6	根据 vs. 据 — “according to” (long vs. short)	41
14.7	恢复 vs. 还原 — “recover / restore” vs. “return to the original”	41

14.8 居然 vs. 反而 — “surprisingly” vs. “on the contrary”	42
14.9 一度 vs. 一时 — “at one time” vs. “for a (short) while”	42
14.10 一直 vs. 一向 — “all along (continuously)” vs. “all along (habitually)”	43
15 Comparing similar nouns	44
15.1 彼此 vs. 对方 — “each other” vs. “the other party”	44
15.2 人家 vs. 别人 — “others / them” vs. “other people”	44

1 Adverbs

1.1 动词 + 得 + 倒 + 形容词 — the rebuking 倒

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

Structure: Subject + Verb + 得 + 倒 + Adjective

{zh: 说 |shuō|saying it / 得 |de / 倒 |dào|easy enough / 容易 |róng yì / , 那 |nà|then / 你 |nǐ|you / 来 |lái|do it / ! }

Easy for you to say — you do it then!

{zh: 你 |nǐ|you / 想 |xiǎng|wish / 得 |de / 倒 |dào|nicely / 美 |měi / ! 不 |bù|don't / 工作 |gōng zuò|work / 还 |hái|yet / 想 |xiǎng|want / 拿 |ná|to be paid / 工资 |gōng zī / ? }

You wish! Get paid without working?

Remember: 得 + 倒 = a sarcastic jab — “说得倒容易” = “easy enough for *you* to say.” Reach for it to push back at the other person's 说 / 想. (你想得倒美! = “you wish!”)

Watch out

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

1.2 很是 + 形容词 — “very, quite” (literary)

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

Structure: Subject + 很是 + Adjective

{zh: 你 |nǐ|your / 的 |de / 表现 |biǎo xiàn|performance / 让 |ràng|made / 领导 |lǐng dǎo|the boss / 很是 |hěn shì|very / 满意 |mǎn yì|pleased / 。 }

Your performance pleased the boss greatly.

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

Doing it this way is quite necessary.

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

Watch out

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

1.3 足足 + 数量 — “a full, all of”

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

Structure: 足足 + Verb (+ Number) · Verb + 足足

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 等 |děng|waited / 了 |le / 她 |tā|for her / 足足 |zú zú|a full / 两个 |liǎng ge|two / 小时 |xiǎo shí|hours / 。 }

I waited a full two hours for her.

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 在 |zài|in / 中国 |Zhōng guó|China / 住 |zhù|lived / 了 |le / 足足 |zú|all of / 十年 |shí nián|ten years / 。 }

He lived in China for all of ten years.

Remember: 足足 = “a FULL, every bit of” (足 = “enough / full”) — it always rides a number and underlines that the amount is *large*: 足足两个小时 (“a whole two hours”), 足足十年 (“all of ten years”).

Watch out

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

1.4 一再 + 动词 — “again and again, repeatedly”

一再 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 地.

Structure: Subject + 一再 + Verb

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 一再 |yí zài|again and again / 跟 |gēn / 你 |nǐ|you / 说 |shuō|told / , 出门 |chū mén|out and about / 要 |yào|to be / 小心 |xiǎo xīn|careful / 。 }

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

{zh: 老师 |lǎo shī|the teacher / 一再 |yí zài|repeatedly / 强调 |qiáng diào|stressed / 这 |zhè|this / 一点 |yì diǎn|point / 。 }

The teacher stressed this point over and over.

Remember: 一再 = “time and again, insistently” — formal, with two-syllable verbs of speech/thought (一再强调, 一再请求, 一再解释). It's the close cousin of 再三.

Watch out

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

1.5 凡是 + 名词 + 都 / 就 / 一律 — “all, every (no exception)”

凡是 sweeps over **every member** of a category — “any, every, whoever / whatever” (= 只要是). It opens the sentence and pairs with 都 / 就 / 一律.

Structure: 凡是 + Noun + 都 / 就 / 一律 + Predicate

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

All members get a discount.

{zh: 凡是 |fán shì|any / 不 |bù / 听话 |tīng huà|disobedient / 的 |de / 孩子 |hái zi|child / 都 |dōu / 没 |méi|gets no / 糖 |táng|sweets / 吃 |chī / 。 }

Any child who misbehaves gets no sweets.

Remember: 凡是 = “any and every, without exception” (= 只要是) — it states a blanket rule and pairs with 都 / 就 / 一律 to nail it down (凡是会员都 ...). Use it to leave *no* member out.

Watch out

- It needs the 都 / 就 / 一律 downstream to complete the “every” sweep.

1.6 向来 (都) + 动词 — “always, all along”

向来 describes a **long-standing habit or trait** — “always, has always, all along.” It’s very close to 一向.

Structure: Subject + 向来 (都) + Verb / Adjective

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 向来 |xiàng lái|has always / 都 |dōu / 很 |hěn|very / 守时 |shǒu shí|punctual / 。 }

He’s always been punctual.

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 向来 |xiàng lái|have never / 不 |bù / 喜欢 |xǐ huan|liked / 点 |diǎn|ordering / 外卖 |wài mài|takeaway / 。 }

I’ve never liked ordering takeaway.

Remember: 向来 = a settled, unchanging pattern over time (“has always been this way”) — interchangeable with 一向 (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 一直).

1.7 果然 — “sure enough, as expected”

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

Structure: Subject + 果然 + Predicate · 果然如此 / 果然不出所料

{zh: 第一名 |dì yī míng|first place / 果然 |guǒ rán|sure enough / 是 |shì|is / 她 |tā|her / ! 我 |wǒ|I / 就 |jiù / 知道 |zhī dào|knew it / 。 }

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

{zh: 天气预报 |tiān qì yù bào|the forecast / 说 |shuō|said / 下雨 |xià yǔ|rain / , 果然如此 |guǒ rán rú cǐ|and so it did / 。 }

The forecast said rain, and sure enough it did.

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

Watch out

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

1.8 似乎 — “it seems, as if”

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

Structure: Subject + 似乎

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

The boss seems a little upset today.

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

She seems to be hiding something.

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

Watch out

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

1.9 偏偏 — “contrary to expectation, of all things”

偏偏 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 + 偏偏 + B

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

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

{zh: 别人 |bié rén|everyone else / 都 |dōu / 早 |zǎo|early / 到 |dào|arrived / 了 |le / , 偏偏 |piān piān|only / 他 |tā|he / 一个人 |yí ge rén|alone / 迟到 |chí dào|was late / 。 }

Everyone else was early — only he was late.

Remember: 偏偏 = a frustrated “of all things / just HAD to” — things go *against* what you wanted (叫他别去, 他偏偏要去, “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 再不 , 也 — “even the most ..., still”

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

Structure: 再不 + Adjective , 也 + Result

{zh: 再不 |zài bù|however un- / 喜欢 |xǐ huan|fond / , 你 |nǐ|you / 也 |yě|still / 得 |děi|have to / 去 |qù|go / 一趟 |yí tàng|once / 。 }

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

{zh: 再不 |zài bù|even if not / 饿 |è|hungry / , 也 |yě|still / 吃 |chī|eat / 点 |diǎn|a little / 吧 |ba / 。 }

Even if you're not hungry, eat a bit.

Remember: 再不 X 也 Y = “however un-X, still Y” — it grants even the unfavourable extreme and holds the result firm (再不喜欢也得去, “however little you like it, you still have to go”). ≈ 即使不 ... 也 ...

Watch out

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

1.11 一律 — “uniformly, without exception”

一律 means a rule applies to **all alike** — “uniformly, across the board, without exception.” It’s written / official, often pairs with 都, and is mostly for people.

Structure: 一律 (+ 都) + Verb / Adjective

{zh: 明天 |míng tiān|tomorrow’s / 的 |de / 会议 |huì yì|meeting / 一律 |yí lǜ|without exception / 都 |dōu / 要 |yào|must / 参加 |cān jiā|attend / 。 }

Everyone must attend tomorrow’s meeting.

{zh: 七十岁 |qī shí suì|over-seventies / 以上 |yǐ shàng / 坐 |zuò|ridding / 公交 |gōng jiāo|the bus / 一律 |yí lǜ|all / 免费 |miǎn fèi|free / 。 }

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

Remember: 一律 = “one treatment for ALL, across the board” — official/written, often with 都 (一律免费, “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 都.

1.12 无非 (是) — “nothing but, merely”

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

Structure: 无非 + (是) + Verb / Noun (+ 罢了 / 而已)

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 无非 |wú fēi|only / 批评 |pī píng|told off / 了 |le / 他 |tā|him / 几句 |jǐ jù|a bit / , 他 |tā|he / 怎么 |zěn me|why / 哭 |kū|crying / 了 |le / ? }

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

{zh: 孩子 |hái zi|the child / 想 |xiǎng|wants / 得到 |dé dào / 的 |de / 无非 |wú fēi|is nothing but / 是 |shì / 你 |nǐ|your / 的 |de / 关心 |guān xīn|attention / 罢了 |bà le / 。 }

All the child wants is your attention, nothing more.

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

Watch out

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

1.13 一向 — “always, all along”

一向 marks a **consistent, long-held** habit or attitude — “always, all along.” The feeling is “it’s always been this way.”

Structure: Subject + 一向 + Habit / Attitude

{zh: 小王 |Xiǎo Wáng|Xiao Wang / 一向 |yí xiàng|has always / 上班 |shàng bān|come to work / 很 |hěn|very / 早 |zǎo|early / , 这次 |zhè cì|this time / 怎么 |zěnmē|what’s / 了 |le|wrong / ? }

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

{zh: 妈妈 |mā ma|mum / 一向 |yí xiàng|has always / 支持 |zhī chí|backed / 我 |wǒ|my / 的 |de / 决定 |jué dìng|decisions / 。 }

Mum has always backed my decisions.

Remember: 一向 = “it’s always been this way” — a settled disposition over the long run. It’s the twin of 向来 (earlier in this file); both look back over a long, unbroken habit.

Watch out

- For one *recent* unbroken stretch (“the whole time lately”), use 一直, not 一向.

1.14 到时候 — “when the time comes”

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

Structure: , 到时候 +

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

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

{zh: 你 |nǐ|you / 先 |xiān|first / 自己 |zì jǐ|yourself / 试试 |shì shì|try / , 到时候 |dào shí hou|then / 我 |wǒ|I / 再 |zài / 教 |jiāo|teach / 你 |nǐ|you / 。 }

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

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

Watch out

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

1.15 何必 — “why bother, there's no need”

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

Structure: Subject + 何必 + Predicate (+ 呢)

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 已经 |yǐ jīng|already / 道歉 |dào qiàn|apologised / 了 |le / , 你 |nǐ|you / 何必 |hé bì|why / 还 |hái|still / 生气 |shēng qì|be angry / ? }

He's already apologised — why stay angry?

{zh: 都是 |dōu shì|we're all / 一家人 |yì jiā rén|family / , 何必 |hé bì|why bother / 这么 |zhè me|being so / 客气 |kè qi|formal / ? }

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

Remember: 何必 = a rhetorical “why (must) you...?” = “there's no need.” It nudges someone to drop a pointless effort (你何必生气? “why be angry?”); 何必呢? alone = “why bother?”. Proverb: 早知如此, 何必当初 (“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 + 来着 — “(was just) ..., what was it again?”

来着 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 不 / 没来着), and in a question it appears only with 什么, 谁, or 哪儿.

Structure: Sentence + 来着

{zh: 昨天 |zuó tiān|yesterday / 有 |yǒu|someone / 人 |rén / 来 |lái|came / 找 |zhǎo|looking for / 你 |nǐ|you / 来着 |lái zhe / 。 }

Someone came looking for you yesterday.

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

What were you just saying again?

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

Watch out

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

3 Conjunctions

3.1 以免 + 动词短语 — “so as to avoid, lest”

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

Structure: Action , 以免 + Undesirable Result

{zh: 这儿 |zhèr|there are / 有 |yǒu / 高压电线 |gāo yā diàn xiàn|high-voltage wires here / , 请 |qǐng|please / 不要 |bú yào|don’t / 靠近 |kào jìn|go near / , 以免 |yǐ miǎn|lest / 发生 |fā shēng|something / 危险 |wēi xiǎn|dangerous happen / 。 }

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

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

Hurry up and go, so you’re not late.

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

Watch out

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

3.2 以及 — “as well as, and”

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

Structure: A、B 以及 C

{zh: 听觉 |tīng jué|hearing / 、视觉 |shì jué|sight / 以及 |yǐ jí|as well as / 触觉 |chù jué|touch / 都 |dōu|are all / 属于 |shǔ yú / 感官 |gǎn guān|senses / 。 }

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

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

The yard has roses, jasmine, and other plants.

Remember: 以及 = a formal “and / as well as,” with the MAIN items before it and secondary ones after (玫瑰、茉莉 以及其他花草). More formal than 和, and it can also join clauses.

Watch out

- Put the central items *before* 以及 — what follows reads as an add-on.

3.3 总之 — “in short, in a word”

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

Structure: (.....,) 总之,

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 经常 |jīng cháng|often / 迟到 |chí dào|late / , 工作 |gōng zuò|with work / 也 |yě|also / 不 |bù|not / 负责 |fù zé|responsible / , 总之 |zǒng zhī|in short / , 公司 |gōng sī|the firm / 必须 |bì xū|must / 解雇 |jiě gù|let go of / 他 |tā|him / 。 }

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

{zh: 不管 |bù guǎn|whatever / 理由 |lǐ yóu|reason / 是 |shì / 什么 |shén me / , 总之 |zǒng zhī|in short / 我 |wǒ|I / 不会 |bú huì|won't / 再 |zài|again / 相信 |xiāng xìn|trust / 他 |tā|him / 了 |le / 。 }

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

Remember: 总之 = 总 (“sum up”) + 之 = “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 则 — “whereas, while (contrast)”

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

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

{zh: 南方人 |nán fāng rén|southerners / 喜欢 |xǐ huan|like / 吃 |chī|eating / 甜 |tián|sweet / 的 |de / , 北方人 |běi fāng rén|northerners / 则 |zé|whereas / 喜欢 |xǐ huan|like / 吃 |chī|eating / 咸 |xián|salty / 的 |de / 。 }

Southerners like sweet food, whereas northerners like salty.

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

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

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

Watch out

- It sits after the second subject, before the verb — 北方人则喜欢 ..., not 则北方人

4 Nouns

4.1 本 + 名词 — “this, one’s own”

In formal written Chinese, **本** means “**this (very) / one’s own**” — always the speaker’s own side. It pairs with single-syllable nouns (人, 校, 市, 国, 周, 月, 年, 次) and a few two-syllable ones (公司, 组织). 本人 = “I, myself” (common on résumés).

Structure: 本 + Noun

{zh: 顾客至上 |gù kè zhì shàng|customer-first / 是 |shì|is / 本 |běn|our / 公司 |gōng sī|company’s / 的 |de / 理念 |lǐ niàn|ethos / 。 }

“Customer first” is our company’s ethos.

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

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

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

Watch out

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

4.2 词 + 性 — “-ness, -ity” (a quality)

The suffix **性** turns a word into an **abstract quality** — “-ness, -ity, -ability” (also “-ic”). Like 化, it’s a productive suffix: 可能性, 重要性, 科学性, 可行性.

Structure: Word + 性

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

This plan isn’t feasible.

{zh: 你 |nǐ|your / 的 |de / 作品 |zuò pǐn|work / 越来越 |yuè lái yuè|more and more / 有 |yǒu|has / 创造性 |chuàng zào xìng|creativity / 。 }

Your work is more and more creative.

Remember: 性 = “-ness / -ity” — turns a word into an abstract *quality*: 可能性 (possibility), 重要性 (importance), 可行性 (feasibility), 创造性 (creativity). It’s the noun-making sibling of the verb-making 化.

Watch out

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

5 Particles

5.1 是否 + 动词 / 形容词 — “whether (or not)”

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

Structure: 是否 + Verb / Adjective

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

Please confirm whether the details are correct.

{zh: 你 |nǐ|your / 父母 |fù mǔ|parents / 是否 |shì fǒu|whether / 同意 |tóng yì|agree to / 你们 |nǐ men|you / 住 |zhù|living / 在一起 |zài yì qǐ|together / ? }

Do your parents agree to you living together?

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

Watch out

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

5.2 动词 / 形容词 + 与否 — “whether or not”

与否 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 + 与否

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

Whether or not you succeed is down to you.

{zh: 这 |zhè|this / 件 |jiàn / 事 |shì|matter / 重要 |zhòng yào|important / 与否 |yǔ fǒu|or not / , 取决于 |qǔ jué yú|depends on / 你 |nǐ|how you / 怎么 |zěn me / 看 |kàn|see it / 。 }

Whether this matters depends on how you see it.

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

Watch out

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

5.3 名词 + 之 + 名词 — literary 的

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

Structure: Noun + 之 + Noun

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

Never mean harm to others.

{zh: 这些 |zhè xiē|these / 方式 |fāng shì|methods / 仍 |réng|still / 有 |yǒu|have / 不足 |bù zú|short- / 之 |zhī / 处 |chù|comings / 。 }

These methods still have shortcomings.

Remember: 之 = the literary 的 — but *fixed* to set expressions, not a free swap: 三分之一 (a third), 意料之中 (as expected), 不足之处 (shortcomings). Learn the phrases whole.

Watch out

- You can't sprinkle 之 in for any 的 — 我之书 is wrong; it's 我的书.

5.4 Statement + 嘛 — “obviously, of course”

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

Structure: Statement + 嘛

{zh: 不 |bù|if you don't / 想 |xiǎng|want to / 去 |qù|go / 就 |jiù|then / 不要 |bú yào|don't / 去 |qù|go / 嘛 |ma / 。 }

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

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 挺 |tǐng|pretty / 有钱 |yǒu qián|well-off / 的 |de / 嘛 |ma / 。 }

He's clearly pretty well-off.

Remember: 嘛 = “obviously, of course” — frames the point as self-evident (不想去就不要去嘛, “then just don't go, *obviously*”). Same sound as the question 吗, opposite job: 嘛 *asserts*, 吗 *asks*.

Watch out

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

5.5 Sentence + 呗 — “(so) obviously, then”

The casual particle 呗 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 + 呗

{zh: 不会 |bú huì|if you can't / 就 |jiù|then / 好好 |hǎo hǎo|just / 学 |xué|learn it / 呗 |bei / 。 }

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

{zh: 不 |bù|if you don't / 想 |xiǎng|want to / 去 |qù|go / 就 |jiù|then / 不 |bù|don't / 去 |qù|go / 呗 |bei / 。 }

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

Remember: 呗 = a shrug: “well, obviously / then just... / so be it.” Very colloquial, often a touch resigned (不会就学呗, “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 鉴于 + Observation , Conclusion — “in light of, in view of”

鉴于 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: 鉴于 + Observation , Conclusion / Suggestion

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

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

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

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

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

Watch out

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

7 Sentence patterns

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

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

Structure: 岂不是 + Rhetorical Question

{zh: 他们 |tā men|they / 不 |bù|don’t / 来 |lái|come / 岂不是 |qǐ bú shì|wouldn’t that be / 更 |gèng|even / 好 |hǎo|better / ? }

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

{zh: 你 |nǐ|you / 这样 |zhè yàng|doing it / 做 |zuò|this way / 岂不是 |qǐ bú shì|aren’t you just / 给 |gěi|making / 自己 |zì jǐ|yourself / 找 |zhǎo / 麻烦 |má fan|trouble / ? }

Aren’t you just making trouble for yourself?

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

Watch out

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

7.2 非 (要) 不可 — “simply must, insist on”

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

Structure: Subject + 非 (要) + Verb Phrase + 不可

{zh: 这个 |zhè ge|this / 项目 |xiàng mù|project / 非 |fēi|simply has to / 他 |tā|him / 来 |lái / 做 |zuò|be done by / 不可 |bù kě / 。 }

This project simply has to be done by him.

{zh: 今天 |jīn tiān|today / 那么 |nà me|so / 冷 |lěng|cold / , 我 |wǒ|my / 女儿 |nǚ ér|daughter / 非要 |fēi yào|insists on / 穿 |chuān|wearing / 裙子 |qún zi|a skirt / 。 }

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

Remember: 非 ... 不可 = a double-negative lock: “must / insist on.” 非 (“not unless”) + 不可 (“can’t not”) clamp shut on “simply have to.” The 不可 can drop when you *disapprove* (非要穿). It also means “bound to”: 再不走非迟到不可.

Watch out

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

7.3 兼 — “concurrently, and also”

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

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

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 是 |shì|is / 这 |zhè|this / 首 |shǒu / 歌 |gē|song's / 的 |de / 主唱 |zhǔ chàng|lead singer / 兼 |jiān|and also / 词 |cí / 作者 |zuò zhě|lyricist / 。 }

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

{zh: 在 |zài|in / 那 |nà|that / 部 |bù / 电影 |diàn yǐng|film / 里 |lǐ / , 他 |tā|he / 兼 |jiān|was both / 做 |zuò / 导演 |dǎo yǎn|director / 和 |hé|and / 男主角 |nán zhǔ jué|lead actor / 。 }

In that film he was both director and lead actor.

Remember: 兼 = “doubling as, both ... and ...” — one person, two hats at once: 主唱兼词作者 (“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 和.

7.4 莫非 — “could it be that ...?”

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

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

{zh: 这么 |zhè me|so / 晚 |wǎn|late / 他 |tā|he / 还 |hái|still / 没 |méi|hasn't / 回来 |huí lái|come back / , 莫非 |mò fēi|could it be / 出 |chū|something / 了 |le / 什么 |shén me / 事 |shì|happened / ? }

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

{zh: 莫非 |mò fēi|don't tell me / 你 |nǐ|you / 真的 |zhēn de|really / 相信 |xiāng xìn|believe / 他 |tā|him / ? }

Don't tell me you actually believe him?

Remember: 莫非 = a worried “could it be...? / don’t tell me...” — a suspicion dawning on the speaker (≈ 难道). The 不成 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 由此 + 动词 — “from this, hence”

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

Structure: Reasons , 由此 + Result / Implication

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

From this we can see how necessary reform is.

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

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

Remember: 由此 = “from this (it follows)...” (由 “from” + 此 “this”) — and the set wrap-ups 由此可见 / 看来 / 说来 = “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 + 莫过于 + B — “nothing is more ... than B”

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

Structure: Topic / Question + 莫过于 + Answer

{zh: 人生 |rén shēng|in life / 最 |zuì|the saddest / 悲伤 |bēi shāng / 的 |de / 事 |shì|thing / 莫过于 |mò guò yú|is nothing more than / 失去 |shī qù|losing / 你 |nǐ|you / 爱 |ài|love / 的 |de / 人 |rén|someone / 。 }

Nothing in life is sadder than losing someone you love.

{zh: 这里 |zhè lǐ|here / 最 |zuì|the best / 好 |hǎo / 的 |de / 大学 |dà xué|university / 莫过于 |mò guò yú|is none other than / 北大 |Běi Dà|Peking University / 。 }

The best university here is none other than Peking University.

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

Watch out

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

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

与其 A, 不如 B weighs two options and **picks B** — “rather than A, better to B.” You can add 还 / 倒 / 真 before 不如. The variant 与其说 A, 不如说 B means “more B than A.”

Structure: 与其 + A , (还) 不如 + B · 与其说 A , 不如说 B

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

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

{zh: 与其说 |yǔ qí shuō|more than / 他 |tā|he / 是 |shì|is / 我 |wǒ|my / 老师 |lǎo shī|teacher / , 不如说 |bù rú shuō|rather / 他 |tā|he / 是 |shì|is / 我 |wǒ|my / 朋友 |péng you|friend / 。 }

He’s more a friend than a teacher.

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

Watch out

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

7.8 跟 + 名词 + 似的 — “just like, as if”

跟 ... 似的 draws a **vivid comparison** — “just like, as if (it were) ...” (the same as 像 ... 一样). It’s common in descriptive writing. The 似 can be read *shì* or *sì*.

Structure: 跟 + Noun / Pronoun / Adjective + 似的

{zh: 她们 |tā men|the two of them / 俩 |liǎ / 好 |hǎo|are as close / 得 |de / 跟 |gēn|as / 亲姐妹 |qīn jiě mèi|real sisters / 似的 |shì de / 。 }

The two of them are as close as real sisters.

{zh: 最近 |zuì jìn|lately / 天气 |tiān qì|the weather / 热 |rè|is as hot / 得 |de / 跟 |gēn|as / 蒸笼 |zhēng lóng|a steamer / 里 |lǐ / 似的 |shì de / 。 }

It's been as hot as a steamer lately.

Remember: 跟 ... 似的 = 像 ... 一样 (“just like, as if”) — a vivid simile (热得跟蒸笼似的, “hot as a steamer”). 似的 caps the comparison; 似 reads *shì* or *sì*.

Watch out

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

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

不愧是 (or 不愧为) 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 + 不愧是 / 不愧为 + reputation

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 不愧是 |bú kuì shì|truly is / 一名 |yì míng|an / 优秀 |yōu xiù|excellent / 的 |de / 老师 |lǎo shī|teacher / 。 }

He truly is an excellent teacher.

{zh: 她 |tā|her / 的 |de / 表演 |biǎo yǎn|acting / 太 |tài|so / 棒 |bàng|superb / 了 |le / , 不愧是 |bú kuì shì|no wonder she's / 拿过 |ná guo|won / 奥斯卡 |Ào sī kǎ|an Oscar / 的 |de / 。 }

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

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

Watch out

- It's a compliment — saying 我不愧是 ... of yourself sounds boastful and odd.

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

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

Structure: Area of responsibility + 由 + Person + 做主

{zh: 我们 |wǒ men|our / 家 |jiā|household / 由 |yóu / 我 |wǒ|my / 妈妈 |mā ma|mum / 做主 |zuò zhǔ|runs / , 她 |tā|she / 说 |shuō|says / 什么 |shén me|whatever / 我们 |wǒ men|we / 就 |jiù|just / 做 |zuò|do / 什么 |shén me / 。 }

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

{zh: 所有 |suǒ yǒu|everything / 的 |de / 事 |shì / 都 |dōu / 由 |yóu|is / 你 |nǐ|your / 做主 |zuò zhǔ|call / , 出 |chū|if something / 了 |le / 事情 |shì qing|goes wrong / 也 |yě|also / 由 |yóu / 你 |nǐ|you / 负责 |fù zé|are responsible / 。 }

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

Remember: 由 X 做主 = “it's X's call, X is the boss” — 由 (assigns the doer) + 做主 (“be master of it”). 家里由我妈做主 (“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 非得 + Action + 不可 / 不行 / 不成 — “must, have to”

非得 ... 不可 / 不行 / 不成 is an emphatic **necessity** — “(one) simply has to, must.” It's the fuller form of 非 ... 不可, with 得 stressing the obligation.

Structure: Statement , 非 (得) + Action + 不可 / 不行 / 不成

{zh: 现在 |xiàn zài|now / 是 |shì|it's / 紧急 |jǐn jí|an emergency / 情况 |qíng kuàng / , 非得 |fēi děi|simply must / 马上 |mǎ shàng|at once / 动 |dòng / 手术 |shǒu shù|operate / 不可 |bù kě / 。 }

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

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

Talk it out properly — why must you argue?

Remember: 非得 ... 不可 = “**simply HAVE to**” — the fuller, more insistent 非 ... 不可, with 得 (*děi*, “must”) driving the obligation home (非得马上手术不可). It leaves *no* alternative.

Watch out

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

7.12 一来 , 二来 — “firstly ..., secondly ...”

一来 ... 二来 ... lists **two (or more) reasons or aims** — “for one thing ..., for another ...” The 是 and 也 are optional.

Structure: 一来 + Reason 1 , 二来 + Reason 2

{zh: 这次 |zhè cì|this time / 来 |lái|coming to / 中国 |Zhōng guó|China / , 一来 |yì lái|for one thing / 是 |shì / 提高 |tí gāo|to improve / 中文 |Zhōng wén|my Chinese

/ , 二来 |èr lái|for another / 是 |shì / 了解 |liǎo jiě|to understand / 中国 |Zhōng guó|Chinese / 文化 |wén huà|culture / 。 }

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

{zh: 别 |bié|don't / 去 |qù|go / 那 |nà|there / 旅游 |lǚ yóu|travelling / , 一来 |yì lái|for one thing / 宾馆 |bīn guǎn|hotels / 贵 |guì|are pricey / , 二来 |èr lái|for another / 没 |méi|there's no / 什么 |shén me / 风景 |fēng jǐng|scenery / 。 }

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

Remember: 一来 ... 二来 ... = “for one thing..., for another...” — a tidy way to count off reasons or aims (一来 ..., 二来 ..., 三来 ...). The 是 / 也 are optional padding.

Watch out

- It enumerates *reasons/purposes*, not a time sequence — that's 先 ... 然后

8 Verbs

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

In spoken Chinese, 谅 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 不 / 没 plus 也, and the speaker is usually 我.

Structure: 谅 + Subject + 也 + 不 / 没 + Verb Phrase

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

I bet he wouldn’t dare!

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 谅 |liàng|bet / 你 |nǐ|you / 也 |yě / 不敢 |bù gǎn|wouldn’t dare / 去 |qù|go and / 投诉 |tóu sù|complain / 。 }

I bet you wouldn’t dare go and complain.

Remember: 谅 = a daring “I bet you wouldn’t...” — a confident challenge, leaning on 也 + 不 / 没 (谅他也不敢, “bet he wouldn’t dare”). The speaker is usually 我, sizing up the other person.

Watch out

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

9 Verb phrases

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

不屑 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 不屑 or, more literary, 不屑于.

Structure: Subject + 不屑 (于) + Verb / Verb Phrase

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 是 |shì|is / 个 |gè|a / 诚实 |chéng shí|honest / 的 |de / 人 |rén|man / , 不屑 |bú xiè|won’t stoop to / 说谎 |shuō huǎng|lying / 。 }

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

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 不屑于 |bú xiè yú|is above / 说 |shuō|saying / 别人 |bié rén|other people’s / 的 |de / 坏话 |huài huà|bad things / 。 }

He’s above bad-mouthing other people.

Remember: 不屑 = “it’s beneath me” — **disdain to do it** (屑 = “worth bothering with,” so 不屑 = “not worth my while”). 不屑说谎 = “won’t stoop to lying.” 不屑于 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 + 以便 (+ 能) + Outcome — “so that, in order to”

以便 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 **能**.

Structure: Action , 以便 (+ 能) + Outcome

{zh: 我们 |wǒ men|we / 很 |hěn|very / 早 |zǎo|early / 就 |jiù / 去 |qù|went to / 了 |le / 机场 |jī chǎng|the airport / , 以便 |yǐ biàn|so that / 能 |néng|we could / 赶上 |gǎn shàng|catch / 最 |zuì|the / 早 |zǎo|earliest / 的 |de / 飞机 |fēi jī|flight / 。 }

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

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

Please leave your number so we can contact you.

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

Watch out

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

10 “If” Statements

10.1 假使 , 就 — “if ... then ...”

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

Structure: 假使 + Condition , (就 / 便) + Result

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

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

{zh: 假使 |jiǎ shǐ|if / 你 |nǐ|you / 是 |shì|were / 我 |wǒ|me / , 你 |nǐ|you / 会 |huì|would / 怎么 |zěnmē|how / 做 |zuò|do it / ? }

If you were me, what would you do?

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

Watch out

- In everyday speech it sounds bookish — use 如果 / 要是.

11 Cause/Effect Statements

11.1 因 (为) , 而 — “because ..., (one) thereby ...”

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

Structure: Subject + 因 (为) + Cause + 而 + Result

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

Because I got ill, I took time off.

{zh: 欧洲 |Ōu zhōu|Europe's / 的 |de / 经济 |jīng jì|economy / 因为 |yīn wèi|because of / 债务 |zhài wù|the debt / 危机 |wēi jī|crisis / 而 |ér / 陷入 |xiàn rù|fell into / 衰退 |shuāi tuì|recession / 。 }

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

Remember: 因 (为) ... 而 ... — 而 is the **hinge** swinging from cause to effect (“because X, *thereby* Y”). In careful writing, 因为 contracts to a tight 因 (因病请假, “took leave due to illness”).

Watch out

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

12 Sentence Patterns

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

借 ... 之名 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 + 借 + Noun + 之名 + Situation

{zh: 有些 |yǒu xiē|some / 人 |rén|people / 借 |jiè|in / 慈善 |cí shàn|charity's / 之名 |zhī míng|name / 骗钱 |piàn qián|swindle money / 。 }

Some people swindle money in the name of charity.

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

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

Remember: 借 X 之名 = “borrowing X’s name as a cover” (借 = “borrow”) — it hints the name is a *front* masking the real aim (借慈善之名骗钱). Contrast the neutral 以 ... 的名义 (“in the name of,” below).

Watch out

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

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

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

Structure: 通过 + Verb (situation) , 使 + Result

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

Through exercise, the body is made healthier.

{zh: 通过 |tōng guò|through / 这 |zhè|this / 件 |jiàn / 事 |shì|matter / , 使 |shǐ|it made / 我 |wǒ|me / 明白 |míng bai|understand / 了 |le / 很多 |hěn duō|a great deal / 。 }

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

Remember: 通过 = the MEANS, 使 = the EFFECT — “by way of X, it brings about Y” (通过锻炼, 使身体更健康). 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 使 acts on, not a new actor.

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

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

Structure: 以 + Person / Body + 的名义 + Action

{zh: 别 |bié|don't / 以 |yǐ|in / 我 |wǒ|my / 的名义 |de míng yì|name / 给 |gěi / 公司 |gōng sī|the company / 写信 |xiě xìn|write to / 。 }

Don't write to the company in my name.

{zh: 法院 |fǎ yuàn|the court / 以 |yǐ|in / 政府 |zhèng fǔ|the government's / 的名义 |de míng yì|name / 起诉 |qǐ sù|sued / 了 |le / 他 |tā|him / 。 }

He was sued in the name of the government.

Remember: 以 ... 的名义 = “in X's name / on behalf of” — **NEUTRAL**. It simply states the capacity an act is done under (以政府的名义). Its shady cousin is 借 ... 之名 (“under the *pretext* of”): same idea, opposite tone.

Watch out

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

12.4 势必 — “inevitably, be bound to”

势必 (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: , 势必 + inevitable result

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

Carry on like this and failure is inevitable.

{zh: 物价 |wù jià|prices / 上涨 |shàng zhǎng|rising / , 势必 |shì bì|will inevitably / 影响 |yǐng xiǎng|affect / 人们 |rén men|people's / 的 |de / 生活 |shēng huó|lives / 。 }

Rising prices are bound to affect people's lives.

Remember: 势必 = 势 (the circumstances) + 必 (must) = “the situation makes it inevitable.” Stronger than a plain 一定 — it claims the *circumstances themselves* force the result. Formal.

Watch out

- It pins the certainty on *circumstances* — for a personal “definitely will,” 一定 / 肯定 fit better.

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

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

Structure: 倘若 + Condition , (就 / 便) + Result

{zh: 倘若 |tǎng ruò|if / 有 |yǒu|there is / 不 |bù|any- / 周到 |zhōu dào|thing overlooked / 之处 |zhī chù / , 请 |qǐng|please / 多 |duō / 包涵 |bāo hán|bear with us / 。 }

If anything has been overlooked, please bear with us.

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

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

Remember: 倘若 = the most literary “if” — even dressier than 假使, at home in formal prose and set courtesies (倘若有不周之处, “if anything's been overlooked”). Result takes 就 / 便.

Watch out

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

12.6 所 + Verb + 的 — the literary 所 structure

The 所 + Verb + 的 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 (我想说的) means the same thing more plainly.

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

{zh: 这 |zhè|this / 就是 |jiù shì|is exactly / 我 |wǒ|what I / 所 |suǒ / 想 |xiǎng|want / 说 |shuō|to say / 的 |de / 。 }

This is exactly what I want to say.

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 所 |suǒ / 做 |zuò|everything he / 的 |de|does / 一切 |yí qiè / 都 |dōu|is
all / 是 |shì / 为了 |wèi le|for / 你 |nǐ|you / 。 }

Everything he does is for you.

Remember: 所 + verb + 的 = “that which is ...ed” — a formal dressing-up.

我**所**想说的 = 我想说的 (“what I want to say”), just more literary. 所 flags the verb’s *object*, so the verb is transitive.

Watch out

- It adds formality, not meaning — the plain 我想说的 says the same thing in speech.

13 Let alone

13.1 连 都 (也) , 何况 — “even ..., let alone ...”

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

Structure: Subject + 连 + A + 都 (也) + Verb , (更) 何况 + B + 呢?

{zh: 连 |lián|even / 大人 |dà rén|adults / 都 |dōu / 觉得 |jué de|find it / 难 |nán|hard / , 何况 |hé kuàng|let alone / 孩子 |hái zi|children / 呢 |ne / ? }

Even adults find it hard, let alone children.

{zh: 这 |zhè|this / 点 |diǎn|bit of / 钱 |qián|money / 连 |lián|even / 吃饭 |chī fàn|for food / 都 |dōu / 不够 |bú gòu|isn’t enough / , 何况 |hé kuàng|let alone / 买 |mǎi|buying / 房 |fáng|a house / ? }

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

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

Watch out

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

14 Comparing similar adverbs

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

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

Structure: 按照 + rule / plan + Action · 根据 + evidence / source + Conclusion

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

Please queue up in accordance with the rules.

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

Going by the forecast, it'll rain tomorrow.

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

Watch out

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

14.2 不得不 vs. 只好 — “have no choice” vs. “have no better choice”

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

Structure: 不得不 + positive Verb · 只好 + Verb (可带不 / 没)

{zh: 出门 |chū mén|going out / 没 |méi|without / 带 |dài|bringing / 钱 |qián|money / , 不得不 |bù dé bù|I had no choice but to / 向 |xiàng|from / 朋友 |péng you|a friend / 借 |jiè|borrow / 。 }

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

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

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

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

Watch out

- You can't say 不得不不去 — for “had to *not* do,” use 只好不去.

14.3 不断 vs. 不停 — “unceasingly” vs. “without stopping”

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

Structure: 不断 (地) + Verb · 不停地 + Verb / Verb + 个不停

{zh: 科技 |kē jì|technology / 在 |zài|is / 不断 |bú duàn|continually / 地 |de / 进步 |jìn bù|advancing / 。 }

Technology is continually advancing.

{zh: 她 |tā|she / 激动 |jī dòng|was so excited / 得 |de|that she / 说 |shuō|talked / 个不停 |gè bù tíng|without stopping / 。 }

She was so excited she talked non-stop.

Remember: 不断 = “again and again / growing over time” (断 = “break,” so 不断 = “unbroken, recurring”); 不停 = “no pause at all” (停 = “stop”). 不断进步 (keeps advancing) vs 说个不停 (talks non-stop). 个不停 clips onto the verb: 笑个不停.

Watch out

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

14.4 反而 vs. 却 — “on the contrary” vs. “but, yet”

Both mark a turn, but with different force. **反而** = “on the contrary, instead” — the result is the **opposite** of what you’d expect, and it can sit before **or** after the subject. **却** = a milder “but, yet,” and it can only come **after** the subject. 反而 often completes the pattern 不但没 / 不但不 ..., 反而

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

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 帮 |bāng|helped / 了 |le / 他 |tā|him / , 他 |tā|yet he / 反而 |fǎn ér|on the contrary / 生气 |shēng qì|got angry / 了 |le / 。 }

I helped him, yet he got angry instead.

{zh: 她 |tā|she / 喜欢 |xǐ huan|likes / 甜食 |tián shí|sweets / , 却 |què|but / 从不 |cóng bù|never / 吃 |chī|eats / 巧克力 |qiǎo kè lì|chocolate / 。 }

She likes sweets, but never eats chocolate.

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

Watch out

- 却 can’t lead the clause — 她却 ..., never 她却她 ...; 反而 is freer.

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

根本 = “(not) at all, simply, fundamentally” — it intensifies a **negation** (根本不 / 根本没), flatly denying something. **到底** = “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: 根本 + 不 / 没 + Verb · 到底 + Question

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 根本 |gēn běn|simply / 没 |méi|didn’t / 出去 |chū qù|go out / , 你 |nǐ|how / 怎么 |zěn me / 会 |huì|could / 看到 |kàn dào|have seen / 我 |wǒ|me / ? }

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

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

What on earth do you want?

Remember: 根本 intensifies a **NEGATION** (“not at all”: 根本不/没); 到底 presses for an **ANSWER** (“on earth / in the end”). One flatly *denies*, the other *demand*s the truth. In a statement, 到底 = “after all, it turned out...”.

Watch out

- 根本 leans on a following 不 / 没; 到底 leans on a question word or a result.

14.6 根据 vs. 据 — “according to” (long vs. short)

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

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

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

It's said he's already gone abroad.

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

According to the survey results, everyone is very satisfied.

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

Watch out

- 据 wants a tight, short partner (据说 ✓); a longer source takes 根据 (根据调查结果).

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

Both mean returning to a former state, but with a different feel. **恢复** = “recover, restore” something that was **damaged, disrupted or lost** — health, order, normal service. **还原** = “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: 恢复 + Noun (health / order) · 把 ... 还原 (成 ...)

{zh: 经过 |jīng guò|after / 治疗 |zhì liáo|treatment / , 他 |tā|he / 的 |de / 身体 |shēn tǐ|health / 慢慢 |màn màn|slowly / 恢复 |huī fù|recovered / 了 |le / 。 }

After treatment, his health slowly recovered.

{zh: 你 |nǐ|you / 可以 |kě yǐ|can / 把 |bǎ / 设置 |shè zhì|the settings / 还原 |huán yuán|restore / 成 |chéng|to / 默认值 |mò rèn zhí|the defaults / 。 }

You can reset the settings to the defaults.

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

Watch out

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

14.8 居然 vs. 反而 — “surprisingly” vs. “on the contrary”

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

Structure: 居然 + astonishing fact (+ comment) · 不但没 / 不但不 ..., 反而 ...

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 这么 |zhè me|so / 小 |xiǎo|young / 居然 |jū rán|astonishingly / 能 |néng|can / 背 |bèi|recite / 几百 |jǐ bǎi|hundreds of / 首 |shǒu / 唐诗 |Táng shī|Tang poems / , 真 |zhēn|truly / 了不起 |liǎo bu qǐ|remarkable / 。 }

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

{zh: 吃 |chī|after taking / 了 |le / 这些 |zhè xiē|these / 药 |yào|pills / , 他 |tā|he / 不但 |bú dàn|not only / 没 |méi|didn’t / 好 |hǎo|get better / , 反而 |fǎn ér|but instead / 更 |gèng|got even / 严重 |yán zhòng|worse / 了 |le / 。 }

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

Remember: 居然 = “astonishingly!” (just marks surprise, + optional comment); 反而 = “on the contrary” (a reversal). Only 反而 completes 不但没 / 不但不 ..., 反而 ... 居然 is amazement; 反而 is a flip.

Watch out

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

14.9 一度 vs. 一时 — “at one time” vs. “for a (short) while”

Both touch on time but mean different spans. 一度 = “once, at one time” — a **past phase** (often a difficult one: 一度想放弃), and it appears in 一年一度 (“annual”). 一时 = “for a short while, momentarily, for the moment” — brief or sudden, often “can’t ... right now” (一时想不起来).

Structure: 一度 + past Verb phrase · 一时 + (不能) Verb

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 过去 |guò qù|in the past / 一度 |yí dù|at one time / 想 |xiǎng|wanted to / 放弃 |fàng qì|give up / 。 }

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

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 一时 |yí shí|for the moment / 想不起来 |xiǎng bu qǐ lái|can't recall / 他 |tā|his / 的 |de / 名字 |míng zi|name / 。 }

I can't recall his name for the moment.

Remember: 一度 = “once, at one time” (a PAST phase; also 一年一度 = “annual”); 一时 = “for a brief moment / right now” (一时想不起来). 度 = a stretch/opportunity; 时 = a moment.

Watch out

- 一时 is the “can't ... *just now*” word — don't use 一度 for a momentary lapse.

14.10 一直 vs. 一向 — “all along (continuously)” vs. “all along (habitually)”

Both mean “all along,” but one is an unbroken stretch and the other a long-standing habit. 一直 = “continuously, the whole time” — an unbroken action from some point, and it can even run **into the future** (我会一直支持你). 一向 = “consistently, habitually up to now” — a settled trait, and it only reaches up to the **present**.

Structure: 一直 + Verb (can be future) · 一向 + habit / trait (up to now)

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 会 |huì|will / 一直 |yí zhí|always / 支持 |zhī chí|support / 你 |nǐ|you / 。 }

I will always support you.

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 一向 |yí xiàng|has always / 很 |hěn|been very / 守时 |shǒu shí|punctual / 。 }

He's always been punctual.

Remember: 一直 = an UNBROKEN stretch (can extend into the FUTURE: 会一直支持你); 一向 = a HABITUAL trait, only up to NOW (一向很守时). Continuous line vs settled habit.

Watch out

- For a promise reaching forward, only 一直 works — 一向 can't point to the future.

15 Comparing similar nouns

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

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

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

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

We should trust each other.

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

You should hear the other side’s view.

Remember: 彼此 = reciprocal “each other” (works before a verb, like 互相: 彼此信任); 对方 = the one SPECIFIC counterpart (“the other side”: 对方的意见). 彼此 = mutual flow both ways; 对方 = the person across the table.

Watch out

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

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

Both refer to people other than the speaker, but **别人** is the neutral one — “other people, someone else.” **人家** 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 人家 carries the extra coloured uses.

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

{zh: 别人 |bié rén|other people’s / 的 |de / 事 |shì|business / 你 |nǐ|you / 别 |bié|don’t / 管 |guǎn|meddle in / 。 }

Don’t meddle in other people’s business.

{zh: 人家 |rén jia|they’ve / 都 |dōu|already / 不 |bù|stopped / 理 |lǐ|paying attention to / 你 |nǐ|you / 了 |le / , 你 |nǐ|and you / 还 |hái|still / 说 |shuō|keep talking / 。 }

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

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

Watch out

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