

HSK 1 Grammar Guide & PDF

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1. 可以: permission

主语 + 可以 + 动词

"可以" is often used to ask for or indicate permission.

「可以」 precedes the action. Add sentence-final 「吗」 to ask permission. 「可以」 also has feasibility and other uses, so interpret it in context.

我可以坐这里吗?

Wǒ kěyǐ zuò zhèlǐ ma?

May I sit here?

你可以看这本书。

Nǐ kěyǐ kàn zhè běn shū.

You may read this book.

2. 呢: Connecting a question and asking about location

名词 / 代词 + 呢?

A noun or pronoun followed by 呢 can continue a previous question or ask where something is.

In “我很好，你呢？”，the omitted part is “你怎么样”；in “我的书呢？”，it asks where the book is. Context determines the function; not every 呢 indicates an ongoing action.

我很好，你呢?

Wǒ hěn hǎo, nǐ ne?

I'm fine, how about you?

我的书呢?

Wǒ de shū ne?

Where is my book?

3. Limited Use of Nominal Predicates

主语 + 日期 / 年龄 / 数量表达

Certain expressions of dates, ages, or quantities can serve directly as predicates.

Expressions like “Today is Wednesday” or “I am eighteen years old” can be used without the copula 是; however, this does not extend to arbitrary nouns such as identity statements like “I am a teacher.”

我今年十八岁。

Wǒ jīnnián shíbā suì.

I am eighteen years old this year.

今天星期三。

Jīntiān xīngqīsān.

Today is Wednesday.

4. Negation with 不 and 没 (有)

不 + 动词 / 形容词; 没 (有) + 动词; 没有 + 名词

不 usually negates habits, intentions or states; 没 (有) usually negates actions that have occurred; 没有 can also negate possession.

When 「没」 denies that an action happened, normally remove perfective 「了」. Past time does not always require 「没」: in 「昨天不想去」, 「不」 negates 「想」 (wanting), not the completed action.

我昨天没有去学校。

Wǒ zuótiān méiyǒu qù xuéxiào.

I didn't go to school yesterday.

我不喝茶。

Wǒ bù hē chá.

I don't drink tea.

5. Háì: supplement or continuation

主语 + 还 + 谓语;, 还.....

Hái can add another item, or indicate that a state or action continues.

Usually placed before the predicate; e.g., 还买了衣服 adds another action, 还在家 shows the situation continues. Context determines which meaning applies.

我买了书, 还买了衣服。

Wǒ mǎi le shū, hái mǎi le yīfu.

I bought a book, and I also bought clothes.

他还在家。

Tā hái zài jiā.

He is still at home.

6. Place + 是: Identify the thing at a location

处所 + 是 + 名词

A place followed by 「是」 identifies what is at that location.

「学校前边是医院」 identifies what the place in front of the school is. 「有」 instead focuses on something existing at a place.

学校前边是医院。

Xuéxiào qiánbian shì yīyuàn.

The place in front of the school is a hospital.

这边是学校。

Zhèbiān shì xuéxiào.

This side is a school.

7. 吗: Yes-No Question Particle

陈述句 + 吗?

吗 turns a declarative statement into a yes-no question.

Use 吗 after a statement like “你是学生” to allow a yes-or-no answer; when asking for specific information with who, what, etc., do not add 吗 at the end.

你是学生吗?

Nǐ shì xuésheng ma?

Are you a student?

你是老师吗?

Nǐ shì lǎoshī ma?
Are you a teacher?

8. Predicate Adjectives and Degree

主语 + 很 / 非常 + 形容词

An adjective can itself be a predicate; degree adverbs express its degree.

A neutral adjective predicate often uses 「很」 before the adjective. Unlike a noun identity statement, it does not need 「是」. 「很」 can make the sentence natural without emphasizing a very high degree.

今天很冷。

Jīntiān hěn lěng.

Today is very cold.

她非常高兴。

Tā fēicháng gāoxìng.

She is extremely happy.

9. Address Prefixes and Ordinals

小 + 姓 / 称呼; 第 + 数词

Adding 小 before a surname can serve as a familiar form of address among acquaintances; 第 placed before a numeral creates an ordinal.

When using 小 with a name like 小林, consider the relationship and politeness; not every noun can freely take 小 as a form of address. 第一、第二 indicate order, whereas 二个 and 两个 do not denote ordinals.

我住第一个房间。

Wǒ zhù dì yī ge fángjiān.

I live in the first room.

小林是我的朋友。

Xiǎo Lín shì wǒ de péngyou.

Xiao Lin is my friend.

10. Time adverbial placed before the predicate

主语 + 时间 + 谓语; 时间 + 主语 + 谓语

Temporal words are usually placed before the predicate.

Both '我明天去学校' and '明天我去学校' are natural; the language does not restrict the time adverbial to a single position.

我明天去学校。

Wǒ míngtiān qù xuéxiào.

I will go to school tomorrow.

明天我去学校。

Míngtiān wǒ qù xuéxiào.

Tomorrow I will go to school.

11. Verb-Object Phrase and Basic Word Order

主语 + 动词 + 宾语

Ordinary verb sentences usually follow the order subject-verb-object.

In a neutral sentence, the subject precedes the verb and the object follows it: 「我吃米饭」. Learn 「看病 / 睡觉 / 说话」 as natural word combinations, not as freely separable pieces.

我吃米饭。

Wǒ chī mǐfàn.

I eat rice.

爸爸喝茶。

Bàba hē chá.

Dad drinks tea.

12. ‘喂’ and Brief Social Expressions

喂，+称呼／问句

‘喂’ is commonly used when answering the phone or calling someone; brief social expressions can stand alone as sentences.

At the start of a call you can say ‘喂，你好’; the tone should be polite, and ‘喂’ cannot replace ‘你好’ in all situations.

喂，你好！

Wéi, nǐ hǎo!

喂, hello!

谢谢！

Xièxie!

Thank you!

13. 吧: suggestions

动词短语／句子+吧

At the end of a sentence, 吧 can be used to make a suggestion or to soften the tone.

我们去学校吧 is a suggestion for the group to go together; it is not a neutral yes-no question about whether the fact is true.

我们去学校吧。

Wǒmen qù xuéxiào ba.

Let's go to school.

喝茶吧。

Hē chá ba.

Have some tea.

14. Serial verb: action and purpose

去／来+处所+动词

The verb 去 or 来 is directly followed by another verb, indicating the purpose of the action.

去商店买东西: 去商店 comes first, and 买东西 explains the purpose; no additional linking verb is needed.

我去商店买东西。

Wǒ qù shāngdiàn mǎi dōngxi.

I go to the store to buy something.

他来学校学习。

Tā lái xuéxiào xuéxí.

He comes to school to study.

15. 想 and 要

主语+想／要+动词；要+名词

想 expresses a wish or intention; 要 can express wanting something or planning to do something.

Use 「想」 before a verb phrase. 「要」 can precede an action or the desired object. Do not equate every

use of 「想」 with 「想要」.

我想喝水。

Wǒ xiǎng hē shuǐ.

I want to drink water.

我要一杯茶。

Wǒ yào yì bēi chá.

I want a cup of tea.

16. Age and Duration

数词+岁；数词+年／天／小时／分钟

「岁」 indicates age. 「年／天／小时／分钟」 can indicate a length of time.

Age can directly form the predicate, as in 「我十八岁」. Duration generally follows the described action or state. 「岁」 measures age, not a period of time.

我今年十八岁。

Wǒ jīnnián shíbā suì.

I am eighteen years old this year.

我学习一个小时。

Wǒ xuéxí yí ge xiǎoshí.

I study for one hour.

17. 几, 多少 and 多 + adjective

几+量词+名词；多少+名词；多+形容词

「几／多少」 ask about quantity. 「多 + adjective」 asks about degree or age, as in 「多大」.

「几」 often asks an expected small number and precedes a classifier, as in 「几个人」. 「多少」 can precede a noun directly or use a classifier. 「多大」 asks age or size; 「多」 is not always a quantity word.

你家有几口人？

Nǐ jiā yǒu jǐ kǒu rén?

How many people are there in your family?

这本书多少钱？

Zhè běn shū duōshao qián?

How much does this book cost?

18. 是: Identity and Category

主语+是+名词

是 is used for identity, category, or equivalence relationships.

Use it in sentences like 我是学生, 这是书, etc.; adjectives are usually described with 很 rather than 是.

她是老师。

Tā shì lǎoshī.

She is a teacher.

这是一本书。

Zhè shì yì běn shū.

This is a book.

19. 也: also

主语+也+谓语;, 也.....

also indicates that another subject or item shares the same situation.

「也」 normally follows the subject and precedes the predicate. It can add a parallel action. For negation use the Chinese forms 「也不／也没有」.

我喜欢茶，也喜欢牛奶。

Wǒ xǐhuan chá, yě xǐhuan niúǎi.

I like tea, and I also like milk.

他也喜欢牛奶。

Tā yě xǐhuan niúǎi.

He also likes milk.

20. Expression of Amounts of Money

数词+元／块+数词+分

Amounts of money can be expressed using units such as yuan, kuai, fen, etc.

「元」 is more formal; 「块」 is common in speech. 「十元五分」 is 10.05 yuan, not 10.5 yuan. Put the number before the currency unit.

这本书十元五分。

Zhè běn shū shí yuán wǔ fēn.

This book costs ten yuan and five fen.

这个杯子五块。

Zhè ge bēizi wǔ kuài.

This cup is five kuai.

21. 二 and 两

二十+; 两+量词+名词

Both 二 and 两 refer to the number two, but they appear in different positions.

Use 「两」 in ordinary quantity phrases such as 「两本书／两个人」. 「二」 occurs in counting, 「二十／第二／二月」. 「两」 also occurs in 「两点／两百／两千」; neither form is explained by a simple universal rule.

我有两本书。

Wǒ yǒu liǎng běn shū.

I have two books.

现在是两点。

Xiànzài shì liǎng diǎn.

It is two o'clock now.

22. A Little vs. A Bit

有点儿+形容词; 形容词+一点儿

有点儿 + adjective indicates a low degree; adjective + 一点儿 can indicate a slight change or a comparison.

有点儿冷 often carries the speaker's feeling of discomfort; 冷一点儿 is usually used for comparison or a request. Their positions differ, so the two structures are not completely interchangeable.

今天有点儿冷。

Jīntiān yǒudiǎnr lěng.

It's a little cold today.

这个杯子小一点儿。

Zhè ge bēizi xiǎo yìdiǎnr.

This cup is a bit smaller.

23. Too, Really and Exclamation

太+形容词+了；真+形容词

‘太...了’ expresses an outstanding degree; ‘真’ can intensify an exclamation.

‘太好了’, ‘真好听’ are often used for evaluation; ‘太...了’ does not always imply an excessive or negative degree—it depends on the adjective and context.

太好了!

Tài hǎo le!

Great!

她唱歌真好听!

Tā chàng gē zhēn hǎotīng!

Her singing sounds really good!

24. Location words

名词+上/下/里/外/前/后; 这边/那边

Location words describe where things are.

The usual structure is noun + location word, such as 桌子上 and 房间里. 这边/那边 indicate a side or location.

A location phrase is different from an action structure such as 上桌子.

书在桌子上。

Shū zài zhuōzi shàng.

The book is on the table.

猫在椅子下。

Māo zài yǐzi xià.

The cat is under the chair.

25. Serial Verb: Manner and Action

方式动词短语+动作动词

The preceding verb phrase can indicate the manner of the following action.

坐出租车去医院 – taking a taxi is the way to go to the hospital; note each action’s own object.

我坐出租车去医院。

Wǒ zuò chūzūchē qù yīyuàn.

I take a taxi to go to the hospital.

爸爸开车去公司。

Bàba kāichē qù gōngsī.

Dad drives a car to go to the office.

26. 再: the next time

主语+再+动词

再 indicates the next occurrence or a repeated action in the future.

Here we learn expressions like 明天再来 for actions that have not yet occurred; 再 is usually placed before the verb. Do not confuse 再 with 又, which refers to past repetitions.

我明天再来。

Wǒ míngtiān zài lái.

I will come again tomorrow.

请再说一下。

Qǐng zài shuō yíxià.

Please say it again.

27. Quantity and Measure Words

数词+本／个／家／口／块／件／只+名词

Quantity phrases usually consist of a numeral, a measure word, and a noun.

Match the classifier to the noun: 「一本书／一件衣服／一只猫」. 「个」 fits many general nouns. Time and money have special expressions; do not apply a single classifier rule to every noun.

我买三本书。

Wǒ mǎi sān běn shū.

I bought three books.

家里有两只猫。

Jiā lǐ yǒu liǎng zhī māo.

There are two cats at home.

28. 和 and 对: participants

和+人+动词；对+人+形容词

和 introduces a co-participant, while 对 introduces the target of an attitude.

‘和朋友学习’ and ‘对学生很好’ are different prepositional structures; here 和 does not simply link two arbitrary actions.

我和朋友学习。

Wǒ hé péngyou xuéxí.

I study together with a friend.

老师对学生很好。

Lǎoshī duì xuésheng hěn hǎo.

The teacher is very kind toward the students.

29. Year, Month, Day and Weekday

年+月+日／号；星期+数词

Dates are expressed in the order of year, month, and day; the weekday indicates a day of the week.

Months use a number + 「月」. Written dates can use 「日」; everyday speech often uses 「号」. Weekdays are 「星期一」 through 「星期六」, with 「星期日／星期天」 for Sunday.

今天是五月三号。

Jīntiān shì wǔ yuè sān hào.

Today is May 3rd.

明天是星期天。

Míngtiān shì xīngqītiān.

Tomorrow is Sunday.

30. Personal Pronouns and Plural

我／你／您／他／她／它；我们／你们／他们／她们／它们

「我／你／他」 and related pronouns refer to the speaker, listener or others. 「我们／你们／他们」 are plural forms.

「您」 is respectful. The written pronouns 「他／她／它」 differ. Plural pronouns already contain 「们」.

「们」 also follows human nouns, as in 「老师们」, but not ordinary objects or a numeral-classifier phrase.

我们是学生。

Wǒmen shì xuésheng.

We are students.

她们是老师。

Tāmen shì lǎoshī.

They (female) are teachers.

31. 在／正在 and 呢

主语＋在／正在＋动词（＋呢）

Placing 在 or 正在 before a verb indicates that the action is in progress.

「在／正在」 precedes the verb to mark an ongoing action; 「正在吃饭」 can add sentence-final 「呢」. Do not mechanically apply it to states unsuitable for progression. 「呢」 also has other uses.

他正在吃饭呢。

Tā zhèngzài chīfàn ne.

He is eating right now.

妈妈在做饭呢。

Māma zài zuòfàn ne.

Mom is cooking.

32. Clause Sequence without Connectives

分句，分句

Two clauses can be linked without a conjunction, relying on order and context.

I finished class, dad came to school; Mom made breakfast after I got up—organized by natural event order, not by shuffling word order.

我下课了，爸爸来学校。

Wǒ xiàkè le, bàba lái xuéxiào.

I finished class, and dad came to school.

我起床了，妈妈做早饭。

Wǒ qǐchuáng le, māma zuò zǎofàn.

I got up, and mom made breakfast.

33. 请: Polite request

请＋动词

Place 请 before an action to express a polite request.

e.g., 请喝茶, 请坐这里; 请 is a marker of politeness, not a tense marker.

请喝茶。

Qǐng hē chá.

Please have some tea.

请坐这里。

Qǐng zuò zhèlǐ.

Please sit here.

34. 了: a change of situation

句子＋了

When placed at the end of a sentence, 了 indicates that a situation has changed or a new situation has arisen.

Now it's raining, indicating a new situation; state words can also end with 了, e.g., 他好了. Do not treat every

sentence-final 了 as a past-perfect marker.

现在下雨了。

Xiànzài xià yǔ le.

It is raining now.

他好了。

Tā hǎo le.

He has gotten better.

35. Place + 有: Existence

处所 + 有 + 数量短语 + 名词

A place followed by 「有」 states that something exists there.

「桌子上有一本书」 introduces the existence of a book on the table. Once the object is known, 「书在桌子上」 describes its location.

桌子上有一本书。

Zhuōzi shàng yǒu yì běn shū.

There is a book on the table.

家里有两只猫。

Jiā lǐ yǒu liǎng zhī māo.

There are two cats at home.

36. Clock Time and Half Hours

数词 + 点 + 数词 + 分; 数词 + 点 + 半

Hours are expressed with 点, minutes with 分, and 半 denotes thirty minutes.

Usually state the hour first, then the minutes; e.g., 八点半 means eight thirty. When minutes are less than ten, a leading zero is often used, such as 八点零五分.

现在是八点半。

Xiànzài shì bā diǎn bàn.

It is now half past eight.

我九点十分上课。

Wǒ jiǔ diǎn shí fēn shàngkè.

I have class at ten minutes past nine.

37. 能: Ability When Conditions Allow

主语 + 能 + 动词

能 indicates ability or that the current conditions permit something.

Here it emphasizes whether the present conditions allow it, e.g., 'I can go today'; it does not only denote a learned skill. 能 is followed by a verb phrase.

我今天能去。

Wǒ jīntiān néng qù.

I can go today.

我现在能说话。

Wǒ xiànzài néng shuōhuà.

I can speak now.

38. 都: Generalization

复数主语+都+谓语

都 indicates that all the mentioned multiple objects share the same condition.

Usually placed after the subject and before the predicate, e.g., 我们都去; not used to indicate the entire duration for a single object.

我们都是学生。

Wǒmen dōu shì xuésheng.

We are all students.

他们都喝茶。

Tāmen dōu hē chá.

They all drink tea.

39. 的: possession and modification

修饰语+的+名词

The particle 的 links a possessor or modifier to a noun.

Use 「的」 in 「我的书／大的房间」. It may be omitted with some close relationships, as in 「我妈妈」. This does not mean it can always be omitted in 「我的老师／我的书」.

这是我的书。

Zhè shì wǒ de shū.

This is my book.

我的朋友很忙。

Wǒ de péngyou hěn máng.

My friend is very busy.

40. 和: joining nouns

名词+和+名词

He connects parallel people or things.

It links noun elements, e.g., 爸爸和妈妈; it is generally not used to connect whole sentences.

爸爸和妈妈在家。

Bàba hé māma zài jiā.

Dad and mom are at home.

我买苹果和面包。

Wǒ mǎi píngguǒ hé miànbāo.

I bought apples and bread.

41. Ability Acquired by Learning (会)

主语+会+动词

会 indicates an ability acquired through learning.

「会」 precedes a verb phrase, as in 「会说汉语」. Here it expresses a learned skill. A noun alone does not describe the action; prediction and other meanings of 「会」 are outside this point.

我会说汉语。

Wǒ huì shuō Hànyǔ.

I can speak Chinese.

她会唱歌。

Tā huì chàng gē.

She can sing.

42. 有: Possession

主语 + 有 + 名词

有 indicates possession of a person, thing, or quantity.

「我有一本书」 expresses possession. The negative is 「没有」, not 「不有」.

我有一个女儿。

Wǒ yǒu yí ge nǚ'ér.

I have a daughter.

我有一本书。

Wǒ yǒu yì běn shū.

I have a book.

43. Demonstratives

这 / 那 + 量词 + 名词; 这些 / 那些

这 refers to a nearer object and 那 to a more distant one; 这些 and 那些 refer to plural objects.

A full noun quantity phrase normally uses 这/那 + classifier + noun, as in 这本书. 这些/那些 can directly precede a noun. Colloquial forms such as 这人 omit the classifier; omission is not always an error.

这本书是我的。

Zhè běn shū shì wǒ de.

This book is mine.

那些学生是我的朋友。

Nàxiē xuésheng shì wǒ de péngyou.

Those students are my friends.

44. 了: Action Completion

动词 + 了 + 宾语

The particle 了 after a verb marks that the action is completed.

Common pattern: verb + 了 + quantity/object. 了 is not the same as past tense; to negate a completed action, use 没 and omit 了.

我买了三本书。

Wǒ mǎi le sān běn shū.

I bought three books.

他喝了一杯水。

Tā hē le yì bēi shuǐ.

He drank a glass of water.

45. 在: location and action place

主语 + 在 + 处所; 主语 + 在 + 处所 + 动词

zài can indicate a location where something is, as well as the place where an action occurs.

Saying "在家" indicates a location; saying "在家学习" indicates the place where learning occurs. The locative prepositional phrase usually precedes the verb, distinguishing it from the progressive "正在" usage.

我在家学习。

Wǒ zài jiā xuéxí.

I study at home.

老师在学校。

Lǎoshī zài xuéxiào.

The teacher is at school.

46. Interrogative Words and In-situ Questions

谁／什么／哪／哪儿／怎么／怎么样

Interrogative words such as who, what, where, how are placed in the original position of the constituent being asked about.

Use '什么名字' to ask a name, '谁' to ask a person, '哪儿/哪里' for a place, '怎么' for a manner; usually without the particle '吗'.

你叫什么名字?

Nǐ jiào shénme míngzi?

What is your name?

你住在哪里?

Nǐ zhù zài nǎlǐ?

Where do you live?

47. 一下: brief action

动词＋一下

Adding 一下 after a verb indicates a brief, tentative action, often softening a request.

Used after verbs like 看 or 说 to indicate a brief, non-strictly single occurrence; 一下 quantifies the action.

请看一下。

Qǐng kàn yíxià.

Please take a look.

请说一下。

Qǐng shuō yíxià.

Please say a few words.

48. 给: Double Object

主语＋给＋人＋物

给 can take both a recipient and an object in the same clause.

I give you a book: the recipient (you) comes first, the object (a book) follows; do not confuse with the prepositional use in 给你买书.

我给你一本书。

Wǒ gěi nǐ yì běn shū.

I give you a book.

妈妈给我一个苹果。

Māma gěi wǒ yí ge píngguǒ.

Mom gives me an apple.

49. 不要: Advice/Prohibition

不要＋动词

不要 can be used to advise against or forbid an action.

Place 不要 before a verb to indicate the action should not be done at a certain place; it differs from 要, which expresses necessity, and does not turn ordinary statements into negatives.

不要在这里说话。

Bú yào zài zhèlǐ shuōhuà.

Do not speak here.

不要喝这个水。

Bú yào hē zhè ge shuǐ.

Do not drink this water.

50. Positive-Negative Question

动词／形容词＋不＋动词／形容词；有没有

A positive-negative question juxtaposes affirmative and negative forms to ask whether something is the case.

Common Chinese forms are 「是不是／去不去／有没有」. A neutral A-not-A question normally does not also add 「吗」.

你是不是老师？

Nǐ shì bu shì lǎoshī?

Are you a teacher?

你有没有手机？

Nǐ yǒu méiyǒu shǒujī?

Do you have a mobile phone?

51. 杯 as a measure word

数词＋杯＋饮料

「杯」 can name a container and can also indicate the amount held in one cup.

The order is numeral + 「杯」 + drink, as in 「一杯茶／两杯水」. 「杯子」 names the container and does not replace 「杯」 in this quantity phrase.

我要一杯茶。

Wǒ yào yì bēi chá.

I would like a cup of tea.

请给我两杯水。

Qǐng gěi wǒ liǎng bēi shuǐ.

Please give me two cups of water.