Laowai

HSK 1

HSK 3.0 / Grammar

Build your first sentences / 55 topics



Open the linked lesson for the full explanation and more examples.

Open this study guide

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Build your first sentences

Introduce yourself, ask a question, say where things are and describe what you want. Start with word order, then add the small words that change a sentence.

我们三个都带了水。

Wǒmen sān ge dōu dài le shuǐ.

All three of us brought water.

Study this construction

How to use this guide

Read the example, cover the translation and say what the sentence means. Open the linked lesson for the full explanation and additional examples. Where practice is available, the online guide links to it.

Laowai's teaching crosswalk to the 2021 proficiency framework. Vocabulary links use the 2025 examination lists; the grammar selections are study guides, not the official 2025 syllabus.

Topics in this selection

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Negation

Say “do not have” with 没有

Person + 没有 + thing / Person + 没 + thing

有 has its own standard negative pattern. Instead of adding 不, put 没 before 有 to make 没有.



我的包里没有纸巾。

Wǒ de bāo lǐ méiyǒu zhǐjīn.

There are no tissues in my bag.

Full lesson and examples →

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Make a negative statement with 不

Person + 不 + verb / Thing + 不 + adjective

Put 不 directly before a verb or adjective to make many everyday statements negative. It is useful for preferences, habits, intentions, and descriptions: someone does not like a drink, does not take a certain bus, or is not tired.



我不喝加糖的咖啡。

Wǒ bù hē jiā táng de kāfēi.

I do not drink coffee with added sugar.

Full lesson and examples →

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Negating Actions with 没有 and 没 in Chinese

没有 + Verb

没有 before an action verb says that the action has not occurred or did not occur in the relevant period. The shorter 没 often has the same function.

我没有去上班。

Wǒ méiyǒu qù shàngbān.

I didn't go to work.

Full lesson and examples →

Negative Commands with 不要 (Bùyào) in Chinese

不要 + Verb

不要 before an action can tell the listener not to do it. It is an instruction, warning, or request rather than simply a report that an action does not happen.

不要走。

Bùyào zǒu.

Don't leave.

Full lesson and examples →

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Adverbs and degree

Talk about a whole group with 都

Group + 都 + verb phrase / Group + 都 + adjective phrase

Use 都 when the whole group shares an action or description. The group normally comes before 都: the three of us are ready, both bags are light, or all these shops sell tea.

我们三个都带了水。

Wǒmen sān ge dōu dài le shuǐ.

All three of us brought water.

我们三个 names the group before 都.

Full lesson and examples →

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Add “also” with 也

Subject + 也 + verb phrase / Subject + 也 + 很 + adjective

也 adds a statement that shares something with what came before. One person likes cycling, and another person does too; one room is bright, and a second room is also bright.



小林喜欢骑车，我也喜欢。

Xiǎo Lín xǐhuan qí chē, wǒ yě xǐhuan.

Xiaolin likes cycling, and I do too.

Full lesson and examples →

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Say what is happening with 在

subject / 在 / verb + object

Put 在 before an action verb to show that the action is underway at the moment you are talking about. 她在写明信片 means she is in the middle of writing a postcard. Chinese does not change the verb itself to match English “-ing.” A word such as 现在 can make the present reference explicit, but context often supplies it.

她在写明信片。

Tā zài xiě míngxìnpiàn.

She is writing a postcard.

在 comes before 写; the postcard follows as its object.

Full lesson and examples →

Not Very and Not Really with 不太 (Bù Tài)

不太 + Adj.

不太 before an adjective weakens a positive degree rather than asserting its strongest opposite. It often corresponds to “not very” or “not particularly.” This makes it useful for measured descriptions and tactful evaluations.

我家不太大。

Wǒ jiā bù tài dà.

My house is not too big.

Full lesson and examples →

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Conjunctions and complex sentences

Join people and things with 和

Noun phrase + 和 + noun phrase

The basic use of 和 joins nouns or noun phrases: tea and water, a colleague and a friend, or your notebook and mine. The combined phrase can act as the subject or the object of a sentence.



我带了铅笔和橡皮。

Wǒ dài le qiānbǐ hé xiàngpí.

I brought a pencil and an eraser.

Full lesson and examples →

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Offer a choice with 还是

Option A + 还是 + option B / Subject + verb + A + 还是 + B

Use 还是 when a question offers alternatives: noodles or dumplings, the underground or walking, a visit or a rest. You are asking which option the listener chooses, so an answer will usually name one of the options.

午饭你想吃面条还是饺子?

Wǔfàn nǐ xiǎng chī miàntiáo háishi jiǎozi?

Would you like noodles or dumplings for lunch?

吃 applies to both food choices.

Full lesson and examples →

Numbers, quantities and classifiers

Talking About Age in Chinese with 岁 (Suì)

Subject + Number + 岁 (+ 半)

An age statement in Mandarin can consist of a person followed directly by a number and 岁. Although English needs a form of “be,” this Chinese structure already forms a complete predicate.

我 20 岁。

Wǒ èrshí suì.

I am 20 years old.

Full lesson and examples →

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Count people and things with 个

Number + 个 + noun / 这 / 那 + 个 + noun

When you count many kinds of nouns in Chinese, a classifier goes between the number and the noun. 个 is a common classifier for people and many everyday things. Learn the three-part unit together: number, classifier, noun.



门口有三个人。

Ménkǒu yǒu sān ge rén.

There are three people at the entrance.

Full lesson and examples →

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Chinese Dates: Year, Month and Day with 年、月、日

Year + 年 + Month + 月 + Day + 日 / 号

Chinese calendar dates move from the largest unit to the smallest: year, then month, then day. Each number comes before its unit.

1868 年 1 月 18 号

Yī-bā-liù-bā nián Yī yuè shíbā hào

January 18, 1868

Full lesson and examples →

Days of the Week in Chinese with 星期 (Xīngqī)

星期 + Number

Mandarin weekday names use 星期 followed by a number for Monday through Saturday. The count starts with Monday as day one.

今天是星期一吗?

Jīntiān shì Xīngqīyī ma?

Is today Monday?

Full lesson and examples →

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Telling Time in Chinese with 点 and 半

(Date / Part of day +) Hour + 点 (+ 半)

To give a clock hour in Mandarin, put the hour number before 点. The longer 点钟 is also possible for a whole hour.

九点

jiǔ diǎn

9 o'clock

Full lesson and examples →

Chinese Money Amounts with 元、块、角 and 毛

Number + 块 / 元 (+ Number + 毛 / 角) (+ 钱)

多少钱 asks for a price or amount of money. A named item can precede it to identify what is being priced.

你的手机多少钱?

Nǐ de shǒujī duōshao qián?

How much does your cell phone cost?

Full lesson and examples →

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Particles

Show ownership with 的

Owner + 的 + thing

的 connects an owner or associated person with a thing. Put the person first, then 的, then the noun: “my friend’s notebook” follows the order friend + 的 + notebook.



这是姐姐的相机。

Zhè shì jiějie de xiàngjī.

This is my older sister’s camera.

Full lesson and examples →

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Making Suggestions in Chinese with 吧 (Ba)

Command + 吧

Adding 吧 to an action phrase can make it sound like a suggestion or a softened request. When the subject includes the speaker and listener, English often uses “let's” for the same purpose.

我们走吧。

Wǒmen zǒu ba.

Let's go.

Full lesson and examples →

View an action as a completed event with 了

Subject + verb + 了 + object

When 了 follows a verb, it can present the action as a completed or bounded event. A useful starting point is an action with a clear result or amount: buying two tickets, drinking a bowl of soup, or sending a message.

我订了两张电影票。

Wǒ dìng le liǎng zhāng diànyǐng piào.

I booked two cinema tickets.

The number gives the booking event a clear amount.

Full lesson and examples →

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Not Anymore with 不……了 and 没有……了

不 / 没(有) + Verb Phrase + 了

A negative predicate followed by sentence-final 了 can show that an earlier situation no longer holds. With 不, the change may concern a habit, intention, state, or future action.

我不想吃了。

Wǒ bù xiǎng chī le.

I don't want to eat anymore.

Full lesson and examples →

Announcing Now and New Situations with 了 (Le)

New Situation + 了

Final 了 often gives an announcement the sense that a new situation applies now. It can mark a transition into an activity, a newly understood fact, or the arrival of a relevant moment.

知道了。

Zhīdào le.

Got it. / I see.

Full lesson and examples →

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Sentence-Final 啊 (A): Tone and Emphasis in Chinese

.....啊

啊 at the end of a sentence shapes how the speaker presents it. It can convey enthusiasm, surprise, urgency, or an emotionally engaged response.

对啊！

Duì a!

You're right!

Full lesson and examples →

Softening Requests and Opinions with 吧 (Ba)

.....吧

吧 can make a sentence sound less forceful or less categorical. With an action phrase, it often presents a request as a suggestion.

这不太好吧。

Zhè bù tài hǎo ba.

This isn't so good.

Full lesson and examples →

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Questions

Ask “what about…?” with 呢

Person or thing + 呢?

After a clear statement or question, 呢 can help you ask “what about…?” Name the new person or thing, then add 呢. The listener uses the conversation to recover the missing words.

我坐公交车去，你呢?

Wǒ zuò gōngjiāochē qù, nǐ ne?

I am going by bus. What about you?

The follow-up asks about the other person’s way of getting there.

Full lesson and examples →

Ask a yes-no question with A-not-A

Subject + verb + 不 + verb / Subject + 有没有 + object

Repeat a verb with 不 between the two copies to make a yes-no question. The listener can choose the positive form or the negative form in the answer.

周末你去不去书店?

Zhōumò nǐ qù bu qù shūdiàn?

Are you going to the bookshop this weekend?

去不去 offers going and not going as the two possibilities.

Full lesson and examples →

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Keep question words in the answer's place

Subject + verb + 什么？ / 谁 + verb + object？ / Subject + 去 + 哪儿？

Chinese question words usually stay where the answer would go. Imagine a complete statement, find the information you do not know, and replace that part.

你在画什么？

Nǐ zài huà shénme?

What are you drawing?

什么 stays after 画, where the thing being drawn would appear.

Full lesson and examples →

Chinese Tag Questions with 对不对、是不是 and 好不好

……是不是 / 对不对 / 好不好？

A short affirmative and negative question can be attached to a statement as a tag. The main clause presents the information, while the final tag asks the listener to confirm it or agree to it.

你会说中文，对不对？

Nǐ huì shuō Zhōngwén, duì bu duì?

You speak Chinese, right?

Full lesson and examples →

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Chinese Tag Questions with 是吗、对吗 and 好吗

.....是吗 / 对吗 / 好吗？

A statement can become a request for confirmation when followed by a short tag containing 吗. The tag has its own checking word, such as 是, 对, or 好.

这样做， 对吗?

Zhèyàng zuò, duì ma?

Do it like this, right?

Full lesson and examples →

Ask a yes-no question with 吗

Statement + 吗?

To ask a neutral yes-no question, begin with the statement you want to check and add 吗 at the end. You do not need to move the verb or add an equivalent of English “do.” Statements about people, objects, or actions can all become this kind of question.

这辆车到博物馆吗?

Zhè liàng chē dào bówùguǎn ma?

Does this bus go to the museum?

The ordinary statement order stays in place.

Full lesson and examples →

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Asking How Many with 几 and 多少 in Chinese

几 + Measure Word (+ Noun) ?

To ask for a small expected count, replace the number in a counted noun phrase with 几 and retain the classifier. The question phrase stays where the quantity would normally appear, often after the verb.

他有几个孩子?

Tā yǒu jǐ gè háizi?

How many kids does he have?

Full lesson and examples →

Asking How Something Is with 怎么样 (Zěnmeyàng)

.....怎么样?

怎么样 asks what something is like or how it is going. The topic or subject comes before it, and the listener supplies a description or assessment.

你最近怎么样?

Nǐ zuìjìn zěnmeyàng?

How have you been recently?

Full lesson and examples →

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Asking Have You Done It with 了吗 (Le Ma)

Verb + 了 + 吗?

A question can combine 了 with final 吗 to ask whether a relevant action has happened or a new situation has been reached. The particles appear in that order, with 吗 completing the yes or no question.

你吃饭了吗?

Nǐ chīfàn le ma?

Did you eat?

Full lesson and examples →

HSK 3.0 Level 1 grammar

Verb phrases

Saying Where Someone Is with 在 (Zài)

在 + Place

Use 在 to state where a person or thing is located. Start with the subject, then 在, then the location.



相机在桌子上。

Xiàngjī zài zhuōzi shàng.

The camera is on the table.

Full lesson and examples →

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HSK 3.0 Level 1 grammar

There Is and There Are in Chinese with 有 (Yǒu)

Place + 有 + Obj.

有 can introduce something that exists in a place as well as describe what someone possesses. For the existence meaning, begin with the location and follow it with 有 and the people or objects found there.

我家有很多小狗。

Wǒ jiā yǒu hěn duō xiǎo gǒu.

There are a lot of puppies in my home.

Full lesson and examples →

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Say what you have with 有

Person + 有 + thing / Person + 没有 + thing

Use 有 to say that someone has something. It works with objects such as a pen, people in a family, and resources such as time.



我有两张展览票。

Wǒ yǒu liǎng zhāng zhǎnlǎn piào.

I have two exhibition tickets.

Full lesson and examples →

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Introducing Names in Chinese with 叫 (Jiào)

叫 + Name

For introductions, 叫 links a person directly with the name they use. The subject comes first and the name follows the verb.

我叫 Tom。

Wǒ jiào Tom.

My name is Tom.

Full lesson and examples →

Going Somewhere with 去 (Qù) in Chinese

去 + Place

去 describes going away toward a destination. Put the person first and the destination after 去; the verb can connect directly to a place name.

我去公司。

Wǒ qù gōngsī.

I'm going to the office.

Full lesson and examples →

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Giving and Asking Surnames with 姓 (Xìng)

姓 + Surname

Mandarin has a verb specifically for a person's family name: 姓. Place the person before 姓 and the surname after it.

我姓王。

Wǒ xìng Wáng.

My family name is Wang.

Full lesson and examples →

Asking How to Do Something with 怎么 (Zěnme)

怎么 + Verb ?

怎么 asks about the method or means of carrying out an action. Put it before the verb whose method you want to know.

你们怎么学中文?

Nǐmen zěnme xué Zhōngwén?

How do you study Chinese?

Full lesson and examples →

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Come vs Go in Chinese: 来 (Lái) and 去 (Qù)

来 / 去 + Place

来 and 去 describe movement in relation to a viewpoint. 来 normally presents movement toward the speaker or relevant center, while 去 presents movement away toward another destination. A place can follow either verb directly.

妈妈要去超市。

Māma yào qù chāoshì.

Mom will go to the supermarket.

Full lesson and examples →

Polite Requests with 请 (Qǐng) in Chinese

请 + Verb

请 can introduce an action you politely ask the listener to perform. In a short request, it comes directly before the verb phrase.

请进。

Qǐng jìn.

Please come in.

Full lesson and examples →

HSK 3.0 Level 1 grammar

Say where an action happens with 在

subject / 在 + place / verb phrase

Use 在 followed by a place before the main activity to say where that activity happens. 我在厨房做饭 means “I cook in the kitchen” or “I am cooking in the kitchen,” depending on context. The location normally comes before 做饭.

我在厨房做饭。

Wǒ zài chúfáng zuò fàn.

I cook in the kitchen.

在厨房 gives the location; context determines whether the activity is habitual or current.

Full lesson and examples →

Modality and auxiliary verbs

Ability and Possibility in Chinese with 能 (Néng)

能 + Verb

能 places attention on whether an action is possible or within someone's capacity. It comes before the main verb, which supplies the actual activity.

我能吃四十个饺子。

Wǒ néng chī sìshí gè jiǎozi.

I can eat 40 dumplings.

Full lesson and examples →

HSK 3.0 Level 1 grammar

Learned Skills with 会 (Huì): Saying Can in Chinese

会 + Verb

会 can mark an ability acquired through learning or practice. It precedes the action describing the skill, such as speaking a language, cooking, or writing.

他会说中文。

Tā huì shuō Zhōngwén.

He can speak Chinese.

Full lesson and examples →

HSK 3.0 Level 1 grammar

State a plan with 要

subject + time / 要 / verb phrase

要 before a verb can express an intention or a planned future action. A time expression makes the reading especially clear: 我明天要去图书馆 means “I am going to the library tomorrow.” The verb stays in the same form.



我明天要去图书馆。

Wǒ míngtiān yào qù túshūguǎn.

I am going to the library tomorrow.

Full lesson and examples →

Laowai

HSK 3.0 Level 1 grammar

Ask permission with 可以

subject / 可以 / verb phrase + 吗

可以 before a verb can say that an action is allowed or acceptable. Add 吗 to ask permission: 我可以坐这里吗 means “May I sit here?” The request names a specific action, so the other person knows what they are agreeing to.

请问，我可以坐这里吗?

Qǐngwèn, wǒ kěyǐ zuò zhèlǐ ma?

Excuse me, may I sit here?

The question asks whether taking this seat is acceptable.

Full lesson and examples →

Wanting to Do Something with 要 (Yào)

要 + Verb

要 before a verb can express a wish or intention to carry out an action. The subject identifies who wants to act, and the following verb phrase names the action.

他要学中文。

Tā yào xué Zhōngwén.

He wants to study Chinese.

Full lesson and examples →

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Predicting Will with 会 (Huì) in Chinese

会 + Verb

会 can express that an event is expected to happen. In this predictive use it stands before the main predicate, and time expressions may identify when the event is expected.

明天你会来吗?

Míngtiān nǐ huì lái ma?

Will you come tomorrow?

Full lesson and examples →

HSK 3.0 Level 1 grammar

Say what you would like to do with 想

subject / 想 / verb phrase

想 before a verb expresses wanting or feeling like doing something. 我想喝点热水 means “I would like to drink some hot water.” It is a useful way to talk about an idea before it becomes a firm arrangement. Keep the whole action after 想: 去公园, 学做饭, or 看这部电影.



我想喝点热水。

Wǒ xiǎng hē diǎn rè shuǐ.

I would like to drink some hot water.

Full lesson and examples →

HSK 3.0 Level 1 grammar

Noun phrases

Say what something is with 是

Person or thing + 是 + identity / Person or thing + 不 + 是 + identity

Use 是 when you identify someone or something: a person is a teacher, a place is a station, or an object is your ticket. The expression after 是 is normally a noun or noun phrase.



这位是林老师。

Zhè wèi shì Lín lǎoshī.

This is Teacher Lin.

Full lesson and examples →

HSK 3.0 Level 1 grammar

Describe things with 很

Person or thing + 很 + adjective / Person or thing + 不 + adjective

Many Chinese adjectives can act as the main description of a sentence. To say that something is warm, convenient, or expensive, put the adjective after the subject. 很 often links the two in a neutral statement.



这间教室很亮。

Zhè jiān jiàoshì hěn liàng.

This classroom is bright.

Full lesson and examples →

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Some and A Few with 一些 (Yīxiē) in Chinese

一些 + Noun

一些 before a noun expresses an unspecified quantity. It can refer to several countable items or an amount of a substance, depending on the noun.

妈妈去超市买了一些水果。

Māma qù chāoshì mǎi le yīxiē shuǐguǒ.

Mom went to the supermarket and bought some fruit.

Full lesson and examples →

Sentence structure and word order

Too and So in Chinese with 太……了 (Tài…Le)

太 + Adj. + 了

太 before an adjective, commonly followed by 了, expresses a strong degree. With an unwelcome quality, it often means that something exceeds a comfortable or acceptable limit.

米饭太多了。

Mǐfàn tài duō le.

There is too much rice.

Full lesson and examples →

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Aspect, time and completion

Follow an event with 以后

Event + 以后 + main action / Time + 以后

以后 follows the event or time that serves as a starting point. 下课以后 means after class ends; 十点以后 means after ten o'clock. The main clause then says what happens in that later period.

下课以后，我们去附近吃饭。

Xiàkè yǐhòu, wǒmen qù fùjìn chīfàn.

After class, we will go somewhere nearby to eat.

The meal follows the end of class.

Full lesson and examples →

Comparisons

Choose between 不 and 没

不 + verb or adjective / 没(有) + verb / 没有 + thing

A useful first distinction is meaning, not a simple past-versus-present rule. 不 often negates habits, preferences, intentions, and descriptions. 没 or 没有 often denies that a particular event happened or has happened. "I do not take taxis" and "I did not take a taxi today" therefore use different negative forms.

我平时不带现金。

Wǒ píngshí bú dài xiànjīn.

I do not normally carry cash.

不 describes the usual habit, and 平时 makes that context clear.

Full lesson and examples →

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Sources and further study

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Chinese Grammar Wiki reference source

Official HSK syllabus and sample questions

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