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Modern Mandarin Chinese Grammar
A practical guide

Claudia Ross
and Jing-heng Sheng Ma
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References consulted

Chapter 1

Chapter 3

Chapter 12
The source of the legal example in Chapter 12 is the Child Welfare Law of the Republic of China, Section 1, article 3.

Chapter 17
The information on names is based on a survey published in the 香港星島日報 *xiānggǎng xīng dào rìbào* (*Hong Kong and Singapore Daily News*) in 2002 and reported in 大参考尊 *dà cǎn kāo zōng* (*VIP Reference*) vol. 1640, July 28, 2002.

Chapter 46

Claudia Ross and Jing-heng Sheng Ma
Introduction

This book is divided into two sections: ‘Structures’ and ‘Situations and functions.’

Part A ‘Structures’ is a concise grammar of Mandarin Chinese organized in the familiar and traditional way, providing an overview of the Chinese writing system and describing the major features of Mandarin grammar. This section should be used for reference when you want to know something about a form or structure. For example, if you want to review the structure of the noun phrase, or how to form numbers, or the structure of the passive form, you should consult this section.

Part B ‘Situations and functions’ is organized in terms of how to do things with language, and it is the longer of the two sections. For example, if you want to know how to address someone, how to say ‘no,’ how to make comparisons, or how to apologize, you should consult this section.

Often, the same ground is covered in both parts of this book, although the emphasis is different in each section. Related sections are linked by cross-referencing, indicated by arrows in the margin of the page directing you to another section. Related functions are also cross-referenced throughout the book. You should always follow the cross-reference links so that you have a complete picture of the expression that you are exploring and can use it correctly and accurately.

Topics covered in this book are listed in the table of contents and in the index, and you should use them to help you find words and topics quickly and easily. Notice that the index is an alphabetical listing that includes keywords in English and in Pinyin romanization. For example, if you want to know how to indicate that you have had an experience in the past you can look in the index for the English expression ‘experience in the past’ or for the Pinyin word guo.

In this book, we use traditional grammatical terms to explain the structures of Mandarin. The terms are presented in the glossary at the beginning of this book. Once you are familiar with the grammatical terms you will find them helpful in understanding the grammar and in expressing yourself accurately.

We hope that you will find this book useful and informative. We look forward to learning how you use the book, and to receiving your suggestions on how it can be improved.

Claudia Ross and Jing-heng Sheng Ma
How to use this book

This book brings together two different types of resources to help you to understand Mandarin Chinese. They are presented in two parts: Part A: ‘Structures’ and Part B: ‘Situations and functions.’

When you want to review some aspect of Mandarin grammar such as how to describe a noun or where to put the prepositional phrase in a sentence, you should consult Part A. On the other hand, when you want to know how to apologize, or how to address someone, or how to emphasize something, you should consult Part B. Some topics are covered in more than one chapter of the book. For example, the verb suffix 过/過 guò is included in ‘Structures’ in the chapters on verbs (Chapters 11–13), and also in ‘Situations and functions’ in Chapter 33, ‘Indicating completion and talking about the past.’ Arrows in the left-hand margin of each page indicate additional sections of the book in which a topic is discussed. You should follow the cross-references and read everything about the topic that you are exploring in order to get a full picture of its structure and functions.

Some topics can be expressed differently depending upon the level of formality in a specific situation. Where appropriate, we have indicated the level of formality associated with expressions. See for example, ‘Prepositions and prepositional phrases’ (Chapter 14, section 14.2.8) and ‘Greetings and goodbyes’ (Chapter 20, section 20.3).

This book provides the most common ways of expressing the major structures and functions in Mandarin. Native speakers of Mandarin differ in their use of some expressions, and we have tried to note standard variations. In your study of Mandarin, you will come across structures and expressions that are not included in this book. You should add them to your repertoire as you continue to strengthen your language skills.

To help you to consolidate your overall knowledge of Chinese, we begin this book with a brief overview of Mandarin pronunciation and an introduction to the Chinese writing system. For a more detailed coverage of pronunciation, consult a beginning level Mandarin textbook. For more information about the Chinese writing system, consult the references cited in the Acknowledgements.

Claudia Ross and Jing-heng Sheng Ma, 2005
Glossary of grammatical terms

Adverbs
Adverbs are words that precede and modify a verb or verb phrase.

- They are all very busy.
- Younger brother already went home.

Classifiers
Classifiers are words that occur after a number and/or specifier and before a noun. Some grammars refer to classifiers as ‘measure words.’ Classifiers often need not be translated into English.

- one [glass of] water
- that [volume of] book
- these two [classifier] people

Clauses
Clauses are dependent sentences, that is, sentences that occur within a larger sentence.

- She said she is very busy today.
- I know he doesn’t have any money.
Glossary of grammatical terms

Clauses may also serve as subjects:

她昨天跟你说话并不表示她愿意当你的女朋友。
她昨天跟你說話並不表示她願意當你的女朋友。

(The fact that) she spoke with you yesterday does not mean that she is willing to be your girlfriend.

Complements
Complements are verb phrases that serve as the object of a verb. Modal verbs require complements, as do many other verbs.

她会说中国话。
她會說中國話。

Tā huì shuō Zhōngguó huà.
She can speak Chinese.

Conjunctions
Conjunctions are words that connect two nouns or noun phrases to form a noun phrase.

妈妈和爸爸都会说中国话。
媽媽和爸爸都會說中國話。

Māmā hé bābā dōu huì shuō Zhōngguó huà.
Mom and dad can both speak Chinese.

Demonstratives see Specifiers and demonstratives

Direct objects see Objects

Final particles
Final particles are syllables that occur at the end of the sentence and indicate a speech act or speaker perspective.

我们吃饭吧!
我們吃飯吧!

Wōmen chī fàn ba!
Let’s eat! (suggestion)

我得走了。再不走就晚咯。
Wǒ děi zǒu le. Zài bù zǒu jiù wǎn le.
I’d better go now. If I don’t go I will be late. (obviousness)

Grammatical particles
Grammatical particles are syllables that convey grammatical meaning, for example 的 de (noun modification), 得 de (postverbal adverbial modification), 地 de (preverbal adverbial modification), 了 le (completed action), 着/著 zhe (duration).

Í 16
Í 24.1.1, 24.5, 30.3, 34.1, 46, 52.2
Í 9, 27, 33, 35

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Indirect objects see Objects

Intensifiers
Intensifiers are words that precede and modify stative verbs, adjectival verbs, and modal verbs.

Wǒ hěn xiǎohuǎn tā.  I like him a lot.
Nà běn shū tài guì.  That book is too expensive.
Ni zhēn huì tiào wū.  You can really dance.

Nouns
Nouns are words that can be directly preceded by a specifier and/or number + classifier.

一本书  one book
那本书  that book

Noun phrases
Noun phrases are nouns and their modifiers.

Objects
There are two different types of objects, direct and indirect.

The direct object is generally the noun phrase affected by or created by the action of the verb. The direct object generally follows the verb, though it may also be topicalized (see Topics).

Wǒ méitiān zài tǔshǔguǎn kàn shū.  I read books in the library every day.
Wǒ yǐjǐng chī le wǎnfàn.  I have already eaten dinner.

The indirect object refers to the recipient of the object noun phrase. In Mandarin, only a small number of verbs take a direct and indirect object. These include 给 ‘to give’ and 送 song ‘to present as a gift.’ In all cases, the indirect object precedes the direct object.

Wǒ bù yào gěi tā qián.  I don't want to give him money.
Glossary of grammatical terms

For most verbs, the recipient is expressed as the object of a preposition and not as an indirect object.

我给她写了一封信。
我給她寫了一封信。
Wǒ gěi tā xiě le yī fēng xìn.
I wrote her a letter. (I wrote a letter to her.)

Predicates

The predicate of a sentence includes a verb and any object(s) or complements of the verb. It may also include negation, adverbs, prepositional phrases, and phrases that indicate time when, duration, or frequency.

Prepositional phrases

Prepositional phrases consist of a preposition and its following noun phrase. In Mandarin, the prepositional phrase always precedes the verb phrase.

我在家吃饭。
我在家吃飯。
Wǒ zài jiā chī fàn.
I eat at home.

I到图书馆去了。
I到圖書館去了。
Wǒ dào tǔshūguǎn qù le.
I went to the library.

Prepositions

Prepositions are words that indicate the relationship of a noun phrase to a verb, for example 在 ‘at,’ 到 ‘to,’ 给/給 ‘to/for,’ 替 ‘for.’

14

Pronouns

Pronouns are words that take the place of a noun or noun phrase.

Wáng Míng shì xuéshèng.
Wang Ming is a student.

Tā shì xuéshèng.
He is a student.

我不认识那两个人。
我不認識他們。
Wǒ bù rěnshì nà liǎng gè rén.
I don’t know those two people.

Wǒ bù rěnshì tāmen.
I don’t know them.

5.2

Sentences

Normally, a full sentence includes a subject and a predicate. The sentence may begin with a topic.
GLOSSARY OF GRAMMATICAL TERMS

(topic + subject + predicate)

那个孩子，脾气很坏。
那个孩子，脾气很坏。
Nàge háizi, píqi hěn huài.
That child has a bad temper. (lit. 'That child, the temper is bad. ‘)

Specifiers and demonstratives

Specifiers are words that translate as ‘this/these’ or ‘that/those’ and describe a noun.

zhè bù shū hěn yǒu yìsì.
This book is very interesting.

These same words, when used to ‘point’ to an object, are ‘demonstratives.’

zhè shì Zhōngguó máobǐ.
This is a Chinese writing brush.

Subject

The subject is the noun or noun phrase about which information is provided in the predicate. In Mandarin, the subject of a sentence occurs before the verb phrase. It can be omitted if it is understood from the overall context of the sentence. Typically, a subject is omitted if it is identical in reference to the subject of the preceding sentence.

wǒ kàn le diànyǐng. ( ) jiǔ diǎn zhōng jiù huí jiā le.
I saw a movie. At nine o’clock I returned home.

Topics

Generally speaking, the topic is the noun or noun phrase that the sentence, paragraph, or narrative is about. The topic occurs at the beginning of a sentence, and is often distinct from the subject.

 Zhōngguó cài, wǒ tèbié xǐhuān chī jiācháng dòufu.
(As for) Chinese food, I especially like to eat homestyle beancurd.

In Mandarin, the object of the verb may sometimes occur in ‘topic’ position, at the beginning of the sentence, before the subject.

yángròu, wǒ bù tài xǐhuān chī.
Mutton, I don’t particularly like to eat (it).

A sentence need not begin with a topic.
Glossary of grammatical terms

Verbs
Verbs are words that can be directly negated, or modified by an adverb, or that can serve as the 'yes' answer to yes–no questions. Verbs are the main word in the predicate, and a Mandarin sentence must include a verb. Verbs that take one or more objects are called transitive, and verbs that do not take an object are called intransitive. Mandarin has the following types of verbs.

Adjectival verbs
Adjectival verbs are verbs that can be translated as adjectives in English, for example 大 大 ‘big,’ 好 好 ‘good,’ 贵 贵 gui ‘expensive.’ Adjectival verbs are usually intransitive. Note that adjectival verbs do not occur with 是 shi ‘to be.’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Say this</th>
<th>Not this</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>他很高。</td>
<td>“他是很高。”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tā hěn gāo.</td>
<td>Tā shì hěn gāo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He is very tall.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stative verbs
(a) Stative verbs are verbs that express states, for example 喜欢/喜歡 xīhuan ‘to like,’ 像 xiàng ‘to resemble.’

我喜歡他。
Wǒ xīhuan tā.
I like him.

(b) Stative verbs are linking verbs, for example 是 shì ‘to be,’ 姓 xìng ‘to be family named,’ 有 yǒu ‘to have, to exist.’

她有很多朋友。
Tā yǒu hěn duō péngyou.
She has many friends.

Modal verbs
Modal verbs are verbs that express ability, permission, or obligation, for example 会/會 huì ‘can’ (mentally able), 能 néng ‘can’ (physically able), 可以/可以 kěyǐ ‘may’ (have permission), 得 dé ‘must/have to.’ Modal verbs can serve as the one word answer to yes–no questions, but in complete sentences they are always followed by a verb phrase complement.

Action verbs
Action verbs are verbs that refer to events. There are two kinds of action verbs:

- Open-ended action verbs express open-ended actions such as 跑 pāo ‘to run,’ 写/寫 xiě ‘to write,’ 和 听/聽 tīng ‘to listen.’ Most open-ended action verbs in Mandarin are transitive.
• Change-of-state action verbs express actions that refer to a change of state and have no duration such as 坐 zuò ‘to sit (down),’ 忘 wàng ‘to forget,’ and 放 fàng ‘to put (down), to place.’

Verb phrases
The verb phrase is the verb and its noun phrase objects and/or verb phrase complement clauses.

他每天看电视。
他每天看电视。
Tā měitiān kàn diànsī.
He watches television every day.

爸爸给我钱。
爸爸给我錢。
Bàba gěi wǒ qián.
Dad gives me money.

他会开车。
他会開車。
Tā huì kāi chē.
He can drive (a car).

我请你吃晚饭。
我請你吃晚餐。
Wǒ qīng nǐ chī wǎnfàn.
I invite you to eat dinner.

A note on grammatical categories and grammatical category shift
In Mandarin, a word may belong to more than one grammatical category. For example, some words may serve as both a verb and a preposition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Preposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>给/給</td>
<td>to give</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>到</td>
<td>to arrive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>在</td>
<td>to be located</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>at</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Out of context, it is not possible to say whether the word 给/給 gěi or 到 dào or 在 zài is a preposition or a verb. However, in the context of a sentence or phrase, the category of the word is clear:

Preposition

我想去中国。
我想去中國。
Wǒ xiǎng dào Zhōngguó qù.
I want to go to China.

I want to go to China.
Glossary of grammatical terms

Verb

你什麼時候到？
你甚麼時候到？
Ni shénme shíhòu dào?
When are you arriving?

Some textbooks and grammars provide special labels for words that can function as more than one category of word. For example, the label ‘coverb’ is used in many textbooks for words that can be both prepositions and verbs.

13.5, 14.3
A note on Chinese characters

Certain traditional characters have more than one standard form. Here are some examples. This book uses the characters in the first column. An overview of the origin, structure, and systems of Chinese characters is presented in Chapter 3.

裏 lǐ
著 zhè
叫 jiào
為 wèi
没 méi
Part A

Structures
1

Overview of pronunciation and Pinyin romanization

1.1 The Mandarin syllable

The syllable in Mandarin Chinese can be made up of three parts: an initial consonant, a final, and a tone. For example, the syllable mà 麻 is made up of the initial m, the final a, and the rising tone [\]. Syllables need not have an initial consonant. The syllable è 阇 is made up of the final e and the falling tone [\]. In addition, a syllable may lack a tone. Syllables that do not have a tone are referred to as having neutral tone.

This section presents a brief overview of the initials, finals, and tones of Mandarin. Initials and finals are presented in Pinyin romanization. For a guide to their pronunciation, please consult a beginning level Mandarin textbook.

1.1.1 Initials

The Mandarin initials are presented here in the traditional recitation order:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of sound</th>
<th>Initial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 bilabial</td>
<td>b, p, m, f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 alveolar</td>
<td>d, t, n, l</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 velar</td>
<td>g, k, h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 palatal</td>
<td>j, q, x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 retroflex</td>
<td>zh, ch, sh, r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 alveolar affricate/fricatives</td>
<td>z, c, s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.1.2 Finals

Finals are listed by initial vowel.

- a finals: a an ang ai ao
- o/e finals: o e en eng ei ou ong er
- u finals: u ua uo uai ui uan un uang ueng
- i finals: i iaiao ie iu ian in iang ing iong
- ü finals: ü üe üian ün
1.1.3 Tones

Tone is the pitch contour of the syllable. Mandarin has four contour tones and a neutral tone. In most romanization systems of Mandarin, the tone is indicated by a diacritic over a vowel, or as a number following the syllable.

The following chart illustrates the contour of the four Mandarin tones when a syllable is spoken in isolation, that is, when it is neither preceded nor followed by another syllable.

1. level pitch 
2. rising pitch 
3. falling-rising pitch 
4. falling pitch

Syllables whose isolation tone is the third tone change their contour in certain contexts as follows.

When a third tone occurs before another third tone, it is pronounced as a rising (second) tone.

\[3 + 3 \rightarrow 2 + 3\]

\[\text{hén hǎo} \rightarrow \text{hén hǎo} \quad \text{很好} \quad \text{very good}\]

When a third tone occurs before any other tone, it is often pronounced as a low tone.

In this book, we indicate the change of a third tone to a second tone within a single word. For example, we write 所以 as suǒyì and not as suǒyí. We do not indicate tone changes that occur across words in the Pinyin spelling. For example, héng hǎo will be written as héng hǎo and not as héng hāo.

Tone is an inherent part of the Mandarin syllable, and Mandarin uses tones to distinguish meaning in the same way that the choice of a consonant or a vowel distinguishes meaning. Notice how tone determines the meaning of the following syllable.

\[\text{Tone}\]

1. mā (ma1) 媽/妈 mother
2. má (ma2) 麻 numb
3. mā (ma3) 馬 horse
4. mà (ma4) 骂/骂 scold
neutral ma (ma5) 吗/嗎 question particle

1.2 Pinyin romanization

Mandarin is written with Chinese characters, but characters do not provide consistent information about pronunciation. Therefore, Mandarin is typically studied via a transcription. Many transcription systems have been devised for Mandarin Chinese in China and in the West. Most of these are based on the Roman alphabet, and are therefore termed ‘romanization’ systems. In 1958, the People’s Republic of China established Hanyu Pinyin (usually referred to as Pinyin) as its standard romanization system. Because of the widespread use of this system of Pinyin in Chinese language teaching around the world, it is used to transcribe the Chinese words in this book.
1.2.1 Placement of tone mark in Pinyin

If a final includes three vowels, or two vowels and a final consonant, the tone mark is written over the second vowel:

kuài huán biān qióng

If a final includes two vowels and no final consonant, the tone mark is placed over the first vowel, unless the first vowel is i or u:

āi  áo  ēi  ǒu
   iā  ié  iǔ
   uà  ué  uǐ  uò

1.2.2 Some additional Pinyin conventions

• ‘u’ after the initials j, q, and x is pronounced ū but is written as u.
• When ‘i’ and ‘ü’ begin a syllable, they are written as yi, and yu.
• When ‘u’ begins a syllable it is written as w.
• In two syllable words, when the boundary between syllables is not clear from the Pinyin spelling and more than one interpretation of the boundary is possible, an apostrophe is used to separate the syllables. For example, if the second syllable begins with a vowel, an apostrophe is used: Xiān vs. xiān.
2
Syllable, meaning, and word

2.1
The special status of the Mandarin syllable

2.1.1
The syllable and meaning

One of the features of Chinese is that each syllable is associated with a meaning. For example, the Mandarin word for bus station/train station or bus stop/train stop is chêzhàn. The syllable chê means vehicle and the syllable zhàn means stand. Occurring together as a word, chêzhàn is very nearly the sum of its parts: vehicle stand.

Some words in English have the kind of structure that Mandarin has, but for most English words, syllables need not have independent meaning. For example, the English word lettuce consists of two syllables let and tuce. These individual syllables do not have meaning on their own, and it makes no sense to ask about the meaning of ‘let’ or of ‘tuce’ in the word lettuce. In contrast, with very few exceptions, the individual syllables of Mandarin words have identifiable meanings, and when learning new words, it makes good sense to note the meanings of the individual syllables.

NOTES
1 In Chinese, a small number of syllables are not associated with a meaning. The most common is the noun suffix 子 zi. See 2.2.1.1.
2 A multi-syllable Mandarin word is not always simply the sum of its parts. For example, the word 故事 gùshì ‘story’ is composed of the syllables 故 gù ‘former, previous’ and 事 shì ‘situation, incident.’

2.1.2
The syllable and Chinese characters

In Chinese, the syllable is associated with a Chinese character as well as a meaning. When a syllable is associated with more than one meaning, it is generally the case that each meaning is written with a different character. For example, Mandarin has a number of meanings associated with the pronunciation zhàn. Each meaning is written with a different character:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>蘭</th>
<th>zhàn</th>
<th>dip in liquid (like a pen in ink)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>占/佔</td>
<td>zhàn</td>
<td>occupy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>战/戰</td>
<td>zhàn</td>
<td>fight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>棟/棟</td>
<td>zhàn</td>
<td>storehouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>织/緞</td>
<td>zhàn</td>
<td>to split; to burst open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>站</td>
<td>zhàn</td>
<td>to stand; a stop, a stand</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because of these differences, the status of the syllable is much more important in Chinese than in English. Conversely, the status of the word is less important in Chinese than in English.
Multi-syllable tendency in Mandarin words

Although Mandarin syllables have meanings, they often combine to form words. Here is a short list of Mandarin syllables and words that they form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syllable</th>
<th>Word</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>学/學 xué</td>
<td>study, study of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>生 shēng</td>
<td>give birth to; grow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>出 chū</td>
<td>go out, produce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>口 kǒu</td>
<td>mouth, opening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>版 bān</td>
<td>printing block/printing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>校 xiào</td>
<td>school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>长/長 zhǎng</td>
<td>head, one in charge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>中 zhōng</td>
<td>middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>图/圖 tú</td>
<td>chart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>片 piàn</td>
<td>a slice, a part</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>地 dì</td>
<td>earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>书/書 shū</td>
<td>book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>餐/飯 fàn</td>
<td>rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>学/學生 xuéshēng</td>
<td>student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>生 chūshēng</td>
<td>to be born, birth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>出 chūkōu</td>
<td>export; exit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>版 chūbān</td>
<td>publish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>校 xuéxiào</td>
<td>school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>长/長 xiǎozhǎng</td>
<td>principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>中 zhōngxué</td>
<td>middle school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>图/圖 túshūguǎn</td>
<td>library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>地 dítú</td>
<td>map</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>书/書 túshūguǎn</td>
<td>library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>餐/飯 fánguǎn</td>
<td>restaurant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>学/學生 xuéshēng</td>
<td>student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>生 chūshēng</td>
<td>to be born, birth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>出 chūkōu</td>
<td>export; exit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>版 chūbān</td>
<td>publish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>校 xuéxiào</td>
<td>school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>长/長 xiǎozhǎng</td>
<td>principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>中 zhōngxué</td>
<td>middle school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>图/圖 túshūguǎn</td>
<td>library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>地 dítú</td>
<td>map</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>书/書 túshūguǎn</td>
<td>library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>餐/飯 fánguǎn</td>
<td>restaurant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2.1 Strategies that create and maintain the two syllable word

The most common length of Mandarin words is two syllables, and a number of common word formation strategies exist which help to create and maintain the two syllable word.

2.2.1.1 The suffix 子 zǐ

One syllable words may be turned into two syllable words by the addition of the suffix 子 zǐ. This suffix adds little or no meaning to the word. It usually occurs in neutral tone (zi).

Some nouns occur in contemporary Mandarin only with the 子 zǐ suffix, for example 孩子 háizi ‘child,’ 房子 fángzi ‘house,’ 屋子 wūzi ‘room,’ 本子 běnzi ‘notebook,’ 袜子 wàzi ‘socks.’

Some words can occur with or without the suffix. These include 车/車 chē → 车子/车子 chēzǐ ‘car,’ 洗/洗 xiǎn → 鞋子 xiézi ‘shoe(s),’ 盤/盤 pán → 盤子/盤子 pánzǐ ‘plate(s),’ 票 piào → 票子 piàozi ‘ticket.’

In the Beijing dialect of Mandarin, the suffix 尾/兒 er is routinely added to words in many categories, especially to nouns and classifiers. 尾/兒 er suffixation adds a retroflex (r) sound but no additional syllable to the word. If a word ends in a final consonant, the 尾/兒 er suffix replaces the final consonant: fěn → fēr ‘a portion,’ wān → wār ‘to play,’ diǎnyīng → diānyīr ‘movie,’ etc. The suffix may also replace a vowel in the final: hái → hár ‘child.’

In this book, we write -r suffixed words in terms of their changed pronunciation. That is, we write wār and not wānr or wān'er.
### 2.2.1.2 Location suffixes

Location words may be suffixed with 头/頭 tou, 面 miàn, or 边/邊 biān to make them two syllable words: 下头/下頭 xiàtou 'below,' 外面 wàimian 'outside,' 左边/左邊 zuǒbiān 'left side,' etc.

In Mandarin spoken in southern China and Taiwan, the specifiers 这/這 zhè, 那 nà, 裡 and 哪 nǎ, 裏 are suffixed with 里/裏 when they are used as location words: 这里/這裏 zhèlǐ 'here,' 那里/那裏 nàlǐ ‘there,’ and 哪里/哪裏 nǎlǐ ‘where?’

### 2.2.1.3 Abbreviation

Words and phrases that are longer than two syllables are often abbreviated to two syllables. The two syllables that form the new, abbreviated word are typically the first syllable of each of the words in the phrase or the first two syllables of the first word in the phrase, though other combinations occur.

| 超级市场/超級市場 | chāojí shichǎng supermarket | 超市 chāoshi |
| 公共汽车/公共汽車 | gōnggōng qìchē public bus | 公車/公車 gōngchē |
| 飞机场/飛機場 | fēijīchǎng airport | 机场/機場 jīchāng |

### 2.3 Word-specific tone changes

In addition to the tone changes mentioned in Chapter 1 for all third-tone syllables, there are certain tone changes that occur in specific words.

#### 2.3.1 Tone change in the word 不 bù

不 bù changes to bú when it occurs before another fourth-toned syllable in the same word, phrase, or breath group:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4–4</th>
<th>→</th>
<th>2–4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>不对/不對 bù duì</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>bú duì</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>不必/不需 bù bì</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>bú bì</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 2.3.2 Tone change in the numbers 一 yī 1, 七 qī 7, and 八 bā 8

The tone of the numbers 一 yī 1, and, less commonly, 七 qī 7, and 八 bā 8 may change to second tone yí, qí, and bá before a fourth-toned syllable in the same word, phrase, or breath group:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1–4</th>
<th>→</th>
<th>2–4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>一共 yīgōng</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>yīgōng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>一定 yìdìng</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>yìdìng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>一辈子 yī bèizi</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>yī bèizi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Beijing and northern China, certain syllables lose their original tone and are pronounced as neutral tone. This tone change does not occur in Taiwan, where all syllables retain their original tones.

1.1.3

The complete conditions for change to neutral tone are complex, but here are some general rules for the change of a second syllable to neutral tone.

• The second syllable is a repetition of the first syllable:

  
  tone-tone  \rightarrow  tone-neutral

太太  tāitài  \rightarrow  tāitái
Mrs
didi  \rightarrow  didi
younger brother

• The second syllable is a suffix that does not contribute a meaning to the word. This includes the suffix 子 zǐ, and the directional suffixes 头/頭 tóu, 面 miàn, and 边/邊 biān:

  
  tone-tone  \rightarrow  tone-neutral

孩子  háizǐ  \rightarrow  háizǐ
child
里头/裏頭  lǐtóu  \rightarrow  lǐtóu
inside
The meaning of the second syllable is the same as or overlaps with the meaning of the first syllable:

\[ \text{tone-tone} \rightarrow \text{tone-neutral} \]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{衣服} & \quad \text{clothing} \\
\text{衣} & \quad \text{yī} \\
\text{服} & \quad \text{fú} \\
\text{事情} & \quad \text{matter/situation} \\
\text{事} & \quad \text{shì} \\
\text{情} & \quad \text{qíng}
\end{align*}
\]

The second syllable retains its tone when it adds to and expands the meaning of the first syllable. Examples include:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{学期/學期} & \quad \text{xuéqī} \\
& \quad \text{xué} \quad \text{qī} \\
\text{作法} & \quad \text{zuòfā} \\
& \quad \text{zuò} \quad \text{fā} \\
\text{看完} & \quad \text{kànwán} \\
& \quad \text{kàn} \quad \text{wán}
\end{align*}
\]

Incorporating foreign words and naming foreign objects

Chinese has not borrowed freely from other languages. However, when it incorporates foreign words into the language, it typically uses the following strategies:

- Adapting the foreign pronunciation to conform to the syllable structure of Chinese.

**Names**

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{罗斯福/羅斯福} & \quad \text{Luósīfú} \\
\text{加缪/加繆} & \quad \text{Jiāmù} \\
\text{邱吉尔/邱吉爾} & \quad \text{Qiūjí’ěr} \\
\text{拿破仑/拿破崙} & \quad \text{Nàpōlùn} \\
\text{莎士比亚/莎士比亞} & \quad \text{Shāshìbiyà}
\end{align*}
\]

**Objects**

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{比萨/比薩} & \quad \text{bīsà} \\
\text{汉堡包/漢堡包} & \quad \text{hànábāobāo}
\end{align*}
\]
Incorporating foreign words and naming foreign objects

- Forming new words based on meaning or function.
  When new items enter China, they often lose their foreign pronunciation and get new Chinese names that reflect their meaning or function. Here are some examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>television</td>
<td>diànshì</td>
<td>television (electric vision)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>computer</td>
<td>diànnào</td>
<td>computer (electric brain)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fax</td>
<td>diàncuán</td>
<td>fax (electric transmission)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cell phone</td>
<td>shōujī</td>
<td>cell phone/mobile phone (hand machine)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fax</td>
<td>diàncuán</td>
<td>fax (electric transmission)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hot dog</td>
<td>règǒu</td>
<td>(lit.) hot dog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>satellite</td>
<td>wèixìng</td>
<td>satellite (protection star)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Forming new words based on meaning while preserving the foreign pronunciation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the world wide web</td>
<td>wàn wéi wǎng</td>
<td>the world wide web (a net of 10,000 connections)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cola</td>
<td>kělè</td>
<td>cola (it can make you happy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tractor</td>
<td>tuōlājī</td>
<td>tractor (drag pull machine)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>credit card</td>
<td>xīnyòng kǎ</td>
<td>credit card (trust card)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jeep</td>
<td>jǐpūchē</td>
<td>jeep (lucky widely used vehicle)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Foreign companies often follow this principle when translating the names of their companies and their products into Chinese.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coca Cola</td>
<td>Kěkǒukēlè</td>
<td>Coca Cola [soft drink] (pleasant to drink and it can make you happy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ford</td>
<td>Fútè</td>
<td>Ford [automobiles] (happiness – exceptional)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tide</td>
<td>Tàizǐ</td>
<td>Tide [laundry detergent] (eliminate stains and sludge)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Chinese writing system: an overview

Although transcription systems can be used to write Chinese, Chinese characters are the basis of written communication in China. This chapter presents an overview of Chinese characters.

3.1 Traditional and simplified characters

There are two standard systems of characters in current use: traditional characters and simplified characters. Simplified characters are the official characters used in mainland China and Singapore. Traditional characters are the official characters used in Taiwan and other parts of the Chinese speaking world.

Most characters in the traditional and simplified systems are identical. However, in the simplified character system, many frequently used characters have been simplified from their traditional, more complex form. Here are some examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Simplified</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>國</td>
<td>国</td>
<td>guó</td>
<td>country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>東</td>
<td>东</td>
<td>dōng</td>
<td>east</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>車</td>
<td>车</td>
<td>chē</td>
<td>car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>賣</td>
<td>买</td>
<td>mǎi</td>
<td>buy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>寫</td>
<td>写</td>
<td>xiě</td>
<td>write</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A simplified way of writing characters has existed for hundreds of years. Simplified characters were used in informal documents and in some forms of calligraphy before they were adopted by mainland China as the official form. Therefore, although the two forms now have some political significance, you may encounter simplified characters in use in Taiwan and traditional characters in use in mainland China.

3.2 The structure of Chinese characters: the radical and the phonetic

3.2.1 The radical

All Chinese characters contain a radical, a sequence of strokes that broadly categorize the character in terms of meaning.
In the set of traditional characters, there are 214 radicals. In the set of simplified characters, there are 189 radicals. Some radicals may occur as independent characters. Others only occur as part of a character.

Here is a list of some of the most common radicals, including their simplified form if there is one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional radical</th>
<th>Alternate form</th>
<th>Radicals with simplified forms</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>人</td>
<td>Œ</td>
<td></td>
<td>person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>刀</td>
<td>刂</td>
<td></td>
<td>knife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>力</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>水</td>
<td>氵</td>
<td></td>
<td>water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>門</td>
<td></td>
<td>门</td>
<td>door</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>土</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>竹</td>
<td>竹</td>
<td>竹</td>
<td>bamboo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>口</td>
<td></td>
<td>口</td>
<td>mouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>回</td>
<td></td>
<td>回</td>
<td>enclosure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>心</td>
<td>心</td>
<td>心</td>
<td>heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>火</td>
<td>火</td>
<td>火</td>
<td>fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>木</td>
<td>木</td>
<td>木</td>
<td>wood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>日</td>
<td></td>
<td>日</td>
<td>sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>食</td>
<td>食</td>
<td>食</td>
<td>eat, food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>言</td>
<td>言</td>
<td>言</td>
<td>language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>金</td>
<td>金</td>
<td>金</td>
<td>metal/gold</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When a radical is simplified, the simplified form is used in all of the characters in which it occurs. Here are some examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Simplified</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>話</td>
<td>話</td>
<td>huà</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>錢</td>
<td>錢</td>
<td>qián</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>鋼</td>
<td>鋼</td>
<td>gāng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>飯</td>
<td>飯</td>
<td>fàn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>餓</td>
<td>餓</td>
<td>è</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### The phonetic

Some characters are radicals by themselves. Examples include:

- 水 shuí water
- 木 mù wood
- 人 rén person

However, most characters include a radical and additional strokes. Often, these additional strokes provide a hint at the pronunciation of the character. When they do, they are called the phonetic.

Here are examples of characters with phonetics. As you can see, the pronunciation of the phonetic may be identical with or similar to the pronunciation of the character.
Noting phonetic information is a helpful way to remember characters. However, the phonetic rarely provides complete information about the pronunciation of a character.

### 3.3 The traditional classification of characters

Chinese characters originated during the early Shang dynasty or the late Xia dynasty, in the seventeenth century BC. One of the earliest Chinese dictionaries, the *Shuowen Jiezi*, compiled in AD 121, established a classification of characters that is still used today. The classification identified the following six categories based on structure and representation of meaning.

#### 3.3.1 Pictographs 象形 xiàngxíng

Pictographs originated as pictures of objects. They represent only a small portion of Chinese characters. The modern forms are stylized versions of the ancient forms. Here are comparisons of the Shang Dynasty forms with the modern forms of the same characters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shang form</th>
<th>Modern form</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>水</td>
<td>shuǐ</td>
<td>water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>日</td>
<td>rì</td>
<td>sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>目</td>
<td>mù</td>
<td>eye</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3.2 Ideographs 指事 zhī shì

Ideographs represent abstract meanings, often having to do with spatial orientation. Only a small number of characters are ideographs. Examples are presented here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shang form</th>
<th>Modern form</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>上</td>
<td>shàng</td>
<td>above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>下</td>
<td>xià</td>
<td>below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>中</td>
<td>zhōng</td>
<td>middle (picture of a target hit by an arrow)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3.3 Associative compounds 会意/會意 huì yì

The meaning of these characters is reflected in the meaning of their component parts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Composed of</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>好 good</td>
<td>女 woman + 子 zǐ child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>话/話 speech</td>
<td>言 yán language + 舌 shé tongue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3.4 Phonetic compounds 形声/形聲 xíngshēng

Phonetic compounds are the most common type of Chinese character and are discussed in 3.2.2 above.

3.3.5 False borrowings 假借 jiǎjiè

False borrowings involve the use of a character to refer to another word with identical pronunciation but different meaning. For example, the word for wheat, written as 来/來, a picture of the wheat plant, was ‘borrowed’ to write the abstract concept ‘come,’ which, at the time, had the same pronunciation as the word for wheat. The character for wheat was later revised to distinguish it from the character for come. In present day writing, ‘wheat’ is written as 麦/麥 mài and ‘come’ is written as 来/來 lái. The similarity in the characters can be seen in the traditional form of the characters. Note that the pronunciation of the two words is no longer identical, though they still rhyme.

3.3.6 Semantic derivations 轉注/轉注 zhùānzhù

Characters are considered 轉注/轉注 zhùānzhù when they are used to represent a meaning that is derived from the original meaning of the character. For example, the character 网/網 wǎng, originally a picture of a fishing net, is used to refer to networks in general. It is the character used in one of the Chinese translations of the World Wide Web: 万维网/萬維網 wàn wéi wǎng. The simplified character for net, 网, is the older form of the character.

3.4 Character stroke order: 笔顺/筆順 bǐshùn

3.4.1 Basic rules of stroke order

Each Chinese character contains a precise number of strokes written in a fixed order. Below are the basic rules of stroke order for the writing of Chinese characters.
THE CHINESE WRITING SYSTEM: AN OVERVIEW

3.4

Rule Example

1 Horizontal (héng) precedes vertical (shù).
2 Left falling stroke (piē) precedes right falling stroke (nà).
3 First top, then bottom.
4 First left, then right.
5 First outside, then inside.
6 First complete the inside of a box, then seal the box.
7 First center, then sides.
8 First horizontal (héng), then left falling stroke (piē), then right falling stroke (nà).

3.4.2 Special stroke order rules

Rule Example

1 Write the dot (diǎn) last if it is positioned at the top right corner of a character.
2 Write the dot (diǎn) last if it is positioned inside a character.
3 If the character includes the curved left-falling stroke (héng zhé piē) and one other component, write the curved left-falling stroke last.
4 If the character consists of more than one horizontal stroke (héng) and vertical stroke (shù), write the vertical stroke first, and the horizontal stroke at the bottom last.
5 If a character has a horizontal stroke (héng) in the middle, write the horizontal stroke last.

Example

十
三
他
月
日
小
大
我
太
建
上
女
4

Phrase order in the Mandarin sentence

4.1 Basic phrase order

The basic order of the Mandarin sentence is

\[ \text{topic} + \text{subject} + \text{predicate} \]

A sentence need not have an overt topic. In addition, if the subject is understood from the context of the sentence, it is often omitted from the sentence.

The predicate consists of everything in the sentence except for the topic and subject, including the verb, its objects, negation, adverbial modifiers, and prepositional phrases. The following sections present the order of these constituents.

4.1, 8.3, 15.2.2, 17.6, 21.11, 35.1.2, 36.3, 42.1.1, 53.1, 53.1.2.2, Glossary

4.2 The position of direct and indirect objects

In the neutral sentence in which nothing is emphasized, the direct and indirect objects of the verb follow the verb. We refer to the verb and its objects as the verb phrase.

If there is an indirect object, it precedes the direct object.

\[ \text{subject} + \text{verb} + \text{indirect object} + \text{direct object} \]

他给我一本书。
他給我一本書。
Tā gěi wǒ yī běn shū.
He gave (gives) me one book.

Most verbs take only a direct object.

\[ \text{subject} + \text{verb} + \text{direct object} \]

我看了那些书。
我看了那些書。
Wǒ kàn le nà xiē shū.
I read those books.
The object may also occur before the subject for emphasis. In this position it is topicalized.

4.3 The position of prepositional phrases

Prepositional phrases always occur right before the verb and its objects.

subject + prepositional phrase + verb + direct object

他跟他的女朋友吃晚饭。
他跟他的女朋友吃晚饭。
Tā gèn tā de nǚ péngyou chī wǎnfàn.
He eats dinner with his girlfriend.

4.4 The position of location phrases

The location phrase is a type of preposition phrase. It always occurs before the verb phrase.

subject + location phrase + verb phrase

我回家吃饭。
我在家吃饭。
Wǒ zài jiā chī fàn.
I eat at home.

Within the location phrase, the order of constituents is from the largest to the smallest. Letters are addressed following this principle.

中国北京朝阳区建国门外大街一号
中國北京潮陽區建國門外大街一號
Zhōngguó Běijīng Cháoyáng qū Jiànguó mén wài dà jiē yī hào
China Beijing Chaoyang District Jiangguo Gate Outer Road Number 1 →
Number 1, Jiangguo Gate Outer Road, Chaoyang District, Beijing, China

4.5 The position of ‘time when’ phrases

A phrase that indicates the ‘time when’ a situation takes place occurs at the beginning of the predicate.

subject + time when + predicate

我每天喝咖啡。
Wǒ méitiān hē kāfēi.
I drink coffee every day.
subject + time when + predicate

He eats dinner every day with his girlfriend.

If ‘time when’ is emphasized or contrasted with another time, it may occur before the subject:

Yesterday I was a bit uncomfortable. Today it is no longer a problem.

Within the ‘time when’ phrase, the order of constituents is from the largest block of time to the smallest block of time:

Yesterday evening 8 o’clock → 8 o’clock last night.

The relative order of the ‘time when’ phrase and the location phrase

When a sentence includes both a ‘time when’ phrase and a location phrase, ‘time when’ generally occurs before location.

subject + time when + location + verb phrase

I eat at home every day.

Adverbs occur at the beginning of the predicate, before the verb and any prepositional phrase. Adverbs usually occur after the ‘time when’ phrase.

Last month I only saw one movie.
4.8 The position of negation

Negation occurs before the verb and any prepositional phrase. It usually occurs after an adverb, though certain adverbs may either precede or follow negation.

15, 23.2

4.9 The position of duration phrases

Duration phrases are time phrases that indicate the length of time that an action occurs. Duration phrases directly follow the verb. Unlike English, there is no preposition associated with the expression of duration in Mandarin.

Wǒ zài Zhōngguó zhù le sān nián.
I in China lived three years. → I lived in China for three years.

Wǒ zuótiān wǎnshàng shuì le bā gè zhōngtóu.
I yesterday evening slept eight hours. → I slept for eight hours yesterday.

4.10 Order within the noun phrase

The main noun in the noun phrase, the head noun, occurs as the last word in the phrase. All phrases that describe or modify the head noun occur before the head noun.

nà běn hěn yǒu yìsi de shū
that very interesting book

4.11 Phrase order in questions

In Mandarin, the order of phrases in questions is identical to the order of phrases in statements. Unlike English and many European languages, Mandarin questions are not characterized by a special question word order.

Statement

Wǒ xǐhuan tā.
I like him.
Phrase order in questions

Content question

你喜歡誰？
你喜歡誰？
Nǐ xihuan shéi?
Who do you like?

Yes–no question

你喜欢他嗎？
你喜歡他嗎？
Nǐ xihuan tā ma?
Do you like him?
5

Nouns

In Mandarin, the same form of the noun is used in subject and object position.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Object</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>猫吃魚。</td>
<td>我養cat。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>猫吃魚。</td>
<td>我養貓。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Māo chī yú.</td>
<td>Wǒ yǎng māo。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cats eat fish.</td>
<td>I raise cat/cats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他学中文。</td>
<td>我喜歡他。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他学中文。</td>
<td>我喜歡他。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tā xué Zhōngwén.</td>
<td>Wǒ xīhuān tā。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He studies Chinese.</td>
<td>I like him.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With the exception of the written form of the third person pronoun, tā (see below), Mandarin nouns are not marked for gender, and there is not the distinction between masculine, feminine and neuter found in many European languages. The properties of Mandarin nouns are described here.

5.1 Common nouns

Most nouns are common nouns. Their referents may be concrete (paper zhī ‘paper,’ 桌子 zhōuzi ‘table,’ water shuǐ ‘water’) or abstract (thought sīxiǎng ‘thought,’ 原则 yuánzé ‘principle,’ 自由 zìyóu ‘freedom’). Mandarin makes no grammatical distinction between ‘mass’ and ‘count’ nouns.

Mandarin common nouns have a single, invariant form. They do not reflect number, and the same form of the noun is used whether the noun is singular or plural. When no number is used with a noun, the noun is understood to be neither singular nor plural, but simply unspecified for number. In addition, nouns that occur without any modifiers or descriptions have a general rather than a specific reference. For example, 书/shū refers to ‘book’ in general and not to any specific book.

When it is necessary to indicate the number of a noun, the noun is modified by a number + classifier phrase. The classifier is required after the number. Number + noun without an intervening classifier is ungrammatical. Compare the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Say this</th>
<th>Not this</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>一本书/一本書</td>
<td>*一本书/一書</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yi běn shū</td>
<td>yi shū</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one book</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Pronouns

#### 5.2

**Say this** | **Not this**
--- | ---
三个人/三個人 | *三人
sān gè rén | sān rén
three people

#### 6, 8

When a specifier 这/這 zhè, zhèi ‘this/these,’ 那 nà, nèi ‘that/those,’ or the question specifier 哪 nà, nèi ‘which’ modifies the noun, it also must be followed by a classifier or number + classifier. If the number is one, the number may be omitted.

| 这(一)本书 | 那两本书 | 哪三本书？
--- | --- | ---
zhè (yì) běn shū | nà liǎng bèn shū | nà sān běn shū?
this book | those two books | which three books?

#### 7

A small number of common nouns referring to people can be suffixed by -们/們 men, the suffix that also marks the plural form of pronouns (see section 5.2 below).

| 同志们/同志們 | tóngzhímen | comrades
--- | --- | ---
孩子们/孩子們 | háizímen | children
学生们/學生們 | xuéshèngmen | students

This use of -们/們 men with common nouns is relatively rare. It conveys a sense of inclusion and is sometimes used when addressing an audience.

同学们，今天我们听马老师作报告。
同学們，今天我們聽馬老師作報告。
Tóngxuémen, jīntiān wǒmen tíng Mǎ lǎoshī zuò báogào.
Fellow students, today we are going to listen to a report by teacher Ma.

When a noun is suffixed with 们/們 men it cannot be further modified with any kind of modifying phrase, including a number + classifier phrase.

**Say this** | **Not this**
--- | ---
我们的同学 | *我们的同学们
wǒmen de tóngxué | wǒmen de tóngxuémen
our fellow students

#### 9

**5.2 Pronouns**

Mandarin has first, second, and third person pronouns and has a reflexive pronoun.
NOUNS

Mandarin pronouns have the following properties:

- Pronouns are not distinguished in terms of grammatical role. The same pronouns are used for subject, object, possession, etc.
- Pronouns have singular and plural forms. The suffix -们 men is added to the singular form to make it the plural form.
- Gender is not reflected in the spoken language. The written language has distinctions for the second and third person pronouns, though only the third person gender distinction is commonly used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First person</strong></td>
<td>我 wǒ</td>
<td>我们 wǒmen (exclusive or neutral)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>l/me</td>
<td>we/us (exclusive or neutral)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>咱们 zánmen</td>
<td>we (inclusive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Second person</strong></td>
<td>你 ní (masculine or neutral)</td>
<td>你们 nǐmen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>你 nǐ (feminine)</td>
<td>you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Third person</strong></td>
<td>他 tā (masculine or neutral)</td>
<td>他们 tāmen (masculine or non-specific for gender)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>她 tā (feminine)</td>
<td>她们 tāmen (feminine)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>它/牠 tā (non-human or inanimate)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reflexive</strong></td>
<td>自己 zǐjī self</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2 The reflexive pronoun 自己 zǐjī ‘self’

Mandarin has only one reflexive pronoun, and it is not marked for person or gender. To indicate person, the reflexive may optionally be preceded by the relevant personal pronoun.

我自己 wǒ zǐjī
我/我们 wǒmen zǐjī

我自己 myself
我/我们 ourselves

你自己 nǐ zǐjī
你们 nǐmen zǐjī

你自己 yourself
你们/你们 yourselves

他自己/她自己 tā zǐjī
他们/她们 tāmen zǐjī

他自己 himself, herself
他们/她们 themselves

自己 zǐjī ‘self’ is also used without a personal pronoun. When it occurs in object position, it is understood to refer to the subject:

Nǐ zài Zhōngguó yīdìng děi bā zǐjī zhàogù hǎo.
When you are in China you certainly should take good care of yourself.
Pronouns

Méi yǒu rén bù xīhuan zìjī de.
No one doesn’t like him/herself.

自己 zìjī ‘self’ may be used to indicate contrast with another noun phrase or pronoun:

Wǒ xiāng tā men jiēhūn, kěshì wǒ zìjī bù xiǎng jiēhūn.
I hope they will get married, but I myself don’t plan to get married.

This is my affair. You need not be concerned with it.

The inclusive pronoun 咱们/咱们 zánmen ‘we’

The inclusive pronoun 咱们/咱们 zánmen ‘we’ is used in northern dialects of Mandarin. 咱们/咱们 zánmen ‘we’ refers to the speaker, other people associated with the speaker, and to the addressee. When a speaker uses 咱们/咱们 zánmen ‘we’ as the subject, he or she includes you in the remarks.

Zánmen dōu shì zìjī rén.
We are all family. (We, including you, are all one family.)

‘Inclusive’ 咱们/咱们 zánmen contrasts with an ‘exclusive’ use of ‘we’ that is associated with 我们/我们 wǒmen. In the exclusive sense, 我们/我们 wǒmen refers to the speaker and others associated with the speaker but not to the addressee.

Wǒmen huānyíng nǐ.
We welcome you.

咱们/咱们 zánmen only has the inclusive meaning. In addition, 咱们/咱们 zánmen is only used as subject, and never as object.

我们/我们 wǒmen can have either inclusive or exclusive meaning and it occurs as subject and object. It is much more commonly used than 咱们/咱们 zánmen.

Modification of pronouns

Pronouns represent an entire noun phrase. Therefore, in general, they are not further modified. However, Mandarin has a small number of literary expressions in which the pronoun is modified:

kělián de wǒ
poor me
### Possession involving pronouns

Mandarin does not have possessive pronouns. The meaning of possessive pronouns is conveyed by *pronoun* + 的 *de*.

- 我的朋友
  - wǒ de péngyou
  - my friend

- 他的小狗
  - tā de xiáogǒu
  - his puppy

Here is a table showing the Mandarin equivalent of English possessive pronouns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>my</td>
<td>我的</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>wǒ de</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>our</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>我们的/我們的</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>wǒmen de</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>咱們的/咱們的</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>zánmen de</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>your</td>
<td>你的</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nǐ de</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>你們的/你們的</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nímen de</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>his (hers)</td>
<td>他的 (她的)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tā de</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>their</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>他們的/他們的</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tāmen de</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflexive ones</td>
<td>自己的</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>zìjī de</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interrogative whose?</td>
<td>誰的?誰的?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>shéi de?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Proper nouns

Proper nouns include personal names, place names, names of companies, names of schools, etc.

- 牛津大学
  - Niǔjīn Dàxué
  - Oxford University
Proper nouns, like pronouns, typically occur without additional modification. As is the case with pronouns, Mandarin has a small number of literary expressions in which the proper noun may be modified. Here are some examples.

可爱王美玲
kě'ài Wáng Méiling
Charming Wang Meiling

山清水秀的台湾
shānqīng shuǐxiù de Táiwān
Taiwan of green hills and clear streams → beautiful Taiwan

地大物博的美国
dìdà wūbó de Méiguó
America vast in territory and rich in resources
6

Numbers

6.1 Mandarin numbers 0–99

6.1.1 Numbers 0–10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>零 líng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>一 yī</td>
<td>一 yī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>二 èr, 两/兩 liǎng</td>
<td>二 èr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>三 sān</td>
<td>三 sān</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>四 sì</td>
<td>四 sì</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>五 wǔ</td>
<td>五 wǔ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>六 liù</td>
<td>六 liù</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>七 qī</td>
<td>七 qī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>八 bā</td>
<td>八 bā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>九 jiǔ</td>
<td>九 jiǔ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>十 shí</td>
<td>十 shí</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number 2 occurs in two forms.

- When counting without a classifier, the number 2 is always 二 èr.

  yī - èr - sān - sì - wǔ

- When it occurs in a phrase with a classifier, the number 2 is 两/兩 liǎng.

  liǎng běn shū
  two books

  liǎng gè rén
  two people

9.1

Telephone numbers are recited as a series of single digits from zero to 9. When reciting a telephone number, the number 2 is always 二 èr.

我的电话号码是八六二二五六〇二。

Wǒ de diànhuà hàomǎ shì bā liù èr èr wǔ liù líng èr.

My phone number is 8 6 2 5 6 0 2.
6.1.2 Numbers 11–19

Numbers 11–19 consist of the number 10 [十 shí] followed by the number 1 [一 yī] through 9 [九 jiǔ] as follows. Note that the number 12 is 十二 shí’èr and not *十两/十兩 shí liǎng.

11 十一 shíyī 16 十六 shíliù
12 十二 shí’èr 17 十七 shíqī
13 十三 shísān 18 十八 shíbā
14 十四 shísi 19 十九 shíjiǔ
15 十五 shíwǔ

6.1.3 Numbers 20–90

Numbers 20, 30, 40, etc. consist of the numbers 2 [二 èr] through 9 [九 jiǔ] followed by the number 10 [十 shí] as follows:

20 二十 èrshí 60 六十 liùshí
30 三十 sānshí 70 七十 qīshí
40 四十 sìshí 80 八十 bāshí
50 五十 wǔshí 90 九十 jiǔshí

The numbers 21, 22, etc. are formed as follows:

21 二十一 èrshíyī 57 五十七 wǔshíqī
22 二十二 èrshí’èr 68 六十八 liùshíbā
35 三十五 sānshíwǔ 74 七十四 qīshísì
46 四十六 sìshíliù 99 九十九 jiǔshíjiǔ

6.2 Number 100 and higher

6.2.1 100, 1000, 10,000 and 100,000,000

Chinese has distinct words for multiples of 100, 1000, 10,000, and 100,000,000 as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hundreds</th>
<th>百 bāi</th>
<th>100</th>
<th>一百 yī bāi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thousands</td>
<td>千 qiān</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>一千 yī qiān</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ten thousands</td>
<td>万/萬 wàn</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>一万 yī wàn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hundred millions</td>
<td>亿/億 yì</td>
<td>100,000,000</td>
<td>一亿/一億 yī yì</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These number words function as classifiers. Therefore, the number 2 is usually 两/兩 liǎng when it occurs immediately before the word for ‘hundred,’ ‘thousand,’ or ‘ten-thousand’: 两百/兩百 liǎng bǎi, 两千/兩千 liǎng qiān, 两万/兩萬 liǎng wàn, etc. In many regional dialects of Mandarin, 二百 èr bǎi, 二千 èr qiān, 二万 èr wàn, etc. is also acceptable.

6.2.2 Forming numbers through 9,999

Numbers up to 9,999 follow the same pattern as in English:

352 三百 sān bǎi 五十 wǔshí 二 èr
6.2 NUMBERS

1,670  一千  六百  七十
yī qiān  liù bǎi  qīshí

3,482  三千  四百  八十  二
sān qiān  sì bǎi  bāshí  èr

9,222  九千  二百 or 两百/两千  二十  二
jiǔ qiān  èr bǎi or liǎng bǎi  èrshí  èr

6.2.3 ‘Zero’ as a placeholder

The word 〇/零 ling may be used when the ‘hundreds’ place or the ‘tens’ place is empty, provided there is a number before and after 〇/零 ling. For example, it can be used to mark the ‘hundreds’ place when thousands and tens are filled, as in the following number.

7,066  七千    零          六十 六
qī qiān  líng  liù shí  liù

It can be used to mark the ‘tens’ place when hundreds and single numbers are filled, as in the following number.

9,102  九千    一百          〇  二
jiǔ qiān  yī bǎi  líng  èr

When two consecutive places are empty, 〇/零 ling occurs only once.

6,006  六千    零          六
liù qiān  líng  liù

6.2.4 Forming numbers 10,000 to 100,000,000

Languages read numbers in terms of the categories that they distinguish. English distinguishes tens, hundreds, thousands, millions, and up. Numbers between one thousand and one million are read in terms of the numbers of thousands that they contain.

Chinese distinguishes the categories of tens, hundreds, thousands, ten-thousands, and hundred millions. Numbers between ten thousand and one-hundred million are read in terms of the number of ten-thousands that they contain. Compare the way that English and Chinese read the following numbers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,000 one thousand</td>
<td>一千 yī qiān one thousand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000 ten thousand</td>
<td>一万 yī wàn one ten-thousand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100,000 one hundred thousand</td>
<td>十万 shí wàn ten ten-thousands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000,000 one million</td>
<td>百万 bǎi wàn one hundred ten-thousands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000,000 ten million</td>
<td>千万 qiān wàn one thousand ten-thousands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100,000,000 one hundred million</td>
<td>亿 yì ten亿 shí yì ten one hundred-millions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Formal characters for numbers

Observe how these numbers are read in Chinese.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>亿/億</th>
<th>万/萬</th>
<th>千</th>
<th>百</th>
<th>十</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25,250</td>
<td>两万</td>
<td>五千</td>
<td>二百</td>
<td>五十</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>225,250</td>
<td>二十二万</td>
<td>五千</td>
<td>二百</td>
<td>五十</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,225,250</td>
<td>两百二十二万</td>
<td>五千</td>
<td>二百</td>
<td>五十</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22,225,250</td>
<td>两千二百二十二万</td>
<td>五千</td>
<td>二百</td>
<td>五十</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>522,225,250</td>
<td>五亿</td>
<td>五千亿</td>
<td>五百</td>
<td>五十</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>壹</td>
<td>一</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>二</td>
<td>二</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>三</td>
<td>叁</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>四</td>
<td>肆</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>五</td>
<td>伍</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>六</td>
<td>陸</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>七</td>
<td>柒</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>八</td>
<td>捌</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>九</td>
<td>玖</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>十</td>
<td>拾</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>百</td>
<td>佰</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000</td>
<td>千</td>
<td>角</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter 8 presents the words and phrases associated with money.
### Ordinal numbers

To make a number ordinal, add the prefix 第 di before the number:

- 1st 第一 di yī
- 2nd 第二 di èr
- 3rd 第三 di sān
- 4th 第四 di sì
- 5th 第五 di wǔ
- 6th 第六 di liù
- 7th 第七 di qī
- 8th 第八 di bā
- 9th 第九 di jiǔ
- 10th 第十 di shí
- 20th 第二十 di èrshí
- 50th 第五十 di wǔshí
- 77th 第七十七 di qīshíqī
- 83rd 第八十三 di bāshí sān
- 95th 第九十 di jiǔshíwǔ
- 100th 第一百 di yībǎi
- 1000th 第一千 di yīqiān

#### NOTE

In ordinal numbers, 'second' is always 第二 di èr and never 第两/第三 di liǎng.

### Estimates and approximations

To indicate that a quantity is ‘more or less’ than the stated number, use the phrase 左右 zuò yòu ‘more or less,’ as follows:

- number + classifier (+ noun) + 左右 zuò yòu
  - 五十个(人)左右
  - 五十個(人)左右
  - wǔshí gè (rén) zuò yòu
  - about 50 (people) (50 people more or less)
  - 一百块钱左右
  - 一百塊錢左右
  - yībǎi kuài qián zuò yòu
  - around $100 ($100 more or less)

To indicate that a quantity is almost but not quite the stated amount, use 差不多 chàbuduō + number ‘almost number.’

- 差不多 + number + classifier (+ noun)
  - 差不多五十个(人)
  - 差不多五十個(人)
  - chàbuduō wǔshí gè (rén)
  - almost 50 people
  - 差不多一百块(钱)
  - 差不多一百塊(錢)
  - chàbuduō yībǎi kuài (qián)
  - almost $100

To indicate that a quantity is greater than or equal to the stated number use 以上 yǐshàng ‘or more.’ For a more formal expression of the same meaning, use 之上 zhī shàng.

- number (+ classifier + noun) + 以上 yǐshàng/之上 zhī shàng
  - 五十(个人)以上
  - 五十(個人)之上
  - wǔshí (gè rén) yǐshàng
  - wǔshí (gè rén) zhī shàng
  - 50 (people) or more
  - 50 (people) or more
Fractions, percentages, decimals, half, and multiples

To indicate that the actual number is less than or equal to the stated number, use yìxià ‘or fewer.’ For a more formal expression of the same meaning, use zhī xià.

\[
\text{number (+ classifier + noun) + 以下 yìxià/之下 zhī xià (50 people) or less 50 (people) or less 50 or fewer (people) or less}
\]

To indicate the actual time lies within the specified period of time, use yīnèi. For a more formal expression of the same meaning, use zhī nèi.

\[
\text{一年以内 yī nián yīnèi (within one year) 一年之内 yī nián zhī nèi (within one year)}
\]

To indicate the actual number is more than the stated number, use duō ‘more than.’

\[
\text{number + 多 duō + classifier (+ noun) (50多个人 五十多个人 50 or more (people) or more)}
\]

To indicate an approximation within a small range, use two numbers in a sequence as follows:

\[
\text{我一两天就回来。 Wō yī liǎng tiān jiù huí lai. (I’ll come back in a day or two)}
\]

\[
\text{这个东西卖三四十块。 Zhège dōngxi mài sān sì kuài qián. (This thing sells for three or four dollars)}
\]

This expression can be used together with 左右 zuòyòu:

\[
\text{这个东西卖三四十块左右。 Zhège dōngxi mài sān sì kuài qián zuòyòu. (This thing sells for around three or four dollars)}
\]
NUMBERS

三分之一
sān fēn zhī yī
one-third (1/3)

Note that the ‘whole’ is expressed first and the ‘part of the whole’ is expressed second.

1/4 四分之一 sì fēn zhī yī
2/5 五分之二 wǔ fēn zhī èr
9/10 十分之九 shí fēn zhī jiǔ
7/9 九分之七 jiǔ fēn zhī qī
1/15 十五分之一 shíwǔ fēn zhī yī

6.6.2 Percentages

Percentages are expressed as parts of 100. The expression used for percentages is the same as for fractions, but the ‘whole’ is always 百 ‘100’:

百分之 number 百分之 shí fēn zhī

10% 百分之十 bǎi fēn zhī shí
25% 百分之二十五 bǎi fēn zhī érshíwǔ
37% 百分之三十七 bǎi fēn zhī sānshíqī
66% 百分之六十六 bǎi fēn zhī liùshíliù
99% 百分之九十九 bǎi fēn zhī jiǔshíjiǔ

6.6.3 Decimals

Decimals are recited as a series of single digits and zeros after a decimal point. The decimal point is read as 点 diǎn:

1.1 一点一/一点一 yī diǎn yī
2.5 (二 or 两点五/二 or 两) liǎng diǎn wǔ
14.56 十四点五/十四点五 shísì diǎn wǔ liù
30.808 三十点八零八/三十点八零八 sānshí diǎn bā líng bā
8.06 八点六/ 八点六 bā diǎn lìng liù

If there is no number before the decimal point, the fraction may optionally be recited as 〇点/点 (XXX) 零 diǎn (XXX):

.35 〇点三五/〇点三五 líng diǎn sān wǔ
.27 〇点二七/〇点二七 líng diǎn èr qī

NOTE

Chinese often omits the final zero after a decimal point. For example, $8.60 may also be written as $8.6.

6.6.4 Indicating ‘half’

The word 半 bàn means ‘half.’

To indicate half of something, place 半 bàn before the classifier associated with the thing.

半碗饭/半碗饭 bàn wǎn fàn
half a bowl of rice
To indicate *one or more things and a half*, place 半 immediately after the classifier associated with the thing: *number + classifier + 半*

三碗半(飯)/ 三碗半(飯)
*sàn wăn bàn (fàn)*
three and a half bowls (of rice)

三本半(書)/ 三本半(書)
*sàn běn bàn (shū)*
three and a half volumes (of books)

三杯半(水)
*sàn bēi bàn (shuǐ)*
three and a half cups (of water)

To indicate ‘half’ in time expressions, see 45.1.3, 45.1.4, 45.1.5

**6.6.5 Indicating multiples of a quantity with 倍 bèi**

倍 bèi is a classifier and is always preceded by a number: 一倍 yī bèi, 两倍/liàng bèi, 三倍 sān bèi, etc.

一倍 yī bèi means ‘one fold,’ or ‘one time more than a given quantity.’ 两倍/liàng bèi means ‘twofold,’ 三倍 sān bèi means ‘threefold,’ etc.

倍 bèi often occurs with expressions that imply an increase:

价格都增加了一倍了。
*Prices have all doubled (increased by one-fold).*

今年这本书比去年贵了一倍。
*This year this book is twice as expensive as it was last year.*

倍 bèi also occurs in equational sentences such as the following:

我的书是你的书的两倍。
*(lit. ‘My books are the equivalent of two times your books.’)*
If 半 bàn ‘half’ occurs, it follows 倍 bèi:

今年学中文的学生是去年的一倍半。
今年學中文的學生是去年的一倍半。

Jìnnián xué Zhōngwén de xuéshēng shì qùnián de yī bèi bàn.
The number of students studying Chinese this year is 1½ times greater than last year.

6.6.4, 26.1

6.6.6 Discounts, sales, and percentage off the price

The expression for discount or sale is the verb phrase 折 dà zhé.

Discounts are expressed as a percentage of the original or full price.

九折 jiǔ zhé is 90% of the original price, or 10% off. 七点五折/qīdiǎn wǔ zhé is 75% of the original price, or 25% off. Here are additional examples of discounts. Discounts are written with either Chinese or Arabic numerals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>折扣</th>
<th>百折</th>
<th>80% of original price</th>
<th>20% off</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>或</td>
<td>五折</td>
<td>50% of original price</td>
<td>50% off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>或</td>
<td>半折</td>
<td>半 of original price</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>二折</td>
<td>20% of original price</td>
<td>80% off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>一折</td>
<td>10% of original price</td>
<td>90% off</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To find out if an item is discounted or on sale, you can ask:

打折吗? or 打不打折? or 有折吗?
Dà zhé ma? or Dà bù dà zhé? or Yǒu zhé ma?
Do you discount? Do you discount? Is there a discount?

To find out how much of a discount there is, you can ask:

打几折?/打幾折?
Dà jǐ zhé?
How much discount is there?

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6.7 Lucky and unlucky numbers

Some numbers have special significance in Chinese based on their value in traditional Chinese numerology or because they are near-homophones with a word with positive or negative connotations. Here some numbers with special significance.

Numbers with negative connotations – unlucky numbers

四 sì (near homophone with 死 sǐ ‘to die’)
五 wǔ (near homophone with 无/無 wú ‘nothing’)

36
Numbers with positive connotations – lucky numbers

六 liù (near homophone with 留 liú ‘remain, leftover/excess’)
八 bā (near homophone with 发 fā ‘prosperity’)

The special significance of odd and even numbers

• 单号/单号 dānhào ‘odd numbers.’ Odd numbered items are appropriate for funerals and other sad occasions.
• 双号/双号 shuānghào ‘even numbers.’ Even numbered items (except for the number 4) are appropriate for weddings and other happy occasions.

Numbers used in phrases and expressions

Numbers, especially sequential numbers, are often used in Chinese phrases.

1's and 2's

yi qìng èr chū
perfectly clearly
他说得一清二楚。
他说得一清二楚。
Tā shuō de yī qíng èr chū.
He said it perfectly clearly.

3's and 4's

Zhāng Sān Lǐ Sì
John Doe and Mary Smith (ordinary people)

bù sān bù sì
neither here nor there, questionable, no good

7's and 8's

luàn qí bā zāo
a mess/disorganized
qī shàng bā xià
to be in an unsettled state of mind

— yī as a marker of sequence

In addition to functioning as a number, the word — yī is also used to indicate sequence in the following structure:
As soon as he sees (his) children he is happy.

Numbers that are used as words

Numbers that are homophonous or near homophones with words may be used as abbreviations for words. This kind of substitution is particularly common on the internet and in written advertisements and signs. Examples include:

5 3 0 五三零
   wǔ sān líng
   (我想你)
   (wǒ xiǎng nǐ)
   I'm thinking of you – I miss you.

5 2 0 五二○
    wǔ èr líng
    (我爱你)
    (wǒ ài nǐ)
    I love you

8 8 八八
   bā bā
   (拜拜)
   (bàibài)
   bye bye
Specifiers and demonstratives

这/這 zhè and 那 nà have two functions.

They can be used as *demonstratives*, or words that are used to point out an item:

- 那是汉语词典。
- 那是漢語辭典。
- Nà shì Hànyǔ cídiǎn.
  *That* is a Chinese language dictionary.

They can be used as *specifiers*, or words that occur as part of a noun phrase and that identify specific items:

- 这三本书
- 这三本書
- zhè sān běn shū
  *these* three books

When used as specifiers, these words each have an alternative pronunciation. 这/這 may be pronounced zhè or zhèi. 那 may be pronounced nà or nèi. The choice of pronunciation varies by speaker and region of China.

7.1 这/這 zhè ‘this’ and 那 nà ‘that’ as demonstratives

As demonstratives, 这/這 zhè ‘this’ and 那 nà ‘that’ refer to an entire noun phrase, either a concrete object or an abstract concept. They always occur at the beginning of the sentence, and they serve as the subject of the sentence. They can occur in statements or in questions.

- 那是中文字典。
  *Nà shì Zhōngwén zìdiǎn.*
  That is a Chinese dictionary.

- 这是我的书。
  *Zhè shì wǒ de shū.*
  This is my book.

- 那是什么？
- 那是甚麽？
- Nà shì shénme?
  *What is that?*
  (lit. ‘That is what?’)
7.2 这/這 zhè, zhèi ‘this/these’ and 那 nà, nèi ‘that/those’ as specifiers

When they are used as specifiers, 这/這 zhè, zhèi ‘this/these’ and 那 nà, nèi ‘that/those’ are part of a noun phrase. They occur before the number if there is one, and before the classifier and the noun in this order:

specifier + (number) + classifier + noun

6, 8, 9

Here are examples of noun phrases that begin with specifiers. Following each noun phrase there is an example showing how the noun phrase is used in a sentence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun phrase that begins with a specifier</th>
<th>Sample sentence with the noun phrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>zhè sān běn shū</td>
<td>Zhè sān běn shū dōu hěn guì. These three books are all expensive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zhè zhèng yīnyuè</td>
<td>Wǒ hěn xǐhuan zhè zhèng yīnyuè. I like this kind of music very much.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nàge rén</td>
<td>Nàge rén hěn cōngmíng. That person is very intelligent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nàge diànyǐng</td>
<td>Wǒ yào kàn nàge diànyǐng. I want to see that movie.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notice that 这/這 zhè, zhèi and 那 nà, nèi do not have separate singular and plural forms.

7.3 这儿/這兒 zhèr and 这里/這裏 zhělǐ ‘here’; 那儿/那兒 nàr and 那里/那裏 nàlǐ ‘there’

这儿/這儿 zhèr (这儿/這里 zhělǐ) ‘here’ and 那儿/那兒 nàr (那里/那裏 nàlǐ) ‘there’ indicate location. 这儿/這儿 zhèr ‘here’ and 那儿/那兒 nàr ‘there’ are used in the north of China, including Beijing. 这里/這里 zhělǐ and 那里/那裏 nàlǐ are used in the south of China, including Taiwan. The meaning and use of 这儿/這儿 zhèr and 这里/這裏 zhělǐ is the same, as is the meaning and use of 那儿/那兒 nàr and 那里/那裏 nàlǐ.
nàlǐ. Each member of the pair is interchangeable in our examples here and throughout this book.

这儿/這兒 zhèr ‘here’ and 那儿/那兒 nàr ‘there’ may occur at the beginning of the sentence as the subject. As subjects, they may optionally be preceded by the location preposition 在 zài ‘at.’

(在)这儿有很多书店。
(在)這兒有很多書店。
(Zài) zhèr yǒu hěn duō shūdiàn.
Here (in this location) are a lot of bookstores.

(在)那儿没有停车场。
(在)那兒沒有停車場。
(Zài) nàr méi yǒu tíngchē cháng.
There (in that location) there aren’t any parking lots.

When they are not the subject they must be preceded by the location preposition 在 zài ‘at.’

我在这儿工作。
我在這兒工作。
Wǒ zài zhèr gōngzuò.
I work here.

我在这儿买东西。
我在那兒買東西。
Wǒ zài nàr mǎi dōngxì.
I shop there.

People cannot serve as location nouns. To make a person into a location, follow it with a location specifier.

请到这儿来。
請到這兒來。
Qǐng dào wǒ zhèr lái.
Please come to me. [to my location]

我们今天晚上小王那儿吃饭。
我們今天晚上小王那兒吃飯。
Wǒmen jīntiān wǎnshàng qù Xiǎo Wáng nàr chī fàn.
Tonight we’ll go to Xiao Wang’s to eat.

Question words that correspond to specifiers

• 哪 nǎ/néi ‘which?’ is the question word that corresponds to the specifier 那 nà.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 你要哪本书？ (lit. ‘You want which book?’) | (我要)那本(书)。
| 你要哪本書？                           | (我要)那本(書)。 |
| Nǐ yào nǎ bèn shū？            | (Wǒ yào) nà bèn (shū). |
• 哪儿/哪儿 nár ‘where?’ is the question word that corresponds to the location words这儿/这儿 zhèr ‘here’ and那儿/那儿 nàr ‘there.’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>哪儿有书店？</td>
<td>那儿有书店。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>哪儿有书店？</td>
<td>那儿有书店。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nàr yǒu shūdiàn?</td>
<td>Nàr yǒu shūdiàn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where is there a bookstore?</td>
<td>There is a bookstore there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你在哪儿工作？</td>
<td>我在这里工作。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你在哪儿工作？</td>
<td>我在这里工作。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nǐ zài nǎlǐ gōngzuò?</td>
<td>Wǒ zài zhèlǐ gōngzuò.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where do you work?</td>
<td>I work here.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24.6
Classifiers

8.1 The structure of phrases involving classifiers

A classifier is a word that occurs between the specifier and/or number and the noun. In Chinese, a classifier always occurs between a specifier or number and a noun in this order:

specifier + number + classifier + noun

Specified and/or number + classifier + noun forms a noun phrase.

NOTE
1 Classifiers are sometimes referred to as ‘measure words.’
2 In English, mass nouns such as ‘coffee’ and ‘rice’ and ‘sand’ occur with classifiers. In Chinese, all nouns occur with classifiers when they are preceded by a specifier and/or number.

Here are examples of noun phrases with specifiers, numbers, classifiers, and nouns. The classifier is emphasized in each example. The classifier is often omitted when a Mandarin noun phrase is translated into English.

Specifier + classifier + noun

这个人
zhè ge rén
this person

那个学校
nà ge xué xiào
that school

Number + classifier + noun

三本书
sān běn shū
three books

三杯咖啡
sān bēi kāfēi
three cups of coffee

Specifier + number + classifier + noun

这两碗饭
zhè liǎng wǎn fàn
these two bowls of rice

那些三本书
nà sān běn shū
those three books

8.2 Choosing the classifier

8.2.1 Nouns and associated classifiers

Most nouns are associated with a particular classifier. Classifiers are often not predictable from the noun so they must be memorized. Some dictionaries indicate the classifier associated with a noun.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>Classifier</th>
<th>Noun phrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>书/書</td>
<td>本</td>
<td>三本书/三本書</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shū</td>
<td>bèn</td>
<td>volume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>book</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>紙/紙</td>
<td>zhăng</td>
<td>一张纸/一张紙</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zhi</td>
<td>sheet</td>
<td>one piece of paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paper</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>鋼筆/鋼筆</td>
<td>zhī</td>
<td>这枝钢笔/这支钢笔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gāngbǐ</td>
<td>branch</td>
<td>this pen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>房子</td>
<td>suò</td>
<td>一所房子</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fángzì</td>
<td>building</td>
<td>one house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>house</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>猫/貓</td>
<td>zhī</td>
<td>两只猫/两只貓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>māo</td>
<td>classifier for animals</td>
<td>liàng zhī māo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cat</td>
<td></td>
<td>two cats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>車/車</td>
<td>liàng</td>
<td>三辆车/三辆車</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chē</td>
<td>classifier for cars</td>
<td>sān liàng chē</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>car</td>
<td></td>
<td>three cars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>椅子</td>
<td>bà</td>
<td>一把椅子</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yǐzì</td>
<td>classifier for things with handles</td>
<td>yī bā yǐzì</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chair</td>
<td></td>
<td>one chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>桌子</td>
<td>zhăng</td>
<td>那张桌子/那張桌子</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zhuōzǐ</td>
<td>sheet</td>
<td>that table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>table</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>照片</td>
<td>zhăng</td>
<td>这张照片/這張照片</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zhaòpiàn</td>
<td>zhăng</td>
<td>this photograph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>photograph</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>电影/電影</td>
<td>bù</td>
<td>一部电影/一部電影</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diànyǐng</td>
<td>classifier for film</td>
<td>yī bù diànyǐng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>movie</td>
<td></td>
<td>one movie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>衣服</td>
<td>jiàn</td>
<td>这件衣服/這件衣服</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yīfu</td>
<td>classifier for items</td>
<td>zhè jiàn yīfú</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clothing</td>
<td></td>
<td>this article of clothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>树/樹</td>
<td>kē</td>
<td>一棵树/一棵樹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shū</td>
<td>classifier for trees</td>
<td>yī kē shū</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tree</td>
<td></td>
<td>a tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>人</td>
<td>gě</td>
<td>一个人/一個人</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rén</td>
<td>classifier for people and many other nouns</td>
<td>yī gě rén</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>person</td>
<td></td>
<td>one person</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NOTE
位 wèi is a polite classifier for people. When it is used, the noun typically does not occur:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Classifier</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>一位</td>
<td>yī wèi</td>
<td>one person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>两位/兩位</td>
<td>liǎng wèi</td>
<td>two people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.2.2 Classifiers that indicate a property of the noun

Some classifiers indicate a property of the noun. These classifiers are often translated into English:

Shape of noun

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>Classifier</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>zhāng</td>
<td>zhāng</td>
<td>a flat sheet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The shape of the container of the noun

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>Classifier</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bēi</td>
<td>bēi</td>
<td>a cup of tea</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The weight of the noun

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>Classifier</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>jīn</td>
<td>jīn</td>
<td>1/2 kilo of apples</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The value of the noun

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>Classifier</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>máo</td>
<td>máo qián</td>
<td>a dime's worth of money</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Different classifiers may be used to describe a noun in different ways.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>Classifier</th>
<th>Noun phrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fàn</td>
<td>wàn</td>
<td>yī wán fàn one bowl of rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rice</td>
<td>jīn</td>
<td>liàng jīn fàn 1/2 kilo of rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>面包/麺包</td>
<td>tiáo</td>
<td>yī tiáo miàn bāo a loaf of bread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bread</td>
<td>kuài</td>
<td>yī kuài miàn bāo a slice of bread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>水</td>
<td>píng</td>
<td>yī píng shuǐ a bottle of water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>water</td>
<td>bēi</td>
<td>yī bēi shuǐ a glass of water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>水</td>
<td>hú</td>
<td>yī hú shuǐ a pot/vase of water</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The most commonly used classifier is 个/個 个. It is used with many different nouns including people and things. It does not contribute any meaning to the noun phrase in which it occurs. It is generally pronounced with neutral tone.

- 一个人/一個人  a person
- 一个问题/一個問題  a problem/a question
- 一个东西/一個東西  a thing (a physical object)

In mainland China, in informal speech, 个/個 个 can be used as the classifier for almost any noun, even those with an established classifier. This phenomenon is sometimes referred to as 个化/個化 个化 ‘ge-ization.’

- 一个车/一個車  a car
- 一个房子/一個房子  a house

### Omission of the head noun

In modern Mandarin, if a noun phrase includes a specifier and/or a number, the classifier may not be omitted. However, the head noun may be omitted from the noun phrase.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Say this</th>
<th>Not this</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>三本书 [or] 三本</td>
<td>*三书</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>三本书</td>
<td>三书</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>三個本 [or] 三個</td>
<td>三個</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>三個本</td>
<td>三個</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>那个学校 [or] 那个</td>
<td>*那学校</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>那个学校</td>
<td>那学校</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>那个学校 [or] 那個</td>
<td>那個</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>三个学校 [or] 三个</td>
<td>三个学校</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>三个学校</td>
<td>三个学校</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>那个学校 [or] 那個</td>
<td>那個</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>那个学校</td>
<td>那个</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>三个学校 [or] 三个</td>
<td>三个</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>三个学校</td>
<td>三个</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**8.4 Classifiers that occur without a noun**

The words for day and year are classifiers. They may be preceded by a number, and they are never followed by a noun.

天 \( tān \) day  
一年 \( yī nián \) one year  
两天/兩天 \( liǎng tiān \) two days

年 \( nián \) year  
一年 \( yī nián \) one year  
两年/兩年 \( liǎng nián \) two years

**8.5 Money and prices**

In Chinese, money and prices are expressed as noun phrases. The units of money, dollars, dimes, and cents, are expressed by classifiers. The word for money, 钱/錢 \( qián \), sometimes occurs at the end of the noun phrase.

In informal and spoken contexts, the classifiers for money are as follows:

块/塊 \( kuài \) dollar  
毛 \( máo \) dime  
分 \( fēn \) cent

分 \( fēn \) represents 1 cent to 9 cents. Multiples of 10 cents are represented by 毛 \( máo \).

五块/五塊 \( wǔ kuài \)  
三毛 \( sān máo \)  
八分 \( bā fēn \)  
錢/錢 \( qián \)  
\( = \$5.38 \)

四十八块/四十八塊 \( sìshíbā kuài \)  
九毛 \( jiǔ máo \)  
六分 \( liù fēn \)  
錢/錢 \( qián \)  
\( = \$48.96 \)

The number 2 in the phrase 2 dollars, 2 dimes (20 cents) or 2 cents may be either 二 \( èr \) or 两/兩 \( liǎng \).

三块/三塊 \( sān kuài \)  
四毛 \( sì máo \)  
二分 \( èr fēn \)  
錢/錢 \( qián \)  
\( = \$3.42 \)

or  
两/兩 \( liǎng \) 分

The noun 钱/錢 \( qián \) ‘money' need not occur in a money phrase. If it is absent, the classifier that immediately precedes it may also be absent.

四十八块/四十八塊 \( sìshíbā kuài \)  
九毛 \( jiǔ máo \)  
六 \( liù \)  
\( = \$48.96 \)

If the classifier is absent, the number 2 can only be represented as 二 \( èr \) and not as 两/兩 \( liǎng \).

三块/三塊 \( sān kuài \)  
四毛 \( sì máo \)  
二 \( èr \)  
\( = \$3.42 \)

Chinese also has the following formal written classifiers for dollars and dimes.

元/圓 \( yuán \) dollar  
角 \( jiǎo \) dime

These are the classifiers used on currency and in formal financial transactions.
For the formal characters for numbers, see

6.3

When 元/圆 yuán and 角 jiao are used, the noun 钱/钱 qian does not occur in the money phrase. 元/圆 yuán and 角 jiao are often not used together in the same price. 角 jiao tends to occur only when the denomination is smaller than one 元/圆 yuán.

**Formal/written**

- $3.00  三元/圆 sān yuán
- $.60  六角 liù jiao
9

Noun phrases

A noun phrase consists of a noun and any words that describe or ‘modify’ the noun. Here is an example of a noun phrase with the noun emphasized.

三个大老虎
三個大老虎
sān gè dà láohǔ
three big tigers

Additional examples of noun phrases are presented below.

In this chapter, we refer to the noun that is being described or modified as the head noun and to the words or phrases that describe or modify the head noun as the modifier.

In Mandarin Chinese, the relative position of modifier and noun is constant:

In Chinese, all noun modifiers occur before the head noun.

9.1 Modifying a noun with a specifier and/or number

Nouns can be modified by

- a specifier (‘this,’ ‘that,’ ‘which?’)
- or a number (‘four,’ ‘twenty’),
- or a specifier and number together (‘these four,’ ‘those twenty,’ ‘which two?’)

In Mandarin, the classifier associated with the noun being modified must be included in the modifying phrase. The entire phrase precedes the head noun as follows:

specifier + classifier + noun

那本书
那本書
nà běn shū
do book

number + classifier + noun

两本 书
兩本 書
liǎng běn shū
two books
NOUN PHRASES

specifier + number + classifier + noun

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>那</td>
<td>三</td>
<td>个</td>
<td>人</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>那</td>
<td>三</td>
<td>個</td>
<td>人</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nà</td>
<td>sān</td>
<td>个</td>
<td>rén</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>哪</td>
<td>三</td>
<td>个</td>
<td>人</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>哪</td>
<td>三</td>
<td>個</td>
<td>人</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nà</td>
<td>sān</td>
<td>个</td>
<td>rén</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>which</td>
<td>three</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6, 7, 8

9.2 Modifying a noun with all other modifiers: modification with 的 de

Noun modifiers may also be nouns, pronouns, verbs, or phrases that include a verb. These kinds of modifiers are typically followed by the particle 的 de, and the noun phrase has the following form:

`modifier + 的 de + head noun`

NOTE

In English, when a modifier includes a verb, the modifier occurs after the head noun as a relative clause introduced by a relative pronoun (‘who,’ ‘whom,’ ‘which’) or a complementizer (‘that’). In these examples, the modifier of the noun is presented in square brackets.

that book [that I bought]
the people [who spoke to you]

In Mandarin, all modifiers precede the head noun. In addition, Mandarin has no words that correspond to relative pronouns or complementizers. Do not attempt to translate them into Chinese.

9.2.1 Examples of noun phrases with different types of modifiers

9.2.1.1 Modifiers that are nouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modifier</th>
<th>Head noun</th>
<th>Noun phrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>孩子</td>
<td>衣服</td>
<td>孩子的衣服</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>háizǐ</td>
<td>yīfu</td>
<td>háizǐ de yīfu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child</td>
<td>clothing</td>
<td>children’s clothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>车/車</td>
<td>速度</td>
<td>车的速度</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chē</td>
<td>sùdù</td>
<td>chē de sùdù</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>car</td>
<td>speed</td>
<td>the speed of a/the car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>马老师</td>
<td>学生</td>
<td>马老师的学生</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>馬老師</td>
<td>xuésheng</td>
<td>Má làoshi de xuésheng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor Ma</td>
<td>student(s)</td>
<td>Professor Ma’s student(s)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## 9.2 Modifying a noun with all other modifiers: modification with 的 de

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modifier</th>
<th>Head noun</th>
<th>Noun phrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>美国</td>
<td>城市</td>
<td>美国的城市</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>美國</td>
<td>chéngshì</td>
<td>Mèiguó de chéngshì</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mèiguó</td>
<td>city</td>
<td>America’s city (cities)/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America</td>
<td></td>
<td>a city (cities) in America.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 9.2.1.2 Modifiers that are pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modifier</th>
<th>Head noun</th>
<th>Noun phrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>我</td>
<td>車/車</td>
<td>我的車</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wǒ</td>
<td>chē</td>
<td>wǒ de chē</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I (my)</td>
<td>car</td>
<td>my car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他</td>
<td>家</td>
<td>他的家</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tā</td>
<td>jiā</td>
<td>tā de jiā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he (his)</td>
<td>home</td>
<td>his home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你们</td>
<td>书</td>
<td>你們的書</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你們</td>
<td>書</td>
<td>你們的書</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nǐmen</td>
<td>shū</td>
<td>nǐmen de shū</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you (your)</td>
<td>book(s)</td>
<td>your book(s)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notice that pronoun + 的 de serves the same function as a possessive pronoun in English and other languages. There are no possessive pronouns in Mandarin.

See Chapter 5 for a table showing the Mandarin equivalent of English possessive pronouns.

5.2.4, 25.2.2

### 9.2.1.3 Modifiers that are adjectival verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modifier</th>
<th>Head noun</th>
<th>Noun phrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>很贵</td>
<td>chē</td>
<td>很貴的車</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>很貴</td>
<td></td>
<td>很貴的車</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hěn guí</td>
<td>chē</td>
<td>hěn guí de chē</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a very expensive</td>
<td>car</td>
<td>a very expensive car</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 9.2.1.4 Modifiers that are stative verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modifier</th>
<th>Head noun</th>
<th>Noun phrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>喜欢</td>
<td>chē</td>
<td>我喜歡的車</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>喜歡</td>
<td></td>
<td>我喜歡的車</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xihuan</td>
<td>chē</td>
<td>wǒ xihuan de chē</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>like</td>
<td>car</td>
<td>a car that I like</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9.2.1.5 Modifiers that are action verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modifier</th>
<th>Head noun</th>
<th>Noun phrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>写</td>
<td>字</td>
<td>写的字</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>窗</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>写</td>
<td>zi</td>
<td>写 de zi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>write</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>a character that is written</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>来</td>
<td>人</td>
<td>来的人</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>来</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>来</td>
<td>rén</td>
<td>来 de rén</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>come</td>
<td>people/person</td>
<td>the people who have come/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9.2.1.6 Modifiers that are verb + object

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modifier</th>
<th>Head noun</th>
<th>Noun phrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>唱歌儿</td>
<td>女孩子</td>
<td>唱歌儿的女孩子</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>唱歌兒</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>唱歌兒</td>
<td>夫人</td>
<td>唱歌儿的人</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>王歌</td>
<td>女孩子</td>
<td>王歌的女学生</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>唱歌</td>
<td>女孩</td>
<td>唱歌的女孩</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>王歌</td>
<td>女孩</td>
<td>王歌的女孩</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>说书</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>说書</td>
<td>人</td>
<td>说書的人</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>卖书</td>
<td>人</td>
<td>卖书的人</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>卖書</td>
<td>rén</td>
<td>卖 de rén</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>卖书</td>
<td>person</td>
<td>the person who sells books</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9.2.1.7 Modifiers that are prepositional phrase + verb

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modifier</th>
<th>Head noun</th>
<th>Noun phrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>在公园里玩</td>
<td>人</td>
<td>在公园里玩的人</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>在公園里玩</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zài gōngyuán lǐ wán rén</td>
<td>zài gōngyuán lǐ wán de rén</td>
<td>people who are playing in the park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>play in the park</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>从日本来</td>
<td>学生</td>
<td>从日本来的学生</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>從日本來</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lòng Rìběn lái xuésheng</td>
<td>lòng Rìběn lái de xuésheng</td>
<td>a student who has come from Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>come from Japan</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9.2.1.8 Modifiers that are subject + verb sequences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modifier</th>
<th>Head noun</th>
<th>Noun phrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>他喜欢</td>
<td>东西</td>
<td>他喜欢的东西</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他喜歡</td>
<td>东西</td>
<td>他喜歡的东西</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tā xǐhuān</td>
<td>dōngxī</td>
<td>tā xǐhuān de dōngxī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he likes</td>
<td>things</td>
<td>the things that he likes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Noun modifiers in a series

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modifier</th>
<th>Head noun</th>
<th>Noun phrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wǒmen kàn</td>
<td>diànyǐng</td>
<td>wǒmen kàn de diànyǐng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we see/we saw</td>
<td>movie</td>
<td>the movie that we saw</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Modifiers that are question words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modifier</th>
<th>Head noun</th>
<th>Noun phrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>shéi</td>
<td>shū</td>
<td>shéi de shū?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>who</td>
<td>book</td>
<td>whose book?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nǎr</td>
<td>fànguān</td>
<td>nǎr de fànguān?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>where</td>
<td>restaurant</td>
<td>a restaurant located where?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Omission of the particle 的 de

The particle 的 de is sometimes omitted from the modifier.

的 de may be omitted:

- when the modifier is an unmodified one syllable adjectival verb.
  
  贵的车/貴的車 gui de chē → 贵车/貴車 gui chē  
  expensive car  
  but not  
  很贵的车/很貴的車 hěn gui de chē → *很贵车/*很貴車 hěn gui chē

- when the modifier is closely associated with the noun, describing, for example, nationality:
  
  美国的人/美國的人 Měiguó de rén → 美国人/美國人 Měiguó rén  
  American person
  or a close personal relationship in which the modifier is a pronoun:
  
  我的爸爸 wǒ de bàba → 我爸爸 wǒ bàba my father

Noun modifiers in a series

In Mandarin Chinese, a noun may be modified by any number of modifiers.

- The modifiers occur in a series before the head noun.
- A modifier that is a specifier and/or a number ends with a classifier. All other modifiers may end in the particle 的 de.
- The head noun occurs only once, at the end of the series of modifiers.
Here are examples of noun phrases in which the head noun is modified by a series of modifiers. Each modifying phrase is included in [square brackets].

- wōmen [zuòtiān kàn de] [gāng chūlái de] [Zhōngguó de] diànyǐng
  - we [yesterday see] [just come out] [China] movie
- [nǐ gěi wǒ jièshào de] [nà liàng gé] [hěn cōngmìng de] liúxuéshēng
  - you introduced to me [those two] very smart exchange students

Modifiers may occur in any order. However, modifiers involving inherent personal characteristics often occur closer to the head noun.

- [chuān máoyī de] [hěn kě'ài de] xiǎo háizi
  - the very cute child who is wearing a sweater

Noun modifiers involving specifiers and numbers often occur first in a sequence of modifiers, though they may also occur closer to the head noun for emphasis or contrast.

- [nàge] [dài yǎnjìng de] [hěn gāo de] rén
  - that very tall person who wears glasses

Omission of the head noun

When the head noun is predictable from the context, it may be omitted. The presence of the de or a classifier at the end of a phrase identifies the phrase as a noun phrase modifier. When the head noun is omitted, the de cannot be omitted.

- Zhè shì shéi zuò de cài? Zhè shì Mǎlǎoshī zuò de (___).
  - This is food cooked by whom? This is (food) cooked by Professor Ma.
- Nǐ xǐhuan shénme yàng de cài? Nǐ xǐhuan hóngshāo de (___).
  - What kind of dishes do you like? I especially like red cooked (ones).
Modification with 之 zhī

之 zhī is the marker of noun modification in literary Chinese, and it is used for this purpose in certain literary expressions in modern Chinese, including the following. These instances of 之 zhī are not interchangeable with 的 de.

### Percentages and fractions

三分之一
sān fēn zhī yī
one-third (1/3)

百分之十
bǎi fēn zhī shí
10%

### Time phrases and sequence

之后/之後 zhīhòu ‘after’ (以後/以後 yǐhòu)

三年之后
sān nián zhīhòu
three years afterward/after three years

之前 zhīqián ‘before, previous’ (以前 yǐqián)

第二次世界战争之前
dì èrcì shìjiè zhànzhēng zhīqián
before the Second World War

之内 zhīnèi ‘within, including’ (cf. 以内 yīnèi)

我三天之内一定作得完。
wǒ sāntiān zhīnèi yīdìng zuòděiwán.
I will definitely be able to finish within three days.
Adjectival verbs translate into adjectives in English. They include 高 gāo ‘to be tall,’ 贵/贵 guì ‘to be expensive,’ 小 xiǎo ‘to be small,’ 大 dà ‘to be big,’ 好 hǎo ‘to be good,’ etc.

Mandarin adjectival verbs, unlike English adjectives, are not preceded by a linking verb such as the verb 是 shì be.

Say this | Not this
---|---
他高。 | *他是高。
Tā gāo. | Tā shì gāo.
He is tall.

那本书贵。 | *那本书是贵。
Nà běn shū guì. | Nà běn shū shì guì.
That book is expensive.

那个学校大。 | *那个学校是大。
Nàge xuéxiào dà. | Nàge xuéxiào shì dà.
That school is big.

Negation of adjectival verbs

Adjectival verbs are negated by 不 bù. They are never negated by 没 méi.

他不高。 | *他没高。
Tā bù gāo. | Tā méi gāo.
He is not tall.

那本书不贵。 | *那本书没贵。
Nà běn shū bù guì. | Nà běn shū méi guì.
That book is not expensive.

那个学校不大。 | *那个人没好。
Nàge rén bù hǎo. | Nàge rén méi hǎo.
That person is not good.
10.2 Yes–no questions with adjectival verbs

Adjectival verbs can occur in yes–no questions formed by 吗/嗎 ma or the verb-not-verb structure.

那 个 学 校 大 吗？
那个学校大吗？
Nàge xuéxiào dà ma？
Is that school big?

那 个 学 校 大 不 大？
那个学校大不大？
Nàge xuéxiào dà bù dà？
Is that school big?

10.3 Modification by intensifiers

Adjectival verbs can be modified by intensifiers. Most intensifiers precede the adjectival verb.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intensifier</th>
<th>Intensifier + adjectival verb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>很 hěn</td>
<td>很好 hěn hǎo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>真 zhēn</td>
<td>真好 zhēn hǎo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>较好/比較 bǐjiào</td>
<td>较好/比較好 bǐjiào hǎo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>相当/相當 xiāngdāng</td>
<td>相当好/相當好 xiāngdāng hǎo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>特別 tèbié</td>
<td>特別好 tèbié hǎo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>非常 fēicháng</td>
<td>非常好 fēicháng hǎo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>尤其 yóuqí</td>
<td>尤其好 yóuqí hǎo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>极其/極其 jiqí</td>
<td>极其好/極其好 jíqí hǎo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>太 tài</td>
<td>太好 tài hǎo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>更 gèng</td>
<td>更好 gèng hǎo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>最 zuì</td>
<td>最好 zuì hǎo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**ADJECTIVAL VERBS**

The intensifiers 得很 de hén ‘very,’ 极了/極了 jíle ‘extremely,’ and 得不得了 de bùdéliao ‘extremely’ follow the adjectival verb:

- 好得很
  - hào de hén
  - to be very good
- 好极了
  - 好極了
  - hàojíle
  - to be terrific
- 好得不得了
  - hào de bùdéliao
  - to be terrific

Stative verbs and the modal verbs 会/會 hui and 能 néng can also be modified by intensifiers.

11.2, 12.6.3

**10.4 Two syllable preference**

Adjectival verbs generally occur in two syllable phrases. In affirmative form, when no special emphasis is intended, one syllable adjectival verbs are usually preceded by 很 hén. When negated, 不 bù provides the second syllable.

- 他很高。
  - Tā hén gāo.
  - He is tall.
- 他不高。
  - Tā bù gāo.
  - He is not tall.
- 那本书很贵。
  - Nà běn shū hén guì.
  - That book is expensive.
- 那本书不贵。
  - Nà běn shū bù guì.
  - That book is not expensive.

**10.5 Comparative meaning**

Adjectival verbs do not have a distinct comparative form. However, in certain contexts they have comparative meaning.

They have comparative meaning when the context implies a comparison:

- Q: 谁高？誰高？
  - Shéi gāo?
  - Who is tall?
  - or
  - 谁更高？
  - Shéi gāo?
  - Who is taller?
- A: 他高。
  - Tā gāo.
  - He is tall.
  - or
  - 他更高。
  - Tā gāo.
  - He is taller.

They have comparative meaning when they occur in comparison structures:

- 他比你高。
  - Tā bǐ nǐ gāo.
  - He is taller than you.
They also have comparative meaning when they occur in structures that indicate change.

To explicitly express comparative meaning, precede the adjectival verb with the intensifier 更 gèng or the expression 还(要)高(要) hái (yào).

他更高。他还(要)高。(要)高。

Tā gèng gāo. Tā hái (yào) gāo.
He is (even) taller. He is (even) taller.

Superlative meaning

Adjectival verbs do not have a distinct superlative form. To express the superlative meaning, precede the adjectival verb with the intensifier 最 zuì ‘most.’

他最高。那本书最贵。

Tā zuì gāo. Nà běn shū zuì guì.
He is the tallest. That book is the most expensive.

Adjectival verbs and comparison structures

Adjectival verbs are used in comparison structures.

Comparison structures involving 比 bǐ ‘more than’ and 没有 méi yǒu ‘less than’ typically end with an adjectival verb or a modified adjectival verb.

我比你高。

Wǒ bǐ nǐ gāo.
I am taller than you.

我没有你高。

Wǒ méi yǒu nǐ gāo.
I am not as tall as you.

Linking adjectival verbs

The adverb 又 yòu can be used to link adjectival verbs as follows. The structure is used to convey the meaning ‘both . . . and . . .’
ADJECTIVAL VERBS

10.9 Adjectival verbs and expressions that indicate change over time

10.9.1 yuè lái yuè adjectival verb ‘more and more’ adjectival verb

Dōngxi yuè lái yuè guì. Things are more and more expensive.

10.9.2 yuè action verb yuè adjectival verb ‘the more’ (action), ‘the more’ (adjectival verb)

Tā yuè shuō yuè kuài. The more he speaks, the faster he speaks.

10.10 Adjectival verbs and sentence final - 了 le

Sentence final -了 le may occur at the end of a sentence with an adjectival verb to indicate change.

Nǐ gāo le. You have gotten taller.
Stative verbs

Stative verbs describe situations that do not involve action. Examples of stative verbs include 喜欢 ‘to like,’ 爱 ‘to love,’ 像 ‘to resemble,’ 想 ‘to want,’ 要 ‘to want,’ 需要 ‘to need,’ 怕 ‘to fear,’ 尊敬 ‘to respect,’ 感激 ‘to appreciate,’ 懂 ‘to understand,’ 信 ‘to believe,’ and 想念 ‘to miss.’ Certain stative verbs have special meanings and properties and will be discussed separately below. They include the equational verbs 是 ‘to be’ and 姓 ‘to be family named,’ and the verb 有 ‘to have,’ ‘to exist.’

Stative verbs are similar to adjectival verbs in their form of negation, their occurrence with intensifiers, and their use in comparison structures.

10.1, 10.3, 29.

11.1 Negation of stative verbs

Most stative verbs may only be negated by 不. The stative verb 有 ‘to have’ may only be negated by 没.

不 negates most stative verbs

他不像他爸爸。
Tā bù xiàng tā bàba.
He doesn’t resemble his dad.

他不怕狗。
Tā bù pà gǒu.
He is not afraid of dogs.

我不要钱。
Wǒ bù yào qián.
I don’t want money.

没 only negates 有

他没有车。
Tā méi yǒu chē.
He doesn’t have a car.
11.2 Modification by intensifiers

Stative verbs, like adjectival verbs, can be preceded and modified by intensifiers. The intensifiers are emphasized in each of the following sentences.

We all respect him *a lot*.

We really need your support.

When I was small I was afraid of dogs.

I used to like to chew gum. (lit. 'Before, I liked to chew gum.')

When a stative verb is followed by *了 le*, it indicates *change of state*.

For a complete list of intensifiers, see section 10.3.

11.3 Indicating completion, past time, and change of state

The verb suffixes 了 le or 过/過 guò cannot be used to indicate the *completion* or *past time* of a stative verb. To indicate that a state existed in the past, use a time expression or adverb that refers to the past.

When a stative verb is followed by 了 le, it indicates *change of state*.

I understand (now)!
The equational verb 是 shì ‘to be’

Some verbs can function as a stative verb and as an action verb.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>有 yǒu as a stative verb</th>
<th>有 yǒu as an action verb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>她很有钱。</td>
<td>她有了一笔钱。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>她很有錢。</td>
<td>她有了一筆錢。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tā hěn yǒu qián.</td>
<td>Tā yǒu le yī bǐ qián.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She has a lot of money.</td>
<td>She has acquired a sum of money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She is rich.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Glossary

11.4 The equational verb 是 shì ‘to be’

是 shì ‘to be’ joins two noun phrases and indicates an equational relationship between them.

她是大学生。  
她是大学生。  
Tā shì dàxuésheng.  
She is a college student.

王老师是英国人。  
王老師是英國人。  
Wáng lǎoshī shì Yīngguó rén.  
Professor Wang is English (an English person).

The negation of 是 shì is 不 is bù shì.

她不是大学生。  
她是大學生。  
Tā bù shì dàxuésheng.  
She is not a college student.

王老师不是英国人。  
王老師不是英國人。  
Wáng lǎoshī bù shì Yīngguó rén.  
Professor Wang is not English (an English person).

是 shì is used less often than the English verb ‘to be.’ In particular, in Mandarin, is shì is ordinarily not used with adjectival verbs or stative verbs. In most circumstances,

Say this                     Not this

我的弟弟很高。          我的弟弟是高。  
Wǒ de dìdì hěn gāo.  Wǒ de dìdì shì hěn gāo.  
My younger brother is very tall.

他很聪明。              他是很聪明。  
Tā hěn cōngmíng.      Tā shì hěn cōngmíng.  
He is very intelligent.

是 shì is only used with adjectival verbs or stative verbs for special emphasis, especially contrastive emphasis.
STATIVE VERBS

你很高！

Nǐ shì hěn gāo!
You really are tall!

那本书是很贵。
那本書是很貴。

Nà bēn shū shì hěn guì.
That book is expensive, despite what you claim.

他很聪明。
他是很聰明。

Tā shì hěn cōngmíng.
He really is intelligent (despite what you may think).

是 shì can be used for contrastive emphasis with action verbs.

我是明天走，不是今天走。

Wǒ shì míntiān zǒu, bù shì jīntiān zǒu.
I am leaving tomorrow. I am not leaving today.

53.3

是 shì is not used to indicate location or existence.

11.6.3, 11.7

When the object of 是 shì includes a number (for example, when it refers to money, age, time, etc.) 是 shì can be omitted in affirmative form.

那本书(是)五块钱。

Nà bēn shū (shì) wǔ kuài qián.
That book is $5.00

我妹妹(是)十八岁。

Wǒ mèimei (shì) shíbā suì.
My younger sister is 18 years old.

现在(是)八点钟。

Xiànzài (shì) bādiǎn zhōng.
It is now 8 o’clock.

However, when the object is negated, 是 shì cannot be omitted.

Say this Not this

Nà bēn shū bù shì wǔ kuài qián.
That book is not $5.00

Wǒ mèimei bù shì shíbā suì.
My younger sister is not 18 years old.

Say this Not this

Nà bēn shū bù shì wǔ kuài qián.
That book is not $5.00

Wǒ mèimei bù shì shíbā suì.
My younger sister is not 18 years old.
The equational verb 姓 xìng ‘to be family named’

Say this

Xiànzài bù shì bǎidiǎn zhōng.
It is not 8 o’clock now.

Not this

Xiànzài bù shì bǎidiǎn zhōng.
It is not 8 o’clock now.

是 shì is used to focus on some detail of a situation, for example the time, place, or participants in a situation, or the material that something is made from.

他说昨天来的。
He was yesterday that he came. (He came yesterday.)

Wǒ shì zuótiān lái de.
It was yesterday that he came. (He came yesterday.)

我是大学学中文。
I was in the university where I study Chinese. (I study Chinese at university.)

我的耳环是(用)金子作的。
My ear rings are made of gold.

Wǒ de ěrhuán shì (yòng) jīnzi zuò de.
My earrings are made of gold.

The negation of 姓 xìng is 不姓 bù xìng.

Wǒ bù xìng Lí. Wǒ xìng luó.
My family name isn’t Li. My family name is Luo.

To ask someone’s family name, say:

中英对照手册

Nǐ xìng shénme?
What is your family name?
STATIVE VERBS

The very polite way to ask someone’s family name is:

你贵姓？
你贵姓？
Ni guì xìng?
(What is) your honorable family name?

The verb of possession and existence: 有 yǒu ‘to have,’ ‘to exist’

有 yǒu has two meanings: ‘to have’ and ‘to exist.’

有 yǒu used to express possession

有 yǒu means ‘to have’ when the subject is something that can have possessions. This includes people, animals, or any other noun that can be described as ‘having’ things:

我有一个弟弟。
Wǒ yǒu yī gè dìdi.
I have a younger brother.

那个书店有很多旧书。
那个书店有很多舊書。
Nàge shǔdiàn yǒu hěn duō jiù shù.
That bookstore has many old books.

中国有很多名胜古迹。
Zhōngguó yǒu hěn duō míng shèng gǔ jì.
China has many scenic spots and historical sites.

有 yǒu used to express existence

有 yǒu indicates existence when the subject is a location. The most common English translation of this meaning is ‘there is’ or ‘there are.’

房子后头有一个小湖。
房子後頭有一個小湖。
Fángzǐ hòutou yǒu yī gè xiǎo hú.
Behind the house there is a small lake.

那儿有很多人排队。
Nàr yǒu hěn duō rén pái duì.
There are a lot of people there waiting in line.
11.6.3 Possession vs. existence

The meanings of possession and existence are closely related, and often a Chinese sentence with 有 yǒu can be interpreted as conveying either possession or existence. The difference in interpretation typically depends upon whether the subject is understood to be a possessor or a location.

美国大学有很多留学生。
United States universities have many exchange students.

Méiguó dàxué yǒu hěn duō liúxuéshēng.
American universities have many exchange students.

There are many exchange students in American universities.

这个图书馆有很多中文书。
This library has a lot of Chinese books.

Zhège túshūguǎn yǒu hěn duō Zhōngwén shū.
This library has a lot of Chinese books.

There are a lot of Chinese books in this library.

11.6.4 Negation of 有 yǒu

The negation of 有 yǒu is always 没有 méi yǒu.

我没有弟弟。
I do not have a younger brother.

Wǒ méi yǒu dìdì.

房子后头没有湖。
There is no lake behind the house.

Fángzi hòutou méi yǒu hú.

这个图书馆没有很多中文书。
This library does not have a lot of Chinese books.

Zhège túshūguǎn méi yǒu hěn duō Zhōngwén shū.

There aren’t a lot of Chinese books in this library.

11.7 The location verb 在 zài ‘to be located at’

To indicate location, use 在 zài.

他在家。
He is at home.

Tā zài jiā.

图书馆在公园的北边。
The library is north of the park.

Túshūguǎn zài gōngyuán de běibīn.

Notice that English uses the verb ‘to be’ and the preposition ‘at’ to express this meaning.
The negation for 在 zài is 不在 bù zài.

他不在家。
Tā bù zài jiā.
He is not at home.

图书馆不在公园的北边。
Túshūguǎn bù zài gōngyuán de běibiān.
The library is not to the north of the park.

在 zài also functions as a preposition. As a preposition, it indicates the location where an action occurs. Depending upon the sentence, it may be translated into English as ‘at,’ or ‘in,’ or ‘on.’

他在家吃饭。
Tā zài jiā chī fàn.
He eats at home.

孩子在公园里玩。
Háizi zài gōngyuán lǐ wán.
The children play in the park.
Modal verbs

Modal verbs occur before a verb and express the meanings of possibility, ability, permission, obligation, and prohibition.

12.1 Expressing possibility: 会 / 會 hùi

明天会下雨。

Míntiān huì xià yǔ.

It may rain tomorrow.

我希望我们将来会有机会再见。

Wǒ xiào wǒmen jiãnlái huì yǒu jìhuì zài jiàn.

I hope that in the future we will have the chance to meet again.

Notice that this meaning of 会 / 會 hùi also implies future time.

12.2 Expressing ability

12.2.1 会 / 會 hùi

会 / 會 hùi expresses innate ability or ability based on learning and knowledge. The negative is 不会 / 不會 bù hùi.

她会说中文。

Tā huì shuō Zhǒngwén.

She can speak Chinese.

我不会写那个字。

Wǒ bù huì xiě nàge zì.

I can’t write that character.
12.2.2 能 néng

能 néng expresses physical ability or the unobstructed ability to perform some action. 不能 bù néng is used when performance is obstructed.

Nǐ néng bù néng bā zhuōzǐ bān dào nàbiān qù?
Can you move this table over there?
(lit: Can you take this table and move it over there?)

他的嗓子疼，不能说话。
His throat is sore. He can’t speak.

Xiànzài zài xiū lù. Bù néng guò.
The road is being repaired now. You can’t cross it.

12.2.3 可以 kěyì

可以 kěyì is sometimes used to express knowledge-based or physical ability. The negative is 不可以 bù kěyì.

Nǐ kěyì bù kěyì xiě nǐ de míngzi?
Can you write your name?

Tā yǐjīng bāshí suì le, kēshì hái kěyì qí zìxíngchē.
She is already eighty years old but can still ride a bicycle.

12.3 Expressing permission: 可以 kěyì

The primary use of 可以 kěyì is to express permission to perform an action. The negative is 不可以 bù kěyì.

47.2
Expressing obligations

12.4 Expressing obligations

Obligations may be strong (must) or weak (should). In Mandarin, as in English, negation often changes the force of the words used to express obligation. This section presents a brief overview of the use of modal verbs to express obligations. For more on expressing obligations, see Chapter 46.

12.4.1 Strong obligation: must, have to

The Mandarin words used to indicate strong obligation (must) in Mandarin are 必须, 必得, and 得. 必得 and 必须 are more formal than 得. 必须 is used in legal pronouncements and in other formal spoken and written contexts.

必须

婚前必须做健康检查。

Hūn qián bìxū zuò jiānkāng jiānchá.

Before you get married you must have a physical exam.

必得

医生说我每天必得吃药。

Yīshēng shuō wǒ mèitiān bìdéi chī yào.

The doctor says I must take medicine every day.

得

住院以前得先付钱。

Zhù yuàn yǐqián dé xiān fù qián.

Before being admitted to the hospital you must first pay a fee.

12.4.2 ‘Weak obligations’ – Social and moral obligation: should, ought to

The modal verbs used to express weak obligations (should) associated with social or moral responsibilities include 应该, 应當, yinggāi, gāi, 兼当, yingdāng, and 應, yüèng. 应该 and 兼当 are more formal than 应当 and 兼当, and can be used in formal texts including legal documents. 应 and 兼 is used in informal speech. 应 is used in formal texts including legal documents. For illustrations of legal uses, see Chapter 46.

应该

学生应该认真地学习。

Xuèshēng yìnggāi rènzhēn de xuéxí.

Students should study conscientiously.
MODAL VERBS

该/该 gāi

你该早一点睡觉。
你该早一点睡觉。
Nǐ gāi zǎo yígèn shuì jiào.
You should go to sleep a little earlier.

应当/应当 yíngdāng

孩子应当尊敬父母。
孩子应当尊敬父母。
Háizi yíngdāng zūnjìng fūmǔ.
Children should respect their parents.

12.4.3 Using modal verbs to express negative obligations: need not, do not have to

不必 bù bǐ expresses negative obligations using the syllable 必 bǐ that occurs in the strong obligation modal verbs 必须 bìxū and 必须 bìdī. For additional ways to express negative obligations, see 46.1.3.

你去看朋友的时候不必送礼物。
你去看朋友的时候不必送礼物。
Nǐ qù kàn péngyou de shíhou bù bǐ sòng lǐwù.
When you visit friends it is not necessary to bring a gift.

12.5 Expressing prohibitions

The following phrases involving modal verbs are used to express prohibitions. For additional phrases used in expressing prohibitions, see

不可以 bù kěyǐ ‘not allowed to’

考试的时候不可以说话。
考试的時候不可以說話。
Kǎoshì de shíhou bù kěyǐ shuō huà.
During the test you cannot speak.

不能 bù néng ‘cannot’

这些书都是内部刊物。你不能借。
這些書書都是內部刊物。你不能借。
Zhè xiē shū dōu shì nèi bù kǎnwù. Nǐ bù néng jiè.
Those books are all restricted publications. You can’t borrow them.

这件事情，我不能告诉你。
這件事情，我不能告訴你。
Zhè jiàn shìqíng, wǒ bù néng gào sū nǐ.
(As for) this matter, I can’t tell you about it.
Grammatical properties of modal verbs

### 12.6.1 Negation of modal verbs

Modal verbs are always negated with 不 bù and never with 没 méi.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Say this</th>
<th>Not this</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>他不会说中文。</td>
<td>他不会说中文。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他不會說中文。</td>
<td>他不會說中文。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tā bù huì shuō Zhōngwén.</td>
<td>Tā méi huì shuō Zhōngwén.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He can’t speak Chinese.</td>
<td>He can’t speak Chinese.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你不应该抽烟。</td>
<td>你没应该抽烟。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你不應該抽菸。</td>
<td>你沒應該抽菸。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You shouldn’t smoke.</td>
<td>You shouldn’t smoke.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Modal verbs indicating weak obligation, 会/會 huì, 可以 kéyì, 能 néng, 应该/應該 yīnggāi, and 应当/應當 yǐngdāng, have the properties of stative verbs.

### 12.6.2 Questions with modal verbs

Modal verbs can occur as the short, one word answers to yes–no questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>你会不会说中文？</td>
<td>会。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你會不會說中文？</td>
<td>會。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nǐ huì bù huì shuō Zhōngwén?</td>
<td>Huì.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you speak Chinese?</td>
<td>(I) can.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我可以不可以借你的车？</td>
<td>可以。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我可以不可以借你的車？</td>
<td>可以。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wǒ kéyì bù kéyì jiè nǐ de chē?</td>
<td>Kéyì.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can I borrow your car?</td>
<td>(You) can.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你能不能帮助我？</td>
<td>能。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你能不能幫助我？</td>
<td>能。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nǐ néng bù néng bāngzhù wǒ?</td>
<td>Néng.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you help me?</td>
<td>(I) can.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Modal Verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wǒmen gǎi bù gǎi jiāo zuòyuè?</td>
<td>Gāi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should we hand in our homework?</td>
<td>(We) should.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

They can serve as the verb in verb-not-verb questions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nǐ huì bù huì shuō Zhōngwén?</td>
<td>Can you speak Chinese?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nǐ néng bù néng bāngzhù wǒ?</td>
<td>Can you help me?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nǐ kěyǐ bù kěyǐ zài tūshūguǎn shuō huà?</td>
<td>Can you speak in the library? (Are you allowed to . . .)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wǒmen gǎi bù gǎi qǐng tā chī fàn?</td>
<td>Should we invite him to dinner?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Modification by intensifiers

会/會 hui and 能 néng can be modified by intensifiers.

- Nàge rén hěn huì tiào wǔ.
  - That person can really dance.
- Zhōngguórén hěn néng chī kǔ.
  - Chinese people can endure a lot of hardship.

For a complete list of intensifiers, see 10.3.

### Modal verbs and expressions that indicate change over time

会/會 hui, 能 néng, and 可以 kěyǐ can be used in the structures 越来越 yuè lái yuè and 越 verb 越 verb yuè verb yuè verb to indicate change over time.
12.6 Grammatical properties of modal verbs

他越来越会说话。
他越来越會說話。

Tā yuè lái yuè huì shuō huà.
He is becoming more and more elegant (diplomatic) in his speech.

他越来越能适应英国的生活了。
他越來越能適應英國的生活了。

Tā yuè lái yuè néng shìyìng Yīngguó de shēnghuó le.
Little by little he is getting used to English life.

中国人越来越可以有谈话的自由了。
中國人越來越可以有談話的自由了。

Zhōngguórén yuè lái yuè kěyì yǒu tán huà de zìyóu le.
Little by little, Chinese people are able to have freedom of speech.

34.3

12.6.5 Modal verbs and adverbs

The modal verbs that indicate strong obligation, 必须/必須 bìxū, 必得 biděi, 得 děi, are similar to adverbs.

They cannot serve as the verb in verb-not-verb questions:

Say this

你必须马上回家吗？
你必須馬上回家嗎？
Ni bìxū mǎshàng huí jiā ma?
Do you have to go right home?

我们得在这儿注册吗？
我們得在這裡註冊嗎？
Wǒmen děi zài zhèr zhù cè ma?
Do we have to register here?

Not this

*你必须不必须马上回家？
*你必須不必須馬上回家？
*Nǐ bìxū bù bìxū mǎshàng huí jiā?

*我们得不得在这儿注册？
*我們得不得在這裡註冊？
*Wǒmen děi bù děi zài zhèr zhù cè?

The modal 得 děi cannot be used as the one-word answer to yes–no questions:

Question

今天得注册吗？
今天得註冊嗎？
Jīntiān děi zhù cè ma?
Do we have to register today?

Respond with this

今天得注册。
今天得註冊。
Jīntiān děi zhù cè.
We have to register today.

Do not respond with this

*得。
*對。
Děi
Correct.
13

Action verbs

Action verbs are verbs that describe doing things. They include 买/買 mǎi ‘to shop,’ 学/學 xué ‘to study,’ 看 kàn ‘to look at,’ ‘watch,’ ‘read,’ 吃 chī ‘to eat,’ 睡 shuì ‘to sleep,’ 去 qù ‘to go,’ 唱 chàng ‘to sing,’ 洗 xǐ ‘to wash,’ etc.

This chapter shows you how to talk about completed, past, and ongoing actions, and introduces the overall properties of action verbs. There are two kinds of action verbs, those that describe open-ended actions, and those that describe actions that cause a change. The last two sections of this chapter present the characteristics of these two types of verbs.

13.1 Indicating that an action is completed or past

To indicate that an action is completed or past, follow the action verb with the verb suffix 了 le.

她买了东西。
她買了東西。
Tā mǎi le dōngxi.
She bought things.

她到图书馆去了。
她到圖書館去了。
Tā dào tǔshūguǎn qù le.
She went to the library.

If the action verb takes an object and the object is one syllable in length, 了 le generally follows the object.

她上课了。
她上課了。
Tā shǎng kè le.
She attended class.

13.2 Indicating that an action has been experienced in the past

To indicate that the subject had the experience of performing some action in the past, follow the action verb with the verb suffix 过/過 guò. The verb suffix 过/過 guò
is used when talking about actions that the subject does not perform on a regular basis or for actions that happened in the remote past.

- 我看过那个电影。
  - Wǒ kànɡuò nàɡè diàn yǐnɡ. I've seen that movie before.
- 我来过这里。
  - Wǒ láiɡuò zhèlǐ. I've been here before.

### 13.3 Negating actions

#### 13.3.1 Indicating that an action does not occur or will not occur

To indicate that an action does not occur or will not occur, negate the action verb with 不 bù.

- 我不吃肉。
  - Wǒ bù chī ròu. I don't eat meat.
- 台北从来不下雪。
  - Táibēi cóng lái bù xià xuě. It does not snow in Taipei.
- 明天是星期六。我们不上课。
  - Míngtiān shì xīnɡqīliù. Wǒmen bù shànɡ kè. Tomorrow is Saturday. We don’t attend class.

#### 13.3.2 Indicating that an action did not occur in the past

To indicate that an action did not occur in the past, negate the action verb with 没 (有) méi (yǒu).

- 我今天没(有)吃早饭。
  - Wǒ jīntiān méi (yǒu) chī zǎofàn. I didn’t eat breakfast today.
- 我没买电脑。
  - Wǒ méi mǎi diàn nǎo. I didn’t buy a computer.

23.1.2, 33.3

When a verb is negated with 没 (有) méi (yǒu), it cannot be suffixed with 了 le. It can, however, be suffixed with 过/過 guo.
Open-ended action verbs refer to actions that can have duration and can be performed for a period of time. Examples of open-ended action verbs include念niàn‘to study/read aloud,’ 买/買新quǎn ‘to shop,’ 写/写xiě ‘to write,’ 学/學xué ‘to study,’ 跑 pāo ‘to run,’ 吃chī ‘to eat,’ 玩 wán ‘to play,’ and 唱 chàng ‘to sing.’

To indicate the duration of an open-ended action verb, follow the verb with a duration expression. In the following examples, the verb is emphasized.

他在中国住了一年。
他在中國住了一年。

他每天看一个钟头的报。
他每天看一個鍾頭的報。

To emphasize the ongoing action of an open-ended action verb without specifying the length of the duration, follow the verb with the suffix着/著zhe. 在zài and 喔ne often occur with着/著zhe. 在zài occurs before the verb and 喔ne occurs at the end of the sentence.

Open-ended action verbs are typically followed by an obligatory object, a noun phrase that serves as the direct object of the verb. Many open-ended action verbs have a default object, an object that automatically occurs with the verb.

Default objects contribute little or no meaning to the verb + object phrase and are typically not translated into English.
### Open-ended action verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open-ended action verb</th>
<th>Default object</th>
<th>Verb + object</th>
<th>Example sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>说</td>
<td>话</td>
<td>说话</td>
<td>他们在说话呢。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>說</td>
<td>話</td>
<td>說話</td>
<td>他們在說話呢。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shuō</td>
<td>huà</td>
<td>shuō huà</td>
<td>Tāmen zài shuō huà ne.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speak</td>
<td>speech</td>
<td>speak</td>
<td>They are speaking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>睡</td>
<td>觉</td>
<td>睡觉</td>
<td>她没睡觉。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>眠</td>
<td>覺</td>
<td>睡覺</td>
<td>她沒睡覺。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shuǐ</td>
<td>jiào</td>
<td>shuǐ jiào</td>
<td>Tā méi shuǐ jiào.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sleep</td>
<td>sleep</td>
<td>sleep</td>
<td>She didn’t sleep.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>看</td>
<td>书</td>
<td>看书</td>
<td>我喜欢看书。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>看</td>
<td>書</td>
<td>看書</td>
<td>我喜歡看書。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kàn</td>
<td>shū</td>
<td>kàn shū</td>
<td>Wǒ xǐhuān kàn shū.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>read</td>
<td>book</td>
<td>read</td>
<td>I like to read.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>吃</td>
<td>飯</td>
<td>吃飯</td>
<td>我们吃饭吧！</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>吃</td>
<td>飭</td>
<td>吃飯</td>
<td>我們吃飯吧！</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chī</td>
<td>fàn</td>
<td>chī fàn</td>
<td>Wǒmen chī fàn ba!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eat</td>
<td>rice</td>
<td>eat</td>
<td>Let’s eat!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>写</td>
<td>字</td>
<td>写字</td>
<td>他不会写字。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>写</td>
<td>字</td>
<td>写字</td>
<td>他不會写字。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xiě</td>
<td>zì</td>
<td>xiě zì</td>
<td>Tā bù huí xiě zì.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>write</td>
<td>character</td>
<td>write</td>
<td>He can’t write.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>画</td>
<td>画儿</td>
<td>画画儿</td>
<td>他会画画儿。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>畫</td>
<td>畫兒</td>
<td>畫畫兒</td>
<td>他會畫畫兒。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>huà</td>
<td>huàr</td>
<td>huà huàr</td>
<td>Tā huì huà huàr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paint</td>
<td>picture</td>
<td>paint</td>
<td>He can paint.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>唱</td>
<td>歌儿</td>
<td>唱歌儿</td>
<td>他周末跟朋友唱歌儿。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>唱</td>
<td>歌兒</td>
<td>唱歌兒</td>
<td>他週末跟朋友唱歌兒。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chàng</td>
<td>gèr</td>
<td>chàng gèr</td>
<td>Tā zhōumò gèn péngyou chàng gèr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sing</td>
<td>song</td>
<td>sing</td>
<td>He sings with friends on the weekend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>洗</td>
<td>澡</td>
<td>洗澡</td>
<td>孩子不喜欢洗澡。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>洗</td>
<td>澡</td>
<td>洗澡</td>
<td>孩子不喜歡洗澡。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xǐ</td>
<td>zǎo</td>
<td>xǐ zǎo</td>
<td>Háizi bù xǐhuan xǐ zǎo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wash</td>
<td>bathe</td>
<td>wash; bathe</td>
<td>Children do not like to bathe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>睡</td>
<td>觉</td>
<td>睡觉</td>
<td>你几点钟睡觉？</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>睡</td>
<td>觉</td>
<td>睡覺</td>
<td>你幾點鐘睡覺？</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shuǐ</td>
<td>jiào</td>
<td>shuǐ jiào</td>
<td>Nǐ jídian zhōng shuǐ jiào?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sleep</td>
<td>a sleep</td>
<td>sleep</td>
<td>What time do you go to sleep?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When an object with fuller meaning is used, it replaces the default object.

For example:

- ‘to eat’ is 吃饭 吃飯 *chī fàn*
- ‘to eat dumplings’ is 吃饺子 吃餃子 *chī jiāozi* and not
- *吃饭饺子 吃飯餃子* *chī fàn jiāozi*.
ACTION VERBS

• ‘to write’ is 写字 xiě zì
‘to write English’ is 写英文/写英文 xiě Yīnwén and not
*写字英文/写字英文 xiě zì Yīnwén
• ‘to read’ is 看书/看書 kàn shū
‘to read a newspaper’ is 看报/看報 kàn bào and not
*看书报/看書報 kànshū báo.

The direct object may be absent when it can be inferred from the context of the sentence.

Q: 你吃了晚饭吗？
你吃了晚饭吗？
Nǐ chī le wǎnfán ma?
Did you eat dinner?
A: 吃了。
I ate (dinner).

When it receives special emphasis, the direct object may occur at the beginning of the sentence as the topic, instead of after the verb.

那个电影我还没看过。
那個電影我還沒看過。
Nàge diànyǐng wǒ hái méi kànguo.
That movie, I still haven’t seen (it).

13.5 Change-of-state action verbs

Change-of-state verbs describe events in which the action of the verb results in a change. Here are some examples of change-of-state verbs.

坐 zuò to sit (a change from standing to sitting)
站 zhàn to stand (a change from sitting to standing)
放 fàng to put/place (a change of location)
挂/掛 guà to hang (a change of location)
离开 líkāi to depart (a change of location)
离开
穿 chuān to put on (clothing – on the torso and legs)
戴 dài to put on (clothing – on the head, neck, and hands)
病 bìng to become sick (a change of health)
到 dào to arrive (a change of location from ‘not here’ to ‘here’)
去 qù to go (a change of location from ‘here’ to ‘not here’)

13.5.1 Change-of-state verbs and duration

Change-of-state verbs have no duration so they cannot be suffixed with the duration suffix 着/著 zhé and they cannot occur in other patterns that focus on the duration of an event.

13.5.2 Change-of-state verbs and stative verbs

Many change-of-state verbs also function as stative verbs.
Change-of-state action verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change-of-state verb</th>
<th>Stative verb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>坐 zuò</td>
<td>to sit down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>站 zhàn</td>
<td>to stand up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>戴 dài</td>
<td>to put on (clothing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>病 bìng</td>
<td>to become sick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>挂/掛 guà</td>
<td>to hang (something up)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to be seated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to be standing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to wear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to be sick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to be hanging</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Prepositions occur before a noun phrase and indicate some relationship between the noun phrase and the main verb of the sentence. The preposition plus its noun phrase forms a prepositional phrase.

14.1 The grammar of the prepositional phrase in the Mandarin sentence

Here are the two rules to follow when using prepositional phrases.

**Rule 1.** In Mandarin, the prepositional phrase occurs immediately before the verb phrase.

Compare this with English, in which the prepositional phrase occurs immediately after the verb phrase.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mandarin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>他们 [gêi didî]</td>
<td>They [for younger brother] [buy ice cream]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他们 [gêi didî]</td>
<td>They bought ice cream for younger brother.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tâ [gêî tîngxué]</td>
<td>She [with classmates] [chat]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tâ [gêî tîngxué]</td>
<td>She chats with classmates.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Rule 2.** Nothing occurs between the preposition and its noun phrase object.

- The suffixes 了 le, 着/著 zhe, and 过/過 guo follow verbs, but not prepositions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mandarin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>他在中国住过一年。</td>
<td>*他在过中国住一年。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他在中國住過一年。</td>
<td>他在中国住了一年。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tâ zài Zhōngguó zhùguó yînián.</td>
<td>He lived in China for a year.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Basic functions of prepositions

14.2

Prepositions that indicate location in time or space – no movement involved

在 zài ‘at, in, on’

他每天晚上在家吃饭。
He eats at home every evening.

他们每天在公园里玩。
They play in the park every day.

在 zài is optional in time expressions

我(在)两点钟来找你，行吗？
Wǒ (zài) liǎng diǎn zhōng lái zhǎo nǐ, xíng ma?
I’ll come looking for you at 2 o’clock, okay?
14.2.2 Prepositions that indicate an action performed towards a reference point - no movement involved

对/对 duì ‘to, towards’

他对你说什么话？
他对你说甚麼話？
Tā duì nǐ shuō le shénme huà?
What did he say to you?

向 xiàng ‘towards’

他一直向外面看。
Tā yízhī xiàng wàimian kàn.
He keeps looking (to the) outside.

14.2.3 Prepositions that indicate joint performance of an action

跟 gēn ‘with’

她每天跟他朋友吃午饭。
She eats lunch every day with her friends.

This use of 跟 gēn overlaps with that of the conjunction 跟 gēn. 16.1

14.2.4 Prepositions that indicate movement of the subject

从/从 cóng ‘from’: movement from a location

他慢慢地从宿舍走出来了。
Tā mànmàn de cóng sūshè zǒuchūlái le.
He slowly walked out of the dormitory.

到 dào ‘to’: movement to a location that is the destination

他想到餐厅去找朋友。
Tā xiǎng dào cāntīng qù zhǎo péngyou.
He’s thinking about going to the cafeteria to look for his friends.

往 wǎng, ‘towards’ a location

往西边走。
Wǎng xībiān zǒu.
Go (towards the) west.
Basic functions of prepositions

进 jìn ‘into’ a location

他进城去了。
He went into the city.

从/从 cóng and 到 dào may occur in sequence in the same sentence:

从宿舍 到邮局 怎么走？
Cóng sūshè dào yóujú zěnmé zǒu?
How do you go from the dormitory to the post office?

14.2.5 Prepositions that indicate transfer of something from one noun phrase to another

给/给 gěi ‘to, for’

她给我买书了。
She bought a book for me.

跟 gēn ‘from’

他跟我借书了。
He borrowed a book from me.

向 xiàng ‘from’

他向我借书了。
He borrowed a book from me.

14.2.6 Prepositions that indicate the beneficiary of an action performed by another

给/给 gěi ‘for, on behalf of’

她给我写信了。
She wrote a letter for me (on my behalf).

替 tì ‘for, on behalf of’

明天请你替我教书。
Please teach for me tomorrow.
14.2.7 Prepositions that mark the agent in passive sentences

被 bèi ‘by’

我的皮包被人家偷走了。
Wǒ de píbāo bèi rénjia tōuzōu le.
My wallet was stolen by someone.

叫 jiào ‘by’

我的课本叫朋友弄丢了。
Wǒ de kèběn jiào péngyou nòngdiū le.
My textbook was lost by my friend.

让 ràng ‘by’

他们的房子让火烧了。
Tāmén de fángzi ràng huǒ shāo le.
Their house was burned down by the fire.

NOTE

The preposition is part of the following fixed expressions:

跟 (someone) 开玩笑
gēn (someone) kāi wánxiào
to play a joke on (someone)

他哥哥喜欢跟他开玩笑。
Tā gége xǐhuān gēn tā kuài kāi wánxiào.
His older brother likes to play jokes on him.

对 (something) 有兴趣
duì (something) yǒu xìngqù
to be interested in (something)

我对科学有兴趣。
Wǒ duì kěxué yǒu xìngqù.
I am interested in science.

14.2.8 Prepositions used in formal speech and formal written language

To indicate beneficiary or recipient

为/為 wèi ‘for/on behalf of’

我们应该为人民服务。
Wǒmen yīnggài wèi rénjīn fúwù.
We should serve the people.
(serve for the people)
Prepositions that also function as verbs

14.3

To indicate the source (no movement)

由 yóu ‘from’

由此可见，人民都喜欢自由。
由此可見，人民都喜歡自由。

*Yóu cǐ kē jiàn, rénmín dōu xiǎohuān zìyóu.*
You can see from this that everyone likes freedom.

To indicate location in time or space

于/於 yú ‘at, in, on’

谨定于三月十五日在人民大会堂开会。
謹定於三月十五日在人民大會堂開會。

*Jǐndìng yú sānyuè shíwǔ rì zài rénmín dàhuìtáng kāi huì.*
The meeting is respectfully set at March 15 in the Great Hall of the People.

To indicate a point in time (no movement)

自从/自從 zìcóng ‘from, (ever) since’

自从中国开放以后，人民的生活水平提高了。
自从中國開放以後，人民的生活水平提高了。

*Zìcóng Zhōngguó kāifàng yǐhòu, rénmín de shēnghuó shuǐpíng tìgāo le.*
Ever since China began to open up, the standard of living of its people has improved.

14.3 Prepositions that also function as verbs

Many prepositions also function as verbs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>As a preposition</th>
<th>As a verb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>在 zài</td>
<td>at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他在家吃饭。</td>
<td>他在家。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他在家吃飯。</td>
<td>Tā zài jiā.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tā zài jiā chī fàn.</td>
<td>Tā zài jiā.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他 is at home.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>给/給 gěi</td>
<td>to/for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他给我买了毛衣。</td>
<td>她给了我这件毛衣。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他這件毛衣。</td>
<td>她這是這件毛衣。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tā gěi wǒ mài le máoyī.</td>
<td>Tā gěi le wǒ zhè jiàn máoyī.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He bought a sweater for me.</td>
<td>She gave me this sweater.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>到 dào</td>
<td>to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你什么时候到图书馆去？</td>
<td>他什么时候到？</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你甚麼時候到圖書館去？</td>
<td>他甚麼時候到？</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nǐ shénme shíhòu dào</td>
<td>Tā shénme shíhòu dào?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>túbìnguǎn qù?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When are you going to the library?</td>
<td>What time does he arrive?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PREPOSITIONS AND PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES

As a preposition

对/對 duì to, towards

你应该对客人很客气。
You should be polite to guests.

As a verb

correct

你对客人很客气。
Nǐ yìnggāi duì kèrén hěn kěqì.

Q: 你是英国人，对吗？
Nǐ shì Yǐngguórén，
duì ma?
You are English, right?

A: 对。
Duì.
Correct.

跟 gēn with

他每天跟朋友聊天。
Tā méitiān gēn péngyou liáo tiān.

follow

不要老跟着我。
Bù yào lǎo zǒu zhe wǒ.

不要老跟着我。

You can identify a word as either a preposition or a verb by observing the other words with which it occurs.

- Prepositions are always followed by an object noun phrase and a verb phrase. If a word is not followed by both an object noun phrase and a verb phrase, it is not a preposition.

Verb: followed by a noun phrase but no verb phrase

Verb: followed by a noun phrase and a verb phrase

她给我这件毛衣了。
Tā gěi wǒ zhè jiàn máoyī le.

She gave me this sweater.

她给我买了这件毛衣了。
Tā gěi wǒ mǎi le zhè jiàn máoyī le.

She bought this sweater for me.

他在家。
Tā zài jiā.

He is at home.

他在家吃饭。
Tā zài jiā chī fàn.

He is eating at home.

Glossary
Adverbs are words that modify the verb or verb phrase.

### 15.1 General properties of adverbs

In Mandarin, adverbs occur at the beginning of the verb phrase, before the verb and any prepositional phrase.

Most adverbs must precede negation, but some adverbs may occur before or after negation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mandarin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>她一定不去。</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tā yìdìng bù qù.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She’s definitely not going.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and also</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>她不一定去。</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tā bù yìdìng qù.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(She is not definitely going.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>她也许不去。</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>她不也许去。</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>她不也许去。</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tā yěxū bù qù.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perhaps she won’t go.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>but not</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>她不也许去。</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>她不也许去。</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tā bù yěxū qù.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>她并不喜欢我。</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tā bìng bù xǐhuàn wǒ.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She doesn’t like me at all.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>but not</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>她不并喜欢我。</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tā bù bìng xǐhuàn wǒ.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unlike verbs, adverbs typically cannot be the one word answer to a yes–no question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Respond with this</th>
<th>Not this</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>他們經常在那個飯館吃飯嗎？</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他們經常在那個飯館吃飯嗎？</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tāmén jīngcháng zài nèi fànguǎn chī fàn ma?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do they often eat at that restaurant?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>对。</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dui.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他們經常在那兒吃飯。</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他們經常在那兒吃飯。</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tāmén jīngcháng zài nèr chī fàn.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They often eat there.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*经常。</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jingcháng.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mandarin has a number of structures that are adverbial in function in that they describe an action in some way. These structures are presented in the chapter on adverbial modification.

Adjectival verbs, stative verbs, and modal verbs may be modified by intensifiers such as 很 ‘very,’ 太 ‘too,’ and 真 ‘really.’ A list of intensifiers is presented in 10.3.

Adverbs add many different kinds of meaning to a sentence. This chapter presents adverbs that have logical functions. Other adverbs are presented throughout this book in chapters that focus on the meanings associated with the specific adverbs.

也 yě ‘also, in addition’

也 yě is used to introduce a second verb phrase. It never follows negation.

也 yě can be used to introduce a second verb phrase that adds additional information about the subject.

Little Wang studies Chinese and also studies Japanese.

When the subjects are identical in reference, the second subject may be omitted:

Little Wang studies Chinese. He also studies Japanese.

也 yě can be used to indicate that two different subjects share similar properties or perform the same action.
Adverbs with logical function: 也 yě, 都 dōu, 还/还 hái, 就 jiù, 只 zhī, and 才 cái

36.1

Since 也 yě introduces additional information it can sometimes be translated by ‘and’ in English. However, it is very different from English ‘and.’ ‘And’ can connect almost any kind of phrase. 也 yě can only occur before verbs or verb phrases.

Compare this Mandarin example and its English translation.

我学中文，也学中国历史。
我學中文，也學中國歷史。

Wǒ xué Zhōngwén, yě xué Zhōngguó lǐshǐ.
I study Chinese and I also study Chinese history.

Chinese conjunctions that join noun phrases and convey the meaning of the English ‘and’ include 和 hé and 跟 gēn.

我学中文和中国历史。
我學中文和中國歷史。

Wǒ xué Zhōngwén hé Zhōngguó lǐshǐ.
I study Chinese and Chinese history.

36.7

15.2.2 都 dōu ‘all, both’

都 dōu can indicate that a verb phrase is true for the entire subject.

我们都学中文。
我們都學中文。

Wǒmen dōu xué Zhōngwén.
We all study Chinese.

小王和小李都学中文。
小王和小李都學中文。

Xiǎo Wáng hé Xiǎo Lǐ dōu xué Zhōngwén.
Little Wang and Little Li both study Chinese.

都 dōu can indicate that a verb is true for multiple objects. Typically, when 都 dōu refers to objects, the objects occur before the verb as the topic of the sentence.

中文，日文，他都学。
中文，日文，他都學。

Zhōngwén, Rìwén, tā dōu xué.
Chinese, Japanese, he studies them both.
都 **dōu** before a verb without an object can be used to express the meaning ‘completely.’

我都懂。
Wǒ dōu dǒng.
I understand everything.

都 **dōu** can occur with a question word to indicate that something is universally true.

她什么都会。
她甚麼都會。
Tā shénme dōu huì.
She can do everything.

她什么时候都很忙。
她甚麼時候都很忙。
Tā shénme shíhòu dōu hên máng.
She is always busy.

都 **dōu** can occur before or after negation. The relative position of negation and 都 **dōu** reflects a difference in meaning.

The sequence 都 **dōu** + Negation conveys the meaning ‘all not.’

都 **dōu** before negation may indicate that the negated verb phrase is true for the entire subject.

他們都沒學中文。
他們都沒學中文。
Tāmen dōu méi xué Zhōngwén.
They all have not studied Chinese.

都 **dōu** before negation can also indicate that the negated verb is true for the entire object. Often, when 都 **dōu** refers to the object, the object is topicalized.

猪肉，牛肉我都不吃。
豬肉，牛肉我都不吃。
Zhūròu，niúròu wǒ dōu bù chī.
Pork, beef, I don’t eat either.

都 **dōu** after negation indicates that negation is not true for the entire subject or that it is not true for the entire object. The sequence **negation** + 都 **dōu** can often be translated into English as ‘not all.’

我们不都是中国人。她是美国人，他是英国人。只有我是中国人。
Wǒmen bù dōu shì Zhōngguó rén. Tā shì Měiguó rén，tā shì Yīngguó rén.
We are not all Chinese. She is American, he is English. Only I am Chinese.

美国人不都有钱。有的有钱，有的没有钱。
美國人不都有錢。有的有錢，有的沒有錢。
Měiguó rén bù dōu yǒu qián. Yǒu de yǒu qián, yǒu de méi yǒu qián.
Americans don’t all have money. Some have money, some don’t have money.
15.2.3 还/还 hái ‘in addition, still, also, else’

还/还 hái marks the continuation of a situation or introduces additional actions performed by the subject. It can never follow negation.

他们还在这儿。
They are still here.

你还学中文吗？
Are you still studying Chinese?

Nǐ hái xué Zhōngwén ma?

我要买书，还要买纸。
I want to buy books. (I) also want to buy paper.

你还要买什么？
What else do you want to buy?

Nǐ hái yào mǎi shénme?

还/还 hái may introduce additional information about a noun phrase. In this function it is similar to 也 yě ‘also.’

他会说中文，还会说日文。
He can speak Chinese (and) can also speak Japanese.

Tā huì shuō Zhōngwén, hái huì shuō Riwén.

他还(有)/还(有) hái méi (yǒu) translates into English as ‘not yet’ or ‘still.’

He hasn’t returned yet. (He still hasn’t returned.)

Tā hái méi huí lái ne.

NOTE

还有/还有 hái yǒu is a phrase that occurs at the beginning of a sentence or clause and introduces additional information. It can be translated into English as ‘in addition.’

她的男朋友很和气。还有，他很帅！
Her boyfriend is very friendly. In addition, he is really cute!

Tā de nán péngyou hěn héqi. Hái yǒu, tā hěn shuài!

35.2.2, 36.3

15.2.4 就 jiù ‘only, uniqueness’

When 就 jiù precedes a verb phrase that is not linked to another verb phrase, it conveys the meaning of uniqueness.

93
In some sentences, this meaning is best translated by the English word ‘only’:

Wǒ jiù yǒu yī kuài qián.
I only have one dollar.

In some contexts, 就 jiù conveys precise identification of a noun phrase. If the noun phrase is a person or place, there may be no English equivalent for 就 jiù.


If the noun phrase is a specifier or a directional expression, 就 jiù may be translated as ‘right’ or ‘precisely.’

Zhào经理的办公室在哪儿?
Where is Manager Zhao’s office?
Her office is right here.

Q: Túshūguǎn zài nǎr?  A: Jiù zài huǒchēzhàn de duìmiàn.
Where is the library?
Right across from the train station.

就 jiù is also used to link two verb phrases and to signal a relationship of sequence between them.

Wǒ kàn le bào yīhòu jiù shuì jiào.
After I read the newspaper I will go to sleep.

Jiù zài huǒchēzhàn de duìmiàn.  Yǐ xué jiù huì.
Right across from the train station. As soon as she studies it she gets it.

只 zhǐ ‘only’

只 zhǐ can be used interchangeably with 就 jiù to express the meaning ‘only.’
Adverbs with logical function: 也 yě, 都 dōu, 还/还 hái, 就 jiù, 只 zhǐ, and 才 cái

我才只有一块钱。
我只有一塊錢。
Wǒ zhǐ yǒu yī kuài qián.
I only have one dollar.

Like 就 jiù, 只 zhǐ typically precedes negation, but may also follow it.

这件事情不只是我一个人知道。
這件事情不只是我一個人知道。
Zhè jiàn shìqing bù zhī shì wǒ yī gè rén zhīdào.
(As for) this matter, it is not just I who knows.

才 cái ‘only, only then’

才 cái indicates that something is less than expected. In sentences in which there is only a single verb, 才 cái may be translated into English as ‘only.’

他才认识五个字。
他才認識五個字。
Tā cái rènshi wǔ gè zì.
He only knows (recognizes) five characters [and that is fewer than one would expect].

那个孩子才一岁。当然还不会说话。
那個孩子才一歲。當然還不會說話。
Nàge háizi cái yīsuì. Dāngrán hái bù huì shuō huà.
That child is only one year old. Of course s/he can’t speak yet.

我才今天挣了三百元。
Wǒ jīntiān cái zhèng le sānbǎi yuán.
Today I only earned 300 yuan (300 dollars).

When 才 cái is used to link two verb phrases as in the following sentences, it may be translated as ‘only then.’

她做完了功课才睡觉。
她做完了功課才睡覺。
Tā zuòwán le gōngkè cái shuì jiào.
She finishes doing her homework and only then goes to sleep.

那本书我看了两次才懂。
那本書我看了兩次才懂。
Nà běn shū wǒ kàn le liǎng cì cái dǒng.
That book, I read it two times and only then understood (it).

38.2.2.2

才 cái never follows negation.

而已 éryǐ ‘and that is all’

In Taiwan, the sentence final expression 而已 éryǐ ‘and that is all’ is commonly used to reinforce the sense of only contributed by 就 jiù, 只 zhǐ, and 才 cái.
The meaning ‘only if’ is expressed with the sentence initial phrase 除非 chúfēi.
Conjunctions

Conjunctions are words that join phrases belonging to the same grammatical category and indicate a relationship between them. Mandarin conjunctions include the following.

### 16.1 Conjunctions that indicate an ‘additive’ or ‘and’ relationship

#### 16.1.1 和 hé

王明和李安是大学生。

Wáng Míng hé Lǐ Ān shì dà xué shēng.

Wang Ming and Li An are college students.

#### 16.1.2 跟 gēn

北京跟上海都是值得去看的地方。

Běijīng gēn Shànghǎi dōu shì hěn zhíde qù kàn de di fang.

Beijing and Shanghai are both places worth seeing.

跟 gēn also functions as a preposition.

#### 16.1.3 同 tóng

我和他的关系很不错。

Wǒ hé tā de guānxi hěn bù cuò.

The relationship between him and me is not bad (really good).

#### 16.1.4 与 yǔ

我们对中国的文化与历史都很有兴趣。

Wǒmen dui Zhōngguó de wén huà yǔ lǐ shǐ dōu hěn yǒu xīng qù.

We are really interested in Chinese culture and history.
16.2 Conjunctions that indicate a disjunctive or ‘or’ relationship

16.2.1 还是/还是 hái shì ‘or’

还是/还是 hái shì is used in questions that ask the addressee to choose between two alternatives, only one of which can be true or possible. It conveys the sense of ‘either . . . or’.

Q: 你是来旅游的还是来学习的？
A: 我是来学习的。

你來旅遊的還是來學習的？
Wǒ shì lái xuéxí de.

Did you come for vacation or to study?

Q: 你要喝红茶还是喝花茶？
A: 我要喝红茶。

你想要喝紅茶還是喝花茶？
Wǒ yào hē hóng chá.

Do you want to drink black tea or jasmine tea?

(In Chinese: red tea or jasmine tea?)

还是/還是 hái shì is sometimes included in an answer to a 还是/還是 hái shì question to mark the preferred alternative. In this usage, 还是/還是 hái shì functions as an adverb and not as a conjunction.

Q: 你想这个问题，是现在讨论好，还是以后再讨论好？
A: 我想还是以后再讨论好。

你想這個問題，是現在討論好，還是以後再討論好？
Wǒ xiǎng hái shì yǐhòu zài tāolùn hǎo.

(As for) this question, do you think we should talk about it now or later?

15, 24.3

16.2.2 或者 huò zhě ‘or’

或者 huò zhě ‘or’ is used in statements to present two alternatives, both of which are possible.

Q: 你要今天去长城还是明天去长城？
A: 今天去或者明天去都行。

你今天去長城還是明天去長城？
Jīntiān qù huò zhě

Do you want to go to the Great Wall today or tomorrow?

Nǐ yào jīntiān qù chángchéng hái shì míngtiān qù chángchéng？
Jīntiān qù huò zhě míngtiān qù dōu xíng.

Today and tomorrow are both okay.
Conjunctions that indicate a disjunctive or ‘or’ relationship

Mandarin conjunctions are much more restricted than English conjunctions in the grammatical categories that they join. In Mandarin, the ‘and’ conjunctions only join noun phrases. The ‘or’ conjunctions only join verb phrases.

Most Mandarin connecting words are adverbs. They are presented in the relevant chapters on sentence connection.

28, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41
The passive

17.1 The structure of the Mandarin passive

In active sentences, the subject is typically the agent, the noun phrase that initiates the action, and the object of the verb is the noun phrase affected by the action of the verb.

\[
\text{subject} + \text{verb} + \text{object} \\
\text{agent} \quad \text{affected object}
\]

He stole my car.

In Mandarin passive sentences, the affected noun phrase occurs as the subject of the verb, and the agent occurs as the object of a passive marking preposition. As in all sentences with prepositional phrases, the prepositional phrase occurs before the verb:

\[
\text{subject} + \text{prepositional phrase} + \text{verb}
\]

Wǒ de chē [ bèi/jiào/ràng ] tā tōuzōu le.
My car was stolen by him.

In passive structures, the word 给/給 gěi is sometimes placed before the verb.

Nà běn zìdiān [ bèi/jiào/ràng ] Xiǎo Lǐ gěi jìezǒu le.
That dictionary was borrowed by Little Li.

The presence of 给/給 gěi before the verb indicates that the sentence is passive, even when the passive markers 被 bèi, 叫 jiào, and 让/讓 ràng do not occur.
The passive and negation

Sentences in passive form typically refer to situations that occurred in the past. Therefore, negation in passive sentences is typically *méi* (yǒu). *méi* (yǒu) must occur before the passive marking preposition, and never before the verb.

**Say this**

- 你的车没有被警察拖走。
- 你的车没有被警察拖走。
- 你的车没有被警察拖走。

**Not this**

- 你的车被警察没有拖走。
- 你的车被警察没有拖走。
- 你的车被警察没有拖走。

The policeman didn’t tow your car away.

23.1, 33.3

The passive form can also be used when expressing prohibitions and warnings.

- 别被你的朋友骗了。
- 别被你的朋友骗了。
- 别被你的朋友骗了。

**Bié bèi nǐ de péngyou piàn le.**

Don’t let your friend cheat you.
17.3 Conditions for using the passive in Mandarin

The Mandarin passive is used under the following circumstances:

- **To express adversity**
  To indicate that the event has negative consequences or is in some way ‘bad news’ for the narrator, addressee, or affected noun:
  
  我的钱被小偷偷走了。
  
  Wǒ de qián bèi xiǎotōu tōuzōu le.
  
  My money was stolen by a thief.

- **To express surprise or astonishment**

  我们的秘密被政府发现了。
  
  Wǒmen de mìmì bèi zhèngfǔ fāxiàn le.
  
  Our secret was discovered by the government.

- **To emphasize the affected noun phrase rather than the agent**

  这儿的树都被人砍了。
  
  Zhèr de shù dōu bèi rén kǎn le.
  
  The trees here were all cut down by people.

- **To describe an action when the agent is unknown**

  昨天银行被抢了。
  
  Zuótiān yínháng bèi qiǎng le.
  
  The bank was robbed yesterday.

- **To avoid mentioning the agent of an action**

  我女儿被骗了。
  
  Wǒ nǚér bèi piàn le.
  
  My daughter was cheated.
17.4 Differences between the passive markers 被 bèi, 叫 jiào, and 让 ràng

- Frequency: 被 bèi occurs more frequently in written or formal contexts than the other passive markers. In colloquial speech, 叫 jiào and 让 ràng are more commonly used. Dialects differ in the preferred passive marker.
- Adversity: 被 bèi connotes stronger adversity than the other three passive markers.

17.5 Additional functions of 让 ràng, 叫 jiào, and 给 gěi

In addition to their role in passive sentences, 让 ràng, 叫 jiào, and 给 gěi have other functions.

- 叫 jiào is also used as a verb meaning ‘to call,’ or ‘to order.’
- 让 ràng is also used as a verb meaning ‘to let’ or ‘to allow.’
- 给 gěi is also used as a verb meaning ‘to give,’ and as a preposition meaning ‘to’ or ‘for/on behalf of.’

When the verb is not followed by an object noun phrase, 叫 jiào and 让 ràng may sometimes be interpreted as either a passive marker or as a verb, and the sentence may be ambiguous.

教授让学生批评了。
教授讓學生批評了。

Professor was criticized by the students.
(让 ràng = passive marker: by the students)

or

The professor now allows the students to criticize.
(让 ràng = allow: allows the students)

In most cases, however, the context will make clear the function of 叫 jiào, or 让 ràng, or 给 gěi, and only one interpretation will make sense. For example, the following sentence only makes sense if 让 ràng is interpreted as ‘to allow’ or ‘to let’ and not as the passive marker ‘by.’

妈妈让孩子吃饼干。
媽媽讓孩子吃餅乾。

Mom let the children eat cookies. (*by the children . . . )

17.6 English passives and their Mandarin equivalents

The association of Mandarin passives with the sense of adversity or bad news makes the passive structure more restricted and less common in Mandarin than in English. Compare the following:
Acceptable use of the passive in English

The book was written by my professor.
The check has already been received by the bank.
The fruit was sent as a gift by a friend.

Inappropriate use of the passive in Mandarin

*这本书被我教授写了。
ZHè běn shū bèi wǒ jiàoshòu xiě le.

*支票已经被银行收到了。
Zhīpiào yǐjīng bèi yínháng shōudào le.

*水果被朋友送来了。
Shuǐguǒ bèi péngyou sònglái le.

Mandarin has several different patterns that are used to emphasize an affected object or to avoid mentioning the agent that do not convey adversity. These include the following:

- **Topicalization**
  
  支票，银行已经收到了。
  zhīpiào, yínháng yǐjīng shōudào le.
  （As for) the check, the bank has already received it.

- **The 把 bā construction**
  朋友把水果送来了。
  péngyou bǎ shuǐguǒ sònglái le.
  A friend sent the fruit as a gift.
  （A friend took the fruit and sent it as a gift.）

- **The 是 shì ... 的 de construction**
  这本书是我教授写的。
  zhè běn shū shì wǒ jiàoshòu xiě de.
  This book was written by my professor.
  （This book, it was my professor who wrote it.）
Part B

Situations and functions
18

Names, kinship terms, titles, and terms of address

18.1 Names: 姓名 xìngmíng

The order of a Chinese name is:

family name + given name

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>姓</th>
<th>名字</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>xìng</td>
<td>míngzi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>王</td>
<td>莉花</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wáng</td>
<td>Lihuā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>張/張</td>
<td>伟明/偉明</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhāng</td>
<td>Wēimíng</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this book we translate Chinese names using Chinese word order. That is, 王莉花 Wáng Lihuā is translated as ‘Wang Lihua’ and not ‘Lihuá Wang.’

18.1.1 Family names

There are over 3500 Chinese family names. However, of these, only about 100 are widely occurring. This is probably the basis of the expression 老百姓 lǎobāixìng ‘the old 100 family names,’ which is used to refer to ‘the people’ or ‘the common man.’

The three most common Chinese family names are 李 Lí, 王 Wáng, and 张/張 Zhāng. The next most common family names, representing the overwhelming majority of Chinese people, are 刘/劉 Liú, 陈/陳 Chén, 杨/揚 Yáng, 赵/趙 Zhào, 黄 Huáng, 周 Zhōu, 吴/吳 Wú, 徐 Xú, 孙/孫 Sūn, 胡 Hú, 王 Zāng, 高 Gāo, 林 Lin, 何 Hé, 郭 Guō, and 马/馬 Mǎ.

Most family names are a single character/single syllable in length. However, there are a small number of two character/two syllable Chinese family names. The most common are 司马/司馬 Simá, 司徒 Sītú, 欧阳/歐陽 Oúyáng, and 皇甫 Huángfǔ.

18.1.2 Given names

A given name consists of one or two characters/syllables. There is no fixed inventory of given names in Chinese as there is in English such as Ruth, Michael, Lisa, and Mark. Instead, names express meaning, and families select as names, words or phrases
with positive connotations that they wish to associate with their child. While this method of naming is also used in the West, it is the exception rather than the rule.

In the traditional naming process, the first character of a given name is a generational name: all children in the family who are of the same gender and in the same generation share the same first character in their given name. The second character reflects some other positive characteristic. Thus, brothers might be named 亦豪 Yi Hao (talent) and 亦强 Yi Qiang (strength). Sisters might be named Ying Yi (joyful) and Ying Mei (beautiful).

Modern naming practice often does not include a generational name. This is especially common in mainland China. Instead, given names reflect positive attributes, and may be one or two syllables in length.

Given names are personal and somewhat private. In general, they are only used as terms of address by good friends and close acquaintances, and in closed settings such as a family, classroom, or office, where people are members of a well-defined group. Often, people use kinship terms and titles rather than names when addressing and referring to others.

### Kinship terms

Here are the most commonly used kinship terms and the distinctions that they reflect.

#### Kinship terms for immediate family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fùqin</td>
<td>mǔqin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bàba</td>
<td>māma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gēge</td>
<td>jiějie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>didi</td>
<td>mèimei</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reference point for siblings is oneself. For example, an older brother is a brother older than oneself. If you are male and have an older brother and a younger brother, then your younger brother has two older brothers.

**Your family from your perspective**

我有一个哥哥，一个弟弟。
I have one older brother, one younger brother.

**Wǒ yǒu yī gè gēge, yī gè didi.**

**Your family from your younger brother’s perspective**

我有两个哥哥，没有弟弟。
I have two older brothers and no younger brother.

**Wǒ yǒu liǎng gè gēge, méi yǒu didi.**
### Kinship terms for extended family

#### Paternal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yéye</td>
<td>grandfather (father’s father)</td>
<td>wàigōng</td>
<td>grandfather (mother’s father)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nǎinai</td>
<td>grandmother (father’s mother)</td>
<td>wàipó</td>
<td>grandmother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shūshu</td>
<td>uncle (on father’s side)</td>
<td>jiùjiu</td>
<td>uncle (on mother’s side)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gūgu</td>
<td>aunt (on father’s side)</td>
<td>āyí</td>
<td>aunt (on mother’s side)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tānggē</td>
<td>male cousin older than self</td>
<td>biāogē</td>
<td>male cousin older than self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tāngdì</td>
<td>male cousin younger than self</td>
<td>biāodì</td>
<td>male cousin younger than self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tāngjiē</td>
<td>female cousin older than self</td>
<td>biāojī</td>
<td>female cousin older than self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tāngmèi</td>
<td>female cousin younger than self</td>
<td>biāomèi</td>
<td>female cousin younger than self</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Maternal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pópo</td>
<td>mother-in-law (husband’s mother)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 18.3 Titles

Titles refer to gender and marital status, education, or occupation. When a name includes a title, the order of information is as follows:

- family name (+ given name) + title

**Dr. Wang Lihua**

Chinese people often use titles when addressing others or when talking about others. Titles may also be used alone or with the family name and given name.

### 18.3.1 Titles that indicate gender and marital status

The most common titles used to reflect gender and marital status are:

- 先生 xīānshēng
- 太太 tài tāitai
- 夫人 fūrén
- 王先生 Wáng xiānshēng
- 王太太 Wáng tài tāitai
- 王夫人 Wáng fūrén
- 夫人 Mrs. Wang
18.3

18.3.2 Professional titles

Commonly used professional titles include:

- 医生/醫生 (yīshēng) doctor
- 护士/護士 (hùshì) nurse
- 老师/老師 (lǎoshī) teacher
- 律师/律師 (lǜshì) lawyer
- 主席 (zhǔxí) chairperson of a government, political party, etc.
- 警察 (jǐngchá) police officer
- 秘书/秘書 (mìshū) secretary
- 主任 (zhǔrèn) director of a department, chairperson of a department
- 大夫 (dàifu) doctor
- 师傅/師傅 (shīfù) master (skilled person)
- 教授 (jiàoshòu) professor
- 法官 (fāguān) judge, justice
- 校长/校長 (xiàozhǎng) principal
- 公关/公關 (gōngguān) receptionist
- 秘书长/祕書長 (mìshūzhǎng) secretary general
- 司机/司機 (sījī) driver; chauffeur
- 大使 (dàshī) ambassador
- 经理/經理 (jīnglǐ) manager
- 博士/博士 (bóshì) doctor of philosophy (Ph.D.)

大使 (dàshī) ambassador

经理/經理 (jīnglǐ) manager

博士/博士 (bóshì) doctor of philosophy (Ph.D.)
Addressing others

18.4 Addressing others

18.4.1 Addressing friends

Close friends may address each other using family name and given name together, or, if they are very close, by given name alone.

王莉花，早。
Wáng Líhuā, zǎo.
Wang Lihua, good morning.

莉花，最近怎么样？
Líhuā, zúi jin zěnmeyàng?
Lihua, how have you been recently?

Friends or close acquaintances may also address each other using the prefix 老 láo ‘old’ or 小 xiǎo ‘small’ before the family name as follows:

老高 Lǎo Gāo Old Gao 小高 Xiǎo Gāo Little Gao
老王 Lǎo Wáng Old Wang 小王 Xiǎo Wáng Little Wang

老 láo or 小 xiǎo do not literally mean ‘old’ and ‘little’ here. 老 láo is used for those older than oneself, and 小 xiǎo is used for those younger than oneself.

18.4.2 Addressing family and others with kinship terms

In China, people use kinship terms rather than names to address relatives. Kinship terms are also used in informal contexts to address people who are not relatives. The term that is used depends upon the age and gender of the person whom you are addressing. Here are the kinship terms most commonly used when talking with people who are not your relatives.

大哥 dà gē older brother (title for man near your age but older than you)
大姐 dà jiě older sister (title for woman near your age but older than you)
叔叔 shūshū uncle (title for man who is about your father’s age)
阿姨 āyí aunt (title for woman who is about your mother’s age or older)
爷爷/爺爺 yéye grandfather (title for man who is about your grandfather’s age)
奶奶 nǎinai grandmother (title for woman who is about your grandmother’s age)

18.4.3 Colloquial terms of address used with strangers

The following terms are used in informal contexts to address strangers

小伙子 xiǎo huòzǐ young fellow (used to address young boys – very colloquial)
小朋友 xiǎo péngyǒu little friend (commonly used to address children)
朋友 péngyou friend (often used by shopkeepers to address customers)
18.4.4 Using titles as terms of address

Titles are commonly used as terms of address. The titles 先生 xiānshēng ‘Mr.,’ 太太 tài tāi ‘Mrs.,’ 小姐 xiǎojié ‘miss,’ and 师傅/师傅 shīfù ‘master’ are used alone without any additional name to address strangers in a polite way. 师傅/师傅 shīfù ‘master’ is often used in mainland China as a polite way to address a man in relatively informal contexts. 小姐 xiǎojié is used to address young women in service positions such as in restaurants and shops. 夫人 fūrén ‘Mrs.’ and 女士 nǚshì ‘Miss’ are very formal and their use is restricted to formal contexts such as speeches and formal events. The titles presented in 18.3.2 can all be used as terms of address. For occupations that are not used as titles or terms of address, see 19.3.

18.5 Addressing new acquaintances and negotiating terms of address

When you meet someone for the first time, you need to determine how to address them. Since given names are not freely used, and family names are generally not used by themselves, an initial conversation usually includes some negotiation about terms of address. The most common expressions are as follows.

The neutral and most common way to inquire about someone’s family name is:

你姓什么？
你姓甚麼？
Nǐ xìng shénme?
What is your family name? (neutral question)

A more formal and polite way to inquire about someone’s family name is:

你贵姓？/你贵姓
Nǐ guì xìng?
What is your family name? (polite, formal)

The most common way to reply to either of these questions is:

我姓王。
Wǒ xìng Wáng.
My family name is Wang.

A very polite and humble response to the formal question is:

敝姓(王)。
Bì xìng (Wáng).
My humble family name is (Wang).

While the polite form of the question is fairly common, the polite humble form of the response is rarely used.

The neutral and most common way to inquire about someone’s family name and given name is:
Addressing new acquaintances and negotiating terms of address

你姓什么，叫什么名字？
你姓甚麼，叫甚麼名字？

Nǐ xìng shénme, jiào shénme míngzi?
What is your family name and what is your given name?

The neutral and most common way to respond to this question is:

我姓王，叫莉花。
Wǒ xìng Wáng, jiào Lìhuā.
My family name is Wang, my given name is Lihua.

The very polite way to inquire about someone’s family name and given name is:

请问，尊姓大名？
Qǐng wèn, zūnxìng dàmíng?
Excuse me, What is your (honorable) family name and your (great) given name?

The polite, humble response to this question is:

敝姓王，小名建國。
Bi xìng Wáng, xiǎo míng Jiànguó.
My humble family name is Wang, and my small name is Jianguo.

People often do not inquire about given names when they first meet. When you have established a friendship, you may inquire about a given name by asking:

你叫什么名字？
你叫甚麼名字？
Nǐ jiào shénme míngzi?
What is your name?

The reply to this question is either the family name plus the given name, or the given name alone:

我叫王玫玲。
Wǒ jiào Wáng Méiling.
I am called Wang Meiling. (My name is Wang Meiling.)

To make a general inquiry about someone’s identity, ask:

你是誰？
Nǐ shì shéi?
Who are you?

你是。。。?
Nǐ shì . . . ?
You are . . . ?

你是哪位？
Nǐ shì nèi wèi?
Who are you? (polite)
To learn how someone prefers to be addressed by you, ask:

我应该怎么称呼你？
我應該怎麼稱呼你？
Wǒ yīnggāi zěnme chēnghū nǐ?
How should I address you?

**18.6 Name cards and business cards**

Name cards and business cards are widely used in China, and people often exchange name cards when they meet for the first time. The information on a person's name card will help you to determine how to address him or her.

When handing your card to someone, use both hands, and give it to the person so that the writing is facing him or her. Receive a card with both hands, read the card, and thank the person who gave you the card or comment on the information on the card so that it is clear that you have read it. If business cards are exchanged during a meeting or a meal, it is customary to place the cards you receive on the table arranged according to hierarchy so that you can refer to them as you talk.

The organization of the Chinese name card or business card is typically as follows:

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAME_name education degree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
                     (Contact information)
| Address              |
| Telephone number     |
| Mobile phone number  |
| Fax number           |
```
In mainland China, cards written in Chinese are usually printed horizontally. In Taiwan, cards may also be printed vertically.
Addressing letters and envelopes

18.7 Special terms for the recipient (addressee) and the sender

The name of the recipient is typically followed by recipient’s title, or the title plus the expression 收 shōu, 启/啟 qǐ, or 大启/大啟 dà qǐ. 启/啟 qǐ and 大启/大啟 dà qǐ are more formal than 收 shōu. All three expressions mean recipient.

The name of the sender may be followed by the expression 寄 jì or 頃/頃 jiān. 頃/頃 jiān is more formal than 寄 jì. Both expressions mean sender.
Addressing letters and envelopes

18.7.2 The format of a horizontal envelope (commonly used in mainland China).

Address of the recipient

Name of Recipient 启/啟 (啟)

Address of the sender, name of sender 絰/缄 jīān

北京市新街口南大街十号

王建国先生大 启

南京中山路五号孙古城
The format of a vertical envelope (commonly used in Taiwan)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>stamp</th>
<th>Recipient Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sender &amp; Address</td>
<td>Address</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

簡/簡

啟/啟

敬/敬
In vertical format, addresses are written from top to bottom.

**Terms used in addresses and their order of presentation**

Addresses in China are presented from the largest unit to the smallest. If the postal code is included in the address, it occurs before the name of the city.

The major regional distinctions used in addresses in order of size are as follows:

- **zhou** ( prefecture/state )
- **xiàn** ( county )
- **shi** ( city )
- **xiāng** ( village )
- **zhèn** ( town/township )

Example address:

- 北京市
- 南京市
- 中山路
- 五号
- 孙古
- 启

Addressing letters and envelopes
The terms used to refer to the units in street addresses differ somewhat in Taiwan and in mainland China. Here is a summary of the most common terms. The term 胡同 ‘alley’ is used in Beijing, though as streets are restructured, alleys are being eliminated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms used in Taiwan</th>
<th>Terms used in mainland China</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>段</td>
<td>ずん</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>区</td>
<td>ぐ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>街</td>
<td>きょう</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>弄</td>
<td>なう</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>里</td>
<td>み</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>路</td>
<td>ろ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>号/号</td>
<td>ごう</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two sample addresses in Beijing:

北京市西城区红星胡同18号
北京市西城区红星胡同18号

Beijing shi xicheng qü hongxing hutong 18 hao
18 Red Star Alley, West District, Beijing

北京市新街口南大街十号
北京市新街口南大街十号

Beijing shi xin jiê kou nan da jiê shi hao
10 South Xinjiekou Street, Beijing

In Beijing, street names often make reference to their location inside or outside of a traditional city gate. Here is an example:

建国门外大街
建國門外大街

Jiånguó mén wài dà jiê
The big street outside of the Jianguo Gate.

Three sample addresses in Taiwan:

台北市和平东路一段162号
台北市和平东路一段162号

Taipei shi Heiping dong lu yi duan 162 hao
162 Section 1 Hoping East Road, Taipei

40744 台中市西屯区台中港路三段181号
40744 台中市西屯区台中港路三段181号

40744 Táizhong shi xiê tun qü Táizhong gàng lù san duan 181 hao
181 Section 3, Taichung Harbor Road, Xitun district, Taichung, 40744

高雄县清水鎮永康乡，镇南里冈山路42号
高雄縣清水鎮永康鄉，鎮南裏岡山路42號

Gáoxióng xiàn qingshui zhen yongkang xiang, zhên nán lǐ gâng shăn nán lù 42 hào
42 South Gangshan Road, Zhennan Neighborhood, Yongkang Village, Qingshui Township, Gaoxiong (County)

For greetings and goodbyes in letters, see

20.3
19 Introductions

19.1 The general format of introductions

Formal introductions use the polite classifier for people, 位 wèi.

这位是刘晓东。这位是王玲玲。
Zhè wèi shì Liú Xiǎodōng. Zhè wèi shì Wáng Méiling.
This (person) is Liu Xiaodong. This (person) is Wang Meiling.

Neutral introductions have the following format.

这是刘晓东。这是王玲玲。
This is Liu Xiaodong. This is Wang Meiling.

The most common and neutral response to an introduction is:

你好。
Nǐ hào.
Hello. (lit. ‘How are you?’)

More formal responses to an introduction include:

很高兴认识你。
Hěn gāoxìng rènshì nǐ.
I’m very happy to meet you.

久仰。
Jiǔ yǎng.
I have wanted to make your acquaintance for a long time.

久仰 jiǔ yǎng is often said twice.

久闻大名。
Jiǔ wén dà míng.
I have heard so much about you.
sample introductions

The following conversations illustrate informal and formal introductions. It is appropriate to include information about a person’s work or field of study in an introduction. Following the conversations are the Mandarin terms for many common occupations and fields of study.

conversation 1 (neutral level of formality)

A: 这是李小姐，我的同学。她学地质学。
   这是我哥哥，张大年。他学语言学。
Zhè shì Lǐ xiǎojī, wǒ de tóng xué. Tā xué dìzhì xué.
Zhè shì wǒ gē, Zhāng Dànián. Tā xué yǔyán xué.

B: Nǐ hǎo.
   你好。
C: Nǐ hǎo.
   你好。

conversation 2 (more formal)

A: 我给你们介绍介绍，这位是唐教授。这位是从美国来的司密斯先生。
   Wǒ gěi nǐ men jiè shào jiè shào, zhè wèi shì Táng jiàoshòu. Zhè wèi shì cóng Měiguó lái de Sī Mìshì xiǎnshēng.

B: Jiǔ yāng, jiǔ yāng.
   久仰，久仰。

C: Bǐcǐ, bǐcǐ.
   彼此，彼此。

conversation 3 (formal)

A: 这位是有名的音乐家，马友友，这位是名导演，张艺谋。
   Zhè wèi shì yǒu míng de yīnyuè jiā, Mǎ Yǒu-yǒu, zhè wèi shì míng dǎoyuàn, Zhāng Yìmóu.

B: Jiǔ yāng dà míng.
   久仰大名。

C: Bǐcǐ, bǐcǐ.
   彼此，彼此。

The feeling is mutual. (in reply to someone well-known)
Common occupations and fields of study

19.3

Common occupations

- 科学家/科学家 - 作者/zuòzhě - writer
- 画家/画家 - 音乐家/音乐家 - yīnyuè jiā - musician
- 作家/记者 - jùzhè/jìzhé - reporter
- 农民/农民 - gònggrén - worker
- 牙医/牙医 - 救火员/救火员 - jiūhuòyuán - fireman
- 木匠/mùjiāng - 水工/shuǐgōng - plumber
- 化工 - diànhéng - electrical engineer; electrician
- 业主/业主 - 小贩/xiǎofàn - street vendor

Fields of study

- 会计学/会计学 - 人类学/人類學 - rénlèixué - anthropology
- 人文科学/人文科学 - 亚洲学系/亞洲學系 - yàzhōu xuéxì - Asian Studies
- 生物学/生物学 - 化学/化學 - huàxué - chemistry
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTRODUCTIONS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>资讯/資訊</td>
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<td>dìlǐ xué</td>
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<td>geography</td>
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<tr>
<td>geology</td>
<td>数学/數學</td>
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<td>历史/歷史</td>
<td>shùxué</td>
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<tr>
<td>lǐshì</td>
<td>math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>history</td>
<td>音乐学/音樂學</td>
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<tr>
<td>医学/醫學</td>
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<tr>
<td>哲学/哲學</td>
<td>wúlì xué</td>
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<td>zhé xué</td>
<td>physics</td>
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<td>philosophy</td>
<td>心理学/心理學</td>
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<td>政治学/政治學</td>
<td>xīnlì xué</td>
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<td>zhèngzhì xué</td>
<td>psychology</td>
</tr>
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<td>political science</td>
<td>社会学/社會學</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>宗教学/宗教學</td>
<td>shèhuì xué</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zōngjiào xué</td>
<td>sociology</td>
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<tr>
<td>religious studies</td>
<td>语言学/語言學</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>戏剧学/戲劇學</td>
<td>yǔyán xué</td>
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<tr>
<td>xìjù xué</td>
<td>linguistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>theater</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Greetings and goodbyes

This chapter contains the most common expressions used by Mandarin Chinese speakers when greeting others and saying goodbye in different contexts. The expressions here are those used by the majority of Mandarin speakers, but differences between mainland and Taiwan Mandarin are noted where relevant. In Chinese, greetings and goodbyes are typically not accompanied by body contact such as a handshake, hug, or kiss, though handshakes are becoming more common in cities.

Greetings are used to acknowledge the presence of another person. Chinese uses different kinds of greetings depending upon the relationship of speaker and addressee, the time of day in which the greeting is made, and whether or not contact is face-to-face. Greetings that take the form of questions typically need no response.

20.1 Greetings in conversations

20.1.1 Basic greeting

To greet casual acquaintances or to greet others in a shopping or business environment, or when meeting someone for the first time, or when answering the telephone, say:

你好。
Nǐ hǎo.
Hi. (How are you?)

The response to this greeting is:

你好
Nǐ hǎo.
Hi. (How are you?)

or

好。谢谢。你呢？
Hǎo. Xièxiè. Nǐ ne?
Fine. Thanks. And you?

NOTE Until recently, the expression 你好 nǐ hǎo was primarily used when greeting foreigners, but in Chinese cities it is now widely used between native speakers of Chinese.
GREETINGS AND GOODBYES

A more formal variation of this greeting uses the polite pronoun 您 nín ‘you’:

Máo: Wáng jìnglǐ, nín hǎo?
Mao: Manager Wang, how are you?

Wáng: Hǎo.
Wang: Fine.

20.1.2 Greetings with reference to time of day

The most common morning greeting is:

早。
Zǎo.
Good morning.

The response is:

早
Zǎo.
Good morning.

An alternative form of this greeting is:

早安。
Zǎoān.
Good morning.

or

早上好。
Zǎoshāng hǎo.
Good morning.

There is no greeting associated with any other time of day.

20.1.3 Greeting people by calling them (叫 jiào)

In China, it is very common to greet others by making eye contact and calling them by name, title, or appropriate kinship term. To greet others in this way is to 叫 jiào ‘call’ them. This greeting can include 好 hǎo or 你好 nǐ hǎo.

罗老师！/ 羅老師！
Professor Ross!

张萌！/ 張萌！
Zhāng Méng!

王经理！/ 王經理！
Manager Wang!

阿姨好！
Āyí hǎo!

小王！
Little Wang!

老张你好！/ 老張你好！
Lǎo Zhāng nǐ hǎo!

何正明

18.4
Greetings in conversations

20.1.4 Greeting others by referring to their present activity

Relatives, friends, or close acquaintances may greet each other by referring to their present activity. Here are some examples.

吃飯去。
吃饭去。
Chī fàn qù. (I see that you are) Going off to eat.
Shàng kè ba! Going to class, I assume.

回家呢?
Huí jiā ne?
Are you going home?
Shàng bān ne. Going to work, right?

你上哪儿去?
你上哪儿去?
Nǐ shàng nàr qù? Where are you going?
Nǐ dào nàr qù? Where are you going?

你去哪儿?
你去哪儿?
Nǐ qù nàr?
Nǐ jīntiān qù nǎr wán le?

干吗(呢)? (informal/casual)
幹嗎(呢)?
Gàn má (ne)?
Máng shénme ne?

A variation of this kind of greeting is to ask about present activity.

你上哪儿去?
你上哪儿去?
Nǐ shàng nàr qù?
Nǐ dào nàr qù?

你去哪儿?
你去哪儿?
Nǐ qù nàr?
Nǐ jīntiān qù nǎr wán le?

干吗(呢)? (informal/casual)
幹嗎(呢)?
Gàn má (ne)?
Máng shénme ne?

What are you up to?
What are you heading off to play?

20.1.5 Greeting by asking about eating a meal

When greeting others around normal meal times, you can ask if they have eaten.

(你)吃了吗?
(你)吃了没有?
Nǐ chī le ma?
Nǐ chī le méi yǒu
Have you eaten yet?
Have you eaten yet?

20.1.6 Telephone greetings

The most common phone greetings are:

喂?
Wèi/Wéi. (It may be spoken in a rising or falling tone.)
Hello.

喂，你好。
Wèi, nǐ hǎo.
Hello, how are you?
20.2 Saying goodbye in conversations

20.2.1 Basic goodbyes

The most general way to say goodbye and to end a conversation is:

再见。
Zài jiàn.
Goodbye. (lit. ‘again see’ → ‘see you again’)

In Taiwan, and increasingly in mainland China, people also say:

拜拜。
Báibái. (also pronounced bàibài)
Bye bye. (borrowed from English ‘bye bye’)

If the participants in a conversation expect to see each other in the near future, they may use variations of 再见 zàijiàn to say goodbye. These include:

一会儿见。
Yīhuìr jiàn.
See you in a moment.

回头见。
Huí tóu jiàn.
See you in a moment. (lit. ‘See you in the turn of a head.’)

明天见。
Míngtiān jiàn.
See you tomorrow.

后天见。
Hòutiān jiàn.
See you the day after tomorrow.

Other expressions indicating future time can be used before 见 jiàn.

20.2.2 Saying goodbye to a guest

To say goodbye to a guest, use one of these expressions:

慢走。
Màn zǒu.
Don’t hurry off.

再来玩。
Zài lái wán.
Come again. (informal)

有空再来。
Yǒu kòng zài lái.
Come again when you have time.
Greetings and goodbyes in letters

(請)好走。
(請)好走。
(Qing) hǎo zǒu.
(Please) take care.

To respond to a host when taking leave, use one of these expressions:

別送。
Bié sòng.
Don’t see me off.

請留步。
Qǐng liú bù.
Please do not bother to see me off. (more formal)

To say goodbye to someone who is leaving on a trip, say:

一路順風。
Yī lù shùn fēng.
Have a good trip.

一路平安。
Yī lù píng’ān.
(Have a smooth wind for the entire road.)

Saying goodbye with reference to time of day

晚安。
Wǎn’ān.
Goodnight.

NOTE

晚安 wǎn’ān can only be used as a goodbye, and not as a greeting.

Greetings and goodbyes in letters

Greetings and salutations in letters

Letters begin with the name of the addressee.

In informal letters to someone with whom you have a close relationship, you may use the recipient’s given name, or family name and given name. Sometimes these are followed by these kinship terms:

兄 xiōng elder brother, a form of address used by males of the same generation
弟 dì younger brother, a form of address used to a younger male
姊 zǐ elder sister or 姐 jiě, a form of address used by female of the same generation
或 or
妹 mèi younger sister, a form of address used to a younger female
A more formal letter may begin with the addressee's family name or family name and given name followed by his or her title.

Wáng Jiànguó xiǎoshēng:
Mr. Wang Jianguo:

More formal letters may also begin with the name and title of the addressee following by a standard salutation. Note that the use of the family name makes the greeting more formal than the use of the given name alone.

The following phrases may also be used after the name and title of the addressee.

**Polite and formal**

鈐鑒/鉅鑒 *jūnjiàn* ‘for your perusal’

Wáng xiǎoshēng jūnjiàn:
Mr. Wang for your perusal:

鈐鑒/鉅鑒 *jūnjiàn* ‘for your perusal’

Wáng xiǎozhāng jūnjiàn:
Principal Wang for your perusal:

**Polite but less formal**

如晤 *rúwù* ‘as if talking to you face-to-face’

Jiànguó xiōng rúwù:
Elder brother Jianguo, it is as if I were talking to you face-to-face:

惠鑒/惠鑒 *huìjiàn* ‘please be kind enough to read the following letter’

Méiyīng zǐ huìjiàn:
Elder sister Meiying, please be kind enough to read the following letter:
Greetings and goodbyes in letters

The use of a formal title makes this salutation more formal:

Ms. Meiying, please be kind enough to read the following letter:

This salutation is used in letters from a government department or organization to an individual.

台端 tāidūān ‘for your gracious perusal’

Wáng xiānshēng tāidūān:
Mr. Wang, for your gracious perusal:

Goodbyes in letters

The following expressions are used to close the letter. They occur after the body of the letter, before the name of the sender.

Expressions used to extend good wishes to the addressee

These expressions occur immediately after the body of the letter, before any additional greetings.

顺颂 shùn sòng I take this opportunity to send regards and wish your well-being
祝 zhù expressing good wishes
敬祝 jìng zhù respectfully extending (good) wishes to you
敬颂 jìng sòng (I) extend good wishes
此颂 cǐ sòng (I) extend good wishes

Wishes for good health and well being

The following phrases are standard expressions of good wishes. They occur after one of the previous phrases, before the name of the sender. Note that many are linked to a specific season or to the new year.

春安 chūn’ān a peaceful spring
夏安 xià’ān your health, your well-being in the summer season
秋安 qiū’ān your welfare in this autumn season
冬安 dōng’ān your well-being in this winter season
祈 qí good fortune
教祺 jiào qí (instructing you to have) good fortune
[for teachers or educators]
岁祺/歲祺 suǐqí good fortune at the New Year
禧 xǐ Happy New Year
道安 dào’ān asking about your well-being
钧安 jūn’ān your well-being
文安 wén’ān your health

Expressions included with the signature

The following expressions are included after the name of the sender.
For letters written to someone of the same generation as oneself:

**Less formal**

手 shǒu written by

**More formal**

敬上 jìng shàng respectfully presented
拜上 bài shàng respectfully yours
拜启/拜敬 bài qǐ respectfully report
再拜 zài bài bow twice (a polite closing to a letter)

**For very formal letters written to a superior**

謏啟/謏敬 jīn qǐ cautiously and prudently respectfully present
謏禀/謏敬 jīn bǐng respectfully submitted

In addition, if the addressee is referred to as 兄 xiōng, 弟 dì, 姊 zǐ, or 妹 mèi in the salutation, the writer typically prefixes the reciprocal generation term to his or her name in the closing. In other words, a male writer who greets his addressee with 兄 xiōng typically closes the letter by prefixing his name with 弟 dì. A female writer who greets her addressee with 姊 zǐ typically closes the letter by prefixing her name with 妹 mèi.

In the body of a letter, the name of the sender and the date of the letter are placed at the end of the letter.

Sample letters illustrating the format and the use of these expressions are presented here.

**Sample letter outlines**

**20.3.1 Informal letter to a friend**

丽哈利如晤：

Lìlì zì rúwù:
Older sister Lili as I talk to you face-to-face:

[body of the letter]

Shùn sòng

I take this opportunity to send regards and wish your well-being

夏安

Xià'ān

peace in this summer season

妹 王嘉玲 上

mèi Wáng Jiālíng shàng

yī yuè shí'èr rì

Younger sister Wang Jialing

January 12
Greetings and goodbyes in letters

20.3.3.2 Formal letter

张老师钧鉴：
张老师钧鉴：
Zhāng lǎoshī jūn jiàn:
Professor Zhang, for your perusal:

[body of the letter]

敬颂
gǐng sòng
(I) extend good wishes

教祺
jiào qí
good fortune

学 生 王 美 丽 拜 上
xuéshēng Wáng Měi lì bài shàng

五月十七日
wǔ yuè shí qī rì

(Your) student, Wang Meili, I bow to you
May 17

20.3.3.3 Very formal letter

刘建安校长台端：
刘建安校长台端：
Líu Jiàn’ān xiàozhǎng tái duān:
Principal Liu Jian’an, for your perusal:

[body of the letter]

此颂
cǐ sòng
(I) extend good wishes to

道安
dào’ān
Your health

郭 友 情 谨 稿
Guō Yǒu qíng jǐn gǎo

九月二十八日
jiǔ yuè èr shí bā rì

郭 友 情 谨 稿
Guō Youqing jǐn gǎo

九月二十八日

Guǒ Yōuqíng jǐn bǐng

jiǔ yuè èr shí bā rì

Guo Youqing respectfully submitted
September 28, 2004

For the format used in addressing envelopes, see

18.7
21

Basic strategies for communication

Languages have specific expressions that speakers use to start conversations and to keep them going. These expressions often reflect the degree of formality of the situation, the relationship of the participants in the conversation, and the attitudes of the speakers. This section presents the most commonly used expressions in Mandarin.

21.1 Attracting someone’s attention

21.1.1 Attracting attention by using a name or title

In Mandarin, the most common way to attract someone’s attention is to address them with their name or a title or kinship term.

18.4

马教授/教授 (Professor Ma)
Mā jiàoshòu Wáng Měilíng
Professor Ma Meiling Wang

先生 (Mr./sir)
Xiānsheng Xiǎojie

Miss

In mainland China, to politely get the attention of a male whom you do not know, you can say:

師傅/師傅 (shīfu) master (as in, master craftsman)

Taxi drivers are typically addressed as:

司机/司機 (sījí) driver

An informal way to attract someone’s attention is by using the interjection:

哎 (ē) hey
21.1.2 Attracting attention by apologizing for the intrusion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mandarin</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>麻烦你</td>
<td>mà fan nǐ</td>
<td>excuse me (I am bothering you)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>麻烦你</td>
<td>mà fan nǐ</td>
<td>excuse me (I am sorry for creating extra work for you)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>对不起</td>
<td>duī bu qǐ</td>
<td>excuse me (I am sorry for being rude)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>劳驾</td>
<td>lǎo jià</td>
<td>excuse me (for creating extra work for you)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21.1.3 Attracting attention by indicating that you want to ask a question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mandarin</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>请问</td>
<td>qǐng wèn</td>
<td>may I ask</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>請問</td>
<td>qǐng wèn</td>
<td>I'd like to inquire for a moment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21.1.4 Attracting attention by asking for help

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mandarin</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>请帮(个)忙。</td>
<td>qǐng bāng (gè) mǎng.</td>
<td>Please help me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>请幫(個)忙。</td>
<td>qǐng bāng (gè) mǎng.</td>
<td>Please help me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>劳驾</td>
<td>lǎo jià</td>
<td>excuse me (for creating extra work for you)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21.2 Responding to a call for attention

The most common way to respond to a call for attention is to use the phrase

```
什什麼事?

What is the matter? / What do you want?
```

Other responses include

```
有事嗎?
有事嗎?
Yǒu shì ma?
Is something the matter?
```

```
怎麼了?
怎怎么会了?
Zěnme le?
What’s the matter?
```

21.3 Checking whether people have understood you

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mandarin</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>清楚嗎？</td>
<td>qīng chu ma?</td>
<td>Is it clear?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>懂不懂？</td>
<td>dǒng bù dǒng?</td>
<td>Do you understand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>懂嗎？</td>
<td>dǒng ma?</td>
<td>Do you understand?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21.4 Indicating understanding or lack of understanding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mandarin</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>好。</td>
<td>hǎo.</td>
<td>(I) understand (now).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>行。</td>
<td>xíng.</td>
<td>(I) understand (now).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(我)懂(了)。</td>
<td>wǒ dǒng (le).</td>
<td>(I) understand (now).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
21.5 Requesting repetition or clarification of spoken language

Qǐng nǐ zài shuō.
Please repeat.

(那是)什么意思?
(那是)甚麼意思?
(Nà shì) shénme yìsi?
What does that mean?

Qǐng nǐ shuō màn yīdiǎn.
Please speak a little slower.

21.6 Asking for assistance in identifying a Chinese character

Zěnme niàn?
How is it pronounced?

Zěnme xiě?
How do you write it?

‘qíngchu’ 怎么写?
How do you write the word ‘qingchu’?

Nàge zì shì shénme yìsi.
What does that character mean?

21.7 Providing information about the identification of Chinese characters

The following strategies are commonly used to help a listener identify a character.
Using fillers

- Present a common word in which the character in question occurs
  「清」的「清」
  ‘qingchu’ de ‘qing’
  the ‘qing’ in ‘qingchu’

- List the components of the character in question
  「三点水」的「清」
  「三點水」的「清」
  ‘sàndiǎn shuǐ’ de ‘qīng’
  the character ‘qing’ with the ‘three dot water’ radical

  「木子」「李」
  ‘mù’ ‘zi’ ‘Lǐ’
  the character ‘李 Lǐ’ that consists of the character ‘木 mù’ and the character ‘子 zi’

21.8 Signaling that you are following the speaker

To indicate that you are following a speaker, say:

- 是，是 shì, shì yes, yes
- 嗯，嗯 ng, ng yeh, yeh
- 对，对/對，對 duì, duì right, right

21.9 Interrupting a speaker

To interrupt a speaker say:

- 对不起/對不起 duìbùqǐ excuse me

21.10 Using fillers

A filler is an expression that fills a pause in a conversation and keeps the conversation going. English uses expressions such as ‘well,’ ‘mmm,’ ‘uh.’ Mandarin uses these expressions.

- 那么/那麼 nàme well
- 嗯，嗯 ng, ng yeh
- 这个，这个.../這個，這個... zhège, zhège this, this...
Formal development of a topic

Opening remarks
To formally introduce a topic in a talk or written report, use the following expressions:

今天要谈到的问题是...
Jintiān yào tánào de wèntí shì...
The issue/problem we are going to discuss today is...

今天要讲的题目是...(今天要讨论的题目是...)
Jintiān yào jiǎng de títí shì... (jintiān yào tǎolùn de títí shì...)
The topic I am going to talk about today is...(The topic I am going to discuss
today is...)

Qǐng gèwèi duōduō zhǐjiào.
I invite your comments and corrections. (used in formal speeches and written presentations)

Introducing further points
To introduce additional points in a discussion or in writing, say:

shǒuxiàn in the first place
dí yī first
dúle (noun phrase) yǐwài besides (noun phrase)
hái yǒu also, in addition
qǐng kàn (+ noun phrase) please look at (noun phrase)

Establishing a sequence

diyī first
dì èr second
dì sān third
ránhòu afterwards
hōulái afterwards (only used to
describe sequence in the past)
Establishing references

To refer to information that is relevant to the conversation, use these expressions:

关于/關於 **guānyú regarding (noun phrase)**

关于买飞机票的事，请你负责。

關於買飛機票的事，請你負責。

**Guānyú mǎi fēijī piào de shì, qǐng nǐ fùzé.**

As for buying the airplane tickets, please take charge.

至于/至於 **zhìyú in reference to (noun phrase)**

至于定旅馆的事，你不必费心。

至於定旅館的事，你不必費心。

**Zhìyú dìng lǚguǎn de shì, nǐ bù bì féixīn.**

As for making the hotel reservations, you don’t have to bother (doing that).

甚至于/甚至於 **shènzhì yú even, go so far as to (noun phrase or verb phrase)**

一切手续都办好了，甚至于你住的地方。

一切手續都辦好了，甚至於你住的地方。

**Yīqié shǒuxù dōu bànhǎo le, shènzhìyú nǐ zhù de difang.**

All of the arrangements have been taking care of, even down to the place where you will live.

为什么有时候打开网页的速度很慢甚至于无法连接？

為什麼有時候打開網頁的速度很慢甚至於無法連接？

**Wèishiénme yǒu shíhòu dǎkāi wǎngyè de sùdù hěn màn shènzhìyú wúfǎ liánjié?**

Why is it that sometimes it takes a very long time for a web page to open, sometimes not even connecting at all?

Giving examples

To give examples, use these expressions to introduce your remarks:

比方说/比如說 **bǐfāng shuō for example (+ sentence)**

中文跟英文不同。比方说，中文有四个声调，英文没有。

中文跟英文不同。比如說，中文有四個聲調，英文沒有。

**Zhōngwén gèn Yīngwén bù tóng. Bífāng shuō, Zhōngwén yǒu si gè shēngdiào, Yīngwén méi yǒu.**

Chinese and English are different. For example, Chinese has four tones, English doesn’t have tones.

例如 **lìrú for example (+ sentence)**

请你说一下你是怎么学中文的，例如每天化多少时间，听多少时间录音，等等。

請你說一下你是怎麼學中文的，例如每天化多少時間，聽多少時間錄音，等等。

**Qǐng nǐ shuō yǒu xiàquè Zhōngwén de, lìrú měitiān huà duōshào shíjìqiān, tīng duōshào shíjìqiān lùyīn, dēng dēng.**

Please tell (me) how you study Chinese, for example, how many hours you spend every day, how long you listen to recordings, etc.
BASIC STRATEGIES FOR COMMUNICATION

21.11

Summarizing and concluding
To summarize and conclude, use these expressions to introduce your remarks:

總而言之/zǒng'éryánzhi in other words, to put it another way

Zhè jiàn shì wǒmen yìjīng tán le hén duō cì le. Zǒng'éryánzhi, xīwàng wǒmen néng hùxiǎng xīnrèn.
We’ve talked about this matter many times before. To put it another way, I hope we can trust each other.

總括來說/zǒngkuò láishuō to sum up

Zǒngkuò lái shuō, Zhōngguó wénzì tài fùzá, xūyào gāigé.
To sum things up, the Chinese language is too complicated and needs to be revised.

zuì hòu/finally

Yìxià shì wǒde kànfǎ, zuìhòu xīwàng gè wèi néng duō tí yìjìan.
What follows is my opinion. Finally, I hope that everyone will provide feedback.
Telecommunications and e-communications play a major role in communication in China. This chapter presents expressions associated with the use of these technologies.

22.1 Sending and receiving phone calls, faxes, email, and beeper messages

22.1.1 Telephone and mobile phone/cell phone

給 (someone) 打電話/給 (someone) 打電話
gěi (someone) dà diànhuà
make a phone call to someone
(請) 給我打电话。
(請) 給我打電話。
(Qǐng) gěi wǒ dà diànhuà.
(Please) call me.

請打我的手机。
請打我的手機。
Qǐng dà wǒ de shǒujī.
Please call my mobile.

接電話/接電話
jiē diànhuà
receive a phone call

沒人接電話。
沒人接電話。
Méi rén jiē diànhuà
No one is answering the phone.

發短信 or 发短消息
fā duànxìn or fā duǎn xiǎoxī
send a text message
22.1 Telecommunications and E-Communications

I sent you a text message.

Wǒ gěi nǐ fā le duǎnxìn.
I received your text message.

I didn’t receive your fax. Please transmit again.

Fax

22.1.2 Fax

fā chuán zhēn
send a fax

shōu chuánzhēn
receive a fax

Email

22.1.3 Email

diànzǐ xìn
email

fā diànzǐ xìn
send an email

diàn zì yóu jiàn
email

jiē diàn zì yóu jiàn
receive an email

Beeper

22.1.4 Beeper

hū jī
beeper

xún hū jī
beeper

BB jī
beeper
Telephone etiquette

(請)呼我。
or 叩我。
(Qǐng) hù wǒ.
(Please) beep me.
Kǒu wǒ. (from English ‘call me’)

22.2 Dialing a number and entering a number

拨打电话号码/撥電話號碼
bō diànhuà hàomǎ
dial a phone number
在你刚拨打的电话号码前加‘0’。
在你剛撥的電話號碼前請加‘0’。
Zài nǐ gāng bō de diànhuà hàomǎ qián qīng jiā ‘líng’.
Please add ‘zero’ in front of the telephone number that you just dialed.

输入号码/輸入號碼
shūrù hàomǎ
enter a phone number
请输入你的客户号码。
请輸入你的客戶號碼。
Qǐng shūrù nǐ de kèhù hàomǎ.
Please enter your customer (account) number.

22.3 Using the internet

Basic vocabulary

万维网/萬維網 wàn wèi wǎng (shìjiè) wǎng lù
internet
因特网/因特網 yīn tè wǎng internet
互联网/互聯網 hùlián wǎng
网站/網站 wǎng zhàn webpage
网吧/網吧 wǎng bā
网路专家/網路專家 wǎnglù zhūānjīā
webmaster
上网/路/shàng wǎng (lù)
surf the web

22.4 Telephone etiquette

Telephone calls are answered with the phrase:
喂？ Wèi? or Wéi?
Wèi? (in either tone) is the equivalent of ‘Hello’ in English.
NOTE 韦 can be used more broadly as an interjection to attract somebody's attention. When used in answering a phone call, it is said in second or fourth tone. Second tone is more polite and more commonly used. Fourth tone conveys a sense of impatience.

Increasingly, in the cities of China, the phrase used to answer a phone call is:

你好。

Wěi? Nǐ hǎo.

Hello. How are you?

To ask to speak to someone say:

(张老师)在吗?

(Zhāng lǎoshī) zài ma?

Is (Professor Zhang) in?

or

我找(张老师)。她在吗?

Wǒzhǎo (Zhāng lǎoshī). Tā zài ma?

I’m looking for (Professor Zhang). Is she in?

If the party in question is not in, say:

(她)不在。

(Tā) bù zài.

(She) is not in.

If you wish to leave a message say:

我要留言。

Wǒ yào liú yán.

I’d like to leave a message.

To arrange to get together with someone by phone say:

我们通电话。

Wǒmen tōng diànhuà.

Let’s be in touch by phone.

To describe problems reaching someone by phone say:

(我)打不通。

(Wǒ) dǎbutōng.

(I am) unable to get through.

现在占线。

Xiànzài zhàn xiàn.

The line is busy.
Writing and reciting phone numbers, fax numbers, and beeper numbers

Phone, fax, and beeper numbers are recited as a list of single digits. In mainland China, when reciting numbers, the number 1 (१) is pronounced याँ. In Taiwan it is pronounced 一. Phone, fax, and beeper numbers are typically written with Arabic numerals and not with Chinese characters.

Sample numbers

Phone, fax, beeper

6 5 2 7 - 3 3 7 8
liù wǔ èr qī  sān sān qī bā

Cell phone

1 3 5 5 7 6 7 6 6 6 6
yī  sān wǔ wǔ qī liù qī liù liù liù liù
or
yāo sān wǔ wǔ qī liù qī liù liù liù liù

NOTE

Phone numbers that include the numerals 6 or 8 are considered particularly good and lucky. Those with the numeral 4 are less desirable. In mainland China, cellphone customers select and purchase their numbers from a list. Those with 6s and 8s are more expensive. Those with 4s are less expensive.
Negating information

23

Negation of verbs and verb phrases

The words that are used to negate verbs and verb phrases in Mandarin are 不 bù and 没 méi. 不 bù and 没 méi immediately precede the verb or anything that precedes and modifies the verb, including an adverb, a location phrase, or any other prepositional phrase.

他不喝酒。[negation + verb]
Tā bù hē jiǔ.
He doesn’t drink (alcohol).

他不一定考得好。[negation + adverb]
Tā bù yīdìng kǎodehǎo.
It is not certain that he will do well on the exam. (He may not do well on the exam.)

他不在家吃饭。[negation + location prepositional phrase]
他不在家吃飯。
Tā bù zài jiā chī fàn.
He doesn’t eat at home.

她没跟弟弟说话。[negation + prepositional phrase]
她沒跟弟弟說話。
Tā méi gēn dìdì shuō huà.
She didn’t speak with younger brother.

In addition to the primary role of 不 bù and 没 méi as markers of negation, they often serve to identify the aspect and time frame of events.

13.3, 33.4

不 bù

不 bù is the marker of negation for

- adjectival verbs, stative verbs, and modal verbs:

妹妹不高。 (adjectival verb)
Mèimei bù gāo.
Younger sister is not tall.
Negation of verbs and verb phrases

10.1, 11.1, 12.6.1

- action verbs describing present, future, or habitual events:

   他不吃肉。
   Tā bù chī ròu.
   He does not eat meat.

   我不学法语。
   Wǒ bù xué Fáyǔ.
   I don’t study French.

13.3

23.1.2 没 méi and 没有 méi yōu

没 méi is the negation word that negates the verb 有 yǒu.

   他没有钱。
   Tā méi yǒu qián.
   He doesn’t have any money.

   公园里没有人。
   Gōngyuán lǐ méi yǒu rén.
   There are no people in the park.

In addition, 没 méi (or 没有 méi yōu) negates action verbs under the following conditions:

The action is not complete

   我还没看完那本书。
   Wǒ hái méi kàn wán nà bèn shū.
   I still haven’t finished reading that book.

The action did not happen in the past

   我昨天没吃晚饭。
   Wǒ zuótiān méi chī wǎnfàn.
   Yesterday, I didn’t eat dinner.
13.3, 33.3

23.2

The relative order of negation and adverbs

Here are some general rules for the relative order of negation and adverbs. The adverbs are emphasized in each example.

• Most adverbs occur before negation.

> 那本书，我还没看完。
> 那本书，我還沒看完。
>  Nà běn shū, wǒ hái méi kàn wán.
> That book, I have not yet finished reading it.

> 我喜欢吃中国饭，就不喜欢吃海参。
> 我喜歡吃中國飯，就不喜歡吃海參。
>  Wǒ xīhuan chí Zhōngguó fàn, jiù bù xīhuan chí hǎi shēn.
> I like to eat Chinese food; I just don’t like to eat sea slugs.

> 他也许不认识你妹妹。
> 他也許不認識你妹妹。
>  Tā yěxǐ bù rènshi nǐ mèimei.
>  Perhaps he doesn’t know your younger sister.

• A small number of adverbs may occur either before or after negation. The order of negation and adverb influences the meaning of the sentence.

> 我们都不会开车。
> 我們都 不會開車。
>  Wǒmen dōu bù huì kāi chē.
>  We all cannot drive (a car).

> 我们不都会开车。有的会，有的不会。
> 我們不都會開車。有的會，有的不會。
>  Wǒmen bù dōu huì kāi chē. Yǒu de huì, yǒu de bù huì.
>  Not all of us can drive a car. Some can, some can’t.

> 我一定不去。
> Wǒ yìdìng bù qù.
>  I am definitely not going.
不  

**Words that occur with negation**

**23.3.1 Adverbs that occur with negation**

Certain adverbs always occur with negation or in negative contexts. These include:

从来/從來  

```
cóngláí (+ negation) ‘never’

我从来没抽过烟。
Wǒ cóngláí méi chōuguó yān.
I’ve never smoked cigarettes.
```

根本

```
gēnbēn (+ negation) ‘absolutely not’

那样的话根本没有道理。
Nà yàng de huà gēnbēn méi yǒu dàoli.
That kind of talk makes no sense.
```

并/並

```
bìng (+ negation) ‘absolutely (not)’

我并不愿意跟他一起住。
Wǒ bìng bú yuàn yì tā yīqǐ zhù.  
(I am not at all willing to live with him.)
```

**23.3.2 The noun modifier 任何 rènhé and negation**

任何  

```
rènhé ‘any’

我没告诉任何人。
Wǒ méi gàosu rènhé rén.  
I didn’t tell anyone.
```

不  

**23.4  

不 bù in resultative verb structures**

不  

```
bù occurs between the verb and the resultative suffix to indicate inability to achieve the result. Here are some examples.

吃完  

chīwān ‘finish eating’

我吃不完。
Wǒ chībùwān.
I am unable to finish eating (the food).
```

I am not definitely going. (I may not go.)
NEGATING INFORMATION

23.5

Literary markers of negation: 無 wú and 非 fēi

The literary markers of negation 無 wú and 非 fēi occur in modern Mandarin as components of words. The following are commonly used words which include 無 wú and 非 fēi.

Expressions with 無 wú

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>无论/無論</td>
<td>wúlùn</td>
<td>no matter what</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>无论如何/無論如何</td>
<td>wúlùn rú hé</td>
<td>in any case, no matter what</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>无比/無比</td>
<td>wúbǐ</td>
<td>incomparable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>无故/無故</td>
<td>wúgù</td>
<td>without reason; for no reason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>无理/無理</td>
<td>wúlǐ</td>
<td>unreasonable; for no reason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>毫无/毫無</td>
<td>háowú</td>
<td>not in the least, not at all</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

无论你去不去上课，我也不去。

Whether or not you go to class, I am not going.

你无论如何得帮我这个忙。

Nǐ wúlùn rú hé děi bāng wǒ zhège máng.

No matter what, you have to help me with this matter.

The Scenery of Hawaii is so beautiful that no place can match it.

Nǐ wèi shénme wúyuán wúgù dā rén?

Why do you hit people for no reason at all?

You are really picking a fight for no reason.
Literary markers of negation: 無 wú and 非 fēi

毫无疑问，她是一个很好的学生。
No doubt at all; she is a very good student.

Q: 你明天能来吗？
A: 毫无疑问。
Are you able to come tomorrow?
No problem.

Expressions with 非 fēi

非 (verb phrase) 不可  fēi (verb phrase) 不可 must (verb phrase)
非得 feiděi must
非凡 feifán outstanding
非法 feifá illegal
非常 fēicháng extraordinary, extremely

我非把中文学好不可。
I must master Chinese.

你今天下午非得把功课做完。
You must finish your homework this afternoon.

这次的庆祝会隆重非凡。
This celebration was extraordinarily ceremonious.

非法的生意我不会作的。
I will never do any illegal business.

他的英文非常好。
His English is extremely good.
24

Asking questions and replying to questions

Questions are used to ask for information. Here are the most common question types in Mandarin.

24.1 Yes–no questions

Yes–no questions are questions that can be answered with ‘yes’ or ‘no.’ In Mandarin, there are several ways to ask yes–no questions. Notice that unlike English, the overall phrase order of statements and yes–no questions is the same. In addition, no helping word equivalent to ‘do’ is involved in yes–no questions in Chinese.

24.1.1 Yes–no questions with 吗/嗎 ma

When 吗/嗎 ma is added to the end of a statement, it turns the statement into a yes–no question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Yes–no question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>她是中国人。</td>
<td>她是中国人吗？</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>她是中国人。</td>
<td>她是中国人吗？</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tā shì Zhōngguó rén.</td>
<td>Tā shì Zhōngguó rén ma?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>她是中国人。</td>
<td>她是中国人吗？</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tā shì Zhōngguó rén.</td>
<td>Tā shì Zhōngguó rén ma?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They sell tangerines.</td>
<td>Tāmen mài júzi ma?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他们卖橘子。</td>
<td>他们卖橘子吗？</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他們賣橘子。</td>
<td>他們賣橘子嗎？</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tāmen mài júzi.</td>
<td>Tāmen mài júzi ma?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He can speak Chinese.</td>
<td>Tā huì shuō Zhōngwén ma?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他会说中文。</td>
<td>他会说中文吗？</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他會說中文。</td>
<td>他會說中文嗎？</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tā huì shuō Zhōngwén.</td>
<td>Tā huì shuō Zhōngwén ma?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24.1.2 Yes–no questions with verb-not-verb structure

Yes–no questions may also be formed by repeating the first verb of the verb phrase in affirmative and negative form. Here are examples with different types of verbs.
Yes–no questions

Modal verbs

他会不会说中文？
他會不會說中文？
Tā huì bù huì shuō Zhōngwén?
*Can he speak Chinese?*

12.6.2

The equational verb 是 shì ‘to be’

她是不是中国人？
她是不是中國人？
Tā shì bù shì Zhōngguó rén?
*Is she a Chinese person?*

11.5

Action verbs

他们卖不卖橘子？
他們賣不賣橘子？
Tāmén mài bù mài júzi?
*Do they sell tangerines?*

13

Stative verbs

你喜欢不喜欢他？
你喜歡不喜歡他？
Nǐ xīhuān bù xīhuān tā?
*Do you like him?*

or

你喜欢不喜欢他？
你喜歡不喜歡他？
Nǐ xǐ bù xǐhuān tā?
*Do you like him?*

11

Adjectival verbs

飞机票贵不贵？
飛機票貴不貴？
Fēijī piào guì bù guì?
*Are airplane tickets expensive?*

10.2

When the main verb of a sentence is 有 yǒu, the verb-not-verb question is 有没有 yǒu méi yǒu.
ASKING QUESTIONS AND REPLYING TO QUESTIONS

你有没有钱？
你有沒有錢？
Nǐ yǒu méi yǒu qián?
Do you have money?

11.6.4, 23.1.2

When the verb is followed by a direct object and no other phrase, verb-not-verb may be split. In this case, not-verb can occur immediately after the object.

他会说中文不会？
他會說中文不會？
Tā huì shuō Zhōngwén bù huì?
Can he speak Chinese?

她是中国人事不？
她是中國人事不？
Tā shì Zhōngguó rén bù shì?
Is she a Chinese person?

他们卖橘子不卖？
他們賣橘子不賣？
Tāmén mài júzi bù mài?
Do they sell tangerines?

你有钱没有？
你有錢沒有？
Nǐ yǒu qián méi yǒu?
Do you have money?

The verb-not-verb structure can be used to question whether an action is past or completed. In this case, not must be 没有 méi yǒu. 没有 méi yǒu occurs after the direct object, at the end of the sentence.

你吃饭了没有？
你吃飯了沒有？
Nǐ chī fàn le méi yǒu?
Have you eaten?

NOTE
Native speakers differ in where they put 了 le in sentences like these. Some speakers prefer to put 了 le after the object of the verb as in the example above. Some speakers prefer to put 了 le after the verb itself, as in the following example.

你吃了饭没有？
你吃了飯沒有？
Nǐ chī le fàn méi yǒu?
Have you eaten?

33.1

24.1.3 Yes–no questions with 是否 shìfǒu

是否 shìfǒu before the verb turns a statement into a yes–no question. 是否 shìfǒu questions are more common in written Chinese than in the spoken language.
Yes–no questions

24.1.4

Replying to yes–no questions

24.1.4.1

Replying ‘yes’

There is no word ‘yes’ in Mandarin. To reply ‘yes’ to a yes–no question in 吗/嗎 ma form, in 是否 shìfǒu form, or in verb-not-verb form, repeat the verb.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>吗/嗎 ma question</th>
<th>是否 shìfǒu question</th>
<th>Verb-not-verb question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>她是中国人吗？</td>
<td>她是否是中国人？</td>
<td>她是不是中国人？</td>
<td>是。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>她是中國人嗎？</td>
<td>她是否是中國人？</td>
<td>她是不是中國人？</td>
<td>是。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他去过中国吗？</td>
<td>他是否去过中國？</td>
<td>他是否去过中國？</td>
<td>去過。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他去過中國嗎？</td>
<td>他是否去過中國？</td>
<td>他是否去過中國？</td>
<td>去過。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tā qūguó Zhōngguó ma?</td>
<td>Tā shìfǒu qūguó Zhōngguó</td>
<td>méi yǒu?</td>
<td>否。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has he been to China?</td>
<td>Has he been to China?</td>
<td>Has he been to China?</td>
<td>Yes。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他会说中文吗？</td>
<td>他會說中文嗎？</td>
<td>他會不會說中文？</td>
<td>會/會。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他會說漢語嗎？</td>
<td>他會不會說漢語？</td>
<td>他會不會說漢語？</td>
<td>會/會。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tā huì shuō Zhōngwén ma?</td>
<td>Tā shìfǒu huì shuō Zhōngwén</td>
<td>méi yǒu?</td>
<td>否。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can he speak Chinese?</td>
<td>Can he speak Chinese?</td>
<td>Can he speak Chinese?</td>
<td>Yes。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你有钱吗？</td>
<td>你是否有錢？</td>
<td>你有沒有錢？</td>
<td>有。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你有錢嗎？</td>
<td>你是否有錢？</td>
<td>你有沒有錢？</td>
<td>有。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nǐ yǒu qián ma?</td>
<td>Nǐ shìfǒu yǒu qián?</td>
<td>Nǐ yǒu méi yǒu qián?</td>
<td>否。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have money?</td>
<td>Do you have money?</td>
<td>Do you have money?</td>
<td>Yes。</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24.1.4.2

Replying ‘no’

If the question asks about non-past time and the main verb of the sentence is any verb except for 有 yǒu, the ‘no’ answer is 不 bù + the verb.

If the question asks about a past or completed event or if the main verb of the question is 有 yǒu, the ‘no’ answer is 没有 méi yǒu.
ASKING QUESTIONS AND REPLYING TO QUESTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes–no question</th>
<th>是否 shìfǒu question</th>
<th>Verb-not-verb question</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>她是中國人嗎？</td>
<td>她是否是中國人？</td>
<td>她是不是中國人？</td>
<td>不是。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>她是中國人嗎？</td>
<td>她是否是中國人？</td>
<td>她是不是中國人？</td>
<td>不是。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tā shì Zhōngguó rén ma?</td>
<td>Tā shìfǒu shì</td>
<td>Tā shì bù shì</td>
<td>Bù shì.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他去過中國嗎？</td>
<td>他是否去過中國？</td>
<td>他去過中國沒有？</td>
<td>没有。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他去過中國嗎？</td>
<td>他是否去過中國？</td>
<td>他去過中國沒有？</td>
<td>没有。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tā qùguó Zhōngguó ma?</td>
<td>Tā shìfǒu qùguó</td>
<td>Tā qùguó Zhōngguó méi yōu.</td>
<td>méi yōu.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他会說中文嗎？</td>
<td>他會說中文嗎？</td>
<td>他會不會說中文？</td>
<td>不會/不會。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他会說中文嗎？</td>
<td>他會說中文嗎？</td>
<td>他會不會說中文？</td>
<td>不會/不會。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have money?</td>
<td>Do you have money?</td>
<td>Do you have money?</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24.2 Asking for agreement

To ask a listener for agreement with a statement, follow the statement with one of these expressions.

对不对?/對不對? duì bù duì? ‘correct?’

她是不是中國人，對不對?

她是中國人，對不對?

Tā shì Zhōngguó rén，duì bù duì?

She is a Chinese person, right?

好不好? hǎo bù hǎo? or 好吗?/好嗎? hǎo ma? ‘okay?’

我們說中文，好不好?

我們說中文，好不好?

Wǒmen shuō Zhōngwén, hǎo bù hǎo?

Let’s speak Chinese, okay?

行不行? xíng bù xíng? or 行吗?/行嗎? xíng ma? ‘okay?’

我請小白跟我們一起吃飯，行不行?

我請小白跟我們一起吃飯，行不行?

Wǒ qǐng Xiǎo Bái gěn wǒmen yīqǐ chī fàn，xíng bù xíng?

I am inviting Little Bai to eat with us, okay?

24.2
Choosing between alternatives with either–or questions

可以嗎？可以嗎？ kéyī ma? ‘okay?’
我跟你去看王老師，可以嗎？
我跟你去看王老師，可以嗎？
Wǒ gēn nǐ qù kàn Wáng lǎoshī，kéyī ma?
I will go with you to see Professor Wang, okay?

To answer in the affirmative, repeat the verb.

To answer ‘no,’ say 不 bù + the verb.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Affirmative</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>她是中國人，對不對？</td>
<td>对。</td>
<td>不对。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>她是中國人，對不對？</td>
<td>對。</td>
<td>不對。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She is a Chinese person, right?</td>
<td>Right.</td>
<td>Wrong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我們說中文，好不？</td>
<td>好。</td>
<td>不好。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我們說中文，好不？</td>
<td>不好。</td>
<td>不好。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let’s speak Chinese, okay?</td>
<td>Okay.</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The expression 是不是？ shì bù shì? ‘right?’ follows the subject.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Affirmative</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>她是不是會說中文？</td>
<td>是。</td>
<td>不是。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>她是不是會說中文？</td>
<td>不是。</td>
<td>不是。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does she speak Chinese?</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>她是不是會說中文？</td>
<td>會。</td>
<td>不會。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>她是不是會說中文？</td>
<td>不會。</td>
<td>不會。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does she speak Chinese?</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24.3 Choosing between alternatives with either–or questions

To ask a listener to choose between alternatives, use 还是/還是 háishi.

If the main verb of the sentence is 是 shì, 还是/還是 háishi can occur before a noun or noun phrase.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Affirmative</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>她是學生還是老師？</td>
<td>是。</td>
<td>不是。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>她是學生還是老師？</td>
<td>不是。</td>
<td>不是。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tā shì xuéshēng háishi lǎoshī?</td>
<td>是。</td>
<td>不是。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is she a student or a teacher?</td>
<td>不是。</td>
<td>不是。</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ASKING QUESTIONS AND REPLYING TO QUESTIONS

Otherwise,  

\textit{háishi} occurs before the verb phrase.

\begin{verbatim}
Nǐ hé chá háishi hē píjiǔ?
Will you drink tea or beer?
\end{verbatim}

When both alternatives are sentences,  

\textit{háishi} occurs before the second sentence.

\begin{verbatim}
Nǐ juéde Zhōngwén nán háishi Rìwén nán?
Which do you think is more difficult: Chinese or Japanese?
(lit. ‘(Do) you think Chinese is difficult or Japanese is difficult?’)
\end{verbatim}

The first alternative may be preceded by  

\textit{shì}.

\begin{verbatim}
(Zhōngguó dà háishi Éguó dà?)
Which is bigger, China or Russia?
(lit. ‘Is China big or is Russia big?’)
\end{verbatim}

To answer a  

\textit{háishi} question, select the alternative that you prefer. To indicate that a choice was made after careful consideration, it may be preceded by  

\textit{shì} or \textit{háishi}.

\begin{verbatim}
Zhōngguó dà. Shì Zhōngguó dà.
China is bigger. [I think] China is bigger.
\end{verbatim}

\begin{verbatim}
(Wǒ juéde) Rìwén nán. (Wǒ juéde) háishi Rìwén nán.
(I think) Japanese is more difficult. After careful consideration (I think)
Japanese is more difficult.
\end{verbatim}

Rhetorical questions

To ask a question for which you think you know the answer, use  

\textit{bù shì} + 吗/嗎 \textit{ma}.  

\textit{bù shì} occurs immediately before the predicate.

\begin{verbatim}
Tā bù shì yǐjīng bǐ yè le ma?
Hasn't he already graduated? (Isn’t it the case that he’s already graduated?)
\end{verbatim}

\begin{verbatim}
Nǐ bù shì yǐjīng kānguó nà bù diànyǐng le ma?
Haven’t you already seen that movie?
\end{verbatim}
24.5 Follow-up questions with 呢 ne

呢 ne is used to follow up a question with another question. It is used to ask the same question as the first one, but about another subject or object. 呢 ne follows the new subject or object.

呢 ne question to ask about a new subject:

小白： 你(的)弟弟上大学了吗？
小白： 你(的)弟弟上大学了吗？
Xiao Bai: Ni (de) didi shang daxue le ma?
Little Bai: Does your younger brother attend college?

Little Gao: 上了。
Xiao Gao: Shang le.

小白： 你(的)妹妹呢？
小白： 你(的)妹妹呢？
Xiao Bai: Ni (de) meimei ne?
Little Bai: (What about) Your younger sister?

Little Gao: 她也上了。
Xiao Gao: Tah ye shang le.

呢 ne question to ask about a new object:

小白： 你会说中文吗？
小白： 你会说中文吗？
Ni hui shuo Zhongwen ma?
Little Bai: Can you speak Chinese?

Little Gao: 会。
Hui.

小白： 日文呢？
Riwen ne?
Little Bai: Japanese?

Little Gao: 不会。
Bu hui.

24.6 Content questions

Content questions are used to ask about the identify of a person, an object, a time, a location, or a quantity, or to seek an explanation or process. Mandarin content question words include the following:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>What it questions</th>
<th>Example phrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>誰</td>
<td>who?</td>
<td>person</td>
<td>他是誰？ 他是誰？</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shéi</td>
<td>person</td>
<td>他 is 誰？</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>什麼</td>
<td>what?</td>
<td>concrete or abstract object</td>
<td>那是什麼？ 那是甚麼</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shénme</td>
<td>abstract object</td>
<td>Nà shénme? 什麼 that?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>甚麼時候</td>
<td>when?</td>
<td>time</td>
<td>你甚麼時候開始學中文？ 你甚麼時候開始學中文？</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shénme shíhòu</td>
<td>clock time</td>
<td>Nǐ shénme shíhòu kāishí xué Zhōngwén? When will you begin to study Chinese?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>几點鐘</td>
<td>when?</td>
<td>clock time</td>
<td>你几点钟回家？ 你幾點鐘回家？</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jǐdiǎn zhōng</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nǐ jǐdiǎn zhōng huí jiā? When are you going home?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>什麼地方</td>
<td>what place/ location</td>
<td>你在什麼地方工作？ 你在甚麼地方工作？</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shénme difang</td>
<td>location</td>
<td>Nǐ zài shénme dìfang gōngzuò? Where do you work?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>哪儿</td>
<td>where?</td>
<td>location</td>
<td>你在哪儿工作？ 你在哪兒工作？ Nǐ zài nàr gōngzuò?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>哪裡</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>náli</td>
<td>location</td>
<td>你在哪兒工作？ 你在哪兒工作？</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>为什么</td>
<td>why?</td>
<td>reason</td>
<td>你为什么学中文？ 你為甚麼學中文？</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wèi shénme</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nǐ wèi shénme xué Zhōngwén? Why do you study Chinese?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>凭什么</td>
<td>on what basis/ by what right?</td>
<td>reason</td>
<td>你凭什么逮捕我？ 你憑甚麼逮捕我？</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ping shénme</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nǐ píng shénme dāibǔ wǒ? On what grounds are you arresting me?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>怎么</td>
<td>how?</td>
<td>process</td>
<td>怎么走？ 怎麼走？</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zěnme</td>
<td></td>
<td>Zěnme zǒu? How do you go?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>哪</td>
<td>which?</td>
<td>specifier</td>
<td>你要买哪本书？ 你要買哪本書？</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Content questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content question word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>What it questions</th>
<th>Example phrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>几</td>
<td>how many? (usually 10 or less; used with countable nouns)</td>
<td>quantity</td>
<td>你想吃几个饺子？</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>個</td>
<td>how many? (larger number; used with mass nouns)</td>
<td>quantity</td>
<td>你有多少钱？</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>多</td>
<td>how? (used with adjectival verbs)</td>
<td>intensity</td>
<td>你多大？</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>何必</td>
<td>why?</td>
<td>reason</td>
<td>你何必生那麼大的气？</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>何妨</td>
<td>why not?</td>
<td>reason</td>
<td>如果你没事，何妨多坐一会儿。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>何时</td>
<td>when?</td>
<td>time</td>
<td>飞机何时到达？</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>何故</td>
<td>why?</td>
<td>reason</td>
<td>他何故杀人？</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>为何/為何</td>
<td>why?</td>
<td>reason</td>
<td>为何惊慌？</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following content question words and phrases are more common in formal, literary texts than in spoken Mandarin.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content question word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>What it questions</th>
<th>Example phrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>何必</td>
<td>why?</td>
<td>reason</td>
<td>你何必生那麼大的气？</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>何妨</td>
<td>why not?</td>
<td>reason</td>
<td>如果你没事，何妨多坐一会儿。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>何时/何時</td>
<td>when?</td>
<td>time</td>
<td>飞机何时到达？</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>何故</td>
<td>why?</td>
<td>reason</td>
<td>他何故杀人？</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>为何/為何</td>
<td>why?</td>
<td>reason</td>
<td>为何惊慌？</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>为何</td>
<td>why?</td>
<td>reason</td>
<td>为何惊慌？</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ASKING QUESTIONS AND REPLYING TO QUESTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content question word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>What it questions</th>
<th>Example phrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>何為</td>
<td>what is (noun</td>
<td>identification</td>
<td>何為科學方法?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>何為</td>
<td>phrase)?</td>
<td></td>
<td>何為科學方法?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>héwéi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>每為 kexue fangfa?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>何曾</td>
<td>how could (you) not</td>
<td>rhetorical request</td>
<td>我何曾不想上大學?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>何曾</td>
<td>(verb phrase)?</td>
<td>reason</td>
<td>我何曾不想上大學?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hécháng</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wǒ hécháng bù xiǎng shàng dàxué?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Mandarin, questions and answers use the same phrase order.

In Mandarin, the content question word goes where the answer goes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>你找誰？</td>
<td>我找王老師。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你找誰？</td>
<td>我找王老師。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ni zhao shéi?</td>
<td>Wǒ zhao Wang laoshi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who are you looking for?</td>
<td>I am looking for Professor Wang.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>这是什么？</td>
<td>这是手机。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>這是甚麼？</td>
<td>這是手機。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhè shì shénme?</td>
<td>Zhè shì shòujī.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is this?</td>
<td>This is a cell phone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你今天喝什么茶？</td>
<td>(我喝)龙井(茶)。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你今天喝甚麼茶？</td>
<td>(我喝)龍井(茶)。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ni jinjian he shenme cha?</td>
<td>(Wǒ hē) longjing (chá).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What tea are you drinking today?</td>
<td>(I'm drinking) Longjing (tea).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你什么时候有空？</td>
<td>我今天下午有空。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你甚麼時侯有空？</td>
<td>我今天下午有空。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ni shenme shihou you kong?</td>
<td>Wǒ jinjian xiawu you kong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When do you have free time?</td>
<td>I have free time this afternoon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你在哪儿(学中文)？</td>
<td>我在大学学中文。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你在哪裡(學中文)？</td>
<td>我在大學學中文。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ni zai nüe (nali) xuex Zhongwen?</td>
<td>Wǒ zai daxue xuex Zhongwen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where do you study Chinese?</td>
<td>I study Chinese in college/at university.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你几点钟下课？</td>
<td>我四点钟下课。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你幾點鐘下課？</td>
<td>我四點鐘下課。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ni jidian zhong xia ke?</td>
<td>Wǒ sidian zhong xia ke.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What time do you get out of class?</td>
<td>I get out of class at 4 o’clock.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你在什么地方吃午饭？</td>
<td>我在餐厅吃午饭。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你在甚麼地方吃午飯？</td>
<td>我在餐廳吃午飯。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ni zai shenme difang chi wufan?</td>
<td>Wǒ zai canteen chi wufan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where do you eat lunch?</td>
<td>I eat lunch in the cafeteria.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Content questions

怎么/怎麼 zěnme ‘how’ asks for a process. It occurs right before the verb. The answer to a 怎么/怎麼 zěnme question is an explanation. It may be a short phrase or it may be a sentence or more in length. The long answer to 怎么/怎麼 zěnme ‘how’ questions involves a series of steps in which the process is described.

**Question**

怎么写这个字?

**Answer**

这个字这样写。

**Zhègè zì zěnme xiě?**

How do you write this character?

**Answer**

You write this character this way.

从这儿到公园怎么走?

**Cóng zhèr dào gōngyuán zěnme zǒu?**

How do you go from here to the library?

**Answer**

From here to the park walk north.

The question expression 怎么样!/怎麼樣? zěnmeiyàng? asks for a description:

那个饭店怎么样?

**Nàge fànguǎn zěnmeiyàng?**

What is that restaurant like?

The expression 怎么了!/怎麼了? zěnme le? is used to ask how someone is when the speaker believes there is something the matter:

你怎麼了?

**Nǐ zěnme le?**

What is the matter with you?

为什么/為甚麼 wèi shénme ‘why’ questions ask for reasons, and their responses typically require a sentence or more. 为什么/為甚麼 wèi shénme occurs after the subject of the sentence.

Replies to 为什么/為甚麼 wèi shénme questions often begin with the word 因为/因為 yīnwéi ‘because.’

**Question**

你为什么学中文?

**Answer**

因为我想在中国找工作。

**Nǐ wèi shénme xué Zhōngwén?**

Why do you study Chinese?

**Answer**

Because I want to look for a job in China.

你为什么喜欢他呢?

**Nǐ wèi shénme xīhuàn tā ne?**

Why do you like him?

**Answer**

Because he’s so handsome!
In Mandarin, content question words are used in expressions that express the meanings ‘any,’ ‘every,’ ‘none,’ ‘aways,’ ‘never,’ etc.

谁都认识他。
誰都認識他。

Shéi dòu rènshi tā.
Everyone knows him.

我什么时候都忙。
我甚麼時候都忙。

Wò shénme shíhòu dōu máng.
I am always busy.

他什么酒都不喝。
他甚麼酒都不喝。

Tā shénme jiǔ dōu bù hē.
He doesn’t drink any alcohol.
25

Expressing identification, possession, and existence

25.1 Expressing identification

To identify a person, place, or thing, use the verb 是 shì ‘to be.’

25.1.1 Identifying oneself and others

I am Zhang Mingzhi.
Wǒ shì Zhāng Míngzhì.

This is my wife.
Zhè shì wǒ tàitái.

Who are they?
Tāmen shì shéi?
They are my friends.
Tāmen shì wǒ de péngyou.

Are you the manager?
Nǐ shì jīnglǐ ma?
Yes. (I am the manager.)
Shì. (Wǒ shì jīnglǐ.)

25.1.2 Identifying places

What is this place?
Zhè shì shénme dìfang?
This is the Beijing Hotel.
Zhè shì Běijīng fàndiàn.
**25.1.3 Identifying things**

Chinese uses yes–no questions and content questions to ask about the identity of things.

Q: 

Zhè shì wǒmen de chēzúchē ma?  
Is this our taxi?

Q: 

Zhè shì shénme cài?  
What is this dish?

A: 

Zhè bù shì nǐmen de.  
This is not yours.

A: 

Zhè shì qīngzhēng yú.  
It is steamed fish.

**25.2 Expressing possession**

This section introduces the forms used by Chinese speakers to express possession and to inquire about possession.

**25.2.1 Indicating ‘having something’**

To say that someone or something has something, use the verb 有 yǒu ‘to have’:

- Tā yǒu nǚ péngyou.  
  He has a girlfriend.

- Nǐ yǒu dìdì ma?  
  Do you have a younger brother?

The negation of 有 yǒu is 没有 méi yǒu.
Expressing possession

Q: 你有妹妹吗？你有妹妹嗎？
Nǐ yǒu méimei ma?
Do you have a younger sister?
A: 没有。
Méi yǒu.

Q: 你有没有姐姐？
Nǐ yǒu méi yǒu jiējie?
Do you have an older sister?
A: 我没有姐姐。
Wǒ méi yǒu jiējie.
I do not have an older sister.

Q: 你现在有空吗？
Nǐ xiànzài yǒu kōng ma?
Do you have free time now?
A: 对不起。现在没有空。
Duìbuqǐ. Xiànzài méi yǒu kōng.
Sorry. I don’t have free time now.

Expressing one’s possession

To indicate one’s possession, use the following structure:

possessor + 的 de + possessed object

哥哥的车 老师的书
哥哥的車 老師的書
gēgē de chē láoshī de shū
teacher’s book

older Brother’s car

Mandarin does not have possessive pronouns. A pronoun + 的 de is equivalent in meaning to a possessive pronoun in English.

我的钥匙 誰的书？
我的鑰匙 誰的書？
wǒ de yàoshi shéi de shū?
my key whose book?

A table of English possessive pronouns and their Mandarin equivalents is presented in Chapter 5.

The possessor + 的 de may sometimes occur without the following ‘possessed’ noun. This is often the case when the noun is clear from the context of the sentence. In the following sentences, the noun in parentheses may be omitted.

这本书是你的(书)。
Zhè běn shū shì nǐ de (shū).
This book is yours.

那个学校是他们的(学校)。
Nàge xuéxiào shì tāmen de (xuéxiào).
That school is theirs.

When there is a close relationship between the possessor and the possessed noun, 的 de may be omitted. 的 de is often omitted if the possessor is a pronoun.
EXPRESSING IDENTIFICATION, POSSESSION, AND EXISTENCE

25.2.3 Expressing possession in formal written Chinese

Zhège yòu’ér yuán shì shōuyú Běijīng Dàxué de.
This kindergarten is affiliated with Beijing University.

Zhī zhī is the formal written equivalent of 的 de, used in literary Chinese texts. Like 的 de, it occurs after the possessor and before the possessed noun.

Zhōnggǔ zhī shēng
the sound of bells and drums

25.3 Expressing existence

There are three verbs that are commonly used to express existence.

25.3.1 有 yǒu ‘to exist’

In addition to its use in expressing possession, the verb 有 yǒu is also used to express existence.

Zhútiān wǎnshāng yǒu hén dà de wù.
Last night there was a very dense fog.

Fùjìn yǒu sān gè lúguǎn.
In this area there are three hotels.

To ask about existence, use the question form 有没有 yǒu méi yǒu or the yes–no question marker 吗/嗎 ma.
25.3 Expressing existence

附近有没有旅馆？
附近有没有旅馆？
Fùjìn yǒu méi yǒu lúguān?
Is there a hotel nearby?

昨天晚上有雾吗？
昨天晚上有雾吗？
Zuótiān wǎnshàng yǒu wù ma?
Was there fog last night? (Was it foggy last night?)

24.1

To give a negative reply, say 没有 méi yǒu.

附近没有旅馆。
附近沒有旅馆。
Fùjìn méi yǒu lúguān.
There is no hotel nearby.

昨天晚上没有雨。
昨天晚上没有雨。
Zuótiān wǎnshàng méi yǒu wù.
There was no fog last night.

23.1.2

25.3.2 The verb 是 shì ‘to express existence’

是 shì can be used to express the existence of some object at a location. 是 shì is often used in this way when the object fills the location.

我们房子的屋顶上都是雪。
我們房子的屋頂上都是雪。
Wǒmen fángzi de wǔdǐng shàng dōu shì xuě.
The roof of our house was covered with snow.

地上都是玩具。
地上都是玩具。
Dì shàng dōu shì wánjù.
Toys are all over the floor.

25.3.3 Expressing existence with placement verbs

Verbs that refer to placement such as 站 zhàn ‘to stand,’ 坐 zuò ‘to sit,’ 放 fàng ‘to put, to place,’ 躺 tāng ‘to lie,’ etc. are often used in sentences that refer to existence. In these ‘existential’ sentences the verbs of placement are usually followed by the verb suffix 着/著 zhe to emphasize the ongoing duration of the situation.

街上站着很多人。
街上站着很多人。
Jiēshang zhànzhē hěn duō rén.
There are a lot of people standing in the street.
There are a lot of people sitting on the bus.

There is a vase of flowers on the desk.

Shūzhúo shàng fàngzhé yī píng huā.
There is a vase of flowers on the desk.
26

Describing people, places, and things

26.1 Equational sentences: identifying or describing the subject with a noun phrase in the predicate

是 shì links the subject with a noun phrase in the predicate that identifies or describes it. Sentences with this form are *equational sentences*.

\[ \text{subject is } \text{noun or noun phrase} \]

Zhào Méilíng shì xuéshēng.
Zhao Meiling is a student.

Sūzhōu shì yī gè chéngshì.
Suzhou is a city.

Bēncī shì yī zhǒng chē.
The Mercedes Benz is a type of car.

26.2 Describing the subject with a predicate that is an adjectival verb

Adjectival verbs may serve as the predicate of the sentence to describe the subject. The intensifier 很 hěn often occurs before the adjectival verb, especially if it is a one syllable adjectival verb. Notice that 是 shì is not used when the predicate is an adjectival verb.

\[ \text{subject (很 hěn) adjectival verb} \]

Zhào Méilíng hěn cōngmíng.
Zhao Meiling is very smart.
26.3 Identifying or describing a noun with a modifying phrase

Phrases that describe or ‘modify’ the noun always occur before the noun. The particle de typically occurs right after the modifier and before the noun that is being described. In the following examples, the modifier + 的 de is emphasized.

- 女孩子
- 女孩子
- hěn cōngmíng de nǚháizi
  - a very intelligent girl

- 车
- 車
- hěn guì de chē
  - a very expensive car

- 大学
- 大學
- hěn yǒu míng de dàxué
  - a very famous university

- 地方
- 地方
- hěn ānjìng de dìfāng
  - a very peaceful place

26.4 Asking questions about the attributes of a person, place, or thing

26.4.1 Asking what someone or something is like

To ask what someone or something is like, say:

person/place/thing 怎么样?
  怎麼樣?
  zěnmeyàng?
Describing an item in terms of the material that it is made of

26.5

What about this person/place/thing?
What is this person/place/thing like?

那个女孩子怎么样?
那个女孩子怎麼樣?
Nàge nǚ háizi zěnmeyàng?
What about that girl? (What is that girl like?)

那个大学怎么样?
那個大學怎麼樣?
Nàge dàxué zěnmeyàng?
What is that university like?

苏州怎么样?
蘇州怎麼樣?
Sūzhōu zěnmeyàng?
What is Suzhou like?

26.4.2

Asking for more information

To ask for more information about a person, place or thing, say:

什么/甚麼? shénme noun?
what person/place thing?

这是什么书?
這是甚麼書?
Zhè shì shénme shū?
What book is this?

or

什么样的/甚麼樣的 shénme yàng de noun?
what kind of noun?

这是什么样的地方?
這是甚麼樣的地方?
Zhè shì shénme yàng de dìfang?
What kind of place is this?

26.5

Describing an item in terms of the material that it is made of

26.5.1

Describing what an item is made of

To describe an item in terms of the material that it is made of, say:

(noun) 是 (用) ____ 作的。

shì (用) ____ zuò de.
(noun) is made of _____.

That table is made of wood.

[159x536]Nàge zhuōzi shì yòng mùtou zuò de.
That table is made of wood.

This vase is made of glass.

[159x490]Zhège huāpíng shì yòng shénme zuò de?
What is this vase made of?

My earrings are made of gold.

[159x435]Wǒ de ěrhuán shì (yòng) jīnzi zuò de.
My earrings are made of gold.

26.6 Describing nouns in terms of attributes that imply comparison

In Mandarin, adjectival verbs imply comparison, even when they are not used in a comparison structure. Therefore, descriptions such as the following may be interpreted as simply descriptive or as comparative. The context usually makes it clear whether a simple description or a comparison is intended.

[56x389]Í53.2.4

53.2.4

26.5.2 Asking what an item is made of

To ask what an item is made of, say:

(noun) 是什么作的?

是用甚麽作的?

[125x349]shi yòng shénme zuò de?
What is (this object) made of?

That book is expensive.

[96x100]Nà běn shū guì.
That book is expensive.

or

That book is more expensive (than some other book).
Describing people in terms of age

Professor Wang is busy.
or
Professor Wang is busier (than some other people.)

10.5, 29

Describing people in terms of age

26.7

Describing age

To describe a person in terms of his or her age say:

Wáng Míng (shì) èrshís
Wang Ming is 23 (years old).

If it is clear from context, 岁/歲 sui ‘years of age’ may be omitted:

Wáng Míng (shì) èrshǐ.
Wang Ming is 23.

The verb 是 shì is optional and is usually absent in statements.

Wò de dìdi shíb
My younger brother is 18 (years old).

However, when negation occurs in the sentence, 是 shì must also occur.

Tā bú shì shíb
He is not 18 (years old). He is only 15 (years old).

When the adverb 已经 yijing ‘already’ occurs, 是 shì may be absent.

Tā yijing (shì) liàng sui le.
He is already two (years old).
ASKING ABOUT AGE

To ask the age of an adult, say:

你多大年纪？
Nǐ duō dà niánjì?
How old are you?

or

你多大岁数？
Nǐ duō dà suìshù?
How old are you?

To ask the age of a young person, say:

你多大？
Nǐ duō dà?
How old are you?

A formal and very polite way to inquire about the age of an older person is:

您今年高寿？
Nín jīnnián gāoshòu?
How old are you?

To ask the age of a child, you can say:

你几岁？
Nǐ jǐ suì?
How old are you?

NOTE

几/幾 jī is a classifier that is used to ask about small numbers. Therefore, it is appropriate to use when asking the age of young children, but not when asking the age of older people.

DESCRIBING THE WEATHER

STATEMENTS THAT DESCRIBE THE WEATHER

Here are common Mandarin expressions used when discussing the weather. Notice that there is no word in Mandarin that is equivalent to the ‘it’ used in weather descriptions in English. Mandarin weather descriptions often begin with the verb and do not have a subject.

| 天气/天气 | 舒服 | 凉快 |
| tān qì | shūfu | liángkuài |
| weather | comfortable | cool |
| 闷热/闷热 | 冷 | 暖和 |
| mèn rè | lěng | nuǎnhuo |
| muggy; hot and humid | cold | warm |
Describing the weather

热/熱  
rè  
hot

多云/多雲  
duō yún  
cloudy

温和/溫和  
wēnhé

下雪  
xià xuě  
snowing

下雨  
xìà yǔ  
raining

刮风/刮風  
guā fēng

windy

今天的天气很好。  
Jìntiān de tiānqì hěn hǎo.  
Today's weather is very good.

昨天很闷热。  
Zuótiān hěn mēnrè.  
Yesterday was very humid and hot.

今天多云。  
Jìntiān duō yún.  
Today it is cloudy. (used in weather reports)

昨天的天气很舒服。  
Zuótiān de tiānqì hěn shūfu.  
Yesterday's weather was very comfortable.

今天很凉快/冷/热/暖和。  
Zuótiān hěn liángkuài/lěng/rè/nuǎnhuo.  
Yesterday's weather was cool/cold/hot/warm.

下雪了。  
Xià xuě le.  
It's snowing. (lit. ‘falling the snow’)

下雪了。  
Xià xuě le.  
It's snowing. (lit. ‘falling the snow’)

刮风了。  
Guā fēng le.  
It is windy. (lit. ‘blowing the wind’)

Asking about the weather

To ask about the weather or climate in general terms, use 怎么样/zěnmeyàng ‘what about it?’ The following questions are followed by a typical answer.

Q: 这儿的天气怎么样？  
Zhèr de tiānqì zěnmeyàng?  
What is the weather like here?
26.8

Asking about temperature and describing temperature

Here are expressions associated with temperature.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>temperature</th>
<th>degree</th>
<th>below zero</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wēndù 温度</td>
<td>dù 度</td>
<td>lingxià 零下</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fahrenheit</td>
<td>Celsius; centigrade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>huáshì 华氏</td>
<td>shèshì 摄氏</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notice that when describing temperature, you can use the verb 是 shì. 是 shì is required with negation, but is otherwise usually absent. With the adverb 差不多 chábùduō ‘almost,’ the verb may be 有 yǒu.

今天的温度是二十度。 今天的温度是二十度。
Jīntiān de wēndù shì èrshí dù. Today’s temperature is 20 degrees.

Q: 今天的温度怎么样？ 今天的温度怎麼樣？
Jīntiān de wēndù zěnmeyàng?
What is today’s temperature?
A: 天气预报说今天的温度差不多有三十度。 天气预报說今天的温度差不多有三十度。
Tiānqì yùbào shuō jīntiān de wēndù chábùduō yǒu sānsá shí dù. The weather report says today’s temperature will be around 30 degrees.
### Expressing general illness or allergy

Here are the most common ways to express having an illness or an allergy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General illness</th>
<th>Cold</th>
<th>Allergy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(我)病了。</td>
<td>(我)感冒了。</td>
<td>(我)对(青霉素)过敏。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(我)有病。</td>
<td>(我)have a cold.</td>
<td>(我)对(青霉素)过敏。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Wǒ) yǒu bìng.</td>
<td>(Wǒ) gān máo le.</td>
<td>(Wǒ)duì(qīng méi sù) guòmín.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Describing symptoms

In English, symptoms are described as a possession of the patient: ‘I have a headache’; ‘you have a broken leg,’ etc. Notice how symptoms are described in Mandarin.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fever</th>
<th>Cold symptoms</th>
<th>Sore throat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(我)发烧了。</td>
<td>(我)流鼻涕。</td>
<td>(我)咳嗽。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Wǒ) fā shāo le.</td>
<td>(Wǒ)liú biti.</td>
<td>(Wǒ) kěsou.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(I) have fever.</td>
<td>(I) have a runny nose.</td>
<td>(I) have a cough.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Q:** 你说的是华氏还是摄氏？
你说的是华氏还是摄氏？

**Nǐ shuō de shì huáshì háishi shèshì?**
Do you mean Fahrenheit or centigrade?

**A:** 在中国我们用的是摄氏。
在中国我们用的是摄氏。

**Zài Zhōngguó wǒmen yòng de shì shèshì.**
We use centigrade in China.

**Q:** 摄氏三十度是华氏多少度？
摄氏三十度是华氏多少度？

**Shèshì sān shí dù shì huáshì duōshao dù?**
Thirty degrees centigrade is how many degrees Fahrenheit?

**A:** 差不多是华氏九十度。
差不多是华氏九十度。

**Chàbuduò shì huáshì jiǔshí dù.**
It’s about 90 degrees Fahrenheit.

---

今天很冷，零下五度。
**Jīntiān hén lěng, língxià wǔ dù.**
It’s really cold today, five degrees below zero.
### General Infection

**Wǒ fāyán.**  
(I) have an infection.

**Wǒ ěrduo téng.**  
(I) have an earache.

**Wǒ tóu téng.**  
(I) have a headache.

### Stomach Ache

**Wǒ dùzi téng.**  
(I) have a stomach ache.

**Wǒ lā dùzi.**  
(I) have diarrhea.

**Tóu téng bù téng?**  
Do you have a headache?

**Tóu téng ma?**  
Do you have a headache?

### Diarrhea

**Wǒ lá xī.**  
(I) have diarrhea.

**Wǒ lā dùzi.**  
(I) have diarrhea.

**Tā gūtou duàn le.**  
He has a broken bone.  
(Literally: His bone broke.)

**Tā tui (shǒu) duàn le.**  
He has a broken leg (arm).

### Broken Bones

**Tā gūtou duàn le.**  
He has a broken bone.  
(Literally: His bone broke.)

**Tā tui (shǒu) duàn le.**  
He has a broken leg (arm).
Describing how actions are performed

27.1 Describing the general or past performance of an action with a manner adverbial phrase

To describe how an action is generally performed or how it was performed in the past, use the following structure:

*action verb 得 de adjectival verb*

Phrases that describe the performance of an action are often referred to as *manner adverbial* phrases. The word *adverbial* means they describe the verb.

他说得快。
他说得慢。
他开得慢。
你都考得好。
你们都考得好。

**NOTE**
The suffixes 了 le, 过 guo, and 着 zhe do not occur after the action verb or the adjectival verb in manner adverbial phrases.

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27.1.1 Describing the performance of an action when the verb takes an object

If the action verb takes an object, the verb is said twice, the first time followed by the object, and the second time followed by 得 de adjectival verb:

*[action verb + object] [action verb 得 de adjectival verb]*
27.1 Modifying the description of the action

27.1.2 Modifying with intensifiers

In these manner adverbial phrases, the adjectival verb may be preceded by an intensifier:

他话说说得很快。
他說話說得很快。
Tā shuō huà shuō de hěn kuài.
He speaks very quickly.

她开车开得太慢。
她開車開得太慢。
Tā kāi chē kāi de tài màn.
She drives a car too slowly.

你们考试都考得很好。
你們考試都考得很好。
Nǐmen kǎo shì dōu kǎo de zhēn hǎo.
You all did really well on the exam.

27.1.2.2 Modifying with negation

In manner adverbial phrases, negation must occur before the adjectival verb, not before the action verb. Negation must be 不 bù:

他说得不快。
他说得不快。
Tā shuō de bù kuài.
He doesn’t speak fast.
27.2 Asking about the performance of an action

To ask how an action is performed, say:

(subject) action verb 得怎么样？

得怎么样？
de zênmeyâng?

How does the subject do the action?

他考得怎么样？

他考得怎么样？
Tâ kâode zênmeyâng?

How did he do on the test?

她开车开得怎么样？

她开车开得怎么样？
Tâ kâi chê kâi de zênmeyâng?

How does she drive?

To ask if an action is performed in a particular way, form a yes–no question with the adjetical verb using:

• Verb-not-verb structure

action verb 得 adjective verb 不 bù adjective verb?

你考试考得好不好？

你考试考得好不好？
Nî kâo shì kâo de hâo bû hâo?

Did you do well on the test?

他说得清楚不清楚？

他说得清楚不清楚？
Tâ shuô de qîngchu bû qîngchu?

Did he speak clearly?

• 吗/嗎 ma yes–no question structure

你考得好吗？

你考得好吗？
Nî kâo de hâo ma?

Did you do well on the test?

他说得清楚吗？

他说得清楚吗？
Tâ shuô de qîngchu ma?

Did he speak clearly?
Describing the performance of an entire action with an adverbial modifier

To describe how an entire action is performed on a specific occasion, precede the verb phrase (or prepositional phrase + verb phrase if there is a prepositional phrase) with an *adverbial verb modifier + de* as follows. Note the tone changes on the second syllable of the modifier:

*adverbial verb modifier + de + verb phrase*

他偷偷地把钱拿走了。
他偷偷地把钱拿走了。
*Tā tòutōu de bā qián názōu le.*
He secretly took away the money.

你们得好好地学。
你们得好好地学。
*Nǐmen déi hǎohào de xué.*
You have to study hard/well.

他慢慢地把汉字学会了。
他慢慢地把汉字学会了。
*Tā mànmàn de bā Hán zì xuéhuì le.*
He slowly learned the Chinese characters.

快快地吃吧！
*Kuàikuài de chī ba!*
Hurry up and eat!

孩子高高兴兴地在公园里玩。
孩子高高兴兴地在公园里玩。
*Háizi gāo gāo xìng xìng de zài gōngyuán lǐ wán.*
The children are playing happily in the park.

他们静静地睡了一个晚上。
他們靜靜地睡了一個晚上。
*Tāmen jìngjìng de shuì le yī gè wǎnshàng.*
They slept peacefully the whole night.

你得留心地听老师说话。
你得留心地聽老師說話。
*Nǐ déi liúxīn de tīng lǎoshī shūō huà.*
You should listen attentively to the teacher.

她急急忙忙地逃走了。
她急急忙忙地逃走了。
*Tā jǐjí mángmáng de tāozōu le.*
She hurriedly ran away. (She ran away in a hurry.)

Phrases that frequently occur as adverbial modifiers of an entire action include the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adverbial Modifier</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>慢慢地</td>
<td>mànmān de</td>
<td>slowly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>快快地</td>
<td>kuàikuāi de</td>
<td>quickly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>好好地</td>
<td>hǎohào de</td>
<td>well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>偷偷地</td>
<td>tòutōu de</td>
<td>secretly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>静静地</td>
<td>jìngjìng de</td>
<td>peacefully</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Describing the performance of an entire action with an adverbial modifier**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese Characters</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>安静地</td>
<td>ānjìng de</td>
<td>peacefully/quietly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>急忙地</td>
<td>jímáng de</td>
<td>hurriedly/hastily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>匆忙地</td>
<td>cōngmáng de</td>
<td>hurriedly/hastily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>兴奋地/兴奋地</td>
<td>xīngfèn de</td>
<td>excitedly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>大声地/大声地</td>
<td>dàshēng de</td>
<td>loudly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>悄悄地</td>
<td>qiāoqiāo de</td>
<td>quietly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>严厉地/严厉地</td>
<td>yánlì de</td>
<td>sternly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>小心地/小心地</td>
<td>xiǎoxīn de</td>
<td>小心翼翼</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>用心地</td>
<td>yòngxīn de</td>
<td>attentively, carefully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>留心地</td>
<td>liúxīn de</td>
<td>attentively, cautiously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>认真地/認真地</td>
<td>rènzhēn de</td>
<td>diligently, conscientiously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>情愿地/情願地</td>
<td>qíngyuàn de</td>
<td>willingly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>自愿地/自願地</td>
<td>zìyuàn de</td>
<td>willingly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>使劲地/使勁地</td>
<td>shǐjìn de</td>
<td>using full strength/do with all one’s might</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>慢慢地/漸漸地</td>
<td>jiànjìàn de</td>
<td>gradually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>安安靜靜地</td>
<td>ānānjìng jìng de</td>
<td>peacefully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>仔細細細地/仔細細細地</td>
<td>zǐzhīxìxì de</td>
<td>meticulously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>急急忙忙地</td>
<td>jíjí mángmáng de</td>
<td>hurriedly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>慌慌张张地/慌慌張張地</td>
<td>huānghuāng</td>
<td>in a flustered manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>zhāngzhāng de</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note**

These adverbial modifiers + 地 de occur in the same position in the predicate as other adverbs.
28

Indicating result, conclusion, potential, and extent

28.1 Indicating the result or conclusion of an action with resultative verbs

In Mandarin, action verbs refer to open-ended processes and not to their conclusions or results. For example, the verb 买/買 mǎi refers to shopping, not buying. The verb 找 zhǎo refers to looking for something, not finding it.

English sometimes uses two entirely different verbs to refer to a process and its result or conclusion. In Mandarin, processes and results are always expressed using the same verb. The process is expressed with an open-ended action verb. The result or conclusion is expressed by adding a resultative suffix to the open-ended action verb. Verbs that are formed by an action verb and a resultative suffix are often referred to as resultative verbs.

Resultative verb structure: action verb + resultative ending

NOTE
Some grammars refer to the resultative suffix as a complement of result.

To read more about action verbs, see 13

28.1.1 Common resultative suffixes

Resultative suffixes that indicate the conclusion of the action:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suffix</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>完</td>
<td>to finish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wán</td>
<td>to do to a successful conclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Resultative suffixes that indicate the result of an action:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suffix</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>见/見</td>
<td>to perceive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jiàn</td>
<td>(used with verbs of perception: see, hear, smell)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Indicating the result or conclusion of an action with resultative verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suffix</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>到</td>
<td>to attain a goal, to acquire (like 著/著 zháo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>着/著</td>
<td>to attain a goal, to acquire (like 到 dào)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>错/錯</td>
<td>to do wrong, to be mistaken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>饱/飽</td>
<td>to be full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>懂</td>
<td>to understand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>会/會</td>
<td>to know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>住</td>
<td>to stick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>开/開</td>
<td>to open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>够</td>
<td>enough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>光</td>
<td>to use up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>清楚</td>
<td>to be clear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>干净/乾淨</td>
<td>to be clean</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Common resultative verbs: action verbs + resultative ending

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action verb</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Resultative verb</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>说/說</td>
<td>to say</td>
<td>shuōwán</td>
<td>to finish saying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>吃</td>
<td>to eat</td>
<td>chīwán</td>
<td>to finish eating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>用</td>
<td>to use</td>
<td>yòngwán</td>
<td>to use up (to use something until finished)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>说/說</td>
<td>to say</td>
<td>shuōhào</td>
<td>to reach a successful conclusion through discussion; to reach an agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>听/聽</td>
<td>to listen</td>
<td>tingjian</td>
<td>to hear something</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### INDICATING RESULT, CONCLUSION, POTENTIAL, AND EXTENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action verb</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Resultative verb</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>看 kàn</td>
<td>to look</td>
<td>看见 kànjiàn</td>
<td>to see something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>闻/聞 wén</td>
<td>to smell</td>
<td>闻见/聞见 wénjiàn</td>
<td>to smell something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>听/聽 tīng</td>
<td>to listen</td>
<td>聆到 tīngdào</td>
<td>to hear something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>看 kàn</td>
<td>to look</td>
<td>看到 kàndào</td>
<td>to see something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>闻/聞 wén</td>
<td>to smell</td>
<td>闻到 wénjiàn</td>
<td>to smell something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>买/買 mài</td>
<td>to shop for</td>
<td>买到 mǎidào</td>
<td>to buy/to purchase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>找 zhāo</td>
<td>to look for</td>
<td>找到 zhāodào</td>
<td>to find</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>买/買 mài</td>
<td>to shop for</td>
<td>买着 mǎizháo</td>
<td>to buy/to purchase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>找 zhāo</td>
<td>to look for</td>
<td>找着 zhāozháo</td>
<td>to find</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>睡/睡 shuì</td>
<td>to sleep</td>
<td>睡着/睡著 shuizháo</td>
<td>to fall asleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>做 zuò</td>
<td>to do</td>
<td>做错 zuòcuò</td>
<td>to do wrong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>写/寫 xiě</td>
<td>to write</td>
<td>写错/寫錯 xiécuò</td>
<td>to write incorrectly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>买/買 mài</td>
<td>to shop for</td>
<td>买错 māicuò</td>
<td>to buy wrong (to buy the wrong thing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>用 yòng</td>
<td>to use</td>
<td>用错 yòngcuò</td>
<td>to use wrong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>吃 chī</td>
<td>to eat</td>
<td>吃饱/chībào</td>
<td>to eat until full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>看 kàn</td>
<td>to read</td>
<td>看懂 kàndòng</td>
<td>to read to the point of understanding something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>听/聽 tīng</td>
<td>to listen</td>
<td>聆懂 tīngdòng</td>
<td>to listen to the point of understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>学/學 xué</td>
<td>to study</td>
<td>学会/學會 xuéhuì</td>
<td>to study to the point of knowing something; to master by studying</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Here are example sentences with resultative verbs

Q: 你听到了那个声音吗？
你聽到了那個聲音嗎？
Nǐ tīngdào le nàge shēngyīn ma?
Did you hear that sound?
A: 没听到。
沒聽到。
Méi tīngdào.
I didn’t hear it.

Q: 你吃饱了吗？
你吃飽了嗎？
Nǐ chībǎo le ma?
Did you eat until full?
(Are you full?)
A: 吃饱了。
吃飽了。
Chībǎo le.
I ate until full.
(I’m full.)

我把自己的名字写错了。
我把自己的名字寫錯了。
Wǒ bā wò zìjǐ de míngzi xiēcuò le.
I wrote my own name wrong.

Resultative suffixes may also refer to the direction of movement.

我们走进来了。
我們走進來了。
Wǒmen zǒujǐnlái le.
We walked in.

猫跳上沙发去了。
貓跳上沙發去了。
Máo tiào qián shāfā qù le.
The cat jumped onto the sofa.
28.1.3 Using the verb suffix 了 le with resultative verbs to indicate completion

The verb suffix 了 le occurs at the end of resultative verbs, after the resultative suffix, to indicate that the action is completed or the desired result has been attained.

- 我写完了功课。
- 我写完了功课。
- 了 le never occurs between the action verb and the resultative ending.

Say this Not this

你找到了你的皮包吗？
你找到了你的皮包吗？

Nǐ zhǎodào le nǐ de píbāo ma?
Nǐ zhǎo le dào nǐ de píbāo ma?

Have you found your wallet?

28.1.4 Using 没 méi with resultative verbs to indicate lack of completion or result

The negative marker 没 méi is used to indicate that an action has not been completed or that the desired result has not been attained. 没 méi occurs before the entire resultative verb.

- 我没看。
- Wǒ méi kàn wán.
- Wǒ méi niàncuò.

没 méi never occurs between the action verb and resultative suffix.

Say this Not this

- 我没念错。
- 我没念错。

Wǒ méi niàncuò.
Wǒ niàn méi cuò.

I didn’t read (it) wrong.

13.1, 33.1

13.3.2, 33.3
Indicating the ability to reach a conclusion or result

28.2 Indicating the ability to reach a conclusion or result: the potential infixes 得 de and 不 bu

得 de and 不 bu may occur between the action verb and resultative suffix to indicate that it is possible or not possible to reach the result. When 得 de and 不 bu are used in this way, we refer to them as potential infixes and the form of the resultative verb as the potential form.

28.2.1 The potential infix 得 de

To indicate that it is possible to perform an action and reach a conclusion or result, add the potential infix 得 de into the middle of the resultative verb, between the action verb and the resultative suffix:

\[
\text{action verb} + \text{得 de} + \text{resultative suffix}
\]

我看得懂中国电影。
I can understand (by watching) Chinese movies.

你吃得完那么多东西吗？
你吃得完那麼多東西嗎？
Nǐ chīdèwán nàme duō dōngxi ma?
Can you finish eating that many things?

28.2.2 The potential infix 不 bu

To indicate that it is not possible to reach a conclusion or result, add the potential infix 不 bu into the middle of the resultative verb, between the action verb and the resultative suffix:

\[
\text{action verb} + \text{不 bu} + \text{resultative suffix}
\]

王老师的话我都听不懂。
Wáng lǎoshī de huà wǒ dōu tīngbudǒng.
I can’t understand (by listening) what Professor Wang says.

我找不到我的皮包。
Wǒ zhǎobudào wǒ de píbāo.
I can’t find my wallet.

NOTE

The infixes 得 de and 不 bu are the only things that can occur between the action verb and the resultative suffix.

28.2.2.1 Using resulative verbs to indicate that a result cannot be achieved no matter what

Resultative verbs in the negative potential form occur with the question word 怎么/zěnmé to indicate that a result cannot be achieved no matter what the subject does.
Summary of the functions of resultative verbs

The functions of resultative verbs and their occurrence with 了 le and negation are summarized below:

- **The action occurred and the result was attained**
  - resultative verb + 了 le
    - 我吃饱了。
      - 我吃飽了。
      - Wǒ chībāo le.
        - I ate until full.
    - It is possible to attain the indicated result or conclusion by performing the verb
      - action verb 得 de result/conclusion
        - 我吃饱了。
          - 我吃飽了。
          - Wǒ chībāo le.
            - I am able to eat until full.

- **The action occurred but the result or conclusion was not attained**
  - 没 méi + resultative verb
    - 我没吃饱。
      - 我沒飽。
      - Wǒ méi chībāo.
        - I did not eat until full.
      - (I ate but was not full).
  - It is impossible to attain the indicated result or conclusion by performing the verb
    - action verb 不 bu result/conclusion
      - 我吃不饱。
        - 我吃不飽。
        - Wǒ chībùbāo.
          - I am unable to eat until full.

Indicating the ability to perform the verb: the potential suffixes 得了 deliāo and 不了 buliāo

Resultative suffixes indicate the result or conclusion of an action. To indicate that the subject is able to or unable to perform the action, add one of the following potential suffixes to the verb:

- **Verb + 得了 deliāo able to perform the action**
- **Verb + 不了 buliāo unable to perform the action**

The potential suffix 得了 deliāo

Use this suffix to say that the subject is able to perform the action of the verb or that the subject is able to finish the action. In the latter sense, it is similar to the resultative suffix 完 wán ‘to finish.’
28.4 Indicating the ability to perform the verb

The potential suffix 不了 buliāo

Use this suffix to say that the subject is not able to do some action.

I am unable to use chopsticks.

Wǒ yòngbuliāo kuàizi.

I am unable to use chopsticks.

He is certainly unable to walk that far.

Tā yídìng zǒubuliāo nàme yuàn.

He is certainly unable to walk that far.

This is his nature. He can’t change.

Zhè shì tā de gèxìng, tā gāibuliāo.

This is his nature. He can’t change.

28.4.2 Asking about the ability to perform an action

To ask about the ability of a subject to perform an action, form a yes–no question with 吗/嗎 ma or with verb-not-verb structure.

• 吗/嗎 ma
  你吃得了这么多菜吗?
  你吃得了這麼多菜嗎?
  Nǐ chīděiliāo zhème duō cài ma?
  Are you able to eat this many dishes?

• Verb-not-verb structure: verb 得了 deliāo verb 不了 buliāo
  他做得了做不了这件事情?
  他做得了做不了這件事情?
  Tā zuòděiliāo zuòbuliāo zhè jiàn shìqing?
  Is he able to take care of this matter or not?

  这么多菜，你吃得了吃不了?
  這麼多菜，你吃得了吃不了?
  Zhème duō cài, nǐ chīděiliāo chībuliāo?
  This many dishes, are you able to eat them or not?
To answer ‘yes’ say \textit{verb 得了 deliāo}:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{zuò deliāo.} He can do it.
  \item \textit{chī deliāo.} I can eat them.
\end{itemize}

To answer ‘no’ say \textit{verb 不了 buliāo}:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{zuò buliāo.} He can’t do it.
  \item \textit{chī buliāo.} I can’t eat them.
\end{itemize}

\section*{Resultative suffixes with special meanings or properties}

\subsection*{掉 diāo}

掉 diāo indicates completion, and often also carries negative connotations for the speaker. It may serve as a suffix on open-ended or change-of-state action verbs. It does not occur with the potential infixes \textit{得 de} and \textit{不 bu}.

\textit{shuài diāo ‘to throw away, to discard’}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{tā bā nà ge hái zi shuài diāo bù guān le.} He abandoned that child.
\end{itemize}

\textit{rēng diāo ‘to throw away’}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{nǐ zěnme bā wǒ de xīn gěi rēng diāo le?} Why you throw away my letter?
\end{itemize}

\textit{sǐ diāo ‘to die’}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{wǒ wàng le jiāo shuǐ, huā rì dōu sǐ diāo le.} I forgot to water (them) and all of my flowers died.
\end{itemize}

\textit{wàng diāo ‘to forget completely’}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{nǐ zěnme néng wàng diāo le zhème yào jīn de shì qíng?} How could you forget such an important thing?
\end{itemize}
丢失 diūdiào ‘to lose’

我的护照丢失了。我得去报警。
我的護照丢失了。我得去報警。
Wǒ de hùzhào diūdiào le. Wǒ děi qù bào jǐng.
I lost my passport. I have to report it to the police.

得及 deji, 不及 bují
及 jí only occurs in potential form. It means to be able to do an action on time.

来得及/来得及 láidejí ‘to be able to arrive on time’

来不及/来不及 láibují ‘to be unable to arrive on time’

Q: 我们现在去上课，来得及来不及？
    我們現在去上課，來得及來不及？
    Wǒmen xiànzaì qù shàng kè, láidejí láibují?
    If we go to class now will we get there on time?

A: 还有五分钟。快点儿走来得及。
    還有五分鐘。快點兒走來得及。
    Hái yǒu wǔfēn zhōng. Kuài diǎnr zǒu láidejí.
    We still have five minutes. If we go fast we can get there on time.

得起 deqí, 不起 buqí
起 qǐ only occurs in potential form. Its most common meaning is to be able to afford to do the verb.

吃得起 chídéqí ‘to be able to afford to eat something’

吃不起 chídūqí ‘to be unable to afford to eat something’

Q: 天天在饭馆吃饭，吃得起吃不起？
    天天在飯館吃飯，吃得起吃不起？
    Tiāntiān zài fànguǎn chī fàn, chídéqí chídūqí?
    Can you afford to eat in a restaurant every day?

A: 有的人吃得起，有的人吃不起。
    有的人吃得起，有的人吃不起。
    Yǒu de rén chídéqí, yǒu de rén chídūqí.
    Some people can afford it, some can’t.

住得起 zhùdéqí ‘to be able to afford to live someplace’

住不起 zhùdūqí ‘to be unable to afford to live someplace’

Q: 现在北京房子那么贵，你们住得起住不起？
    現在北京房子那麼貴，你們住得起住不起？
    Xiànzài Běijīng fángzi nàme guì, nǐmen zhùdéqí zhùdūqí?
    Houses in Beijing are so expensive now, can you afford to live there?

A: 我们住得起，可是我们孩子住不起。
    我們住得起，可是我們孩子住不起。
    Wǒmen zhùdéqí, kěshì wǒmen de háizi zhùdūqí.
    We can afford to live there, but our children cannot afford to live there.

得起 deqí and 不起 buqí also have idiomatic meanings when suffixed to certain verbs.
indicating result, conclusion, potential, and extent

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kàn bu qí ‘to look down on someone’

你不应该看不起没有钱的人。
你不應該看不起沒有錢的人。

Nǐ bù yīng gài kàn bu qí méi yǒu qián de rén.
You should not look down on people who have no money.

duì bu qí ‘to insult someone’ or ‘show disrespect’

duì de qí ‘to show respect to someone’

Q: 你不好好地念书对得起对不起你的父母?
你不好好地唸書對得起對不起你的父母?

Nǐ bù hǎo hào de niàn shū duìde qí duì bu qí nǐ de fū mǔ?
If you do not study hard, how can you face your parents?

A: 我一定要好好地念书才能对得起他们。
我一定要好好地唸書才能對得起他們。

Wǒ yī dìng yào hǎo hào de niàn shū cǎi néng duìde qí tā mén.
I certainly want to study hard so that I can show respect to them.

shàng

shàng has a special meaning when used in the resultative verb 考上 kǎoshàng ‘to pass an entrance exam’ (especially a university entrance exam). The potential forms are:

考得上 kǎodeshàng ‘able to pass the entrance exam’

考不上 kǎobushàng ‘unable to pass the entrance exam’

Q: 你想我今年考得上考不上北大?

Nǐ xiǎng wǒ jīn nián kǎodeshàng kǎobushàng Běi Dà?
Do you think I will be able to pass the exam for Beijing University this year?

A: 我想你一定考得上。

Wǒ xiǎng nǐ yī dìng kǎodeshàng.
I think you will certainly pass the exam.

buding

buding has a restricted use as a resultative verb ending:

说不定 shuō buding ‘perhaps’

说不定/说不定 shuō buding ‘perhaps’

他现在还没来，说不定他不会来了。

Tā xiàn zài hái méi lái, shuō buding tā bù huí lái le.
He hasn’t come yet. Perhaps he won’t come.

indicating the extent or result of a situation

Resultative verbs indicate the result of actions. To indicate the result or extent of a situation, use the following structure:

verb 得 de verb phrase/clause
Indicating the extent or result of a situation

When the verb is an adjectival verb, 得 de verb phrase/clause introduces the extent of the situation: so adjectival verb that verb phrase/clause.

他累得抬不起头来了。
他累得抬不起頭來了。
**Tā léi de tāibuqitóu lái le.**
He was so tired that he could not pick up his head.

她高兴得说不出话来了。
她高興得說不出話來了。
**Tā gāoxìng de shuòbuchū huà lái le.**
She was so happy that she was unable to speak.

他冷得发抖了。
他冷得發抖了。
**Tā lěng de fādǒu le.**
He was so cold that he was shivering.

When the verb is an action verb, 得 de verb phrase/clause introduces the result of the action: performed the action until verb phrase/sentence.

妈妈哭得眼睛都红了。
媽媽哭得眼睛都紅了。
**Māmā kū de yǎnjīng dōu hóng le.**
Mom cried until her eyes were red.

他走得精疲力尽了。
他走得精疲力盡了。
**Tā zǒu de jīngpí lìjin le.**
He walked so much that he was exhausted.

If the action verb takes an object, the sentence takes the following form:

[action verb + object] action verb 得 de verb phrase/clause

他[走路]走得精疲力尽了。
他[走路]走得精疲力盡了。
**Tā [zǒu lù] zǒu de jīngpí lìjin le.**
He walked so much that he was exhausted.
29

Making comparisons

Comparison structures are used to indicate that things are similar to or different from each other, or to indicate that something is more than or less than another thing in some way.

This chapter presents the structures used to make comparisons in Mandarin. It uses the following grammatical terms and abbreviations. Refer to the relevant chapters for more information about each grammatical category.

- Noun phrase (NP) Chapter 9
- Adjectival verb (AV) and adjective verb phrase (AVP) Chapter 10
- Stative verb (SV) and stative verb phrase (SVP) Chapter 11
- Modal verb (MV) Chapter 12
- Action verb (V) and action verb phrases (VP) Chapter 13

29.1

Similarity

29.1.1

Indicating that noun phrases are identical

To indicate that two noun phrases are similar or equal, say:

NP₁ 跟/和 NP₂ 一样
NP₁ 跟/和 NP₂ 一样
NP₁ 跟/和 NP₂ yìyàng
NP₁ and NP₂ identical/same

Zhè běn shū gēn/hé nà běn shū yìyàng.
This book and that book are the same.

Jīntiān de tīnqí gēn/hé zuótiān de yìyàng.
Today’s weather is the same as yesterday’s.

NOTE

The words 跟 gēn and 和 hé are equivalent in meaning. In all of the structures in this chapter in which they occur, 跟 gēn and 和 hé are interchangeable. In some dialects, 同 tóng occurs in this structure instead of 跟 gēn or 和 hé.
29.1 Similarity

29.1.2 Indicating that all noun phrases are the same

When a noun phrase refers to multiple entities (for example, ‘houses,’ ‘dogs,’ ‘two books,’ etc.) use this pattern to say that all of the entities are the same.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{NP} & \text{ 一样} \\
\text{NP} & \text{ 一樣} \\
\text{NP} & \text{ yìyàng} \\
\text{NP} & \text{ identical/same}
\end{align*}
\]

Zhè liǎng běn shū yìyàng.
These two books are identical.

Zhè sān gè cái yìyàng ma?
Are these three dishes the same?

29.2.2

29.1.3 Indicating that noun phrases share a property

To indicate that two noun phrases are alike in a particular property, say the following.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{NP}_1 \text{ 跟/和 } \text{NP}_2 & \text{ 一样 } \text{AV} \\
\text{NP}_1 \text{ 跟/和 } \text{NP}_2 & \text{ 一樣 } \text{AV} \\
\text{NP}_1 \text{ gēn/hé } \text{NP}_2 & \text{ yìyàng } \text{AV} \\
\text{NP}_1 \text{ and } \text{NP}_2 & \text{ identical/same } \text{AV}
\end{align*}
\]

Wǒ ěrzi gēn/hé wǒ nǚér yìyàng gāo.
My son and my daughter are the same height. (equally tall)

Xīǎogōu hé xiǎomāo yìyàng kē’ài.
Puppies and kittens are equally cute.

29.2.3

29.1.4 Indicating resemblance

To indicate that one noun phrase resembles another noun phrase, say:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{NP}_1 \text{ 像 } \text{NP}_2 \\
\text{NP}_1 \text{ xiàng } \text{NP}_2 \\
\text{NP}_1 \text{ looks like } \text{NP}_2 \text{ (NP}_1 \text{ resembles NP}_2)
\end{align*}
\]

Tā xiàng tā bàba.
He resembles his dad.

Tā xiàng Fāguórén ma?
Does he look like a French person?
or

NP₁ 跟/和 NP₂ 很像
NP₁ gēn/hé NP₂ hěn xiàng
你儿子跟/和你女儿很像吗?
你儿子跟/和你女儿很像嗎?
Ni érzi gēn/hé nǐ nǚ’ér hěn xiàng ma?
Do your son and daughter look alike?

If the noun phrase refers to multiple entities, say:

NP (很) 像
NP (hěn) xiàng
NP are very similar/very much alike.
他们很像。
他們很像。
Tāmen hěn xiàng.
They look very much alike.

29.2.4

29.1.5 Indicating similarity in some property
To indicate that two noun phrases are similar enough to be considered equivalent, say:

NP₁ 有 NP₂ 那么/那麼 AV
NP₁ yǒu NP₂ nàme AV
他有他姐姐那麼高。(AV)
他有他姐姐那麼高。
Tā yǒu tā jiéjie nàme gāo.
He is as tall as his older sister.

他有他姐姐那麼聰明嗎?
他有他姐姐那麼聰明嗎?
Tā yǒu tā jiéjie nàme cōngmíng ma?
Is he as intelligent as his older sister?

or

NP₁ 有 NP₂ 这么/這麼 AV
NP₁ yǒu NP₂ zhème AV
NP₁ is as AV as NP₂.
他有你這麼高。AV
他有你這麼高。
Tā yǒu nǐ zhème gāo.
He is as tall as you.

A note on 那么/那麼 nàme and 这么/這麼 zhème
这么/這麼 zhème ‘this/so’ and 那么/那麼 nàme ‘that/so’ are used frequently in comparison structures. They may occur before an adjectival verb. It is often not necessary to translate 这么/這麼 zhème and 那么/那麼 nàme into English.

29.4.1
Indicating identical performance of an action

To indicate that two noun phrases perform an action in a similar way, say:

NP₁ 跟/和  NP₂ [verb 得] 一样 AV
NP₁ 跟/和  NP₂ [verb 得] 一樣 AV
NP₁ 跟/hé  NP₂ [verb de] yìyàng AV
NP₁ 跟/hé  NP₂ [verb de] 一樣 AV

NP₁ and NP₂ perform the verb equally AV

我跟他吃得一样多。
我跟他吃得一樣多。

Wǒ gēn tā chí de yìyàng duō.
I eat as much as him.

弟弟跟妹妹写得一样快。
弟弟跟妹妹寫得一樣快。

Didi gēn mèimei xié de yìyàng kuài.
Younger brother and younger sister write equally fast.

If the object of the action verb is included in the sentence, the action verb is said twice, once followed by the object, and once followed by 得 一样 de yìyàng (AV).

NP₁ 跟/和  NP₂ [action verb + object] [action verb 得] 一样 AV
NP₁ 跟/和  NP₂ [action verb + object] [action verb 得] 一樣 AV
NP₁ gēn/hé  NP₂ [action verb + object] [action verb de] yìyàng AV
NP₁ gēn/hé  NP₂ [action verb + object] [action verb de] 一樣 AV
NP₁ and NP₂ perform the action verb equally AV

我跟他吃饭吃得一样多。
我跟他吃飯吃得一樣多。

Wǒ gēn tā fàn chǐ de yìyàng duō.
I eat as much as him.

弟弟跟妹妹写字写得一样快。
弟弟跟妹妹寫字寫得一樣快。

Didi gēn mèimei xié zi xié de yìyàng kuài.
Younger brother and younger sister write characters equally fast.

Here are several variations in this pattern. They differ in the order of the phrases. In all of these variations, [action verb + object] occurs before [action verb 得 de], and 得 一样 de yìyàng AV occurs at the end of the sentence.

Variation 1

NP₁ [action verb + object] [action verb 得] 跟/和  NP₂ 一样 AV
NP₁ [action verb + object] [action verb 得] 跟/和  NP₂ 一樣 AV
NP₁ [action verb + object] [action verb de] gēn/hé  NP₂ yìyàng AV
NP₁ [action verb + object] [action verb de] gēn/hé  NP₂ 一樣 yìyàng AV
NP₁ and NP₂ perform the action verb equally AV

我吃饭吃得跟他一样多。
我吃飯吃得跟他一樣多。

Wǒ chǐ fàn chǐ de gēn tā yìyàng duō.
I eat as much as him.

弟弟写字写得跟妹妹一样快。
弟弟寫字寫得跟妹妹一樣快。

Didi xié zi xié de gēn mèimei yìyàng kuài.
Younger brother and younger sister write characters equally fast.
Variation 2

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{NP}_1 \quad \text{[action verb + object]} \quad \text{跟/和} \quad \text{NP}_2 \quad \text{[action verb 得]} \quad \text{一样} \quad \text{AV} \\
\text{NP}_1 \quad \text{[action verb + object]} \quad \text{跟/和} \quad \text{NP}_2 \quad \text{[action verb 得]} \quad \text{一样} \quad \text{AV} \\
\text{NP}_1 \quad \text{[action verb + object]} \quad \text{跟/hé} \quad \text{NP}_2 \quad \text{[action verb de]} \quad \text{yìyàng} \quad \text{AV} \\
\text{NP}_1 \text{ and NP}_2 \text{ perform the action verb equally} \quad \text{AV}
\end{align*}
\]

我吃饭跟他吃得一样多。
我吃饭跟他吃得一样多。
Wǒ chī fàn gèn tā chī de yìyàng duō.
I eat as much as him.

The verb 有 yǒu can be used instead of 跟 gèn or 跟 hé.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{NP}_1 \quad \text{有} \quad \text{NP}_2 \quad \text{[action verb + object] [action verb 得]} \quad \text{（那么/这么）} \quad \text{AV} \\
\text{NP}_1 \quad \text{有} \quad \text{NP}_2 \quad \text{[action verb + object] [action verb 得]} \quad \text{（那呢/這麼）} \quad \text{AV} \\
\text{NP}_1 \quad \text{yǒu} \quad \text{NP}_2 \quad \text{[action verb + object] [action verb de]} \quad \text{（nàme/zhème）} \quad \text{AV} \\
\text{NP}_1 \text{ and NP}_2 \text{ perform the action verb equally} \quad \text{AV}
\end{align*}
\]

弟弟有爸爸写字写得那么漂亮。
弟弟有爸爸写字写得那麼漂亮。
\textbf{Didi yóu bāba xiě zì xiě de nàme piàoliang.}
Younger brother writes characters as beautifully as dad.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{NP}_1 \quad \text{[action verb + object] [action verb 得]} \quad \text{有} \quad \text{NP}_2 \quad \text{（那麼/这么）} \quad \text{AV} \\
\text{NP}_1 \quad \text{[action verb + object] [action verb 得]} \quad \text{有} \quad \text{NP}_2 \quad \text{（那麼/這麼）} \quad \text{AV} \\
\text{NP}_1 \quad \text{[action verb + object] [action verb de]} \quad \text{yǒu} \quad \text{NP}_2 \quad \text{（nàme/zhème）} \quad \text{AV} \\
\text{NP}_1 \text{ performs the action verb as AV as NP}_2 \quad \text{AV}
\end{align*}
\]

弟弟写字写得有爸爸那么漂亮。
弟弟寫字寫得有爸爸那麼漂亮。
\textbf{Didi xiě zì xiě de yǒu bāba nàme piàoliang.}
Younger brother writes characters as beautifully as dad.

Be careful to repeat the verb if you include the object of the verb.

\begin{center}
\textbf{Say this} \hspace{1cm} \textbf{Not this}
\end{center}

\begin{align*}
\text{我吃饭吃得跟他一样多。} & \quad \text{我吃饭吃得跟他一样多。} \\
\text{我吃饭吃得跟他一样多。} & \quad \text{我吃饭吃得跟他一样多。} \\
\text{Wǒ chī fàn chī de gèn tā yìyàng duō.} & \quad \text{Wǒ chī fàn de gèn tā yìyàng duō.}
\end{align*}

I eat as much as he does.

\begin{align*}
\text{弟弟写字写得有爸爸那么漂亮。} & \quad \text{弟弟写字写得有爸爸那麼漂亮。} \\
\text{弟弟写字写得有爸爸那麼漂亮。} & \quad \text{弟弟寫字寫得有爸爸那麼漂亮。} \\
\textbf{Didi xiě zì xiě de yǒu bāba nàme piàoliang.} & \quad \textbf{Didi xiě zì de yǒu bāba nàme piàoliang.}
\end{align*}

Younger brother writes characters as nicely as dad.

27.1.2, 29.3.5, 29.4.3
Difference

29.2 Difference

29.2.1 Indicating that noun phrases are different

To indicate that two noun phrases are different, say:

NP₁ 不 跟/和 NP₂ 一样。
NP₁ 不 跟/和 NP₂ 一樣。
NP₁ 不 gēn/hé NP₂ yīyàng.
NP₁ and NP₂ are not identical/the same.

Zhè bèn shū bù gēn/hé nà bèn shū yīyàng.
This book is not the same as that book.

Today's weather is not the same as yesterday's.

or

NP₁ 跟/和 NP₂ 不 一样。
NP₁ 跟/和 NP₂ 不 一樣。
NP₁ gēn/hé NP₂ bù yīyàng.
NP₁ and NP₂ are not identical/the same.

Zhège lǚ guǎn de jiàqian gēn/hé nàge lǚ guǎn de jiàqian bù yīyàng.
The cost of this hotel is not the same as the cost of that hotel.

29.2.2 Indicating that all noun phrases are not identical

When a noun phrase refers to more than one entity (for example ‘houses,’ ‘dogs,’ ‘two books,’ etc.) use this pattern to say that the entities are not identical.

NP 不 一样。
NP 不 一樣。
NP bù yīyàng.
NP are not identical/same

Zhè liǎng bèn shū bù yīyàng.
These two books are not identical.

29.2.3 Indicating that noun phrases are different in some property

To indicate that two noun phrases are different in a particular property, say:
MAKING COMPARISONS

NP₁ 不 吧/和  NP₁ 一样 AV。
NP₂ 一样 AV。

NP₁ bù gēn/hé  NP₂ yǐyàng AV。

The rooms in this hotel are not as clean as the rooms in that hotel.

Wǒ érzi bù gēn/hé wǒ nǚ’ér yǐyàng gāo.
My son is not the same height as my daughter.

or

NP₁ 跟/和  NP₂ 不 一样 AV。
NP₂ 一样 AV。

NP₁ gēn/hé  NP₂ bù yǐyàng AV。

NP₁ and NP₂ are not identical/the same in some property.

Zhège lúguăn de fángjiān bù gēn nàge lúguăn de fángjiān yǐyàng gānjing.
The rooms in this hotel are not as clean as the rooms in that hotel.

Wǒ érzi gēn/hé wǒ nǚ’ér bù yǐyàng gāo.
My son and my daughter are not the same height. (not equally tall)

29.1.3

29.2.4 Indicating that one noun phrase does not resemble another

To indicate that one noun phrase does not resemble another noun phrase, say:

NP₁ 不 像  NP₂

NP₁ bù xiàng  NP₂
NP₁ does not look like NP₂

Tā (yǐdiān yě) bù xiàng Fáguórén.
He doesn’t look like a French person (at all).

29.1.4

29.3 More than

‘More than’ comparisons indicate that some noun phrase has more of some property than another noun phrase. The property can be expressed as an adjectival verb, a stative verb, or a verb phrase with a modal verb.
29.3 Comparing noun phrases in terms of adjectival verbs

NP₁ 比 NP₂ AV
NP₁ bǐ NP₂ AV
NP₁ is more AV than NP₂

中国比日本大。
中國比日本大。
Zhōngguó bǐ Riběn dà.

China is bigger than Japan.

我的身体比以前好了。
我的身體比以前好了。
Wǒ de shēntǐ bǐ yǐqián hǎo le.

My health is better than before.

吃饭比做饭容易。
吃飯比做飯容易。
Chī fàn bǐ zuò fàn rónɡyì.

Eating is easier than cooking.

写字比认字难。
寫字比認字難。
Xiě zì bǐ rèn zì nán.

Writing characters is harder than recognizing characters.

NOTE
In the third and fourth example sentences in this section, the phrases that are being compared are a verb + object. In these sentences, the verb + object together function as a noun phrase, serving as the subject of the sentence or as the object of bǐ.

29.3.2 Comparing noun phrases in terms of stative verbs

Stative verbs such as ài ‘to love’ and xihuan ‘to like to,’ ‘to prefer’ take noun phrase objects or verb phrase complements. The stative verb and its object or complement is a stative verb phrase (SVP). When comparing two noun phrases in terms of a stative verb phrase, say:

NP₁ 比 NP₂ SVP
NP₁ bǐ NP₂ SVP
NP₁ is more SVP than NP₂

他比我爱吃中国饭。
他比我愛吃中國飯。
Tā bǐ wǒ ài chī Zhōngguó fàn.

He loves to eat Chinese food more than I.

张先生比张太太喜欢买书。
张先生比張太太喜歡買書。
Zhāng xiānshēng bǐ Zhāng tāitài xīhuàn mǎi shū.

Mr. Zhang likes to buy books more than Mrs. Zhang.
Comparing noun phrases in terms of modal verb phrase

To compare noun phrases in terms of verb phrases that begin with a modal verb, say:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{NP}_1 & \quad \text{比} \quad \text{NP}_2 \quad \text{MVP} \\
\text{NP}_1 & \quad \text{bǐ} \quad \text{NP}_2 \quad \text{MVP} \\
\text{NP}_1 \text{ is more MVP than NP}_2 \\
\end{align*}
\]

Wǒ jiějie bǐ wǒ gēgē huì chàng gē.
My older sister can sing better than my older brother.

Indicating quantity in ‘more than’ comparisons

When comparing noun phrases, it is possible to indicate how much more one noun phrase is than the other. The phrase that indicates the quantity occurs at the end of the sentence, after the adjectival verb or stative verb.

Indicating a specific quantity

When the quantity is a specific number, say:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{NP}_1 & \quad \text{比} \quad \text{NP}_2 \quad \text{AV [number + classifier (+ noun)]} \\
\text{NP}_1 & \quad \text{bǐ} \quad \text{NP}_2 \quad \text{AV [number + classifier (+ noun)]} \\
\text{NP}_1 \text{ is more AV than NP}_2 \text{ by [number + classifier (+ noun)]} \\
\end{align*}
\]

Tā xiǎnshēng bǐ tā dà liù suì.
Her husband is six years older than her.

Zhège liùguān bǐ nàge liùguān guì jiǔ kuài qián.
This hotel is ninety dollars more expensive than that one.

Zhège liùguān bǐ nàge liùguān guì yī bèi.
This hotel is twice as expensive as that one.

The adjectival verbs 早 zǎo ‘early,’ 晚 wǎn ‘late,’ 多 duō ‘more,’ and 少 shǎo ‘less’ may be followed by an action verb. The number + classifier and optional noun sequence occurs after the adjectival verb + action verb.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{NP}_1 & \quad \text{比} \quad \text{NP}_2 \quad \text{AV action verb [number + classifier (+ noun)]} \\
\text{NP}_1 & \quad \text{bǐ} \quad \text{NP}_2 \quad \text{AV action verb [number + classifier (+ noun)]} \\
\text{NP}_1 \text{ does verb more AV than NP}_2 \text{ by [number + classifier (+ noun)]} \\
\end{align*}
\]

Jiàotīn tā bǐ wǒ zǎo lái le wǔ fēn zhōng.
He came five minutes earlier than I did today.

Zuótiān wǒ bǐ lǎobān wǎn zǒu le yī gè zhōngtōu.
Yesterday I left an hour later than my boss did.
Noun phrase₁ is much more AV than noun phrase₂

To indicate that one noun phrase is much more AV than another noun phrase, say the following.

NP₁ 比 NP₂ AV 得多
今天比昨天冷得多。

Jīntiān bǐ zuòtiān lěng de duō.
Today is much colder than yesterday.

NP₁ 比 NP₂ AV duō le
今天比昨天冷多了。

Jīntiān bǐ zuòtiān lěng duō le.
Today is much colder than yesterday.

中文比英文难得多。

NP₁ 比 NP₂ AV le
He is much more hardworking than I am.

Tā bǐ wǒ yònggōng de duō.
Tā bǐ wǒ fēicháng yònggōng.

NOTE
Intensifiers cannot occur before the adjectival verb in the 比 bǐ comparison pattern.

Say this                               Not this

今天比昨天冷得多。                   今天比昨天很冷。

Jīntiān bǐ zuòtiān lěng de duō.        Jīntiān bǐ zuòtiān hěn lěng.
Today is a lot colder than yesterday.

他比我用功得多。                     他比我非常用功。

Tā bǐ wǒ yònggōng de duō.              Tā bǐ wǒ fēicháng yònggōng.

The following pattern with 真 zhēn conveys a very similar meaning to the above patterns.

NP₁ 真 比 NP₂ AV

Jīntiān zhēn bǐ zuòtiān lěng.
Today is really much colder than yesterday.
### 29.3.4.3 Noun phrase₁ is *a little more AV* than noun phrase₂

To indicate that one noun phrase is *a little more AV* than another noun phrase, say the following.

NP₁ 比 NP₂ AV 一点儿/一点儿

NP₁ bǐ NP₂ AV yīdiār

NP₁ is a little more AV than NP₂

Н 소개房子比他們的小一点儿。

我们的房子比他們的小一点儿。

Wōmen de fángzi bǐ tāmen de xiǎo yīdiār.

Our house is a *little smaller* than theirs.

哥哥弟弟用功一点儿。

哥哥弟弟用功一点儿。

Gēge bǐ dìdì yònggōng yīdiǎn.

Older brother is a *little more hardworking* than younger brother.

### 29.3.4.4 Noun phrase₁ is *more adjectival verb* than noun phrase₂ *by half*

To indicate that one noun phrase is *more of some quality* *by half*, put the phrase 一半 yī bàn ‘one half’ after the adjectival verb.

这两件衣服，哪一件便宜？

这两件衣服，哪一件便宜？

Zhè liǎng jiàn yīfú, nǎ yī jiàn piányi?

Of these two dresses which one is cheaper?

这件衣服比那件便宜一半。

这件衣服比那件便宜一半。

Zhè jiàn yīfú bǐ nà jiàn piányi yī bàn.

This dress is half the price of that one.

### 29.3.4.5 Noun phrase₁ is *more adjectival verb* than noun phrase₂ *by a specific percent*

The phrase X 分之 Y occurs after the adjectival verb.

今年学中文的学生比去年多四分之一。

今年學中文的學生比去年多四分之一。

Jīnnián xué Zhōngwén de xuéshēng bǐ qùnián duō sì fēn zhī yī.

There are 25% more students studying Chinese this year.

### 29.3.5 Comparing the performance of an action

To indicate that one noun phrase does some action *more AV than* another noun phrase, say:

NP₁ 比 NP₂ [verb 得] AV

NP₁ bǐ NP₂ [verb de] AV

NP₁ performs the verb more AV than NP₂
If the object of the action verb is included in the sentence, the action verb must be said twice, once followed by the object, and once followed by AV.

NP₁ 比 NP₂ [action verb + object] [action verb 得] AV
NP₁ 比 NP₂ [action verb + object] [action verb de] AV
NP₁ performs the action verb more AV than NP₂

他比我吃饭吃得多。
他比我吃饭吃得多。

Tā bǐ wǒ chī fàn chī de duō.
He eats more food than me.

弟弟比妹妹写字写得快。
弟弟比妹妹写字写得快。

Didi bì mèimei xiě zì xiě de kuài.
Younger brother writes characters faster than younger sister.

Here are several variations in this pattern. They differ in the order of the phrases. In all of them, [action verb + object] occurs before [action verb 得 de], and AV occurs at the end of the sentence.

Variation 1

NP₁ [action verb + object] [action verb 得] 比 NP₂ AV
NP₁ [action verb + object] [action verb de] 比 NP₂ AV
NP₁ performs the action verb more AV than NP₂

他吃饭吃得多。
他吃饭吃得多。

Tā chī fàn chī de bǐ wǒ duō.
He eats more food than me

弟弟写字写得比妹妹快。
弟弟写字写得比妹妹快。

Didi xiě zì xiě de bǐ mèimei kuài.
Younger brother writes characters faster than younger sister.

Variation 2

object, NP₁ [action verb 得] 比 NP₂ AV
object, NP₁ [action verb de] 比 NP₂ AV
As for the object, NP₁ performs the action verb more AV than NP₂

中国字，弟弟写得比妹妹快。
中国字，弟弟写得比妹妹快。

Zhōngguó zì, didi xiě de bǐ mèimei kuài.
As for Chinese characters, younger brother writes them faster than younger sister.
MAKING COMPARISONS

**Variation 3**

NP1 + object [action verb 得] 比 NP2 AV

NP1 + object [action verb de] bǐ NP2 AV

NP1 performs the action verb more AV than NP2

弟弟的中国字，写得比妹妹快。
弟弟的中国字，写得比妹妹快。

**Didi de Zhōngguó zì, xiě de bǐ mēimei kuài.**
Younger brother’s Chinese characters, (he) writes them faster than younger sister.

Be careful to repeat the verb if you include the object of the verb.

**Say this**

他吃饭吃得比我多。

他吃饭吃得比我多。

Tā chī fàn chī de bǐ wǒ duō.
He eats more than I do.

弟弟写字写得比妹妹快。
弟弟写字写得比妹妹快。

Didi xié zì xié de bǐ měimei kuài.
Younger brother writes faster than younger sister.

**Not this**

*他吃饭得比我多。

*他吃饭得比我多。

Tā chī fàn de bǐ wǒ duō.

I am not as tall as he.

我没有他(那么)高。
我没有他(那麼)高。

Wǒ méi yǒu tā (nàme) gāo.
I am not as tall as he.

他没有你(lǐne) yònggōng.
他沒有你(這麼)用功。

Wǒ méi yǒu nǐ (zhème) yònggōng.
He is not as hardworking as you.
29.4

### 29.4.2 Indicating ‘less than’ with 不如 bùrú

不如 bùrú can be used when comparing two noun phrases, or when comparing noun phrases in terms of some property. It is used in formal, literary contexts.

\[
\text{NP}_1 \text{ 不如} \text{ NP}_2 \\
\text{NP}_1 \text{ bùrú} \text{ NP}_2 \\
\text{NP}_1 \text{ is not as good as NP}_2
\]

論學問，誰都不如趙教授。

Lùnüéwen, shéi dōu bùrú Zhào jiàoshòu.

As for scholarship, no one is the equal to Professor Zhao.

我的嗓子不如我妹妹。

Wǒ de sāngzǐ bùrú wǒ mèimei.

My voice is not as good as my younger sister’s.

\[
\text{NP}_1 \text{ 不如} \text{ NP}_2 \text{ AV} \\
\text{NP}_1 \text{ bùrú} \text{ NP}_2 \text{ AV} \\
\text{NP}_1 \text{ is not as AV as NP}_2
\]

弟弟不如哥哥用功。

Didi bùrú gēge yònggōng.

Younger brother is not as hardworking as older brother.

走起不如骑自行车快。

Zǒu lù bùrú qǐ zìxíngchē kuài.

Walking is not as fast as riding a bike.

### 29.4.3 Indicating performance that is less than another’s in some way

To indicate that one noun phrase does not perform some action as AV as another noun phrase, say:

\[
\text{NP}_1 \text{ 没有} \text{ NP}_2 \text{ [action verb 得] AV} \\
\text{NP}_1 \text{ méi yǒu} \text{ NP}_2 \text{ [action verb de] AV} \\
\text{NP}_1 \text{ does not perform the action verb as AV as NP}_2
\]

我没有他吃得多。

Wǒ méi yǒu tā chī de duō.

I don’t eat as much as him.

妹妹没有弟弟写得快。

Méimei méi yǒu dìdi xiě de kuài.

Younger sister doesn’t write as fast as younger brother.

那么/那麼 nàme and 这么/這麼 zhème optionally occur before the AV.

我没有他吃得那么多。

Wǒ méi yǒu tā chī de nàme duō.

I don’t eat as much as him.

妹妹没有弟弟写得這麼快。

Méimei méi yǒu dìdi xiě de zhème kuài.

Younger sister doesn’t write as fast as younger brother.
MAKING COMPARISONS

If the object of the action verb is included in the sentence, the action verb is said twice, once followed by the object, and once followed by AV.

NP_1 没有 NP_2 [action verb + object] [action verb de] (那么/那麼) AV
NP_1 méi yǒu NP_2 [action verb + object] [action verb de] (nàme) AV
NP_1 does not perform the action verb as AV as NP_2
I 没有他吃饭吃得多。
I 没有他吃饭吃得多。
Wǒ méi yǒu tā chī fàn chī de duō.
I don’t eat as much food as younger brother.

妹妹没有弟弟写字写得(那么)快。
妹妹没有弟弟写字写得(那麼)快。
Mèimei méi yǒu dìdi xiě zì xiě de (nàme) kuài.
Younger sister doesn’t write characters as fast as younger brother.

Here are several variations in this pattern. They differ in the order of the phrases. In all of them, [action verb + object] occurs before [action verb de], and AV occurs at the end of the sentence.

Variation 1

NP_1 [action verb + object] [action verb de] 没有 NP_2 (那么/那麼) AV
NP_1 [action verb + object] [action verb de] méi yǒu NP_2 (nàme) AV
NP_1 does not perform the action verb as AV as NP_2
I 吃饭吃得没有他多。
I 吃飯吃得沒有他多。
Wǒ chī fàn chī de méi yǒu tā duō.
I don’t eat as much food as he does.

妹妹写字写得没有弟弟(那么)快。
妹妹寫字寫得沒有弟弟(那麼)快。
Mèimei xié zī xiě de méi yǒu dìdi (nàme) kuài.
Younger sister doesn’t write characters as fast as younger brother.

Variation 2

object, NP_1 [action verb de] 没有 NP_2 (那么/那麼) AV
object, NP_1 [action verb de] méi yǒu NP_2 (nàme) AV
As for the object, NP_1 does not perform the action verb as AV as NP_2
中国字，妹妹写得没有弟弟那么快。
中國字，妹妹寫得沒有弟弟那麼快。
Zhōngguó zì, mèimei xié de méi yǒu dìdi nàme kuài.
(As for) Chinese characters, younger sister doesn’t write them as fast as younger brother.

Be careful to repeat the action verb if you include its object.

Say this                      Not this
我沒有他吃饭吃得 没有他吃饭吃得多。
我沒有他吃饭吃得。
Wǒ méi yǒu tā chī fàn chī de duō.  Wǒ méi yǒu tā chī fàn de duō.
I do not eat as much as he does.
29.5

Comparative degree

To indicate the comparative form in Mandarin, place the intensifier 更 gèng or the expression 还(要)/還要 hái (yào) before the stative verb or adjectival verb.

哥哥喜欢吃看电影。妹妹更喜欢。(SV)
哥哥喜歡看电影。妹妹更喜歡。

Gēge xihuan kàn diànyǐng. Méimei gèng xihuan.
Older brother likes to watch movies. Younger sister likes to even more.

日本车很贵。德国车更贵。(AV)
日本車很貴。德國車更貴。

Riběn chē hěn guì. Déguó chē gèng guì.
Japanese cars are very expensive. German cars are even more expensive.

日本车很贵。德国车还要贵。(AV)
日本車很貴。德國車還要貴。

Riběn chē hěn guì. Déguó chē hái (yào) guì.
Japanese cars are very expensive. German cars are even more expensive.

更 gèng and 还要/還要 hái yào may be used in 比 bǐ comparison sentences.

德国车比日本车更贵。
德國車比日本車更貴。

Déguó chē bǐ Riběn chē gèng guì.
German cars are even more expensive than Japanese cars.

天气预报说明天比今天还要冷。
天氣預報說明天比今天還要冷。

Tiānqì yùbào shuō míngtiān bǐ jǐntiān hái yào lěng.
The weather report says tomorrow will be even colder than today.

29.6

Superlative degree

The intensifier 最 zuì indicates a superlative degree: most stative verb/most adjectival verb. Sentence final -了 le is sometimes used at the end of the sentence to emphasize that the information is new for the addressee. The superlative form is also used for exaggeration.
MAKING COMPARISONS

The Great Wall is the longest wall in the world.

My younger sister loves to eat ice cream the most.

Today is relatively hot.

That girl is quite tall.

I prefer to drink French wine.

People from Sichuan prefer to eat spicy food.
30

Talking about the present

Here are the expressions and structures most often used to indicate that a state exists at the present time or that an action is occurring at the present time.

30.1 Time expressions that indicate present time

現在/現在 xiànzài ‘now’
你現在去哪兒?
你現在去哪兒?
Nǐ xiànzài qù nàr?
Where are you going now?

目前 mùqián ‘at present’
他目前在學中文。
他目前在學中文。
Tā mǔqián zài xué Zhōngwén.
He is presently studying Chinese.

今天 jīntiān ‘today’
他今天很忙。
Tā jīntiān hěn máng.
He is very busy today.

这个星期/這個星期 zhègē xīngqī ‘this week’ or
这个礼拜/這個禮拜 zhègē lǐbài ‘this week’
这个星期很冷。
這個星期很冷。
Zhègē xīngqī hěn lěng.
This week it is very cold.

这个月/這個月 zhègē yuè ‘this month’
她这个月在纽约。
她這個月在紐約。
Tā zhègē yuè zài Niǔyuē.
She is in New York this month.
TALKING ABOUT THE PRESENT

30.2 Using 在 zài and 正在 zhèngzài to indicate ongoing actions in present time

在 zài or 正在 zhèngzài can occur before action verbs that have duration to indicate that the action is ongoing at the present time.

哥哥在打球。
Gége zài dǎ qiú.
Elder brother is playing ball.

他正在洗澡，不能接电话。
Tā zhèngzài xiāo zǎo, bù néng jiē diànhuà.
He's bathing right now (and) can't get the phone.

NOTE
在 zài and 正在 zhèngzài are only used when talking about actions. They are not used when the main verb of the sentence is an adjectival verb, a stative verb, or a modal verb. 现在 xiànzài 'now' can be used when talking about states or actions that occur in the present time.

Say this

汽油现在贵了。(AV)  
Qíyóu xiànzài guì le.
Gasoline is expensive now.

他现在很高兴。(AV)  
Tā xiànzài hěn gāoxìng.
He is happy right now.

她现在喜欢那个男的。(SV)  
Tā xiànzài xīhuān nàge nán de.
She likes that boy now.

Not this

*汽油正在贵了。
Qíyóu zhèngzài guì le.

*她正在喜歡那個男的。
Tā zhèngzài xīhuān nàge nán de.

30.3 Using the final particle 呢 ne to indicate ongoing situations in present time

The final particle 呢 ne may be used at the end of a sentence when an action is ongoing in the present time. 呢 ne often co-occurs with 在 zài and 正在 zhèngzài.

他跳舞呢。
Tā tiào wǔ ne.
He is dancing.
Using 着/著 zhe to emphasize ongoing duration

你在想什么呢？
你在想什么呢？
Nǐ zài xiǎng shénme ne?
What are you thinking?

他們正在開會呢。
他們正在開會呢。
Tāmen zhèng zài kāi huì ne.
They are having a meeting now.

30.4 Using 着/著 zhe to emphasize ongoing duration or an ongoing state in the present time

Open-ended action verbs may be suffixed with 着/著 zhe to emphasize ongoing duration at the present time. 着/著 zhe often co-occurs with 在 zài, 正在 zhèngzài and/or 呢 ne.

他在说着话呢。
他在说着话呢。
Tā zài shuōzhe huà ne.
He is speaking.

Change-of-state verbs that describe posture or placement such as 站 zhàn ‘to stand,’ 坐 zuò ‘to sit,’ 躺 tāng ‘to lie,’ 存 cún ‘to save/to deposit,’ 放 fàng ‘to put/to place,’ 挂/掛 guà ‘to hang,’ and 停 tīng ‘to park’ may be suffixed with 着/著 zhe to indicate that the state is ongoing in present time. 呢 ne may occur at the end of the sentence.

谁在门口站着？
谁在门口站着？
Shéi zài ménkǒu zhànzhe?
Who is standing at the door?

客人在客厅里坐着呢。
客人在客厅里坐着呢。
Kèrén zài kētīng lǐ zuòzhe ne.
The guests are sitting in the living room.

病人在床上躺着。
病人在床上躺着。
Bìngrén zài chuángshàng tīngzhe.
The patient is lying on the bed.

我们的钱都在银行里存着呢。
我们的钱都在银行里存着呢。
Wǒmen de qián dōu zài yínháng lǐ cúnzhe ne.
All of our money is (saved) in the bank.

那张画在墙上挂着呢。
那张画在墙上挂着呢。
Nà zhāng huà zài qiáng shàng guàzhe ne.
That painting is hanging on the wall.

我的书在哪儿放着呢？
我的书在哪儿放着呢？
Wǒ de shū zài nár fāngzhe ne?
Where is my book? (Where is my book placed?)
TALKING ABOUT THE PRESENT

My car is parked in the parking lot.

Indicating present time by context

Time expressions are optional when the context makes it clear that the sentence refers to a present time situation. For example, in the following conversation, 现在 xiànzài ‘now’ can be included, but it is not necessary, because the question and response clearly refer to the present time.

Mom: Nǐ (xiànzài) zuò shénme gōngkè?
Child: Wǒ (xiànzài) zuò shùxué.

Negation in present time situations

Present time situations are negated with 不 bù with one exception. The verb 有 yǒu is always negated with 没 méi.

He is not coming to class today. I don’t have money.

Talking about actions that begin in the past and continue to the present

To indicate that an action began in the past and continues to the present, end the sentence with sentence final -le. If the verb is followed by an object or a duration expression, the sentence will have two instances of -le, one following the verb, and
the other at the end of the sentence. Sentences like these are sometimes described as having ‘double 了 le.’ The sentence final -了 le is sometimes described as indicating the ‘present relevance’ of the situation.

34.1.3

我看了两本书了。
我看了两本書了。
Wǒ kàn le liǎng běn shū le.
I've read two books (so far).

他在美国住了十年了。
他在美國住了十年了。
Tā zài Méiguó zhù le shínián le.
He has lived in America for 10 years (and is still there).

The adverb 已经/已經 yǐjīng ‘already’ often occurs in these sentences to emphasize the fact that the situation has been ongoing from some time in the past up to the present time.

她已经学了三年的中文了。
她已經學了三年的中文了。
Tā yǐjīng xué le sān nián de Zhōngwén le.
She has already studied three years of Chinese.

我教中文已经有二十多年了。
我教中文已經有二十多年了。
Wǒ jiāo Zhōngwén yǐjīng yǒu èrshí duō nián le.
I've already taught Chinese for over twenty years.

30.8 Describing situations that are generally true

To indicate that a situation is generally true, the verb is presented without any modifiers that indicate time phrase: no time phrases, no adverbs, no verb suffixes.

Zhōngguó rénkǒu hěn duō.
China has a very large population.

Zhèr de tiānqì hěn rè.
The weather is very hot here.
Talking about habitual actions

Habitual actions are actions that occur regularly. The following time expressions and adverbs are used to express habitual actions in Chinese.

### 31.1 Expressing habitual time with the word 每 měi ‘every/each’

Time expressions that indicate habitual action include the word 每 měi ‘every/each.’ As with other expressions that indicate the time when an action occurs, these expressions occur right after the subject, at the beginning of the predicate. Commonly used time expressions include:

- 每小时/每個小時 měi gè xiāoshí every hour
- 每个钟头/每個鐘頭 měi gè zhōngtóu every hour
- 每天 měitiān every day
- 每天晚上 měitiān wānshāng every evening
- 每个礼拜/每個禮拜 měi gè lǐbài every week
- 每个星期/每個星期 měi gè xīngqī every week
- 每个月/每個月 měi gè yuè every month
- 每年 měi nián every year

The adverb 都 dōu may also occur with these expressions, right before the verb or, if there is a prepositional phrase, right before the prepositional phrase.

- 我每天八点半去上班。 Wǒ měitiān bā diànbān qù shàngbān. I go to work every day at 8:30.
- 她每个星期都回家看父母一次。 Tā měi gè xīngqī dōu huí jiā kàn fùmǔ yīcì. She goes home once every week to see her parents.
- 我每个月都跟朋友去看电影。 Wǒ měi gè yuè dōu gēn péngyǒu qù kàn diànyǐng. Every month I go with my friends to see a movie.
### 31.2 Expressing habitual time with 天天 tiāntiān and 年年 niánnián

天天 tiāntiān and 年年 niánnián may also occur in the following phrases to indicate habitual action.

天天 tiāntiān  
年年 niánnián  

- 大学生天天都很忙。
- 大学生天天都很忙。
- Dàxuéshēng tiāntiān dōu hěn máng.
- University students are busy every day.

### 31.3 Adverbs that describe habitual action

Adverbs that describe habitual action include:

**常常 chángcháng ‘often’**

- 我们常常去网吧上网。
- Wǒmen chángcháng qù wǎngbā shàng wǎng.
- We frequently go to an internet café to surf the web.

**平常 píngcháng ‘ordinarily, usually’**

- 学生平常在周末跟朋友玩儿。
- Xuéshèng píngcháng zài zhōumò gēn péngyou wán.
- Students often have fun with their friends on the weekend.

**经常 jīngcháng ‘usually, often’**

- 弟弟经常上课迟到。
- Dìdì jīngcháng shàng kè chídào.
- My younger brother is often late for class.

**时常 shícháng ‘regularly’**

- 你得时常运动运动，鍛鍊身体。
- Nǐ děi shícháng yùndòng yùndòng, duànliàn shēntǐ.
- You should exercise regularly and strengthen your body.

**总 zǒng ‘always’**

- 她总跟男朋友在一起，不愿意一个人出去。
- Tā zǒng gēn nán péngyou zài yīqi, bù yuàn yī gè rén chūqu.
- She's always with her boyfriend; (she's) not willing to go out by herself.
TALKING ABOUT HABITUAL ACTIONS

總是/總是 zǒngshì ‘always’

他真是好人，總是幫助朋友。
He really is a good person; (he) always helps his friends.

都 dōu ‘all/always’

我每天都看報。
I read the news every day.

老 lǎo ‘always’

我不要老待在家。
I don’t want to always stay home.

向來/向來 xiànglái ‘always in the past’

他向來都聽父母的話。
He always listened to his parents.

Yǐxiàng ‘always in the past’

他一向很可靠。我們一定可以信任他。
He has always been very reliable. We can certainly trust him.

NOTE 向來/向來 xiànglái and 从来/从 来 cónglái are opposites.

- 向来/向来 xiànglái is used to indicate that an action habitually occurred in the past.
- 从来/从 来 cónglái indicates that an action does not happen or has not happened.
  从来/从 来 cónglái always occurs with negation:

  从来/从 来 cónglái + 不 bù indicates that an action never occurs.
  从来/从 来 cónglái + 没 méi indicates that an action has never occurred in the past.

  他从来不喝酒。
  He never drinks alcohol.

  我从来没给他打过电话。
  I have never called him on the phone before.
Talking about the future

Mandarin has no distinct future tense. Instead, future time is expressed by words and phrases that refer to the future.

### 32.1 Time words that refer to future time

Here are some common time words that refer to future time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mandarin</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>jīntiān xiàwǔ</td>
<td>jìntiān wānshāng</td>
<td>this afternoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>míntiān</td>
<td>wānshāng</td>
<td>tomorrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hòutiān</td>
<td></td>
<td>the day after tomorrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dà hòutiān</td>
<td></td>
<td>three days from now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xià gè xīngqī</td>
<td></td>
<td>next week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xià gè lìbài</td>
<td></td>
<td>next week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xià gè yuè</td>
<td></td>
<td>next month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>míngnián</td>
<td></td>
<td>next year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jiānglái</td>
<td></td>
<td>in the future</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The neutral position for ‘time when’ expressions is after the subject, at the beginning of the predicate. To emphasize the time when a situation occurs, put the ‘time when’ expression at the beginning of the sentence, before the subject.

- 我们今天晚上看电影。
- Wǒmen jīntiān wānshāng qù kàn diànyīng.
- We are going to see a movie tonight.

- 今天晚上我们去看电影。
- 今天晚上我們去看電影。
- jīntiān wānshāng wǒmen qù kàn diànyīng.
- Tonight we are going to see a movie.

### 32.2 Adverbs that refer to future time

Common adverbs that refer to the future include the following. (Note that adverbs always occur before the [prepositional phrase +] verb phrase.)

- 今天 (jīntiān)  today
- 明天 (míntiān) tomorrow
- 后天 (hòutiān) day after tomorrow
- 大后天 (dà hòutiān) three days from now
- 下个星期 (xià gè xīngqī) next week
- 下个月 (xià gè yuè) next month
- 明年 (míngnián) next year
- 将来 (jiānglái) in the future
**TALKING ABOUT THE FUTURE**

**To speak about the future**

**soon will**

He就要结婚了。

**He is going to get married soon.**

再 (do) again in the future

**Zài jiàn!**

See you **again** (Goodbye)

Wǒ méi tīng qīngchu, qǐng nǐ zài shūō yīcì.

I didn’t hear clearly, please say it **again**.

**possible**

**Tà kěnéng bù xué Zhōngwén le.**

She **may** not study Chinese any more.

Notice that the adverb 再 zài is closely related to the adverb 又 yòu. The adverb 再 zài means (to do) again in the future, and the adverb 又 yòu means (to do) again in the past.

你前天迟到了。昨天又迟到了。

You were late the day before yesterday. Yesterday you were late again.

**Indicating future time with the modal verb 会 hùi**

The modal verb 会 hùi can be used to indicate future time. The meaning of ‘future’ is associated with the meanings of ‘possibility’ and ‘prediction’ conveyed by 会 hùi.

Wǒ xiǎng tā bù hùi lái le.

I don’t think he **will** come.
Verbs that refer to the future

Sometimes, 会/會 huì simply indicates future.

天氣預報說，明天一定會下雨。
天氣預報說，明天一定會下雨。

The weather report says tomorrow it will definitely rain.

12.1

32.4 Verbs that refer to the future

Verbs involving thinking or planning refer to future time. The most common include the following:

要 yào ‘to want’

我要出去买东西。
我要出去買東西。

Wǒ yào chūqu mǎi dōngxi.
I want to go out to buy some things.

想 xiǎng ‘to think’

我今天想早一点回家。
我今天想早一點回家。

Wǒ jīntiān xiǎng zǎo yìdiǎn huí jiā.
I want to return home a little earlier today.

愿意/願意 yuànyì ‘to be willing’

我愿意跟他结婚。
我願意跟他結婚。

Wǒ yuànyì gēn tā jiéhūn.
I am willing to marry him.

准备/準備 zhǔnbèi ‘to prepare to, to get ready to’

请你准备下车。
請你準備下車。

Qing nǐ zhǔnbèi xià chē.
Please get ready to get off the bus.

打算 dāsuàn ‘to plan to’

我将来打算住在日本。
我將來打算住在日本。

Wǒ jiānglái dāsuàn zhù zài Rìběn.
I plan to live in Japan in the future.
Indicating completion and talking about the past

Mandarin has no grammatical structure that is entirely equivalent to past tense in English. Instead, it has structures that signal the completion of an event or that indicate that an event occurred or did not occur at some time in the past, or that a situation existed at some time in the past. The primary strategies for indicating completion and talking about the past are presented in this chapter.

33.1 Completion: V - 了 le

Mandarin uses the verb suffix 了 le to mark an action as complete. When an action is marked as complete with respect to now (speech time), completion also indicates that the action happened in the past.

Only action verbs can be marked as complete. If a stative verb, adjectival verb, or modal verb is followed by 了 le, the meaning is one of change rather than completion.

Ordinarily, when - 了 le marks completion it occurs right after the verb.

Q: 你跟誰看了電影？ 你跟誰看了電影？
   Nǐ gèn shéi kàn le diànyǐng?
   With whom did you see the movie?
A: 我跟我女朋友看了電影。
   Wò gēn wǒ nǚ péngyou kàn le diànyǐng.
   I saw the movie with my girlfriend.

Notice that these sentences refer to situations that are both completed and past. If the verb takes an object and the object is only one syllable in length, 了 le may occur after the verb + object. Some speakers of Mandarin prefer to put 了 le after the object regardless of the length of the object noun phrase.

我昨天晚上八點鐘回家了。
Wò zuǒtiān wǎnshàng bā diǎo zhōng huí jiā le.
Last night I returned home at 8 p.m.
The use of 了 le to mark completed actions is not obligatory. However, it is commonly used when the verb takes an object that includes a number phrase. In these sentences, 了 le occurs right after the verb.

He boy friend bought a Chinese dictionary for her.

上个周末我们跳了两个钟头的舞。

We danced for two hours last weekend. (here: two hours of dance)

The adverb 已经/已經 yijing ‘already’ often occurs before a completed action to indicate that an action is already concluded:

I already ate dinner.

or

I already ate dinner.

Q: 那件事，你什么时候做完？
   那件事，你甚麼時候做完？
   Nà jiàn shì, nǐ shénme shíhòu zuòwán?
   When will you finish that matter?
A: 我已经做完了。
   我已經做完了。
   Wǒ yǐjīng zuòwán le.
   I’ve already finished.

To indicate that two actions occur in sequence, follow the first action verb with 了 le.

He will eat and then leave. (After he eats, he will leave.)

As the translation of this sentence indicates, this sentence refers to a sequence that will take place in the future: 了 le indicates that 吃 chī ‘to eat’ occurs before 走 zǒu ‘to leave.’

To indicate that a sequence occurred in the past, follow the second verb or the object of the second verb with -了 le.
33.3 Indicating that an action did not occur in the past

To indicate that an action did not occur in the past, negate the verb with 没 méi or 没有 méi yǒu. Do not use 不 bú as the marker of negation, and do not use 了 le after the verb when talking about an action that did not occur.

我寒假没回家。
Wǒ hánjià méi huì jiā.
I didn't go home for winter break.

我昨天一天都没看见他。
Wǒ zuótiān yī tiān dōu méi kàn jiàn tā.
I didn’t see him at all yesterday.

他没有(有)买那本书。
Tā méi (yǒu) mǎi nà bìng shū.
He didn’t buy that book.

The adverb 还/還 hái may occur in sentences negated with 没(有) méi (yǒu). 还没(有)還沒(有) hái méi (yǒu) means not yet.

我还没吃早饭。
Wǒ hái méi ě chǎo fàn.
I haven’t yet eaten breakfast.

他才十三岁。当然还没结婚。
Tā cái shí sān suì. Dāngrán hái méi jié hūn.
He’s only 13. Of course he hasn’t yet married.

33.4 Asking whether an action has occurred

To ask whether an action has occurred, use a yes–no question:
Indicating that an action occurred again in the past: 又 yòu verb 了 le

S-吗/嗎/ma

Q: 你买了飞机票了吗？
你買了飛機票了嗎？
Nǐ mǎi le fēijī piào le ma?
Did you buy the airplane ticket?

or

Q: 你买飞机票了吗？
你買飛機票了嗎？
Nǐ mǎi fēijī piào le ma?
Did you buy the airplane ticket?

verb 了 le (object) 没有 méi yǒu

Q: 你买了飞机票了没有？
你買了飛機票了沒有？
Nǐ mǎi le fēijī piào le méi yǒu?
Have you bought (the) airplane ticket yet?

A: 買了。
Mǎi le.
[I bought [it].

A: 買了。
Mǎi le.
[I bought [it].

有没有 yǒu méi yǒu + [prepositional phrase +] verb phrase

Q: 你有没有买飞机票？
你有沒有買飛機票?
Nǐ yǒu méi yǒu mǎi fēijī piào?
Have you bought the airplane ticket?

A: 買了。
Mǎi le.
[I bought [it].

For any form of yes–no question, a ‘yes’ answer includes 了 le after the verb.

A: 買了。
Mǎi le.
[I bought [it].

A ‘no’ answer does not have 了 le.

A: 没(有)買。
Méi (yǒu) mǎi
[I haven’t.

24.1

Indicating that an action occurred again in the past: 又 yòu verb 了 le

To indicate that an action occurred again in the past, precede the [prepositional phrase +] verb phrase with the adverb 又 yòu and follow the verb with 了 le.
INDICATING COMPLETION AND TALKING ABOUT THE PAST

He came the day before yesterday. This morning he came again.

Notice that the adverb 又 yòu ‘(to do) again in the past’ is closely related to the adverb 再 zài ‘(to do) again in the future.’

I ate dumplings again last night. I don’t want to eat them again tomorrow.

NOTE 又 yòu ... 又 yòu ... means ‘both ... and ...’ and can be used to link stative verbs or adjectival verbs.

They are hungry and thirsty.

Talking about past experience: verb suffix -过/過 guo

To indicate that an action has been experienced at least once in the indefinite past, follow the verb with the verb suffix -过/過 guo.

Wǒ chīguǒ Zhōngguó fàn. I’ve eaten Chinese food (before).

The verb suffix 过/過 guo is appropriate in the following circumstances:

- when talking about actions that the subject does not perform on a regular basis,
- when talking about actions that happened in the remote past,
- when talking about actions that are repeatable. Actions that are not repeatable cannot be suffixed with 过/過 guo.

Do not say

* She has graduated from university before.

Tā tài xué bié yè guò. intended: She has graduated from university before.
The suffix 过/過 guo can be used with the verb suffix 了 le to emphasize the fact that a specific action happened in the past. 过/過 guo always occurs before 了 le.

今天的投资已经看过了。
今天的報我已經看過了。

Jíntiān de báo wǒ yìjīng kàn guō le.
I've already read today's paper.

长城我已经登过了。
長城我已經登過了。

Chángchéng wǒ yìjīng dēngguō le.
I have already climbed the Great Wall.

To indicate that an action has never been experienced before, precede the [prepositional phrase +] verb phrase with 没 méi or 没有 méi yǒu and follow the verb with 过/過 guo as follows:

没(有) méi (yǒu) + verb -过/過 guo
我吃没吃过中国饭。
我沒有吃過中國飯。

Wǒ méi chī guō Zhōngguó fàn.
I have never eaten Chinese food before.

他没坐过飞机。
他沒有坐過飛機。

Tā méi zuò guō fēijī.
He has never ridden on a plane before.

When talking about events that have never been experienced before, the adverb 从来/從來 cóng lái ‘in the past’ often occurs before the verb for additional emphasis:

我从来没吃过中国饭。
我從來沒有吃過中國飯。

Wǒ cóng lái méi chī guō Zhōngguó fàn.
I have never eaten Chinese food before.

NOTE

从来/從來 cóng lái is only used in negative sentences.

23.3, 31.3

Comparing the verb suffixes 过/過 guo and 了 le

The verb suffixes 过/過 guo and 了 le overlap in meaning but they are not identical. As illustrated in Section 33.6, they may sometimes be used together. However, in many contexts, only 过/過 guo or 了 le is appropriate.

Here is a table that summarizes the meanings associated with 过/過 guo and 了 le, and illustrates their differences.
### 33.8 Adverbs that indicate past time

Adverbs that indicate past time may be used with action verbs, stative verbs, or adjectival verbs. When the verb is a stative verb or adjectival verb, an adverb may be the only marker of past time. Here are the most common adverbs that indicate past time.

#### 以前 yǐqián ‘before, previously, in the past’

我以前在外国住了几年。(action verb)

I previously lived abroad for a few years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>过/過 guo</th>
<th>了 le</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The action is completed in the past.</td>
<td>过/過 guo is acceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我去过中国。</td>
<td>我去了中国。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我去過中國。</td>
<td>我去了中國。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wǒ qùguó Zhōngguó.</td>
<td>Wǒ qù le Zhōngguó.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ve been to China before.</td>
<td>I went to China.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The action has never been performed by the subject.</td>
<td>过/過 guo is acceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我没去过中国。</td>
<td>我没去中国。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我沒去過中國。</td>
<td>我沒去過中國。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have never been to China before.</td>
<td>I didn’t go to China.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The action refers to a repeatable event.</td>
<td>This condition is necessary for 过/過 guo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我看过那个电影。</td>
<td>我看了那个电影。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我看過那個電影。</td>
<td>我看了那個電影。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wǒ kànɡuo nàge diànyǐnɡ.</td>
<td>Wǒ kànle nàge diànyǐnɡ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have seen that movie before.</td>
<td>I saw that movie before.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the action is not repeatable, 过/過 guo is not acceptable</td>
<td>This condition is necessary for 过/過 guo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>她大学毕业过。</td>
<td>她大学毕业了。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>她大學畢業過。</td>
<td>她大學畢業了。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tā dàxué biyèguó.</td>
<td>Tā dàxué biyè le.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She graduated from university.</td>
<td>She graduated from university.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The action is not customary. It is unusual for the subject to do it.</td>
<td>This condition is necessary for 过/過 guo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我吃过蛇肉。</td>
<td>我吃了蛇肉。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我吃過蛇肉。</td>
<td>我吃了蛇肉。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wǒ chīɡuo shè ròu.</td>
<td>Wǒ chīle shè ròu.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have had the experience of eating snake before.</td>
<td>I ate snake. (There is no implication about how common this action is for me.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Focusing on a detail of a past event with 是 ... 的 shì ... de

To focus on a specific detail of an event such as the time or place of the event, use 是 ... 的 shì ... de.

是 shì occurs right before the phrase that is being focused.

的 de occurs right after the verb or at the end of the sentence.

是 ... 的 shì ... de is used to focus on:
INDICATING COMPLETION AND TALKING ABOUT THE PAST

• the time when an event occurred:
  他是一年以前去中国的。
  He went to China a year ago.
  
• the one who performed the activity:
  这本书是谁写的？
  Who wrote this book?
  
• location:
  你的大衣是在哪儿买的？
  Where did you buy your coat?
  
• a prepositional phrase:
  他是跟谁结婚的？
  Who (with whom) did he marry?

If the verb has an object and the object is not a pronoun, 的 de can come either after the verb or at the end of the sentence.

  昨天晚上是谁给你做的晚饭？
  Who cooked dinner for you last night?

or

  昨天晚上是谁给你做晚饭的？
  Who cooked dinner for you last night?

If the object of the verb is a pronoun, 的 de can only occur after the pronoun, at the end of the sentence.
### Focusing on a detail of a past event with 是...的 shì...de

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Say this</th>
<th>Not this</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>你是在那儿认识他的？</td>
<td>你是在哪儿认识的他？</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你是在那儿認識他的？</td>
<td>你是在那儿認識的他？</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nǐ shì zài nàr rènshì tā de?</td>
<td>Nǐ shì zài nǎr rènshì de tā?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Where</em> did you meet him?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

是 shì may be omitted in affirmative sentences.

这张磁碟(是)在书店买的。
Zhè zhāng cídié (shì) zài shū diàn mái de.
This CD was bought at the bookstore.

是 shì may not be omitted in negated sentences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Say this</th>
<th>Not this</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>这张磁碟不是在书店买的。</td>
<td>这张磁碟不在书店买的。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>這張磁碟不是在書店買的。</td>
<td>這張磁碟不在書店買的。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhè zhāng cídié bù shì zài shūdiàn mái de.</td>
<td>Zhè zhāng cídié bù zài shūdiàn mái de.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This CD was not bought at the bookstore.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 11.4, 26.4, 53.2.4
Talking about change, new situations, and changing situations

Mandarin has a number of ways to indicate that a situation represents a change from the past or that it is in the process of change. 34.1 and 34.3 present grammatical patterns that are used to talk about change. 34.4 presents words that are used to talk about change.

34.1 Indicating that a situation represents a change

To indicate that a situation represents a change, add the particle 了 le to the end of the sentence that describes the situation. We refer to this use of 了 le as ‘sentence final -了 le.’ Here are the most common types of change associated with sentence final -了 le. Notice that in English, this sense of change is sometimes expressed with the word ‘become’ (verb) or (verb) ‘now’ or ‘gotten’ (verb).

34.1.1 New information for the addressee

他们订婚了！
Tāmen dìng hūn le!
They have become engaged!

我有两个孩子了。
Wǒ yǒu liǎng gè háizi le.
I have two children now.

34.1.2 Change of state

When the main verb of sentence is a stative verb, sentence final -了 le indicates a change of state.

东西都贵了。
Dōngxi dōu guì le.
Things have become expensive.
34.1 Indicating that a situation represents a change

他有女朋友了。
Tā yǒu nǚ péngyou le.
He has a girlfriend now. (He didn't have one before.)

34.1.3 Actions that continue into the future: double -了 le sentences

Sentence final -了 le can be used with the verb suffix -了 le to signal that a certain portion of an action is complete but that the action is continuing into the future. Sentences like these are sometimes described as having ‘double -了 le,’ and the function of the sentence final -了 le is sometimes described as indicating the ‘present relevance’ of the situation.

他已经睡了十个小时了。
Tā yǐjīng shuì le shí gè zhōngtóu le.
He has already slept for ten hours.

34.1.4 Situations that do not exist anymore

To indicate that a situation does not exist anymore, add sentence final -了 le to the end of a negated sentence:

negated sentence + sentence final -了 le

她不吃肉了。
Tā bù chī ròu le.
She doesn’t eat meat anymore.

太阳出来了。不冷了。
Tàiyáng chū lái le. Bù lěng le.
The sun has come out. (It) isn’t cold anymore.

34.1.5 Imminent occurrences and imminent change

Sentence final -了 le can be used to indicate that a situation will happen soon. Often, an adverb or adverbial phrase such as 快 kuài, 快要 kuài yào, or 就要 jiù yào occurs before the [prepositional phrase +] verb phrase to emphasize the fact that the situation will happen soon.

我们快到了。
Wǒmen kuài dào le.
We will be arriving soon.

我快要完了。
Wǒ kuài yào zuòwán le.
I’m just about done.
Comparing sentences with and without sentence final -了 le

Notice how sentence final -了 le changes the meaning of the sentence. Without sentence final -了 le, the sentence is a description of a situation. With sentence final -了 le, the sentence focuses on a change.

No sentence final -了 le

- 我会看中文报。
- 我會看中文報了。
- Wǒ huì kàn Zhōngwén bào.
- Wǒ huì kàn Zhōngwén báo le.
- 我 can read Chinese newspapers.
- I can read Chinese newspapers now.
- 汽油很贵。
- 汽油很貴了。
- Qìyóu hěn guì.
- Qìyóu hěn guì le.
- Gasoline is very expensive.
- Gasoline has became very expensive.
- 我不喜欢吃肉。
- 我們吃肉了。
- Wǒ bù xǐhuàn chī ròu.
- Wǒ bù xǐhuàn chī ròu le.
- I don't like to eat meat.
- I don't like to eat meat anymore.

Indicating change over time

More and more of some situation

- 越来越 yuè lái yuè AV/SV/MV
- 我 can read Chinese newspapers.
- 我can read Chinese newspapers now.

This pattern is used to indicate that something is becoming more and more adjectival verb (AV), stative verb (SV), or modal verb (MV) over time.

Sentence final -了 le can optionally occur with this pattern to emphasize the sense of change that the pattern conveys.

‘more and more’ adjectival verb

- 东西越来越贵(了)。
- Dōngxī yuè lái yuè guì (le).
- Things are getting more and more expensive.
- 天气越来越冷(了)。
- Tiānqì yuè lái yuè lěng (le).
- The weather is getting colder and colder.

‘more and more’ stative verb

- 他长大了，越来越懂事(了)。
- Tā zhǎng dà le, yuè lái yuè dōng shì (le).
- He has grown up. More and more he knows how to behave.
Indicating change over time

中国的生活，我越来越习惯了。
中国的生活，我越来越习惯了。
Zhîngguó de shènghuó, wô yuè lái yuè xíguàn le.
(As for) Life in China, I am getting used to it.

‘more and more’ modal verb

你越来越会做饭(了)。
你越来越会做饭(了)。
Nǐ yuè lái yuè huì zuò fàn (le).
You are getting better and better at cooking.

他们越来越会说中文(了)。
他們越來越會說中文(了)。
Tâmen yuè lái yuè huì shuō Zhîngwén (le).
They are getting more and more proficient in speaking Chinese.

越来越 yuè lái yuè can be used to express negative situations.

我越来越不喜欢他了。
我越來越不喜歡他了。
Wô yuè lái yuè bù xîhuàn tâ le.
I dislike him more and more.

他们家越来越没有钱了。
他們家越來越沒有錢了。
Tâmen jiâ yuè lái yuè méi yǒu qián le.
Their family has less and less money.

34.3 Indicating change caused by changing events

To indicate that one change causes another change, say:

越 VP 越 AV/SV/MV
yuè VP yuè AV/SV/MV
the more VP the more AV/SV/MV

越 yuè VP 越 yuè adjectival verb

我越吃冰淇淋越胖。
Wô yuè chî bîngqîlîn yuè pàng.
The more I eat ice cream, the fatter I get.

越 yuè VP 越 yuè stative verb

我越吃豆腐，越喜欢吃。
我越吃豆腐，越喜歡吃。
Wô yuè chî dîufû, yuè xîhuàn chí.
The more I eat beancurd, the more I like to eat it.

越 yuè VP 越 yuè modal verb

我越学中文越会说中国话。
我越學中文越會說中國話。
wô yuè xué Zhîngwén yuè huì shuō Zhîngguó huà.
The more I study Chinese the more I am able to speak Chinese.
Note that this pattern indicates both change and result.

10.9, 12.6.4

### 34.4 Nouns and verbs that express change

#### Noun

变化/变化 biànhuà ‘a change’

- 最近十年来，北京变化很大。
- 最近十年来，北京變化很大。

 Zuìjìn shínián lái, Běijīng biànhuà hěn dà.
In the past ten years, Beijing has had a lot of changes.
(In the past ten years, Beijing’s changes have been big.)

这附近没有什么变化。

Zhe fujin méi yǒu shénme biànhuà.
The area around here hasn’t had much change.

#### Verbs

变/變 biàn ‘to change’ [does not take an object]

- 情况变了。
- 情況變了。

Qíngkuàng biàn le.
The circumstances have changed.

换 huàn ‘to change (something)’ [takes an object]

- 这句话不容易懂，请你换一个说法。
- 這句話不容易懂，請你換一個說法。

Zhè jù huà bù róngrén dǒng, qǐng nǐ huàn yǐ gē shǔōfa.
This sentence is difficult to understand. Please put it another way.

成 chéng ‘to change into (something), to turn into (something), to become (something)’ [takes an object]

- 他成了一个很有名的人了。
- 他成了一個很有名的人了。

Tā chéng le yǐ gē hěn yǒu míng de rén le.
He has become a very famous person.

Some common expressions with 成 chéng:

- 成名 chéng míng become famous
- 成年 chéng nián grow up, become an adult; to come of age

改变/改變 gāibiàn ‘to change’ [does not take an object]

- 他的样子改变了。
- 他的樣子改變了。

Tā de yǎngzi gāibiàn le.
His appearance has changed.
Nouns and verbs that express change

变成/變成 biànhéng ‘to turn into (something), to change into (something)’ [takes an object]

你覺得壞人能變成好人嗎？
你覺得壞人能變成好人嗎？
Nǐ juédé huài rén néng biànhéng hǎorén ma?
Do you think that bad people can turn into good people?

成为/成為 chéngwéi ‘to become (something), to turn into (something)’ [takes an object]

他成为一个科学家了。
他成為一個科學家了。
Tā chéngwéi yī gè kē xué jiā le.
He became a scientist.

改 gāi ‘to change (something), to reform (something), to correct (something)’ [takes an object]

请你帮我改我的文章。
请你幫我改我的文章。
Qǐng nǐ bāng wǒ gāi wǒ de wén zhāng.
Please help me correct my essay.

改 gāi is also used as the first part of the following verbs:

改写/改寫 gáixiě ‘to rewrite’

这本书，我已经改写三次了。你还不满意吗？
這本書，我已經改寫三次了。你還滿意嗎？
Zhè běn shū, wǒ yǐjīng gáixiě sāncì le. Nǐ hái bù mǎnyì ma?
I've rewritten this book three times. Are you still not satisfied?

改正 gáizhèng ‘to correct, to rectify’

请你改正我的错误。
請你改正我的錯誤。
Qǐng nǐ gáizhèng wǒ de cuò wù.
Please correct my mistakes.

改造 gāizào ‘to remodel, to reform’ [this expression has political overtones]

你的思想意识太旧，真应该改造改造。
你的思想意識太舊，真應該改造改造。
Nǐ de xíng xiǎo yì shí tài jiù, zhēn yǐnggāi gāizào gāizào.
Your ideological awareness is out of date and needs to be reformed.

改善 gāishàn ‘to improve’

政府应该设法改善人民的生活。
政府應該設法改善人民的生活。
Zhěngfǔ yěnggāi shèfǎ gāishàn rénmín de shēng huó.
(The) Government should think of ways to improve people’s livelihood.
改良 gǎiliáng ‘to improve’

中国帮助非洲国家改良农业。
Zhōngguó bāngzhù Fēizhōu guójiā gǎiliáng nóngyè.
China has helped African nations improve their agriculture.

改换(成)/改换(成) gāihuàn (chéng) ‘to change (something); ‘to exchange for some equivalent item’

现在朝代已经改换了。
Xiànzài cháodài yìjīng gāihuàn le.
The dynasty has changed (to another dynasty).

改进/改進 gǎijīn ‘to improve’

我们的税收制度，仍得改进。
Wǒmen de shuìshòu zhìdù, réng děi gǎijīn.
Our tax system still needs to be improved.
Talking about duration and frequency

When we talk about duration, we can specify the length of an action (‘we walked for an hour’), or we can focus on the ongoing duration of the action without reference to its length (‘while we were walking, it started to rain’). When we talk about frequency we indicate how often an action occurs. This chapter will show you how to express both duration and frequency in Mandarin.

### 35.1 Specifying the length of an action with a duration phrase

Duration phrases can be used to indicate how long an action occurs. To indicate the duration of an action, follow the verb with a time phrase:

\[ \text{subject + verb + duration} \]

Only open-ended actions have duration. Open-ended actions include 买 (mǎi) ‘to shop,’ 学 (xué) ‘to study,’ 看 (kàn) ‘to look at,’ ‘to watch,’ ‘to read,’ 吃 (chī) ‘to eat,’ 睡 (shuì) ‘to sleep,’ 唱 (chàng) ‘to sing,’ 洗 (xǐ) ‘to wash,’ etc.

#### 35.1.1 Indicating duration when there is no object noun phrase

When the action verb does not have an object noun phrase, the duration phrase simply follows the verb. If the verb is suffixed with 了 (le), the duration phrase follows verb - 了 (le).

我想在中国住一年。
我想在中国住一年。

Wǒ xiǎng zài Zhōngguó zhù yīnián.
I plan to live in China for a year.

他病了三天。
Tā bìng le sān tiān.
He was sick for three days.
Indicating duration when the verb takes an object

When the verb takes an object noun phrase, duration may be indicated using the following sentence patterns. In all of these patterns, the verb is followed by its object or by a duration phrase. A single verb is never followed directly by both an object and a duration phrase, with one exception. If the object is a pronoun, the pronoun may occur after the verb and before the duration phrase.

我等了他三个小时了。  
我等了他三個小時了。  
Wǒ děng le tā sān gè xiǎoshí le.  
I've been waiting for him for three hours.

**Pattern 1: verb + object verb + duration**

The verb occurs twice in the verb phrase. First it is followed by the object, then it is followed by the duration phrase.

*Say this*  
I often read books for four hours.  

*Not this*  
I read books for four hours.

Every night I read (books) for four hours.

If the sentence refers to a past event, the second occurrence of the verb is followed by 了 le.

我有时看了八个小时。  
我時覺睡了八個鐘頭。  
Wǒ shíchí jiào shū le bā gè zhōngtóu.  
I slept for eight hours.

我等他等了三个小时。  
Wǒ děng tā děng le sān gè xiǎoshí.  
I waited for him for three hours.

**Pattern 2: verb + object 有 yǒu + duration**

The verb and its object are stated first, followed by 有 yǒu and the duration phase. 有 yǒu is not directly followed by 了 le, though sentence final -了 le may occur at the end of the sentence.

我等王明有三个小时了。  
Wǒ děng Wáng Míng yǒu sān gè xiǎoshí le.  
I have been waiting for Wang Ming for three hours.

**Pattern 3: verb + duration 的 de object noun phrase**

The duration phrase plus 的 de occurs immediately before the object noun phrase. This pattern cannot be used when the object noun phrase is a pronoun.
Specifying the length of an action with a duration phrase

I studied Chinese for two years.
I slept for eight hours.

The object noun phrase may occur at the beginning of the sentence, before the subject, as a topic. The verb is then directly followed by the duration phrase. This pattern cannot be used when the object noun phrase is a pronoun or a default object.

This problem, I have already thought about (it) for a long time.
Chinese, I've already studied (it) for four years.
Chinese, at the very least I will study (it) for two years.

Note the difference between phrases that indicate duration and those that indicate time when.

Time phrases that indicate the duration of a situation always occur after the verb.
I studied for two hours.

Time phrases that indicate the time when a situation takes place always occur before the verb:
TALKING ABOUT DURATION AND FREQUENCY

A sentence may include a ‘time when’ phrase and a duration phrase.

Wò zuótiān xué le Zhōngwén.
I studied Chinese yesterday.

35.1.4 Indicating how long it has been that something has not occurred

In Mandarin, only situations that occur can be described in terms of their duration. If a situation does not occur, the duration pattern cannot be used to describe it. To indicate the length of time that something has not occurred, put the time phrase before the [prepositional phrase +] verb or verb phrase.

Wò liǎng tiān méi shuì jiào.
I haven’t slept for two days.

Tā sān nián méi yǒu chōu yān.
He hasn’t smoked for three years.

35.2 Emphasizing ongoing duration

35.2.1 Emphasizing the ongoing duration of an action

To emphasize the ongoing duration of an action without specifying the length of the duration, follow the verb with the suffix 着/著 zhe. To indicate that an action is ongoing at the moment of speaking, 在 zài or 正在 zhèngzài may also precede the verb. 呢 ne may occur at the end of the sentence.

Tā zài shuōzhe huà ne.
He is speaking.

Tā zhèngzài chīzhè zhǎofàn ne.
She is eating breakfast right now.

在 zài before the verb may also mark duration without the verb suffix 着/著 zhe.

Tā zài shuō huà ne.
He is speaking.
Emphasizing ongoing duration

We are eating right now. (We are right in the middle of eating.)

The duration suffix 着/著 zhe is often used with verbs that refer to the placement or location of an object.

There are a lot of people standing in the street.

There are a lot of people sitting on the bus.

This use of 着/著 zhe is similar to the use of the present progressive verb suffix ‘-ing’ in English in its focus on ongoing actions. However, 着/著 zhe and ‘-ing’ are not always equivalent. For example, 着/著 zhe can be used in Mandarin to emphasize the duration of an adjectival verb. The English equivalent does not typically use ‘-ing.’

Her face is red. (Not ‘Her face is being red.’)

The soup is hot. (Not ‘The soup is being hot.’)

In Mandarin, 着/著 zhe may also be suffixed to certain verbs in commands. The English equivalent does not ordinarily involve verb ‘-ing.’

Názhe! Hold it!/Take it!
Jízhe! Remember!
Děngzhe! Wait!
Zuòzhe! Sit!

To emphasize the ongoing duration of a situation or state, use the adverb 还/還 hái before the [prepositional phrase +] verb or verb phrase. In affirmative sentences and questions, this use of 还/還 hái can often be translated into English with the word ‘still.’
TALKING ABOUT DURATION AND FREQUENCY

15.2.3, 36.2

35.3

Indicating the ongoing duration of a background event

When two events occur at the same time, we sometimes consider one event to be the main event and the other to be the background event. To signal that a background event is ongoing as the main event occurs, follow the verb of the background event with the verb suffix 着 zhe.

Wǒmen hēzhē kāfēi tán huà.  
We talked while drinking coffee. (‘drinking coffee’ is the background event.)

Tā kànzhē diànsī chī záofàn.  
He eats breakfast while watching television. (‘watching television’ is the background event.)

To indicate that an event is a background event without focusing on its duration, use 的时候 de shíhou ‘when, while.’

Wǒ zài Zhōngguó de shíhou rènshì tā le.  
While I was in China I met him.
### 35.4 Indicating frequency

#### 35.4.1 Words used to indicate frequency

The classifiers 次 ci ‘number of times’ and 遍 biàn ‘a time’ are used to indicate frequency. They are always preceded by a number or the question words 几几 jǐ or 多少 duōshào ‘how many.’ 次 ci can be used to refer to the frequency of any kind of action. 遍 biàn is more restricted in its use and refers only to actions that have been performed from beginning to end.

#### 35.4.2 The grammar of the frequency expression

To indicate the frequency of an action, follow the action verb with the phrase 数十 cì ‘number of times.’ If the verb is suffixed with suffix 了 le or 过/過 guo, the frequency phrase occurs after the verb suffix.

I already said it three times, how can you still not understand?

A verb may be followed by both a frequency expression and an object. The frequency expression always precedes the object.

There are several ways to indicate frequency.

**Pattern 1: verb + object, verb + frequency**

If the verb takes an object, the verb may be repeated, once followed by the object, and once followed by the frequency expression.

Last year I rode airplanes three times.

**Pattern 2: verb + frequency + object noun phrase**

The frequency expression can occur between the verb and its object.

She’s ridden on a plane once.

**Pattern 3: object noun phrase, verb + frequency**

If the verb takes an object, the object may be topicalized, and presented first in the sentence:
That movie, I have seen it twice.

那个电影，我看过两次。

Nàge diànyīng, wǒ kàn guó liǎng cì.

Xi’an, I’ve been there once.

Xī’ān, wǒ qù guó yī cì.
Expressing additional information

Mandarin uses the following expressions to provide additional information.

### 36.1 也 yě ‘also’

也 yě is an adverb and is always followed by a [prepositional phrase +] verb or verb phrase.

也 yě can be used to introduce additional information about the subject of the sentence.

张美丽学英文。她也学日文。

Zhāng Měilì xué Yīngwén. Tā yě xué Rìwén.

Zhang Meili studies English. She also studies Japanese.

也 yě can be used to indicate that two different subjects share similar characteristics or perform the same action.

张美丽很高。她妹妹也很高。

Zhāng Měilì hěn gāo. Tā mèimei yě hěn gāo.

Zhang Meili is very tall. Her younger sister is also very tall.

### 36.2 还/還 hái ‘in addition, also’

还/還 hái is an adverb and is always followed by a [prepositional phrase +] verb or verb phrase. 还/還 hái overlaps in meaning with 也 yě, but they are not identical in function. 也 yě introduces any kind of new information. 还/還 hái only introduces new actions or situations.
EXPRESSING ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

**36.3 还有 / 還有 ** **hái yǒu 'in addition'**

还有/還有 hái yǒu begins a new sentence or clause. It introduces additional information related to the topic of the conversation.

不要忘记我们明天考试。还有，可以用字典。

别忘了明天考试。还有，可以用字典。

bie wàng le míntiān kǎo shì. Hái yǒu, kéyǐ yòng zìdīn.

Don’t forget we have a test tomorrow. In addition, you can use a dictionary.

**36.4 并且 / 並且 ** **bìngqǐè ‘moreover’**

并且/並且 bìngqǐè begins a new sentence and provides additional information to support a preceding statement.

我觉得那个电影的故事没有意思。并且，太长。

我觉得那个电影的故事没有意思。並且，太長。

Wǒ juéde nàge diànyǐng de gùshī méi yǒu yìsi. Bìngqǐè, tài cháng.

I think that movie’s story wasn’t interesting. Moreover, it was too long.

**36.5 再说 / 再說 ** **zài shuō ‘besides, moreover, to put it another way’**

再说 zài shuō begins a new sentence and presents information that continues and clarifies information presented in the preceding sentence.

我们很喜欢去中国旅行。再说在那儿也可以练习说中文。

我們很喜歡去中國旅行。再說在那兒也可以練習說中文。


We like to go to China to travel. Moreover, we can practice speaking Chinese there.
36.6 而 ér ‘and, but’

而 ér joins adjectival verbs and introduces additional though contrasting information. It is literary in usage.

办奥运是一个艰辛而光荣的任务。
辨奥运是一個艱辛而光榮的任務。
Bàn ào yùn shì yì gè jiǎnxìng ér guāngróng de rènwù.
Organizing the Olympics is a difficult but prestigious responsibility.

36.7 和 hé and 跟 gēn ‘and’

和 hé and 跟 gēn are conjunctions, and they are identical in meaning. They join nouns or noun phrases.

哥哥和弟弟都很像爸爸。
Gēge hé didì dōu hěn xiàng bàba.
Older brother and younger brother both resemble dad.

For more on these and related conjunctions, see 16.1

跟 gēn is also a preposition.

36.8 不但 ... 而且 ... búdàn ... érqìè ... ‘not only ... but also ...’

This expression introduces related information about a subject. 不但 búdàn and 而且 érqìè are always followed by a [prepositional phrase +] verb or verb phrase or clause.

那个饭馆，不但菜好吃，而且服务也很好。
那个飯館，不但菜好吃，而且服務也很好。
Nàge fànguǎn, búdàn cài hǎo chī, érqìè fúwù yě hěn hǎo.
(As for) that restaurant, not only is the food good, but so is the service.
(lit. ‘That restaurant, not only is the food good, but the service is also good.’)

不但 búdàn can occur without 而且 érqìè. In the following examples, it occurs with the adverbs 还/hái and 也/yě.

哈佛大学不但录取了他，还给了他一笔很大的奖学金。
哈佛大學不但錄取了他，還給了他一筆很大的獎學金。
Háfó dàxué búdàn lùqǔ le tā, hái gěi le tā yī bǐ hěn dà de jiǎngxuéjīn.
Harvard University not only admitted him but also gave him a big scholarship.

那个饭馆，不但菜好吃，服务也很好。
那個飯館，不但菜好吃，服務也很好。
Nàge fànguǎn, búdàn cài hǎo chī, fúwù yě hěn hǎo.
(As for) that restaurant, not only is the food good, so is the service.


**EXPRESSING ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### 36.9 又 ... 又 ... *yòu ... yòu* ‘both ... and ...’

This expression is used to indicate two similar properties about a subject. Each instance of *yòu* must be followed by an adjectival verb.

- 中国梨，又甜又脆，特别好吃。
- Zhōngguó lí, yòu tián yòu cuì, tèbié hǎo chī.

*Chinese pears (are) both sweet and crisp. (They are) especially delicious.*

### 36.10 除了 ... 以外 *chúle ... yìwài* ‘besides ...’

This expression can be used to introduce additional information or it can be used to introduce an exception. When it introduces additional information, the additional information is always related in meaning to the phrase that occurs between 除了 *chúle* and 以外 *yìwài*.

The phrase that occurs between 除了 *chúle* and 以外 *yìwài* can be a subject noun phrase, an object noun phrase, or a time phrase.

**Subject noun phrase**

除了妹妹以外，弟弟也想去中国留学。
- Chúle mèimei yìwài, dìdi yě xiǎng qù Zhōngguó liúxué.

Besides younger sister, *younger brother also wants to go to China to study.*

**Object noun phrase**

除了中国以外，弟弟也想去越南旅行。
- Chúle Zhōngguó yìwài, dìdi yě xiǎng qù Yuènán lǚxíng.

Besides China, *younger brother also wants to go to Vietnam to travel.*

**Time phrase**

除了夏天以外，我们冬天也放假。
- Chúle xiàtián yìwài, wǒmen dōngtiān yě fàng jià.

Besides the summer, we also have (a) vacation in the *winter*.

除了 *chúle* and 以外 *yìwài* need not both occur in the same sentence. One or the other may be omitted.

除了中国，弟弟也想去越南旅行。
- Chúle Zhōngguó, dìdi yě xiǎng qù Yuènán lǚxíng.

Besides China, *younger brother also wants to go to Vietnam to travel.*
Besides younger sister, younger brother also wants to go to China to study.

另外 lingwài ‘in addition,’ ‘(an)other’

lingwài functions as an adverb, occurring before the verb phrase to indicate an additional action:

她买了裙子，另外(也)买了毛衣。

She bought a skirt, and in addition also bought a sweater.

It can also occur before a number + classifier phrase + noun to indicate ‘another’ (number of nouns).

那是另外一种方法。

That is another method.

我还有另外几个问题。

I still have several other questions.
37

Expressing contrast

37.1

Expressing contrast with paired connecting words

Mandarin uses the following paired connecting words to express contrast.

- 虽然...可是 or 虽然...但是 or 虽然...不过
- 雖然...可是 雖然...但是 雖然...不過
- suīrán . . . kěshì suīrán . . . dānshì suīrán . . . búguò
- although . . . but although . . . however

可是 kěshì and 但是 dānshì are identical in meaning and are interchangeable. 不过/ 不過 búguò conveys a slightly stronger sense of contrariety to expectation.

The Chinese connecting words occur at the beginning of their clauses or right before the predicate. Both members of the pair can occur in the same sentence. Although English permits only a single contrast connector in a sentence, in order to best illustrate the usage of the Mandarin words, the English translations in this section translate each connector in the Mandarin sentences.

- Suīrán tā shì Zhōngguó rén, kěshì tā hái xīhuàn chī Ribĕn cài.
  Although he is Chinese, but he still likes to eat Japanese food.
- Suīrán tā shì Zhōngguó rén, dānshì tā méi qùguó Běijīng.
  Although he is Chinese, but he has never been to Beijing.
- Suīrán tā hén yǒu qián, kěshì wǒ hái bù yuàn yì jiàgē tā.
  Although he has a lot of money, but I’m still not willing to marry him.

37.1.1

The placement of connecting words

If the subjects of the two clauses are identical in reference and the second one is not omitted, 虽然/雖然 suīrán typically occurs before the subject.

- Suīrán wǒ gēge yǐjīng sānshí suī le, dānshì tā hái méi jiēhūn.
  Although my older brother is already 30 years old, but he still hasn’t married.
When subjects of the two clauses in contrast sentences are identical in reference, the second one is sometimes omitted. When this is the case, the connecting word 虽然/虽然 suīrán typically occurs after the subject of the first clause.

Although my older brother is already 30 years old but (he) still hasn’t married.

37.1.2 Relative order of the clauses in contrast sentences

The position of the clauses is fixed. The 虽然/虽然 suīrán clause comes first. The 可是 kěshì, 但是 dànshì, or 不过/búguò clause comes second.

Say this: 虽然他认识很多人，
可是他没有很好的朋友。

Not this: (可是)他没有很好的朋友，
虽然他认识很多人。

Suīrán tā rènshi hén duō rén,
kěshì tā méiyǒu hén hào
de péngyou.
Although he knows a lot of people he doesn’t have any very good friends.

Suīrán tā hén xiǎo búguò tā
dánzì hén dà.
Although he is little he is very brave
his courage is big.

37.1.3 Omission of the connecting words

虽然/虽然 suīrán can be freely omitted:

他很有钱，可是我还不愿意嫁给他。
He has a lot of money, but I’m still not willing to marry him.

Suīrán tā hén yǒu qián, kěshì wǒ hái bù yuàn yì jiàgē tā.

可是 kěshì, 但是 dànshì, or 不过/búguò can be omitted when the second clause contains the adverb 还/hái or an adverb that indicates contrast. Adverbs that indicate contrast are presented in 37.2.

He has a lot of money, but I’m still not willing to marry him.

Tā hén yǒu qián, kěshì wǒ hái bù yuàn yì jiàgē tā.

Although he has a lot of money, I’m still not willing to marry him.
Adverbs that indicate contrast

37.2 Adverbs that must occur before the [prepositional phrase +] verb or verb phrase

即 què ‘in contrast’

即 què may occur with other contrast connectors.

Suīrán tā hěn yǒu qián, kěshì wǒ què bù yuàn yì jiàgěi tā. Although he is rich, I am not willing to marry him.

他很有錢，我卻不願意嫁給他。

Tā hěn yǒuqián, wǒ què bù yuàn yì jiàgěi tā. He is rich but I am still not willing to marry him.

倒似 dàoshì ‘contrary to one’s expectations’

Fángzǐ bù dà, bǔzhì de dàoshì hěn jiāngjiǔ. The house isn’t big, but it is fixed up really nicely.

Contrast adverbs that can occur at the beginning of a sentence or before a verb or very phrase

不过/不過 búguò ‘however, nevertheless’

Zhōngguó zì hěn nán xiě, búguò wénfǎ bìjiāo jiāndān. Chinese characters are very difficult to write, but the grammar is relatively easy.

Chī Sichuán cài kěyí, búguò bù néng tài là. It is okay (with me) to eat Sichuan food, but it can’t be too hot.

然而 rán’ér ‘however, nevertheless’

Tā suīrán méi kǎoshāng dàxué, rán’ér tā bìng bù huíxīn. Although he didn’t pass the college entrance exam, he did not lose heart.

Tā xiǎo de shíhòu tǐyuè duō bìng, rán’ér zhǎng dà hòu què fēicháng qiáng zhǔàng. When he was young he was weak and sickly, but after he grew up he was extremely strong.
Qualifying a statement with an adjectival verb or stative verb

37.3

反而言 fān’ér ‘on the contrary, in contrast’

难的字他都记住了，容易的反而忘了。
难的字他都记住了，容易的反而忘了。
Nán de zì tā dōu jìzhù le, róngyì de fān’ér wàng le.
He remembers all of the difficult characters; the easy characters he forgets.

你不但不帮我忙，反而批评我。
你不但不帮我忙，反而批评我。
Nǐ bùdàn bù bāng wǒ mánɡ, fān’ér pīpínɡ wǒ.
Not only don’t you help me, but on the contrary you criticize me.

反过来 fānguólái ‘conversely’

有的认为学数学快的人学语言也快，反过来也一样。
有的认为学数学快的人学语言也快，反过来也一样。
Yǒu de rén rènwéi xué shǔxué kuài de rén xué yǔyánxué yě kuài, fānguólái yě yǐyǎnɡ.
Some people think that people who learn math quickly also learn linguistics quickly. The converse is also true. (The converse is the same.)

你们是好朋友，看到他做错了就应该跟他说。反过来，如果不跟他说就不是真正的朋友了。
你们是好朋友，看到他做错了就应该跟他说。反过来，如果不跟他说就不是真正的朋友了。
Nǐmen shì hǎo péngyǒu, kàn dào tā zuòcuò le jiù yīnggǎi gēn tā shuō.
Fānguólái, rúguǒ bù gěn tā shuō jiù bù shì zhēnzhèng de péngyǒu le.
You are good friends. When you see him do something wrong you should speak with him. Conversely, if you don’t speak with him, you are not a real friend.

37.3 Qualifying a statement with an adjectival verb or stative verb

To qualify a statement involving an adjectival verb or stative verb, use this pattern:

AV/SV 是 shì AV/SV, 可是 kěshì . . .

但是 dànshì
不过/不过 bùguó
就是 jiù shì

AV/SV ‘all right, but . . .’

那个电影好看是好看，就是太长。(AV)
那个电影好看是好看，就是太长。
Nàge diànyǐnghǎo shì hǎo, jiù shì tài chánɡ.
That movie is good all right but it is too long.

那个女孩子好看是好看，就是太瘦。(AV)
那个女孩子好看是好看，就是太瘦。
Nàge nǚ háizi hǎo kàn shì hǎo kàn, jiù shì tài shòu.
That girl is pretty all right, but she is too thin.

我喜欢是喜欢他，就是他有一点太无聊。(SV)
我喜欢是喜欢他，就是他有一点太无聊。
Wǒ xǐhuān shì xǐhuān tā, jiùshì tā yǒu yīdiǎn tài wúliáo.
I like him all right, he’s just a little boring.
Expressing sequence

38

Expressing the relationship ‘before’

38.1

The structure of the 以前 yìqián ‘before’ sentence

以前 yìqián is used to indicate the relationship ‘before one event occurs, another event occurs.’

event₁ 以前 yìqián, event₂
before event₁, event₂

我上大学以前，想去澳大利亚旅游。
我上大学以前，想去澳大利亚旅游。
Wǒ shàng dà xué yìqián, xiǎng qù Àódàliyà lǚyóu.
Before I attend university, I want to go to Australia to travel.

妈妈上班以前，都吃早饭。
妈妈上班以前，都吃早饭。
Māmā shàng bān yìqián, dōu chī zǎofàn.
Before mom goes to work, she always eats breakfast.

To indicate that a sequence occurred in the past, follow the verb of the second clause with the verb suffix – 了 le.

我来中国以前，在日本住了一年。
我来中國以前，在日本住了 一年。
Wǒ lái Zhōngguó yìqián, zài Rìběn zhù le yīnián.
Before I came to China, I lived in Japan for a year.

NOTE

The more literary form of 以前 yìqián is 之前 zhīqián.

38.1.2

Comparing 以前 yìqián with ‘before’

以前 yìqián signals the same relationship of sequence as the English word ‘before.’ However, there are important differences between 以前 yìqián and ‘before.’

- 以前 yìqián occurs at the end of the first clause:

  妈妈上班以前
  Māmā shàng bān yìqián
Expressing the relationship ‘after’ in a single sentence

Before occurs at the beginning of the first clause:

*before* mom goes to work

- In Mandarin, the clause that ends with *以前* 前 must come first in the sentence. In English, the order of the clauses in the ‘before’ sentence is not fixed. Either can come first in the sentence. Compare the following sentences.

**Good English**

Before mom went to work
she ate breakfast.

**Good Mandarin**

妈去上班之前吃早餐。

**Bad Mandarin**

妈上班前吃了早餐。

Mama shàng bàn yǐqián chī le zǎofàn.

**Good English**

Mom ate breakfast *before*
she went to work.

**Bad Mandarin**

妈吃了早餐上班前。

妈去上班前吃早餐。

Māma chī le zǎo fàn shàng bàn yǐqián.

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Expressing the relationship ‘after’ in a single sentence

In Mandarin, the relationship of ‘after’ is expressed using some combination of the word *以后* 後, the verb suffix *了* le, and adverbs, usually 就 jiù or 才 cái.

These markers of sequence can occur together in a single sentence to express the relationship of sequence, or they can occur independently.

Native speakers of Mandarin differ in their preference for the use of these markers of sequence.

6.9, 33.2, 38.2.2

**38.2.1 Indicating sequence with 以后/以後 yiḥòu ‘after’**

以後/以後 yiḥòu ‘after’ is used to express the following relationship: ‘after an event occurs, another event occurs.’

event₁, 以後/以後 yiḥòu, event₂

*After* we eat, we will go to a movie.

我们吃了饭以后，就去看电影。

Wǒmen chī le fàn yǐḥòu, jiù qù kàn diànyǐng.

*After* I get out of class, I go home.

我下了课以后，就回家。

Wǒ xià le kè yǐḥòu, jiù huí jiā.

After the children go to sleep, the parents watch television.

Háizi shuì le jiào yǐḥòu, fùmǔ jiù kàn diànbì.

*After* we eat, we will go to a movie.

我们吃了饭以后，就去看电影。

Wǒmen chī le fàn yǐḥòu, jiù qù kàn diànyǐng.

*After* I get out of class, I go home.

我下了课以后，就回家。

Wǒ xià le kè yǐḥòu, jiù huí jiā.

*After* the children go to sleep, the parents watch television.

Háizi shuì le jiào yǐḥòu, fùmǔ jiù kàn diànbì.
To signal that a sequence occurred in the past, follow the verb of the second clause with 了 le. If the verb takes a one-syllable object, 了 le may also follow the object.

他吃了饭以后就看了电视。
他吃了飯以後就看了電視。

Tā chī le fàn yǐhòu jiù kàn le diànhì.
After he ate he watched television.

他吃了饭以后就睡了。
他吃了飯以後就睡了。

Tā chī le fàn yǐhòu jiù shuì jiào le.
After he ate he went to sleep.

以后/以後 yǐhòu signals the same relationship of sequence as the English word ‘after.’ However, there are important differences between 以后/以後 yǐhòu and ‘after.’

- 以后/以後 yǐhòu occurs at the end of the first clause:
  我下了課以后
  我下了課以後
  wǒ xià le kè yǐhòu

  After occurs at the beginning of the clause:
  after I get out of class

- In Mandarin, the clause that ends with 以后/以後 yǐhòu must come first in the sentence. In English, the order of the clauses in the ‘after’ sentence is not fixed. Either can come first in the sentence. Compare the following sentences.

  Good English
  After I get out of class I go home.

  Good Mandarin
  我下了課以後回家。

  Wǒ xià le kè yǐhòu huí jiā.

  Good English
  I go home after I get out of class.

  Bad Mandarin
  *我回家下了課以後。

  Wǒ huí jiā xià le kè yǐhòu.

NOTE

The more literary form of 以后/以後 yǐhòu is 之后/之後 zhīhòu.

9.6

Adverbs that occur in sequence sentences

38.2.2.1 就 jiù

The adverb 就 jiù has several functions. One function is to signal a relationship of sequence between events that occur in a series. The relationship of sequence indicated by 就 jiù reinforces the meaning of sequence indicated by 以后/以後 yǐhòu. Therefore, 就 jiù often occurs with 以后/以後 yǐhòu in sequence sentences.
Expressing the relationship ‘after’ in a single sentence

I studied Chinese history and I wanted to go to China.

The meaning of 就 jiù is related to the meaning of 以后 yihou, but the two words are independent. 就 jiù may occur without 以后 yihou, and 以后 yihou may occur without 就 jiù.

The following two sentences, one with 就 jiù and the other with 以后 yihou, are equivalent in meaning. Compare them to the sentence above in which 就 jiù and 以后 yihou both occur.

Í 15.2.6

Pay attention to the difference between the adverbs 才 cái and 就 jiù in the following sentences. Since 就 jiù indicates simple sequence, it is used much more frequently than 才 cái. For many speakers of Mandarin, a verb phrase with 才 cái cannot include了 le.

才 cái
他吃了药就好了。
他吃了藥就好了。
Tā chī le yào cái hǎo le.
After he ate the medicine he recovered.

就 jiù
他吃了药就好了。
他吃了藥就好了。
Tā chī le yào jiù hǎo le.
After he ate the medicine he recovered.
### EXPRESSING SEQUENCE

#### 38.2

**進 jiù**

他开了空调就舒服了。

他開了空調就舒服了。

*Tā kāi le kōngtiáo jiù shūfu le.*

**才 cái**

他开了空调才舒服。

他開了空調才舒服。

*Tā kāi le kōngtiáo cái shūfu.*

**他每天下了班就回家。**

**他每天下了班就回家。**

**他每天下了班就回家。**

**Every day after he gets out of work he goes home.**

**Only after he turned on the air conditioner was he comfortable.**

(He turned on the air conditioner and only then was comfortable.)

#### 38.2.3

**便 biàn**

*p* 便 *biàn*, like 进 *jiù*, is used to reinforce a relationship of sequence between two events.

*After he turned on the air conditioner he was comfortable.*

*After he turned on the air conditioner he was comfortable.*

### Indicating sequence with the verb suffix 了 *le*

Like the adverbs 进 *jiù*, 才 *cái*, and 便 *biàn*, the verb suffix 了 *le* can be used to signal a relationship of sequence between two events. 了 *le* is optional, but when it occurs, it normally follows the first verb in a series of verb phrases. Notice that 进 *jiù* or 才 *cái* often occurs with 了 *le* and 以后 *jiùhòu* in sequence sentences that indicate the relationship ‘after.’

*Only after I finish my homework will I go to sleep.*

(I will finish my homework and only then go to sleep.)

### 33.2

**他每天下了班就回家。**

**他每天下了班就回家。**

**他每天下了班就回家。**

**Every day after he gets out of work he goes home.**

**Every day after he gets out of work he goes home.**

**Every day after he gets out of work he goes home.**
38.2.4 Indicating ‘after’ in a single sentence: a summary of the use of 以后/以後 yihòu, 了 le, and sequence adverbs

- 以后/以後 yihòu, 了 le, and sequence adverbs all signal a sequence of events within a single sentence.
- Sequence sentences can contain any combination of 以后/以後 yihòu, 了 le, and sequence adverbs.
- None of these markers of sequence is obligatory, and native speakers of Mandarin differ in their preferences in using them.
- Events that are related in terms of sequence need not have any of these sequence markers.

我每天下课回家。
我每天下課回家。
Wǒ méitiān xià kè huí jiā.
Every day, after I get out of class I return home.
(Every day I get out of class and return home.)

38.3 Indicating that one event happens first and another event happens afterwards

The following pairs of adverbs are used to indicate that one event happens first and another event happens afterwards. The adverbs always occur before [prepositional phrases +] verb phrases. The order of the adverbs and their following verb phrases is fixed. They are often used when giving instructions and describing processes.

38.3.1 Indicating the relationship ‘first . . . then . . . ’

The following pairs of adverbs are commonly used to indicate the relationship ‘first . . . then . . . ’

先 xiān VP₁, 然后/然後 ránhòu VP₂
first VP₁, then/afterwards VP₂

Nǐ xiān mǎi piào, zài shàng gōnggōng qì chē.
You first buy a ticket, then get on the bus.

Wǒmen děi xiān qu huàn qián, ránhòu zài qù mǎi dòngxi.
We have to first change money and then go shopping.

先 xiān VP₁, 以后/以後 yihòu VP₂
first VP₁, then/afterwards VP₂

Wǒmen xiān chī fǎn, yihòu zài tāolùn nà jiàn shìqing.
We will eat first and discuss this matter afterwards.
38.3.2 Indicating the relationship ‘first . . . only then . . . ’

To indicate that some event occurs ‘only after’ another event, say:

先 xiān VP₁ 才 cái VP₂
first VP₁ only then VP₂
你先买票，才上公共汽车。
You first buy a ticket and only then get on the bus.

38.3.3 Indicating the relationship ‘as soon as . . . then . . . ’

To indicate that some event occurs ‘as soon as’ another event occurs, say:

一 yī VP₁ 就 jiù VP₂
as soon as VP₁ then VP₂
我们一到北京，就去爬长城。
Our arrival in Beijing leads directly to climbing the Great Wall.

NOTE
When yī occurs immediately before a [prepositional phrase +] verb or verb phrase, it always means as soon as. When yī occurs immediately before a classifier, it is always the number ‘one.’

38.4 Indicating ‘afterwards’ in a separate sentence

Mandarin has a number of sentence adverbs, adverbs that occur at the beginning of a sentence, to introduce an event that happens afterwards. The most common are 以后/以後 yǐhòu, 然后/然後 ránhòu, and 后来/後來 hòulái.

以后/以後 yǐhòu ‘afterwards, later’
以后/以後 yǐhòu is the most neutral of the sentence adverbs used to indicate ‘afterwards.’

请先喝点茶吧！以后我们出去吃晚饭。
Drink a little tea first. Afterwards we will go out to eat dinner.

然后/然後 ránhòu ‘afterwards/after that’
然后/然後 ránhòu can only be used to indicate sequence between two events that occur in close temporal sequence to each other.

We saw a movie. Afterwards, we went to a coffee shop and drank coffee.
Comparing 以前 yìqián ‘before’ with 以后/以後 yǐhòu ‘after’

後來/後來 hòulái ‘afterwards’

後來/後來 hòulái can only be used to indicate sequence between two events that have already occurred.

我昨天早上考了中文。後來我回宿舍睡覺了。
我昨天早上考了中文。後來我回宿舍睡覺了。

Wǒ zuòtiān zǎoshang kǎo le Zhōngwén. Hòulái wǒ huí sūshè shuì jiào le.
Yesterday morning I had a Chinese test. Afterwards I went back to the dormitory and went to sleep.

Comparing 以前 yìqián ‘before’ with 以后/以後 yǐhòu ‘after’

In some ways, the uses of 以前 yìqián ‘before’ and 以后/以後 yǐhòu ‘after’ are parallel. Both must occur in the first clause of a sequence sentence, and both words occur at the end of their clause.

However, the words are different in their occurrence with the verb suffix 了 le. The verb suffix 了 le may occur in the 以后/以後 yǐhòu clause but it may not occur in the 以前 yìqián clause. Compare these sentences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Say this</th>
<th>Not this</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wǒ qù Zhōngguó yìqián xué le liǎng nián de Zhōngwén.</td>
<td>Wǒ qù le Zhōngguó yìqián xué le liǎng nián de Zhōngwén.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>走去中国以前学了两年的中文。</td>
<td>走了中国以前学了两年的中文。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>去中国以前学了两年的中文。</td>
<td>去了中国以前学了两年的中文。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>前他考试以前复习了功课。</td>
<td>前他考试了以前复习了功课。</td>
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<td>前他考试了以前复习了功课。</td>
<td>前他考试了以前复习了功课。</td>
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<td>考试了以前复习了功课。</td>
<td>考试了以前复习了功课。</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For many Mandarin speakers, the sequence use of 就 jiù is also not acceptable in 以前 yìqián sentences. For these speakers, if 就 jiù occurs in an 以前 yìqián sentence, it has the sense of ‘only,’ and not of sequence.

Before I went to China I studied only two years of Chinese.

Wǒ qù Zhōngguó yìqián jiù xué le liǎng nián de Zhōngwén. 
Before I went to China I only studied two years of Chinese.
Expressing simultaneous situations

39.1 Indicating that one situation is the background for another situation

To indicate that one situation is the background for another situation, say:

- $S_1$ 的时候 $S_2$ / $S_1$ 的时候 $S_2$
- $S_1$ de shíhou $S_2$
  while, when $S_1$, $S_2$

$S_1$ and $S_2$ can be actions or states.

$S_1$ and $S_2$ are states

- 我小的时候，生活很苦。
- 我小的時候，生活很苦。
  $Wǒ xiǎo de shíhou, shēnghuó hěn kǔ.$
  When I was young, life was very hard (bitter).

$S_1$ and $S_2$ are actions

- 我看书的時候，常听音乐。
- 我看書的時候，常聽音樂。
  $Wǒ kàn shū de shíhou, cháng tīng yīnyuè.$
  When I read, I often listen to music.

的時候/的時候 de shíhou can be used when one situation overlaps with the start of another one.

- 你來的時候，我們正在上課。
- 你來的時候，我們正在上課。
  $Nǐ lái de shíhou, wǒmen zhèngzài shàng kè.$
  When you arrived, we were in class.

However, 的時候/的時候 de shíhou cannot be used when the relationship between $S_1$ and $S_2$ is that of sequence. When $S_1$ and $S_2$ are related in terms of sequence, use 以後/以後 yǐhòu.
Indicating that two actions occur in the same time frame

The events in the following sentence are related in terms of sequence. Therefore, they should be connected by 以后/以後 yihòu ‘after’ and not 的时候/的時候 de shíhou ‘when.’ Notice that in English, ‘when’ can be used with sequential situations or with simultaneous situations.

**Say this**
- 你吃(完)了晚饭以后请给我打电话。
- 你吃(完)了晚饭以後請給我打電話。
- Nǐ chī(wán) le wǎnfàn yíhòu qīng gěi wǒ dà diànhuà.
- After (when) you arrive home, please call me.

**Not this**
- 你吃完了晚饭的时候请给我打电话。
- 你吃完了晚飯的時候請給我打電話。
- Nǐ chīwàn le wǎn fàn de shíhou qīng gěi wǒ dà diànhuà.

### 39.2 Indicating that two actions occur at the same time

#### 39.2.1 Focusing on each action separately

(subject) 一边/邊 VP₁ 一边/邊 VP₂
(subject) yībiān VP₁ yībiān VP₂

**subject** does both VP₁ and VP₂ at the same time

一边/一邊 yībiān must occur before each verb phrase:

- 我儿子一边听音乐，一边作功课。
- 我兒子一邊聽音樂，一邊作功課。
- Wǒ érzi yībiān tīng yīnyuè, yībiān zuò gōngkè.
- My son listens to music and does homework at the same time.

#### 39.2.2 Focusing on the shared time

(subject) 同时/同時 VP₁ VP₂
(subject) tóngshí VP₁ VP₂

**subject** simultaneously does VP₁ and VP₂

同时/同時 tóngshí occurs before the list of actions that occur at the same time:

- 你为什么同时听音乐作功课？
- 你為什麼同時聽音樂作功課？
- Nǐ wèi shénme tóngshí tīng yīnyuè zuò gōngkè?
- Why do you listen to music and do your homework at the same time?

### 39.3 Indicating that two actions occur in the same time frame

To indicate that two actions occur in the same time frame, though not necessarily at the same time, say:

- 又 action VP₁ 又 action VP₂
- yòu VP₁ yòu VP₂
- (subject) does both VP₁ and VP₂
  - 他特別忙，又念書，又做事。
  - Tā tèbié mǎng, yòu niàn shū, yòu zuò shì.
  - He is really busy. He both studies and has a job.
39.4 Describing a subject in terms of two qualities that exist at the same time

(subject) 又 AV/SV₁ 又 AV/SV₂
(subject) 有 AV/SV₁ 有 AV/SV₂
(subject) is both AV/SV₁ and AV/SV₂

那个男的又高又大。
那个男的又高又大。
Nàge nán de yòu gāo yòu dà.
That guy is both tall and big.

39.5 Indicating that a situation is reached at a specific point in time

dào + time phrase/S₁, S₂
when/by that time that time phrase/S₁, S₂

到六月，我就在这儿教了十五年书了。
到六月，我就在这儿教了十五年书了。
Dào liù yuè, wǒ jiù zài zhèr jiào le shíwǔ nián shū le.
In June, I will have been teaching here for fifteen years.

到三月，我就三十岁了。
到三月，我就三十岁了。
Dào sān yuè, wǒ jiù sānshí suì le.
When March comes I will be 30.

dìng /dào + S₁, S₂
when/by that time that S₁, S₂

等你学完这本书，你就学了很多中文了。
等你学完这本书，你就学了很多中文了。
Děng nǐ xuéwán zhè běn shū, nǐ jiù xué le hěn duō Zhōngwén le.
By the time you finish this book, you will have studied a lot of Chinese.

等菜来了我们都饿死了。
等菜来了我们都饿死了。
Děng cài lái le wǒmen dōu è sǐ le.
By the time the food arrived we were all starving to death.

dài /děngdào + S₁, S₂
when/by that time that S₁, S₂

等到你毕业，你的中国话一定会说得很好。
等到你毕业，你的中国话一定会说得很好。
Děngdào nǐ biè, nǐ de Zhōngguó huà yìdìng huì shuō de hěn hǎo.
By the time you graduate, your spoken Chinese will be very good.

等到爸爸回家了，孩子都睡觉了。
等到爸爸回家了，孩子都睡觉了。
Děngdào bàba huí jiā le, háizi dōu shuìjiào le.
By the time that dad returned home, the children were already asleep.
Presenting simultaneous situations

To present two parallel circumstances that exist at the same time and describe the same situation, say:

一方面 $S_1$ 一方面 $S_2$
yī fāngmiàn $S_1$ yī fāngmiàn $S_2$
on the one hand $S_1$, on the other hand $S_2$

她一定考得上大学。一方面她很聪明，一方面她很用功。

Tā yídèng kǎoshì shàng dà xué. Yīfāngmiàn tā hěn cōngmíng, yīfāngmiàn tā hěn yònggōng.
She will certainly pass the college entrance exam. On the one hand, she is very smart, on the other hand, she is very hardworking.

他的体重不会减轻。一方面，他吃得太多，一方面他不愿意运动。

Tā de tǐzhòng bù huì jiǎngqīng. Yīfāngmiàn, tā chī de tài duō, yīfāngmiàn tā bù yuàn yì yùndòng.
He can’t lose weight. On the one hand, he eats too much. On the other hand, he isn’t willing to exercise.
Expressing cause and effect or reason and result

40.1 Expressing cause and effect or reason and result in a single sentence

Mandarin uses the paired connecting words 因为/因為 yīnwei ‘because/since’ . . . 所以 suǒyǐ ‘therefore’ . . . to express cause and effect or reason and result. 因为/因為 yīnwei and 所以 suǒyǐ occur at the beginning of their clauses or right before the predicate. They can occur in the same sentence.

Because he doesn’t have a lot of money, therefore he doesn’t casually buy things.

40.1.1 Omission of subjects in 因为/因為 yīnwei . . . 所以 suǒyǐ . . . sentences

When the subjects of the 因为/因為 yīnwei clause and the 所以 suǒyǐ clause are identical, the subject is often omitted in the second (所以 suǒyǐ) clause. In that case, 因为/因為 yīnwei is usually placed after the subject of the first clause.

Because I have been busy recently, I haven’t called you.

40.1.2 Relative order of the 因为/因為 yīnwei and 所以 suǒyǐ clauses

The position of the 所以 suǒyǐ clause is fixed. It must come second in the sentence, after a clause that introduces the cause.
Introducing the cause or reason

40.1.3 Omission of the connecting words

Although you can include 因为/因為 yīnwei and 所以 suǒyì in the same sentence, it is often possible to have only 因为/因為 yīnwei or only 所以 suǒyì in a cause and effect sentence.

所以 suǒyì and not 因为/因為 yīnwei:

我最近忙，所以没给你打电话。
我最近忙，所以没给你打电话。
Wǒ zuì jìn máng, suǒyì méi gěi nǐ dǎ diànhuà.
I have been busy recently, so I haven’t called you.

因为/因為 yīnwei and not 所以 suǒyì:

他因为病了，没来上课。
他因為病了，沒來上課。
Tā yīnwei bìng le, méi lái shàng kè.
Because he was sick, he didn’t come to class.

40.2 Introducing the cause or reason

The following expressions introduce a cause or reason for some situation.

因为 (noun phrase) 的关系，

因为 (noun phrase) 的關係，

yīnwei (noun phrase) de guānxi，

because of/due to (noun phrase)，
Because of his friend, the price of the car was reduced.

The reason why some people don’t work conscientiously is because they lack a sense of responsibility.

The reason why I am not going to America is that my health isn’t good.

Because of my carelessness, my grade on this exam was not good.

Because he did not understand the situation, he made a big mistake.

The inclusion of 所以 suóyì ‘therefore’, or 因而 yín’ér ‘therefore’, etc., makes the relationship between cause and effect or reason and result clearer.

Because we could not get tickets, we couldn’t get on the train.
Inquiring about cause or reason

由于各自坚持自己的意见，因而无法达成协议。
由於各自堅持自己的意見，因而無法達成協議。

Owing to the fact that everyone held onto his own opinion, there was no way to reach an agreement.

The result may be stated first in the sentence. The reason is then introduced with 由于/由於 yóu yú. 由于/由於 yóu yú must be preceded by 是 shì:

(situation₂) 是由于/由於 (situation₁)
(situation₁) shì yóu yú (situation₁)
situation₂ is because of situation₁,

碰到一点儿困难就退缩，这都是由于你缺乏信心。
碰到一點兒困難就退縮，這都是由於你缺乏信心。

Pèngdào yìdiǎnr kùnnan jiù tuìsuō, zhè dōu shì yóuyú nǐ quèfá xīnxin.
(If) you retreat when you meet a little difficulty, this is because of your lack of confidence.

为了/為了 (noun phrase)
wéi le (noun phrase)
because of/for the sake of (noun phrase)

为了/為了 wéi le can be used to identify some noun phrase as the reason for performing some action.

我这样作，完全是为了你。
我這樣作，完全是為了你。

Wǒ zhèyàng zuò, wánquán shì wéi le nǐ.
My doing this is completely for you. (I’m doing this all for you.)

Introducing the effect or result

In this pattern, 为了/為了 wéi le introduces a desired effect or result.

为了 situation 起见…,
為了 situation 起見…,
wéi le situation qijiàn, ...
in order to, for the purpose of (obtaining the situation)

为了安全起见，绝对禁止司机酒后开车。
為了安全起見，絕對禁止司機酒後開車。

Wéi le ānquán qijiàn, juédì jìnzhì sījì jiǔ hòu kǎi chē.
For the sake of safety, drivers are absolutely forbidden to drink and drive.

Inquiring about cause or reason

To inquire about the cause or reason for something, use the following expressions:

为什么/為甚麼? wèi shénme? ‘why?’
为什么/為甚麼 wèi shénme is the most common and neutral expression used to inquire about the cause or reason for something.
EXPRESSING CAUSE AND EFFECT OR REASON AND RESULT

你昨天为什么没来上课？
你昨天为什么没来上课？
Nǐ zuòtiān wèi shénme méi lái shàng kè？
Why didn’t you come to class yesterday?

你为什么还在这儿？
你为什么还在这儿？
Nǐ wèi shénme hái zài zhèr？
Why are you still here?

怎么？/怎麽？zěnme？‘Why？How come?’
怎么 / 怎麼 zěnme is used to inquire about the reason for something, at the same time conveying surprise or disapproval. It may not require an answer.

他说今天来，怎么没来？
他说今天来，怎麼没来？
Tā shuō jīntiān lái，zěnme méi lái？
He said he was coming today. Why hasn’t he come?

你不说，我怎么知道？
你不说，我怎麼知道？
Nǐ bù shuō，wǒ zěnme zhīdào？
If you don’t say (if you don’t tell me), how can I know?

什么理由？/甚麼理由？shénme liyóu？‘What is the reason?’
什么理由 / 甚麼理由 shénme liyóu is used to inquire about the reason for something. When the speaker uses this expression, he or she expects an answer.

你有什么理由要跟我离婚？
你有甚麼理由要跟我離婚？
Nǐ yǒu shénme liyóu yào gèn wǒ lí hūn？
What is the reason why you want to divorce me?

什么理由你不给我们工钱？
什么理由你不給我們工錢？
Shénme liyóu nǐ bù gěi wǒmen gōngqián？
What is the reason why you haven’t given us our wages?

凭什么？/憑甚麼？píng shénme？‘On what basis?’ ‘By what right?’
凭什么 / 憑甚麼 píng shénme is a colloquial expression, most often used in speaking.

你凭什么打人？
你憑甚麼打人？
Nǐ píng shénme dà rén？
What right do you have to hit me?

你凭什么逮捕我？
你憑甚麼逮捕我？
Nǐ píng shénme dàibǔ wǒ？
On what grounds are you arresting me?

何故 hégù？和 何 / 為何 wéi hé ‘For what reason?’ ‘Why?’
何故 hégù and 为何 / 為何 wéi hé are used only in formal (usually written) language.
Inquiring about cause or reason

他何故杀人？
He为何杀人？
Tā hégù shā rén?
Why did he kill someone?

为何惊慌？
何故惊慌？
Wèi hé jīnghuāng?
Why are (you) so frightened?

24.6
Expressing conditions

41.1 ‘If . . . then’ conditional sentences

Mandarin uses the following words to express ‘if’ in conditional sentences.

- 要是 yàoshi
- 如果 rúguó
- 假如 jiāruú
- 假使 jiáshí
- 倘若 tāngruò
- 倘使 tāngshí

要是 yàoshi and 如果 rúguó are commonly used in formal and informal speech or writing.

假如 jiāruú is used in more formal speech or writing.

假使 jiáshí, 倘若 tāngruò, and 倘使 tāngshí are most commonly used in formal, written Chinese.

The ‘if’ word is placed before or after the subject in the first clause of a sentence.

Mandarin does not have a word that specifically corresponds to ‘then’ in conditional sentences. Instead, the adverb 就 jiù typically occurs in the second clause, immediately before the [prepositional phrase +] verb phrase.

**NOTE**

15.2.4

便 biàn or 则/则 zé are sometimes used instead of 就 jiù before the [prepositional phrase +] verb phrase of the second clause.

Here are examples of conditional sentences.

要是 yàoshi

要是你不给他钱，他就不会给你做事。
要是你不给他钱，他就不给你做事。

Yàoshi nǐ bù gěi tā qián, jiù bù huì gěi nǐ zuò shì.
If you don’t pay him he won’t work for you.
如果 rénguò
如果你是我，你也不会同意他的看法的。
如果你是我，你也不会同意他的看法的。
Rúguò nǐ shì wǒ, nǐ yě bù huì tóngyì tā de kānfa de.
If you were I, you wouldn't agree with his viewpoint either.

假如 jiànrú
这篇文章写得不错，假如再短一点儿那就更好了。
这篇文章写得不错，假如再短一点儿那就更好了。
Zhè piān wénzhāng xiě de bù cuò, jiànrú zài duǎn yídīār nà jiù gěng hǎo le.
This essay is very good; if it were a little shorter it would be even better.

假使 jiáshǐ
假使人人都骑自行车或坐公共汽车，环境污染的问题就容易解决了。
假使人人都骑自行车或坐公共汽车，环境污染的问题就容易解决了。
Jiáshǐ rén rèn dòu qí xíngzhìché huò zuò gōnggòng qìchē, huánjìng wūrǎn de wèn tí jiù róngyì jiějué le.
If everyone rode a bicycle or took the bus, the pollution problem would be easy to solve.

假使我是老师，我每天都给学生考试。
假使我是老师，我每天都给学生考试。
Jiáshǐ wǒ shì lǎoshī, wǒ měitiān dōu gěi xuéshēng kǎo shì.
If I were a teacher, I would give students a test every day.

倘若/僱若 tǎngruò
倘若学生都一看就懂，那老师还有什么用呢？
倘若学生都一看就懂，那老師還有甚麼用呢？
Tǎngruò xuéshēng dōu yī kàn jiù dǒng, nà lǎoshī hái yǒu shénme yòng ne?
If students understood as soon as they looked at something, then what use would there be for teachers?

倘使 tǎngshǐ
倘使放假不能回家，请及时写信告知。
倘使放假不能回家，请及时写信告知。
Tǎngshǐ fàng jià bù néng huí jiā, qǐng jí shí xiě xìn gào zhī.
If you have a vacation and cannot return home, please write me right away to let me know.

则/則 zé
大家共同努力则一定能把事情作好。
大家共同努力则一定能把事情作好。
Dàjiā gōngtóng nǔlì zé yìdìng néng bǎ shìqíng zuòhǎo.
(If) everyone works hard together, we certainly can take care of this matter.

坚持不懈则会成功。
坚持不懈则會成功。
Jiānchí bù xiè zé huì chénggōng.
(If)(we) persist (we) can definitely succeed.
EXPRESSING CONDITIONS

41.2 ‘even if’

就是 jiūshì situation, (subject) 也/ yě [prepositional phrase +] verb phrase

就是 jiūshì situation, (subject) 还/ hái [prepositional phrase +] verb phrase

Even if (situation), (subject) still ([prepositional phrase +] verb phrase)

就是你去我也不去。

Jiūshì nǐ qù wǒ yě bù qù.

Even if you go I still won’t go.

那本字典特别好。就是很贵我还要买。


That dictionary is particularly good. Even if it is expensive I still want to buy it.

我爱她。就是她不爱我我还爱她。

Wǒ ài tā. Jiūshì tā bù ài wǒ wǒ hái ài tā.

I love her. Even if she doesn’t love me, I still love her.

41.3 ‘as long as’

Use 只要 zhīyào to express this meaning:

只要我们一起努力合作，我们一定会成功。

Zhiyào wǒmen yìqǐ nǔzhù, wǒmen yídǐng huì chénggōng.

As long as we work hard together, we will definitely succeed.

41.4 ‘only if’, ‘unless’

Use 除非 chúfēi to express this meaning.
除非你是百万富翁，要不然你最好别去看那边的房子。
除非你是百万富翁，要不然你最好别去看那边的房子。

Chúfēi nǐ shì bǎiwàn fùwǒng, yào bùrán nǐ zuì hǎo bié qù kàn nàbian de fángzǐ.
Unless you are a millionaire, you’d best not go look at the houses over there.

除非多修几个水库，否则无法解决饮水的问题。
除非多修几个水库，否则无法解决饮水的问题。

Chúfēi duō xiū jī gè shuǐkù, fǒu zé wú fǎ jiějué yǐnshuǐ de wèntí.
Unless we build more reservoirs, there is no way to solve the drinking water problem.

41.5  ‘otherwise’

Use the following words to express this meaning. Notice that they occur before the subject of the second clause or sentence.

要不然 yào bùrán ‘otherwise’
快一点走吧，要不然上课又要迟到了。
快一点走吧，要不然上课又要迟到了。

Kuài yìdiǎn zǒu ba, yào bùrán shàng kě yǒu yào chídào le.
Hurry up, otherwise we will be late for class.

我的汽车坏了，要不然我不会不来上班。
我的汽车坏了，要不然我不会不来上班。

Wǒ de qìchē huài le, yào bùrán wǒ bù huì bù lái shàng bān.
My car is broken, otherwise I wouldn’t miss work.

不然 bù rán ‘otherwise’
他让我跟他一起去买东西，不然他不帮我练习中文。
他让我跟他一起去买东西，不然他不帮我练习中文。

Tā ràng wǒ qù bèi tā qù mǎi dōngxì, bù rán tā bù bāng wǒ liànxi Zhōngwén.
He makes me go with him to buy things (to go shopping with him). Otherwise, he won’t help me study Chinese.

幸亏我的身体好，不然一定会生病。
幸亏我的身体好，不然一定会生病。

Xìngkuǐ wǒ de shēntǐ hǎo, bù rán yīdìng huì shēng bìng.
It is a good thing I am healthy. Otherwise I would get sick.

否则 fǒu zé ‘otherwise’
幸亏我多带了点钱，否则我们就回不去了。
幸亏我多带了点钱，否则我们就回不去了。

Xìngkuǐ wǒ duō dài le diǎn qián, fǒu zé wǒmén jiù huí bù quán le.
Luckily I brought a little extra money with me. Otherwise we wouldn’t be able to get back.

要不然走人行横道，否则撞死了也是白撞。
要不然走人行横道，否则撞死了也是白撞。

Yào zǒu rén xíng héng dào, fǒu zé zhuàngsǐ le yě shì bái zhuàng.
You should walk in the crosswalk. Otherwise, if you get killed it’s your fault.
(lit. ‘Otherwise, if you get killed (by being hit) it would have been avoidable.’)
Expressing ‘both,’ ‘all,’ ‘every,’ ‘any,’ ‘none,’ ‘not any,’ and ‘no matter how’

42.1 Expressing ‘both’ and ‘all’

42.1.1 Expressing ‘both’ and ‘all’ with 都 dōu

Mandarin does not have separate words for ‘both’ and ‘all.’ It uses the same word, 都 dōu, to indicate that a situation is true for the entire plural subject or object. 都 dōu is an adverb and always occurs before the verb. When the sentence occurs in neutral subject-verb-object form, 都 dōu usually indicates ‘both’ or ‘all’ of the subject.

We all like him.

To indicate ‘both’ or ‘all’ of the object noun phrase using 都 dōu, ‘topicalize’ the object noun phrase by placing it before the subject.

(As for) Chinese food, I like to eat everything.

53.1.2

Mandarin does not have a distinct word for ‘both.’ To specify that a situation is true for precisely two nouns, your noun phrase must include the number two:

Those two books are both very interesting.
Expressing ‘both’ and ‘all’

42.1.2 Expressing ‘all’ with 所有的 suǒyǒu de
所有的 suǒyǒu de occurs before any noun with plural reference to indicate all of the noun. It generally refers to nouns that represent a relatively large number of objects.

- 所有的车都太贵。
- 所有的车都太贵。
  Suǒyǒu de chē dōu tài guì.
  All of the cars are too expensive.

- 那个饭馆，所有的菜都太咸。
- 那个饭馆，所有的菜都太咸。
  Nàge fànguǎn, suǒyǒu de cài dōu tài xián.
  (In) that restaurant, all of the dishes are too salty.

- 我校的足球队，所有的男的都很帅。
- 我校的足球队，所有的男的都很帅。
  Wǒ xiào de zúqiú duì, suǒyǒu de nán de dōu hěn shuài.
  (In) Our school’s football team, all of the guys are really cute.

42.1.3 Expressing the concept ‘all’ with 全 quán
全 quán occurs before certain nouns to indicate all of the noun or the entire noun.

Commonly occurring phrases with 全 quán include:

- 全家 quán jiā all of the family/the whole family
- 全班 quán bān all of the class/the whole class
- 全国/全國 quán guó the whole country
- 全民 quán mín all of the people
- 全年 quán nián the whole year

- 上个星期我们全家人都去法国旅行了。
  Shàng gè xīngqī wǒmen quán jiā rén dōu qù Fǎguó lǐxíng le.
  Last week, our whole family went to France for vacation.

- 全班都考得很好。
  quán bān dōu kāo de hěn hǎo.
  The whole class did well on the exam.

42.1.4 Expressing ‘double’ or ‘both’ with 双/雙 shuāng
双/雙 shuāng ‘pair’ is a classifier:

- 一双鞋子/一双鞋子
  yī shuāng xiézi
  a pair of shoes

双/雙 shuāng also occurs before a noun to indicate double noun or both nouns. It is often used to describe objects that come in pairs:

- 双面/雙面 shuāngmiàn both sides; reversible
- 双方/雙方 shuāngfāng both parties (both people)
- 双亲/雙親 shuāngqīn both parents
- 双姓/雙姓 shuāngxìng two-character family name
42.2 Expressing ‘none’

Mandarin does not have a single word for ‘none.’ Instead, ‘none’ is expressed as:

都 dōu + negation all not = none

孩子都不愿意睡觉。

小孩都不愿意睡觉。

Háizi dōu bù yuàn yì shuì jiào.
The children are all not willing to sleep. = None of the children is willing to sleep.

我的朋友都没上过大学。

我的朋友都没上过大学。

Wǒ de péngyou dōu méi shàngguó dàxué.
All of my friends have not attended college. = None of my friends has attended college.

42.3 Expressing ‘every’

42.3.1 Expressing ‘every’ with 每 měi

每 měi + number + classifier (+ noun).

If the number is ‘one,’ it is usually omitted.

那些书，每个一本都很贵。

那些书，每(一)本都很贵。

Nà xiē shū, měi (yī) běn dōu hěn guì.
Those books, every volume is expensive.

每(一)个学生都考得很好。

每(一)個學生都考得很好。

Měi (yī) gè xuésheng dōu kǎo de hěn hǎo.
Every student did well on the exam.

我每天都上课。

我每天都上课。

Wǒ měitiān dōu shàng kè.
I attend class every day.

你每两天可以借一本书。

你每兩天可以借一本書。

Nǐ méi liǎng tiān kéyǐ jiē yī běn shū.
Every two days you can borrow one book.

42.3.2 Expressing ‘every’ with double negatives

沒有 méi yǒu + noun phrase + negation

there is no noun phrase that is not = every noun phrase
Expressing ‘every’

42.3.3 Expressing ‘every’ with reduplication

Certain nouns and classifiers can be reduplicated (repeated) to mean *every noun* or *every classifier*. The most common of these include the following.

人人, rénrén ‘everyone’

人人都喜欢吃好吃的东西。
人人都喜歡吃好吃的東西。

*Rénrén dōu xǐhuān chī hǎo chī de dōngxi.*

Everyone likes to eat delicious food.

个个/個個, gègè ‘everyone’

他們的孩子，個個都很聰明。
他們的孩子，個個都很聰明。

*Tāmen de háizi, gègè dōu hěn cōngming.*

All their children are very bright.

年年, niánnián ‘every year’

他們的生活不變。年年都一樣。
他們的生活不變。年年都一樣。

*Tāmen de shēnghuó bù biàn. Niánnián dōu yīyàng.*

Their lives do not change. Every year is the same.

本本, běnběn ‘every volume’

他寫的書，本本都很好。
他寫的書，本本都很好。

*Tā xiě de shū, běn běn dōu hěn hǎo.*

The books that he writes, every volume (every one) is very good.

天天, tiāntiān ‘everyday’

我們天天吃中國飯。
我們天天吃中國飯。

*Wǒmen tiāntiān chī Zhōngguó fàn.*

We eat Chinese food every day.
Expressing ‘every,’ ‘any,’ ‘not any,’ and ‘no matter how’ with question words

In Mandarin, question words + 都 dōu or 也 yě are commonly used to convey the meaning ‘every’ or ‘any.’

Here is a list of question words + 都 dōu or 也 yě with translations and examples. Note that in some expressions, the question word is part of a larger noun phrase.

**谁/誰 + 都 or 也**

**shéi + dōu or yě**

everyone

- 誰都會作這個工作。
  誰都會作這個工作。
  Shéi dōu huì zuò zhège gōngzuò.
  Anyone can do this job.
- 誰都要跟張三做生意。
  誰都要跟張三做生意。
  Shéi dōu yào gēn Zhāng Sān zuò shēngyì.
  Everyone wants to do business with Zhang San.

**什么/甚麼 + 都 or 也**

**shénme + dōu or yě**

everything, anything

- 他什麼事情都懂。
  他甚麼事情都懂。
  Tā shénme shìqìng dōu dǒng.
  He understands everything.
- 弟弟什麼書都喜欢看。
  弟弟甚麼書都喜欢看。
  Dìdì shénme shū dōu xǐhuàn kàn.
  Little Brother enjoys reading everything.

**哪 + classifier + 都 or 也**

**nà + classifier + dōu or yě**

everything, anything

- 这兒的天氣很好。哪天都很舒服。
  這兒的天氣很好。哪天都很舒服。
  Zhèr de tiānqì hěn hǎo. Nà tiān dōu hěn shūfu.
  The weather here is very good. Every day is very comfortable.
- 我特別喜歡看王老師的書。他寫的書，哪本都很有意思。
  我特別喜歡看王老師的書。他寫的書，哪本都很有意思。
  Wǒ tèbié xǐhuàn kàn Wáng lǎoshī de shū. Tā xiě de shū, nà běn dōu hěn yòu yìsi.
  I especially like to read Professor Wang’s books. Of the books that he has written, every book is very interesting.
Expressing ‘every,’ ‘any,’ ‘not any,’ and ‘no matter how’ with question words

哪儿/哪儿 + 都 or 也
nár + dōu or yě
everywhere

他妹妹哪儿都想去。
他妹妹哪兒都想去。

Tā meīmei nár dōu xiǎng qù.
His little sister wants to go everywhere.

Q: 你想去哪儿吃饭？
你想哪儿吃飯？

Nǐ xiǎng qù nár chī fàn?
Where do you want to go to eat?

A: 哪儿都行。
Nár dōu xíng.
Any place is okay.

什么地方/甚麼地方 + 都 or 也
shénme difang + dōu or yě
everywhere/anywhere

中国人口很多。什么地方都是人。
中國人口很多。甚麼地方都是人。

Zhōngguó rénkǒu hěn duō. Shénme difang dōu shì rén.
China’s population is very big. There are people everywhere.

( . . . Every place is full of people.)

我听说意大利什么地方都很漂亮。
我聽說意大利甚麼地方都很漂亮。

Wō tǐngshuō Yídàlì shénme difang dōu hěn piào liáng.
I’ve heard it said that in Italy, every place is very pretty.

几点钟/幾點鐘 + 都 or 也
jidiǎn zhōng + dōu or yě
always/at any hour

Q: 我们几点钟去看电影？
我們幾點鐘去看電影？

Wǒmen jidiǎn zhōng qù kàn diànyǐng?
What time should we go to see a movie?

A: 几点钟都可以。
Jidiǎn zhōng dōu kěyǐ.
Anytime is okay.

什么时候/甚麼时候 + 都 or 也
shénme shíhòu + dōu or yě
always/any time/whenever

爸爸什么时候都很忙。
爸爸甚麼時候都很忙。

Bāba shénme shíhòu dōu hěn máng.
Dad is always busy.

Q: 你什么时候有空？
你甚麼時候有空？

Nǐ shénme shíhòu yǒu kòng?
When do you have free time?

A: 我什么时候都有空。
Wǒ shénme shíhòu dōu yǒu kòng.
I always have free time.

The following expressions with 多 dōu also express the meaning ‘no matter how.’
Note that they do not occur with 都 dōu or 也 yě.
**Expressing ‘both,’ ‘all,’ ‘every,’ ‘any,’ ‘none,’ ‘not any’**

**42.4.2 Expressing ‘not any’ with question words**

Question words with 都 dōu or 也 yě and negation are used to express the concept ‘not any.’

Here is a list of question words + 都 dōu or 也 yě + negation, with translations and examples. 也 yě is much more commonly used than 都 dōu when expressing ‘not any.’

**谁/誰 + 都 or 也 + negation**

**shéi + dōu or yě + negation**

no one/not anyone

No one wants to do business with Zhang San.

**什么/甚麼 + 都 or 也 + negation**

**shénme + dōu or yě + negation**

nothing/not anything

He doesn’t understand anything.

Little Brother doesn’t like to read any book.

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多麼/多麼 + adjectival verb
duómé + adjectival verb

no matter how adjectival verb

那件衣服多麼貴我還想買。

Nà jiàn yīfu duómé guì wǒ hái xiǎng mǎi.

No matter how expensive that item of clothing is I still want to buy it.

多少
duōshǎo

however many

我跟你说了多少次你还不听。

Wǒ gēn nǐ shuō le duōshǎo cì nǐ hái bù tīng.

No matter how many times I’ve told you, you still don’t listen.

No one can do this job.

He doesn’t understand anything.

Little Brother doesn’t like to read any book.
Expressing ‘every,’ ‘any,’ ‘not any,’ and ‘no matter how’ with question words

哪/哪 + classifier + 都 or 也 + negation
nà + classifier + dōu or yē + negation
nothing/not anything

他哪个菜也不喜欢吃。
他哪个菜也不喜欢吃。
Tā nàge cài yě bù xǐhuān chí.
He doesn’t like to eat any dish.

他哪个车都没买。
他哪个车都没买。
Tā nàge chē dōu méi mǎi.
He didn’t buy a car.

哪儿/哪儿 + 都 or 也 + negation
nàr + dōu or yē + negation
nowhere/not anyplace

他妹妹哪儿也不想去。
他妹妹哪儿也不想去。
Tā mèimeì nàr yē bù xiǎng qù.
His little sister doesn’t want to go anywhere.

我哪儿都没去过。
我哪儿都没去过。
Wǒ nàr dōu méi qùguò.
I haven’t been anywhere.

什么地方/甚麼地方 + 都 or 也 + negation
shénme diāng + dōu or yē + negation
nowhere/not anyplace

我刚到这儿来。什么地方都不认识。
我刚到這兒來。甚麼地方都不認識。
Wǒ gāng dào zhèr lái. Shénme diāng dōu bù rènshi.
I’ve just come here. (I’m new here.) I don’t recognize any place.

怎么了？什么地方都没有人。
怎樣了？甚麼地方都沒有人。
Zěnme le? Shénme diāng dōu méi yǒu rén.
What’s going on? There aren’t any people anywhere.

什么时候/甚麼時候 + 都 or 也 + negation
shénme shíhòu + dōu or yē + negation
never/not anytime

Q: 你什么时候有空？
A: 我什么时候也没有空。
你甚麼時候有空？
Wǒ shénme shíhòu yě méi yǒu kòng.
I never have free time.

Nǐ shénme shíhòu yǒu kòng?
When do you have free time?
### Expressing ‘both,’ ‘all,’ ‘every,’ ‘any,’ ‘none,’ ‘not any’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>你什么时候看电视？ 你甚麼时候看电视？</td>
<td>我什么时候都不看电视。  我甚麼时候都不看电视。</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 42.4.3 Expressing ‘no matter how’ with 怎么/怎麼 zènme

怎么/怎麼 verb₁ 也 + verb₂  
zènme verb₁ yě + verb₂  
no matter how much one does verb₁ (the anticipated goal or result is not attained)

When 怎么/怎麼 zènme is used, verb₂ is often a resultative verb.

- 这个字，怎么写，也写不对。  
  这個字，我怎麼寫，也寫不對。  
  Zhège zì, wǒ zènme xiě, yě xiě bù duì.  
  This character, no matter how I write it, I write it incorrectly.

- 这件事，怎么作也好。  
  這件事，我怎麼作也好。  
  Zhè jiàn shì, wǒ zènme zuò yě bù hǎo.  
  This situation, no matter how I handle it, it is not good.

- 你做的菜太多了！怎么吃，也吃不完。  
  你做的菜太多了！怎麼吃，也吃不完。  
  Nǐ zuò de cài tài duō le! Zènme chī, yě chībùwán.  
  You made too much food! No matter how we eat we can’t finish it.

- 这个谜语，怎么猜也猜不着。  
  這個謎語，怎麼猜也猜不著。  
  Zhège míyǔ, zènme cāi yě cāibuzháo.  
  This riddle, no matter how I guess I can’t figure it out.

The expression 不论/不論 búlùn ‘regardless/no matter how’ may occur before 怎么/怎麼 zènme. The meaning of the expression is the same.

- 这个字，我不论怎么写，也写错。  
  这個字，我不論怎麼寫，也寫錯。  
  Zhège zì, wǒ búlùn zènme xiě yě xiěcuò.  
  This character, no matter how I write it, I write it wrong.

- 这件事，我不论怎么作也好。  
  這件事，我不論怎麼作也好。  
  Zhè jiàn shì, wǒ búlùn zènme zuò yě bù hǎo.  
  This situation, no matter how I handle it, it is not good.
# Expressing location and distance

## Location

### Words that indicate location and compass direction

#### Location words

Mandarin location words consist of a base form and a location suffix. Base forms never occur alone. Some base forms occur with several different suffixes with no change in meaning. Here are the Mandarin location words and their English equivalents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base form</th>
<th>Mandarin location words</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>里/裏</td>
<td>里头/裏頭</td>
<td>里面/裏面</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>外</td>
<td>外头/外頭</td>
<td>外面</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>上</td>
<td>上头/上頭</td>
<td>上面</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shàng</td>
<td>shàngtou</td>
<td>shàngmian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>下</td>
<td>下头/下頭</td>
<td>下面</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qián</td>
<td>qián tóu</td>
<td>qián mian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hòu</td>
<td>hòu tou</td>
<td>hòu mian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>左</td>
<td>左面</td>
<td>左边/左边</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zuò</td>
<td>zuò miàn</td>
<td>zuò bian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>右</td>
<td>右面</td>
<td>右边/右边</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yòu</td>
<td>yòu miàn</td>
<td>yòu bian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>对/对</td>
<td>对面/對面</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dui</td>
<td>dui miàn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>旁</td>
<td>旁边/旁邊</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>páng</td>
<td>páng bian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zhōng</td>
<td>zhōng jìan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The words in bold are the base forms, and the suffixes are used to indicate location.
EXPRESSING LOCATION AND DISTANCE

### 43.1

#### 43.1.1

#### Compass direction

The words for north, east, south, and west are also formed with a base form and a suffix. The suffix can be 面 or 边/biān.

The combination compass direction words (northeast, southwest, etc.) usually occur without a suffix. If a suffix occurs, it is 面 or 边/biān.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base form</th>
<th>Mandarin compass direction words</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>东/東</td>
<td>东方/東面</td>
<td>东边/東邊</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dōng</td>
<td>dōngmiàn</td>
<td>dōngbiàn east</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>南</td>
<td>南面</td>
<td>南边/南邊</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nán</td>
<td>nánmiàn</td>
<td>nánbiàn south</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>西</td>
<td>西面</td>
<td>西边/西邊</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xī</td>
<td>xīmiàn</td>
<td>xībiàn west</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>北</td>
<td>北面</td>
<td>北边/北邊</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>běi</td>
<td>bēimiàn</td>
<td>běibian north</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>东南(面)/東南(面)</td>
<td>东南(边)/東南(邊)</td>
<td>southeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dōngnán (miàn)</td>
<td>dōngnán (bian)</td>
<td>东南(边)/東南(邊) south</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>东北(面)/東北(面)</td>
<td>东北(边)/東北(邊)</td>
<td>东北(边)/東北(邊)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dōngběi (miàn)</td>
<td>dōngběi (bian)</td>
<td>东南(边)/東南(邊) northeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>西南(面)</td>
<td>西南(面)</td>
<td>西南(边)/西南(邊) southwest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xīnán (miàn)</td>
<td>xīnán (bian)</td>
<td>西南(边)/西南(邊)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>西北(面)</td>
<td>西北(面)</td>
<td>西北(边)/西北(邊)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xīběi (miàn)</td>
<td>xīběi (bian)</td>
<td>西北(边)/西北(邊)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Spatial orientation with respect to a reference point

#### 43.1.2

#### Indicating location with respect to a reference using location words

To indicate that something is ‘inside,’ ‘outside,’ ‘over,’ ‘under,’ etc. a reference point, use the following structure:

*reference point 的 de location word*

In the following phrases, the reference point is the house. Note that 的 de may be omitted.

房子(的)里头/房子(的)裏頭

fángzi (de) lǐtóu

inside the house

房子(的)外头/房子(的)外頭

fángzi (de) wàitóu

outside the house
The location base forms 里/裏 lǐ ‘inside,’ 外 wài ‘outside,’ 上 shàng ‘above,’ and 下 xià ‘below’ can directly follow the reference point. When they occur this way, the de does not occur.

*reference point + location base form*

房子(的)里头/房子(的)裏头  
fángzǐ (de) lǐtou  
inside the house

房子(的)外头/房子(的)外頭  
fángzǐ (de) wàitou  
outside the house

房子(的)上头/房子(的)上頭  
fángzǐ (de) shàngtou  
on top of the house

房子(的)下头/房子(的)下頭  
fángzǐ (de) xiàtou  
below the house
43.1.2.2 Indicating location with compass direction words

To indicate that something is 'east of,' 'west of,' 'north of,' or 'south of' a reference point, use the following structure. Keep in mind that compass direction words can be used with the 面 miàn or 边 biān suffix.

*reference point* 的 *de* compass direction word

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>compass direction</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>北面</td>
<td>fángzi de běìmian</td>
<td>north of the house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>西面</td>
<td>fángzi de xīmiàn</td>
<td>west of the house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>南面</td>
<td>fángzi de nánmiàn</td>
<td>south of the house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>东面</td>
<td>fángzi de dōngmiàn</td>
<td>east of the house</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

43.1.3 Describing the location of an object

To describe the location of an object with respect to a reference point, say:

*object* 在 *zài* *reference point* 的 *de* *location word*

In these examples, the object is the cat, and the reference point is the house.

- 猫在房子的里头。
  貓在房子的裏頭。
  Māo zài fángzi (de) lǐtóu.
  The cat is inside the house.

- 猫在房子的外头。
  貓在房子的外頭。
  Māo zài fángzi (de) wàitóu.
  The cat is outside the house.

- 猫在房子的上头。
  貓在房子的上頭。
  Māo zài fángzi (de) shàngtóu.
  The cat is on the house/over the house.

- 猫在房子的下头。
  貓在房子的下頭。
  Māo zài fángzi (de) xiàtóu.
  The cat is below the house/under the house.

- 猫在房子的前头。
  貓在房子的前頭。
  Māo zài fángzi (de) qiántóu.
  The cat is in front of the house.
Indicating that an object exists or does not exist at a location

猫在房子(的)后头。
Māo zài fángzi (de) hòutou.
The cat is behind the house.

猫在房子(的)左边。
Māo zài fángzi (de) zuǒbian.
The cat is to the left of the house.

猫在房子(的)右边。
Māo zài fángzi (de) yòubian.
The cat is to the right of the house.

猫在房子(的)对面。
Māo zài fángzi (de) duìmiàn.
The cat is across from the house.

猫在房子(的)中间。
Māo zài fángzi (de) zhōngjiān.
The cat is between the houses.

猫在房子(的)旁边。
Māo zài fángzi (de) pángbiān.
The cat is next to the house.

Use the same pattern to indicate location in terms of compass direction:

object 在 zài reference point 的 de compass location word

房子在路(的)西北(边)。
Fángzi zài lù (de) xīběi (biān).
The house is to the northwest of the road.

路在房子(的)东南(边)。
Lù zài fángzi (de) dōngnán (biān).
The road is to the southeast of the house.

To indicate that an object exists at a location, use the following pattern. Note that

(在 zài) location 有 yǒu object。
At location there is object (there are objects).
## EXPRESSING LOCATION AND DISTANCE

(在)桌子上有一本书。
(在)桌子上有一本书。

(Zài) zhuōzǐ shàng yǒu shū.
On the table there is a book (there are books).

(在)房子后边有一只猫。
(在)房子後邊有一隻貓。

(Zài) fángzì hòubian yǒu māo.
Behind the house there is a cat (there are cats).

有 yǒu object 在 zài location。
There is object (there are objects) at location.

有两本书在桌子上。
有兩本書在桌子上。

Yǒu liǎng běn shū zài zhuōzǐ shàng.
There are two books on the table.

有一只猫在房子的后边。
有一只貓在房子的後邊。

Yǒu yīzhī māo zài fángzǐ de hòubian.
There is a cat behind the house.

To indicate that an object does not exist at a location, use the following structure:

(在 zài) location 沒有 méi yǒu object
At location there is no object.

(在)房子里没有人。
(在)房子裏沒有人。

(Zài) fángzǐ lǐ méi yǒu rén.
There are no people in the house.
(lit. ‘In the house there are no people.’)

(在)屋子里没有桌子。
(在)屋子裏沒有桌子。

(Zài) wūzǐ lǐ méi yǒu zhuōzǐ.
There aren’t any tables in the room.
(lit. ‘In the room there aren’t any tables.’)

or

沒有 méi yǒu object 在 zài location
There are no objects at location.

没有人再房子里。
沒有人在房子里。

Méi yǒu rén zài fángzǐ lǐ.
There are no people in the house.

没有桌子在屋子里。
沒有桌子在屋子裏。

Méi yǒu zhuōzǐ zài wūzǐ lǐ.
There aren’t any tables in the room.
Using location as a description

**43.3 Using location as a description**

Location phrases may also be used to describe a noun. When used as a description, the location phrase precedes the noun, as follows:

- **Location phrase 的 de noun**
  - the noun at this location [or] the noun in this direction

To help you to understand this structure, the location phrase in each of the following examples is presented in square brackets. Notice that the words ‘that,’ ‘who,’ and ‘which’ that occur in the description in English are not translated into Mandarin. In Mandarin, the noun can be understood as singular or plural.

- [沙发] 的 猫
- [沙发] 的 猫
  - [shāfà shàng] de māo
  - the cat [(that is) on the sofa]

- [房子里] 的 人
- [房子里] 的 人
  - [fángzi lǐ] de rén
  - the person [(that is) in the house]

- [北边] 的 湖
- [北边] 的 湖
  - [běibiān] de hú
  - the lake [(that is) in the north]

- [左边] 的 人
- [左边] 的 人
  - [zuǒbiān] de rén
  - the person [(who is) on the left]

The location phrase may itself include a noun with a description:

- [房子(的)后头] 的 人
- [房子(的)后头] 的 人
  - [fángzi de hòutou] de rén
  - the person [(who is) behind the house]

- [图书馆(的)对面] 的 学校
- [图书馆(的)对面] 的 学校
  - [túshūguǎn (de) duìmiàn] de xuéxiào
  - the school [(that is) across from the library]

Compare the use of the location phrase as a description of a noun, with the use of the location phrase to indicate the location of a noun. Keep in mind that location phrases follow the noun and description phrases precede the noun.
EXPRESSING LOCATION AND DISTANCE

43.4

Talking about distance

In Mandarin, distance is always expressed with the word 离/離 lí ‘to be separated from.’ All expressions of distance use the following structure. The noun phrases refer to objects or locations.

\[ \text{noun phrase}_1 \text{ lí} \text{ noun phrase}_2 \text{ close/far/x distance} \]

\[ \text{noun phrase}_1 \text{ is close/far/x distance from noun phrase}_2 \]

43.4.1

Talking about ‘near’ and ‘far’

To say that one object or place is (very) far from another object or place, say:

\[ \text{noun phrase}_1 \text{ lí} \text{ noun phrase}_2 \text{ (很) 远/遠} \]

\[ \text{noun phrase}_1 \text{ lí} \text{ noun phrase}_2 \text{ (很) yuǎn} \]

我家離圖書館很遠。
我家離圖書館很遠。

Wǒ jiā lí túshūguǎn hěn yuǎn.
My house is very far from the library.

To say that one object or place is (very) close to another object or place, say:

\[ \text{noun phrase}_1 \text{ lí} \text{ noun phrase}_2 \text{ (很) 近} \]

\[ \text{noun phrase}_1 \text{ lí} \text{ noun phrase}_2 \text{ (很) jìn} \]

公园離學校(很)近。
公園離學校(很)近。

Gōngyuán lí xuéxiào (hěn) jìn.
The park is very close to the school.
Talking about distance

To say that an object or place is close to your present location, say:

\[ \text{noun phrase}_1 \text{ 离/離 这儿/這兒 (很) 近} \]
\[ \text{noun phrase}_1 \text{ lí zhèr (hěn) jìn} \]

or

\[ \text{noun phrase}_1 \text{ 离/離 这里/這裏 (很) 近} \]
\[ \text{noun phrase}_1 \text{ lí zhēlī (hěn) jìn} \]

公园离这儿(很)近。
公园離這儿(很)近。
\[ \text{Gōngyuán lí zhèr (hěn) jìn.} \]
The park is (very) close to here.

学校离这里(很)近。
學校離這裏(很)近。
\[ \text{Xuéxiào lí zhèlī (hěn) jìn.} \]
The school is (very) close to here.

To say that an object or place is far from your present location, say:

\[ \text{noun phrase}_1 \text{ 离/離 这儿/這兒 (很) 远/遠} \]
\[ \text{noun phrase}_1 \text{ lí zhèr (hěn) yuān} \]

or

\[ \text{noun phrase}_1 \text{ 离/離 这里/這裏 (很) 远/遠} \]
\[ \text{noun phrase}_1 \text{ lí zhēlī (hěn) yuān} \]

公园离这儿(很)远。
公园離這儿(很)遠。
\[ \text{Gōngyuán lí zhèr (hěn) yuān.} \]
The park is (very) far from here.

学校离这里(很)远。
學校離這裏(很)遠。
\[ \text{Xuéxiào lí zhèlī (hěn) yuān.} \]
The school is (very) far from here.

Be careful to use 离/離 li ‘to be separated from,’ and not the prepositions 到 dào ‘from’ or 从/從 cónɡ ‘from’ when talking about distance.

\begin{align*}
\text{Say this} & \quad \text{Not this} \\
\text{我家离图书馆近。} & \quad \text{*我家到图书馆近。} \\
\text{我家離圖書館近。} & \quad \text{我家到圖書館近。} \\
\text{Wǒ jiā lǐ túshūguān jìn.} & \quad \text{Wǒ jiā dào túshūguān jìn.} \\
\text{My house is close to the library.} & \quad \text{*我家近到图书馆。} \\
\end{align*}

43.4.2 Talking about specific distance

To indicate the specific distance between two objects or places, say:

\[ \text{noun phrase}_1 \text{ 离/離 noun phrase}_2 \text{ (有) distance} \]
\[ \text{noun phrase}_1 \text{ lí noun phrase}_2 \text{ (yǒu) distance} \]
EXPRESSING LOCATION AND DISTANCE

公园离图书馆(有)三里(路)。

Gōngyuán lǐ tūshūguǎn (yǒu) sān lǐ (lù).
The park is three miles from the library.

Commonly used distance words include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinese mile</td>
<td>gōnglǐ</td>
<td>(.5 kilometers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kilometer</td>
<td>mǐ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meter</td>
<td>lǐ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English mile</td>
<td>yīng lǐ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 43.5 Asking about distance

#### 43.5.1 Asking about ‘near’ and ‘far’

To ask if an object or place is far from another object or place, say:

noun phrase₁ 离 noun phrase₂ 远吗？
noun phrase₁ 離 noun phrase₂ 遠嗎？
noun phrase₁ lǐ noun phrase₂ yuàn ma?

or
	noun phrase₁ 离 noun phrase₂ 远不远？
	noun phrase₁ 離 noun phrase₂ 遠不遠？
	noun phrase₁ lǐ noun phrase₂ yuàn bù yuàn?

你家离图书馆远吗？

你的房子离图书馆远吗？

Nǐ jiā lǐ tūshūguǎn yuàn ma?

Is your house far from the library?

or

你家离图书馆不远吗？

你的房子离图书馆不远吗？

Nǐ jiā lǐ tūshūguǎn yuàn bù yuàn?

Is your house far from the library?

To ask if an object or place is near to another object or place, say:

noun phrase₁ 离 noun phrase₂ 近吗？

noun phrase₁ 離 noun phrase₂ 近嗎？

noun phrase₁ lǐ noun phrase₂ jìn ma?

你家离图书馆近吗？

你的房子离图书馆近吗？

Nǐ jiā lǐ tūshūguǎn jìn ma?

Is your house close to the library?

**NOTE**

As in English, the question ‘is it far?’ is more neutral than the question ‘is it close?’ When the speaker asks ‘is it far?’ he or she typically does not necessarily expect the answer to be ‘far.’ However, when the question is ‘is it close?’ the speaker often expects the answer to be ‘close.’
Asking about distance

To ask if an object or place is far from your present location, say:

图书馆离这儿远吗？
Túshūguǎn lì zhèr yuǎn ma?
Is the library far from here?

or

图书馆离这里远吗？
Túshūguǎn lì zhèlǐ yuǎn ma?
Is the library far from here?

Asking about specific distances

To ask how far one object or place is from another object or place, say:

你家离图书馆多(me)远？
Nǐ jiā lǐ túshūguǎn duō(me) yuǎn?
How far is your house from the library?

or

你家离图书馆有多远？
Nǐ jiā lǐ túshūguǎn yǒu duō yuǎn?
How far is your house from the library?
Talking about movement, directions, and means of transportation

44.1 Talking about ‘going’ and ‘coming’

Expressions used to talk about going and coming usually involve a preposition indicating ‘to,’ ‘from,’ or ‘towards,’ and a verb indicating ‘going’ or ‘coming.’ The structures used to indicate going and coming are presented here. In Mandarin, the prepositional phrase always occurs before the verb.

Note the difference between 走 zǒu and 去 qù.

The verb 走 zǒu ‘to go’ is used with movement towards a direction. The verb 去 qù is used with movement that terminates at a location.

44.1.1 Talking about ‘going towards’ a direction

[往/向/朝 (direction)] 走 [wàng/xiàng/cháo (direction)] zǒu

往东走。  朝南走。  向西走。


Go east.  Go south.  Go west.

To say that you are ‘going straight’, say:

一直走。

Yí zhí zǒu.

Go straight ahead.

To say that you are ‘going straight towards’ a direction, say:

[一直] [往/向/朝 (direction)] 走 [yí zhí] [wàng/xiàng/cháo (direction)] zǒu

or
Talking about ‘going’ and ‘coming’

[往/向/朝 (direction)] [一直] 走
[wǎng/xiàng/cháo (direction)] [yī zhí] zǒu
go straight towards (direction)

一直往北走。 or 往北一直走。
Yīzhí wǎng bèi zǒu. Wǎng bèi yīzhí zǒu.
Go straight north. Go straight north.

44.1.2 Talking about ‘going to’ a destination

到 destination 去
dào destination qù
to [a destination] go = go to a destination

或
or

去 qù destination
go (to) a destination

我想去图书馆去。
Wǒ xiǎng qù túshūguǎn qù.
I want to go to the library.

44.1.3 Talking about ‘coming to’ a destination

到 destination 来/來
dào destination lái
to [a place] come (come to a place)

或
or

来/來 lái destination
come to a destination

你什么时候到我家来？
Nǐ shénme shíhòu dào wǒ jiā lái?
When are you coming to my house?

44.1.4 Talking about ‘coming from’ a location

从/从 location 来/來
cóng location lái
from location come (come from a location)

她刚从美国来。
Tā gāng cóng Méiguó lái.
She just came from America.
Talking about turning

Turning is a type of movement towards a direction. Therefore, it may be expressed with the prepositions 往 wǎng, 向 xiàng, and 朝 cháo.

To talk about turning, say:

- [往/向/朝] (direction) 拐
  - [wǎng/xiàng/cháo] (direction) guǎi
    - turn towards (direction)

- [往] 左拐。 [向] 右拐。 [朝] 北拐。
    - Turn left. Turn right. Turn north.

or

拐 (direction) guǎi (direction)

- 拐北。
  - Guǎi běi.
  - Turn left.

Talking about crossing

- 过一条街。
  - Guò yī tiáo jiē.
    - Cross one street or go one block.

- 过两个红绿灯。
  - Guò liǎng gè hóng lù dēng.
    - Pass two traffic lights.

- 过一个路口。
  - Guò yī gè lùkǒu.
    - Cross one intersection.

Talking about arriving

The verb 到 dào means to arrive.

- 我们到了。
  - Wǒmen dào le.
    - We’ve arrived (at our destination.)

- 你到了奶奶家请给我打电话。
  - Nǐ dào le nǎinai jiā qǐng gěi wǒ dǎ diànhuà.
    - After you arrive at (get to) grandma’s house please call me.
Talking about means of transportation

Means of transportation includes locomotion: 走 zuǒ ‘to walk,’ 跑 páo ‘to run,’ 跳 tiào ‘to hop/to jump,’ 游 yóu ‘to swim,’ 飞/飛 fēi ‘to fly’; or transportation by a vehicle: 车/車 chē ‘car,’ 出租车/chūzū chē ‘taxi cab,’ 火车/火車 huǒchē ‘train,’ 地铁/地鐵 dìtiē ‘subway,’ 公共汽车/公共汽车 gōnggōng qìchē ‘public bus,’ 飞机/飛機 fēijī ‘plane,’ 摩托车/摩托車 mòtuōchē ‘motorcycle,’ or 自行车/自行車 zìxíngchē (in Taiwan: 脚踏车/腳踏車 jiàotāchē) ‘bicycle.’

The expression used to describe riding on a vehicle depends upon the vehicle.

For vehicles in which you sit on a seat, the verb is 坐 zuò ‘sit.’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>坐 zuò</th>
<th>车/車 chē</th>
<th>火车/火車 huǒchē</th>
<th>地铁/地鐵 dìtiē</th>
<th>飞机/飛機 fēijī</th>
<th>公共汽车/公共汽车 gōnggōng qìchē</th>
<th>or 自行车/自行車 zìxíngchē</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sit</td>
<td>ride in a car (go by car)</td>
<td>take a train/by train</td>
<td>take the subway</td>
<td>take an airplane/by plane</td>
<td>take a bus/(go)by bus</td>
<td>or take a bus/(go)by bus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For things that you ride astraddle such as bicycles, motorcycles, and horses, the verb is 骑/騎 qí:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>骑/騎 qí</th>
<th>自行车/自行車</th>
<th>摩托车/摩托車</th>
<th>马/馬 mǎ</th>
<th>骑 a bicycle</th>
<th>ride a motorcycle</th>
<th>ride a horse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ride</td>
<td>自行车/自行車</td>
<td>摩托车/摩托車</td>
<td>马/馬 mǎ</td>
<td>ride a bicycle</td>
<td>ride a motorcycle</td>
<td>ride a horse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The expression used to get on or into a vehicle is 上 上 shàng [vehicle]:

| 上飞机/上飛機 shàng fēijī | get on the plane; board the plane |
TALKING ABOUT MOVEMENT, DIRECTIONS

The expression used to get off or out of a vehicle is 下 xià [vehicle]:

下火车/下车  xià huǒchē  get off the train

To indicate that you wish to get off a public vehicle, you say:

下车/下车
Xià chē!
Getting off!

### 44.5.2 Including the means of transportation in a directional expression

The means of transportation normally occurs before the verb, or before the prepositional phrase and the verb.

- 他想坐船到中国去。
  他想坐船到中國去。
  Tā xiǎng zuò chuán dào Zhōngguó qù.
  He's thinking about taking a boat to China.
  (He's thinking about going to China by boat.)

- 你可以坐地铁去天安门。
  你可以坐地鐵去天安門。
  Nǐ kěyǐ zuò dìtiē qù Tiān'ānmén.
  You can take the subway to Tian’an Men.

### 44.6 Asking about locations and asking for directions

#### 44.6.1 Asking about locations

To ask where a place is located, say:

- (place) 在哪儿？ or (place) 在哪里？
  地方在哪兒？
  地方在哪儿？
  Where is (the place)?
  Where is (the place)?

- 图书馆在哪儿？
  Túshūguǎn zài nǎr?
  Where is the library?

- 图书馆在哪里？
  Túshūguǎn zài nǎlí?
  Where is the library?

#### 44.6.2 Asking how to go from one place to another

To ask how to get from one place to another place, say:

- 怎么走？
  Zěnme zǒu?
  How do you go?
Asking for and giving directions: sample conversations

44.6.3 Asking about alternative directions

To ask about alternative directions, use 还是 háishi ‘or’:

往北拐还是往南拐？
往北拐還是往南拐？
Wàng běi guǎi háishi wǎng nán guǎi?
(Do you) turn north or turn south?

44.6.4 What to say when you do not know the way

我不太清楚。
Wǒ bù tài qīngchu.
I am not too clear (about this).

(对不起，) 我不知道怎么走。
(對不起，) 我不知道怎麼走。
(Duìbùqǐ,) wǒ bù zhīdào zěnme qù.
(Sorry,) I don’t know how to go.

(对不起，) 我不认识这个地方。
(對不起，) 我不認識這個地方。
(Duìbùqǐ,) wǒ bù rěnshì zhègè difang.
(Sorry,) I don’t know this place.

(对不起，) 我不知道。
(對不起，) 我不知道。
(Duìbùqǐ,) wǒ bù zhīdao.
(Sorry,) I don’t know.

44.7 Asking for and giving directions: sample conversations

Notice that the adverb 再 zài can be used to connect a series of directions.

32.2 Conversation 1

A: 请问，火車站在哪儿？
    請問，火車站在哪兒？
    Qíngwèn, huǒchēzhàn zài nǎr?
    May I ask, where is the train station?
Talking about movement, directions

Action verbs that refer to movement such as 跑 ‘to run,’ 走 ‘to walk,’ 跳 ‘to jump,’ 开/開 駕 ‘to drive,’ 飞/飛 乘 ‘to fly,’ 划 huá ‘to row,’ 游 yóu ‘to swim,’ and even 穿 chuān ‘to put on,’ 吃 chī ‘to eat,’ and 喝 hē ‘to drink’ may be suffixed with directional phrases that indicate the direction of the movement.

The directional suffix always ends in 来/來 lái ‘to come’ or 去 qù ‘to go.’ 来/來 lái ‘to come’ is used when the movement is towards the speaker or addressee. 去 qù ‘to go’ is used when the movement is away from the speaker or addressee.

我们走进来了。
We walked in.

他跑出去了。
He ran out.
These directional suffixes behave like resultative endings. 得 de and 不 bu may occur between the action verb and the direction suffix to indicate that the subject was able or unable to move to the direction indicated by the suffix.

你开得进去吗？
你開得進去嗎？
Nǐ kāidejìng qu ma?
Can you drive in?

車太大。我开不进去。
車太大。我開不進去。
Chē tài dà. Wǒ kàibùjìn qu.
The car is too big. I can’t drive in.

The object of the action verb may also be included in these directional endings. When it is included, it occurs between the direction word and 来 lái ‘to come’ or 去 qù ‘to go.’

她走进屋子来了。
她走進屋子來了。
Tā zǒujìn wūzi lái le.
She walked into the room.

我们开进城里去了。
我們開進城裏去了。
Wǒmen kāijìn chénglǐ qù le.
We drove into the city.
Talking about clock time and calendar time

Clock time

Talking about hours

There are two Mandarin words for hour 钟头 zhōngtóu and 小时 xiǎoshí. Speakers in different regions of China prefer one or the other word, but the meanings are identical. Hours are counted with the classifier 个/個 gé:

- one hour 一个钟头/一個鐘頭 一/一 or 一个小时/一個小時
- two hours 两个钟头/兩個鐘頭 二/二 or 两个小时/兩個小時
- three hours 三个钟头/三個鐘頭 三/三 or 三个小时/三個小時

To say ‘half an hour,’ place 半 bàn before the classifier 个/個 gé.

- 半个钟头/半個鐘頭 个/個 or 半个小时/半個小時
- 半个钟头/半個鐘頭 个/個 or 半个小时/半個小時
- 半个钟头/半個鐘頭 个/個 or 半个小时/半個小時

To indicate one or more hours and a half, place 半 bàn after the classifier 个/個 gé.

- 一个半钟头/一個半鐘頭 个/個 or 一个半小时/一個半小時
- 一个半钟头/一個半鐘頭 个/個 or 一个半小时/一個半小時
- 一个半钟头/一個半鐘頭 个/個 or 一个半小时/一個半小時

Talking about minutes and seconds

The word for minute 分 fēn. The word for second 秒 miǎo. 分 fēn and 秒 miǎo are classifiers and are directly preceded by a number. A phrase indicating the number of minutes or seconds may optionally end with the noun 钟/鐘 zhōng ‘clock.’
Clock time

1 分 (钟/鐘) 两分(钟)/两分(鐘)  or  二分(钟)/二分(鐘)
一分 (zhong) 两分 (zhong)  or  二分 (zhong)

1 秒(钟/鐘) 两秒(钟)/两秒(鐘)  or  二秒(钟)/二秒(鐘)
一秒 (zhong) 两秒 (zhong)  or  二秒 (zhong)

To indicate half a minute or half a second, place 半 bàn before the word for minute or second.

半分 bàn fēn
half an hour

半秒 bàn miǎo
half a second

To indicate one or more minutes or seconds and a half, place 半 bàn immediately after the word for minute/second.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minutes</th>
<th>Seconds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>一分半</td>
<td>一秒半</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yī fēn bàn</td>
<td>yī miǎo bàn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one and a half minutes</td>
<td>one and a half seconds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minutes</th>
<th>Seconds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>两分半/两分半</td>
<td>两秒半/两秒半</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liàng fēn bàn</td>
<td>liàng miǎo bàn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>two and a half minutes</td>
<td>two and a half seconds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.6.4

45.1.3

Telling time

45.1.3.1 o'clock: time on the hour

o'clock time is expressed as follows. 钟/鐘 zhōng is optional and is often not used. The ‘(X) o'clock’ phrase literally means ‘(X) dots of the clock.’

1 o'clock 一点钟/一點鐘 7 o'clock 七点钟/七點鐘
yī diǎn zhōng

2 o'clock 两点钟/兩點鐘 8 o'clock 八点钟/八點鐘
liǎng diǎn zhōng
或
èr diǎn zhōng

3 o'clock 三点钟/三點鐘 9 o'clock 九点钟/九點鐘
sān diǎn zhōng

4 o'clock 四点钟/四點鐘 10 o'clock 十点钟/十點鐘
sì diǎn zhōng

5 o'clock 五点钟/五點鐘 11 o'clock 十一点钟/十一點鐘
wǔ diǎn zhōng

6 o'clock 六点钟/六點鐘 12 o'clock 十二点钟/十二點鐘
liù diǎn zhōng

45.1.3.2 Reciting time as digital time

The most common way to tell time is to say it the way it appears on a digital clock.
TALKING ABOUT CLOCK TIME AND CALENDAR TIME

3:50  三点五十分(钟)
      三點五十分(鐘)

        sān diǎn wǔ shí fēn (zhōng)

4:27  四点二十七分(钟)
      四點二十七分(鐘)

        sì diǎn èr shí qī fēn (zhōng)

Reciting time with 零 líng ‘zero’
When time is recited as digital time, if the number of minutes is smaller than ten, minutes may optionally begin with 零 líng ‘zero.’ 零 líng ‘zero’ is also written as 0.

2:02  两点零二分
      兩點零二分

      liǎng diǎn líng èr fēn

To indicate half past the hour, use 半 bàn.

6:30  六点半
      六點半

      liù diǎn bàn

The phrases 一刻 yī kè ‘one quarter’ and 三刻 sān kè ‘three quarters’ can be used to express a quarter after or a quarter to and 45 minutes after the hour.

7:15  七点一刻(钟)
      七點一刻(鐘)

      qī diǎn yī kè (zhōng)

7:45  七点三刻(钟)
      七點三刻(鐘)

      qī diǎn sān kè (zhōng)

45.1.3.3 Telling time specifying ‘minutes to’ and ‘minutes past’ the hour
过/過 guò ‘pass’ introduces minutes past the hour. When reciting time with 过/過 guò, the order of information is as follows. 钟/鐘 zhōng is optional and is often omitted.

x hour  past       x minutes
x 点/點 diǎn  过/過 guò  x 分 fēn  钟/鐘 zhōng

3:10  三点过十分(钟)
      三點過十分(鐘)

        sān diǎn guò shí fēn (zhōng)

4:27  四点过二十七分(钟)
      四點過二十七分(鐘)

        sì diǎn guò èr shí qī fēn (zhōng)

7:15  七点过一刻(钟)
      七點過一刻(鐘)

        qī diǎn guò yī kè (zhōng)

7:45  七点过三刻(钟)
      七點過三刻(鐘)

        qī diǎn guò sān kè (zhōng)

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NOTE

过/過 guò cannot be used with 半 bán half.

差 chà ‘lack’ introduces minutes before the hour. 差 chà + minutes can occur either before or after the hour phrase, as follows. 钟/鐘 zhōng is optional and is often omitted.

Pattern 1

差 chà x 分 fēn (钟/鐘 zhōng)
(lit. ‘x o’clock lacking x minutes’)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6:50</td>
<td>七点差十分(钟)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>七點差十分(鐘)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>qī diǎn chà shífēn (zhōng)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:45</td>
<td>八点差一刻(钟)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>八點過一刻(鐘)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bā diǎn chà yī kè (zhōng)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pattern 2

差 chà x 分 fēn x 点/點 diǎn (钟/鐘 zhōng)
(lit. ‘lacking x minutes, x o’clock’)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6:50</td>
<td>差十分七点(钟)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>差十分七點(鐘)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>chà shífēn qī diǎn (zhōng)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:45</td>
<td>差一刻八点(钟)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>過一刻八點(鐘)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>chà yī kè bā diǎn (zhōng)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**45.1.4 Indicating a.m. and p.m.**

In Mandarin, instead of the two-way distinction between a.m. and p.m., time is categorized as follows:

- **morning** (the early hours, approximately 6–8 or 9 a.m.)
  - 早上 zǎoshang
  - or 早晨 zāochén
  - 上午 shángwǔ
- **before noon** (approximately 8 or 9 a.m. until noon)
  - 中午 zhōngwǔ
- **midday** (12 noon or the time around noon.)
- **afternoon** (approximately 1 p.m. to 6 p.m.)
- **evening** (beginning approximately 6 p.m.)
- **midnight – middle of the night** (approximately midnight to 3 a.m.)
  - 晚上 wǎnshāng
  - 半夜 bàn yè
These expressions occur at the beginning of the clock time phrase:

- **xiàwǔ sān diǎn zhōng**
  - 3 o'clock in the afternoon (3 p.m.)

- **zǎoshāngh ī liù diǎn bàn**
  - 6:30 in the morning (6:30 a.m.)

- **shǎnghǔ shí diǎn**
  - 10 in the morning (10 a.m.)

- **wǎnshāngh qiǎ diǎn sānkè**
  - 7:45 in the evening (7:45 p.m.)

The location of clock time phrases in the sentence

Clock time, like all phrases that indicate the time when a situation takes place, occurs at the beginning of the predicate, right after the subject.

> Tā měitiān zhōngwǔ shí’èr diǎn zhōng chī fàn.
> 他每天中午十二点钟吃饭。
>  
> Wǒmen liù diǎn chī wǎnfàn.
> 我们六点吃晚饭。

The position of the clock time phrase in the sentence is the same whether the sentence is a statement or a question.

**Q:** 什么时候吃晚饭？
- Shēnhé shíhou chī wǎnfàn?
  - When will we have dinner?

**A:** 我们六点吃晚饭。
- Wǒmen liù diǎn chī wǎnfàn.
  - We will eat dinner at 6:00.

**Q:** 我们什么时候见？
- Wǒmen shěnhé shíhou jiàn?
  - When shall we meet?

**A:** 我们明天上午九点见。
- Wǒmen míngtiān shǎngwǔ jiǔ diǎn jiàn.
  - We will meet at 9:00 tomorrow morning.
### Asking about time

To ask for the present hour of the day, say:

現在几点钟？  
現在幾點鐘？
Xiànzài jǐ diǎn zhōng?  
What time (hour) is it now?

More general questions about the present time are the following:

現在(是)什么时候?  
現在(是)甚麼時候?
Xiànzài (shì) shénme shíhòu?  
What time is it now?

or

現在(是)什么時間？
現在(是)甚麼時間？
Xiànzài (shì) shénme shíjiān?
What time is it now?

### Calendar time

#### 45.2

China uses two different calendar systems. The Western calendar, called 阳历/陽曆 yánglì, is used in nearly all official and public contexts, such as school, business, publishing, civil administration, military affairs, and politics. The 阴历/陰曆 yīnli (lunar calendar), sometimes called 农历/農曆 nónɡlì (agricultural calendar), is used to mark birthdays, and traditional Chinese holidays such as the Chinese New Year, the Dragon Festival, the Mid-Autumn festival, etc. Until the nineteenth century, the lunar calendar was the primary calendar. Nowadays, the Western calendar is more widely used than the lunar calendar, especially in urban China.

#### 45.2.1

#### Years

##### Counting years and asking about the number of years

To count years, precede the word 年 nián ‘year’ by a number. No additional classifier occurs between the number and the word for year.

- one year  一 年 yī nián
- two years  两年/兩年 liǎnɡ nián
- three years  三年 sān nián

To ask how many years, say:

几年?/幾年?
jǐ nián?
how many years?

or

多少年？
duōshǎo nián?
how many years?
45.2.1.2 Referring to years

- this year: 今年 jīnnián
- next year: 明年 míngnián
- two years from now: 后年/後年 hòunián
- three years from now: 大后年/大後年 dà hòunián
- four years from now: 四年以后/四年以後 sì nián yǐhòu
- last year: 去年 qùnián
- the year before last: 前年 qiánhòunián
- three years ago: 大前年 dà qiánnián
- four years ago: 四年以前 sì nián yǐqián

45.2.1.3 Reciting years

To recite a year, read the year as a series of single numbers followed by 年 nián:

- 2004: èr líng líng sì nián
- 1976: yī jiǔ qī lìù nián

To indicate BC and AD, say:

**公**元 gōngyuán or **公**历/公曆 gōnglì, AD
**公**前 gōngyuánqián or **前** qián, BC

- 公元 2002 年: gōngyuán 2002 nián
- 公元前 47 年: gōngyuánqián 47 nián

In Taiwan, years are counted from the founding of the Republic of China in 1911:

- 民國 47 年: Mínguó 47 nián = 1958
- 民國 93 年: Mínguó 93 nián = 2004

45.2.1.4 Asking about years

To ask about a year say:

- 哪年? nǎ nián?
- 你是哪年毕业的? nǐ shì nǎ nián bì yè de?

In what year did you graduate?

- 这个大学是哪年建立的? zhègè dàxué shì nǎ nián jiànlì de?

In what year was this university established?

45.2.2 Months

月 yuè is the word for month and it is also part of the name of the months. When months are counted or referred to in expressions such as ‘one month,’ ‘this month,’
or ‘next month,’ the classifier 个/個 gè occurs between the specifier and/or number and 月 yuè ‘month.’ The names of the months do not include a classifier.

**45.2.1 Counting months and asking about the number of months**

To count months, precede the word 月 yuè ‘month’ by a number and the classifier 个/個 gè:

- one month 一个月/一個月 yī gè yuè
- two months 两个月/兩個月 liǎng gè yuè
- three months 三个月/三個月 sān gè yuè

To ask how many months, say:

- 几个月？ 几個月？ jǐ gè yuè? duōshǎo yuè?
- how many months? 一年有几个月？ 一年有幾個月？ yī nián yǒu jǐ gè yuè?
- One year has how many months? (How many months are there in a year?)

To ask which month it is, say 几月？几月？ jǐ yuè? ‘which month?’

**45.2.2 Referring to months with respect to ‘now’**

To refer to the months, use these expressions:

- this month 这个月/這個月 zhège yuè
- next month 下个月/下個月 xià gè yuè
- last month 上个月/上個月 shàng gè yuè

**45.2.3 The names of the months**

- January 一月 yīyuè
- February 二月 èryuè
- March 三月 sānyuè
- April 四月 sìyuè
- May 五月 wǔyuè
- June 六月 lìuyuè
- July 七月 qǐyuè
- August 八月 bāyuè
- September 九月 jiǔyuè
- October 十月 shíyuè
- November 十一月 shíyī yuè
- December 十二月 shí’èryuè

To ask which month it is, say 几月？几月？ jǐ yuè? ‘which month?’

- 你是几月生的？ nǐ shì jǐ yuè shēng de?
- 你是幾月生的？
- In which month were you born?
TALKING ABOUT CLOCK TIME AND CALENDAR TIME

45.2.3 Weeks
Mandarin has two words for week: 礼拜/禮拜 libài and 星期 xīngqī.

礼拜/禮拜 libài was originally associated with religious services, but no longer has religious connotations. Different regions of China have different preferences in the choice of the word for week. 星期 xīngqī is the word used in calendars, newspapers, and formal documents.

45.2.3.1 Counting weeks and asking about the number of weeks
To count weeks use the classifier 个/個 ɡè:

- one week 一个星期/一個星期  yī ɡè xīngqī or 一个礼拜/一個禮拜
- two weeks 两个星期/兩個星期  liǎnɡ ɡè xīngqī or 两个礼拜/兩個禮拜
- three weeks 三个星期/三個星期  sān ɡè xīngqī or 三个礼拜/三個禮拜

To ask how many weeks, say:

- 几个星期?/幾個星期?  or  几个礼拜?/幾個禮拜?
- jī ɡè xīngqī?  or  jī ɡè libài?
- how many weeks?

45.2.3.2 Referring to weeks and weekends with respect to ‘now’
Expressions that refer to weeks:

- this week 这个星期/這個星期  zhèɡè xīngqī
- next week 下个星期/下個星期  xià ɡè xīngqī
- last week 上个星期/上個星期  shànɡ ɡè xīngqī

Expressions that refer to weekends:

- this weekend 这个周末/這個週末  zhèɡè zhōumò
- next weekend 下个周末/下個週末  xià ɡè zhōumò
- last weekend 上个周末/上個週末  shànɡ ɡè zhōumò

45.2.4 Days

45.2.4.1 Counting days and asking about the number of days
To count days, put the number right before the word for day. No additional classifier is used:

- one day 一天  yī tiān
- two days 两天/兩天  liǎnɡ tiān
- three days 三天  sān tiān

To ask about the number of days, say:

- 几天? 几天?  or  多少天?
- jiān tiān?  or  duōshǎo tiān?
- how many days? (small number expected)
- how many days?
the days of the week from Monday to Saturday include a number. Pay attention to
the words for Sunday.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>礼拜天/禮拜天</td>
<td>libai tian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>or</td>
<td>or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>礼拜日/禮拜日</td>
<td>libai ri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>礼拜一/禮拜一</td>
<td>libai yi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>礼拜二/禮拜二</td>
<td>libai er</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>礼拜三/禮拜三</td>
<td>libai san</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>礼拜四/禮拜四</td>
<td>libai si</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>礼拜五/禮拜五</td>
<td>libai wu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>礼拜六/禮拜六</td>
<td>libai liu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To say ‘last Tuesday,’ say:

上(个)星期二 or 上(个)礼拜二
shang (ge) xingqi er or shang (ge) libai er

To say ‘next Saturday,’ say:

下(个)星期六 or 下(个)礼拜六
xia (ge) xingqi liu or xia (ge) libai liu

To ask about days of the week, say:

星期几？ or 礼拜几？
xingqi ji？ or libai ji？

What day of the week?

今天(是)星期几？
Jintian (shì) xingqi ji？
What day of the week is it today?

明天(是)礼拜几？
Mingtian (shì) libai ji？
What day of the week is it tomorrow?
45.2.4.3 Referring to days before and after today

大前天  dà qiántiān  three days ago
前天   qiántiān  the day before yesterday
昨天   zuótiān  yesterday
今天   jīntiān  today
明天   míngtiān  tomorrow
后天/後天  hòutiān  the day after tomorrow
大后天/大後天  dà hòutiān  three days from now

45.2.4.4 Referring to the date of the month (the first, second, third of the month, etc.)

There are two words for date that are used when referring to the date of the month, 号/號 hào and 日 rì. 日 rì is more formal than 号/號 hào and is used in calendars and other written documents. To indicate the date, put the number directly before 日 rì or 号/號 hào:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>简/jiǎn</th>
<th>形/xíng</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the 5th (of the month)</td>
<td>五/五</td>
<td>日/日</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the 22nd (of the month)</td>
<td>二/二</td>
<td>日/日</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To ask about the date, say:

几号？  jǐ hào?  what is the date?
幾號？  jǐ hào?  what is the date?
今天几号？  jīntiān jǐ hào?  What is today's date?
今天幾號？  jīntiān jǐ hào?  What is today's date?

45.2.4.5 Reciting complete days and asking about dates

In Mandarin, complete dates are presented from the largest unit of time to the smallest unit of time as follows:

year + month + date

一九九年・七月・三十一日
yī jiǔ jiǔ bā nián, qīyuè, sānshí yī rì
July 31, 1998

二零零零年一月一日
èr líng líng líng nián yī yuè yī rì
January 1, 2000

一九八二年十月五号
yī jiǔ bā èr nián shí yuè wǔ hào
October 5, 1982
Calendar time

To ask about complete dates, say:

哪年几月几日？ or 哪年幾月幾號？
哪年幾月幾日？
nà nián jǐ yuè jǐ rì?
which year which month which date

你是哪年几月几号生的？
你是哪年幾月幾號生的？

Nǐ shì nà nián jǐ yuè jǐ hào shēng de?
You were born in which year, which month, which date?
(When were you born?)

他们是哪年几月几日结婚的？
他們是哪年幾月幾日結婚的？

Tāmen shì nà nián jǐ yuè jǐ rì jiéhūn de?
In which year, which month, and on which date were they married?
(When were they married?)

45.2.5
Talking about semesters
学期/學期 xuéqí means a semester (of a school year).

45.2.5.1
Counting semesters
To count semesters, put the classifier 个/個 gè after the number and before the word学期/學期 xuéqí semester.

one semester 一个学期/一個學期 yī gè xuéqí
two semesters 两个学期/兩個學期 liǎng gè xuéqí
three semesters 三个学期/三個學期 sān gè xuéqí

45.2.5.2
Referring to semesters
学期/學期 xuéqí are referred to in the same way as weeks, weekends, and months.

this semester 这个学期/這個學期 zhègè xuéqí
next semester 下个学期/下個學期 xià gè xuéqí
last semester 上个学期/上個學期 shàng gè xuéqí
46

Expressing obligations and prohibitions

46.1

Expressing obligations

46.1.1

Expressing strong obligations: must

Here are the words used to express ‘strong obligations’ in Mandarin with sentences illustrating their use. All of these words can be translated with the English ‘must.’

得 děi

明天你得早点儿起来。
明天你得早點兒起來。
Míntiān nǐ děi zǎo diànr qǐlái.
You have to get up earlier tomorrow morning.

必得 bìděi

你必得按时来上课。
你必得按時來上課。
Nǐ bìděi ànhshì lái shàngkè.
You must come to class on time.

必须/必须 bǐxū

去中国以前你必须申请签证。
去中國以前你必須申請簽證。
Qù Zhōngguó yǐqián nǐ bǐxū shēnqǐng qǐzhèng.
Before you go to China you must apply for a visa.

必得 bìděi and 必须/必须 bǐxū are more formal and stronger than 得 děi. 必须/必须 bǐxū is also used in legal pronouncements and in other formal spoken and written contexts.

经济合同用货币履行义务时，。。。必须用人民币计算和支付。
经济合同用貨幣履行義務時，。。。必須用人民幣計算和支付。
Jīngjì hétóng yòng huòbì lǔxing yìwù shì，。。。bǐxū yòng rénmínbì jisuàn hé zhīfù.
When economic contracts provide for the performance of obligations through money，。。。Rénmínbì must be used for calculating and paying obligations.
46.1.2 Expressing ‘weak’ social and moral obligations: should, shall, ought to

Here are the words used in Mandarin to express the kind of ‘weak obligations’ associated with the English words ‘should’ and ‘ought to’ with sentences illustrating their use. In Mandarin, these words are also used to express moral obligations such as the responsibilities of parents to children or children to parents, and social obligations involving the things that a good person should do.

应当/應該 yìngdāng is more formal than 应该/應該 yǐnggāi and can be used in formal texts including legal documents. 应/應 gāi is used in informal speech. 应/應 yīng is used in formal texts including legal documents.

应该/應該 yǐnggāi

父母应该照顾他们的孩子。
父母應該照顧他們的孩子。
Fùmǔ yǐnggāi zhāogù tāmen de háizi.
Parents should take care of their children.

应当/應該 yìngdāng

你有错误就应当改正。
你有錯誤就應當改正。
Nǐ yǒu cuòwù jiù yìngdāng gāizhèng.
When you make a mistake, you should correct it.

该/該 gāi

我该去上班了。
我該去上班了。
Wǒ gāi qù shàngbān le.
I should go to work.

In legal documents, 应/應 yīng often means shall.

经济合同被确认无效后，当事人依据该合同所取得的财产，应当返还给对方。
經濟合同被確認無效後，當事人依據該合同所取得的財產，應當返還給對方。
Jīngjì hétóng bèi quèwén wúxìaò hòu, dāngshìrén yǐjù gǎi hétóng suǒ qǔ de cái chān, yīng fān huán gěi duìfāng.
After an economic contract has been confirmed to be invalid, the parties shall return to each other any property that they have acquired pursuant to the contract.

应/應 yīng may occur in legal texts to specify moral, though non-legal obligations. The following is an excerpt from Section 1, Article 3, of the Child Welfare Law of Taiwan.

父母、养父母或监护人对其儿童应负保育之责任。
父母、養父母或監護人對其兒童應負保育之責任。
Fùmǔ, yǎng fùmǔ huò jiānhù rén duì qí értóng yīng fù bāoyù zhī zérén.
Parents, foster parents, or legal guardians should bear the responsibility of rearing the children in the household.
46.1.3 Expressing negative obligations: need not, do not have to

The Mandarin words used to indicate that an action need not be done are 不必 bù bì, 不用 bù yòng, 甭 béng, 不须/不须 bù xū, and 无须/無须 wú xū.

不必 bù bì

他們明天不必來上課。
他們明天不必來上課。
Tāmén míngtiān bù bì lái shàng kè.
They don’t have to come to class tomorrow.

不用 bù yòng

你不用謝我。謝她。
你不用謝我。謝她。
Nǐ bù yòng xiè wǒ. Xiè tā.
You don’t have to thank me. Thank her.

甭 béng

甭 béng is the contraction of 不用 bù yòng. It is used in informal speech.

我們都是自己人。甭那麼客氣。
我們都是自己人。甭那麼客氣。
Wǒmen dōu shì zìjǐ rén. Béng nàme kèqì.
We are all friends. You don’t have to be so polite.

不須/不須 bù xū

去中國以前不須打針。
去中國以前不須打針。
Qù Zhōngguó yǐqián bù xū dǎ zhēn.
Before going to China it is not necessary to get vaccinations.

无须/無须 wú xū

這件事無須告訴你父母。
這件事無須告訴你父母。
Zhè jiàn shì wú xū gào su nǐ fùmǔ.
There is no need to tell your parents about this matter.
(As for this matter, there is no need to tell your parents.)

46.1.4 Asking questions about obligations

To ask if there is an obligation to do something, use a yes–no question. 吗/嗎 ma questions can be used with all obligation words.

我們得看那本書嗎？
我們得看那本書嗎？
Wǒmen děi kàn nà běn shū ma?
Do we have to read that book?

应该/應該 yīnggāi and 应当/應當 yīngdāng can also occur in verb-not-verb questions.
Expressing prohibitions: must not, should not

46.2

46.2.1 Expressing strong prohibitions: must not

The words used to express strong prohibitions in Mandarin are 不许/不許 bù xǔ ‘must not,’ 不要 bù yào ‘don’t,’ and 別 bié ‘don’t.’

医院里不许抽烟。

Yīyuàn lǐ bù xǔ chōu yān.

Smoking is not permitted in the hospital.

别开玩笑。

Bié kāi wánxiào.

Don’t joke. (Be serious.)

考试以前不要紧张。

Kǎoshì yìqián bù yào jīnzhāng.

Before a test don’t be nervous.

12.5

46.2.2 Expressing weak prohibitions: should not

The Mandarin words used to indicate that an action should not be done are 不应该/不應當 bù yīnggāi and 不应当/應當 bù yīngdāng.

你不应该/應當打人。

Nǐ bù yīnggāi/yīngdāng dǎ rén.

You shouldn’t hit people.

不应该/不應該 bù yīnggāi ‘should not’ and 不应当/應當 bù yīngdāng ‘should not’ sometimes carry negative expectations. Both of the following sentences can be used after the fact, when we have seen that the medicine had side effects, or that Zhang San is a bad person.
EXPRESSING OBLIGATIONS AND PROHIBITIONS

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Zhège yào bù yīnggāi yǒu fù zuòyòng a.
This drug is not supposed to have any side effects.

Zhāng Sān bù yīnggāi shì huái rén a.
Zhang San is not supposed to be a bad person.

46.2.3 Formal written words that specify prohibited activities
Here are some commonly used expressions in formal written texts that indicate prohibited activities. They are always followed by a verb phrase.

禁止 jīnzhǐ + verb phrase  prohibited from
免 miǎn + verb phrase  prohibited from
勿 wù + verb phrase  do not
严禁/嚴禁 yánjìn + verb phrase  strictly prohibited from
不准 bù zhǔn + verb phrase  not permitted to

Here are the texts of actual signs posted in Chinese cities indicating prohibited activities. They illustrate the use of formal written words for prohibitions.

Gè zhǒng chēliàng jīnzhǐ jìnrù
No entry
(lit. ‘All vehicles prohibited from entering’)

Zìxíng chē qīchē mótuōché jīnzhǐ rù nèi chǔ
Bicycles, cars and motorcycles prohibited from entering

Jīnzhí pāi zhào
No photographs
(lit. ‘Taking photographs is prohibited’)

Jīnzhī xī yān
No smoking
(lit. ‘Smoking is prohibited’)

Bùzhǔn luàn rèng guāguǒ píhé
It is not permitted to throw away melon and fruit peels and pits

Xiánrén miǎn jìn
No admission except on business
(lit. ‘Persons with no business here are prohibited from entering’)

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Expressing prohibitions: must not, should not

禁止停车
禁止停车
Jinzhi ting che
No parking
(lit. ‘Parking is prohibited’)
禁止摘花
Jinzhi zhai hua
Do not pick the flowers
(lit. ‘Picking flowers is prohibited’)
禁止随地吐痰
禁止随地吐痰
jinzhi suidi tutan
No spitting
(lit. ‘Spitting is prohibited’)

请勿停车
Please don’t park
Qing wu ting che
No parking
(lit. ‘Please don’t park’)
不准随地吐痰
不准随地吐痰
Buzhun suidi tutan
No spitting
(lit. ‘Spitting on the ground is not permitted’)
请勿随地吐痰
Please don’t spit
Qing wu suidi tutan
No spitting
(lit. ‘Please don’t spit’)

46.2
Expressing commands and permission

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47.1

Commands

47.1.1

Making a command

There is no specific command form in Mandarin, but there are several ways to make a command.

The simplest way is simply to state the verb:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Command</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>吃！</td>
<td>Ēt!</td>
<td>Eat!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>说！/説！</td>
<td>Shuō!</td>
<td>Speak!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>坐！</td>
<td>Zuò!</td>
<td>Sit!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The verb may sometimes be suffixed with 着/著 zhe:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Command</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>吃着！/吃著！</td>
<td>Ētzhē!</td>
<td>Eat!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>拿着！/拿著！</td>
<td>Názhē!</td>
<td>Hold it!/Take it!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>坐着！/坐著！</td>
<td>Zuòzhē!</td>
<td>Sit!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Commands may also take the form of a statement followed by 吧 ba.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Command</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>吃吧！</td>
<td>Ēt ba!</td>
<td>Eat!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>给我吧！</td>
<td>Gěi wǒ ba!</td>
<td>Give (it) to me!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>坐吧！</td>
<td>Zuò ba!</td>
<td>Sit!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that the particle 吧 ba at the end of the sentence may also convey suggestion:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>我们看电影吧！</td>
<td>We'll see a movie!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wǒmen kàn diànyīng ba!</td>
<td>Let’s see a movie!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

or supposition:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>你是王老师吗。</td>
<td>You must be professor Wang.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nǐ shì Wáng lǎoshī ba.</td>
<td>You must be professor Wang.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Context will make the function of 吧 ba clear in any given sentence.

47.1.2 Negative commands: prohibitions
To command someone not to do something, use 不要 bù yào ‘don’t,’ 别 bié ‘don’t,’ or 不许 bù xǔ ‘not allow.’

- 不要在屋裡吸烟！
- 不要在屋裡吸菸！
- 不要在屋里吸烟！
- 不要在屋里吸烟！

Bù yào zài wū lǐ xī yān!
Don’t smoke in the house!

别出去！
Bié chūqù!
Don’t go out!

喝酒以后不许开车。
喝酒以后不许開車。
Hē jiǔ yǐhòu bù xǔ kāi chē.
After you drink alcohol you are not allowed to drive a car.

47.1.3 Reporting a command
To report a command, use the verb 叫 jiào ‘to order, ‘to call,’ ‘to tell.’

他叫我走。
Tā jiào wǒ zǒu.
He ordered me to leave. (He told me to leave.)

谁叫你这样做的？
Shéi jiào nǐ zhèyàng zuò de?
Who told you to do it this way?

Q: 妈妈叫你去买什么？
Māmā jiào nǐ qù mǎi shénme?
What did mom tell you to buy?

A: 妈妈叫我去买一瓶可口可乐。
Māmā jiào wǒ qù mǎi yī píng kěkǒukělè.
Mom made me (told me to) buy a bottle of Coke.

Note that 叫 jiào has other meanings and functions that are not associated with commands. They include ‘to call/to be called’:

我叫郭美玲。
Wǒ jiào Guō Měilíng.
I am called Mėiling Guō.
and the passive marker ‘by’:

饼干都叫孩子吃完了。
饼乾都叫孩子吃完了。
Bǐnggān dōu jiào háizi chīwán le.
The cookies were all eaten up by the children.

47.2 Permission

47.2.1 Giving permission

To give permission use the modal verb 可以 kéyī ‘can/permitted.’ To deny permission, say 不可以 bù kéyī ‘cannot/not permitted.’

Q: 妈妈，今天晚上，我可以不可以跟朋友去看电影？
妈妈，今天晚上，我可以不可以跟朋友去看電影？
Māmā, jīntiān wǎnshàng, wǒ kéyī bù kéyī gèn péngyou qù kàn diànyǐng?
Mom, may I go to see a movie with my friends tonight?
A: 你可以去看电影，可是不可以太晚回家。
你可以去看電影，可是不可以太晚回家。
Nǐ kéyī qù kàn diànyǐng, kěshì bù kéyī tài wǎn huí jiā.
Yes, you may go to see a movie, but you can’t come home too late.

Q: 这里可以不可以抽烟？
這裡可以不可以抽菸？
Zhèlǐ kéyī bù kéyī chōu yān?
Can one smoke here?
A: 这里不可以抽菸。
這裡不可以抽菸。
Zhèlǐ bù kéyī chōu yān.
No, one can’t smoke here.

Q: 我们今天不能来，可以明天来吗？
我們今天不能來，可以明天來嗎？
Wǒmen jīntiān bù néng lái, kéyī míngtiān lái ma?
We can’t come today. Can we come tomorrow instead?
A: 当然可以。
當然可以。
Dāngrán kéyī.
Of course you can.

12.2.3 Reporting permission

To report that someone is allowed to do something, use 让/讓 ràng ‘to let/to permit/to allow,’ or 许/許 xǔ ‘to permit/to allow.’

我父母让我去中国学习。
我父母讓我去中國學習。
Wǒ fùmǔ ràng wǒ qù Zhōngguó xuéxí.
My parents let me go to China to study.
The government has allowed me to leave the country.

让/讓 `ràng` also functions as the passive marker 'by':

我的行李让人拿走了。

我的行李讓人拿走了。

Wǒ de xíngli ràng rén ná zǒu le.
My suitcase was taken away by someone.

To indicate that someone is not allowed to do something, say 不叫 `bù jiào`, 不让/不讓 `bù ràng`, or 不许/不許 `bù xǔ`.

老师不叫我们出去。

老師不叫我們出去。

Làoshī bù jiào wǒmen chūqu.
The teacher won’t allow us to go out.

妈妈不让我看电视。

媽媽不讓我電視。

Māma bù ràng wǒ kàn diànshì.
Mom won’t let me watch television.

你不许喝酒以后开车。

你不許喝酒以後開車。

Nǐ bù xǔ hē jiǔ yǐhòu kāi chē.
You are not allowed to drive after drinking alcohol.
Expressing ability and possibility

48

Expressing ability

48.1

Expressing a learned ability

To express a learned or acquired ability or skill, something that you know how to do or have learned how to do, use the modal verb 会/會 hui.

Q: 你会说英文吗？
你會說英文嗎？
Nǐ hui shuo Yíngwén ma?
Do you know how to speak English?
A: 我会说一点儿英文。
I know how to speak a little English.
Wǒ huì shuō yìdiǎn Yíngwén.

Q: 你会开车吗？
你會開車嗎？
Nǐ hui kai che ma?
Do you know how to drive?
A: 我还不会开车呢。
I don’t know how to drive yet.
Wǒ hái bù huì kāi chē ne.

48.1.2

Expressing an innate ability or talent

To express a skill or talent or an innate ability, use the modal verb 会/會 hui. When expressing this meaning, 会/會 hui may be preceded by the intensifiers 很 ‘very,’ 真 zhēn ‘really,’ or 最 zuì ‘the most.’

Wǒ mèimei hén hui tiào wǔ. Nǐ qǐng tā tiào ba.
My little sister dances very well. Ask her to dance with you.

Wáng jiàoshòu zuì huì jiāo shùxué le.
Professor Wang is the best at teaching math.

Wáng: 来，干杯！
林: 我真不会喝酒。
Lín: Wǒ zhēn bù huì hē jiǔ.

Wáng: Bottoms up!
Lín: I really can’t drink.
48.2 Expressing possibility

48.2.1 Expressing the likely occurrence of an event

To express possibility or the likelihood of the occurrence of an event, as in ‘will, could possibly,’ or ‘would probably,’ use the modal verb 会/會 hui.

Q: 明天会不会下雪？
明天會不會下雪？
Míngtiān huì bù huì xià xuě?
Is it going to snow tomorrow?
A: 天气预报说明天不会下雪。
天气預報說明天不會下雪。
Tiānqì yùbào shuō míngtiān bù huì xià xuě.
According to the weather report, it won’t snow tomorrow.

Q: 你想我们要坐的飞机会不会误点？
你想我們要坐的飛機會不會誤點？
Nhí xiǎng wǒmen yào zuò de fēijī huì bù huì wùdiǎn?
Do you think the plane we are going to take will be late?
A: 航空公司说，我们要坐的飞机不会误点。
航空公司說，我們要坐的飛機不會誤點。
Hángkōng gōngsī shuō, wǒmen yào zuò de fēijī bù huì wùdiǎn.
The airline company says the plane we are going to take won’t be late.
Expressing feasibility

The modal 可以 kěyǐ is also sometimes used to express the feasibility of an event.

我们今天可以不考试吗？ 不可以。
Wǒmen jīntiān kěyǐ bù kǎo shì ma? Bù kěyǐ.
Can we not have a test today? No, not possible.

The most common function of 可以 kěyǐ is to express permission.

Describing circumstances that may influence the occurrence of an event

To specify circumstantial factors that favor or obstruct the occurrence of an event use 能 néng.

中国孩子都能上中学吗？
Zhōngguó háizi dōu néng shàng zhōngxué ma?
Can all Chinese children go to high school?

今天我的车坏了，所以不能去接你了。 
Jīntiān wǒ de chē huài le, suǒyǐ bù néng qù jiē nǐ le.
I can’t pick you up today because my car has broken down.
Expressing desires, needs, preferences, and willingness

49.1 Expressing desires

To express a desire for something to happen, say:

希望 xīwàng ‘to hope’

我希望我们有机会再见。
我希望我們有機會再見。

Wǒ xīwàng wǒmen yǒu jīhuì zài jiàn.
I hope we have the chance to meet again.

要 yào ‘to want’

她要看她母亲。

Tā yào kàn tā mǔqīn.
She wants to see her mother.

她要回家。

Tā yào huí jiā.
She wants to go home.

盼望 pànwàng ‘hope for, long for’ (+ VP)

母亲天天盼望哥哥回来。

Mǔqīn tiāntiān pànwàng gēge huí lai.
Mother hopes every day that older brother will come back.

期望 qīwàng ‘to expect’

我期望能早日回国。

Wǒ qīwàng néng zǎori huí guó.
I hope I can return to my home country soon.
EXPRESSING DESIRES, NEEDS, PREFERENCES, AND WILLINGNESS

期望 qīwàng can also be used as a noun:

父母对孩子的期望很大。
父母對孩子的期望很大。
Fùmǔ duì háizi de qīwàng hěn dà.
Parents have great hopes and expectations for their children.
(The expectations of parents regarding their children are very big.)

To express a desire for something, say:

要 yào ‘to want’

他要一辆新车。
他要一輛新車。
Tā yào yī liàng xīn chē.
He wants a new car.

小狗饿了，要吃东西。
小狗餓了，要吃東西。
Xiǎo gǒu è le, yào chī dōngxi.
The little dog is hungry and wants to eat something.

Expressing needs

To indicate that you need something, say:

需要 xiūyào ‘to need’

他需要安慰和了解。
他需要安慰和了解。
Tā xiūyào ānwèi hé liáojiě.
He needs comfort and understanding.

我需要你的帮助。
我需要你的幫助。
Wǒ xiūyào nǐ de bāngzhù.
I need your help.

得 déi [+ verb] ‘to need [to do]’

这个汤得多加点盐。
這個湯得多加點鹽。
Zhège tāng duì duō jiā diǎn yán.
This soup needs a little more salt.
(This soup needs (for us) to add a little more salt.)

我们得晚上十点到家。
我們得晚上十點到家。
Wǒmen déi wǎnshang shí diǎn dào jiā.
We need to be home by 10 p.m.
49.3 Expressing preferences

To indicate a preference, say:

宁可/寧可 níngkě ‘to prefer’

我们宁可在家吃饭，不愿意去饭店吃。

Wǒmen níngkě zài jiā chī fàn, bù yuàn yì qù fànguǎn chī.

We’d prefer to eat at home. We do not want to go to a restaurant to eat.

他宁可死，也不愿意屈服。

Tā níngkě sǐ, yě bù yuàn yì qūfú.

He’d prefer to die, and he is not ready to surrender.

偏爱/偏愛 piān’ài ‘favor, be partial to somebody or something’

老师不应该偏爱某一个学生。

Lǎoshī bù yīnggài piān’ài měi yī gè xuésheng.

The teacher should not be partial to any student.

情愿/情願 qíngyuàn ‘would rather’

我情愿一辈子不结婚，也不要跟他结婚。

Wǒ qíngyuàn yī bèizi bù jiéhūn, yě bù yào gēn tā jiéhūn.

I’d rather be single all my life than marry him.

49.4 Expressing willingness

To indicate willingness, say:

愿意/願意 yuàn yì ‘to be willing’

我愿意嫁给他。

Wǒ yuàn yì jià gé tā.

I am willing to marry him.

我不愿意嫁给别人。

Wǒ bù yuàn yì jià gé bié rén.

I don’t want to marry anyone else.

我愿意跟你合作。

Wǒ yuàn yì gēn nǐ hézuò.

I am willing to cooperate with you.
Expressing knowledge, advice, and opinions

Expressing knowledge

To express knowledge, use the following verbs:

- 知道 zhīdào to know
- 认识 rènshi to recognize/to know
- 会/會 huì to be able to, to know

Expressing knowledge with 知道 zhīdào and 认识 rènshi

知道 zhīdào and 认识 rènshi can both be translated into English as ‘to know.’ They are sometimes interchangeable, but they often have distinct uses.

- 知道 zhīdào means to know information.
- 认识 rènshi means to know of or to recognize. It is used to talk about recognizing Chinese characters and locations, as well as people.

The following examples illustrate the differences between 知道 zhīdào and 认识 rènshi.

Conversation 1

Q: 你认识他吗？
   你認識他嗎？
   Nǐ rènshi tā ma?

Do you know him?

A: 我知道他是谁，可是我不认识他。
   Wǒ zhīdào tā shì shéi, kěshì wǒ bù rènshi tā.
   I know who he is, but I don’t know him.

Do not say

* 你知道他吗？
   你知道他嗎？
   Nǐ zhīdào tā ma?
Expressing knowledge

Conversation 2

Q: 你知道火车站在哪儿吗？
   你知道火車站在哪兒嗎?
   Nǐ zhīdào huǒchēzhàn zài nǎr ma?
   Do you know where the train station is?

A:  我不知道。对不起。
   我不知道。對不起。
   Wǒ bù zhīdào. Duībuqǐ.

Do not say

*你认识火车站在哪儿吗？
*你認識火車站在哪兒嗎?
   Nǐ rènshì huǒchēzhàn zài nǎr ma?

Conversation 3

Q:  你认识中国字吗？
    你認識中國字嗎？
    Nǐ rènshì Zhōngguó zì ma?
    Do you know Chinese characters?

A:  我认识，可是我不知道怎么写。
    我認識，可是我不知道怎麼寫。
    Wǒ rènshì, kěshì wǒ bù zhīdào zēnme xiě.
    I recognize them, but I don’t know how to write them.

Do not say

*你知道中国字吗？
*你認識中國字嗎？
   Nǐ zhīdào Zhōngguó zì ma?

Conversation 4

Q:  请问，到图书馆怎么走？
    請問，到圖書館怎麼走？
    Qīngwèn, dào túshūguǎn zēnme zǒu?
    Excuse me, how do you go to the library?

A:  对不起，我不认识路。
    對不起，我不認識路。
    Duībuqǐ, wǒ bù rènshì lù.
    Sorry, I don’t know the way.

Do not say

*我不知道路。
   Wǒ bù zhīdào lù.

50.1.2 Expressing knowledge with 会/會 hui

One meaning conveyed by the modal verb 会/會 hui is that of ability associated with knowledge. In the following sentences, 会/會 hui means to be able to or to know.

Q:  你会说英文吗？
    你會說英文嗎？
    Nǐ huì shuō Yīngwén ma?
    Do you speak English?

A:  我会说一点儿。
    我會說一點兒。
    Wǒ huì shuō yīdiǎnr.
    I can speak a little.
EXPRESSING KNOWLEDGE, ADVICE, AND OPINIONS

Q: 你会不会开车？
   Nǐ huì bù huì kāi chē?
Do you know how to drive?

A: 我十八岁就会开车了。
   Wǒ shíbā suì jiù huì kāi chē le.
I have known how to drive since I was eighteen.

Q: 美国人都会跳舞吧？
   Méiguó rén dōu huì tiào wǔ ba?
All Americans know how to dance, right?

A: 不一定。我就不会。
   Bù yīdìng. Wǒ jiù bù huì.
Not necessarily. I for one cannot dance.

Advice and opinions

50.2.1 Requesting and giving advice and opinions

To give your opinion or your advice, or to ask another for their opinion or advice use these expressions.

想 xiǎng ‘to think’

Q: 你想我们坐飞机好，还是坐火车好？
   Nǐ xiǎng wǒmen shì zuò fēijī hǎo, háishì zuò huǒchē hǎo?
Do you think we should fly or take the train?

A: 我想我们坐飞机比较好。
   Wǒ xiǎng wǒmen zuò fēijī bijiào hǎo.
I think it is better to fly.

The Mandarin equivalent of the English expression ‘I don’t think . . . ’ is 我想 . . . 不 wǒ xiǎng . . . bù ‘I think . . . not . . . ’ and not 我不想 wǒ bù xiǎng . . .

我想他不聪明。
   Wǒ xiǎng tā bù cōngmíng.
I don’t think he is smart.

我想他不会来。
   Wǒ xiǎng tā bù huì lái.
I don’t think he is going to come.

看 kàn ‘to look at, consider, think’

Q: 你看这件事应该怎么办？
   Nǐ kàn zhè jiàn shì yīnggāi zěnmé bàn?
How do you think we should handle this matter?

A: 我想我们 . . .
Advice and opinions

A: 我们应该先看看大家的意见。
Wǒ kàn wǒmen dēi xiān kànkan dàjiā de yìjiàn.
I think we should consider everybody's opinion first.

觉得/覺得 juéde ‘to feel, to consider, think’

他們都觉得这样作比较妥当。
Tāmen dōu juéde zhèyàng zuò bǐjiào tuòdang.
They all feel that doing it this way is more appropriate.

说/説 shuō ‘say’

你说你应该选哪门课？
Nǐ shuō wǒ yīnggāi xuǎn nǎ mén kè?
Which courses do you say I should take?

认为/認為 rènwéi ‘to believe, to suppose, to consider’

以為/以為 yíwéi ‘to believe, to suppose, to consider’

以為/以為 yíwéi and 认为/認為 rènwéi overlap in meaning and usage. Both mean to consider, to suppose.

我认为这次的旅行很有意思。(认为/認為 rènwéi can be used)
Wǒ yíwéi zhècì de lǚxíng hěn yǒu yìsi.
I consider this trip to be very interesting.

大家都以为他是一个好人。(认为/認為 rènwéi can be used)
Dàjiā dōu yíwéi tā shì yī gè háorén.
Everyone believes he is a good person.

以為/以為 yíwéi also means to mistakenly assume something. This meaning is not shared by 认为/認為 rènwéi. It is illustrated in the following sentences:

我以为你是日本人，原来你是韩国人。
Wǒ yíwéi nǐ shì Rìběn rén, yuánlái nǐ shì Hángrú rén.
I thought you were Japanese, but you are Korean.

我以为今天不会下雨。没想到下了这么大的雨。
Wǒ yíwéi jīntiān bù huì xià yǔ. Méi xiǎngdào xià le zhèměi dà de yǔ.
I assumed that it wouldn't rain today. I had no idea that it would rain this much.

When giving or requesting advice, you can make reference to obligations.

我想你该多多用功一些。
Wǒ xiǎng nǐ yīnggāi duō yònggōng yīxī.
I think you should be a little more diligent.
50.2.2 Making your request polite

To make your request for an opinion or advice polite, use these expressions.

请问/请问 qǐng wèn ‘may I ask, excuse me’

请问，我应该送他什么礼物？
请问，我應該送他甚麼禮物？
Qǐngwèn, wǒ yīnggāi sòng tā shénme lǐwù?
May I ask, what kind of gift should I give him?

请教/請教 qǐng jiào ‘please teach me/(I) request instruction’

我有一个问题跟您请教。
我有一個問題跟您請教。
Wǒ yǒu yī gè wèntí gēn nín qǐng jiào.
I'd like some advice from you on a question.

请指教/請指教 qǐng zhǐjiào ‘please provide instruction’

我写了一篇文章请你多指教。
我寫了一篇文章請你多指教。
Wǒ xiě le yī piān wénzhāng qǐng nǐ duō zhǐjiào.
I've written an essay that I would like your comments on.

50.2.3 Telling someone their best or only option

These expressions can be used when giving strong, direct advice.

最好 zuì hǎo (+ verb phrase) ‘the best thing to do is’ (verb phrase)

Q: 下雨呢！怎么办啊？
    下雨呢！怎麼辦啊？
    Xià yǔ ne! Zěnmé bàn a?
    It's raining. What should we do?

A: 那，我们最好不要去。
    那，我們最好不要去。
    Nà, wǒmen zuì hǎo bù qù.
    Well then, we’d best not go.

只好 zhǐ hǎo (+ verb phrase) ‘the only thing to do is’ (verb phrase)

要是你要考得好，只好認真的學習。
要是你要考得好，只好認真的學習。
Yàoshì nǐ yào kǎo de hǎo, zhǐ hǎo rènzhēn de xuéxí.
If you want to do well on the exam, the only thing you can do is study hard.

50.2.4 Telling someone to do as they please

To tell someone to do as they please, use the following expression:

subject 怎么 verb 就 怎么 verb
subject 怎麼 verb 就 怎麼 verb
subject zěnmé verb jiù zěnmé verb
do whatever the subject pleases
Advice and opinions

Conversation 1

Q: 这件事我怎么作好？
   這件事我怎麼作好？
   Zhè jiàn shì wǒ zěnme zuò hǎo?
   How should I best do this?
A: 这我可不知道，你想怎么作就怎么作吧。
   這我可不知道，你想怎麼作就怎麼作吧。
   Zhè wǒ kě bù zhīdào, nǐ xiǎng zěnme zuò jiù zěnme zuò ba.
   I don’t know. Do it the way you think it should be done.

Conversation 2

Q: 你想这个周末我们去哪儿好？
   你想這個週末我們去哪兒好？
   Nǐ xiǎng zhège zhōumò wǒmen qù nǎr hǎo?
   Where do you think we should go this weekend?
A: 你想去哪儿我们就去哪儿吧，我没意见。
   你想去哪兒我們就去哪兒吧，我沒意見。
   Nǐ xiǎng qù nǎr wǒmen jiù qù nǎr ba, wǒ méiyì jiàn.
   We will go wherever you think we should go. I don’t have an opinion.

Conversation 3

Q: 姐姐，你说我跟谁出去玩儿好？
   姐姐，你說我跟誰出去玩兒好？
   Jiējie, nǐ shuō wǒ gēn shéi chūqu wár hǎo?
   Older sister, who do you think I should go out with?
A: 你想跟谁玩儿就跟谁玩儿。不必问我。
   你想跟誰玩兒就跟誰玩兒。不必問我。
   Nǐ xiǎng gēn shéi wár jiù gēn shéi wár. Bù bì wèn wǒ.
   Go out with whomever you want. You don’t have to ask me.
51

Expressing fear, worry, and anxiety

51.1 Expressing fear of something

To express fear of something, say:

subject 怕 something
subject is afraid of something

我怕狗。
Wǒ pà gǒu.
I am afraid of dogs.

我们不要怕困难。
我们不要怕困难。
Wǒmen bù yào pà kùnnán.
We shouldn’t be afraid of difficulty.

我妈妈怕胖，不敢多吃。
我妈妈怕胖，不敢多吃。
Wǒ māmā pà pàng, bù gǎn duō chī.
My mother is afraid of getting fat. She doesn’t dare eat much.

这个人真是天不怕，地不怕。
这个人真是天不怕，地不怕。
Zhège rén zhēn shì tiān bù pà, dì bù pà.
This person is not afraid of anything.

To tell someone not to be afraid of something, say:

別怕！ Bié pà! ‘Don’t be afraid!’

別怕我的狗。
Bié pà wǒ de gǒu.
Don’t be afraid of my dog.

不要怕！ Bù yào pà! ‘Don’t be afraid!’

不要怕他。他人很好。
Bù yào pà tā. Tā rén hěn hǎo.
Don’t be afraid of him. He means well.
Expressing nervousness or anxiety

To indicate that someone is afraid use these expressions:

怕死(了) pàsǐ le ‘to be scared to death’
  我怕死了。
  Wǒ pàsǐ le.
  I am scared to death.

害怕 hàipà ‘to be afraid’
  我很害怕。
  Wǒ hěn háipà.
  I’m very afraid.

恐惧/恐懼 kǒngjù ‘to be terrified’ (literary expression used in formal speech and writing)
  听到 SARS 流行的报道，大家都很恐惧。
  听到 SARS 流行的報道，大家都很恐懼。
  Tíngdào SARS liúxíng de báodào, dàjiā dōu hěn kǒngjù.
  When people heard the report about the spread of SARS, they were filled with terror.

恐惧/恐懼 kǒngjù is also used as a noun, meaning fear or terror.
  一想到战争的可能性，我心里就充满了恐惧。
  一想到战争的可能性，我心裏就充满了恐懼。
  Yī xiǎngdào zhàngzhēng de kěnénɡ xìnɡ, wǒ xīn lǐ jiù chōnɡmàn le kǒngjù.
  When I think about the possibility of war, my heart fills with fear.

Expressing nervousness or anxiety

To indicate that someone is nervous, say:

紧张/緊張 jǐnzhānɡ ‘to be nervous’
  考试以前我很紧张。
  Kǎoshì yǐqián wǒ hěn jǐnzhānɡ.
  Before I take a test I am very nervous.

To indicate that someone is worried or anxious, say:

着急/著急 zháojí ‘to be worried or anxious’
  他找不着飞机票了。非常着急。
  Tā zhǎobuzháo fēijī piào le. Fēichánɡ zháojí.
  He can’t find the airplane ticket(s). (He is) extremely anxious.
EXPRESSING FEAR, WORRY, AND ANXIETY

To indicate worry about someone or something, say:

担心/擔心 dànxīn ‘worry about’

我担心我的儿子。
我擔心我的兒子。

Wǒ dànxīn wǒ de érzi.
I am worried about my son.

为 something 着急
為 something 著急
worried about something

我为后果着急。
我為後果著急。

Wǒ wéi hòuguǒ zháojí.
I am worried about the results.

To tell someone not to worry or be nervous, say:

别着急。
別緊張。

Bié zháojí. Bié jǐnzhāng.
Don’t worry. Don’t be nervous.

To ask someone in an informal context what they are worried about, say:

你着急什么啊？
你著什麼急啊？

Nǐ zháojí shénme jí a?
What are you worried about?

Indicating that something is scary

To indicate that something is scary or frightening, say:

something 可怕 kěpà

今天看的这个电影真可怕
今天看的這個電影真可怕。

Jīntiān kàn de zhège diànyǐng zhēn kěpà.
The movie we saw today was very scary.

战争真可怕。
戰爭真可怕。

Zhànzhēng zhēn kěpà.
War is very frightening.

To describe something as scary, say:

恐怖 的 noun kǒngbù de noun scary noun
I don’t like to watch horror movies.

Don’t scare the child.

Don’t scare me, okay?

You scared me to death.
Expressing speaker attitudes and perspectives

Mandarin uses interjections at the beginning of the sentence and syllables at the end of the sentence (sentence-final particles) to indicate the attitude of the speaker towards the situation expressed in the sentence. Attitudes expressed by interjections and sentence final particles include surprise, disgust, agreement, pity, etc.

Interjections and sentence final particles stand outside of the grammar of the sentence. Their omission or inclusion never affects the grammatical status of the sentence. However, their appropriate use contributes to the naturalness of the sentence, making it sound more authentically Mandarin.

52.1 Interjections

Syllables serving as interjections always have tones. Here are some common interjections and their associated meanings.

哈 hā satisfaction

哈哈！还是我对吧！
哈哈！還是我對吧！
Hā hā! Hái shì wǒ duì ba!
Well (ha), so I was right after all!

哈 hài sorrow, regret

嘿，你怎么能跟这种人结婚？
咳，你怎麽能跟這種人結婚？
Hāi, nǐ zěnme néng gēn zhè zhǒng rén jiéhūn?
Why, how can you marry this kind of person?

啊 ā surprise

啊！他死了？
A! tā sǐ le?
What? He passed away?
Interjections

啊 ā doubt, surprise

啊，你会说英文！
啊，你会説英文！
Ā, nǐ huì shuō Yīngwén!
Oh! You speak English!

啊 ā puzzled surprise

啊，你把飞机票弄丢了？
啊，你把飛機票弄丢了？
Ā, nǐ bā fēijī piào nònɡdiū le?
What! You lost your airplane ticket?

啊 ā agreement, approval, acknowledgement

啊，你说得很对。
啊，你说得很对。
Ā, nǐ shuō de hěn duì.
Yes. What you said was right.

哎 āi surprise, dissatisfaction

哎，火车怎么还没来啊？
哎，火車怎麼還沒來啊？
Āi, huǒchē zěnme hái méi lái a?
Oh! Why isn’t the train here yet?

哎哟/哎喲 āiyōi surprise, pain

哎哟/哎喲！把我疼死了。
Āiyō! Bā wǒ tèngsǐ le.
Ouch! It hurts so much.

哎呀 āiyāi wonder, admiration, shock

哎呀！太晚了。我得走了。
Āiyā! Tàì wǎn le. Wǒ déi zǒu le.
Gosh! It is already so late. I have to go now.

啊呀 āyā pained surprise

啊呀！我的钱包不见了。
啊呀！我的錢包不見了。
Āyā! Wǒ de qiánbāo bù jiàn le.
Oh no! My wallet is missing.

唉 āi regret

唉，真没想到他的车出事了。
唉，真没想到他的车出事了。
Āi, zhēn méi xiǎngdào tā de chē chūshì le.
How awful. I never thought that his car would be in an accident.
EXPRESSING SPEAKER ATTITUDES AND PERSPECTIVES

### 52.2

**Sentence final particles**

Sentence final particles occur in neutral tone. Here are some common sentence final particles that are used to express speaker attitude.

#### 唉 ma indicates that something is obviously true

唉，我早就告诉你他不是好人嘛。
唉，我早就告诉你他不是好人嘛。

Wǒ zǎo jiù gào su nǐ tā bù shì hǎo rén ma.
Didn’t I tell you from the start that he wasn’t a good person?

#### 啊 a obviousness, impatience

你要多注意身体啊。
你要多注意身体啊。

Nǐ yào duō zhù yì shēntǐ a.
You should pay more attention to your health.

#### 咱 lo obviousness

我们该走了。再不走就晚咯。
我们该走了。再不走就晚咯。

Wǒmen gāi zǒu le. Zài bù zǒu jiù wǎn lè.
We’d better go now. If we don’t go we will be late.

#### 哇 la exclamation

好啦，好啦，别再说啦！
好啦，好啦，别再说啦！

Hǎo la, hǎo la, bié zài shuō la!
Okay, okay, don’t say it again!

---

**Examples:**

- 唉 ō sudden realization
  - 唉，我忘了给你钱了。
  - 唉，我忘了给你钱了。
  - Ō, wǒ wàng le gěi nǐ qián le.
  - Oh, I forgot to pay you.

- 哦 ő suspicion, not fully believing
  - 哦，你们认识？
  - 哦，你们認識？
  - Ō, nǐmen rènshi?
  - Oh, you know each other?

- 喔 ō surprise, sudden realization
  - 喔，原来你是警察啊！
  - 喔，原來你是警察啊！
  - Ō, yuánlái nǐ shì jīngchá a!
  - Oh, so you are a policeman!
Sentence final particles

NOTE

啦 la is a combination of the sentence final particles 了 le and 啊 a. Its meaning varies depending upon the sentence.

吧 ba suggestions; suppositions

多吃一點吧！
多吃一點吧！
Duō chī yìdiǎn ba!
Eat a little more!

您是王教授吧！
Nín shì Wáng jiàoshòu ba!
You must be Professor Wang!

For discussion of the sentence final particles 吗/嗎 ma, 呢 ne, and 了 le, see 24.1.1, 24.5, 30.3, 34.1
53

Topic, focus, and emphasis

53.1

Introducing a topic

The topic is the thing that is being discussed or written about. Mandarin has a variety of ways to introduce and identify the topic. Here are the most common.

53.1.1

Expressions that introduce the topic of a sentence

Mandarin uses the following expressions to introduce the topic of a sentence.

至于/至/zhìyú ‘concerning, regarding, as for’

至于我们两个人的事情，你就不要管了。

Zhìyú wǒmen liǎng gè rén de shìqing，nǐ jiù bù yào guān le.

As for the matter between the two of us, you don’t have to pay attention to it.

对于/對/duìyú ‘concerning, regarding, as for (topic)’

对于中国的情形，我也不太清楚。

Duìyú Zhōngguó de qíngxíng，wǒ yě bù tài qǐntōng chū.

Regarding China’s state of affairs, I am also not too clear (about it).

关于/關/guānyú ‘concerning, regarding, as for (topic)’

关于国家大事，我们都应该注意。

Guānyú guójiā dà shì，wǒmen dōu yīnggāi zhùyì.

As for the major events of (our) country, we all should pay attention.

对 (topic) 来说/對 (topic) lái shuō ‘as for (topic) . . .’

对我来说，教书是一件很快乐的事。

Duì wǒ lái shuō，jiāo shū shì yī jiàn hěn kuàilè de shì.

As for me, teaching is a very enjoyable task.

论(到)/論(到) lùn (dào) ‘speaking about (topic)’

论到足球，我是一窍不通。

Lùn dào zúqiu，wǒ shì yī qiào bù tóng.
Introducing a topic

Lùn dào zúqiú, wǒ shì yǐqiào bù tōng.
Speaking about football, I am completely ignorant.

提(到) tí (dào) ‘speaking about (topic)’

提到奥运，你觉得那个裁判公平不公平？
提到了奥运，你觉得那个裁判公平不公平？

Tí dào Àoyùn, nǐ juéde nàge cái pàn gōng píng bù gōng píng？
Speaking about the Olympics, do you think that decision was fair?

谈(到)/談(到) tán (dào) ‘speaking about (topic)’

谈到中英两国的历史，他比谁都有兴趣。
谈到中英两国的历史，他比谁都有兴趣。

Tán dào Zhōng Yīng liǎng guó de lìshǐ，tā bǐ shuí dōu yǒu xìng qu。
Speaking about the history of China and England, he is more interested than anyone.

至于/至於 zhiyú, 对于/對於 duiyú, 和 关于/關於 guānyú are interchangeable, as are 提到 tí dào and 講到/談到 tán dào.

53.1.2 Structures that identify the topic of a sentence

53.1.2.1 Topicalization

In Mandarin, a noun phrase may be identified as the topic of a sentence when it occurs at the beginning of the sentence. If another noun phrase in the sentence has the same reference as the topic, it is typically omitted. In the following sentences, the first noun phrase is the topic. The omitted phrase is indicated as ( ).

那个饭馆，服务不好。
那个饭店，服务不好。

Nàge fànguān, fúwù bù hǎo.
That restaurant, the service is not good.

美国大学，学费很贵。
美国大学，学费很贵。

Měiguó dàxué, xuéfèi hěn guì.
(In) American universities, tuition is very expensive.

中国长城，我听说 ( ) 冬天最美。
中國長城，我聽說 ( ) 冬天最美。

Zhōngguó Chángchéng, wǒ tīngshuō ( ) dōngtiān zuì měi.
The Great Wall of China, I hear (it) is prettiest in the winter.

汉字，我怎么写 ( ) 也写不好。
漢字，我怎麼寫 ( ) 也寫不好。

Hànzì, wǒ zěnme xiě ( ) yě xiě bù hǎo.
Chinese characters, no matter how I write them I don't write ( ) well.

English also topicalizes noun phrases in this way, but topicalization is much more common in Mandarin than in English.

53.1.2.2 Noun phrase omission

In English, when a series of noun phrases refer to the same entity, all instances after the first reference typically occur as pronouns. In Mandarin, noun phrase omission is more common than pronominalization as a way to mark identity of reference. Noun
phrase omission is one way that Mandarin identifies a noun phrase as a topic. As we saw in the previous section, noun phrases are typically omitted if they refer to the topic of the discourse.

Noun phrases are omitted when they occur in the same grammatical role as the first noun phrase.

In this example, the first reference and the omitted noun phrases are subjects of the verb:

张美丽每天都忙。(_,_).早上六点起床，(_,_).七点出门，(_,_).晚上九点才回家。  
张美丽每天都忙。(_,_).早上六点起床，(_,_).七点出门，(_,_).晚上九点才回家。  

Zhāng Méili měitiān dōu hěn máng. (_,_). Zàoshānɡ liùdiǎn qǐchuánɡ, (_,_). qídiǎn chūmén, (_,_). wǎnshānɡ jiǔdiǎn cái huí jiā.  

Meili Zhang is very busy every day. She gets up at 6 o’clock, (she) leaves the house by 7 o’clock, and she doesn’t get home at night until 9 o’clock.

In this example, the first reference and the omitted noun phrase are objects of the verb:

她买了裙子，到家以后马上穿上了(_).  
她买了裙子，到家以后马上穿上了(_).  

Tā mài le qúnzi, dào jiā yǐhòu mǎishànɡ chuānshànɡ le (_).  
She bought a skirt; when she got home she immediately put it on.

When a noun phrase with identical reference occurs in a different grammatical role from the first instance, it occurs as a pronoun and is not omitted. In this example, the first reference is the object of 喜欢/喜歡 xǐhuān ‘to like.’ In the second reference, it is the subject of the sentence.

我们都喜欢那个孩子。她又可爱又乖。  
我們都喜歡那個孩子。她又可愛又乖。  

Wǒmen dōu xǐhuān nàge háizi. Tā yòu kě’ài yòu guāi.  
We all like that child. She is both cute and well-behaved.

Focus

Mandarin uses the following expressions to focus or highlight a phrase. This section presents the structure and purpose of the most common focusing constructions in Mandarin.

53.2.1 把 bā

把 bā is used to indicate what a subject does to some object, while focusing on the object. 把 bā sentences can always be used to answer the question: ‘What did the subject do to the object?’ 把 bā sentences are sometimes called the ‘disposal construction.’ The structure of 把 bā sentences is as follows.

subject 把 bā object [prepositional phrase +] verb phrase

弟弟把饺子吃完了。  
弟弟把饺子吃完了。  

Dìdi bā jiāozi chīwán le.  
Younger brother ate up the dumplings.  
(Younger brother took the dumplings and ate them up.)
The object of 把 must refer to something specific and definite.

The action must have a conclusion or completion. Therefore, 把 is often used with change-of-state verbs and verbs with resultative endings.

我把他的地址忘了。 *(change-of-state verb)*

Wǒ bā tā de dìzhǐ wàng le.

I forgot his address.

(He took his address and forgot it.)

他把窗户打破了。*(verb with resultative ending)*

Tā bā chuānghu dǎpò le.

He broke the window.

(He took the window and broke it.)

她把论文写完了。*(verb with resultative ending)*

Tā bā lúnwén xiěwán le.

She finished writing her thesis.

(He took her thesis and finished writing it.)

她把每个字都写错了。*(verb with resultative ending)*

Tā bā měi gè zì dōu xiēcuò le.

He wrote every character wrong.

(He took every character and wrote it wrong.)

△ 13.5, 28.1

Mandarin often uses 把 when English would use a passive sentence.

△ 17

### 53.2.2 Indicating exception or addition with 除了 chūle ... 以外 yīwài

除了 chūle noun phrase 以外 yīwài except for noun phrase; in addition to (noun phrase)

This expression introduces an exception to a situation or an additional example of a situation. The structure itself is the same whether it focuses on an exception or an example. The context of the sentence makes it clear whether the sentence is providing an exception or an additional example.

- The noun phrase that follows 除了 chūle may be the subject, a ‘time when’ expression, or the object of the verb.
- The full expression includes both 除了 chūle and 以外 yīwài. However, either phrase may be omitted.
- 也 yě or 都 dōu typically occurs in the predicate.
除了*chúle* ... 以外 *yīwài* marking exception: ‘except for noun phrase’

除了 *chúle* + subject

除了爷爷以外，我们全家都去中国旅游。
除了爺爺以外，我們全家都去中國旅遊。
*Chúle yéye yīwài, wǒmen quánji à dōu qù Zhōngguó lǚyóu.*
*Except for grandfather, our whole family is going to China to travel.*

除了 *chúle* + time when

除了星期天以外，他每天都复习中文。
除了星期天以外，他每天都復習中文。
*Chúle xīngqītiān yīwài, tā měitiān dōu fūxí Zhōngwén.*
*Except for Sunday, he reviews Chinese every day.*

除了 *chúle* + object

除了苦瓜以外，我弟弟什么都吃。
除了苦瓜以外，我弟弟甚麼都吃。
*Chúle kǔguā yīwài, wǒ di dì shénme dōu chī.*
*Except for bitter melon, my younger brother eats everything.*

除了 *chúle* ... 以外 *yīwài* marking an additional example: ‘In addition to noun phrase’

In this use of 除了 *chúle* ... 以外 *yīwài*, the adverb 也 *yě* usually occurs in the predicate.

除了 *chúle* + subject

除了爷爷以外，奶奶也去中国旅游。
除了爺爺以外，奶奶也去中國旅遊。
*Chúle yéye yīwài, nǎinai yě qù Zhōngguó lǚyóu.*
*Besides grandfather, grandmother will also go to China to travel.*

除了 *chúle* + time when

除了晚上以外，他白天也上网。
除了晚上以外，他白天也上網。
*Chúle wǎnshàng yīwài, tā báitiān yě shàng wǎng.*
*In addition to the evening, he also surfs the web during the day.*

除了 *chúle* + object

除了苦瓜以外，我弟弟也吃辣椒。
*Chúle kǔguā yīwài, wǒ di dì yě chī lájiāo.*
*Besides bitter melon, my younger brother also eats hot peppers.*

**53.2.3**

**Indicating inclusion with 连/連 lián**

连/連 lián noun phrase 也/都 yě/dōu [+ prepositional phrase +] verb phrase
even noun phrase does verb phrase [+ prepositional phrase]
連/連 lián is used to indicate that a noun phrase is included in the situation described by the verb phrase. The noun phrase that follows 連/連 lián may be the subject, a ‘time when’ expression, or the object of the verb. 也 yě or 都 dōu typically occurs in the predicate.

連/連 lián + subject noun phrase

人人都喜欢吃中国饭。连外国人也喜欢。
人人都喜歡吃中國飯。連外國人也喜歡。

Everyone likes to eat Chinese food. Even foreigners like to (eat Chinese food).

我們全家都去中國旅遊。連爷爷也去。
我們全家都去中國旅遊。連爺爺也去。

Our whole family is going to China to travel. Even grandpa will go.

連/連 lián + ‘time when’ expression

他每天都复习中文。连周末也复习。
他每天都復習中文。連週末也復習。

He reviews Chinese every day. He even reviews on the weekend.

他每天都很忙。连礼拜天都很忙。
他每天都很忙。連禮拜天都很忙。

He is busy every day. He is even busy on Sunday.

連/連 lián + object noun phrase

我弟弟什么都吃。连苦瓜也吃。
我弟弟什麼都吃。連苦瓜也吃。

My younger brother eats anything. He even eats bitter melon.

誰都喜欢这个电影。连爸爸也喜欢。
誰都喜欢這個電影。連爸爸也喜歡。

Everyone likes that movie. Even dad likes it.

53.2.4 Focusing with 是 shì or 是 ... 的 shì ... de

是 shì, or 是 ... 的 shì ... de together, focus on some detail of an event: the time, the place, the actor, etc.

The phrase that is focused occurs immediately after 是 shì.

If the sentence refers to a situation in past time, 的 de occurs at the very end of the sentence, or immediately after the verb. In the following examples, the phrase that is focused is emphasized.
TOPIC, FOCUS, AND EMPHASIS

Focus on the subject

是他给我们介绍的。
他是給我們介紹的。
Shì tā gěi wǒmen jièshào de.
It was he who introduced us.

Focus on the place

我是在中国学中文的。
我是在中國學中文的。
Wǒ shì zài Zhōngguó xué Zhōngwén de.
It was in China where I studied Chinese.

你們是在哪儿认识他的？
你們是在哪兒認識他的？
Nǐmen shì zài nèr rènshì de？
Where did you meet?

Focus on the ‘time when’

他是去年买的那本书。
他是去年買的那本書。
Tā shì qùnián mǎi de nà běn shū.
It was last year when he bought that book.

Focus on the prepositional phrase

我是跟朋友看电影的。
我是跟朋友看電影的。
Wǒ shì gēn péngyou kàn diànyǐng de.
It was with friends that I saw the movie.

是 shì may be omitted, unless it is negated.

这张磁碟(是)在书店买的。
這張磁碟(是)在書店買的。
Zhè zhāng cídié (shì) zài shūdiàn mǎi de.
This CD was bought at the bookstore.

这张磁碟不在书店买的。
這張磁碟不在書店買的。
Zhè zhāng cídié bù shì zài shūdiàn mǎi de.
This CD was not bought at the bookstore.

If the object of the verb is a pronoun, 的 de can only occur after the pronoun, at the end of the sentence.

Say this                        Not this

你是在哪儿认识他的？                   你是在哪兒認識他的？
你是在哪兒認識他的？                   你是在哪兒認識他的？
Nǐ shì zài nèr rènshì tā de?          Nǐ shì zài nèr rènshì de tā?
Where did you meet him?

When the sentence refers to a non-past event, is shì alone can be used to focus a phrase.
Emphasis

53.3

Using 是 shì for emphasis

Mandarin uses the word 是 shì to emphasize words or phrases in the sentence, especially when the sentence is used to confirm some previously mentioned situation. 是 shì may be added before a ‘time when’ phrase, a location phrase, or a [prepositional phrase +] verb phrase to emphasize the following phrase.

In English, words that are emphasized usually receive heavy stress and falling pitch. Because Mandarin is a tone language, pitch contour cannot be used for emphasis. However, 是 shì often receives heavy stress when it is used for emphasis, and the emphasis used in the following examples is intended to convey heavy stress.

Neutral

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nà běn shū hén gui.</td>
<td>That book is expensive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我明天走。</td>
<td>I’m leaving tomorrow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他很会唱歌。</td>
<td>He can sing well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我们在小王家吃饭。</td>
<td>We are eating at Little Wang’s house.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With emphasis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nà běn shī shí hén gui.</td>
<td>That book is expensive. (just like you said)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我是明天走。</td>
<td>I am going tomorrow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>他是很会唱歌。</td>
<td>He really can sing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我们是小王家吃饭。</td>
<td>We are eating at Little Wang’s house.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\*\*\*
53.3.2 Emphasizing the time when a situation occurs

To emphasize the time when a situation occurs, you can also put the ‘time when’ expression before the subject. This phrase order is typically used to contrast one time phrase with another time phrase.

Yesterday he was very busy. Today he is not busy.

Zuótiān tā hěn máng. Jīntiān tā bù máng.

Yesterday he was very busy. Today he is not busy.
Guest and host

The present day roles of guest and host are based on centuries of tradition. In their simplest form, the roles are as follows: the host must take care of the guest, and the guest must accept the hospitality of the host without being a burden to the host. In practice, this means that the host must offer food and drink to the guest, must make the guest comfortable, and must escort the guest when he/she departs, and the guest must reject the hospitality of the host several times before eventually accepting it. Here are some general rules of behavior for guest and host.

- When visiting a Chinese host, the guest should bring a small gift. Items such as tea, fruit, flowers, and candy are usually appropriate. The host does not ordinarily open a gift in the presence of the guest.
- When a host invites a guest to participate in an activity for which there is a fee (dinner in a restaurant, coffee or ice cream in a café, attendance at a movie or show, transportation by taxi or train, etc.), it is understood that the host pays the bill.
- In most social situations, one of the participants typically assumes the role of host, paying the bill, ordering food or drink, paying for transportation, etc. It is expected that today’s guest will be tomorrow’s host, and the obligations (financial and otherwise) associated with the host will be reciprocated on later occasions by other members of the group. This creates a network of mutual obligations among participants and solidifies their identity as a group. It is rare for people to split the bill in China, or for individuals to pay for themselves when participating in some entertainment as part of a group. It is common for individuals to have a good natured fight over a bill to establish the host for the occasion.

Many common interactions between guest and host are conducted using ritual expressions and behavior. The most common of these are presented here. Expressions used in welcoming a guest and in saying goodbye are also used towards customers in restaurants.

54.1 Welcoming the guest

To welcome a guest, say:

欢迎！
欢迎！
Huányíng!
Welcome!
54.2 Offering food and drink

When the host offers the guest something to eat or drink, he or she either serves something or gives the guest a choice of beverages or food. For example:

- 請喝茶。
- 請喝茶。
- Qǐng hé chá.
- Have some tea.

or

- 你喝可樂喝茶？
- 你喝可樂喝茶？
- Nǐ hē kělè hē chá?
- Do you drink cola or tea?

It is not polite to ask the guest whether he or she wants something to eat or drink (Would you like something to drink?), or if he or she is thirsty (Are you thirsty?). These kind of questions allow a response of 'no,' and imply that the host does not wish to provide food. A good Chinese host does not give the guest the opportunity to refuse hospitality.

54.3 Inviting the guest to get comfortable

To invite a guest to get comfortable, say:

- 請坐。 
- 請坐。
- Qǐng zuò.
- Have a seat.

- 休息一会儿。 
- 休息一会儿。
- Xiūxī yīhuìr.
- Rest for awhile.

54.4 Saying goodbye and seeing the guest off

When it is time for guests to leave, the host has a ritual obligation to encourage them to stay. Guests have a ritual obligation to insist upon leaving. Expressions used in this ritual are presented below.

When guests leave, the host is expected to 送 sòng the guests, that is, to see them off. When you see guests off, you are expected to walk them a portion of the way home. Modern day interpretation requires accompanying guests at least to the doorway if not to their car or bus or train, and staying with them until they depart. Even if the host does not accompany the guest beyond the doorway, he or she does not close the door when guests walk out of the house. Instead, the host stands in view of the guests, waving, until they are out of sight.
54.4.1 Expressions that the host can say to the guest at the end of a visit

再来玩。
再来玩。

Zài lái wán.
Come again. (informal)

有空再来。
有空再来。

Yǒu kòng zài lái.
Come again when you have time.

(请)慢走。
(請)慢走。

(Qǐng) màn zǒu.
(Please) Don’t hurry off.

(请)好走。
(請)好走。

(Qǐng) hǎo zǒu.
(Please) take care.

20.2.2

54.4.2 Expressions that guests can say to the host at the end of a visit

请留步。
請留步。

Qǐng liú bù.
Don’t bother to see me out.

别送。

Bié sòng.
There’s no need to see me off.

54.5 Additional expressions involving guest and host

The opposite of seeing a guest off is picking a guest up. The verb used is 捡 jiē.

我今天晚上到机场去接经理。

Wǒ jīntiān wǎnhàng dào jīchǎng qù jiē Bái jīnglǐ.
Tonight I am going to the airport to pick up Manager Bai.

The verb that is used for a formal visit to someone is 拜访/拜訪 bàifǎng.

我们明天拜访王教授。

Wǒmen míngtiān bàifǎng Wáng jiàoshòu.
Tomorrow we will visit Professor Wang.
55

Giving and responding to compliments

55.1 Cultural conventions regarding praise

Traditionally, Chinese people do not say 謝謝/謝謝 xièxiè ‘thank you’ in response to a personal compliment of any kind. In Chinese culture, accepting a personal compliment can be interpreted as showing conceit. Thus, it is customary in China for people to reject rather than to accept compliments. To a Westerner, 謝謝/謝謝 xièxiè is merely thanks for the compliment. However, in Chinese culture, it is often interpreted as a boastful agreement with someone’s assessment of the quality of your abilities or possessions.

55.2 Expressions used in deflecting praise

You are expected to reject compliments and deflect praise of your accomplishments, abilities, and possessions, and to deflect praise of the accomplishments and abilities of those close to you. The following expressions are commonly used to deflect praise:

Deflecting praise in neutral or informal situations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>哪裏·哪裏。</td>
<td>哪兒的話？</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>哪裏·哪裏。</td>
<td>哪兒的話？</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Náli, náli.</td>
<td>什麼 talk is that?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have done nothing to deserve your compliments.</td>
<td>What are you talking about?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(lit. ‘where? where?’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>沒什麼。</td>
<td>不好，不好。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>沒甚麼。</td>
<td>Bù hǎo, bù hǎo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Měi shénme.</td>
<td>It is nothing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>真的嗎？</td>
<td>不好，不好。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>真的嗎？</td>
<td>Bù hǎo, bù hǎo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhēnde ma?</td>
<td>Really?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Compliments and appropriate responses

More formal expressions used to deflect praise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compliment</th>
<th>Appropriate response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>过奖了。</td>
<td>不敢当。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>贬奖了。</td>
<td>不敢当。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guò jiāng le. You are excessive in your praise.</td>
<td>Bùgândāng. I cannot accept your praise.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The type of compliment determines the type of response. Here are some examples of compliments and appropriate responses.

**Compliment**

- 你的孩子很聪明。
  - Nǐ de háizi hěn cōngmíng. Your child is very intelligent.

- 你的中国字写得很好。
  - Nǐ de Zhōngguó zì xiě de zhěn hǎo. You write Chinese characters really well.

- 你的医术真高明。
  - Nǐ de yīshù zhēn gāomíng. Your medical skill is brilliant.

- 你的工作很出色。
  - Nǐ de jiàodū zhèn chūsè. Your work is very good.

**Appropriate response**

- 不聪明。不聪明。
  - Bù cōngmíng. Bù cōngmíng. (She/he) is not intelligent.

- 我写得不好。
  - Wǒ xiě de bù hǎo. I do not write well.

- 不敢当。
  - Bùgândāng. I cannot accept your praise.
Expressing satisfaction and dissatisfaction

56

Expressing satisfaction

56.1

Expressions used to indicate satisfaction

The following expressions are used to express satisfaction. They are arranged here according to approximate intensity ranging from least to most enthusiastic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>māmā hūhū</td>
<td>so-so</td>
<td>very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hái bù cuò</td>
<td>hái xíng</td>
<td>it's okay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kèyǐ</td>
<td>fèin</td>
<td>fine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bù cuò</td>
<td>xiāngdāng hǎo</td>
<td>pretty good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hěn hǎo</td>
<td>tǐng hǎo</td>
<td>very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mǎnyǐ</td>
<td>satisfied, pleased</td>
<td>very satisfied</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Expressing satisfaction

非常好  好极了
fēicháng hǎo  hàojíle
excellent  excellent

Situations in which satisfaction is expressed

Question  

这个菜的味道怎么样？
Zhègè cài de wèidào zènmeyàng?
How is the flavor of this dish?

Zhè běn shū yǒu yìsī ma?
Is this book interesting?

Nǐmen zhù de lǚguān hǎo ma?
How is the hotel that you are staying in?

Lǚxíngshè de fúwù zènmeyàng?
How is that travel agency's service?

Zhè běn shū hǎo bù hǎo?
How is this book?

Zhègè bówùguǎn zènmeyàng?
How is this art museum?

Nín duì wǒmen de fúwù mǎnyì ma?
Are you satisfied with our service?

Response indicating satisfaction

马马虎虎。
Mǎmǎ hūhū.
So-so.

还不错。
Hěn bù cuò.
It's okay.

可以。
Kěyí.
It's okay.

很好。
Hěn hǎo.
Very good.

Excellent

10.3, 11.2
56.2 Expressing dissatisfaction

56.2.1 Expressions used to indicate dissatisfaction

These expressions are arranged from mild to strong dissatisfaction.

不太好
bù tài hǎo
not too good

不好
bù hǎo
not good

不合格
bù hé gé
not up to standard

很差
hěn chà
very inferior

太差了
tài chà le
too inferior

非常不好
fēicháng bù hǎo
extremely bad

非常坏
fēicháng huài
every bad

完全不行
wánquán bù xíng
completely unacceptable

糟透了
zāotòu le
it’s a mess

Situations in which dissatisfaction is expressed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response indicating dissatisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>这个医院怎么样？</td>
<td>不太好。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhègè yǐyuàn zěnméiyàng?</td>
<td>Bù tài hǎo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How is this hospital?</td>
<td>Not too good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>餐厅的饭怎么样？</td>
<td>很差。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cāntīng de fàn zěnméiyàng?</td>
<td>Hěn chà.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How is the food in the cafeteria?</td>
<td>Really inferior.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Expressing dissatisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response indicating dissatisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 他们的服务还好吧？
他们的服务還好吧？
Tāmen de fúwù hái hǎo ba?
Is their service okay?                                                     | 太差了。
Tài chà le.                                                                 |
| 这儿的空气怎么样？
這兒的空氣怎麼樣？
Zhèr de kōngqì zěnmeyàng?
How is the air here?                                                         | 非常不好。
Fēicháng bù hǎo.                                                            |
|那儿的天气怎么样？
那兒的天氣怎麼樣？
Nàr de tiānqì zěnmeyàng?
How is the weather here?                                                    | 坏极了。
Huàijíle.                                                                  |
|那儿的交通怎么样？
那兒的交通怎麼樣？
Nàr de jiàotōng zěnmeyàng?
How is the transportation there?                                            | 槽透了。
Záotòu le.                                                                 |
|                                                                         | It's really inferior.               |
|                                                                         | 非常不好。                         |
|                                                                         | 坏極了。                           |
|                                                                         | Huàijíle.                           |
|                                                                         | Extremely bad.                     |
|                                                                         | 槽透了。                           |
|                                                                         | It's a mess./It’s terrible.         |
Expressing gratitude and responding to expressions of gratitude

57.1 Expressing gratitude

In Chinese culture, you thank others for actions that benefit you or show you respect. Such actions include doing something for you, taking the time to visit or write you, or helping you in some way. In Chinese culture, you do not thank others for compliments or invitations.

57.1.1 Direct expressions of thanks

Gratitude is expressed in Chinese with the following expressions:

谢谢/谢谢 xièxiè ‘thank you’

谢谢你帮我忙。
谢谢你帮我忙。

Xièxiè nǐ bāng wǒ máng.

Thank you for helping me.

感谢/感謝 gǎnxiè ‘gratefully thank; appreciate’

非常感谢您的建议。
非常感谢您的建议。

Fēichāng gǎnxiè nín de jiànyì.
I greatly appreciate your suggestions.

表示感谢/表示感謝 biāoshì gǎnxiè ‘to express thanks’

这点小礼物表示我们的感谢。请笑纳。
這點小禮物表示我們的感謝。請笑納。

Zhè diǎn xiǎo lǐwù biāoshì wǒmen de gǎnxiè. Qǐng xiào'nà.
This little gift expresses our thanks. Please accept our humble gift.
Indirect expressions of gratitude

To express gratitude without saying ‘thank you,’ use the following expressions:

- Tài máfan nǐ le. This caused you too much trouble. (I’ve troubled you too much.)
- Tài xǐn̄kǔ le. This was really a lot of work for you.
- Zhēn bù hào yīsì. I’m really embarrassed.

Replying to expressions of gratitude

In Chinese, it is considered presumptuous or rude to accept compliments, praise, and expressions of gratitude. Chinese does not have an expression equivalent to ‘you’re welcome’ in English. Common appropriate responses to expressions of gratitude include the following:

- Bù xiè. Don’t thank me.
- Méi shì. It wasn’t anything.
- Bù kèqi. Don’t be polite.
- Nàr de huà. What kind of talk is that?
Invitations, requests, and refusals

In Chinese culture, people are connected through a web of obligations and mutual social debt often referred to as 关系/關係 guānxi, ‘relationships’ or ‘connections.’

This social debt is created by invitations, favors, and requests, big and small, that have been offered and accepted by others. They include buying small items for someone such as coffee, soft drinks, or ice cream, helping someone complete a task, inviting someone to dinner, or facilitating an introduction. By accepting an invitation or favor, or by making or agreeing to a request, you enter into a relationship that obliges you to reciprocate at some time in the future.

The Chinese expression that captures this social obligation is 来往/來往 lái wǎng, as in the expression:

有来有往。
有來有往。
Yǒu lái yǒu wǎng.
To have give and take.

A friendship is based on giving and taking, and one expects a regular exchange of giving and receiving favors and assistance with a Chinese friend. When taking is not balanced with giving, the behavior is described by the Chinese expression:

有来无往，非礼也。
有來無往，非禮也。
Yǒu lái wú wǎng, fēi lǐ yě.
Taking without giving is ill-mannered and uncivil.

In many Western cultures, the relationship between favors and social obligations is not so strong. One may accept favors without creating any obligation towards the giver. English has an expression that captures this: ‘no strings attached.’ The expression means that a gift or favor comes with no obligations to the recipient. In Chinese, where relationships are built on give and take, favors often come with the expectation of reciprocation. A Chinese friend may be more generous with you than a Western friend, but will expect more from you in return.

This chapter provides the basic strategies for negotiating invitations and requests in Chinese and for forming socially acceptable refusals.
Invitations

58.1

Offering invitations

In English, invitations are often expressed in terms of a choice about whether or not to participate:

Would you like to have coffee with me?

In Chinese, giving the listener a choice about whether or not to participate is considered rude. It implies that the speaker does not want the listener to accept the invitation. Therefore, invitations are often worded as suggestions.

我们去喝一杯咖啡吧！
我们去喝一杯咖啡吧！
Wōmen qù hé yī bēi kāfēi ba!
Let’s go drink a cup of coffee!

An invitation may also imply that the speaker will assume the role of ‘host’ and pay for any expenses involved in the activity. If the speaker specifically invites the addressee with the word 请/qīng ‘please’ (lit. ‘invite’), he or she expects to pay for the activity.

我请你去喝咖啡，好吗？
我请你去喝咖啡，好吗？
Wǒ qǐng nǐ qù hē kāfēi, hǎo ma?
Please have coffee with me.
(lit. ‘I invite you to go with me to drink coffee, okay?’)

47.1.1, 54

58.1.2

Accepting and refusing invitations

Words and phrases used to accept invitations include:

好。 行。 可以。
Okay. Okay. I can.

Invitations between friends are accepted or rejected without ceremony. However, in more formal circumstances, it is often not considered polite to accept an invitation at its first offer. Typically, people refuse an invitation once or twice before accepting, even if they intend to accept all along. In the same way, the one who gives an invitation does not give up after an initial refusal, but offers a second or a third time before being certain that the refusal is genuine. This cycle of refusal and re-invitation is a social ritual in which you are expected to participate.

Expressions that are commonly used for the ritual refusal of an invitation to eat or drink include:

不要客气。 你太客气了。 我不(吃)/(喝)。
Bù yào kèqì.  Nǐ tài kèqì le.  Wǒ bù (chī)/(hē).
Don’t be polite.  You are too polite.  I am not (eating)/(drinking).
INVITATIONS, REQUESTS, AND REFUSALS

If you are a guest, you cannot ultimately refuse an offer of a snack or a non-alcoholic drink. After the ritual refusal, you must accept it, though you need not eat or drink it. If you accept an invitation for a meal, however, you must eat.

It is acceptable to provide a direct refusal to an invitation to drink an alcoholic beverage or to smoke. If you do not or cannot drink, say:

我不喝酒。 or 我不会喝酒。
我不喝酒。
Wǒ bù hé jiǔ. Wǒ bù huì hē jiǔ.
I do not drink alcohol. I am not able to drink alcohol.

If you do not smoke, you can refuse a cigarette by saying:

我不抽烟。
我不抽烟。
Wǒ bù chāo yān.
I do not smoke.

In general, appropriate refusals for most other kinds of invitations are indirect and involve face-saving strategies. See section 58.3 for polite ways to refuse invitations.

58.1.3 Formal written invitations

Written invitations are issued for weddings and formal dinners and events. Formal Chinese events have a fixed ending time as well as a fixed beginning time. Guests come on time and the event ends at the predetermined time. Formal events typically begin with a short formal speech announcing the commencement and end with a short formal speech announcing the conclusion.

The cover of the invitation often includes one of the following expressions that identify it as an invitation.

邀请(书/信) or 请帖
邀请(书/信)
yāoqǐng (shū/xìn) qǐngtiě
invitation invitation (lit. ‘a written submission’)

The body of the invitation includes the following expressions.

• Expressions that say ‘formally invite’:

敬约/敬约
敬邀
敬邀
fēngyī
respectfully request respectfully request
敬邀
jìng yāo
chuàng yāo
respectfully invite respectfully invite

恭敬/恭请
guānglín
gōng qǐng
gōng qǐng
(formally request)
(your) presence

formally request
your presence
Invitations

呈送
chénghòng
formally send a
report or petition
(to a higher authority)

• Expressions that identify the recipient(s) of the invitation:

  (family name) 台启 tāiqǐ
  respectfully submitted to (family name)

  or (less formal)

  致 zhì (the names of the invited guests)

• Expressions that identify the type of event:

  举行/舉行 jǔxíng (the type of event)
  hold (a ceremony)

  or (less formal)

  参加 (the type of event)
  cānjiā
  to attend an event

• Expressions that indicate the location of the event:

  在 zài (location of event)

  or

  地点/地點 (location of event)
  dìdiǎn
  place

• Expressions that indicate the date and time of the event:

  謹訂于 (2002 年 10 月 5 日)
  jǐngdìng yú (2002 nián shí yuè wǔ rì)
  respectfully reserve the date of (October 5, 2002)

  晚上六点举行
  wǎnshàng liù diǎn jǔxíng
  begin at (6 p.m.)

  or (less formal)

  时间/時間 (the time)
  shíjiān
  time

  晚上九点散会 or 晚上九点散會
  wǎnshàng jiǔ diǎn sàn huì
  the event concludes at 9 p.m.

  晚上九点散会闭幕
  wǎnshàng jiǔ diǎn sàn huì bì mù
  (the event concludes at 9 p.m.)
Requests

Making requests of close relatives and close friends

Close relatives and close friends have an obligation to help you. Therefore, requests to close relatives and close friends are often indistinguishable from commands.

```
給我那本字典。
给我那本字典。
Gěi wǒ nà běn zìdiǎn.
Give me that dictionary.
```

```
我借用一下你的笔。
我借用一下你的笔。
Wǒ jiè yòng yī xià nǐ de bǐ.
Let me borrow your pen for a minute.
```

```
給我笔用一下。
给我笔用一下。
Gěi wǒ bǐ yòng yī xià.
Lend me a pen for a minute.
```

To make a request more polite, you may preface it with 請/請 qǐng ‘please.’

```
請給我筆用一下。
請給我筆用一下。
Qǐng gěi wǒ bǐ yòng yī xià.
Please lend me a pen for a minute.
```

Requesting information or assistance from teachers

Teachers have an obligation to help you with learning so requests to teachers for information can be direct. However, they should always be polite. You can preface a request with 请教/請教 qǐng jiào ‘please teach me,’ or 请问/請問 qǐng wèn ‘may I ask.’

```
老師，請教。。。 (這個字怎麼用?)
老師，請教。。。 (這個字怎麼用?)
Lǎoshī, qǐng jiào... (zhège zì zěnme yòng?)
Professor, may I ask... (literally: please teach me)
```

```
王教授，請問，您的意思是。。。 
王教授，請問，您的意思是。。。 
Wáng jiàoshòu, qǐng wèn, nín de yìsi shì...
Professor Wang, may I ask, do you mean...
```

Face-saving strategies used in requests

When making a request to someone outside of your close personal circle, you should leave him or her room for a graceful refusal. That is, you should allow him or her the opportunity to 留面子 liú miànzi ‘save face’ if he or she has to refuse you. Here are some face-saving ways to phrase requests.
Refusals

- Ask if he or she has time.

- Ask if he or she has the ability to help.

- Be humble

  The use of to 求 ‘beg’ makes this request more humble.

  • Promising to try

    A promise to try leaves open the possibility that your request may be granted at some point. Here are some responses that promise to try.

    • Pleading a lack of understanding

      This kind of response is a common way to avoid answering a request for information.

      • Postponing the decision

      These responses are used to postpone a decision to another time.
We’ll think about it.

Let's talk about it again another time.

I am unable to do it.

I am afraid I am unable to help you.

I've never done this kind of thing before.

I am powerless to help. (formal)

I've got something else I have to do right now.

I'm afraid I'm too busy.

I don't have time.

Sorry, I have something to do (that day).
Abandoning a request

To indicate that your explanation is genuine, and that you really do not have the knowledge, ability, time, or connections required to comply with a request, add 真的 zhènde to your refusal.

我真的很不会。
我真的很不会。
Wǒ zhènde bù huì.
I really can’t do it.

我真的不懂。
Wǒ zhènde bù dǒng.
I really don’t understand.

You can soften a refusal with an apology by saying:

不好意思。
Bù hǎo yìsi.
I’m embarrassed about this.

or

对不起。
Duìbùqǐ.
Excuse me.

不好意思 bùhǎoyìsi indicates the speaker’s discomfort at not being able to comply with a request.

Abandoning a request

To abandon a request and indicate that you will not ask anymore, say:

算了 (吧)。
不要紧。
没关系。
Suànle (ba).
Bù yàojīn.
Méi guānxi.
Forget it.
It is not important.
It is not important.
59

Expressing apologies, regrets, sympathy, and bad news

59.1 Apologies and regrets

Cultures differ in the kinds of things that people are expected to apologize for. This chapter presents the types of situations for which an apology is expected and provides expressions of apology that can be used in these situations.

Note that in Chinese culture, you are not expected to apologize for or otherwise acknowledge bodily functions such as coughs, sneezes, belches, flatulence, etc. In response to someone’s sneeze, you can say:

百岁。/ 百歲。
Bāi suì.
(May you live to be) 100 years old.

If someone sneezes a second time, you can say:

千岁。/ 千歳。
Qiān suì.
(May you live to be) 1000 years old.

59.1.1 Apologizing for showing disrespect: 对不起/對不起 duìbùqǐ

对不起/對不起 duìbùqǐ is the appropriate apology for actions that show disrespect towards another, including:

- Physical actions: bumping into someone, stepping on someone’s foot, spilling something on someone, etc.
- Inappropriate behavior: interrupting someone, ending a conversation, etc.
- Imperfect performance: work done poorly, language spoken poorly, comprehension difficulty, etc.

对不起。我中文说得不好。
对不 quí。我中文说得不好。

Duìbùqǐ. Wǒ Zhōngwen shuō de bù hǎo.
Excuse me. I speak Chinese poorly.
Apologies and regrets

对不起。我不懂。
对不起。我不懂。
**Duìbùqǐ. Wǒ bù dōng.**
I’m sorry. I don’t understand.

对不起。我耽误了你。
对不起。我耽误了你。
**Duìbùqǐ. Wǒ dānwú le nǐ.**
Excuse me. I’ve caused you to be delayed.

Reply to 对不起/对不起 duìbùqǐ by saying:

没事。
没事。
没关系。
没关系。
不要紧。
不要紧。
**Méi shì. Méi guānxi. Bù yàojīn.**
It’s nothing. It’s not important. It’s not important.

59.1.2  
**Apologizing for refusals:** 不好意思 **bù hào yīsī**

不好意思 **bù hào yīsī** acknowledges embarrassment on the part of the speaker. It is commonly used when the speaker refuses an invitation or turns down a request for assistance.

Wáng: Jǐntiān xiàwǔ gēn wǒ hē kāfēi ba.  
Wang: Have coffee with me this afternoon.

Lín: Bù hào yīsī. Wǒ jǐntiān xiàwǔ yǒu shì.  
Lin: How embarrassing. This afternoon I’ve got something to do.

There is no formulaic response to **不** 好意思 **bù hào yīsī**.

59.1.3  
**Apologizing for mistakes or wrongs:** 抱歉 **bāoqiàn** and 道歉 **dàoqiàn**

抱歉 **bāoqiàn** and 道歉 **dàoqiàn** acknowledge a wrong to another and acknowledge personal responsibility for the wrong. Formal and written contexts often call for 抱歉 **bāoqiàn** or 道歉 **dàoqiàn**. Many speakers of Mandarin use these two words interchangeably. Here are expressions in which these words are used.

**Bāoqiàn.**  
I apologize.

**Bāoqiàn. Wǒ lái wǎn le.**  
I’m sorry. I’ve arrived late.

真抱歉。
真抱歉。
我向你道歉。
**Zhēn bāoqiàn. Wǒ xiàng nǐ dàoqiàn.**
I really apologize. I apologize to you.

**The use of the more formal preposition 向 xiàng ‘towards’ in the prepositional phrase 向你 xiàng nǐ ‘towards you’ makes this structure more formal.**
EXPRESSING APOLOGIES, REGRETS, SYMPATHY, AND BAD NEWS

The appropriate response to 抱歉 bàoqiàn or 道歉 dàoqiàn is the same as the response to 对不起 dòubùqǐ:

没事。 没关系。 不要紧。
It’s nothing. It’s not important. It’s not important.

59.1.4 Asking for forgiveness: 请原谅/請原諒 qǐng yuánliàng ‘please forgive me’

请原谅我/請原諒我 qǐng yuánliàng wǒ is used in an apology acknowledging personal responsibility for an action that negatively affects others.

The response to this kind of apology is the same as for 对不起/對不起 dòubùqǐ, 抱歉 bàoqiàn, and 道歉 dàoqiàn.

59.2 Expressing sympathy

To acknowledge a bad situation that another is experiencing, say:

真可惜。
Zhēn kěxī.
What a pity. What a shame.

To express sympathy when another is ill, say:

多保重身体。
Duō bǎozhòng shēntǐ.
Take care of your health.

希望你早日康复。
Xīwàng nǐ zǎo rì kāngfù.
I hope your health is soon restored.

59.3 Conveying bad news

To introduce bad news or a negative situation use 怕 pà ‘to fear’ and 恐怕 kǒngpà ‘to be afraid that.’ Notice that 怕 pà requires a subject and 恐怕 kǒngpà does not take a subject.

(subject) 怕 pà situation

这件事，我怕他作不好。
Zhè jiàn shì, wǒ pà tā zuòbùhǎo.
I am afraid that he won’t be able to do this job well.

我怕你这次考得不好。
Wǒ pà nǐ zhècì kāo de bù hǎo.
I am afraid that this time you didn’t do well on the exam.
**Conveying bad news**

I am afraid that I can’t help you.

I’m afraid it will rain tomorrow.

I am afraid that they may not come today.

I’m afraid that this time you did not do well on the exam.

**Kǒngpà situation**

I’m afraid that I cannot help you.

我怕我帮不了你的忙。
我怕我帮不了你的忙。

Wǒ pà wǒ bāngbuliāo nǐ de máng.
I am afraid that I can’t help you.

我怕明天会下雨。
我怕明天会下雨。

Kǒngpà míngtiān huì xià yǔ.
I’m afraid it will rain tomorrow.

我怕他们今天不会来了。
我怕他们今天不会来了。

Kǒngpà tāmen jīntiān bù huì lái le.
I am afraid that they may not come today.

我怕你这次考得不好。
我怕你這次考得不好。

Kǒngpà nǐ zhè cì kǎo de bù hǎo.
I’m afraid that this time you did not do well on the exam.

我怕我帮不了你的忙。
我怕我帮不了你的忙。

Kǒngpà wǒ bāngbuliāo nǐ de máng.
I am afraid that I cannot help you.
Expressing congratulations and good wishes

60.1 General expressions of congratulations and good wishes

The following expressions may be used to extend congratulations in any occasion. Each is followed by an illustration of its use.

恭喜！gōngxǐ! ‘congratulations’

恭喜！恭喜！
Gōngxǐ! Gōngxǐ!
Congratulations!
(As an expression of congratulations, the word is often said twice.)
恭喜发财！
恭喜发财！
Gōngxǐ fàcái!
Wishing you a prosperous New Year! (standard New Year greeting)

祝贺/祝贺 zhù hè ‘congratulations’

祝贺开张大吉。
祝贺開張大吉。
Zhù hè kāizhǎng dàjí.
Wishing you extraordinary good luck on your great business opening.

庆祝/庆祝 qìngzhù ‘celebrate’

庆祝结婚纪念。
慶祝結婚紀念。
Qìngzhù jiēhūn jìniàn.
Congratulations on your wedding anniversary.

庆祝新婚。
慶祝新婚。
Qìngzhù xīn hūn.
Congratulations on your wedding. (on your new marriage)

庆祝开业。
慶祝開業。
Qìngzhù kāi yè.
Congratulations on your new business.
### Fixed phrases of congratulations and good wishes for special events

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|           | 恭喜發財！ (traditional greeting) |
|           | Gōngxǐ fā cái! |
|           | Congratulations and get rich! |
|           | 新春大喜！ |
|           | Xīn chūn dà xǐ! |
|           | Wishing you great happiness at the new year! |
|           | 新年快乐！ |
|           | 新年快乐！ |
|           | Xīnnián kuàilè! |
|           | Happy New Year! (Western influenced greeting) |
| Christmas | 圣诞快乐！ |
|           | Shèngdàn kuàilè! |
|           | Merry Christmas! |
| Wedding   | 恭喜！ |
|           | Gōngxǐ! |
|           | Congratulations! |
|           | 天作之合！ |
|           | Tiān zuò zhī hé! |
|           | A match made in heaven! |
|           | 百年好合！ |
|           | Bǎinián hǎo hé! |
|           | A happy union lasting 100 years! |
|           | 白头偕老！ |
|           | Báitóu xiēlào! |
|           | Growing old together in happiness! |
| Birthday  | 恭喜！ |
|           | Gōngxǐ! |
|           | Congratulations! |
|           | 祝你生日快乐！ |
|           | Zhù nǐ shēngrì kuàilè! |
|           | Wishing you a happy birthday! |
|           | (Western influenced greeting) |
EXPRESSING CONGRATULATIONS AND GOOD WISHES

Birth of child (a new birth is celebrated when the child is a month old)

- **Chángmìng bǎi suì!**  
  May you live to be 100 years old!

Birthday of someone 60 years old or older

- **Zhù nǐ shòu bì nán shān, fú rú dōng hǎi.**  
  I wish you a long life (live as long as the south mountain) and great fortune (as great as the east sea).

Graduation

- **Zhù hè nǐ qiántú wúliàng.**  
  Wishing you boundless prospects.

Good wishes for a business

- **Kāi shì dà jí!**  
  Wishing you great luck in your new business!
Replying to expressions of congratulations and good wishes

When someone congratulates you, you can reply by saying:

- Xièxiè. or Duō xiè. or Xièxiè de hǎoyì.
- 謝謝。 or 多謝。 or 謝謝你的好意。

To give a more formal reply, say:

- Duō xiè nǐ de jíyán.
  多謝你的吉言。
- 謝謝你的吉言。

Thank you for your good wishes.
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Yip Po-Ching and Don Rimmington

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