



# Chinese Grammar

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# Introduction

If pronunciation is the foundation of Chinese learning, then grammar must be the skeletal framework around which it is built. With good grammar, people can then express themselves with proper meaning. Even if you know what all the Chinese characters mean, you will make no sense without proper order in your sentences. Good grammar will give you proper order.

Mandarin Chinese grammar is not as difficult as you would think. I believe learning the grammar of any language is done through constant repetition. However, I still want to suggest a way to make grammar easier to learn for DigMandarin audiences.

In the content that follows, you will learn the most basic and important grammar points step by step. It's a collection that includes a summary of grammar structure, basic tenses introduction, and the most commonly used special sentence patterns.

Let's begin!

## **1. Sentence Structures & Exceptions**

In Chinese, the sentence words order is especially important, partly as a consequence of its lack of case endings for nouns.

Although Chinese is not the only language where the sentence words order is important, it is extremely important to take care of the right Chinese Sentence order. A slight difference in the words order may result in a completely different sentence and meaning. For example:

*Some person/people have come*

来人了  
(lái rén Le)

*The person/people (we expecting to) have come*

人来了  
(rén lái Le)

The meanings are different in the two sentences. Also, the Chinese sentence words order is very different from English, like this example:

*English: who are you?*

*Chinese: 你是谁?*  
(nǐ shì shéi?)

So, a word-by-word translation from English to Chinese would result in meaningless sentences in Chinese. There is no way to make sense of the Chinese words order from English. The aim of this article is to explain clearly and intuitively the rules of the Chinese sentence structure and point out some important exceptions. Let's take a look.

The basic sentence pattern in Chinese is similar to English and it follows this:

**Subject + Verb + Object (S-V-O)**

Here is an example of what this would look like:

*He read Chinese book.*

他 看 中文书  
(tā kàn zhōng wén shū)  
S V O

If there is also an indirect object, it always precedes the direct object. It will look like this structure followed by good sentence examples.

### Subject + Verb + Indirect Object + Direct Object (S-V-O-O)

*He bought me a dog.*

他 给我 买了 一只狗  
(tā gěi wǒ mǎi le yī zhī gǒu)  
S IO V O

*He smiled to me.*

他 对我 笑了 一笑  
(tā duì wǒ xiào le yī xiào)  
S IO V O

*He sends me a book.*

他 送 我 一本书  
(tā sòng wǒ yī běn shū)  
S V IO O

## Differences from Chinese and English:

### The Location of Prepositions

Now we will look into differences in the Chinese grammar compared to English. Prepositions (介词) are words that come before nouns and pronouns to expressing time, place, direction, objective, reason, means, dependence, passivity, comparison, etc. Common prepositions in Chinese are:

在 zài (in/on), 从 còng (from), 向 xiàng (towards), 跟 gēn (with), 往 wǎng (to, towards), 到 dào (to a place, until a certain time), 对 duì (for), 给 gěi (to, for), 对于 duìyú (regarding), 关于 guānyú (concerning, about), 把 bǎ (to hold), 被 bèi (by), 比 bǐ (particle used for comparison), 根据 gēnjù (based on), 为了 wèile (in order to), 除了 chúle (except for).....

Preposition always occur right before the verb and its objects:

### Subject + preposition + verb + direct object

Here are a couple examples of preposition in Chinese:

*Add milk to the flour.*

往	面粉里	加	牛奶
(wǎng	miàn fěn lǐ	jiā	niú nǎi)
<u>Prep.</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>V</u>	<u>O</u>

*A flight from Beijing to Chengdu takes 2.5 hours.*

从	北京	到	成都	坐飞机	要	两个半小时
(Cóng	běi jīng	dào	chéng dū	zuò fēi jī	yào	liǎng gè bàn xiǎoshí)
<u>Prep</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Prep</u>	<u>Place</u>			

## The Adverb Placement

Adverbs (describes the verb) in Chinese typically occur at the beginning of the predicate before an adjective, verb and preposition. Here are examples of adverbs:

只 zhǐ(only), 才 cái (only ,only then), 都 dōu (all), 肯定 kěn dìng (sure),  
一定 yīdìng (surely, certainly), 很 hěn (very), 太 tài (too much, very), 够  
gòu(enough), 非常 fēicháng (extremely), 已经 yǐjīng (already), 经常 jīng  
cháng(frequently), 将要 jiāngyào(will, shall), 最后 zuìhòu(finally), 当初  
dāng chū(at that time / originally), 可能 kěnéng (maybe), 大概  
dàgài(approximate), 或许 huòxǔ(perhaps , maybe), 几乎 jīhū(almost)

Here are a few ways of how it would be used in Chinese:

*They all can speak Japanese.*

他们	都	会说	日语
(tāmen	dōu	huìshuō	rì yǔ)
<u>S</u>	<u>Adv</u>	<u>V</u>	<u>O</u>

*That tall man goes away in a hurry.*

那个很高的男人	匆匆地	走了
(nàgè hěn gāo de nán rén	cōng cōng de	zǒu le)
<u>S</u>	<u>Adv</u>	<u>V</u>

*He likes cats very much.*

他	非常	喜欢	猫。
(Tā	fēicháng	xǐhuān	māo.)
<u>S</u>	<u>Adv</u>	<u>V</u>	<u>O</u>

## The Location Word

The location word almost always occurs before the verb in Chinese. There are exceptions we will discuss them in a next lesson. Here is the structure frame and an example of how it is used.

**Subject + location + verb**

*I work in Beijing.*

我 在 北京 工作  
(wǒ zài běi jīng gōng zuò)  
S prep place V

If the description of the place contents several places, then the order in Chinese is always from the biggest place to the smallest. It would look like the following sequence.

<i>China,</i> 中国 (zhōng guó) <u>the biggest place</u>	<i>Beijing University,</i> 北京 大学 (běi jīng dà xué) <u>smaller place</u>	<i>Department of Mathematic</i> 数学系 (shù xué xì) <u>the smallest place</u>
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### The Placement of 'time when'

Unlike English, a word that indicates the 'time when' a situation in Chinese is placed at the beginning of the predicate.

#### Subject + time when + predicate

For a few examples:

*I had a dinner yesterday.*

我 昨天 吃了晚饭  
(wǒ zuótiān chīle wǎn fàn)  
S time when predicate

*I will go to Shanghai tomorrow.*

我 明天 要去上海。  
(Wǒ míngtiān yào qù shànghǎi.)  
S time when predicate

*I will send it via email this afternoon.*

我 今天下午 用电邮发。

(Wǒ jīntiān xiàwǔ yóng diànyóu fā.)

S time when predicate

With time and location, which comes first?

When a sentence includes both a 'time when' and a location, 'time when' generally occurs before location. Both of them will come before the verb in the sentence frame like the examples given.

### Subject + time when + location + verb

*I swim in swimming pool every day.*

我 每天 在 游泳池 游泳  
 (wǒ měi tiān zài yóu yǒng chí yóuyǒng)  
S Time Prep Place V

*I eat in the cafeteria at school every day.*

我 每天 在 学校食堂 吃饭  
 (wǒ měi tiān zài xué xiào shí táng chīfàn)  
S Time Place V

### The Time Duration Words

Duration of time word indicates the length of time that an action occurs. Time duration directly follow the verb. Unlike English no preposition is associated with it. See the following structure and examples

### Subject + verb + time duration

*I slept two hours yesterday afternoon.*

我 昨天下午 睡了 两个小时。  
 (wǒ zuótiān xià wǔ shuìle liǎng gè xiǎo shí)  
S Time V time duration

*I run every day.*

我 每天 跑步  
(wǒ měitiān pǎobù)  
S Time V

*Yesterday I bought several books*

昨天 我 买了 几本书。  
(zuótiān wǒ mǎile jǐběnshū)  
Time S V O

In summary, The Chinese sentence structure is as follows:

**Subject + time preposition + Time + location preposition + Location (from the biggest to the smallest) + how (can be adverb or a phrase containing a preposition.) + Verb + time duration + indirect object + Object**

Here are some tips you can follow to better remember the sentence structure.

1. The subject can be located after the time.
2. Sometime the duration of time word is an adverb phrase, which describes a verb or an adjective phrase describing a noun. In this case it is located before the verb (or noun) and not after it. Pay attention not to let it confuse you. (Look at examples)

*Since coming to China, I learnt Chinese very hard for three hours every day with my sister in Beijing University.*

自从来到中国，我和妹妹每天在北京大学努力学三个小时的中文  
Time S Location Adv.V. O

(zì cóng lái dào zhōng guó, wǒ hé mèimei měi tiān zài běi jīng dà xué nǚ lì xué xí sān gè xiǎo shí de zhōng wén)

*My dog lies in the couch of living room all day.*

我的狗 整天 在客厅的沙发上 躺着 睡懒觉。

S                      Time                      Location                      How                      V

(wǒ de gǒu zhěng tiān zài kè tīng de shā fā shàng tǎng zhe shuì lǎn jiào)

## Important Exceptions in the Chinese sentence order

As we know the basic Chinese sentence order is: Subject + Time (when) + Place + verb. There are some special verbs, which seem to be allowed to break the rules. These verbs are put before the place and not after it as usual. For these verbs, we have the structure:

### Subject + Time (when) + verb + Place

Which verbs are breaking the rules? There are two kinds of these verbs:

#### 1. Verbs implying movement or location:

住(zhù/live), 放(fàng/put), 坐(zuò/sit), 站(zhàn/stand), 走(zǒu/walk), 去(qù/go), 达到(dá dào/arrive), 来(lái/come), 飞(fēi/fly), 扔(rēng/throw), 待(dāi/stay), etc.

#### 2. Verbs that express variability from one situation to another in this place:

结(jiē/ bear fruit), 积累/积(jī lěi / accumulate), 生长(shēng zhǎng/ grow), 烹饪(pēng rèn/cooking), etc.

Here are several exception examples:

*The food is put in the stove*  
食物放在炉子上 (type 2)  
(shí wù fàng zài lú zi shàng)

*Bananas grow on the tree.*

香蕉结在树上 (type 2)  
(xiāng jiāo jiē zài shù shàng)

*Don't throw on the ground.*

不要扔在地上 (type 1)  
(bú yào rēng zài dì shàng)

*Kids always like sitting on the ground.*

孩子总是喜欢坐在地上 (type 1)  
(hái zi zǒng shì xǐ huan zuò zài dì shàng)

This may be a lot of information to take in and may be overwhelming but don't fret. If you continue to listen and read as much real Chinese as you can, it will let you get a natural feel for these exceptions and put them before the place word naturally. These verbs can be also used in the normal order (after the place) in case we want to emphasize the place. For example:

*I live in US*

我在美国住。  
(wǒ zài měi guó zhù) (not in China).

Take an easy Chinese sentence, which still contains most of the sentence grammatical words (like subject, object, verb, prepositions and etc.) and say it to yourself for some days until you will be able to recite it fluently. Then, whenever you need to compose a sentence in Chinese only check the situation in this sentence frame.

## 2. 3 Basic Tenses Introductions

Chinese has a different approach from other languages in indicating tenses. It can be tricky, but once you master it, using tenses will become clearer. If your native language involves changing the form of the verb to indicate past, present or future tenses, it may take some time for you to adjust and adapt to how the Chinese express different tenses. But with practice, and in grasping the context of when such sentences are used, it is actually quite easy to understand. Once you get the hang of it, it will add to your growing skill with the Mandarin language.

### i. **How to Express an Ongoing State or a Continuity of an Action**

In Chinese, and unlike in English, people don't change the form of a word to express the ongoing continuity of an action or a state of being. Instead, Chinese focuses on using other words to express this. Here are some important words in Chinese that are used for this purpose: “在”(zài), “正”(zhèng), “正在”(zhèngzài) and “着”(zhe).

**1. “在”, “正”and “正在” are used to indicate that an action is ongoing.**

**Form 1) : Subject+在/正在+Verb/Adjective+.....**

E.g.

(1) 我在/正在看电视。(Wǒ zài/zhèngzài kàn diànshì.)  
I am watching TV.

(2) 整个上午她都在哭。(Zhěnggè shàngwǔ tā dōu zài kū.)  
She was crying all morning.

**Form 2) : Subject +正 + Verb/Adjective + 着...../呢/着呢**

E.g.

(1) 他正忙着，没看到你。(Tā zhèng mángzhe, méi kàndào nǐ.)  
He is busy, so he can't see you.

(2) (京剧) 我正看着呢。( (Jīngjù) wǒ zhèng kànzhe ne.)  
(Peking Opera) I was watching it.

**Notes :**

- “在” stresses the condition of an action, “正” indicates the time of an action, while “正在” indicates the time and state of an action.
- “在” can be enhanced with some adverbs like “又”(yòu), “一直”(yìzhí), “总”(zǒng), “还”(hái) to express the repetition and long continuity of the action, while “正在” cannot be used for this.

E.g.

(1) 这些天他一直在想出国的事。(Zhèxiētiān tā yìzhí zài xiǎng chūguóde shì.)  
He has been thinking about going abroad these days.

(2) 你又在喝酒了。(Nǐ yòu zài hējiǔ le.)  
You're drinking again.

(3) 他总在说过去的经历。(Tā zǒng zài shuō guòqùde jīnglì.)  
He's always talking about the past.

(4) 过去一周，他都在写论文。(Guòqù yìzhōu, tā dōu zài xiě lùnwén.)

*He has been writing papers for the past week.*

- “正” usually does not connect with a single Verb (especially monosyllable Verbs). Its usual form is “Subject+正+Verb/Adjective +着……/呢/着呢”, while “在” and “正在” have no such limitation.

E.g.

(1) 我正在吃晚饭。(Wǒ zhèngzài chī wǎnfàn.)  
*I'm having dinner.*

(2) 我在看。(Wǒ zài kàn.)  
*I'm watching.*

## 2. “着” is used after a Verb and Adjective to indicate the continuity of an action or a state.

**Basic Form : Subject + Verb/Adjective +着……**

E.g.

(1) 冰箱开着。(Bīngxiāng kāi zhe.)  
*The refrigerator is open.*

(2) 你说，我听着。(Nǐ shuō, wǒ tīng zhe.)  
*You speak, and I listen.*

(3) 她一路唱着不知名的歌。(Tā yílù chàngzhe bù zhī míng de gē.)  
*She sang an unknown song all the way.*

In order to emphasize this present state, it could connect with “正” or “在”, or place “呢” at the end of the sentence. The specific situations for this are as follows:

**Subject + (“正”, “在”) + Verb/Adjective + 着 + (...../呢)**

1) To indicate the continuity of a state, the subject is usually a thing. But if not, the Verb or Adjective are usually static words, like “坐”, “站”, “等” etc.

E.g.

(1) 灯开着呢。(Dēng kāi zhe ne.)

*The light is open.*

(2) 窗户正开着, 雨飘了进来。(Chuānghu zhèng kāizhe, yǔ piāole jìnlái.)

*The windows were open and the rain drifted in.*

(3) (你)别坐着了, 起来走走。((Nǐ)bié zuòzhe le, qǐlái zǒuzou.)

*(You) Don't stay seated, get up and walk.*

2) To indicate the continuity of an action, the Subject can be an animated one.

E.g.

(1) 兔子正高兴地吃着胡萝卜。(Tùzi zhèng gāoxìngdi chīzhe húluóbo.)

*The rabbit is happily eating carrots.*

(2) 我听着音乐, 不说话。(Wǒ tīngzhe yīnyuè, bù shuōhuà.)

*I am listening to music, not speaking.*

**For better understanding, see the chart below:**

Adverbs “在”, “正”, “正在” and Auxiliary word “着”				
Function	For an ongoing situation: “在”, “正”, “正在”		For continuity: “着”	
Form	Subject+在/正在 +Verb/Adjective+... ...	Subject+正 +Verb/Adjective+着...../ 呢/着呢	Subject+ (“正”, “在”)+Verb/Adjective+着+(...../呢)	
			the continuity of a state	the continuity of an action
Example	他在做饭。 (Tā zài zuòfàn.) He's cooking.	我正听着歌呢。 (Wǒ zhèng tīngzhe gē ne.) I'm listening to music.	电脑正开着。 (Diànnǎo zhèng kāi zhe.) The computer is open.	外面刮着大风, 我不想出门。 (Wàimiàn guāzhe dàfēng, wǒ bù xiǎng chūmén.) The wind is blowing outside, I don't want to go out.

**Note :**

These are situations when we can't use “着”:

(1) — 你在干/想什么? (Nǐ zài gān/xiǎng shénme?)  
What are you doing/thinking about?

— 我在看电视。(Wǒ zài kàn diànshì.)  
I'm watching TV.

我在想今天的作业。(Wǒ zài xiǎng jīntiānde zuòyè.)  
I'm thinking about today's homework.

(2) — 你在等谁? (Nǐ zài děng shuí?)  
Who are you waiting for?

— 我在等李华。(Wǒ zài děng Lǐhuá.)  
I'm waiting for Lihua.

We now know that “在”, “正”, and “正在” are used to indicate that an action is ongoing, while “着” is used after a Verb and Adjective to indicate the continuity of an action or a state. Thus, “着” is mainly used for description. In

the sentences above, the speaker focuses on the continuity of an action and not when or how the action is finished. So we can't use “着” here.

## ii. How to Express that Something Will Happen “Soon”

There are several ways to say how something will happen soon or the near future. Below, we have described some of those ways, and they are quite useful and can help you become better at both written and oral Chinese.

**Way 1:** Use “要(yào)……了”; and “就”(jiù) or “快”(kuài) can be placed before “要” to constitute “就要……了” or “快要……了”.

E.g.

(1) 电影要开始了，你快点儿！(Diànyǐng yào kāishǐ le, nǐ kuài diánr ! )

*The movie will soon start, be quick!*

(2) 飞机就要起飞了。(Fēijī jiù yào qǐfēi le.)

*The flight will take off.*

(3) 船快要开了。(Chuán kuài yào kāi le.)

*The ship will depart.*

**Way 2:** use “快……了” which is similar to “要……了”.

E.g.

(1) 饭快煮好了。(Fàn kuài zhǔ hǎo le.)

*The rice will be ready.*

(2) 经理快来了。(Jīnglǐ kuài lái le.)

*The manager is coming.*

To form the interrogative form of these sentences, one can add the word “吗” at the end of the sentence, followed by a question mark. The Negative Adverb “没有” is its negative answer.

E.g.

(1) — 老师要开始上课了吗？ (Lǎoshī yào kāishǐ shàngkè le ma?)  
Will the teacher begin our class?

— 没有。(Méi yǒu.)  
Not yet.

(2) — 会议快结束了吗？ (Huìyì kuài jiéshù le ma?)  
Will the meeting be finished soon?

— 没有。(Méi yǒu.)  
Not yet.

### Differences:

#### 1. “快……了” VS “(快) 要……了”

Generally speaking, “快……了” and “要……了” can be substituted for each other,

but there are still some differences, as shown below:

快+V./Adj./ **time words/quantifiers**+了  
(快) 要+V./Adj.+了

E.g.

(1) 车快/要开了。(Chē kuài/yào kāi le.)  
The car will leave.

(2) 粥快/要冷了。(Zhōu kuài/yào lěng le.)  
The porridge will get cold.

(3) 快春节了，他准备好回家过春节了。  
(Kuài chūnjié le, tā zhǔnbèi hǎo huíjiā guò chūnjié le.)  
The Spring Festival is coming, and he is ready to go home and spend Spring Festival there.

(4) 我快十岁了，我不小了。(Wǒ kuài shísuì le, wǒ bù xiǎo le.)  
I'll be ten years old, so I'm old enough.

## 2. “快要……了” VS “就要……了”

Generally speaking, “快要……了” and “就要……了” can substitute for each other, but the important difference between them is that when there is a specific time adverbial in the sentence, we can only use “就要……了”, and not “快要……了”.

E.g.

(1) 他们明天就要出发了。(Tāmen míngtiān jiù yào chūfā le.)  
They will set out tomorrow.

(2) 爸爸后天就要出差了。(Bàba hòutiān jiù yào chūchāi le.)  
My father will be in business the day after tomorrow.

## Summary

How to say that something will happen “Soon” in Mandarin			
“要……了”	“快……了”	“快要……了”	“就要……了”
E.g. 火车要开了。 (Huǒchē yào kāi le.) The train will leave.	E.g. 火车快开了。 (Huǒchē kuài kāi le.) The train will leave.	E.g. 晚饭快要做好了。 (Wǎnfàn kuàiyào zuò hǎo le.) The dinner will be done.	E.g. 晚饭就要做好了。 (Wǎnfàn jiù yào zuò hǎo le.) The dinner will be done.
1. “要……了”≈“快……了” 2. Generally, “(快)要……了” cannot use time words or quantifiers.		1. “就要……了”≈“快要……了” 2. When there is a specific time adverbial, we can only use “就要……了”.	
<b>Interrogative form:</b> generally use “吗” at the end, followed by a question mark. <b>Negative answer:</b> only “没有”			
E.g. ——唱歌比赛要开始了吗? (Chàngē bǐsài yào kāishǐ le ma?) Will the singing contest begin? ——没有。(Méi yǒu.) Not yet.			

### iii. How to Express that Something “Happened” (Intermediate Level)

*Example: “我吃了火锅” (wǒ chīle huǒ guō)*

1.

We know that when you add “了” after a verb, it indicates that this action happened at some time in the past, like “我吃了火锅” just means “I ate a hotpot.” In this sentence, you can also put “了” after the object, to say “我吃火锅了” It’s absolutely the same as “我吃了火锅” They have the same meaning.

But when the object of the verb is quantified, like “I ate hotpot three times,” you can only say “我吃了三次火锅” Like:

*“上个星期，我吃了三次火锅 – I ate hotpot three times last week.”*

*“去年五月，我吃了三次火锅 – I ate hotpots three times last May.”*

It’s typical past tense, the same as in English.

The negative: “我没吃火锅。” “上个星期，我没吃火锅。”

2.

When you talk about your past experiences, you need to add “过” after the verb, like

*“我吃过臭豆腐。 – I’ve ever eaten stinky tofu before.”*

*“我去过南极。 – I’ve been to the South Pole before.”*

When the object is quantified, like “I’ve eaten hotpot three times” you can say “我吃过三次火锅。” It still shows your experiences; it means that you’ve only ever eaten hotpot three times in your lifetime.

The negative: “我没吃过火锅。”

### 3.

But if you want to say “I’ve eaten hotpot three times from the first time I’d eaten it up to now,” you need to say “我吃了三次火锅了。” It’s like the perfect progressive in English. It means from the first time you eat hotpot, up to the moment you’re speaking, you’ve eaten hotpot three times.

So from a point in time in the past, up to the moment of speaking, you have done something for many times, you can use this structure, like “这个月，我吃了三次火锅了。 - I’ve eaten hotpot three times this month.” It means from the beginning of this month up to the moment you are speaking, you’ve eaten the hotpot three times.

And from a point in time in the past up to the moment of speaking, you have been doing something for a period of time, you can still use this structure, like in English: “I’ve been learning Chinese for three years,” can also be translated into “我学了三年汉语了。” It means from the first time you started learning Chinese up to the moment of speaking, you’ve been learning Chinese for three years.

## In Summary:

### A:

*I ate hotpot at noon.* 中午，我吃火锅了。

*It's my first time to eat hotpot.* 这是我第一次吃火锅。

*I've never eaten the hotpot before.* 我以前没吃过火锅。

*Have you ever eaten hotpot?* 你吃过火锅吗？

### B:

*I've eaten the hotpot many times.* 我吃过很多次火锅。

*I've already eaten the hotpot three times this month.*

这个月，我已经吃了三次火锅了。

## 3. Special Sentence Patterns

Chinese grammar is highly patterned based. Learn these grammar patterns to understand the structure of the language and be easily understood.

### i. Chinese Interrogative Sentences

Asking questions in Chinese is as important as learning basic survival sentences.

Chinese is a tonal language so when you ask a question, it is not as simple as raising your tone at the end of an interrogative sentence like people do in English. When a tone changes in Chinese, the very meaning of the word will change too. With this in mind, you may ask simple questions in Chinese by using an interrogative particle, the affirmative-negative sentence structure, or a question word. Here we will introduce some particles and structures that are commonly used to help you correctly learn how to ask questions in Mandarin.

1. You may be very familiar with particles “吗” and “呢”. In Chinese, you can just put them at the end of a sentence to ask questions, such as:

你是老师吗? (Nǐ shì lǎo shī ma)  
Are you a teacher?

今天是星期一吗? (Jīn tiān shì xīng qī yī ma)  
Is it Monday today?

你干什么呢? (Nǐ gàn shén me ne?)  
What are you doing?

我喜欢这本书, 你觉得呢? (Wǒ xǐ huān zhè běn shū, nǐ jué de ne?)  
I like this book and what do you think?

2. Besides “吗” and “呢”, we can add “好” or “可以” and make “好吗” or “可以吗” at the end of sentence. “好吗” is used to ask suggestions from others and “可以吗” is used to ask for permission, such as:

我们明天一起去长城, 好吗? (Wǒ men míng tiān yì qǐ qù cháng chéng, hǎo ma?)  
Shall we go to the Great Wall together tomorrow?

借我一下你的笔, 可以吗? (Jiè wǒ yí xià nǐ de bǐ, kě yǐ ma?)  
Can I borrow your pen?

3. The particles “什么”, “怎么”, “哪里”, “谁” and “为什么” are used to ask “what”, “how”, “where”, “Who” and “why” in Chinese. If you want to ask something specific, these particles are really helpful, such as:

你想吃什么? (Nǐ xiǎng chī shén me?)  
What do you want to eat?

你叫什么名字? (Nǐ jiào shén me míng zì?)  
What is your name?

去故宫怎么走? (Qù gù gōng zěn me zǒu?)

*How can I get to the Imperial Place?*

*这道题怎么做? (Zhè dào tí zěn me zuò?)  
How can I solve this question?*

*哪里能买到汉语词典? (Nǎ lǐ néng mǎi dào hàn yǔ cí diǎn?)  
Where can I buy a Chinese dictionary?*

*你要去哪里? (Nǐ yào qù nǎ lǐ?)  
Where would you want to go?*

*他是谁? (Tā shì shuí?)  
Who is he?*

*谁是美国人? (Shuí shì měi guó rén?)  
Who is an American?*

*他为什么没来? (Tā wèi shén me méi lái?)  
Why doesn't he come?*

4. When you want to ask how much or how many about something or somebody in Chinese, you can use “几”, “多”, such as:

*这件衣服多少钱? (Zhè jiàn yī fu duō shǎo qián?)  
How much are these clothes?*

*这孩子多大了? (Zhè hái zi duō dà le?)  
How old is this child?*

*现在几点了? (Xiàn zài jǐ diǎn le?)  
What is the time now?*

*你要几个苹果?( Nǐ yào jǐ gè píng guǒ)  
How many apples do you want?*

5. Another construction for a question is the “Verb-不-Verb” format, that is to say, a verb is followed by “不”(bù) which means not, no or don't and the verb is repeated. This construction is used to confirm something that people are not very sure about and the examples are as follows:

你是不是医生? (Nǐ shì bú shì yī shēng?)

Are you a doctor or not?

小明吃不吃香蕉? (Xiǎo míng chī bù chī xiāng jiāo)

Does Xiaoming eat bananas or not?

妈妈看不看电视? (Mā ma kàn bú kàn diàn shì?)

Does mother watch TV or not?

6. Some associated statements, like “(是)...还是”(shì...hái shì)(.... Or....), are good for you to give people some choices and ask them which one is better, such as:

你是吃中国菜还是吃美国菜? (Nǐ shì chī zhōng guó cài hái shì měi guó cài)

Do you eat Chinese food or American food?

这是梨还是苹果? (Zhè shì lí hái shì píng guǒ?)

Is this pear or apple?

## ii. 把(ba) Sentence(Intermediate Level)

When learning Chinese sentence structure, we can never skip the 把 sentence. According to the variations of words in 把 sentence, it does seem like one of the most difficult sentence structure in Chinese Grammar. Otherwise as one of the most often-used sentence in our daily life, 把 sentence must be learned well. Here come the four rules, which can help you to grab the basic and common usage of 把 sentence.

### Rule #1

the structure and the meaning

S + 把 + O + V + others

Subjects do some actions on objects to make them change. This 把 sentence emphasizes the actions(verb) by which the changes of objects made. In some aspect, it can be translated as the English sentence with have, make and let.

Most of the 把 sentence can be rewritten in Verb + Object order.

*我们把小偷抓住了。(We make the theft caught.)*

*我们抓住了小偷。(We catch the theft.)*

*我把房间打扫了。(I make the house clean.)*

*我打扫房间了。(I clean the house.)*

## Rule #2

In 把 sentence, verbs can never be used alone and there must some words put before or after them. That is why we need “others” in this sentence structure. Others can be 了 着 过 nonce or phrases.

*我把衣服洗了。*

*你把书读一遍。*

*我把笔放在桌子上了。*

In addition, there are some verbs that cannot be used as predication verbs of

把 sentences

1. intransitive verbs which cannot be follow ed by any object , such as “旅行、旅游、游泳、跳舞、合作、结婚、睡觉、吃饭” etc.
2. some of the verbs of judgment or state , such as “有、是、像、在、存在”.

3. some of the verbs of expressing mentality or senses, such as “知道、同意、觉得、希望、渴望、期望、喜欢、爱、要求、看见、听见、学习”.
4. some of the directional verbs, such as “上、下、进、出、回、到、过、起” etc.

### Rule #3

Objects in 把 sentence must be definite. That explains “把一些书(some books)拿来。”×—— It should be “把这些书(these books)拿来”。Some may wonder why we can say “把书拿来”。In this case, the book in this sentence is that one the speaker and listener both know.

### Rule #4

The negative form of this 把 sentence: “不” “没” “没有” should be put just before 把.

1. 我没有把消息告诉他。——×我把消息没有告诉他。 (*I didn't let him know this news.*)
2. 她不把钱给他。——×她把钱不给他。 (*She doesn't give him the money.*)

### iii. “被字句”(Bèi-structure) Passive Sentences

In Chinese, the use of “passive sentences” is fairly common and foreigners who are not used to passive sentences are often confused by them when learning the language. So , now we are going to explore one of these special

sentence structures—passive sentences with the preposition “被”(Bèi), also called “被字句”(Bèi-structure).

“被字句”(Bèi-structure) is a kind of passive sentence structure using “被”(Bèi) to indicate the agent who has performed the given action or verb. The basic structure is “(Patient)Subject+被

(Bèi)+agent+V.+complement/other elements”. Note that sometimes, it is possible to leave out “被 (Bèi)+agent” depending on the particular situation.

Here are some detailed examples to better explain this structure:

## The Affirmative Form

### 1. Basic form

**(Patient)Subject + 被(Bèi) + agent + V. + complement/other elements**

E.g.

(1) 书被他拿走了。(Shū bèi tā ná zǒu le.)

*The book was taken by him.*

(2) 面包被妹妹吃了。(Miànbāo bèi mèimei chī le.)

*The bread has been eaten by younger sister.*

(3) 我被他打了。(Wǒ bèi tā dǎ le.)

*I was beaten by him.*

(4) 果汁被弟弟喝了。(Guǒzhī bèi dìdì hē le.)

*The juice has been drunk by young brother.*

in using this basic form, what is emphasized is the agent, or the doer of the action.

## 2. Leaving the “agent” out:

**(Patient)Subject + 被(Bèi) + V. + complement/other elements**

E.g.

(1) 自行车被偷了。(Zìxíngchē bèi tōu le.)

*The bike was stolen.*

(2) 汉语书被借走了。(Hànyǔ shū bèi jiè zǒu le.)

*The Chinese book has been borrowed.*

(3) 手机被摔了。(Shǒu jī bèi shuāi le.)

*The phone was dropped.*

(4) 空气被污染了。(Kōngqì bèi wūrǎn le.)

*The air is polluted.*

This structure emphasizes the result of the action, not the agent. The agent is left out because it is unnecessary for it to be mentioned, or is unknown.

## 3. Leaving the “被 (Bèi)+agent” out:

**(Patient)Subject + V.+ complement/other elements**

E.g.

(1) 饭做好了。(Fàn zuò hǎo le.)

*The meal is ready.*

(2) 作业写完了。(Zuòyè xiě wán le.)

*The homework was finished.*

(3) 电影票买好了。(Diàn yǐngpiào mǎi hǎo le.)

*The movie ticket was bought.*

(4) 电脑修好了。(Diànnǎo xiū hǎo le.)

*The computer has been repaired.*

This type of structure only emphasizes on the (Patient)Subject and the result of the action.

## The Negative Form

There is a negative form as well where “没（有）（méiyǒu）” is used in the passive sentences, and （有） is implied. To be consistent with the affirmative form, there are two negative forms:

1. 没（有）（méiyǒu） is put before the preposition “被（Bèi）” in the first two affirmative forms:

**(Patient)Subject + 没（有）（méiyǒu） + 被（Bèi） + agent + V. + complement/other elements**

**(Patient)Subject + 没（有）（méiyǒu） + 被（Bèi） + V. + complement/other elements**

E.g.

(1) 自行车没被哥哥修好。(Zìxíngchē méi bèi gēge xiū hǎo.)  
The bike hasn't been repaired by older brother.

(2) 自行车没被修好。(Zìxíngchē méi bèi xiū hǎo.)  
The bike hasn't been repaired.

2. 没（有）（méiyǒu） is put before the verbs:

**(Patient)Subject + 没（有）（méiyǒu） + V. + complement/other elements**

E.g.

(1) 自行车没修好。(Zìxíngchē méi xiū hǎo.)  
The bike was not repaired.

(2) 作业没写完。(Zuòyè méi xiě wán.)  
the homework isn't finished yet.

Here is a summary chart about “被字句”(Bèi-structure) to help make things clearer. We will use the sentence below to show the different affirmative and negative forms:

杯子被妹妹打碎了。(Bēizi bèi mèimei dǎ suì le.)  
The cup was broken by young sister.

**Affirmative forms:**

	(Patient) Subject	被 (Bèi)	agent	V.	complement/ other elements
1.	杯子	被	妹妹	打	碎了。
2.	杯子	被	\	打	碎了。
3.	杯子	\	\	打	碎了。

**Negative forms:**

	(Patient) Subject	没(有) (méiyǒu)	被 (Bèi)	agent	没(有) (méiyǒu)	complement/ V. other elements
1	杯子	没(有)	被	妹妹	\	打碎。
2	杯子	没(有)	被	\	\	打碎。
3	杯子	\	\	\	没(有)	打碎。

**Finally**, some points need to be emphasized:

i). In pattern 1 of affirmative forms, we can also use the prepositions “叫”(jiào)and “让”(ràng); the negative form can also be constructed with “不”(bù), “别”(bié). Finally, some points need to be emphasized:

E.g.

(1)字典叫他借走了。(Zìdiǎn jiào tā jiè zǒu le.)  
The dictionary was borrowed by him.

(2)钱包让小偷偷走了。(Qiánbāo ràng xiǎotōu tōu zǒu le.)  
The wallet was stolen by the thief.

(3) 他的文章不被采纳。(Tāde wénzhāng bú bèi cǎinà.)

*His essay hasn't been accepted.*

(4) 你拿着苹果，别让他吃。(Nǐ nǎzhe píngguǒ, bié ràng tā chī.)

*Keep the apple, don't let him eat it.*

ii). In “被字句”(Bèi-structure), there must be a modifying element following the Verb, and the verb can't be used alone.

Compare the two sentences below:

Water has been drunk:

水被喝完了。(Shuǐ bèi hē wán le.)

※水被喝完。(Shuǐ bèi hē wán.)

※水被喝。(Shuǐ bèi hē.)

(The three sentences above may have the same meaning when translated to English, but the original Chinese pattern and meaning are different. Usually, the last two sentences are considered wrong grammar in Chinese.)

#### iv. Existential Sentences(存现句)

‘存现句’ - Existential Sentences are an especially useful structure in Mandarin. Chinese people use it to express the existence, appearance, or disappearance of someone or something. It is similar to the ‘There is’ grammatical structure in English, though it is not exactly equivalent.

Existential Sentences follow a structure that is used to express that someone or something exists, appears, or disappears somewhere. Usually, it consists of three main parts: the Front Part indicates ‘a place’, the Middle Part uses Verbs

which express 'existence/appearance/disappearance', and the Final Part indicates 'someone or something'. If this sounds abstract, then the concrete grammatical form can be expressed as:

**'Place+ Verb + Object'**

*\*(Verb: for existence or appearance or disappearance)*

*\*(Object: Something or Somebody)*

Let's look at some specific examples:

1) 书包里有一本书。 (Shūbāo lǐ yǒu yì běn shū.)

*There is a book in the schoolbag.*

2) 墙上挂着一件衣服。 (Qiángshàng guàzhe yí jiàn yīfu.)

*There is a piece of cloth on the wall.*

3) 小河旁边是一条大马路。 (Xiǎohé pángbiān shì yì tiáo dà mǎlù.)

*Beside the creek, there is a road.*

4) 家里来了几位客人。 (Jiālǐ lái le jǐ wèi kè rén.)

*Several guests came to my house.*

5) 鱼缸里死了一条金鱼。 (Yúgāng lǐ sǐ le yì tiáo jīnyú.)

*A goldfish has died in the fish tank.*

From those sentences above, (1)、(2)、 and (3) express existence, (4) expresses appearance, and (5) expresses disappearance. According to the concept of Existential Sentences above, they can be summarized in the following chart:

	the Front Part (place)	the Middle Part (verb)	the Final Part (object)
Existence	书包里	有	一本书
	墙上	挂着	一件衣服
	小河旁边	是	一条大马路
Appearance	家里	来了	几位客人
Disappearance	水缸里	死了	一条金鱼

## 1. For the Front Part of the Sentence

This part is structured as ‘Noun + Locality Words’ to indicate a place.

Examples: 桌子上 (Zhuōzi shàng) on the table, 杯子左边 (Bēizi zuǒbian) the left of the cup, 房间里 (Fángjiān lǐ) inside the room, etc.

## 2. For the Middle Part of the Sentence

We use ‘有’, ‘V 着’, ‘是’ to connect the front and final parts of the sentence to indicate existence, showing a state or a mode, while ‘V 了’ usually shows a dynamic meaning that indicates appearance or disappearance.

## 3. For the Final Part

The Object is definitely needed in this structure to complete the Existential Sentence, and usually is uncertain or impermanent (except in Example (3) above). There is usually no modifying adjective before the Object, and the elements before it are usually a Descriptive or Numerical phrase.

### Other notes:

1). Generally speaking, in Existential Sentences, the front of the whole structure should follow ‘Noun + Locality Words’, and prepositions such as ‘在’, ‘从’ and so on cannot be used.

2). Time words could exist before the Front Part in Existential Sentences as an adverbial modifier, but are really unnecessary.

E.g.

家里来了几位客人。 (Jiālǐ lái le jǐ wèi kè rén.)  
Several guests came to my house.

刚刚家里来了几位客人。 (Gānggāng jiālǐ lái le jǐ wèi kè rén.)  
Just now, several guests came to my house.

3). The Object is often uncertain except in ‘是’ sentences. In a ‘是’ sentence, there is only a singular thing or person that is certain.

E.g.

小河旁边是一条大马路。 (Xiǎohé pángbiān shì yì tiáo dà mǎ lù.)  
Beside the creek, there is a road.

商店后面是超市。 (Shāngdiàn hòumian shì chāoshì.)  
There is a supermarket behind the shop.

## v. Bǐ-structure(比字句) - Making Comparisons in Chinese

In everyday life, we usually compare different people or things by length, weight, size, age and so on. So, do you know how to say she is more beautiful than I am and She is much more beautiful than I am in Chinese? And why the sentence“他比我很漂亮(Tā bǐ wǒ hěn piàoliang)” is wrong?

1. The sentences above can be expressed using “Bi-structure(比字句)”. In Chinese, we usually use “Bi-structure(比字句)” to compare different people and things, describe the changes in different situations, and describe changes over time of one person or thing, but the word order in these kinds of sentences is different from in English. Look at the patterns below:

### A 比 B + adjective

E.g.

(1) 他比我高。(Tā bǐ wǒ gāo.)

He is taller than me.

(2) 我的房间比他的房间大。(Wǒ de fángjiān bǐ tā de fángjiān dà.)

My room is bigger than his.

(3) 我比去年胖。(Wǒ bǐ qùnián pàng.)

I am fatter than last year.

We can omit the part which is compared. For example:

我的房间比他的(房间)大。(Wǒ de fángjiān bǐ tā de fángjiān dà.)

My room is bigger than his.

- **The interrogative form:**

A 比 B + adjective + 吗?

E.g.

他比你高吗?(Tā bǐ nǐ gāo ma?)

Is he taller than you?

How to answer the question“他比你高吗(Tā bǐ nǐ gāo ma)” in Chinese ?

We already know the affirmative answer, but when we come to the negative form, there are two different kinds of answers. Look at the examples below:

- **The negative form:**

i) A 没有 B + adjective

E.g.

他没有我高。(Tā méiyǒu wǒ gāo.) He is not taller than I am.  
His height < My height

ii) A 不比 B + adjective

E.g.

他不比我高。(Tā bù bǐ wǒ gāo.)  
a) His height ≈ My height (His height is almost the same with mine)  
b) His height < My height (He is shorter than I am)

**Notes:**

The sentence 他不比我高(Tā bù bǐ wǒ gāo) has two possible meanings like above. Actually, this negative form is not only a comparative sentence, it also expresses a tone of the dispute. While, the sentence“他没有我高(Tā méiyǒu wǒ gāo)”“just focuses on the fact itself.

What's more, there are differences between the adjectives used in these two negative forms. Generally, the adjectives in “A 没有 B + adjective” should be positive words, but there are no such limits in “A 不比 B + adjective”.

Look at the examples below:

E.g.

我没有你聪明。(Wǒ méiyǒu nǐ cōngmíng.) I am not clever than you.

\*我没有你笨。(Wǒ méiyǒu nǐ bèn.) I am not stupider than you. **X**

我不比你矮。(Wǒ bù bǐ nǐ ǎi.) I am not shorter than you.

我也不比你笨啊，可是我为什么总学不会。(Wǒ yě bù bǐ nǐ bèn a, kěshì wǒ wèishénme zǒng xué bú huì.)

I am not stupider than you, but why I can't always learn that.

Nomally, we can't say “我没有你笨(Wǒ méiyǒu nǐ bèn)”; but if you want to emphasize that you are stupid and I am not as stupid as you, we can say “我没有你那么笨(Wǒ méiyǒu nǐ nàme bèn)”. Generally, we would use “那么(nàme)” before passive adjectives.

2. The sentence A 比 B + adj can explain there are imparities between A and B, but if there are some big differences between two people or things, or you want to express the specific differences between them, we should add some specific words to the “Bi-structure(比字句)”. Look at the examples below:

i) A 比 B + adjective + the specific quantity

E.g.

他比我高10厘米。(Tā bǐ wǒ gāo shí límǐ.)  
He is ten centimeters taller than I am.

ii) A 比 B + adjective + 一点儿/ 一些/得多/多了

E.g.

他比我高一点儿。(Tā bǐ wǒ gāo yìdiǎnr.)  
He is a little bit taller than I am.

他比我高一些。(Tā bǐ wǒ gāo yìxiē.)  
He is a little taller than I am.

他比我高得多/多了。(Tā bǐ wǒ gāo de duō/duō le)  
He is much taller than I am.

When we express that there are big differences between two people or two things, we should pay attention to the fact that we can't put the adverbs

which describe the high degree before the adjective. We can use the adjectives, like “多、远” which should be put behind the adjective.

E.g.

\*我的汉语比他很差。(Wǒ de hànyǔ bǐ tā hěn chà.) X  
我的汉语比他差远了。(Wǒ de hànyǔ bǐ tā chà yuǎn le.) ✓  
My Chinese is much worse than his.

3. If you want to express A has the high degree in an aspect, while B is much higher than A in this aspect, we can say as follows:

A 比 B + 更/还 + adjective

E.g.

大卫比姚明还高。(Dàwèi bǐ Yáomíng hái gāo.)

David is even taller than Yaoming.

If you want to ask about specific differences or if there is a big difference between two aspects, you can say:

- The interrogative form

i) A 比 B + adjective + 多少?

E.g.

大卫比姚明高多少?(Dàwèi bǐ Yáomíng gāo duōshao?)

ii) A 比 B + adjective + 得多吗?

E.g.

大卫比姚明高得多吗?(Dàwèi bǐ Yáomíng gāo dé duō ma?)

Here is a summary of the Bi-structure(比字句):

Structures of 比		Examples
A 比 B	Adjective	他比我高。(Tā bǐ wǒ gāo. ) He is taller than I am .
	adjective + the specific quantity	他比我高10厘米。(Tā bǐ wǒ gāo shí límǐ.) He is ten centimeters taller than I am.
	adjective + 一点儿/一些/得多/多了	他比我高一点儿。(Tā bǐ wǒ gāo yìdiǎnr.) He is a little bit taller than I am.
	更/还 + adjective	他比我还高。(Tā bǐ wǒ hái gāo.) He is even taller than me.

## vi. Pivotal Sentence

‘兼语句’ (Jiānyǔjù), Pivotal sentence, which is a special structure that plays an important role in Chinese. I believe many learners will have or have had trouble while working with it. So, here is a brief introduction.

Well, WHY we should know what a Pivotal sentence is? Because that’s something we meet when studying Chinese, even in the primary stage. It has both an Information Function and Aesthetic Function. Actually, if talking with native speakers, you’ll find out Chinese people use it more often in oral communication.

Now that ‘What is a Pivotal sentence?’ To start, let’s look at following sentence

*(Wǒ jiào mèimei chī wǔfàn. )*

*我叫妹妹吃午饭。*

*I ask my younger sister to have lunch.*

According to the sentence above, we can find out a structure which is:

我	叫	妹妹	吃	午饭
Noun1	Verb1	Noun2	Verb2	Other elements

So simply to say, Pivotal sentence has the form of

**‘(Noun1+Verb1+[Noun2]) + Verb2+Other elements’**,

and Noun2(more precisely, Nominal element2) is the Object of the Verb1, and

the logical subject of the Verb2. Among Pivotal sentences, there still exist

different types according to what Verb1 and Verb2 are, so here, with limited

time and space, two basic structures will be introduced.

**Structure1:** Noun1+让/叫/派/请...+Noun2+Verb2+ (other elements)

*E.g.*

(1) 让我看看。 (Ràng wǒ kànkàn.)  
Let me have a look.

(2) 老师叫/让你交作业。 (Lǎoshī jiào/ ràng nǐ jiāo zuòyè.)  
The teacher asked you to hand in homework.

(3) 公司派我出国。 (Gōngsī pài wǒ chūguó.)  
The firm assigned me to go abroad.

(4) 我的好朋友请我去北京。 (Wǒde hǎopéngyou qǐng wǒ qù Běijīng.)  
My best friend invited me to Beijing.

### Meanings:

1. To express ‘Noun1 asks or requests Noun2’ to do something. In this case,

Verb1 should be

‘请’、‘派’、‘要求’etc.

*E.g.* 我要求他去睡觉。 (Wǒ yāoqiú tā qù shuìjiào.)  
I asked him to go to sleep.

2. To express 'Noun1 allows Noun2' to do something. In this case, Verb1 should be '同意' etc.

E.g. 学校同意我们去公园。 (Xuéxiào tóngyì wǒmen qù gōngyuán.)  
The school allowed us to go to park.

**The negative form:**

**Noun1+不/没(没有)+让/叫/派/请...+Noun2+Verb2+(other elements)**

E.g. (1) 老师没叫/让我交作业。 (Lǎoshī méi jiào/ràng wǒ jiāo zuòyè.)  
The teacher didn't ask me to hand in homework.

(2) 妈妈不同意我去成都。 (Māma bù tóngyì wǒ qù Chéngdū.)  
Mam don't allow me to go to Chengdu.

(3) 我没请他来办公室。 (Wǒ méi qǐng tā lái bànòngshì.)  
I didn't ask him to the office.

**Structure2: Noun1+让/叫/使...+Noun2+Verb2/Adj.**

E.g. (1) 这件事让/叫/使我不高兴。 (Zhèjiànshì ràng/jiào/shǐ wǒ bù gāoxìng.)  
This thing makes me unhappy.

(2) 这篇文章让/叫/使我伤心。 (Zhèpiān wénzhāng ràng/jiào/shǐ wǒ shāngxīn.)  
This article makes me sad.

(3) 他的话让/使妹妹决定去工作。 (Tādehuà ràng/shǐ mèimei juéding qù gōngzuò.)  
His words make his young sister decide to work.

**Notice:**

1. It differs from Structure1 in that in this case, Noun1 is the reason for Noun2 to do something or change, not Noun1 asks or orders Noun2 to do something of Structure1.

2. When the place of Verb2 is Adjective, there are usually no other elements following the Adjective; however, if it's a Verb, there could be other elements that follow.
3. The negative form of it is complex, and it depends on the meaning of the whole sentence. We will illustrate it in the future.

In summary, we've learned two basic structures of Pivotal sentences; a basic summary can be seen in the following chart.

	Structure1	Structure2
Basic form	Noun1+让/叫/派/请...+Noun2+Verb2+ (other elements)	Noun1+让/叫/使...+Noun2+Verb2/Adj.
	老师叫/让你交作业。 (Lǎoshī jiào/ ràng nǐ jiāo zuòyè.) The teacher asked you to hand in homework.	这件事让/叫/使我不高兴。 (Zhèjiànshì ràng/jiào/shǐ wǒ bù gāoxìng.) This thing makes me unhappy.
Negative form	Noun1+ 不 / 没 (没有) + 让 / 叫 / 派 / 请...+Noun2+Verb2+(other elements)	.....
	老师不/没叫/让我交作业。 (Lǎoshī méi jiào/ràng wǒ jiāo zuòyè.) The teacher didn't ask me to hand in homework.	.....

Some other points we should focus on are:

1. The Verb1 in the Pivotal sentence usually express 'asking or ordering' meaning.
2. Structure2 is different from Structure1.
3. “使” (shǐ) in the Structure2 can't be used in Structure1.

4. When it's an Adjective in the place of Verb2, there are usually no other elements that follow the Adjective.

## vii. Serial Verb Phrases Sentences

‘连动句(lián dòng jù)’ are Sentences with Serial Verb Phrases, the last of the special sentences in Mandarin. This kind of sentence structure is widely used in oral and written Chinese to express a reason for, purpose, or way of doing something, and closely reflects the way of thinking in Chinese culture.

Sentences with Serial Verb Phrases consist of two or more Verbs or Verbal phrases which are predicative of the same Subject. Its basic form is

**‘Subject+ Verb1+(Object1) +Verb2+ (Object2)’**

but each part of the structure has a different intent, which are as follows:

### 1. Verb 1 indicates the ‘means or manner’ of Verb 2.

E.g.

- (1) 我开车去超市。(Wǒ kāi chē qù chāoshì.)  
*I drive the car to go to the supermarket.*
- (2) 我们用筷子吃饭。(Wǒmen yòng kuàizi chīfàn.)  
*We use chopsticks to eat.*

### 2. Verb 2 indicates the ‘purpose’ of Verb 1.

E.g.

- (1) 他去公园玩。(Tā qù gōngyuán wán.)  
*He goes to the park to play.*
- (2) 奶奶上街买菜。(Nǎinai shàngjiē mǎi cài.)  
*Grandma went to the market to buy food.*

### 3. Verb 2 indicates the 'result' of Verb 1.

E.g.

- (1) 我听了很高兴。(Wǒ tīng le hěn gāo xìng.)  
*I'm so happy after hearing it.*
- (2) 弟弟生病住院了。(Dìdì shēngbìng zhùyuàn le.)  
*Younger brother has been sick in the hospital.*

### 4. Verb 2 indicates the 'succession' of Verb 1.

E.g.

- (1) 大家排队上车!(Dàjiā páiduì shàngchē.)  
*Please line up for boarding!*
- (2) 我起床穿衣服。(Wǒ qǐchuáng chuān yīfu.)  
*I get up and put on clothes.*

### 5. Verb 1 is '有'(yǒu) or '没有'(méi yǒu).

E.g.

- (1) 他有事找你。(Tā yǒu shì zhǎo nǐ.)  
*He's looking for something from you.*
- (2) 我没有话说。(Wǒ méiyǒu huà shuō.)  
*I have nothing to say.*

### 6. Verb 1 and Verb 2 indicate the same thing but Verb 1 expresses affirmative meaning while Verb2 expresses negative meaning.

E.g.

- (1) 他坐着不动。(Tā zuòzhe bú dòng.)  
*He sat still.*
- (2) 弟弟闭口不說話。(Dìdì bìkǒu bù shuōhuà.)  
*Younger brother closes his mouth and doesn't talk.*

### Notes:

1) The sequence of Sentences with Serial Verb Phrases *cannot* be changed, and there is no conjunction or comma between Verb 1 and Verb 2.

2) In this structure, the verb (but only Verb 2) can be overlapped.

E.g.

(1) 我去公园逛逛。(Wǒ qù gōngyuán guàngguang.)  
I will go to the park for fun.

(2) 我去超市买买东西。(Wǒ qù chāoshì mǎimai dōngxi.)  
I will go to the supermarket to buy something.

3) For added meaning, we sometimes can add ‘可’(kě) before Verb 2, as there is an idiomatic usage with ‘无……可……’.

E.g.

(1) 商场里有很多打折商品可买，可以去看看。  
(Shāngchǎng lǐ yǒu hěn duō dǎzhé shāngpǐn kě mǎi, kěyǐ qù kànkàn.)  
There are so many goods on discount for shopping, you can go and have a look.

(2) 现在我无事可干。(Xiànzài wǒ wú shì kě gàn.)  
Now I have nothing to do.

## Summary :

We have learned six meanings expressed through Sentences with Serial Verb Phrases, which are summarized in the following chart:

Sentences with serial verb phrases					
Meanings	Structure				
	Subject	Verb1	(Object)	Verb2	(Object)
'means or manner'	我们	用	筷子	吃	饭
'purpose'	他	去	公园	玩	
'result'	我	听了		很高兴	
'succession'	大家	排	队	上	车
'有'(yǒu) or '没有'(méi yǒu)	他	有	事	找	你
	我	没有	话	说	
'V1 expresses affirmative meaning while V2 expresses negative meaning'	弟弟	闭	口	不说	话

Understanding Chinese grammar gives your insight into the Chinese way of thinking. As you start using these sentences and practice more and more, you will also eventually be able to talk more like a native Chinese speaker. If you are interested in more Mandarin Chinese grammar lessons, feel free to check [www.digmandarin.com](http://www.digmandarin.com) anytime. Good luck with your studies!