

# Subject-Predicate

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A simple [predicate](#) can be just a verb. The most basic word order in Chinese is:

## Structure

Subj. + Verb

You can form very simple sentences with just two words.

## Examples

Subject	Verb	Translation
你们 Nǐmen	吃。 chī.	You eat.
他 Tā	笑。 xiào.	He laughs.
我 Wǒ	读。 dú.	I read.
你 Nǐ	去。 qù.	You go.

Subject	Verb	Translation
你们 Nǐmen	看。 kàn.	You look.
你 Nǐ	来。 lái.	You come here!
我 Wǒ	说。 shuō.	I speak.
孩子 Háizi	哭。 kū.	Children cry.
谁 Shéi	要学? yào xué?	Who wants to study?
谁 Shéi	想玩? xiǎng wán?	Who wants to play?

## Subject-Verb-Object

A slightly longer [predicate](#) might be a verb with an object. A sentence with both a verb and an object is formed with this structure:

### Structure

Subj. + Verb + Obj.

This is the same as in English, and is commonly referred to as SVO word order. You can express a huge variety of things with this simple structure.

### Examples

Subject	Verb	Object	Translation
他们 Tāmen	吃 chī	肉。 ròu.	They eat meat.
你 Nǐ	喝 hē	茶吗？ chá ma?	Do you drink tea?
我 Wǒ	去 qù	学校。 xuéxiào.	I go to school.
他 Tā	说 shuō	中文。 Zhōngwén.	He speaks Chinese.
你 Nǐ	喜欢 xǐhuan	孩子吗？ háizi ma?	Do you like kids?

Subject	Verb	Object	Translation
我们 Wǒmen	要买 yào mǎi	电脑。 diànnǎo.	We want to buy a computer.
你们 Nǐmen	想吃 xiǎng chī	中国菜吗？ Zhōngguó cài ma?	Do you want to eat Chinese food?
我 Wǒ	爱 ài	你和爸爸。 nǐ hé bàba.	I love you and dad.
他们 Tāmen	要做 yào zuò	什么？ shénme?	What do they want to do?
你 Nǐ	想去 xiǎng qù	什么地方？ shénme dìfang?	What place do you want to go to?

## Simple "noun + adjective" sentences

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In English, nouns can be "linked" to adjectives and other nouns with the verb "to be." In Chinese, [nouns](#) are linked to other nouns in one way, but linked to [adjectives](#) in a completely different way. Nouns are linked to other [nouns with 是 \(shì\)](#). Nouns are linked to adjectives with 很 (hěn).

## Structure

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Noun + 很 + Adj.

The noun in this structure is the subject of the sentence. Sometimes the 很 (hěn) in this structure is translated as "very," but often it is just a way to link a noun to an adjective.

## Examples

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In the following examples, 很 (hěn) is just a link (you could think of it as a substitute for the verb "to be"), and the sentences could be translated as "(Noun) is (adjective)."

• 我 很 好。

Wǒ hěn hǎo.

I'm good.

• 你 很 漂亮。

Nǐ hěn piàoliang.

You are pretty.

• 他 很 高兴。

Tā hěn gāoxìng.

He is happy.

- 中文 很 难。

Zhōngwén hěn nán.

Chinese is difficult.

- 老板 很 生气。

Lǎobǎn hěn shēngqì.

The boss is angry.

- 我们 很 累。

Wǒmen hěn lèi.

We're tired.

- 我 哥哥 也 很 高。

Wǒ gēge yě hěn gāo.

My older brother is also tall.

- 你 家 也 很 远 吗？

Nǐ jiā yě hěn yuǎn ma?

Is your house also far away?

- 爸爸 很 忙，妈妈 也 很 忙。

Bàba hěn máng, māma yě hěn máng.

Dad is busy, and mom is also busy.

• 他和他弟弟都很帅。

Tā hé tā dìdi dōu hěn shuài.

He and his younger brother are both handsome.

Remember that **是 (shì)** is not used to link adjectives to nouns. This is a classic mistake that almost everyone makes when learning Chinese. Make sure you use **很 (hěn)** and not **是 (shì)** to link adjectives to nouns, as shown below:

	他 <b>是</b> 高。 Tā <b>shì</b> gāo
	他 <b>很</b> 高。 Tā <b>hěn</b> gāo. He is tall.

## What 很 (hěn) Really Means

If you're like most learners, when you first learn this pattern, you're thinking, "How can 很 (hěn) mean "very" one minute, but then nothing but a "link" the next? How do I know if anything means anything in this language?" That's a reasonable response. But in the case of these "Noun + Adj." sentences, you just have to think of this usage of 很 (hěn) as an exception. It's just part of the structure.

If you actually want to add the meaning of "very" into the sentence, you could use another adverb instead of 很 (hěn). One good choice is 非常 (fēicháng).

- 他 非常 高 。 Tā **fēicháng** gāo. He is very tall.

## Adding extra information to a sentence

More details can be added to the basic sentence structure. How to do this is demonstrated below.

### Placement of time words in a sentence

Time words, the WHEN part of a sentence, have a special place in Chinese. They usually come at the beginning of a sentence, right after the subject. Occasionally you'll see them before the subject, but the place you *won't* be seeing them is at the *end* of the sentence (where they frequently appear in English).

#### Placement of Time Words

Subject	Time when	Verb phrase	
我	今天	工作	。
你们	每天	洗澡	。
他	星期二	来	。

### Placement of place words in a sentence

When you want to tell WHERE something happened in Chinese (at school, at work, in Vegas, on the bus, etc.), you're most often going to use a phrase beginning with 在. This phrase needs to come after the time word (see above) and *before the verb*. Pay attention to this last part: *before the verb*. In English, this information naturally comes *after* the verb, so it's going to be difficult at first to get used to saying WHERE something happened *before* saying the verb.

#### Placement of place words

Subject	Time when	Place word	Verb phrase	
我		在上海	工作	。

你们	星期六	在家	看电影	。
她	1980年	在美国	出生	。