



SPEAKING • STARTER

Yesterday, Today, Next Week: Mandarin Time Words & Plans

Use relative days, weeks, months, years, parts of the day, and before-or-after phrases to understand and make simple plans in Mandarin.

Wǒ míngtiān shàngwǔ xuéxí.

我明天上午学习。

I'm studying tomorrow morning.

The larger day word comes before the smaller part of day, and the complete time phrase comes before the predicate.

By the end, you can...

- ✓ Distinguish common past, present, and future day, week, month, and year phrases
- ✓ Build larger-to-smaller time chunks such as 明天上午
- ✓ Place a when-time phrase before its associated predicate



Starter

60–80 minutes across several short sessions

22 pages

Answer guide

Self-contained print practice. Audio and web tools are optional.



1

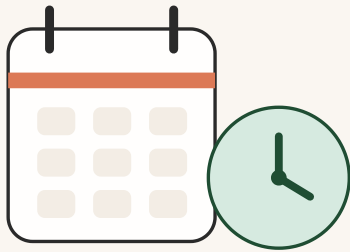
Move around today and this week

After this page, you can Anchor common day and week phrases to now instead of memorizing an unordered list.

LOCATE

A relative-time line

Read each scale from past to future: days first, then weeks.



Use the visual cue, then find the matching row.

Position	Hanzi	Pinyin	Meaning
two days back	前天	qiántiān	the day before yesterday
one day back	昨天	zuótiān	yesterday
anchor day	今天	jīntiān	today
one day ahead	明天	míngtiān	tomorrow



Find, cover, recall

Find one useful row. Cover it and reconstruct the target form before checking.



2

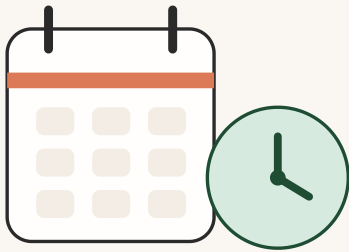
Move around today and this week CONTINUED

After this page, you can Anchor common day and week phrases to now instead of memorizing an unordered list.

LOCATE

A relative-time line

Read each scale from past to future: days first, then weeks.



Use the visual cue, then find the matching row.

Position	Hanzi	Pinyin	Meaning
two days ahead	后天	hòutiān	the day after tomorrow
one week back	上个星期	shàng ge xīngqī	last week
anchor week	这个星期	zhè ge xīngqī	this week
one week ahead	下个星期	xià ge xīngqī	next week



Find, cover, recall

Find one useful row. Cover it and reconstruct the target form before checking.



3

Move around today and this week CONTINUED

After this page, you can Anchor common day and week phrases to now instead of memorizing an unordered list.

LOCATE

Locate the phrase

Choose the meaning or sequence that matches the anchor.

1

WORKED EXAMPLE

后天

☐ the day before yesterday☐ tomorrow☒ the day after tomorrow

Why it works: It completes the requested job using the target pattern.

2

上个星期

☐ last week☐ this week☐ next week

3

Which order moves from yesterday to tomorrow?

☐ 昨天 → 今天 → 明天☐ 明天 → 今天 → 昨天☐ 今天 → 昨天 → 明天

4

this week

☐ 上个星期☐ 这个星期☐ 下个星期

Finish from memory. Choose one completed response, cover the page, and make it again.



4

Shift the month or year

After this page, you can Use the special year forms and the reusable last-this-next pattern for months.

SHIFT

Month and year anchors

Hanzi	Pinyin	Meaning	Pattern clue
上个月	shàng ge yuè	last month	上 = previous
这个月	zhè ge yuè	this month	这 = this
下个月	xià ge yuè	next month	下 = following
去年	qùnián	last year	special high-use form
今年	jīnnián	this year	今 = current
明年	míngnián	next year	明 = coming

**Find, cover, recall**

Find one useful row. Cover it and reconstruct the target form before checking.



5

Shift the month or year

CONTINUED

After this page, you can Use the special year forms and the reusable last-this-next pattern for months.

SHIFT

Change only the time anchor

Choose the requested period.

5

WORKED EXAMPLE

next month

☐ 上个月☐ 这个月☒ 下个月

Why it works: It completes the requested job using the target pattern.

6

last year

☐ 去年☐ 今年☐ 明年

7

Which pair points forward?

☐ 下个月 + 明年☐ 上个月 + 去年☐ 这个月 + 今年

8

今天 : 明天 :: 今年 : ____

☐ 去年☐ 明年☐ 后天

Finish from memory. Choose one completed response, cover the page, and make it again.



6

Choose a part of the day

After this page, you can Add a useful daily period without calculating an exact clock time.

STACK

Five broad time periods

Hanzi	Pinyin	Practical meaning	Model chunk
早上	zǎoshang	early morning / morning	今天早上 · this morning
上午	shàngwǔ	morning before noon	明天上午 · tomorrow morning
中午	zhōngwǔ	around midday / noon	今天中午 · today at noon
下午	xiàwǔ	afternoon	后天下午 · the afternoon of the day after tomorrow
晚上	wǎnshang	evening / nighttime	今天晚上 · tonight



Find, cover, recall

Find one useful row. Cover it and reconstruct the target form before checking.



7

Choose a part of the day CONTINUED

After this page, you can Add a useful daily period without calculating an exact clock time.

 **STACK**

Build larger to smaller

Choose the natural time chunk.

9

WORKED EXAMPLE

tomorrow afternoon

☐ 下午明天☒ 明天下午☐ 明天中午

Why it works: It completes the requested job using the target pattern.

10

tonight

☐ 今天晚上☐ 晚上昨天☐ 明天早上

11

the morning of the day after tomorrow

☐ 后天上午☐ 前天上午☐ 上后天

12

Which phrase narrows from a day to a part of that day?

☐ 明天 → 上午☐ 上午 → 明天☐ 学习 → 明天

Finish from memory. Choose one completed response, cover the page, and make it again.



8

Put when before what happens

After this page, you can Place the complete when-time phrase before its associated predicate.

 **PLACE**

Two useful sentence frames

Time may come before or after the subject, but not after the completed predicate in these basic sentences.



Wǒ míngtiān xuéxí.

我明天学习。

I'm studying tomorrow.

subject + time + predicate



Míngtiān wǒ xuéxí.

明天我学习。

Tomorrow, I'm studying.

time + subject + predicate



Wǒmen xià ge xīngqī jiàn.

我们下个星期见。

We will meet next week.

the time stays before 见



Tā jīntiān wǎnshang gōngzuò.

她今天晚上工作。

She's working tonight.

day + part of day precedes the predicate



Cover + retrieve

Choose one line. Hide it, say it once, then uncover and repair one detail.



9

Put when before what happens CONTINUED

After this page, you can Place the complete when-time phrase before its associated predicate.

 PLACE

Repair the placement

Choose the basic sentence with the time phrase before the predicate.

13

WORKED EXAMPLE

I'm studying tomorrow morning.



我明天上午学习。



我学习明天上午。



我学习上午明天。

Why it works: It completes the requested job using the target pattern.

14

We meet next week.



我们见下个星期。



我们下个星期见。



下个见我们星期。

15

He's working tonight.



他工作今天晚上。



今天晚上他工作。



他工作晚上今天。

16

Which slot can hold 明天下午?



before 去: 我____去



after the whole sentence: 我去____



inside 明天: 明____天

Finish from memory. Choose one completed response, cover the page, and make it again.



10

Attach before or after to the anchor

After this page, you can Build reference point + 以前 or 以后, then use the whole phrase as the time setting.

SEQUENCE

Reference first, relationship second

1

Shàngkè yǐqián, wǒ hē shuǐ.

上课以前，我喝水。

Before class, I drink water.

class + before

2

Xiàkè yǐhòu, wǒmen hē kāfēi.

下课以后，我们喝咖啡。

After class, we drink coffee.

class ends + after

3

Zhōumò yǐqián wǒ hěn máng.

周末以前我很忙。

I am busy before the weekend.

the full phrase sets when

4

Zhōumò yǐhòu wǒ yǒu kòng.

周末以后我有空。

I am free after the weekend.

有空 means to be available



Cover + retrieve

Choose one line. Hide it, say it once, then uncover and repair one detail.



11

Attach before or after to the anchor CONTINUED

After this page, you can Build reference point + 以前 or 以后, then use the whole phrase as the time setting.

SEQUENCE

Follow the event order

Choose the phrase or interpretation that matches the sequence.

17

WORKED EXAMPLE

after class

☐ 上课以前☒ 下课以后☐ 以后下课

Why it works: It completes the requested job using the target pattern.

18

before lunch

☐ 午饭以前☐ 午饭以后☐ 以前午饭

19

我睡觉以前看书。 What happens first?

☐ I read☐ I sleep☐ Both are at the same time

20

晚饭以后, 我学习。 What is the reference point?

☐ studying☐ dinner☐ tomorrow

Finish from memory. Choose one completed response, cover the page, and make it again.



12

Negotiate a plan without a clock

After this page, you can Ask about availability, propose a broad time, adjust it, and confirm.

 **PLAN**

Coffee this weekend

Two friends choose a day and part of the day; no exact clock time is needed.

安

安娜

Nǐ zhè ge zhōumò yǒu kòng ma?

你这个周末有空吗？

Are you free this weekend?

陈伟

Xīngqīliù méi kòng, xīngqītiān shàngwǔ kěyǐ.

星期六没空，星期天上午可以。

I am not free Saturday; Sunday morning works.

陈

安

安娜

Nà wǒmen xīngqītiān shàngwǔ yìqǐ hē kāfēi, zěnmeyàng?

那我们星期天上午一起喝咖啡，怎么样？

Then how about we have coffee together Sunday morning?

陈伟

Hǎo. Wǔfàn yǐqián kěyǐ ma?

好。午饭以前可以吗？

Good. Does before lunch work?

陈

安

安娜

Kěyǐ. Nà jiù xīngqītiān shàngwǔ ba.

可以。那就星期天上午吧。

Yes. Then Sunday morning it is.

Replay it three ways Read · switch roles · change one detail



13

Negotiate a plan without a clock CONTINUED

After this page, you can Ask about availability, propose a broad time, adjust it, and confirm.

 **PLAN**

Check the agreed plan

Answer from the dialogue.

21

WORKED EXAMPLE

When is Chen Wei unavailable?



Saturday



Sunday morning



after lunch

Why it works: It completes the requested job using the target pattern.

22

What activity do they propose?



studying



having coffee



shopping

23

What broad time do they finally confirm?



Saturday evening



Sunday morning before lunch



next month

**One more from you**

Make a new response with the same target pattern.

Finish from memory. Choose one completed response, cover the page, and make it again.



14

Choose, adjust, and confirm

After this page, you can Respond to changing availability and build one complete plan of your own.

🔗 ADJUST

Choose the useful next line

Use the availability statement to select a matching response.

24

WORKED EXAMPLE

Friend: 我明天没空，后天晚上有空。

☐ 那我们明天见。☒ 那我们后天晚上见。☐ 那我们昨天见。

Why it works: It completes the requested job using the target pattern.

25

Friend: 周末以前我没空，周末以后有空。 When is this person available?

☐ before the weekend☐ after the weekend☐ yesterday only

26

You need to move a plan from this month to next month.

☐ 这个月不行。下个月可以。☐ 下个月不行。上个月可以。☐ 去年不行。今天可以。

One more from you

Make a new response with the same target pattern.

Finish from memory. Choose one completed response, cover the page, and make it again.



15

Choose, adjust, and confirm CONTINUED

After this page, you can Respond to changing availability and build one complete plan of your own.

 **ADJUST**

My no-clock plan

27

Write a six-line exchange that: asks if someone is free, proposes a relative day plus a part of day, receives one conflict, adjusts the plan, uses 以前 or 以后 once, and confirms with 那就.....吧. Use real or fictional details.

Success looks like Accept any coherent six-line exchange with time phrases before their predicates, larger-to-smaller time order, one correctly ordered reference + 以前/以后 phrase, one adjustment, and a clear confirmation.

Choose your mode Write in Hanzi · write in tone-marked pinyin · say and record it



16

Check your work

After this page, you can compare your response, understand the repair, and choose one item to replay later.

✓ ANSWER GUIDE

Answers with useful feedback

Closed tasks have a direct answer. Open tasks include a model or success criteria; your response does not need to match word for word.

1

后天

the day after tomorrow

2

上个星期

last week

3

Which order moves from yesterday to tomorrow?

zuó tiān · jīn tiān · míng tiān

昨天 → 今天 → 明天

4

this week

zhè ge xīng qī

这个星期

5

next month

xià gè yuè

下个月

6

last year

qù nián

去年

Do not stop at checking. Circle one repair and make that response again with the answer covered.



17

Check your work CONTINUED

After this page, you can compare your response, understand the repair, and choose one item to replay later.

✓ ANSWER GUIDE

Answers with useful feedback

Closed tasks have a direct answer. Open tasks include a model or success criteria; your response does not need to match word for word.

7

Which pair points forward?

xià gè yuè · míng nián

下个月 + 明年

8

今天 : 明天 :: 今年 : ____

míng nián

明年

9

tomorrow afternoon

míng tiān xià wǔ

明天下午

10

tonight

jīn tiān wǎn shàng

今天晚上

11

the morning of the day after tomorrow

hòu tiān shàng wǔ

后天上午

12

Which phrase narrows from a day to a part of that day?

míng tiān · shàng wǔ

明天 → 上午

Do not stop at checking. Circle one repair and make that response again with the answer covered.



18

Check your work CONTINUED

After this page, you can compare your response, understand the repair, and choose one item to replay later.

✓ ANSWER GUIDE

Answers with useful feedback

Closed tasks have a direct answer. Open tasks include a model or success criteria; your response does not need to match word for word.

13

I'm studying tomorrow morning.

Wǒ míngtiān shàngwǔ xuéxí.

我明天上午学习。

14

We meet next week.

Wǒmen xià ge xīngqī jiàn.

我们下个星期见。

15

He's working tonight.

jīn tiān wǎn shàng tā gōng zuò

今天晚上他工作。

16

Which slot can hold 明天下午?

qù · wǒ · qù

before 去: 我____去

17

after class

xià kè yǐ hòu

下课以后

18

before lunch

wǔ fàn yǐ qián

午饭以前

Do not stop at checking. Circle one repair and make that response again with the answer covered.



19

Check your work CONTINUED

After this page, you can compare your response, understand the repair, and choose one item to replay later.

✓ ANSWER GUIDE

Answers with useful feedback

Closed tasks have a direct answer. Open tasks include a model or success criteria; your response does not need to match word for word.

19

我睡觉以前看书。 What happens first?

I read

20

晚饭以后，我学习。 What is the reference point?

dinner

21

When is Chen Wei unavailable?

Saturday

22

What activity do they propose?

having coffee

23

What broad time do they finally confirm?

Sunday morning before lunch

24

Friend: 我明天没空，后天晚上有空。

nà wǒ men hòu tiān wǎn shàng jiàn

那我们后天晚上见。

Do not stop at checking. Circle one repair and make that response again with the answer covered.



20

Check your work CONTINUED

After this page, you can compare your response, understand the repair, and choose one item to replay later.

✓ ANSWER GUIDE

Answers with useful feedback

Closed tasks have a direct answer. Open tasks include a model or success criteria; your response does not need to match word for word.

25

Friend: 周末以前我没空，周末以后有空。
When is this person available?

after the weekend

26

You need to move a plan from this month to next month.

zhè ge yuè bù xíng · xià gè yuè kě yǐ
这个月不行。下个月可以。

Do not stop at checking. Circle one repair and make that response again with the answer covered.



21

Check your work CONTINUED

After this page, you can compare your response, understand the repair, and choose one item to replay later.

✓ ANSWER GUIDE

Answers with useful feedback

Closed tasks have a direct answer. Open tasks include a model or success criteria; your response does not need to match word for word.

27

Write a six-line exchange that: asks if someone is free, proposes a relative day plus a part of day, receives one conflict, adjusts the plan, uses 以前 or 以后 once, and confirms with 那就.....吧. Use real or fictional details.

ONE POSSIBLE ANSWER

A: Nǐ míngtiān xiàwǔ yǒu kòng ma? / B: Míngtiān xiàwǔ méi kòng. / A: Nà hòutiān xiàwǔ ne? / B: Wǔfàn yǐhòu kěyǐ.
/ A: Hǎo, wǒmen hòutiān xiàwǔ jiàn. / B: Nà jiù hòutiān xiàwǔ jiàn ba.

A: 你明天下午有空吗? / B: 明天下午没空。 / A: 那后天下午呢? / B: 午饭以后可以。 / A: 好, 我们后天下午见。 / B: 那就后天下午见吧。

Success criteria: Accept any coherent six-line exchange with time phrases before their predicates, larger-to-smaller time order, one correctly ordered reference + 以前/以后 phrase, one adjustment, and a clear confirmation.

Do not stop at checking. Circle one repair and make that response again with the answer covered.