

BUILD THE SENTENCE. CHECK THE MEANING. SAY IT ALOUD.

Mandarin Word Order Builder

A print-first workbook for learners who know useful words but need a reliable place to put them.

01
WHO

02
WHEN

03
WHERE

04
ACTION

05
THING

WHAT YOU WILL PRACTICE

- 01** Build with movable sentence blocks
- 02** Practice question words in place
- 03** Repair common beginner mix-ups
- 04** Leave with six sentences about your own life

KEEP THE PATH CONNECTED

Scan to browse the public library and choose the next practice step.



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How to use the builder

Explain the build-check-say loop and establish that the map is a beginner default, not a universal rule.

- 01 Build** Cut or point to the blocks, then put them in an order that expresses the intended meaning.
- 02 Check** Underline the action. Circle the time. Box 在 + place. Make sure the question word sits where its answer would go.
- 03 Say** Read the complete sentence once slowly, then once as one thought. Personalize one block before moving on.

A STARTER MAP, NOT A CAGE

Mandarin often uses subject + verb + object, and a beginner can usually place time and 在 + place before the action. Real Mandarin also moves known topics to the front and uses other constructions. This workbook practices one neutral starting point so you can speak; it does not label every different order as wrong.

TRY THE LOOP NOW

Build one sentence with a subject, an action, and an object. Underline the action, then say the whole sentence twice.

ENTRY CHECK

- ☐ Can say at least three subject pronouns
- ☐ Can recognize a basic verb and object in a model sentence

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Your starter sentence map

Show the six core frames at readable size.

WHO + ACTION + THING

Subject + Verb + Object

我喝茶。

Wǒ hē chá.

I drink tea.

ADD WHEN

Subject + Time + Verb + Object

我今天学中文。

Wǒ jīntiān xué Zhōngwén.

I am studying Chinese today.

ADD WHERE

Subject + Time + 在 + Place + Verb + Object

我今天在家学中文。

Wǒ jīntiān zài jiā xué Zhōngwén.

I am studying Chinese at home today.

MAKE IT NEGATIVE

Subject + Time + 不/没 + Verb + Object

我今天不喝咖啡。

Wǒ jīntiān bù hē kāfēi.

I am not drinking coffee today.

ASK FOR MISSING INFORMATION

Keep the question word in the answer slot

你在哪里学中文？

Nǐ zài nǎlǐ xué Zhōngwén?

Where do you study Chinese?

我在家学中文。 / Wǒ zài jiā xué Zhōngwén. / I study Chinese at home.

BUILD THE NOUN AS ONE BLOCK

Owner/description + 的 + Noun, or Number + Measure word + Noun

我的中文老师 / 一杯热茶

wǒ de Zhōngwén lǎoshī / yì bēi rè chá

my Chinese teacher / a cup of hot tea

PAGE 4 • GUIDED PRACTICE

Start with who, action, thing

Practice neutral subject-verb-object sentences.

STARTER IDEA

In a neutral beginner sentence, say who, then the action, then the thing affected by that action.

- | | | |
|----|---------------------|----------------------|
| 01 | 我吃米饭。 | I eat rice. |
| | Wǒ chī mǐfàn. | |
| | | |
| 02 | 她看电影。 | She watches a movie. |
| | Tā kàn diànyǐng. | |
| | | |
| 03 | 我们学中文。 | We study Chinese. |
| | Wǒmen xué Zhōngwén. | |

YOUR TASK

Replace the object: 我喝____。 / Wǒ hē ____ . / I drink ____.

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Put the time before the action

Add a time phrase without changing the verb-object chunk.

STARTER IDEA

A time phrase commonly comes after the subject or at the front of the sentence. Keep it before the action in this starter frame.

01	我今天上班。	I am working today.
	Wǒ jīntiān shàngbān.	Also natural: 今天我上班。
02	她晚上看书。	She reads in the evening.
	Tā wǎnshàng kàn shū.	Also natural: 晚上她看书。
03	我们周末去公园。	We go to the park on the weekend.
	Wǒmen zhōumò qù gōngyuán.	Also natural: 周末我们去公园。

YOUR TASK

Choose one: 今天 / 明天 / 周末. Add it before the action.

PAGE 6 • GUIDED PRACTICE

Put 在 + place before the action

Build location frames that describe where an action happens.

STARTER IDEA

When 在 + place tells where an activity happens, put that location block before the action.

- | | | |
|----|--|----------------------------------|
| 01 | <p>我在家工作。</p> <p>Wǒ zài jiā gōngzuò.</p> | <p>I work at home.</p> |
| | | |
| 02 | <p>他在学校吃午饭。</p> <p>Tā zài xuéxiào chī wǔfàn.</p> | <p>He eats lunch at school.</p> |
| | | |
| 03 | <p>我们在咖啡店见。</p> <p>Wǒmen zài kāfēidiàn jiàn.</p> | <p>We will meet at the café.</p> |

YOUR TASK

Choose one place: 在家 / 在学校 / 在咖啡店. Add an action.

This page practices where an action happens. Sentences that describe where an object is located use other patterns and are outside this exercise.

PAGE 7 • GUIDED PRACTICE

Combine time and place

Build subject + time + place + action sentences with natural variants noted.

STARTER IDEA

With both time and place, a useful neutral pattern is subject + time + 在 + place + action. A time phrase may also lead the sentence.

01	我明天在家工作。	I will work at home tomorrow.
	Wǒ míngtiān zài jiā gōngzuò.	Also natural: 明天我在家工作。
02	她下午在图书馆学习。	She studies at the library in the afternoon.
	Tā xiàwǔ zài túshūguǎn xuéxí.	Also natural: 下午她在图书馆学习。
03	我们周末在公园跑步。	We run in the park on the weekend.
	Wǒmen zhōumò zài gōngyuán pǎobù.	Also natural: 周末我们在公园跑步。

YOUR TASK

Build one true sentence with who + when + where + action.

PAGE 8 • GUIDED PRACTICE

Keep the question word in the answer slot

Turn known answers into useful questions.

STARTER IDEA

Mandarin information questions usually keep the normal sentence frame. Replace the missing information with 谁, 什么, 什么时候, or 哪里 instead of moving it to the front.

01	你喝什么？ Nǐ hē shénme? What do you drink? I drink tea.	我喝茶。 Wǒ hē chá.
02	谁在家做饭？ Shéi zài jiā zuò fàn? Who cooks at home? I cook at home.	我在家做饭。 Wǒ zài jiā zuò fàn.
03	你什么时候去北京？ Nǐ shénme shíhòu qù Běijīng? When are you going to Beijing? I am going tomorrow.	我明天去北京。 Wǒ míngtiān qù Běijīng.
04	你在哪里学中文？ Nǐ zài nǎlǐ xué Zhōngwén? Where do you study Chinese? I study at home.	我在家学中文。 Wǒ zài jiā xué Zhōngwén.

YOUR TASK

Cover each answer. Point to the missing slot, then ask the question without adding 吗.

Do not add 吗 to a question that already uses a question word in this pattern.

PAGE 9 • GUIDED PRACTICE

Put a simple negative before the action

Use a bounded beginner contrast between 不 and 没.

STARTER IDEA

For this beginner workbook, use 不 before an action for a present choice, habit, or intended action. Use 没 before an action to say it did not happen. Mandarin aspect and negation are broader than this starter contrast.

01 我今天不喝咖啡。

I am not drinking coffee today.

Wǒ jīntiān bù hē kāfēi.

02 他明天不去学校。

He is not going to school tomorrow.

Tā míngtiān bù qù xuéxiào.

03 我昨天没上班。

I did not work yesterday.

Wǒ zuótiān méi shàngbān.

YOUR TASK

Write one thing you are not doing today and one thing you did not do yesterday.

PAGE 10 • GUIDED PRACTICE

Build the noun before placing it

Keep short modifiers and measure-word phrases together as one block.

STARTER IDEA

Build a short owner, description, or quantity before the noun. Then place the completed noun phrase into the sentence.

01	我的中文老师 wǒ de Zhōngwén lǎoshī	my Chinese teacher
02	那本中文书 nà běn Zhōngwén shū	that Chinese book
03	一杯热茶 yì bēi rè chá	a cup of hot tea
	我的中文老师喝茶。 Wǒ de Zhōngwén lǎoshī hē chá.	My Chinese teacher drinks tea.
	我买那本中文书。 Wǒ mǎi nà běn Zhōngwén shū.	I am buying that Chinese book.

YOUR TASK

Choose one noun phrase above. Use it as a subject or object in a complete sentence.

PAGE 11 • GUIDED PRACTICE

Build it: Set A

Reorder eight short sentences.

Write one complete sentence on the line. Keep each action chunk together, then read your answer aloud before checking page 16.

W-B01

I drink tea.

Hint: Who + action + thing

茶 我 喝

W-B02

She watches a movie.

Hint: Who + action + thing

电影 她 看

W-B03

We study Chinese.

Hint: Keep 学中文 together.

中文 学 我们

W-B04

I am buying groceries today.

Hint: Put the time before the action.

菜 今天 我 买

W-B05

He reads in the evening.

Hint: The whole action is 看书.

看书 晚上 他

W-B06

We go to the park on the weekend.

Hint: 去公园 is the action and destination.

公园 周末 去 我们

W-B07

She works at home.

Hint: Put 在家 before the action.

工作 在家 她

W-B08

I drink coffee at the café.

Hint: Where + action + thing

咖啡 我 在咖啡店 喝

PAGE 12 • GUIDED PRACTICE

Build it: Set B

Reorder eight sentences with time, place, negatives, or question words.

Write one complete sentence on the line. Keep each action chunk together, then read your answer aloud before checking page 16.

W-B09 They eat lunch at school.

Hint: Place comes before the action.

午饭 他们 在学校 吃

W-B10 I will study Chinese at home tomorrow.

Hint: Who + when + where + action + thing

中文 明天 在家 我 学

W-B11 She reads at the library in the afternoon.

Hint: Time before place

她 在图书馆 下午 看书

W-B12 We eat dinner at a restaurant on Friday.

Hint: Build the scene before the action.

吃晚饭 我们 在餐厅 周五

W-B13 I am not drinking coffee today.

Hint: Put 不 directly before the action.

今天 我 咖啡 不 喝

W-B14 He did not work yesterday.

Hint: Put 没 directly before the action.

昨天 他 上班 没

W-B15 What do you do on the weekend?

Hint: 什么 sits where the missing activity would go.

什么 周末 做 你

W-B16 Where do you buy water?

Hint: 在哪里 sits where the place would go.

买 水 你 在哪里

PAGE 13 • GUIDED PRACTICE

Question-slot lab

Write the question that would produce each answer.

Read the answer first. Replace the requested information with 谁, 什么, 什么时候, or 哪里. Do not add 吗.

W-Q01 Ask: Where do you work?

Target: place

我在家工作。

Wǒ zài jiā gōngzuò.

W-Q02 Ask: When are you going to Shanghai?

Target: time

我明天去上海。

Wǒ míngtiān qù Shànghǎi.

W-Q03 Ask: Who teaches Chinese in the classroom?

Target: person

王老师在教室教中文。

Wáng lǎoshī zài jiàoshì jiāo Zhōngwén.

W-Q04 Ask: What would you like to drink?

Target: thing

我想喝茶。

Wǒ xiǎng hē chá.

W-Q05 Ask: Where does she run on the weekend?

Target: place

她周末在公园跑步。

Tā zhōumò zài gōngyuán pǎobù.

W-Q06 Ask: When do you watch a movie?

Target: time

我们晚上看电影。

Wǒmen wǎnshang kàn diànyǐng.

W-Q07 Ask: Who is buying that book?

Target: person

李明买那本书。

Lǐ Míng mǎi nà běn shū.

W-Q08 Ask: What does she drink at the café?

Target: thing

她在咖啡店喝咖啡。

Tā zài kāfēidiàn hē kāfēi.

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Repair the sentence

Fix ten targeted beginner errors while preserving the intended meaning.

Rewrite each line without changing its intended meaning. Name the block you moved before checking page 16.

W-R01	I am drinking coffee today. 我喝今天咖啡。	Focus: time before action _____
W-R02	She studies Chinese at the library. 她学习在图书馆中文。	Focus: place before action _____
W-R03	We will meet at the park tomorrow. 我们在公园明天见。	Focus: time before place in the target frame _____
W-R04	What do you drink? 你什么喝？	Focus: question word in answer slot _____
W-R05	Where does he work? 他在哪里工作吗？	Focus: no 吗 with the information question _____
W-R06	I am not going to school today. 我不今天去学校。	Focus: time before negative _____
W-R07	She did not come yesterday. 她昨天不来。	Focus: 没 for the intended non-occurrence _____
W-R08	I am buying one book. 我买书一本。	Focus: number + measure word + noun _____
W-R09	This is my teacher. 这是老师我的。	Focus: owner before noun _____
W-R10	I want to buy that red cup. 我想买杯子那个红色的。	Focus: build the noun phrase as one block _____

PAGE 15 • GUIDED PRACTICE

Make the map yours

Write and say six truthful sentences, then complete a speaking ladder.

W-P01

我今天_____。

Wǒ jīntiān _____.

Write one true action for today.

W-P02

我明天在_____。

Wǒ míngtiān zài _____.

Add a place, then add an action.

W-P03

周末我想_____。

Zhōumò wǒ xiǎng _____.

Write what you want to do this weekend.

W-P04

我在_____学中文。

Wǒ zài _____ xué Zhōngwén.

Write where you study Chinese.

W-P05

我今天不_____。

Wǒ jīntiān bù _____.

Write one thing you are not doing today.

W-P06

我昨天没_____。

Wǒ zuótiān méi _____.

Write one thing you did not do yesterday.

GROW ONE SENTENCE

01 学中文。 / Xué Zhōngwén. / Study Chinese.

02 我学中文。 / Wǒ xué Zhōngwén. / I study Chinese.

03 我今天学中文。 / Wǒ jīntiān xué Zhōngwén. / I study Chinese today.

04 我今天在家学中文。 / Wǒ jīntiān zài jiā xué Zhōngwén. / I study Chinese at home today.

Say each line once. Then replace 今天 and 在家 with your own blocks.

PAGE 16 • GUIDED PRACTICE

Answers and your next step

Provide primary answers, natural variants, and a self-check path.

Meaning and context decide the final sentence. When two answers are natural, the answer page lists both.

W-B01 我喝茶。

W-B02 她看电影。

W-B03 我们学中文。

W-B04 我今天买菜。

Also: 今天我买菜。

W-B05 他晚上看书。

Also: 晚上他看书。

W-B06 我们周末去公园。

Also: 周末我们去公园。

W-B07 她在家工作。

W-B08 我在咖啡店喝咖啡。

W-B09 他们在学校吃午饭。

W-B10 我明天在家学中文。

Also: 明天我在家学中文。

W-B11 她下午在图书馆看书。

Also: 下午她在图书馆看书。

W-B12 我们周五在餐厅吃晚饭。

Also:

周五我们在餐厅吃晚饭。

W-B13 我今天不喝咖啡。

Also: 今天我不喝咖啡。

W-B14 他昨天没上班。

Also: 昨天他没上班。

W-B15 你周末做什么？

Also: 周末你做什么？

W-B16 你在哪里买水？

W-Q01 你在哪里工作？

W-Q02 你什么时候去上海？

W-Q03 谁在教室教中文？

W-Q04 你想喝什么？

W-Q05 她周末在哪里跑步？

Also: 周末她在哪里跑步？

W-Q06 你们什么时候看电影？

W-Q07 谁买那本书？

W-Q08 她在咖啡店喝什么？

W-R01 我今天喝咖啡。

Also: 今天我喝咖啡。

W-R02 她在图书馆学习中文。

W-R03 我们明天在公园见。

Also: 明天我们在公园见。

W-R04 你喝什么？

W-R05 他在哪里工作？

W-R06 我今天不去学校。

Also: 今天我不去学校。

W-R07 她昨天没来。

Also: 昨天她没来。

W-R08 我买一本书。

W-R09 这是我的老师。

W-R10 我想买那个红色的杯子。

SELF-CHECK AND NEXT STEP

0-7 correct without help

Repeat pages 3-7 with only four blocks at a time.

Which block do I move most often by mistake?
☐

8-13 correct without help

Redo the question and repair pages, then speak all six personal sentences.

Can I say one sentence without looking?
☐

14-16 correct without help

Move to the Beginner Listening Dictation Lab and listen for the same blocks.

Which natural variant surprised me?
☐