



GRAMMAR • EARLY BEGINNER

Say No, Not Yet & What You Prefer in Mandarin

Choose among 不, 没有, 还没, 别, and 不要, then make a simple preference or polite refusal without translating every English 'not' the same way.

Wǒ bù hē kāfēi.

我不喝咖啡。

I don't drink coffee.

不 fits a habit or general choice.

By the end, you can...

- ✓ Use 不 for common habits, descriptions, intentions, and future choices
- ✓ Use 没 or 没有 for non-occurrence and lack of possession
- ✓ Use 还没 to say that an expected action has not happened yet



Early beginner

70–100 minutes across several short sessions

20 pages

Answer guide

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



1

Give each kind of 'not' a job

After this page, you can Choose a pattern from meaning rather than from the English word alone.

 SORT

Five beginner patterns

Pattern	Core job	Example	Meaning
不 + verb/adjective	Habit, description, intention, or future choice	我不忙。	I'm not busy.
没(有) + action	An action did not happen	我昨天没去。	I didn't go yesterday.
没有 + noun	Do not have; there is not	我没有时间。	I don't have time.
还没(有) + action	An expected action has not happened yet	我还没吃饭。	I haven't eaten yet.
别 / 不要 + action	Negative command	别走。 / 不要走。	Don't leave.



Find, cover, recall

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



2

Give each kind of 'not' a job CONTINUED

After this page, you can Choose a pattern from meaning rather than from the English word alone.

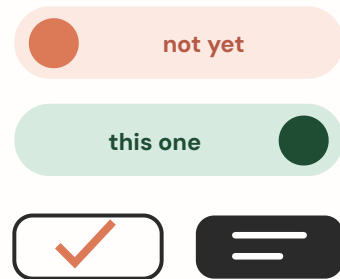
 **SORT**

Do not add 了 after a negated completed event

For a basic past non-event, use 没 (有) before the verb: 我昨天没去, 'I didn't go yesterday.' Do not build the beginner pattern as 没去了. Later contexts can contain sentence-final 了 for other meanings, but that is a separate job.

Put it in your own words.

Cover this card and explain the idea in one sentence.



A visual anchor for this page's idea



3

Choose 不 or 没有

After this page, you can Separate general choices and descriptions from non-occurrence and possession.

 CHOOSE

Fill the gap

Choose 不, 没, or 没有. More than one form is accepted only where the answer note says so.

1

WORKED EXAMPLE

我___喝咖啡。 I don't drink coffee (habit).

☒ 不☐ 没☐ 没有

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

2

我昨天___喝咖啡。 I didn't drink coffee yesterday.

☐ 不☐ 没☐ 别

3

我___时间。 I don't have time.

☐ 不☐ 没有☐ 别

4

我明天___忙。 I won't be busy tomorrow.

☐ 不☐ 没☐ 没有

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



4

Choose 不 or 没有 CONTINUED

After this page, you can Separate general choices and descriptions from non-occurrence and possession.

CHOOSE

Fill the gap

Choose 不, 没, or 没有. More than one form is accepted only where the answer note says so.

5

她昨天___来。 She didn't come yesterday.

☐ 不☐ 没☐ 不要

6

这里___人。 There is nobody here.

☐ 不☐ 没有☐ 别

7

我___喜欢这个。 I don't like this one.

☐ 不☐ 没☐ 没有

8

今天我___去。 I'm not going today.

☐ 不☐ 没☐ 没有

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



5

Not yet and don't

After this page, you can Distinguish an unfinished expectation from a command to another person.

DISTINGUISH

Compare the jobs



Wǒ hái méi chīfàn.

我还没吃饭。

I haven't eaten yet.

Expected action not completed up to now



Wǒ hái méi juéding.

我还没决定。

I haven't decided yet.

Useful before making a choice



Bié zǒu.

别走。

Don't leave.

Short negative command



Bú yào dānxīn.

不要担心。

Don't worry.

不要 before a verb can be a negative command



Wǒ bú yào kāfēi.

我不要咖啡。

I don't want coffee.

Subject + 不要 + thing expresses non-want



Cover + retrieve

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



6

Not yet and don't CONTINUED

After this page, you can Distinguish an unfinished expectation from a command to another person.

DISTINGUISH

Name the intended job

Choose NOT YET, COMMAND, or DO NOT WANT.

9

WORKED EXAMPLE

我还没准备好。



NOT YET



COMMAND



DO NOT WANT

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

10

别说。



NOT YET



COMMAND



DO NOT WANT

11

我不要这个。



NOT YET



COMMAND



DO NOT WANT



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.



7

Not yet and don't CONTINUED

After this page, you can Distinguish an unfinished expectation from a command to another person.

DISTINGUISH

Name the intended job

Choose NOT YET, COMMAND, or DO NOT WANT.

12

不要跑。

☐ NOT YET

☐ COMMAND

☐ DO NOT WANT

13

我还没吃。

☐ NOT YET

☐ COMMAND

☐ DO NOT WANT



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.



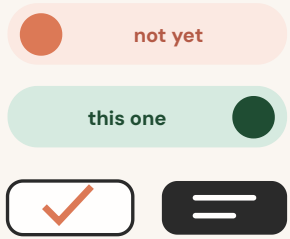
8

Say what you want and soften a refusal

After this page, you can Respond to an offer with a clear choice plus an optional polite softener.

RESPOND

Choice frames



Use the visual cue, then find the matching row.

Purpose	Hanzi	Pinyin	English
Want	我要茶。	Wǒ yào chá.	I want tea.
Would like	我想要茶。	Wǒ xiǎng yào chá.	I'd like tea.
Do not want	我不要咖啡。	Wǒ bú yào kāfēi.	I don't want coffee.
Like	我喜欢这个。	Wǒ xǐhuan zhè ge.	I like this one.



Find, cover, recall

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



9

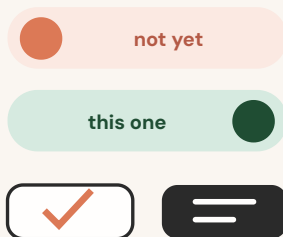
Say what you want and soften a refusal

CONTINUED

After this page, you can Respond to an offer with a clear choice plus an optional polite softener.

RESPOND

Choice frames



Use the visual cue, then find the matching row.

Purpose	Hanzi	Pinyin	English
Prefer	我比较喜欢那个。	Wǒ bǐjiào xǐhuan nà ge.	I prefer that one.
No thanks	不用了，谢谢。	Bú yòng le, xièxie.	No need, thank you.
Not decided yet	我还没决定。	Wǒ hái méi juéding.	I haven't decided yet.
Need a moment	我想一下。	Wǒ xiǎng yíxià.	Let me think for a moment.



Find, cover, recall

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



10

Say what you want and soften a refusal

CONTINUED

After this page, you can Respond to an offer with a clear choice plus an optional polite softener.

RESPOND

Choose a useful response

Circle the response that best matches the English purpose.

14

WORKED EXAMPLE

'I'd like tea.'



我想要茶。



我没茶。



别喝茶。

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

15

'I haven't decided yet.'



我不决定。



我还没决定。



别决定。

16

A polite 'No need, thank you.'



不用了，谢谢。



我没有。



你不。

17

'I prefer that one.'



我比较喜欢那个。



我没喜欢那个。



不要喜欢那个。

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



11

Use the patterns in a real choice

After this page, you can Track why each negative form is chosen in a short travel-planning exchange.

 **CHOOSE**

How should we go?

Two friends are choosing transportation.

A

A

Wǒmen zuò dìtiě háishi zuò gōngjiāochē?

我们坐地铁还是坐公交车？

Should we take the subway or the bus?

B

Wǒ bù xiǎng zuò gōngjiāochē. Wǒ xiǎng zuò dìtiě.

我不想坐公交车。我想坐地铁。

I don't want to take the bus. I want to take the subway.

B

A

A

Hǎo. Wǒmen xiànzài zǒu ma?

好。我们现在走吗？

Okay. Should we leave now?

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



12

Use the patterns in a real choice CONTINUED

After this page, you can Track why each negative form is chosen in a short travel-planning exchange.

 **CHOOSE**

How should we go?

Two friends are choosing transportation.

B

B

Hái méi, wǒ hái méi zhǔnbèi hǎo.

还没，我还没准备好。

Not yet. I'm not ready yet.

A

Méi wèntí. Nǐ zhǔnbèi hǎo le jiù gàosu wǒ.

没问题。你准备好了就告诉我。

No problem. Tell me when you're ready.

A

B

B

Hǎo, xièxie.

好，谢谢。

Okay, thanks.

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



13

Use the patterns in a real choice CONTINUED

After this page, you can Track why each negative form is chosen in a short travel-planning exchange.

 **CHOOSE**

Why this negative?

Answer from the dialogue.

18

WORKED EXAMPLE

Why does B use 不 in 不想?

- ☒ A current preference or intention
- ☐ A completed past action
- ☐ A negative command

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

19

What does 还没 communicate?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Not yet
- ☐ Do not

20

Which transportation does B prefer?

- ☐ Bus
- ☐ Subway
- ☐ Taxi

21

Has B finished getting ready?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No, not yet

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



14

Make your own safe choices

After this page, you can Use the same small patterns with changed details.

 WRITE

My four-response card

22

Write one true or fictional example for each: (1) a habit you do not have with 不, (2) an action you have not done yet with 还没, (3) something you do not want with 不要, and (4) a polite refusal or preference. Add one changed detail to each.

Success looks like Any four grammatical, context-appropriate examples using the requested patterns plus one meaningful changed detail each are acceptable.

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



15

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

我___喝咖啡。 I don't drink coffee (habit).

bù

不

2

我昨天___喝咖啡。 I didn't drink coffee yesterday.

méi

没

Why: 没有 is also grammatical before the action verb, but the listed option is 没.

3

我___时间。 I don't have time.

méi yǒu

没有

4

我明天___忙。 I won't be busy tomorrow.

bù

不

5

她昨天___来。 She didn't come yesterday.

méi

没

6

这里___人。 There is nobody here.

méi yǒu

没有

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



16

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

我___喜欢这个。 I don't like this one.

bù

不

8

今天我___去。 I'm not going today.

bù

不

9

我还没准备好。

NOT YET

10

别说。

COMMAND

11

我不要这个。

DO NOT WANT

12

不要跑。

COMMAND

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.

13

我还没吃。

NOT YET

14

'I'd like tea.'

wǒ xiǎng yào chá

我想要茶。

15

'I haven't decided yet.'

Wǒ hái méi juéding.

我还没决定。

16

A polite 'No need, thank you.'

bú yòng le · xiè xiè

不用了，谢谢。

17

'I prefer that one.'

wǒ bǐ jiào xǐ huan nà ge

我比较喜欢那个。

18

Why does B use 不 in 不想?

A current preference or intention

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.

19

What does 还没 communicate?

Not yet

20

Which transportation does B prefer?

Subway

21

Has B finished getting ready?

No, not yet

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.

22

Write one true or fictional example for each: (1) a habit you do not have with 不, (2) an action you have not done yet with 还没, (3) something you do not want with 不要, and (4) a polite refusal or preference. Add one changed detail to each.

ONE POSSIBLE ANSWER

Wǒ bù hē kāfēi. → Wǒ bù hē chá. / Wǒ hái méi chī zǎofàn. → Wǒ hái méi chī wǔfàn. / Wǒ bú yào là de. → Wǒ bú yào bīng de. / Bú yòng le, xièxie. Wǒ xiǎng yào chá. → Bú yòng le, xièxie. Wǒ xiǎng yào shuǐ.

我不喝咖啡。→ 我不喝茶。/ 我还没吃早饭。→ 我还没吃午饭。/ 我不要辣的。→ 我不要冰的。/ 不用了，谢谢。我想要茶。→ 不用了，谢谢。我想要水。

Success criteria: Any four grammatical, context-appropriate examples using the requested patterns plus one meaningful changed detail each are acceptable.

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