



GRAMMAR • DEVELOPING BEGINNER

Two Essential Uses of 了 (le)

A printable beginner workbook that separates verb-suffix 了 for a bounded event from sentence-final 了 for a new or changed situation, with careful contrast practice.

Wǒ mǎi le liǎng běn shū.

我买了两本书。

I bought two books.

Verb-suffix 了 presents the bounded buying event as a whole.

By the end, you can...

- ✓ Distinguish the two target jobs of 了 in clear beginner sentences
- ✓ Use verb-suffix 了 to present a bounded event as a whole
- ✓ Use sentence-final 了 to signal a new or changed situation



Developing beginner

45–60 minutes

25 pages

Answer guide

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



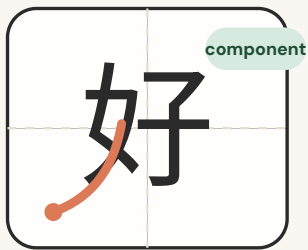
1

Two jobs, one character

After this page, you can Use meaning and position to form a first working distinction.

DISTINGUISH

The beginner map



Use the visual cue, then find the matching row.

Job	Plain-language question	Common position	Clear example
A · bounded event	Is the speaker viewing a specific event as a whole?	After the verb, often before an object	我买了两本书。
B · new situation	Is the speaker saying the situation is now different?	At the end of the sentence	天冷了。



Find, cover, recall

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



2

Two jobs, one character

 CONTINUED

After this page, you can Use meaning and position to form a first working distinction.

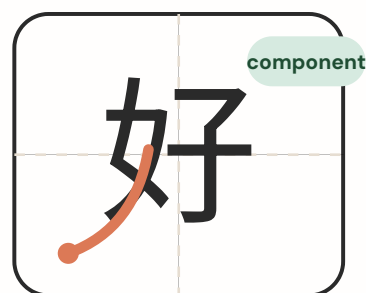
👁 DISTINGUISH

A shortcut with a boundary

Call Job A “event 了” and Job B “new-situation 了” while practicing. This is a learning scaffold, not a claim that every real sentence is unambiguous. If a short sentence puts 了 both after a verb and at the end, use context and save the harder analysis for later.

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

Job A: view a bounded event as a whole

After this page, you can Recognize clear verb-suffix 了 examples with an overt object or boundary.

 FIND

Specific completed-event reports



Wǒ mǎi le liǎng běn shū.

我买了两本书。

I bought two books.

了 follows 买; the counted object makes the event bounded.



Tā hē le yì bēi chá.

她喝了一杯茶。

She drank a cup of tea.

了 follows 喝; one cup supplies a boundary.



Wǒmen kàn le nà bù diànyǐng.

我们看了那部电影。

We watched that movie.

A specific movie follows the marked verb.



Tā zuótiān qù le Běijīng.

他昨天去了北京。

He went to Beijing yesterday.

昨天 locates the bounded trip in past time; 了 itself is not a past-tense ending.



Cover + retrieve

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



4

Job A: view a bounded event as a whole

CONTINUED

After this page, you can Recognize clear verb-suffix 了 examples with an overt object or boundary.

FIND

Find Job A

Choose the sentence that clearly reports a bounded event.

1

WORKED EXAMPLE

A counted purchase



我买了两本书。



天冷了。



我饿了。

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

2

A specific drink event



她喝了一杯茶。



下雨了。



他二十岁了。

3

In 我们看了那部电影, where is 了?



After the verb 看



Before the subject 我们



After the entire sentence only

4

What explicitly places 他昨天去了北京 in past time?



昨天



了 alone



北京

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



5

Job B: the situation is new now

After this page, you can Recognize sentence-final 了 when the speaker contrasts now with before.

NOTICE

A change has become relevant



Xiàyǔ le.

下雨了。

It has started raining / It's raining now.

The weather situation changed.



Tiān lěng le.

天冷了。

It has gotten cold now.

Cold is newly true or newly relevant.



Wǒ è le.

我饿了。

I'm hungry now.

The speaker's state has changed.



Tā èrshí suì le.

他二十岁了。

He is twenty now.

He has reached a new age.



Cover + retrieve

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



6

Job B: the situation is new now CONTINUED

After this page, you can Recognize sentence-final 了 when the speaker contrasts now with before.

NOTICE

Find the new situation

Choose the intended change supplied in parentheses.

5

WORKED EXAMPLE

It was dry; rain begins.

☒ 下雨了。☐ 下了雨。☐ 我买了雨伞。

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

6

The temperature has become cold.

☐ 天冷了。☐ 我喝了茶。☐ 他看了电影。

7

You were not hungry before; you are hungry now.

☐ 我饿了。☐ 我吃了饭。☐ 我没吃饭。

8

Which word captures the target contrast in Job B?

☐ now☐ yesterday only☐ always

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



7

Contrast what changed

After this page, you can Compare an unmarked statement with a sentence-final 了 version.

COMPARE

Before-and-now contrasts



Use the visual cue, then find the matching row.

Without final 了	With final 了	What the second adds
天很冷。The weather is cold.	天冷了。It has gotten cold.	A change from the earlier temperature
我不喝咖啡。I do not drink coffee.	我不喝咖啡了。I don't drink coffee anymore.	A changed habit or decision
他二十岁。He is twenty.	他二十岁了。He is twenty now.	Reaching a new age
她不在家。She is not home.	她不在家了。She is no longer home.	The earlier home situation no longer holds



Find, cover, recall

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



8

Contrast what changed CONTINUED

After this page, you can Compare an unmarked statement with a sentence-final 了 version.

COMPARE

Choose the intended meaning

Select the line that explicitly contrasts now with before.

9

WORKED EXAMPLE

It has gotten cold.

☒ 天冷了。☐ 天很冷。☐ 我冷。

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

10

I don't drink coffee anymore.

☐ 我不喝咖啡了。☐ 我不喝咖啡。☐ 我没喝咖啡。

11

She is no longer at home.

☐ 她不在家了。☐ 她不在家。☐ 她没回家。

12

Which version merely states a general present habit?

☐ 我不喝咖啡。☐ 我不喝咖啡了。☐ 我喝了咖啡。

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



9

Negation without a false rule

After this page, you can Use 没(有) for a negative bounded event while preserving final 了 in a real change contrast.

REPAIR

Two negative patterns



Wǒ méi mǎi shū.

我没买书。

I did not buy books.

Negative bounded event: 没 + verb; no perfective 了.



Tā méiyǒu hē chá.

她没有喝茶。

She did not drink tea.

没有 is the full negative form.



Wǒ hái méi chīfàn.

我还没吃饭。

I have not eaten yet.

还没 marks "not yet" in this beginner pattern.



Wǒ bù hē kāfēi le.

我不喝咖啡了。

I don't drink coffee anymore.

Final 了 remains because the point is a changed situation.



Cover + retrieve

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



10

Negation without a false rule CONTINUED

After this page, you can Use 没(有) for a negative bounded event while preserving final 了 in a real change contrast.

REPAIR

Repair the negative

Choose the target form for the meaning in English.

13

WORKED EXAMPLE

I did not buy coffee.



我没买咖啡。



我没买了咖啡。



我不买了咖啡。

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

14

She has not eaten yet.



她还没吃饭。



她还没吃了饭。



她不吃饭了。



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.



11

Negation without a false rule CONTINUED

After this page, you can Use 没(有) for a negative bounded event while preserving final 了 in a real change contrast.

REPAIR

Repair the negative

Choose the target form for the meaning in English.

15

I no longer eat meat.

☐ 我不吃肉了。☐ 我没吃肉。☐ 我不吃了肉。

16

Which statement is carefully scoped?

☐ 没(有) + verb commonly negates the bounded event taught here☐ Every negative sentence forbids every 了☐ 了 always turns 不 into 没有

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.



12

Both jobs in one scene

After this page, you can Use context to label clear event and new-situation examples.

 LABEL

Books, rain, and a changed plan

Two friends meet after shopping

A

A

Nǐ jīntiān zuò le shénme?

你今天做了什么？

What did you do today?

B

Wǒ mǎi le liǎng běn shū.

我买了两本书。

I bought two books.

B

A

A

Nǐ hē kāfēi le ma?

你喝咖啡了吗？

Did you have coffee?

B

Méiyǒu. Wǒ hē le yì bēi chá.

没有。我喝了一杯茶。

No. I drank a cup of tea.

B

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



13

Both jobs in one scene CONTINUED

After this page, you can Use context to label clear event and new-situation examples.

LABEL

Books, rain, and a changed plan

Two friends meet after shopping

A**A**

Xià yǔ le.

下雨了。

It has started raining.

B

Zhēn de. Tiān yě lěng le.

真的。天也冷了。

It has. It has gotten cold too.

B**A****A**

Nà wǒ bù zǒu lù le.

那我不走路了。

Then I won't walk after all.

B

Hǎo, wǒmen zuò chē.

好，我们坐车。

Okay, we'll take a vehicle.

B

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



14

Both jobs in one scene CONTINUED

After this page, you can Use context to label clear event and new-situation examples.

 LABEL

Label A or B

A = bounded event; B = new or changed situation. Use the intended reading in the dialogue.

17

WORKED EXAMPLE

我买了两本书。



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

18

我喝了一杯茶。



19

下雨了。



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

Both jobs in one scene CONTINUED

After this page, you can Use context to label clear event and new-situation examples.

 LABEL

Label A or B

A = bounded event; B = new or changed situation. Use the intended reading in the dialogue.

20

天也冷了。

☐ A

☐ B

21

我不走路了。

☐ A

☐ B



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.



16

Cold contrast and transfer

After this page, you can Choose the intended 了 job from meaning, then create one clear pair.

CONTRAST

Do not look back

Write the complete sentence requested.

22

WORKED EXAMPLE

Report: "I bought three drinking cups." Use verb-suffix 了.

One answer wǒ mǎi le sān gè bēi zi

我买了三个杯子。

Why it works: A different natural counted object with 买了 is acceptable.

23

Announce: "It has started raining." Use sentence-final 了.



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.



17

Cold contrast and transfer CONTINUED

After this page, you can Choose the intended 了 job from meaning, then create one clear pair.

CONTRAST

Do not look back

Write the complete sentence requested.

24

Negate the event: "I did not buy books."

25

Express changed habit: "I no longer drink tea."



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.



18

Cold contrast and transfer CONTINUED

After this page, you can Choose the intended 了 job from meaning, then create one clear pair.

CONTRAST

Write one before-and-now pair

26

Write a plain statement and a second sentence with final 了 that makes the situation newly true or no longer true. Add one English line explaining the contrast.

Success looks like Accept a coherent pair where the second sentence signals a genuine contextual change; do not accept an explanation that calls 了 simply past tense.

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



19

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

A counted purchase

Wǒ mǎi le liǎng běn shū.

我买了两本书。

2

A specific drink event

Tā hē le yì bēi chá.

她喝了一杯茶。

3

In 我们看了那部电影, where is 了?

kàn

After the verb 看

4

What explicitly places 他昨天去了北京 in past time?

zuó tiān

昨天

Why: 了 contributes aspectual viewpoint; 昨天 supplies past-time location.

5

It was dry; rain begins.

Xià yǔ le.

下雨了。

6

The temperature has become cold.

Tiān lěng le.

天冷了。

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.

7

You were not hungry before; you are hungry now.

Wǒ è le.

我饿了。

8

Which word captures the target contrast in Job B?

now

9

It has gotten cold.

Tiān lěng le.

天冷了。

10

I don't drink coffee anymore.

Wǒ bù hē kāfēi le.

我不喝咖啡了。

11

She is no longer at home.

tā bú zài jiā le

她不在家了。

12

Which version merely states a general present habit?

wǒ bù hē kāfēi

我不喝咖啡。

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.

13

I did not buy coffee.

wǒ méi mǎi kā fēi

我没买咖啡。

14

She has not eaten yet.

tā hái méi chī fàn

她还没吃饭。

15

I no longer eat meat.

wǒ bù chī ròu le

我不吃肉了。

16

Which statement is carefully scoped?

méi · yǒu

没(有) + verb commonly negates the bounded event taught here

17

我买了两本书。

A

18

我喝了一杯茶。

A

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



22

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

下雨了。

B

20

天也冷了。

B

21

我不走路了。

B

22

Report: "I bought three drinking cups." Use verb-suffix 了.

wǒ mǎi le sān gè bēi zi

我买了三个杯子。

Why: A different natural counted object with 买了 is acceptable.

23

Announce: "It has started raining." Use sentence-final 了.

Xià yǔ le.

下雨了。

24

Negate the event: "I did not buy books."

Wǒ méi mǎi shū.

我没买书。

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



23

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

Express changed habit: "I no longer drink tea."

wǒ bù hē chá le

我不喝茶了。

Second attempt

Cover the model. Recreate it from memory, change one useful detail, and note the repair you want to revisit.

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



24

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.

26

Write a plain statement and a second sentence with final 了 that makes the situation newly true or no longer true. Add one English line explaining the contrast.

ONE POSSIBLE ANSWER

Wǒ yǐqián bù hē kāfēi. Xiànzài wǒ hē kāfēi le.

我以前不喝咖啡。现在我喝咖啡了。 Before, I did not drink coffee; now drinking coffee is newly true.

Why: The second sentence must make a new situation relevant now; sentence-final 了 is not a universal past-tense marker.

Success criteria: Accept a coherent pair where the second sentence signals a genuine contextual change; do not accept an explanation that calls 了 simply past tense.

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