

CHINESE LANGUAGE COURSE

Hànyǔ Shuǐpíng Kǎoshì (汉语水平考试)

COMPLETE SYLLABUS

HSK 1, HSK 2, HSK 3, HSK 4, HSK 5, HSK 6



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SINCE 2015

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COMPREHENSIVE CHINESE SYLLABUS

STEP-BY-STEP PREPARATION GUIDE

The Chinese Proficiency Test (HSK) is the most important and internationally recognized standardized exam for non-native Chinese speakers. Administered by the Chinese Ministry of Education, it serves as a gateway for academic admissions, scholarships, and career opportunities both within China and globally.

A CRITICAL UPDATE FOR 2026: The HSK exam is undergoing its most significant change in decades. The old 6-level system (HSK 2.0) is being replaced by a new **"Three Stages, Nine Levels"** (三级九等) standard, often called HSK 3.0. This new syllabus will be fully implemented starting July 2026. This guide provides the detailed syllabus for this new system.

PART 1: UNDERSTANDING THE HSK 3.0

The HSK 3.0 update is a major shift designed to better align Chinese language testing with international standards like the CEFR and to emphasize practical, real-world language use rather than just rote memorization.

Why the Change?

- ◆ **More Rigorous:** The new structure provides a more granular and accurate measurement of proficiency, especially at advanced levels.
- ◆ **Practical Focus:** It places a greater emphasis on communicative competence, including writing, translation, and understanding nuanced contexts.
- ◆ **Global Standards:** It aligns more closely with how other major languages structure their proficiency tests.

HSK 3.0 Structure: The "Three Stages, Nine Levels"

The new system is divided into three main stages: Elementary, Intermediate, & Advanced.

Stage (等级)	Level (级别)	Total Vocabulary	New Words Added	Total Characters	Characters for Handwriting	CEFR Alignment
Elementary (初等)	HSK 1	300	300	246	50	A1
Elementary (初等)	HSK 2	500	+200	125	50	A2
Elementary (初等)	HSK 3	1,000	+500	284	150	A2/B1
Elementary (初等)	HSK 4	2,000	+1000	441	150	B1/B2

Elementary (初等)	HSK 5	3,600	+1,600	431	150	B2
Elementary (初等)	HSK 6	5,400	+1,800	413	150	B2/C1
Elementary (初等)	HSK 7-9	11,000	+5,600	1,148	500	C1/C2

Note: Compared to the old system, HSK 3.0 has significantly increased the vocabulary requirements. For example, old HSK 1 required 150 words, while new HSK 1 requires 300 words

PART 2: DETAILED HSK SYLLABUS (LEVELS 1 TO 9)

Here is a step-by-step breakdown of the syllabus for each level, based on the new HSK 2026 standards.

ELEMENTARY STAGE (HSK 1-3): Daily Conversations & Survival Chinese

This stage focuses on basic communication for everyday life, allowing learners to handle simple, routine tasks and interactions.

HSK 1 (Absolute Beginner)

- ◆ **Importance:** The perfect starting point. It validates that you can understand and use very basic Chinese phrases, fulfilling basic communication needs. It provides a structured framework for beginning your Mandarin journey.
- ◆ **Vocabulary:** 300 words.
- ◆ **Characters:** 246 characters (recognize); 50 characters (write).
- ◆ **Grammar:** Fundamental sentence structures.
 - Subject-Verb-Object (我爱你 - wǒ ài nǐ - I love you).
 - Simple questions with 吗 (ma) and 呢 (ne) (你好吗? - Nǐ hǎo ma? - How are you?).
 - Basic negation with 不 (bù) (我不是老师 - wǒ bù shì lǎoshī - I am not a teacher).
 - Expressing possession with 的 (de) (我的名字 - wǒ de míngzi - my name).
- ◆ **Topics:** Greetings, introductions, family, numbers, time, dates, daily routines, simple likes/dislikes.

HSK 2 (Beginner)

- ◆ **Importance:** Builds on the foundation, enabling you to communicate more effectively on familiar and routine matters.
- ◆ **Vocabulary:** 500 words (+200 new).
- ◆ **Characters:** 125 new characters; 50 for handwriting.
- ◆ **Grammar:** More particles and question forms. Expressing actions in progress (正在...呢), past experiences (过 - guo), and simple comparisons.
- ◆ **Topics:** Shopping, ordering food, discussing hobbies, simple directions, talking about past events.

HSK 3 (Elementary Intermediate)

- ◆ **Importance:** Completes the elementary stage. You can manage most communication in daily life, work, and study environments. This is a solid foundation for moving to more complex topics.
- ◆ **Vocabulary:** 1,000 words (+500 new).
- ◆ **Characters:** 284 new characters; 150 for handwriting.
- ◆ **Grammar:** Introduction to more complex sentence structures, including result complements (完 – wán - to finish), potential complements (看得见 – kàn de jiàn - can see), and basic connecting words to link ideas.
- ◆ **Topics:** Expressing feelings and opinions, making appointments, handling simple emergencies, discussing plans.

INTERMEDIATE STAGE (HSK 4-6): Social & Workplace Proficiency

This stage bridges the gap between casual conversation and professional fluency, covering complex topics like society, emotions, and work.

HSK 4 (Intermediate)

- ◆ **Importance:** Marks the ability to discuss abstract topics and complex emotions. Often a requirement for university studies in certain programs or for jobs that require daily Chinese communication.
- ◆ **Vocabulary:** 2,000 words (+1,000 new).
- ◆ **Characters:** 441 new characters; 150 for handwriting.
- ◆ **Grammar:** Focus on structures for expressing opinions, making complaints, discussing hypothetical situations, and understanding detailed instructions.
- ◆ **Topics:** Emotions, business complaints, recruitment, health and fitness, social issues.

HSK 5 (Upper Intermediate)

- ◆ **Importance:** A major milestone for academic and professional advancement. It demonstrates the ability to read Chinese newspapers, understand lectures, and give structured speeches. Required by many universities and Chinese government scholarships.
- ◆ **Vocabulary:** 3,600 words (+1,600 new).
- ◆ **Characters:** 431 new characters; 150 for handwriting.
- ◆ **Skills:**
 - ◆ **Listening:** Understand longer dialogues, interviews, and narratives played only once.
 - ◆ **Reading:** Comprehend long passages (300-600 characters) on topics like culture, education, and social issues. Analyze the author's viewpoint.
 - ◆ **Writing:** Write a coherent short essay based on a picture or a set of keywords (approx. 80 characters).

- ◆ **Topics:** Giving speeches, environmental protection, traditional Chinese culture, economic discussions.

HSK 6 (Advanced)

- ◆ **Importance:** Represents a high level of fluency. You can understand professional lectures, debate social phenomena, and handle complex language in most academic and professional settings.
- ◆ **Vocabulary:** 5,400 words (+1,800 new).
- ◆ **Characters:** 413 new characters; 150 for handwriting.
- ◆ **Skills:** Can understand implicit meaning, follow complex logical arguments, and express oneself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions.
- ◆ **Topics:** Debating social news, understanding historical analysis, engaging with complex narratives.

ADVANCED STAGE (HSK 7-9): Mastery & Specialization

This is the "Master" level, newly introduced in HSK 3.0. It is intended for professional translators, academic researchers, and those needing to use Chinese at the highest level in specialized fields like philosophy, international relations, and law.

HSK 7-9 (Master)

- ◆ **Importance:** Certifies an expert-level command of the Chinese language, suitable for high-level professional roles, academic research, and professional translation.
- ◆ **Vocabulary:** 11,000 words (+5,600 from previous level).
- ◆ **Characters:** 1,148 total characters in this stage; 500 for handwriting.
- ◆ **Skills:**
 - Can read and understand highly complex and abstract writings, such as policy reports and academic papers.
 - Can produce well-structured, clear, and detailed texts on complex subjects.
 - Can handle professional translation and interpretation tasks.
 - Can engage in sophisticated discussions on abstract cultural and academic topics.
- ◆ **Topics:** Academic research, international affairs, legal documents, philosophical concepts, literary criticism.

PART 3: IMPORTANT DO'S & DON'TS FOR HSK SUCCESS

Following the syllabus is crucial, but effective study habits are what lead to success.

FIVE DO'S

- ◆ **Do Use Official & Structured Resources:** Rely on official workbooks and trusted textbook series. The official "HSK Standard Course" textbooks are an excellent

foundation . For the new 2026 syllabus, ensure any app or book you use is updated to HSK 3.0 standards .

- ◆ **Do Practice with Mock Tests:** Familiarize yourself with the test format, timing, and question styles by taking full-length mock tests. This builds stamina and reduces anxiety . HSK levels 1-3 do not have a writing section, so practice is focused on listening and reading recognition .
- ◆ **Do Immerse Yourself in Authentic Content:** Move beyond textbooks. For listening, incorporate Chinese podcasts, interviews, and TV shows. For reading, graduate from simple dialogues to news articles, essays, and short stories as you advance .
- ◆ **Do Focus on "Functional" Grammar:** Don't just memorize grammar rules. Understand how they are used in context to express logic (causation, contrast, condition) and the speaker's attitude, especially for HSK 4 and above.
- ◆ **Do Learn Vocabulary in Context:** Avoid memorizing word lists in isolation. Learn new words by seeing them in sentences, stories, and dialogues. This helps you understand usage and improves retention . For characters, focus on recognizing them first (especially for early levels), and practice handwriting for the required characters at each stage .

FIVE DON'TS

- ◆ **Don't Study for the Wrong HSK Version:** If you are starting your journey in 2026 or planning to take the test after July 2026, do not use old HSK 2.0 materials. You will learn the wrong vocabulary and be unprepared for the new format and requirements. Verify that any course or app is aligned with the new "HSK 3.0" or "2026 Syllabus" .
- ◆ **Don't Ignore Your Weaknesses:** Be honest about the sections you struggle with. If listening is hard, do dictation exercises. If reading speed is slow, practice skimming and scanning techniques. Use diagnostic tools to identify gaps .
- ◆ **Don't Just Translate Word-for-Word:** Train yourself to understand phrases and ideas rather than translating everything into your native language. This is essential for building reading speed and listening comprehension, especially in the intermediate and advanced stages .
- ◆ **Don't Neglect Time Management:** The HSK is a test of speed as well as knowledge. Practice completing sections within the allotted time. Know how much time to allocate per question or passage .
- ◆ **Don't Be Discouraged by the Numbers:** The jump in vocabulary from level to level is steep (e.g., from 1,000 to 2,000 words). Focus on consistent, daily practice. Even 30-40 minutes a day is more effective than cramming . Remember, the certificate is a tool to open doors, but real-world communication requires continuous practice.

YOUR SYLLABUS ACTION PLAN

- ◆ **Check the Date:** First, confirm when you plan to take the exam. If it's after July 2026, your entire preparation must be based on the new HSK 3.0 syllabus.
- ◆ **Identify Your Goal:** Why are you learning Chinese? (e.g., to study at a Chinese university, for a job in international business, for travel, for personal enrichment).
- ◆ **Determine Your Target Level:** Based on your goal.
- ◆ **Tourism/Basic Interest:** HSK 2 or 3
- ◆ **Work in a Chinese company (basic communication):** HSK 4
- ◆ **University Admission (most programs) / Government Scholarship:** HSK 5
- ◆ **Academic Research / High-Level Professional / Translation:** HSK 6, 7-9
- ◆ **Take a Placement Test:** If unsure of your level, take a free online placement test aligned with the new HSK 3.0 standards to find your starting point.
- ◆ **Follow the Syllabus & Do's:** Use the detailed syllabus above as your roadmap. Start from your appropriate level and incorporate the Do's & Don'ts into your study habits.
- ◆ **Find a Test Center:** Search for an official test center near you via the official HSK website. Many are affiliated with universities or cultural institutes.

OUR CERTIFICATION



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