

# 句式

geoi3 sik1

## 13 Must-Know Everyday Cantonese Patterns

*Stop memorizing random words — learn these instead*

cantobestie

### THE BIG IDEA

### One verb, thirteen ways to use it

All 13 examples below use the same verb — 做 (zou6, "to do / make"). Notice how the MEANING changes completely depending on which small word attaches to it. Learn the pattern, and you can plug in almost any verb you already know.

## GROUP 1

The basics — marking when it happens 

These three patterns share the same skeleton (Subject + Verb + Object) — only the piece right after the verb changes.

## PATTERN 1

## PRESENT / HABITUAL

我做運動。

*ngo5 zou6 wan6 dung6.*

I exercise.

**Pattern: Subject + Verb + Object**

## PATTERN 2

## PAST TENSE — COMPLETED ACTION

我做咗家務。

*ngo5 zou6 zo2 gaa1 mou6.*

I did some housework.

**Pattern: Subject + Verb + 咗 *zo2* (past tense) + Object**

## PATTERN 3

## PRESENT CONTINUOUS — HAPPENING NOW

我做緊功課。

*ngo5 zou6 gan2 gung1 fo3.*

I'm doing my homework.

**Pattern: Subject + Verb + 緊 *gan2* (ongoing) + Object**

## GROUP 2

Plans, ability & possibility 

From "planning to" all the way to "physically able to" — four shades of possibility, each with its own marker.

## PATTERN 4

## FUTURE PLAN / INTENTION

我打算做老師。

*ngo5 daa2 syun3 zou6 lou5 si1.*

I plan to become a teacher.

**Pattern: Subject + 打算** *daa2syun3* (plan to) **+ Verb + Noun**

## PATTERN 5

## FUTURE TENSE — WILL / GOING TO

我會做 gym。

*ngo5 wui5 zou6 gym1.*

I will hit the gym.

**Pattern: Subject + 會** *wui5* (future tense) **+ Verb + Object**

## PATTERN 6

## POTENTIAL — ABLE TO (CAN)

放心啦，我做得到！

*fong3 sam1 laa1, ngo5 zou6 dak1 dou2!*

Don't worry, I can do it!

**Pattern: Subject + Verb + 得到** *dak1dou2* (can)

## PATTERN 7

## POTENTIAL — UNABLE TO (CAN'T)

今日太叻喇，我做唔到。

*gam1 jat6 tai3 gui6 laa3, ngo5 zou6 m4 dou2.*

I'm too tired today. I can't do it.

**Pattern: Subject + Verb + 唔到** *m4dou2* (can't)

## GROUP 3

Obligation & necessity 

When something has to happen — whether it's scheduled, or just non-negotiable.

## PATTERN 8

## OBLIGATION — A FUTURE NECESSITY

聽日我要做身體檢查。

*ting1 jat6 ngo5 jiu3 zou6 san1 tai2 gim2 caa4.*

I need to have a medical check-up tomorrow.

**Pattern: Time + Subject + 要 *jiu3* (need to) + Verb + Object**

## PATTERN 9

## STRONG OBLIGATION — EMPHATIC

呢件事我一定要做。

*ni1 gin6 si6 ngo5 jat1 ding6 jiu3 zou6.*

I definitely have to do this.

**Pattern: Topic + Subject + 一定要 *jat1ding6jiu3* (definitely must) + Verb**

## GROUP 4

## Desires &amp; feelings ♥

From a wish, to an invitation, to a full-blown like or hate — how you feel about the action comes right before the verb.

## PATTERN 10

## DESIRE — WANT TO

我想做生意。

*ngo5 soeng2 zou6 saang1 ji3.*

I want to start a business.

**Pattern:** Subject + 想 *soeng2* (want to) + Verb + Object

## PATTERN 11

## SUGGESTION — A SOFT PROPOSAL

不如我哋一齊做運動？

*bat1 jyu4 ngo5 dei6 jat1 cai4 zou6 wan6 dung6?*

How about we exercise together?

**Pattern:** 不如 *bat1jyu4* (how about) + Subject + 一齊 *jat1cai4* (together) + Verb + Object

## PATTERN 12

## PREFERENCE — LIKE DOING

我鍾意做瑜伽。

*ngo5 zung1 ji3 zou6 jyu4 gaa1.*

I like doing yoga.

**Pattern:** Subject + 鍾意 *zung1ji3* (like to) + Verb + Object

## PATTERN 13

## STRONG DISLIKE — HATE DOING

我好憎食榴槤。

*ngo5 hou2 zang1 sik6 lau4 lin4.*

I really hate eating durian.

**Pattern:** Subject + 好憎 *hou2zang1* (really hate) + Verb + Object

一個動詞，十三種用法！

