

# 80/20 JAPANESE

*Learn smarter, start  
speaking today, and get to  
fluency fast!*



**RICHARD WEBB**



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# Introduction



Japanese is often considered one of the most difficult languages to learn. I thought this too, once upon a time, but now I know better. Yes, it is very different from English and pretty much every other language, but it is incredibly logical, flexible and has very few irregularities. With the right approach, I believe it is possible to learn to speak fluent Japanese in a very short period of time.

That's why I've written this book. I want to share with you the knowledge I have accumulated through years of formal study, over six years of living in Japan, and countless hours spent contemplating the finer points of Japanese and English linguistics.

When I first learned Japanese, I struggled with all kinds of concepts that, in retrospect, aren't very difficult at all. The problem was that I didn't know what I was doing, or what I should be learning. I had textbooks and teachers that taught me all the basic grammar and sentence patterns, and I could even put some decent sentences together, but it wasn't until I studied in Japan that I finally "got it".

The reason for that is simple - I spent a lot of time learning what to say, without properly understanding how Japanese really works. I had to figure a lot out on my own, which only came after being exposed to Japanese almost exclusively for months on end. If I had just had a better grasp of how languages work in general, and the specific things that make Japanese and English so different, I could have saved myself a lot of time and confusion.

This book is designed to give you the head start I didn't have. Wherever you are, if you want to learn to speak Japanese, this book will help you learn smarter, start speaking today, and get to fluency fast!

## The 80/20 Approach

If you haven't heard of the 80/20 rule, or Pareto Principle, it suggests that in any endeavor, 80% of the results come from 20% of the input. For a company, 80% of revenue usually comes from around 20% of its customers. In many sports, approximately 80% of the goals are scored by 20% of the players. The ratios won't always be 20% and 80%, but the point is that in anything you do, there are a few things that matter far more than everything else.

When it comes to languages, one of the most oft-cited examples of the 80/20 principle relates to vocabulary. In just about any language, the most common 1500 words or so usually account for 80% of the spoken or written language. For Japanese, the first 1000 words account for roughly 76% of the words that appear in novels.<sup>1</sup> Although this is good to know, it is somewhat misleading, and misses the point of language learning.

Firstly, many of the most common words have very little meaning on their own, like the English words “it”, “the” and “of”. These words are essential, but they mostly just supplement other, less common words that have more meaning.

Secondly, the most common words overall will not necessarily be the most useful words for you. If your goal is to discuss politics in Japanese, you'll need a very different set of vocabulary to somebody who wants to understand anime. You're much better off learning the words you need over the ones you're told you “should” know.

More importantly though, a language is not merely a collection of vocabulary. A language is a skill, or more accurately, a group of skills that you use to communicate. The most important 20% of the Japanese language is therefore not a list of the most common words, but rather the knowledge and understanding that will allow you to practice and develop these skills most efficiently and effectively. Vocabulary is of course necessary, but it is only one piece of the puzzle.

To speak fluent Japanese, the most important skill you need is the ability to understand how sentences are formed, and how the words in a sentence relate to each other. You need to develop this skill above all others because it applies to everything, and because it is the single aspect that is most different to what you already know, making it the most difficult to master.

Despite this, the usual way people are taught Japanese essentially equates to being made to remember and practice lots of different sentence patterns that apply to specific situations. This works for a while, but it is severely limiting and leads to a lot of confusion. I

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<sup>1</sup> The Most Commonly Used Japanese Words by Frequency: <http://www.offbeatband.com/2010/12/the-most-commonly-used-japanese-words-by-frequency/>

experienced this myself, and wish I had started with a proper understanding of sentence formation, rather than having to figure it out for myself.

That's why after introducing the sounds of Japanese, this book focuses first and foremost on giving you a proper understanding of Japanese sentence structure. It does this using simple examples and highlighting the important differences between Japanese and English. This teaches you to think differently, and lays the foundation that will allow you to say anything. It's the 20% of the language that will get you 80% of the way to speaking fluent Japanese.

One more application of the 80/20 rule in this book is to ignore written Japanese. Learning to read and write Japanese requires a lot of memorization and additional practice. I encourage you to learn these skills when you are ready, but at the beginning stages of learning a new language, an entirely new writing system is a distraction that slows you down and causes added frustration, making you more likely to quit. Instead, it's better to focus on understanding the language first. That is the most important 20%.

## **Deconstructing Japanese**

The skill of speaking Japanese can be broken down broadly into four pieces - pronunciation, listening, vocabulary and sentence building. The sounds of Japanese, which are relevant to both pronunciation and listening, are covered in Chapter 1, while the remainder of the book focuses on sentence building. In doing so, it also includes a variety of useful vocabulary.

Here is a brief introduction to each of the building blocks of spoken Japanese.

### **Pronunciation**

This is really important, and people often don't spend enough time on this. There's no point being able to speak Japanese correctly if nobody can understand what you say. You don't need to be perfect, but good pronunciation will make communication much smoother and more enjoyable, while also improving your listening skills. In the beginning especially, you should dedicate time every day just to practicing pronunciation. It takes time for the muscles in your mouth to develop the ability to make the new sounds accurately and efficiently, just like any other physical skill. The more you do it, the easier it will become.

### **Listening**

Listening is a skill in itself that takes practice. In addition to learning to recognize all the different sounds and sound combinations, it is important to get used to the natural

flow of a language, and practice listening to it being spoken at a natural pace. So often, people will learn all the basics of a language, but can't keep up when they hear it spoken naturally. Focused practice on listening to naturally spoken Japanese is essential. The sooner you start, and the more you do, the better.

## **Vocabulary**

This is obviously important, but it's more than just memorization. If you ever studied a language at school, you no doubt had vocabulary tests that required you to memorize the meanings of individual words. You also no doubt forgot most of those words as soon as the test was over.

Instead of this, try to learn words that matter to you, and learn them in context. The majority of my vocabulary has come from hearing or seeing a word in the real world and making the effort to learn its meaning. This works extremely well because it lets your environment tell you which words to learn and how to use them. This doesn't mean you can't learn vocabulary through study; just be sure that when you do so, you learn words that are relevant to you, and learn them in context.

## **Sentence Building**

In order to communicate in any language, you need to be able to build and understand sentences. A solid understanding of grammar makes this process much less random and confusing. Grammar is often seen as boring, but it helps you make sense of new concepts, allows you to expand the range of ideas you can express, and if you learn the basics well, it gives you the power to self-correct and experience rapid improvement.

If you think grammar is unnecessary, and simply listening to and immersing yourself in a language is the most effective way to learn it because that's how children do it, consider this - when you learned your first language, you were constantly surrounded by it and had no way to escape, even in your thoughts. You had a fundamental need for language, a rapidly developing brain, and people around you that actively encouraged you at every step. Even so, it took you several years before you could put a coherent sentence together, let alone have an intelligent conversation.

The fact is, you can't simulate a child's circumstances, and nor do you want to. You're smarter now and your brain is more powerful. As an adult, you possess the ability to dissect and analyze new information far better than any child. Learning grammar allows you to leverage that superior analytical ability to great effect.

## How To Learn A Language

Since learning a language means learning a number of skills, it should be treated like any other skill. Simply reading this book from beginning to end won't magically give you the ability to speak Japanese. It will help you learn all the essential knowledge you need to speak Japanese, but it is critical that you don't confuse the acquisition of knowledge with the acquisition of a skill.

Consider other skills. If you want to learn to play golf, simply reading about technique and studying videos of Tiger Woods is not enough. This will give you some basic knowledge that will help you improve, but you won't get better at swinging a golf club until you practice swinging a golf club. It's that simple.

Learning to speak a language is the same - you need to train your brain to think a certain way, your mouth to move a certain way, and your ears to interpret sounds a certain way. You obviously need some knowledge of the language to be able to do this, but you absolutely must put this knowledge to use by speaking and listening to Japanese.

It's not just me who thinks this. In his book *Fluent in 3 Months*, Benny Lewis says that the key ingredient that has helped him become fluent in 7 languages (and counting) is to start speaking from day one. No matter how little you know, talking to people in your target language gives you valuable experience that you can't get from study. It's also far more enjoyable than spending all of your time with your head down learning grammar and vocabulary.

As proud as I am of the quality of this book and how beneficial it will be for your Japanese language learning, it will never replace real-life experience. Make sure you practice what you learn early and often.

## Creating Opportunities To Practice

"But... but... I don't have anyone to practice with?"

That excuse may have worked in the past, but not any more.

First of all, Japanese people are everywhere. With few exceptions, Japanese communities can be found in most major cities around the world - you just have to put in the effort to find and connect with them. When you do, though, don't be that person that goes up to people and says they're looking for someone with whom they can practice their Japanese. I've met countless people who, within a few minutes of meeting me, asked me to help them with their English. I'm happy to help out my friends, but nobody wants to feel as though they're being used, unless they're getting something in return.

Make friends first before asking for help, or just start speaking to them in Japanese so that becomes the default language. In some cases, you may be able to arrange a language exchange, where you help each other out with your language learning goals. In any case, you want to build a genuine relationship, not one that hinges purely on your need for their language skills.

If you're worried about your lack of Japanese ability, and fear being ridiculed, don't be. Easier said than done, I know, but for the most part, Japanese people are incredibly kind and will be flattered that you are trying to speak their language. In English speaking countries, non-English speakers are sometimes made to feel like they don't belong. They get treated with rudeness, impatience and are sometimes even abused. Japanese people aren't like this - they don't expect people to learn their language. They're impressed with people who can speak Japanese, even a little, and although they might be shy, they will generally want to talk to you, no matter how little sense you make.

If you live somewhere where there aren't any Japanese people, don't have the time to spend searching, or are intimidated by the prospect of approaching a Japanese community, there is, of course, the Internet. Using websites like [www.italki.com](http://www.italki.com) or [www.interpals.net](http://www.interpals.net), you can find native Japanese language tutors for as little as \$8/hour, or connect with language exchange partners for free. This gives you easy, affordable access to native Japanese speakers with whom you can practice speaking Japanese, wherever you happen to be.

Of course, when you just want to practice your listening and interpretation skills without the speaking element, it's even easier. There are countless movies, TV shows, anime, podcasts, youtube channels and streaming radio channels available online. With these, you can practice when it suits you, and by using media related to a topic you're interested in, you can ensure that you actually enjoy the process.

For a list of useful resources available to help you practice and improve your Japanese, visit [8020japanese.com/resources](http://8020japanese.com/resources).

## **Speeding Up Learning**

When learning a new skill, what you learn and the order in which you learn it makes a big difference. In his book *The 4-Hour Chef*, Tim Ferriss shares his methodology for rapid skill acquisition, saying you must first deconstruct the skill into manageable blocks, select the most important blocks (the 20%), and then learn those blocks in a logical sequence.



The logical sequence is the “secret sauce”. Using kickboxing students as an example, Tim notes that average students were taught a “hodgepodge of random techniques” that “leave students to assemble the puzzle themselves”. This can still produce excellent students, but success is dependent on each student’s ability to assemble that puzzle. In contrast, teachers that consistently produce the best and most reliable students teach their craft in a logical sequence.

This book is that logical sequence for Japanese. Here you’ll find the most important aspects of the Japanese language broken down and presented in a logical order designed to maximize learning efficiency and long-term effectiveness.

In some cases, this means that things you would normally learn first in a language learning course appear later, or not at all, simply because they are limited in overall application. Remember, this isn’t a phrasebook; it’s a road-map to fluency. By practicing what you learn in this book in the order it appears, you will learn the most crucial concepts first and avoid the biggest sticking points, bringing you closer to spoken fluency faster.

So now that have the material you need, what else can you do to speed up learning? In his book *The First 20 Hours*, Josh Kaufman discusses the keys to achieving rapid progress during the early stages of acquiring a new skill.

One of those keys is to learn just enough to self correct. As discussed, spending too much time studying and not enough time practicing Japanese is counter-productive, but so is not learning enough. If you learn just enough so that you will know when you make a mistake, it allows you to self-correct immediately, reinforcing correct methods.

Without this, you generally won’t have that instant feedback. When speaking to a native speaker, their goal is usually just to communicate, so in most cases, they will not correct your mistakes as long as they understand what you are trying to say. Some people will help you out, and you can of course ask people the correct way to say something, but you should make it your own responsibility to be able to recognize and correct your own mistakes. I have done this since I started learning Japanese, and it has served me extremely well.

Another of the strategies Josh describes that is particularly relevant to language learning is to emphasize quantity and speed. When speaking Japanese, you should focus on saying as much as you can as quickly as you can, without trying to be perfect. The same goes for listening - instead of worrying about every single word, just try to understand as much as you can as it is being spoken. Especially in the early stages, your Japanese will rarely be perfect, even if you are careful, so give yourself the opportunity to make lots of mistakes and learn from them.

## Keeping Motivated

“The major barrier to skill acquisition isn’t intellectual... it’s emotional”

—Josh Kaufman

The biggest obstacle you will face in your quest to speak fluent Japanese is yourself. The fact is, like any new skill, learning a language is tough. What makes it tough, though, is not the content, but rather the fact that you will get frustrated and feel stupid at times. The road will seem too long, and it would be much easier to just give up and watch old episodes of Game of Thrones instead.

For this reason, it helps to create a system that allows you to overcome these emotional barriers that you will inevitably face. The point of this system is to keep you motivated, or at least to ensure that you keep going even when you don’t feel motivated. Here are ten things you can do to help prevent yourself from giving up or making excuses. You don’t need to implement them all, but by putting some kind of system in place, you make it harder for yourself to lose focus and quit.

### 1. Focus on small wins

Feeling like you are making progress is crucial. If all you can say to yourself is, “I’ve been doing this for days/weeks/months/years now and I’m still not even close to where I want to be”, you’ll constantly feel like a failure. Instead, enjoy the small wins, and be proud of everything you achieve. It could be something as simple as recognizing a new word that you just learned, or successfully using the correct form of a verb. Everything counts, and everything is progress, so make a habit of celebrating your successes.

### 2. Recognize that learning a new language is a rollercoaster ride

When I studied in Japan in high school, in five months I went from knowing some basic grammar and vocabulary and not much else, to being able to converse at full pace on any topic that wasn’t too technical. Everyone was amazed at the speed of my progress. Despite this, I constantly went through periods where I felt like I wasn’t getting anywhere. Invariably, though, these periods were soon followed by huge breakthroughs where I suddenly felt like I could understand absolutely everything. Of course, not long after, I’d be back down again. Then up. Then down. Then up. You get the point. So when things feel hopeless, recognize that it’s a natural part of the process, and that the next big breakthrough is just around the corner. Just keep pushing.

### 3. Set specific and realistic goals

Saying you want to be fluent in Japanese, with no timeline and no definition of what fluency is, doesn't work. As Benny Lewis says in his book *Fluent in 3 Months*, "successful language learners are those who are as specific as possible with their goals". Start by defining the level of fluency you want to achieve. I recommend starting with something small and within reach, such as the ability to hold a simple, spontaneous conversation. Don't aim for perfection, and don't expect yourself to know all the vocabulary that comes up. Once you have a defined goal, give yourself a realistic deadline to achieve it, taking into account how much time you can commit. The more achievable the goal seems, the more motivated you will be to reach it.

### 4. Use content that interests you

It will make all the difference in the world if you are interested in the content you use to practice your Japanese. When I first lived in Japan, I liked talking to people and learning from them, so that's what I did. It didn't feel like study because I enjoyed it, and it's the reason I can now speak Japanese fluently. You may not be as fortunate as I was to have that opportunity, but if you want to learn to speak Japanese, there's probably something about Japan or Japanese culture that interests you. Use that. If you just like talking to people, find people to talk to. If you like anime or other forms of Japanese pop-culture, watch it and talk to others who like it too. Whatever your interests, you can find material and someone to talk to about it if you look.

### 5. Set a schedule and stick to it

Consistency is essential to learning any new skill, especially a language. Deciding you want to learn Japanese, and committing to studying and practicing in your free time, is not really committing at all. When your free time comes around, unless you're really motivated at that exact moment, there's a fair chance you will choose to do something else instead. Schedule time to study and practice your Japanese. Meet with a language exchange partner on a weekly basis, make Wednesday nights Japanese movie night, or read this book every morning on your commute. Whatever you do, make sure you deliberately allocate time for learning. As the saying goes, failing to plan is planning to fail.

### 6. Practice for at least 20 hours

In his book *The First 20 Hours*, Josh Kaufman argues that the beginning stages of learning a new skill are the hardest because, basically, you suck at it. This means you

get frustrated, feel stupid, and in many cases, give up. One way to overcome this is to commit before you start to doing at least 20 hours of focused practice. By forcing yourself to the 20-hour point, you get yourself to a level where you feel competent enough that you won't feel like a failure and will therefore want to continue. Just make sure the twenty hours is consistent and frequent. One hour a week for twenty weeks isn't going to cut it - instead, aim to reach 20 hours in under a month.

#### 7. Set stakes to ensure accountability

If you have something to lose, such as money or reputation, you're more likely to work harder to succeed. As Tim Ferriss notes in *The 4-Hour Chef*, a goal needs consequences. Once you've set a specific and realistic goal, create a disincentive for failure. Give a friend money or the right to publicly shame you if you don't follow through. You could also use a service like [www.stickk.com](http://www.stickk.com), which punishes you for failing to reach a goal either by telling your supporters of your failure, or by giving money to a friend, foe or 'anti-charity'. Whatever you put on the line, the more it hurts, the more likely you'll stay motivated to succeed.

#### 8. The Jerry Seinfeld productivity 'secret'

Jerry Seinfeld apparently doesn't like to take credit for this method, but it is often attributed to him nonetheless. Here's what you do - buy a calendar, and commit to doing a certain amount of Japanese speaking or listening practice every day. Every day you do what you said you would do, mark that day off on the calendar with a big "X". Your only goal is to not break the chain of days that are marked off. It doesn't matter how well you perform while practicing, just that you practice for a set period of time every day and don't break the chain.

#### 9. Write or record a diary in Japanese every day

A great way to both practice as well as create a visual record of your progress is to write a diary in Japanese (in romaji), or speak one into a voice recorder or video camera. Just write or say whatever you can, without worrying too much about the content. I've never been the sort of person to keep a journal, but I used this method when I first lived in Japan to practice and consolidate all of the new grammar and vocabulary I had learned. My first entry was just three lines and full of errors, but after five months I was writing a page and a half of almost error-free Japanese every day.

## 10. Have a good reason to learn Japanese

The best language students are always the ones that are either passionate about the culture of the target language, or whose circumstances require them to learn it. Countless people live abroad for years without learning a single word of the local language, simply because they don't have a strong desire to learn and can get by without it. On the other hand, some people are able to learn to speak a foreign language without ever traveling to the country it's spoken in because they want it badly enough and put in the effort. If you kinda sorta wanna learn Japanese, but are not particularly fazed if you never do, you'll have a much tougher time keeping motivated to make the effort. Find or create a good reason to learn Japanese and the battle is half won.

## The 80/20 Japanese Road Map

As stated earlier, this book is designed to help you get from zero to fluency in the shortest possible time, and the lessons in this book have been carefully ordered with that goal in mind. To give you an idea of where you are heading, and why this book has been structured the way it has, here is a basic road map for your journey to Japanese fluency.

In chapter one, you will learn the basic sounds of Japanese. These are obviously essential to learning to speak and understand spoken Japanese. Some basic words will also be introduced, such as greetings and numbers, to help you practice your pronunciation.

In chapter two, we will look at the basic structure of Japanese sentences using basic vocabulary. You will learn how the words in Japanese sentences relate to each other, and how this compares with English, laying the foundations for everything else you will learn in this book.

Chapter three covers some general characteristics of the Japanese language that affect how people communicate. This includes some fundamental differences between Japanese and English that affect everything you say or hear, as well as some key cultural aspects that are reflected in the language.

Chapter four is essentially a summary of all the major aspects of Japanese grammar, and is designed to give you enough knowledge to communicate basic ideas that are useful in everyday conversation. This includes some basic verb tenses, how to talk about your likes and dislikes, and how to ask questions. You will also learn a lot of essential vocabulary to help you put these ideas to use.

In chapter five, you will learn about numbers and counters. Numbers themselves are fairly straightforward, but they need to be converted to counters in order to use numbers in a sentence to talk about quantities. This chapter will help you do that.

Using the numbers you learned in chapter five, chapter six covers all the different kinds of expressions used to discuss time. With this knowledge, you can easily add context to any basic sentence, and ensure that even if you make other mistakes, you can accurately communicate and understand the basic timing of events.

From chapter seven onward, we start looking at the finer points of Japanese grammar, starting with adjectives, nouns and adverbs. Building on your understanding of Japanese sentence structure, this chapter focuses on the different ways that adjectives can be manipulated and used, and how this knowledge can also be applied to nouns and adverbs.

Verbs are the central part of any sentence, and the focus of chapter eight. Here, you will expand on the basic verb tenses covered in chapter four by learning the major verb forms used in both polite and informal speech. You will also learn to differentiate between two main types of verbs, greatly improving your ability to use them correctly in sentences.

Chapter nine introduces one of the most versatile verb forms in Japanese, the te-form. You will learn how to convert any verb into the te-form, as well as some of the most useful ways to use the te-form to express yourself. This includes describing actions that are ongoing, giving commands, making requests, and linking multiple actions in a sequence.

In chapter ten, the shackles come off. Here, you will learn about the concept of noun phrases, and how they can be used to form a wide range of complex, highly descriptive sentences. This chapter will truly take your understanding to the next level.

In chapter eleven, we will take a deeper look at particles, a key component of Japanese sentences first introduced in chapter two. This chapter aims to fill in any gaps in your understanding of how particles work, while also introducing some new ones and teaching you some new tricks.

By the time you reach chapter twelve, you should have a very solid understanding of Japanese sentence formation, and how each of the components interact to create meaning. This final chapter introduces more than 40 new expressions that build on everything you have learned thus far, ensuring you will always know what to say.

That's it! Hopefully this brief outline has given you a good understanding of where we are heading and how we will get there, so without further ado, let's start learning Japanese!

## Chapter 1

# The Sounds Of Japanese

The first thing to do when learning any new language is become familiar with the sounds that are used. For someone who speaks English, Japanese is relatively easy in this respect because there are fewer unique sounds than in English, and most of them are the same or very similar.

To begin with, there are only five vowel sounds. While English only has five vowels, they are each pronounced differently when used in different combinations with other letters, bringing the total number of unique vowel sounds up to around 20, depending on a person's accent. Compared with this, the five sounds in Japanese are easy to learn. Here they are in the order they appear in the “syllabary”, the Japanese equivalent of the alphabet:

- あ a, like the “a” sound in “father”
- い i, like the “ee” sound in “meet”
- う u, like the “oo” sound in “fool”
- え e, like the “e” sound in “set”
- お o, like the “o” sound in “cold”

The descriptions above are only approximations of the actual sounds based on an American accent. They can be used as a guide, but sounds are of course best learned with the ears. You can find an audio-based pronunciation guide at [8020japanese.com/resources](http://8020japanese.com/resources).

Also, please note that although the Japanese hiragana characters are shown throughout this chapter, this is only to demonstrate certain principles relating to pronunciation. This book will not cover written Japanese, hence there is no need to learn these characters for the purpose of completing this book.

In the 46-tone syllabary, the above five vowels are the first five “letters”, and we will refer to them from now on as the “a-line”. In speech and writing, these are each used on their own or in combination with consonant sounds to produce other “letters”. For example, the first consonant sound is a “k” sound, but this can only be written or spoken in combination with one of the five vowel sounds. As such, the next five “letters” in the syllabary after the a-line are:

- か “ka”, like the “cu” in “cut”
- き “ki”, like the “kee” in “keep”
- く “ku”, like the “coo” in “cool”
- け “ke”, like the “ke” in “kettle”
- こ “ko”, like the “co” in “cold”

From this point on, we will refer to the above five sounds as the “ka-line”, as there is no such thing in Japanese as a “k” on its own. This is the same for all other consonant sounds, with the exception of “n”, as will be explained shortly.

### Japanese Words You Already Know

If you think of any Japanese sports, company names or names of foods that you already know (and that have not been adapted for the global market), you will notice that any consonant sounds are usually separated by a vowel. The only exceptions are double letters and “n”, both of which we will cover later. Some examples include sushi, karate, karaoke, Toyota, Nissan and Honda.

In addition to the basic ka-line above, there is a simple transformation to this line that gives us a whole new set of “letters”. By adding two small lines to the upper right of each of these characters, the hard “k” sound changes into a softer “g” sound as follows:

- |   |    |   |   |    |
|---|----|---|---|----|
| か | ka | → | が | ga |
| き | ki | → | ぎ | gi |



く	ku	→	ぐ	gu
け	ke	→	げ	ge
こ	ko	→	ご	go

As you can see, with just two small lines added to each character, we essentially have a new consonant sound. These altered characters, however, do not appear in the syllabary, as they are considered simply as variations of the ka-line. Why is this? Because the “k” sound and the “g” sound are essentially the same except for one small difference - the “g” sound is voiced, while the “k” sound is not.

If you’re not sure what a voiced or unvoiced sound is, say aloud the English “k” sound alone without a vowel, and compare this with what happens when you do the same with an English “g”. You should notice that your mouth moves in much the same way, but while you don’t use your voice for the “k” sound, you do for the “g”. This is because “g” is a voiced consonant, whereas “k” is not.

So, in Japanese, unvoiced sounds including “k”, “s”, “t” and “h” can be altered to create a voiced sound that is written in a similar way to their unvoiced counterparts.

Additionally, in some cases, words that normally use the unvoiced sound (eg. the “k” sound) use the voiced sound (eg. “g”) instead when combined with other words, as it may be easier to say. For example, the number “three” is “san” and the word for “floor” (of a building) is “kai”, yet the third floor could be referred to as “san gai”. This kind of adaptation can be seen all throughout the language.

So if we now combine the first two lines of the syllabary covered so far, it appears as follows:

あいうえお	a i u e o
かきくけこ	ka ki ku ke ko

After “k” the pattern continues, starting with “s” and followed by “t”, “n”, “h”, “m”, “y”, “r” and “w”. There are, however a few exceptions to this basic pattern, and some of these also have voiced alternatives like the “g” described above, so we will now look at each of these lines one by one.

#### sa-line

さ	sa
し	shi
す	su

せ se  
そ so

The exception here is that the second sound is “shi”, not “si”.

These sounds can also be altered to a voiced “z” sound as follows:

ざ za  
じ ji  
ず zu  
ぜ ze  
ぞ zo

Again, note that the second sound is “ji”, not “zi”.

**ta-line**

た ta  
ち chi  
つ tsu  
て te  
と to

The exceptions here are the “i” and “u” variations, where “ti” is pronounced “chi”, and “tu” is pronounced “tsu”, as in the word “tsunami”.

The ta-line sounds can also be altered to a “d” sound, as follows:

だ da  
ぢ ji  
づ dzu  
で de  
ど do

The second sound, “ji”, is effectively the same as that from the modified sa-line above, and is rarely used. The “dzu” sound is basically a heavier version of the “tsu” sound where the “dz” is a voiced version of the unvoiced “ts” sound.

**na-line**

な na  
 に ni  
 ぬ nu  
 ね ne  
 の no

Here, there are no exceptions, and there is also no altered version.

**ha-line**

は ha  
 ひ hi  
 ふ fu  
 へ he  
 ほ ho

The third sound here is not a “hu” sound but a “fu” sound, as in Mt. Fuji. It is, however, a lighter sound than the English “f”, similar to the sound made when unsuccessfully attempting to whistle. Your bottom lip should not touch your teeth.

The ha-line is unique in that it has two alternatives - a “b” sound and a “p” sound. Firstly, the “b” sound is made by adding two lines like the others:

ば ba  
 び bi  
 ぶ bu  
 べ be  
 ぼ bo

The “p” sound is achieved by adding a small circle instead of two lines, as follows:

ぱ pa  
 ぴ pi  
 ぷ pu  
 ぺ pe  
 ぽ po

Both the “b” and “p” variations of the ha-line are straightforward and without exceptions.

**ma-line**

ま ma  
み mi  
む mu  
め me  
も mo

**ya-line**

や ya  
ゆ yu  
よ yo

The ya-line only has the “a”, “u”, and “o” sounds, but is otherwise quite straightforward. The “yi” and “ye” sounds died out of the language long ago. As a result of this, the Japanese currency today is pronounced “en” in Japanese, not “yen”.

**ra-line**

ら ra  
り ri  
る ru  
れ re  
ろ ro

Although there are no exceptions in the ra-line, this is unquestionably the hardest sound for native English speakers to master. It is mostly written as an “R”, but the sound itself is much lighter than the English “R”, somewhere between an “R” sound and an “L” sound, and is achieved by flicking your tongue lightly against the roof of your mouth. This is why Japanese people often struggle to distinguish between “R” and “L” when learning English - they use the same sound to cover both letters when speaking English.

Like all other sounds, the best way to learn to pronounce the ra-line correctly is to listen and practice repeatedly until your tongue builds up the necessary muscles to make the sound effortlessly.

**wa-line**

わ wa

を wo

This line only has the “a” and “o” variations, and the “w” sound is effectively silent in the case of “wo”. The “wo” therefore sounds the same as the “o” from the a-line, but they are used differently in writing and not interchangeable. This will become much more apparent when we start to discuss grammar.

**n**

ん n

This “n” is the only consonant that stands alone without a vowel sound attached. It is slightly different to the “n” sound produced in the na-line, although you can get away with a regular “n” sound in most cases. To get the correct sound, open your mouth slightly and say “ah”, like at the doctor’s office but not as wide, then use your tongue to close off the flow of air at the back of your throat. Doing this, you should be able to produce an “n”-like sound, almost like a humming sound. This is different from the English “n” sound and the na-line sounds, which are produced with the tongue closer to the front of your mouth.

It is important to note that this “n” sound should always be pronounced as its own syllable, and not blended into other sounds. For example, the name “Shinichi” is actually made up of the sounds shi-n-i-chi (しんいち), with the “n” sound being the lone “n”, not a part of “ni”. This name should therefore be pronounced with a distinct separation of “shin” and “ichi”. Throughout this book, this “n” sound will be written as “n” (“n” followed by an apostrophe) whenever it is necessary to distinguish it from a na-line sound.

Also, when “n” is followed by a na-line character, it will be written as “nna”, “nni”, etc., to show that there is an “n” sound followed by a separate na-line sound. For example, the commonly know Japanese word for “hello”, “konichiwa”, actually contains this “n” followed by “ni”, so should therefore be written as “konnichiwa”.

We have now covered all of the basic sounds as they appear in the syllabary. Remembering that we don’t include the altered sounds, the complete syllabary appears as follows:

あいうえお

a i u e o

かきくけこ

ka ki ku ke ko

さしすせそ	sa shi su se so
たちつてと	ta chi tsu te to
なにぬねの	na ni nu ne no
はひふへほ	ha hi fu he ho
まみむめも	ma mi mu me mo
や ゆ よ	ya yu yo
らりるれろ	ra ri ru re ro
わ を	wa (w)o
ん	n

In addition, we have the altered sounds:

がぎぐげご	ga gi gu ge go
ざじずぜぞ	za ji zu ze zo
だちづでど	da ji dzu de do
ばびぶべぼ	ba bi bu be bo
ぱぴぷぺぽ	pa pi pu pe po

There are, however, a couple more things to cover.

### Small “ya”, “yu” and “yo”

i + small ya, i + small yu, i + small yo

The three ya-line sounds can be combined with any of the “i” characters (except for “i” itself from the “a-line”) to produce another variation of sounds. When written, the ya-line sounds are written smaller than regular characters. For example, “ki” + “small ya” would become “kya”, as if you were saying “ki” and then “ya” but without the “i” sound. In the case of the sa-line, “shi” is the character with the “i” sound, so instead of “sya”, “syu” and “syo”, combining “shi” with the small ya-line characters produces the sounds “sha”, “shu” and “sho”. This idea also applies to some other sounds, as you will see below.

The full list of these is as follows:

きゃきゅきょ	kya kyu kyo
ぎゃぎゅぎょ	gya gyu gyo
しゃしゅしょ	sha shu sho
じゃじゅじょ	ja ju jo

ちゃちゅちょ	cha chu cho
ぢゃぢゅぢょ	ja ju jo
にゃにゅにょ	nya nyu nyo
ひゃひゅひょ	hya hyu hyo
びゃびゅびょ	bya byu byo
ぴゃぴゅぴょ	pya pyu pyo
りゃりゅりょ	rya ryu ryo

Note that when a lone “n” sound is followed by a ya-line sound, it will be written as “n’ya”, “n’yu” or “n’yo”. These should be pronounced as two separate sounds, and not joined together like the “nya”, “nyu” and “nyo” sounds above.

### Small “tsu” (double consonants)

Some words, when written in Japanese, contain a small “tsu” inserted between other characters. When this is done, the word is pronounced with a tiny pause where the small “tsu” occurs, followed by an accentuation of the sound that follows the small “tsu”. This must always be a consonant sound, and usually a hard, unvoiced sound (k, s, t, p). When written using English letters, the small “tsu” is instead written as a double letter. Examples include Sapporo, Hokkaido, Nissan, and Nippon (an alternative to the word “Nihon”, meaning “Japan”, and often chanted by fans at international sporting events).

### Even weighting of sounds, and no accents

When spoken, each kana character is given the same weighting, or an equal amount of time, and there is no accent placed on any of the characters. To demonstrate this, consider the city of Osaka. Many English speakers will naturally put the accent on the first “a” and draw out this sound, so it sounds something like “Osaaka”. In fact, when written in Japanese, Osaka is actually “おおさか” (“oosaka”). Since each kana character is given equal time, Osaka is actually a four character word pronounced “o-o-sa-ka”, with no accent anywhere, and the “o” sound making up half of the word.

The Japanese word for “hello” is similar. As mentioned earlier, this should actually be pronounced “ko-n-ni-chi-wa”, with a longer “n” sound than most English speakers normally say, and no accent on the first “i” (or anywhere else).

Another example might be “karate”. Like Osaka, the second syllable is usually accented by English speakers, but in fact equal time and weight should be given to each of “ka”, “ra” and “te”: ka-ra-te.

## Elongated vowel sounds

When a sound is followed immediately by the same vowel sound, it is usually elongated as in the above example of “Osaka”. This applies whether the first of the repeated vowel sounds is paired with a consonant or not. For example, “toori”, meaning “street”, has an elongated “o” sound just the same as that in “Osaka”. When written in Japanese, there are other ways that elongated vowel sounds can be expressed, but since we are focusing on spoken Japanese in this book and not covering writing, all elongated sounds will be written with a line on the top of the vowel like this: ōsaka.

### Cities with elongated vowel sounds

The three most well-known cities in Japan - Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto - all have elongated vowel sounds, and as such are usually pronounced incorrectly by English speakers. The correct pronunciation of these is actually Tōkyō, Ōsaka and Kyōto.

## Vowel sounds followed by “i”

When the vowel sounds “a”, “e” and “o” are followed immediately by “i”, these two sounds are often blended together into one sound, resulting in something like this:

あい	“ai”, like the “i” in “kite”
えい	“ei”, like the “ay” in “say”
おい	“oi”, like the “oy” in “boy”

This also applies to any sounds that start with a consonant, so “kai” would sound like the “ki” in “kite”, and “sei” and “boi” would sound like “say” and “boy” respectively.

Note, however, that they only tend to sound like this, and will often have a faint but distinct “i” sound towards the end of the blended sound. As a pair, they are also still given the weighting of two sounds, so in the word “eigo” (meaning “English language”) for example, the “ay” sound accounts for ⅔ of the word: e-i-go.

## Spaces

Japanese is always written without spaces between words or letters. Since this book will be using English lettering, or “Rōmaji”, instead of Japanese characters, spaces will be used in various places for the sake of readability.



## Exercise

Below are the numbers one through ten, some common greetings, a few colors, the days of the week, and the months of the year. Practice pronouncing these words. For this exercise only, a hyphen (-) is placed between each sound to make it easier to distinguish between syllables. Be sure to stretch out any elongated vowel sounds (ō, ū etc.).

Numbers	
One	i-chi
Two	ni
Three	sa-n
Four	shi or yon
Five	go
Six	ro-ku
Seven	shi-chi or na-na
Eight	ha-chi
Nine	kyū
Ten	jū

Greetings	
Hello	ko-n-ni-chi-wa
Nice to meet you	ha-ji-me-ma-shi-te* (ha-ji-me-ma- <b>sh</b> -te)
Good morning	o-ha-yō-go-za-i-ma-su* (o-ha-yō-go-za-i-ma-s)
Good evening	ko-n-ba-n-wa
Goodbye	sa-yō-na-ra
See you later	ma-ta-ne
Good night	o-ya-su-mi-na-sa-i
Thanks	a-ri-ga-tō
Thank you	a-ri-ga-tō-go-za-i-ma-su* (a-ri-ga-tō-go-za-i-ma-s)
You're welcome	dō-i-ta-shi-ma-shi-te* (dō-i-ta-shi-ma- <b>sh</b> -te)
Excuse me	su-mi-ma-se-n
Sorry	go-me-n-na-sa-i

- \* For “Nice to meet you” and “You’re welcome”, the “i” before the “te” at the end is usually silent.  
For “Good morning” and “Thank you”, the final “u” sound is usually silent.

### Colors

Black	ku-ro-i
White	shi-ro-i
Red	a-ka-i
Green	mi-do-ri
Blue	a-o-i
Yellow	kī-ro-i

### Days of the week

Monday	ge-tsu-yō-bi
Tuesday	ka-yō-bi
Wednesday	su-i-yō-bi
Thursday	mo-ku-yō-bi
Friday	ki-n'-yō-bi
Saturday	do-yō-bi
Sunday	ni-chi-yō-bi

### Months of the year

January	i-chi-ga-tsu
February	ni-ga-tsu
March	sa-n-ga-tsu
April	shi-ga-tsu
May	go-ga-tsu
June	ro-ku-ga-tsu
July	shi-chi-ga-tsu
August	ha-chi-ga-tsu
September	ku-ga-tsu
October	jū-ga-tsu
November	jū-i-chi-ga-tsu
December	jū-ni-ga-tsu

## Chapter 2

# Introduction to Japanese Grammar

The purpose of this chapter is to help you understand how the Japanese language is structured. Sentence structure in any language determines how words are used together to form meaning. The content in this chapter is quite heavy, but once you overcome the extreme differences between English and Japanese sentence structure, the language becomes much easier.

## 2.1 Basic Japanese sentence structure

### New vocabulary

to be (am/are/is)	desu*
this	kore
that	sore
car	kuruma
red	akai
I/me	watashi
person	hito

\* In the word “desu”, the “u” is usually not voiced, hence this should be pronounced “dess”.

Let's start with some basic sentences.

1. I am a person                      watashi wa hito desu
2. This is a car                      kore wa kuruma desu
3. My car is red                      watashi no kuruma wa akai desu
4. That is Taro's car              sore wa Tarō no kuruma desu

Looking at these sentences, you may notice that:

- Every sentence ends in “desu” (pronounced “dess”)
- Every sentence contains a “wa”

“Desu” is effectively the verb “to be”, which in the above cases takes the form “is” or “am”. In Japanese, **the verb always comes at the end of the sentence.**

“Wa” is what is known as a particle (particles will be explained in greater detail later). Its purpose is to identify the topic of the sentence. In English, the topic (or subject) of a sentence is whatever comes before the main verb, which in the above cases is either “is” or “am”. In Japanese, the topic of a sentence is whatever comes before “wa”.

Now that we know this, let's take another look at sentences one and two. Text with the same formatting has the same meaning.

1. I *am* a person                      **watashi** wa hito *desu*
2. **This** *is* a car                      **kore** wa kuruma *desu*

First of all, we can see that “wa” has no English equivalent. This is because its entire purpose is to show that “watashi” or “kore” is the topic of these sentences. There is no English equivalent because in English, word order alone is enough to determine the subject of a sentence.

Secondly, since “hito” means person and “kuruma” means car, we can see that there is no Japanese equivalent of “a”. The articles “a”, “an” and “the” simply do not exist in Japanese. This makes things simpler in some ways, but can be hard to get used to for someone used to English or similar languages, as not having these words can sometimes make a sentence feel as though it is lacking somehow.

Now let's look at sentences 3 and 4.

3. **My car** *is* red                      **watashi no kuruma** wa akai *desu*
4. **That** *is* Taro's car              **sore** wa Tarō no kuruma *desu*

Here we can see that:

- “watashi no kuruma” = “my car”, and
- “Tarō no kuruma” = “Taro’s car”

Adding “no”, another particle, indicates possession. It converts “I”, “you”, “he”, “she” and “they” into “my”, “your”, “his”, “her” and “their”, respectively. For other things like people’s names, animals, places and objects, it has the same effect as adding “’s” (apostrophe s).

The one-size-fits-all way of defining “no” would be to say it is equal to English “of”. For example, instead of “Taro’s car”, “Tarō no kuruma” could be thought of as “the car of Taro”. This is more versatile as there are plenty of situations in English where “’s” is not normally appropriate. “No” can be used to connect just about any two things, where one of the two things belongs to the other in some way, such as “the back of the door”, “the color of your eyes” or even “the rain of yesterday”.

To summarize what we have learned about Japanese sentence structure so far:

- The verb comes at the end of the sentence
- The particle “wa” defines the topic of the sentence, and has no English equivalent
- There is no “a”, “an” or “the”
- The particle “no” indicates possession

## 2.2 Introduction to particles

Now that you have a basic understanding of some simple sentences, we will look at the most important concept relating to Japanese sentence structure - particles. Particles are like small words that go in between other words to help a sentence make sense. They are somewhat like prepositions in English (in, at, on, from, to etc.), but only in some cases, and thinking of them as the equivalent of prepositions will likely cause you unnecessary confusion.

Put simply, **particles determine the role of each word relative to the verb.**

Understanding what this really means will make learning Japanese grammar much, much easier.

To illustrate what is meant by “the role of each word”, let’s first consider how the English language works. In English, the role of words in a sentence is determined primarily by word order. Take the following example:

John saw Jane.

From the word order, we know:

- a) John was the person who did the seeing
- b) Jane was the person who was seen

If we change the word order, it changes the meaning of the sentence. We can say “Jane saw John”, and it makes grammatical sense, but it does not mean the same thing. This is because English sentences always follow the pattern [subject] + [verb] + [object].

The *subject* of a sentence is the person/animal/thing that is performing the action described by the verb. In this case, “John” is the subject because John is the one performing the act of seeing. We know this because “John” comes before the verb “saw”.

The *object* of a sentence is the person/animal/thing that the action is performed on. In this case, “Jane” is the object because she is the one who was seen by John, and we know this because “Jane” comes after the verb “saw”.

As you can see, in English, *word order* determines the role of each word in the sentence and, in particular, how each word relates to the *verb*.

In Japanese, instead of word order, particles determine the role of each word and how they relate to the verb. Word order is important too, but not to the same extent. Word order in Japanese mainly influences the natural flow, and has more of an effect on where the emphasis lies within a sentence than on its literal meaning. Don’t worry about this too much for now - the important thing to know is that particles, not word order, determine how all the words in a sentence relate to each other.

The simple sentence “John saw Jane” could be written in Japanese as follows:

John wa Jane wo mimashita

Firstly, as you may have guessed, “mimashita” is the verb “to see” in the past tense. Note that for verbs in the past tense, the “i” after the “sh” is usually silent, hence this would be read as “mimashta”.

Also in this sentence are the two particles, “wa” and “wo”. Like all particles, these ones define the role of the words that come *before* them.

In general terms:

- “wa” defines the topic of the sentence, as we discussed earlier.

- “wo” defines the object of the verb. Recall from chapter one that the “w” in “wo” is silent, and is therefore simply pronounced “o”.

So in the above sentence:

- “wa” defines “John” as the topic of the sentence, meaning John is the person who performed the act of seeing
- “wo” defines “Jane” as the object of the verb “saw”, meaning Jane is the person who was seen

By putting this together, we can see that:

John wa Jane wo mimashita = John saw Jane

## Exercise

So far, we have seen the particles “wa”, “no” and “wo”. Recall that:

- “wa” defines the topic of a sentence or clause
  - “wo” defines the object of the verb
  - “no” indicates possession
1. Identify the topic of each of the following sentences. Keep in mind that the topic is one ‘thing’ and can be more than one word.
    - a) I watched the baseball game
    - b) This apple is green
    - c) My sister is listening to music
    - d) The red bike is faster than the blue one
    - e) The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog
  2. Identify the object of the verb in each of the following sentences. Like the topic, the object can also be more than one word.
    - a) He ate a hamburger
    - b) Alan watched TV
    - c) I read a fascinating book
    - d) Her older brother bought a mobile phone
    - e) My grandfather drank a big glass of water

3. Using the vocabulary provided, translate these phrases into Japanese.

- a) My friend
- b) His mother
- c) Her bicycle
- d) Jiro's book
- e) My friend's dog

### Vocabulary

I	watashi
he	kare
she	kanojo
friend	tomodachi

mother	okāsan
bicycle	jitensha
book	hon
dog	inu

### Answers

- 1. a. I; b. this apple; c. my sister; d. the red bike; e. the quick brown fox
- 2. a. a hamburger; b. TV; c. a fascinating book; d. a mobile phone; e. a big glass of water
- 3. a. watashi no tomodachi; b. kare no okāsan; c. kanojo no jitensha; d. Jirō no hon; e. watashi no tomodachi no inu

## 2.3 Particles in more depth

To further your understanding of particles, we will now look at “wa”, “wo” and “no” in action, while also introducing a couple more common particles.

Here is the vocabulary for this section:

Verbs* (past tense)	
went	ikimashita
watched	mimashita
came	kimashita

Nouns	
school	gakkō
movie	eiga
house	ie

\* For all of the verbs above, the last “i” is usually silent.



We will now break down the following sentences. Particles are bolded.

- |                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 1. I watched a movie           | watashi <b>wa</b> eiga <b>wo</b> mimashita                  |
| 2. Taro went to school         | Tarō <b>wa</b> gakkō <b>ni</b> ikimashita                   |
| 3. Taro came to my house       | Tarō <b>wa</b> watashi <b>no</b> ie <b>ni</b> kimashita     |
| 4. I went to school with Taro  | watashi <b>wa</b> Tarō <b>to</b> gakkō <b>ni</b> ikimashita |
| 5. I watched a movie with Taro | watashi <b>wa</b> Tarō <b>to</b> eiga <b>wo</b> mimashita   |

Notice that every noun in each sentence is followed by a particle. This is almost always true because nouns represent things, and how these things are affected by actions always needs to be defined, which is what particles are for.

Let's start by deconstructing sentence one:

1. watashi **wa** eiga **wo** mimashita

Here you can see that:

- “wa” comes after “watashi”. This means that “watashi” is the topic.
- “wo” comes after “eiga”. This means that “eiga” is the object of the verb “mimashita”.

This sentence says that I am the person who performed the act of watching, and it is a movie that I watched. In other words, “I watched a movie”.

Make sense?

Now let's compare this to sentence two.

1. watashi **wa** eiga **wo** mimashita
2. Tarō **wa** gakkō **ni** ikimashita

In sentence two, we can see that Taro is the topic, and he performed the act of going. There is, however, no “wo”. Instead “gakkō”, meaning “school”, is followed by the particle “ni”.

**The particle “ni” defines the destination related to an action that involves movement.**

This includes actions described by verbs like go, come, move, give, send, return, etc. It is very similar to the English preposition “to”, although they are not perfectly equivalent. Note that “ni” also has a number of other meanings, which will be covered later.

In sentence two, we can see that “ni” comes after “gakkō”, indicating that school is the destination. Putting this together, we know that Taro is the person who went somewhere, and his destination was school, hence sentence two means, “Taro went to school”.

3. Tarō **wa** watashi **no** ie **ni** kimashita

The particles we see here are “wa”, “no” and “ni”, so we know that:

- Taro performed the action, which in this case is “came”
- The place that he came to is “watashi no ie”

Remembering that “no” indicates possession, “watashi no ie” means “my house”. This comes before “ni”, so Taro’s destination must be my house, and the full sentence therefore means, “Taro came to my house”.

Now let’s take a look at sentence four.

4. watashi **wa** Tarō **to** gakkō **ni** ikimashita

We can see that I (watashi) performed the action, the action is went (ikimashita), and the destination is school (gakkō), but we also have “Tarō to” in there as well.

**The particle “to” indicates who or what else is involved in the action in the same way.**

Basically, “Tarō to” means “with Taro”, making the whole sentence equivalent to, “I went to school with Taro”.

The particle “to” is often compared to “and” in English, but “and” is much more versatile than “to”. “To” can only be used to join nouns together, whereas “and” can be used to join virtually any two phrases together that are grammatically equal. For example, you cannot use the particle “to” to say something like, “I went to school and watched a movie,” because the “and” in this sentence doesn’t join two nouns. For this reason, it is more appropriate to think of “to” as meaning “with”, even if “and” is the more natural choice when speaking English.

One alternative way to express the same meaning as sentence four, although with a slightly different emphasis, is to say, “watashi to tarō wa gakkō ni ikimashita”. Let’s compare these directly:

- |   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| a) watashi wa tarō to gakkō ni ikimashita | I went to school with Taro |
| b) watashi to tarō wa gakkō ni ikimashita | Taro and I went to school  |

### Indirect objects

In the previous section, we discussed how the object of a verb in Japanese is marked by the particle “wo”. The particle “wo” is actually used to mark the *direct* object. In English, we also have *indirect* objects. These, however, do not exist in Japanese, so a brief explanation might be helpful.

Consider the sentence, “I sent you a letter”. In this sentence, the direct object is “a letter”, because that is what is being sent. The indirect object is “you”, because that is who the letter is being sent to. In English, the indirect object (you) is placed in between the verb (sent) and the direct object (a letter). It defines the *recipient of the action*. However, there is always another way of phrasing a sentence that uses an indirect object. In this case, that would be, “I sent a letter *to you*”. This is closer to how it would be phrased in Japanese. Here are some more examples:

I gave <b>you</b> a gift	=	I gave a gift <b>to you</b>
I showed <b>him</b> a picture	=	I showed a picture <b>to him</b>
I bought <b>her</b> a present	=	I bought a present <b>for her</b>
I baked <b>Emma</b> a cake	=	I baked a cake <b>for Emma</b>

Notice that the alternative phrases always use “to” or “for”.

In Japanese, like everything else, particles are used to define the recipient of the action. **Think of the recipient as the destination.** For “I sent you a letter”, the destination of the letter is “you”, so “you” should be marked with the particle “ni”. The sentence would therefore be:

watashi wa **anata ni** tegami wo okurimashita

*I            you            letter            sent*

The same applies when the English phrase uses “for”. In the example above, Emma is the recipient of the cake, and this would be expressed by saying “Emma ni”. There is, however, more to it than that, as will be covered in Chapter 12.3.3. For now, focus on the examples that more clearly involve movement to a destination.

In option (a), “watashi” is the only thing before “wa”, so “watashi” is the topic. This means the focus of the sentence is me, and Taro’s presence is additional information. This is more likely to be the answer to the question, “What did you do?”

In option (b), “watashi to tarō” comes before “wa”, so “watashi to tarō” is the topic. This means both Taro and I are the focus of the sentence equally. This is more likely to be the answer to the question, “What did you and Taro do?”

In the end, they both have essentially the same meaning. The difference in emphasis is small enough that it really doesn’t make much difference, so just use whichever one makes the most sense to you.

Sentence five is similar to sentence four.

5. watashi **wa** Tarō **to** eiga **wo** mimashita

We can break this down as follows:

- I (watashi) am the person who performed the action
- Taro is also involved in the action in the same way as me
- The object of the action was a movie (eiga)
- The action was “watched” (mimashita)

The sentence must therefore mean, “I watched a movie with Taro”, and just like sentence four, this could also be rearranged to, “watashi to tarō wa eiga wo mimashita”.

If we ignore the particles, we can see that the important elements of the sentence are: I, Taro, movie, watched. The particles are there to define the role of each of these words, thus defining their relationship with one another. Without them, we can’t be sure what actually happened. We can probably guess what happened, but what if Taro is a film director? Instead of watching a movie with Taro, maybe I actually want to say “I watched Taro’s movie” (watashi wa Tarō no eiga wo mimashita). This uses the same key words, but the relationship between these words is different. This is why particles are so important.

## Exercise

In this exercise, you will build simple sentences using the particles covered so far.

Complete tasks 1 - 6 for each of the sentences a - m below. Vocabulary is provided for each sentence so you can focus on the grammatical aspects of each sentence.

1. Identify the topic of each sentence and say it in Japanese followed by “wa”. Be aware that the subject can be more than one word.

2. Identify any extra people involved in the action of each sentence. Say them in Japanese followed by “to”.
3. Identify the destination, if there is one, of the person or object in each sentence. Say it in Japanese followed by “ni”.
4. Identify the object of each sentence and say it in Japanese followed by “wo”. Keep in mind that some sentences do not have an object (including a and b).
5. Translate each of the phrases into Japanese and write them down. Check your answers on the following page.
6. Without looking at your answers from the previous questions, say each of the sentences aloud in Japanese. Check your answers as you go and if you make any mistakes, say the sentence again correctly before moving on. Once you have finished all of the sentences, go back and repeat any that you said incorrectly the first time.

a) This is a pen

this	kore
pen	pen
is	desu

b) My name is [your name]

I / me	watashi
name	namae
is	desu

c) I ate an apple

I / me	watashi
ate	tabemashita
apple	ringo

d) You drank water

you	anata
drank	nomimashita
water	mizu

- e) He bought a mobile phone

he	kare
bought	kaimashita
mobile phone	keitai

- f) She read the newspaper

she	kanojo
read (past tense)	yomimashita
newspaper	shinbun

- g) Your mother wrote a book

you	anata
mother	okāsan
wrote	kakimashita
book	hon

- h) His father studied Japanese

he / him	kare
father	otōsan
studied	benkyō shimashita
Japanese (language)	nihongo

- i) My friend made sushi with Aiko

I / me	watashi
friend	tomodachi
made	tsukurimashita
sushi	sushi

- j) Her older sister listened to music with him

she / her	kanojo
he / him	kare
older sister	onēsan

listen	kikimashita
music	ongaku

k) Her older brother went to my school

she / her	kanojo
I / me	watashi
older brother	onīsan
went	ikimashita
school	gakkō

l) He came to my house with Taro

he / him	kare
I / me	watashi
came	kimashita
house	ie

m) She sent a letter to her grandmother

she / her	kanojo
sent	okurimashita
letter	tegami
grandmother	obāsan

n) Our grandfather taught English to Mai and Kazutaka

we / us	watashi tachi
grandfather	ojīsan
taught	oshiemashita
English (language)	eigo

o) They gave Mako's mother a souvenir

they	karera
gave	agemashita
mother	okāsan
souvenir	omiyage

p) Yutaka and I gave Kenta a jacket

I / me	watashi
gave	agemashita
jacket	uwagi

## Answers

	Task 1	Task 2
a)	kore wa	-
b)	watashi no namae wa	-
c)	watashi wa	-
d)	anata wa	-
e)	kare wa	-
f)	kanojo wa	-
g)	anata no okāsan wa	-
h)	kare no otōsan wa	-
i)	watashi no tomodachi wa	Aiko to
j)	kanojo no onēsan wa	kare to
k)	kanojo no onīsan wa	-
l)	kare wa	Tarō to
m)	kanojo wa	-
n)	watashi tachi no ojīsan wa	Mai to <i>or</i> Kazutaka to
o)	karera wa	-
p)	watashi to Yutaka wa <i>or</i> Yutaka to watashi wa	watashi to <i>or</i> Yutaka to

	Task 3	Task 4
a)	-	-
b)	-	-
c)	-	ringo wo
d)	-	mizu wo
e)	-	keitai wo
f)	-	shinbun wo
g)	-	hon wo
h)	-	nihongo wo



i)	-	sushi wo
j)	-	ongaku wo
k)	watashi no gakkō ni	-
l)	watashi no ie ni	-
m)	kanojo no obāsan ni	tegami wo
n)	Mai to Kazutaka ni	eigo wo
o)	Mako no okāsan ni	omiyage wo
p)	Kenta ni	uwagi wo

### Tasks 5 and 6

- a) kore wa pen desu
- b) watashi no namae wa [your name] desu
- c) watashi wa ringo wo tabemashita
- d) anata wa mizu wo nomimashita
- e) kare wa keitai wo kaimashita
- f) kanojo wa shinbun wo yomimashita
- g) anata no okāsan wa hon wo kakimashita
- h) kare no otōsan wa nihongo wo benkyō shimashita
- i) watashi no tomodachi wa Aiko to sushi wo tsukurimashita
- j) kanojo no onēsan wa kare to ongaku wo kikimashita
- k) kanojo no onīsan wa watashi no gakkō ni ikimashita
- l) kare wa Tarō to watashi no ie ni kimashita
- m) kanojo wa kanojo no obāsan ni tegami wo okurimashita
- n) watashi tachi no ojisan wa Mai to Kazutaka ni eigo wo oshiemashita
- o) karera wa Mako no okāsan ni omiyage wo agemashita
- p) watashi to Yutaka wa Kenta ni uwagi wo agemashita, OR  
Yutaka to watashi wa Kenta ni uwagi wo agemashita



## Chapter 3

# General characteristics of Japanese

Now that you should have a basic understanding of how Japanese sentences are structured, let's go over some general characteristics, mostly related to culture, that will help you use Japanese correctly.

### 3.1 Politeness

Japanese can be spoken with varying levels of politeness; let's call these levels 'informal', 'polite', and 'super polite'. The distinction is mostly based on verb endings, so the majority of the language remains the same at all levels of politeness, especially the informal and polite levels.

As a general rule, you should only use informal speech with people with whom you are very familiar, or who are of equal or lower standing than you. This means you should use polite language with anybody that you are not close to, as well as any person who is more senior than you, either in age or rank. Politeness and respect for elders is so ingrained in Japanese culture that in many cases, Japanese people will forever use polite language with people who are older than them, even if they become good friends.

We will be focusing initially on the polite form, as this is appropriate in most circumstances. The informal form will be introduced later as it is also very important

to understand, and has wide-reaching applications beyond simply defining the level of politeness. You will later see that converting between different levels of politeness is fairly straightforward once you understand the rules that apply.

### 3.2 Unaffected by person or gender

Although different levels of politeness require different verb endings, person and gender do not affect the way a verb is conjugated. For example, in English, “do” becomes “does” when the subject is a third person (ie. “I do” becomes “he does”, “Jane does”) but Japanese does not change in this way. “Do” is always “shimasu” in the polite form and “suru” in the informal form, no matter who is being talked about. Similarly, there is no gender associated with objects as in languages like Spanish and French, hence no distinction needs to be made for these.

### 3.3 Addressing and referring to people

Since politeness and respect are a central part of Japanese culture, how you refer to people is important. Let’s go over the key ways of addressing and referring to people.

#### By name

With the exception of relatives and close friends, Japanese people usually refer to others by their surname. When referring to people by name (first name or surname), it is customary to add “san” to the end of the person’s name as a sign of respect, eg. Yamamoto-san. This should *not* be used when you say your own name. It is also not usually required for people you are familiar with who are your age or younger, or of equal or lower status.

There are a number of other suffixes that can be added to names instead of “san” depending on your relationship to the person (“sama”, “kun” and “chan” are some examples), but for the sake of simplicity and to be on the safe side, always use “san” until you can determine for yourself what might be an appropriate alternative.

#### You

There are a few words that mean “you” in Japanese (the main ones being “anata” and “kimi”), but these are not used very often. Instead, when referring to the person you are speaking to, it is common practice to use the person’s name followed by the appropriate suffix, usually “san”. To say “your”, simply add “no” after “san” like you would with any

other name, eg. “Yamamoto-san no”. As will be explained shortly, it is also possible to leave the person’s name out of the sentence entirely if it is clear from the context who you are talking about.

## I and me

“I” and “me” can actually be said in numerous ways. Here are the most common ones you will hear:

I/me	Used by
watashi	everyone
watakushi	everyone (more formal)
boku	men/boys only
atashi	women/girls only (a bit ‘cutesy’, but perfectly acceptable)
ore	men/boys only (quite masculine and informal)
uchi	everyone (informal, mainly used by women/girls)
<i>one’s own name</i>	children, usually girls (some adult women use it but it is considered childish and should be avoided)

Of all of these, “watashi” is always the safest option, and I would recommend using it until you are more familiar with the other ones. The others are listed here primarily so that you will understand them when you hear them.

## Subject/object pronouns

Just to clarify, there is no distinction between subject pronouns (I, he, she, they, who) and object pronouns (me, him, her, them, whom) like there is in English. The below two sentences demonstrate this:

I saw *him*

**watashi** wa *kare* wo mimashita

He saw **me**

*kare* wa **watashi** wo mimashita

As you can see, “I” and “me” are both “watashi”, and “he” and “him” are both “kare”.

## Family members

When it comes to family members, different words should be used depending on whether you are talking about your own family or the family of others. Below is a list of the main family member words in both the humble (your own family) and honorific (others' families) forms. Most of these have other alternative ways of saying them, but these are the main ones for each.

English	Your own family	Someone else's family
family	kazoku	gokazoku
father	chichi	otōsan
mother	haha	okāsan
parents	ryōshin	goryōshin
older brother	ani	onīsan
older sister	ane	onēsan
younger brother	otōto	otōtosan
younger sister	imōto	imōtosan
husband	shujin	goshujin
wife	tsuma	okusan
grandfather	sofu	ojisan
grandmother	sobo	obāsan
child/children	kodomo	okosan
son	musuko	musukosan
daughter	musume	ojōsan
grandchild	mago	omagosan

## 3.4 No articles

As explained in the previous chapter, Japanese does not have the articles “a”, “an” and “the”. This makes things simpler in some ways, but also increases the dependency on context, and can require some time for an English speaker to get used to.

For example, to say something like “I ate a donut”, you would simply say something equivalent to “I ate donut” (watashi wa dōnatsu wo tabemashita). In English, we might alternatively say “I ate the donut” to indicate that we are talking about a specific donut, but in Japanese, this would also simply be “I ate donut”. It is assumed from context

that we know which donut the speaker is referring to, but this vagueness can lead to misunderstandings, especially if you're not used to it.

### 3.5 No plurals

For the most part, there are also no plurals in Japanese. This means that “I ate a donut” and “I ate some donuts” would both be “I ate donut” (*watashi wa dōnatsu wo tabemashita*). Without further specification or context, the person could be talking about one, two or fifty donuts. It is, of course, possible to use numbers or words like “many” to define quantity, but even then, the word for “donut” will always take the same form, unlike in English where we add an “s” if there is more than one.

One main situation where plurals *are* used is with living things, especially people. The simplest way to refer to a group of people or animals in the plural form is to add “tachi” to the end of the word. Here are some examples:

English singular	Japanese singular	English plural	Japanese plural
I	watashi	we	watashi tachi
You	anata	You (plural)	anata tachi
He	kare	they	kare tachi
She	kanojo	they (all female)	kanojo tachi
Person	hito	People	hito tachi
Friend	tomodachi	Friends	tomodachi tachi
Dog	inu	Dogs	inutachi
Taro	Tarō	Taro and co.	Tarō tachi

The suffix “ra” can also be used instead of “tachi” in some cases, but it is generally more informal and therefore only used with certain words. Two cases where “ra” is usually preferable to “tachi” are “karera”, meaning “they”, and “uchira”, meaning “we”. You might also hear it with some other words for “I”, like “watashira”, “bokura” or “orera”.

### 3.6 Highly dependent on context

When speaking Japanese, there is a lot that is left unspoken because it can be understood from context. This even includes the most important things in a sentence, like the subject. Whereas in English you might say, “I went to school today”, in Japanese, it is usually obvious that the person speaking is talking about themselves, so “I” would

be omitted. This results in something literally equivalent to, “Went to school today”. Similarly, when asking the question, “Did you go to school today?”, it is usually obvious that the speaker is talking about the person being asked, so in Japanese it would be normal to say the literal equivalent of, “Did go to school today?”.

Generally, Japanese has looser grammar rules than English, so in Japanese, it is possible to leave out certain parts of a sentence that are grammatically required in English. Here are two main examples:

1. English grammar requires every complete sentence or clause to contain (1) a subject, (2) a verb, and (3) an object if the verb takes one. Japanese clauses only require a verb, and any other words that are understood from context can be left out. In English, it is grammatically incorrect to omit words that are required, so we use pronouns like “he” or “it” to abbreviate them and avoid being repetitive. For example, if we are talking about a pen, we can say “It fell on the floor”, or “Ben gave it to me”. In this case, we know from the context that “it” refers to the pen. In Japanese, instead of saying “it”, the word is just omitted, resulting in sentences literally equivalent to “Fell on the floor”, or “Ben gave to me”. These are, of course, grammatically incomplete sentences in English, but they are perfectly fine in Japanese.

If all the information is understood from context, the sentence can even just be a verb. For example, if we’re talking about a pen, and someone questions whether or not I gave the pen to Ben or not, I could simply say, “Gave”. This would be a grammatically complete sentence, and it communicates the message effectively since every other relevant piece of information is already understood from the context.

2. In English, determiners (words that go before nouns, like “a”, “the”, “my”, “his”, “their” etc.) are almost always required, but in Japanese they are often omitted. For example, one of the sentences from the exercise at the end of the previous chapter was:

She sent a letter to her grandmother  
kanojo wa kanojo no obāsan ni tegami wo okurimashita

The English sentence has two determiners - the “a” before “letter”, and the “her” before “grandmother”. As discussed above, “a” does not exist in Japanese so



there is no determiner before “tegami”. “Her grandmother” is translated above as “konojo no obāsan”, but although this is literally correct, it is actually very unnatural. We’re already talking about “kanojo”, so repeating it is redundant, and sounds overly repetitive. It would be more appropriate to leave out “kanojo no” because it can be assumed that the grandmother being referred to belongs to the person we are talking about, ie. “kanojo”. The more natural way to say this sentence would be:

kanojo wa obāsan ni tegami wo okurimashita

This could potentially mean somebody else’s grandmother, but if that were the case, it would normally be necessary to include that information. As long as no additional information is provided or can be derived from context, we can assume that it is “kanojo no obāsan” that is being talked about.

The dependency on context in Japanese can, and does, lead to ambiguity. Coming from English, where we are grammatically required to be specific about things, this can be confusing and frustrating at times. For the most part, though, it is obvious what a person is talking about.

Below are a few commonly used phrases where part of the information has been omitted.

English	Common phrase	Full phrase
How are you? (literally: Are you well?)	ogenki* desu ka	<i>anata wa genki desu ka</i>
I am fine/well	genki desu	<i>watashi wa genki desu</i>
What is your name?	onamae* wa nan desu ka	<i>anata no namae wa nan desu ka</i>

- \* The “o” at the beginning of “ogenki” and “onamae” is an honorific prefix. It simply makes the word more polite, but should only be used when referring to other people, not yourself.

In the examples and exercises throughout this book, some words that would often be obvious and therefore unnecessary are shown in brackets (). It isn’t wrong to include any of these words, but in many situations, it will be more natural to omit them. In real conversation, these bracketed and other words are usually left out of sentences, so try to get used to omitting them when possible.

### 3.7 Particle omission

As discussed in the previous chapter, particles are an integral part of the Japanese language. The truth is, however, that in spoken language, particles are often left out. How does this work? Just as with other words that are left out of sentences, it is only done when it is obvious which particle would otherwise be used. Take the following example:

I bought a book  
 watashi wa hon wo kaimashita

This could be changed to:

hon kaimashita

The “watashi wa” can be removed because, as discussed previously, it is clear the speaker is talking about themselves. In addition, the “wo” can be left out because it is clear that the book is what was bought. In other words, the role of “hon” is obvious. We are not going to get confused and think that the particle should be “wa”, because that would make “hon” the topic of the sentence and imply that the book went and bought something, which makes no sense. The role of “hon” is obvious, and since particles define the role of the words they follow, they become somewhat unnecessary when that role is easily identified.

Although particle omission is possible, until you can speak Japanese more fluently, try to always include all the necessary particles so as to avoid omitting the wrong ones. Just be aware that when a Japanese person is speaking, they may leave some of the particles out, and that's fine - they probably won't even realize they're doing it.

### 3.8 Loanwords

Japanese contains a lot of words that have been imported from other languages, especially English. These are known as loanwords, or “gairaigo”, and are written using katakana instead of the hiragana and kanji (Chinese characters) used for other words. The number of these words in common use is constantly increasing. Young people are using loanwords more and more, and business people will sometimes use them in order to sound more educated, even when there is a perfectly appropriate pre-existing Japanese word they could use instead.

The prevalence of these words can make it easier to learn a lot of new words quickly, but there is one hurdle - you need to get used to the Japanese pronunciation of these words. Loanwords are, for the most part, limited to the same sounds that exist in regular Japanese, so all of the vowel and consonant sounds that don't exist in Japanese have to be approximated with sounds that do exist.

There are some exceptions, though, which relate to the consonant/vowel combinations not present in Japanese. For example, since “fu” is the only “f” sound, loanwords will sometimes combine this with other vowels like “a” or “e” to make “fa” and “fe” sounds, which normally don't exist. This can be seen in words like “sofa” (sofa) and “fēsubukku” (Facebook). When these are written in Japanese, they are written as “fu” followed by a small “a” or “e”, similar to the small “ya”, “yu”, “yo” and “tsu” described in chapter one.

Other sounds that are produced like this include “she” (“shi” + small “e”), such as in the word “mirukushēku” (milkshake), or “wi” (“u” + small “i”), which can be seen in words like “wisuki” (whiskey). Throughout this book, sounds like these will be written as they are pronounced, so just be sure to use the correct *Japanese* vowel sound (a, i, u, e, o) as it is written.

Here are some common loanwords:

restaurant	resutoran
pizza	piza
hamburger	hanbāgā
sandwich	sandoicchi
ice cream	aisu kurīmu
cake	kēki
hot dog	hotto doggu
cola	kōra
coffee	kōhi
beer	bīru
bread	pan (Spanish)
television	terebi
computer	konpyūtā
Internet	intānetto
camera	kamera
email	mēru
bus	basu

motorbike	baiku
hotel	hoteru
supermarket	sūpā
convenience store	konbini
part-time job	arubaito (German)
ball	bōru
sports	supōtsu
basketball	basuke
soccer	sakkā
tennis	tenisu
volleyball	barē (bōru)
golf	gorufu
passport	pasupōto
visa	biza
pen	pen
a swing	buranko (Portugese)

There are no set rules for how loanwords are adapted and pronounced in Japanese, but there is a general pattern that is fairly consistent throughout all such words. Below is a list of general guidelines. There is certainly no need to remember these, but you may find them useful as a point of reference.

One last thing to keep in mind is that a loanword in Japanese may not have the exact same meaning as that of the word it was derived from. For example, while English speakers will usually use the word “bike” to refer to a bicycle, “baiku” in Japanese means “motorbike” (the word for bicycle is “jitensha”). Another example is “poteto”, which usually means “french fries”. There are many more words like these, and in some cases the Japanese meaning is almost nothing like the original English meaning, but for most loanwords this isn’t a problem.

### Guidelines for the pronunciation of loanwords

- The sound is what matters most, not the English spelling. For example, the vowel in “ball” is an “a”, but the sound is closest to the Japanese “o” sound, hence it is pronounced “bōru”.
- “R” and “L” sounds both use the ra-line
- “B” and “V” sounds both use the ba-line
- “Th” sounds usually use the sa-line
- Long words are often shortened, eg. sūpā (supermarket), terebi (television)
- When a word contains a hard sound like “t” or “p” it is often turned into a double consonant (a small “tsu” when written in Japanese), followed by either “u” or “o”, eg. **hotto doggu** (hot dog), **intānetto** (Internet), **hippu hoppu** (hip hop).
- If a consonant sound does not have a vowel sound immediately following it, it will usually have an “u” sound added after it. This includes:
  - ▷ Words that have two different consonant sounds in a row. For example, the “c” in “ice cream” is followed by an “r”, so the “k” sound becomes “ku”. This makes the full word “aisu **kurīmu**”.
  - ▷ Words that end in a consonant. For example, “ice cream” ends in “m”, and therefore becomes “aisu **kurīmu**”.

Note that although written with an “u” sound, the “u” in “su” is usually silent when it comes immediately before a consonant sound. For example, “**supōtsu**” (sport/s) would be pronounced “spōtsu”, and “**resutoran**” would be pronounced “restoran”.

The general exceptions to this “u” rule are:

- ▷ “n” and “m” sounds often use “n”, since it exists as a consonant on its own and is close enough to “m”, eg. **pan** (bread), **konpyūtā** (computer)
- ▷ “t” and “d” use an “o” sound instead of “u”, eg. **pasupōto** (passport)
- ▷ a “t” followed by an “s” at the end of a word will use “tsu”, eg. **dōnatsu** (donut/s)



## Chapter 4

# The essentials

In this chapter, you will learn the most useful words, phrases and grammar rules that you can apply to quickly expand the range of ideas you are able to express in Japanese.

### 4.1 More useful particles

Japanese has quite a large number of particles, a few of which we have already covered. We will now look at few more particles that are also very common. There are no exercises to be completed for this section, but more examples that use these particles can be found throughout this chapter and beyond.

#### New vocabulary

Nouns	
here	koko
library	toshokan
park	kōen
pencil	enpitsu
ramen	rāmen
sea, beach	umi
shop, store	mise

Verbs (polite past tense)	
did, played	shimashita
sold	urimashita
spoke, talked	hanashimashita
swam	oyogimashita

**de**

This particle has two main applications:

1. Defines where an activity takes place.

I played soccer at the park  
(watashi wa) **kōen de** sakkā wo shimashita

They swam in the sea  
karera wa **umi de** oyogimashita

She bought a book at the store  
kanojo wa **mise de** hon wo kaimashita

Sato-san sold his car online  
satō san wa **intānetto de** kuruma wo urimashita

2. Defines the means used to complete an action, like a mode of transport or a tool

I went to school by bus  
(watashi wa) **basu de** gakkō ni ikimashita

He came here by car  
kare wa **kuruma de** koko ni kimashita

She wrote a letter in pencil  
kanojo wa **enpitsu de** tegami wo kakimashita

Suzuki-san spoke in English  
suzuki san wa **eigo de** hanashimashita

**ga**

This particle defines the subject of the sentence or clause.

This is very similar to “wa”, which defines the topic of the sentence. The difference between “wa” and “ga” is probably the most difficult concept for people learning Japanese to grasp. This will be explained in detail later. For now, use “wa” in most cases, but be



aware that there are certain times when “ga” is preferred, and that it is also possible to have both “wa” and “ga” in one sentence.

### mo

This particle adds the meaning of “too” or “also” when used with positive verbs, and “either/neither” when used with negative verbs.

This can be used instead of “wa” or “wo” to say things like, “I also did X”, or, “He didn’t do X either”. It can also be used after “ni” to say what *else* was a destination. In both cases, there is usually at least one element in the sentence that is understood from the context, and this can, and usually is, omitted.

I watched a movie  
watashi wa eiga wo mimashita

Taro watched (the movie) too  
**Tarō mo** (eiga wo) mimashita

—

I ate ramen  
watashi wa rāmen wo tabemashita

I also ate yakisoba  
(watashi wa) **yakisoba mo** tabemashita

—

He went to the park  
kare wa kōen ni ikimashita

He also went to the library  
(kare wa) **toshokan ni mo** ikimashita

## 4.2 Polite verb tenses and expressions

So far, all of the verbs we have used (with the exception of “desu”) have been in the polite past tense. Verbs will be covered in detail in Chapter 8, but before getting to that, we will first look at a few tenses and expressions in the polite form that are very useful and easy to learn.

### New vocabulary

Nouns	
baseball	yakyū
chopsticks	ohashi
clothes	fuku
dinner	bangohan
friend(s)	tomodachi
fruit	kudamono
Japan	nihon
party	pāti
rain	ame
shower	shawā
stomach	onaka
teeth	ha
throat	nodo
ticket	chiketto
toilet	toire
vegetables	yasai

Time-related words	
7 o'clock	shichiji
every day	mainichi
last week	senshū
Sunday	nichiyōbi
tomorrow	ashita
yesterday	kinō

Verbs (polite present tense)	
become dry	kawakimasu
become empty	sukimasu
buy	kaimasu
come	kimasu
clean	migakimasu
do	shimasu
drink	nomimasu
eat	tabemasu
fall (rain, snow etc.)	furimasu
go	ikimasu
listen	kikimasu
make	tsukurimasu
meet	aimasu
run	hashirimasu
take (a shower)	abimasu
use	tsukaimasu
wake up	okimasu
watch	mimasu

## The two main verb tenses

The two main verb tenses in Japanese are the present/future tense and the past tense. Between these two, you can talk about almost anything that has happened in the past, or that will happen in the future.

Verb tenses in Japanese are determined by the verb ending. The table below shows the endings that need to be applied to verbs in order to express them in the present/future tense and the past tense.

	Positive	Negative (eg. I didn't do...)
<b>Present/future</b>	-masu	-masen
<b>Past</b>	-mashita	-masen deshita

When pronouncing these verb endings, be sure to remember the following points:

- the “u” at the end of “-masu” is usually silent, hence this should be pronounced “-mas”
- the “i” in “mashita” is usually silent, hence this should be pronounced “-mashta”
- the “i” in “deshita” is usually silent, hence this should be pronounced “-deshta”

“Deshita”, by the way, is also the past tense of “desu”. Although this means “was” when it’s used as a verb on its own, when used at the end of other verbs, it simply changes the verb to the past tense without any added meaning.

Here are some examples of verbs in each of these tenses.

	Present/ future	Past	Present/ future negative	Past negative
<b>do</b>	shimasu	shimashita	shimasen	shimasen deshita
<b>go</b>	ikimasu	ikimashita	ikimasen	ikimasen deshita
<b>come</b>	kimasu	kimashita	kimasen	kimasen deshita
<b>watch</b>	mimasu	mimashita	mimasen	mimasen deshita
<b>listen</b>	kikimasu	kikimashita	kikimasen	kikimasen deshita
<b>use</b>	tsukaimasu	tsukaimashita	tsukaimasen	tsukaimasen deshita
<b>make</b>	tsukurimasu	tsukurimashita	tsukurimasen	tsukurimasen deshita
<b>eat</b>	tabemasu	tabemashita	tabemasen	tabemasen deshita
<b>drink</b>	nomimasu	nomimashita	nomimasen	nomimasen deshita

As you can see, conjugating verbs in these tenses is straightforward, and in the polite form, there are no exceptions to the rules stated above.

Just be aware, however, that verbs appear in the dictionary in the *informal* present/future tense. At the back of this book, you will find the most common Japanese verbs in the informal and polite present tenses, but if you use a dictionary to learn new words, you will need to know how to convert verbs from the informal form to the polite form. This will be covered in Chapter 8.

Of course, just as important as knowing how to say verbs in different tenses is knowing when to use them. Below is a brief explanation of when to use each of these tenses.

## Present/future tense

This is mainly used to talk about things that will occur in the future, either actively (eg. I'm going to the beach tomorrow) or passively (eg. It's going to rain tomorrow). It can include things in the distant future, such as "I will go to Japan in 3 years", or things that are about to begin immediately, like "I am going to watch a movie now".

It can also be used to talk about regular activities or habits in the present (eg. I wake up at 7am every day), usually accompanied by an indication of when such activities take place (ie. 7am every day). It is *not*, however, used to talk about actions that are taking place right now (eg. I am eating breakfast). This requires the use of the present continuous tense, which will be introduced in Chapter 9.

The following examples include some words that specify the time the action takes place, which we haven't covered yet, but this is just to give the sentences context and demonstrate the different verb tenses. Don't worry about this too much for now - just focus on the verbs. Expressions of time will be introduced in Chapter 6.

## Regular activities and habits

She wakes up at 7 o'clock every day  
kanojo wa mainichi shichiji ni **okimasu**

Ichiro plays baseball on Sundays  
Ichirō wa maishū nichiyōbi ni yakyū wo **shimasu**

I don't watch television  
watashi wa terebi wo **mimasen**

She doesn't eat vegetables  
kanojo wa yasai wo **tabemasen**

She doesn't eat fruit either  
(kanojo wa) kudamono mo **tabemasen**

### Future actions

I **will meet** a friend tomorrow  
ashita (watashi wa) tomodachi ni **aimasu**

I **will also go** to the library  
(watashi wa) toshokan ni mo **ikimasu**

Okubo-san **isn't coming** to the party  
ōkubo san wa pāti ni **kimasen**

Kudo-san **isn't coming** either  
kudō san mo **kimasen**

### Past tense

The past tense is simply used to talk about actions that both started and finished in the past. Japanese has other ways to talk about past events, but even if it's not always the best option, the regular past tense can be used for just about anything.

It rained  
ame ga **furimashita** [literally: "Rain fell"]

He bought clothes at Harajuku last week  
senshū, kare wa harajuku de fuku wo **kaimashita**

I didn't have a shower yesterday  
kinō, shawā wo **abimasen deshita**

I didn't clean my teeth either  
ha mo **migakimasen deshita**

Lastly, here are two very useful expressions that use verbs in the past tense (unlike English, which uses adjectives):

I'm hungry

onaka ga **sukimashita** [literally: "(My) stomach has emptied"]

I'm thirsty

nodo ga **kawakimashita** [literally: "(My) throat has dried"]

## Two simple and useful verb expressions

In addition to the two verb tenses introduced above, we will now also look at two useful expressions: "I want to..." and "Let's..."

### I want to...

The "I want to..." expression presented below can be used any time that you want to say that you want to do something. It can only be used with verbs, so it cannot be used to say "I want sushi", or some other noun. It also can't be used to say what other people want, as it is an expression of one's own desire, not someone else's. That said, it can be used with "we" to say things like, "We want to play football".

### Let's...

This expression allows you to suggest activities by saying "Let's do...", "Let's eat...", "Let's go...", etc. This form of the verb does have other applications, in which the meaning is slightly different, but that is not important at this stage.

The table below shows how these two expressions are formed in the polite form.

	Positive	Negative
<b>I want to...</b>	-tai desu	-takunai desu
<b>Let's...</b>	-mashō	<none>

One thing to note with the "I want to..." expression is that where "wo" would normally be used to mark the object of the verb, "ga" should be used instead. This is because this expression actually functions as an *adjective* that describes how you feel about doing something, unlike English where "want" is a verb. This is also why it needs "desu" at the end in the polite form. Despite this, though, you will likely often hear people using "wo" instead of "ga".

Below are some examples of verbs in the polite form of each of these expressions.

	I want to...	I don't want to...	Let's...
<b>do</b>	shitai desu	shitakunai desu	shimashō
<b>go</b>	ikitai desu	ikitakunai desu	ikimashō
<b>come</b>	kitai desu	kitakunai desu	kimashō
<b>watch</b>	mitai desu	mitakunai desu	mimashō
<b>listen</b>	kikitai desu	kikitakunai desu	kikimashō
<b>use</b>	tsukaitai desu	tsukaitakunai desu	tsukaimashō
<b>make</b>	tsukuritai desu	tsukuritakunai desu	tsukurimashō
<b>eat</b>	tabetai desu	tabetakunai desu	tabemashō
<b>drink</b>	nomitai desu	nomitakunai desu	nomimashō

Here are some examples of these two expressions:

I want to buy a ticket  
chiketto ga **kaitai desu**

I want to go to the toilet/bathroom  
toire ni **ikitai desu**

I don't want to eat this  
kore ga **tabetakunai desu**

I don't want to use chopsticks  
ohashi ga **tsukaitakunai desu**

Let's make dinner  
bangohan wo **tsukurimashō**

Let's go to Japan  
nihon ni **ikimashō**

Let's run  
**hashirimashō**

Let's also run  
watashi tachi mo **hashirimashō**

Lastly, note that both of these expressions can be turned into questions by adding the particle “ka” at the end, as explained later in Chapter 4.5. When asked as questions, “I want to...” becomes “Do you want to...?” (eg. ~shitai desu ka?), and “Let’s...” becomes, “Shall we...?” or “Shall I...?” (eg. ~shimashō ka?).

## 4.3 A couple of useful verbs

Now that we’ve covered a few basic verb tenses and expressions, let’s have a look at a couple of verbs that are very common and quite useful to know how to use.

### New vocabulary

cat	neko
swimming pool	pūru

table	tēburu
money	okane

### Shimasu

“Shimasu”, meaning “to do”, is very handy as it can generally be used after any noun to turn it into a verb, as long as it makes sense to do so. Here are some examples:

Noun		Verb	
shopping	kaimono	to go shopping	kaimono shimasu
work	shigoto	to work	shigoto shimasu
cooking	ryōri	to cook	ryōri shimasu
practice	renshū	to practice	renshū shimasu
travel	ryokō	to travel	ryokō shimasu
phone	denwa	to make a phone call	denwa shimasu
order	chūmon	to place an order	chūmon shimasu
reservation	yoyaku	to make a reservation	yoyaku shimasu
choice	sentaku	to choose	sentaku shimasu
football	futtobōru	to play football	futtobōru shimasu



You can, of course, use this in other verb forms as well, like the past tense (shimashita), and to say “I want to...” (shitai desu) and “let’s do” (shimashō).

In many cases, there will actually be another, possibly more common verb with the same meaning as the “noun + shimasu” combination. For example, “hatarakimasu” is an alternative word for “shigoto shimasu” that also means “to work”. To master Japanese, you would still eventually need to learn such words, but knowing that you can just add “shimasu” to the noun allows you to learn a lot of new verbs quickly.

## Imasu/Arimasu

We know that the verb “desu” is roughly equivalent to “to be”, but Japanese also has the following two verbs that have a meaning close to “to be” or “there is”:

Verb	Usage
imasu	living things
arimasu	non-living things

The difference between these verbs and “desu” is that these are used to say that things *exist*, or to describe their location. This will become more apparent shortly, but before looking at examples of “imasu” and “arimasu”, you need to know this:

**The particle “ni”, when used with “imasu” or “arimasu”, defines the location of something.**

This is an additional usage of “ni” to the one described in chapter two (“The particle “ni” defines the destination related to an action that involves movement”).

Now that you know this, consider these sentences:

1a. This is a cat	kore wa neko desu
1b. The cat is in my house	neko wa watashi no ie ni imasu
1c. There is a cat in my house	watashi no ie ni neko ga imasu
2a. That is a pen	sore wa pen desu
2b. The pen is on the table	pen wa tēburu ni arimasu
2c. There is a pen on the table	tēburu ni pen ga arimasu

Firstly, you can see here how “ni” describes the location of the person, animal or object, such as in “watashi no ie ni” (in my house) and “tēburu ni” (on the table). It is important to note that this is only true for “imasu” and “arimasu”. For other verbs, when describing the location where something takes place, the particle “de” should be used instead (refer back to Chapter 4.1).

Secondly, even though the verb in all of these sentences is “is” when expressed in English, its meaning is fundamentally different when “desu” is used compared to when “imasu” or “arimasu” is used. More specifically:

- “Desu” is used when the sentence is simply describing two things as being the same, or “**a = b**”. For example, “kore wa neko desu” means “this = cat”.
- “Imasu” and “arimasu” are used to describe the **existence and/or location of something**. For example, “watashi no ie ni neko ga imasu” is equivalent to, “a cat exists in my house”.

These two cannot be interchanged. For example, you cannot say “sore wa pen ga arimasu”, or, “watashi no ie ni neko desu”. Neither of these sentences make sense.

Third, notice that there is a fundamental difference between the meaning of the (b) sentences and the (c) sentences. In sentences 1b and 2b, there is a topic or ‘thing’ defined by “wa”, and these sentences simply state where that ‘thing’ is. In sentences 1c and 2c, however, there is no “wa” because there is no topic of these sentences. This kind of general statement of existence is expressed in English with the words “there is”. In Japanese, the topic is left undefined, and the ‘thing’ that exists is marked with the particle “ga”.

These words can also be used to say that you or someone else **has** or **doesn’t have** something. Here are some examples:

I **have** a younger brother  
watashi wa otōto ga **imasu**

He **doesn’t have** any children  
kare wa kodomo ga **imasen**

She **has** a swimming pool at her house  
kanojo wa ie ni pūru ga **arimasu**

Okada-san **doesn't have** (any) money  
 okada san wa okane ga **arimasen**

**Important:** These verbs should only be used to mean “has” or “have” when the owner and the possessor are the *same person*.

Also, in all of these examples, you can see that there is both a “wa” and a “ga”. Let’s see how these sentences would appear if the “wa” portion of the sentences were removed.

There is a younger brother  
 otōto ga imasu

There are no children  
 kodomo ga imasen

There is a swimming pool at the house  
 ie ni pūru ga arimasu

There is no money  
 okane ga arimasen

All of these are simple statements of existence, where the ‘things’ being talked about do not belong to anybody specific. Even when the “wa” portion is included, they are still just statements of existence - **they do not actually indicate possession** like the English verb “to have”.

So what does the “wa” portion do? As always, it defines the topic of the sentence, which **provides context for everything that follows**. In the first sentence, I am talking about myself (watashi wa), and by saying that “a younger brother exists”, the context of “me” implies that the younger brother is mine. A more literal translation would be something like, “When talking about me, there is a younger brother”.

## Exercise

1. Look around you and pick five objects, animals or people. For each of these things, write down and say aloud a sentence with each of the following meanings (two sentences each).

- a) The [thing] is in/on/at the [place]                      eg. The book is on the table  
 b) There is a [thing] in/on/at the [place]                      eg. There is a book on the table
2. Think of three things that you own, and three things that somebody else owns. For each of these things, write down and say aloud a sentence that means:

[person] has a [thing] (eg. I have a car).

## Answers

Your sentences should follow the patterns below. “Imasu” should be used for living things, while “arimasu” should be used for all non-living things.

1.  
 a) [thing] wa [place] ni imasu/arimasu                      eg. hon wa tēburu ni arimasu  
 b) [place] ni [thing] ga imasu/arimasu                      eg. tēburu ni hon ga arimasu
2. [person] wa [thing] ga imasu/arimasu                      eg. watashi wa kuruma ga arimasu

## 4.4 Liking and wanting things

The concepts of ‘liking’ and ‘wanting’ are very similar in Japanese and English, but the way they are expressed differs in a fairly fundamental way. In English, we use these words as verbs, or action words, while the equivalent words in Japanese are actually adjectives, or describing words. In this section we’ll look at how to express these two ideas, and how to make sense of the different approach.

### New vocabulary

like	suki
love	daisuki
want	hoshī

cheese	chīzu
chocolate	chokorēto
motorbike	baiku

### Liking and loving things

The Japanese word for “like” is “suki”. The following examples show how to say that someone likes something:

I like sushi  
(watashi wa) sushi ga suki desu

He likes ramen  
kare wa rāmen ga suki desu

Generally, simply remembering the following pattern will be enough to be able to use “suki” correctly:

**[person] wa [thing] ga suki desu**

You can do the same for things that you or someone else loves by saying “daisuki” instead (“dai” literally means “big”), like so:

**[person] wa [thing] ga daisuki desu**

Here are some more examples of each:

I like movies  
(watashi wa) eiga ga suki desu

Imai-san likes chocolate  
Imai san wa chokorēto ga suki desu

She loves cheese  
kanojo wa chīzu ga daisuki desu

Arai-san loves golf  
Arai san wa gorufu ga daisuki desu

## Wanting things

The Japanese word for “want” is “hoshī”, and it is used in much the same way as “suki”. You’ll recall from Chapter 4.2 that we can turn a verb into an expression meaning “I want to...” by adding “tai” to the verb stem. The difference between that expression and “hoshī” is that “hoshī” is used with nouns instead of verbs, so you would use “hoshī” to

say that you want *something*, and “-tai” to say that you want *to do something*. Just like with the “I want to...” expression, **“hoshī” can usually only be used for yourself**, so it cannot normally be used to talk about what *someone else* wants.

The following examples show how to say that that you want something:

I want sushi  
(watashi wa) sushi ga hoshī desu

I want a motorbike  
(watashi wa) baiku ga hoshī desu

Generally, the following pattern can be used:

**(watashi wa) [thing] ga hoshī desu**

## Making sense of these expressions

To get a deeper understanding of the interaction between words in these sentences, it may help to recognize that these sentence structures are much like that of the sentences where “imasu” and “arimasu” are used to mean “has”, since they too contain both “wa” and “ga”. Just as was the case there, “wa” defines the topic (or it is implied), and this provides context for the rest of the sentence.

For example, in “kare wa rāmen ga suki desu”, we are talking about “him”, as is defined by “wa”. By saying “rāmen ga suki desu” to describe ramen as “likable” or “appealing”, the context of “him” makes the whole sentence mean, “He likes ramen”. A more literal translation would be something like, “In his mind, ramen is likeable”. You cannot, however, use “suki” and “daisuki” to describe something as likable in a general sentence - it always has to be attributed to someone.

The same applies to sentences using “hoshī”, except that it is mostly only used by the speaker to say “I want...”. In this case, the adjective “hoshī” has a meaning that is something like “wanted”, so the sentence “(watashi wa) sushi ga hoshī desu” would therefore more literally translate to something along the lines of, “In my mind, sushi is wanted”. The meaning is still simply “I want sushi” - it’s just expressed in a way that fits in better with Japanese grammar and culture.

## Exercise

1. For yourself and four people you know, describe one thing that they like and one thing that they love. Write down and say aloud each sentence.
2. Think of five things that you want. For each, write down and say aloud that you want those things.

## Answers

1. Your sentences should follow the pattern: [person] wa [thing] ga suki/daisuki desu.
2. Your sentences should follow the pattern: (watashi wa) [thing] ga hoshī desu.

## 4.5 Questions

Generally speaking, there are two types of questions - yes/no questions, and open questions (who, when, why etc.). Let's look at how each of these are formed in Japanese.

### New vocabulary

Nouns	
lunch	hirugohan
post office	yūbinkyoku
question	shitsumon
spy	supai
window	mado

Verbs (polite present tense)	
to ask	kikimasu
to break	kowashimasu
to fix	naoshimasu
to open	akemasu
to return (home)*	kaerimasu
to sleep	nemasu
to turn off	keshimasu

\* Japanese has a unique word for going or returning home. Rather than saying “ie ni ikimasu”, it is normal to say “ie ni kaerimasu”, or just “kaerimasu”. This verb can also be used when a person is returning to a temporary place of lodging, such as a hotel, or a more general idea of “home”, such as a home town, country or continent.

### Yes/no questions

Turning Japanese sentences into yes/no questions is incredibly easy.

**To form a question, add the particle “ka” to the end of the sentence.**

Here are some examples:

This is a pen  
kore wa pen desu

Is this a pen?  
kore wa pen desu **ka**

—

You ate sushi  
anata wa sushi wo tabemashita

Did you eat sushi?  
(anata wa) sushi wo tabemashita **ka**

—

Mom went to the post office  
haha wa yūbinkyoku ni ikimashita

Did mom go to the post office?  
haha wa yūbinkyoku ni ikimashita **ka**

## Exercise

For each of the verbs listed below, ask a question in each of the following three tenses:

- a) Past tense (Did you...?)
- b) Do you want to...?
- c) Shall I/we...?

### Verbs:

1. tabemasu
2. ikimasu
3. mimasu



4. kikimasu
5. kaimasu

## Answers

- |                           |                         |                      |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. a) ~ wo tabemashita ka | b) ~ ga tabetai desu ka | c) ~ wo tabemashō ka |
| 2. a) ~ ni ikimashita ka  | b) ~ ni ikitai desu ka  | c) ~ ni ikimashō ka  |
| 3. a) ~ wo mimashita ka   | b) ~ ga mitai desu ka   | c) ~ wo mimashō ka   |
| 4. a) ~ wo kikimashita ka | b) ~ ga kikitai desu ka | c) ~ wo kikimashō ka |
| 5. a) ~ wo kaimashita ka  | b) ~ ga kaitai desu ka  | c) ~ wo kaimashō ka  |

## Open questions

The structure of open questions is similar to that of yes/no questions, but you will of course need to use a questions word, such as “what”, “who”, “when”, etc. Below are all the main question words you need to know, although a few others will be introduced later in this and other chapters.

what	nani / nan
where	doko
who	dare
when	itsu
why	dōshite / nande
how	dōyatte

Here are a couple of notes regarding these words:

- “Nani” and “nan” both mean “what”, but “nan” is usually used when it is followed by “desu”, the particle “no”, or a counter (counters will be explained in Chapter 5). “Nani” is used in most other situations. The different usage is mainly based on what is easier to say.
- “Dōshite” and “nande” can be used interchangeably to mean “why”. “Nande” originated from the Kansai region and was generally not used in “standard” Japanese, but it has since spread and is now used by people from all around the country.

How these question words are used depends on a few factors. Let's look at some example sentences.

What is this?  
kore wa nan desu ka

Where is Mako?  
mako wa doko desu ka

Who is the spy?  
supai wa dare desu ka

When is the party?  
pāti wa itsu desu ka

For all of these questions, the main verb is “desu”. For questions using “desu”, it is important to remember this:

**A question word cannot be used before “wa”.**

Think of it this way - an unknown factor cannot be the topic of a sentence and provide context for it. If we are asking, “What is this?”, the topic is “this”. We are talking about “this”, and asking for further information about it. Consider these two sentences:

What is this?  
kore wa nan desu ka

This is a pen  
kore wa pen desu

As you can see, when asking a question in English, we move the question word to the beginning of the sentence and make it the subject. In Japanese, the topic or subject of the sentence remains the same whether the sentence is a question or not. Question words, therefore, will usually come before “desu” when that is the main verb.

Let's look at some more example questions.

What did you do yesterday?  
kinō, **nani wo** shimashita ka

Where will they go?  
karera wa **doko ni** ikimasu ka

Who will you go with?  
**dare to** ikimasu ka

When shall we eat lunch?  
**itsu** hirugohan wo tabemashō ka

Why did you open the window?  
**dōshite** mado wo akemashita ka

How did he fix the TV?  
kare wa **dōyatte** terebi wo naoshimashita ka

These sentences all use a verb *other than* “desu”. When the main verb is not “desu”, some question words require a particle to follow them, while others do not. Determining whether or not a particle is needed comes down to this:

### **Does the role of the thing that the question word refers to need defining?**

For example, when asking “who”, “what” or “where”, the question word is referring to someone, something or somewhere that is involved in the action, so the role of that person, thing or place needs to be defined by a particle. Are you asking who did the action (dare ga), who it was done with (dare to), or who it was done to (dare wo)? Are you asking where the action took place (doko de), where it began (doko kara), or where the destination was (doko ni)? Generally, if the question word represents *something*, whether it be physical, digital or abstract, a particle is normally needed.

Other words like “when”, “how” and “why”, on the other hand, refer to the timing, the method, or the reason for the action. They do not really affect the action itself, hence they do not have a role and no particle is necessary.

The only exception to this might be for “when”. If instead of asking when something takes place, you are asking when it begins (itsu kara) or when it ends (itsu made), a

particle would be needed. Words relating to time, including the particles “kara” and “made”, will be explained in detail in Chapter 6.

One last thing - since a question word cannot be used before “wa”, you may be wondering how you ask about the person, animal or object performing the action, such as in the question, “Who ate my bacon?”.

**To ask who or what performed the action, put “ga” after the question word.**

To ask the question, “Who ate my bacon?”, you could say, “**dare ga** watashi no bēkon wo tabemashita ka”. The basic order of the words is the same for both statements and questions, but while statements would normally use “wa” to mark the person or thing performing the action, questions use “ga” instead.

## Exercise

1. Translate each of the following questions into Japanese. Write down and say aloud each of your answers.
  - a) What did he buy?
  - b) What do you want to eat?
  - c) Where did she go?
  - d) Where will they play baseball?
  - e) Who will you watch the movie with?
  - f) Who used my mobile phone?
  - g) When will you return home?
  - h) When do you want to go to Fukuoka?
  - i) Why did you turn off the TV?
  - j) Why did you sleep on the sofa?
  - k) How shall we go to Kyoto?
  - l) How did he break the chair?

## Answers

1.
  - a) kare wa nani wo kaimashita ka
  - b) (anata wa) nani ga tabetai desu ka

- c) kanojo wa doko ni ikimashita ka
- d) karera wa doko de yakyū wo shimasu ka
- e) (anata wa) dare to eiga wo mimasu ka
- f) dare ga watashi no keitai wo tsukaimashita ka
- g) (anata wa) itsu ie ni kaerimasu ka
- h) (anata wa) itsu fukuoka ni ikitai desu ka
- i) (anata wa) dōshite/nande terebi wo keshimashita ka
- j) (anata wa) dōshite/nande sofa de nemashita ka
- k) dōyatte kyōto ni ikimashō ka
- l) kare wa dōyatte isu wo kowashimashita ka

### The word “ask”

One potentially confusing word that relates to questions is the word “ask” itself. The Japanese word for “ask” is actually “kikimasu”, which is the same as the word for “listen”. Even when written in Japanese, these two verbs use the same kanji. The main method of differentiating between someone saying “ask” and someone saying “listen” is in the particles. Compare the following example sentences:

He listened to her  
kare wa kanojo **wo** kikimashita

He asked her a question  
kare wa kanojo **ni** shitsumon wo kikimashita

With “listen”, the particles are simple, with the person thing being listened to being marked as the object with the particle “wo”. In the case of the word “ask”, however, the person being asked is the destination of the question, and are therefore marked by the particle “ni”. What they are asking then becomes the object of the sentence, as marked by the particle “wo”. Although it may be confusing that these two English words are expressed using the same verb in Japanese, the presence or absence of the particle “ni” tells us which action is being described.

## 4.6 Other sentence-ending particles

In addition to the particle “ka” explained above, there is another group of particles that are often used at the end of sentences known as Interjectory Particles. These particles do not really change the meaning of a sentence, but are used to add emotion or emphasis to an otherwise straightforward statement. Some of these are unique to certain dialects within Japan, but there are two main ones that are extremely common and used (or at least understood) everywhere.

With both of the particles below, you will probably need to hear them a lot before you can fully understand when it is appropriate to use them. Don't worry though - these are incredibly common, so if you listen to native Japanese speakers, either in person, in movies, on TV or on the radio, you will hear them all the time and will quickly get a sense of how to use them correctly.

### New vocabulary

Adjectives	
boring	tsumaranai
delicious	oishī
expensive	takai
good	ī
hot	atsui
interesting, funny	omoshiroi

Verbs (polite present tense)	
close, shut	shimemasu
understand	wakarimasu

Other words	
no	iya
wallet	saifu

### Yo

This is used to make assertions, and adds a moderate level of emphasis to a sentence. It is often used when the speaker is providing new information (example 1 below), confirming that something has or will be done (2), giving an opinion, especially one of surprise (3), or expressing disagreement (4). Note that this is not an exhaustive list of possible uses.

1. I bought tickets  
chiketto wo kaimashita **yo**
2. Did you close the window?  
mado wo shimemashita ka

(Yes), I did  
shimemashita **yo**

3. That's expensive!  
(sore wa) takai desu **yo!**

4. Japanese TV is boring  
nihon no terebi wa tsumaranai desu

No, it's interesting/funny!  
iya, omoshiroi desu **yo!**

These sentences would all have the same basic meaning if “yo” wasn’t added at the end, but the “yo” makes each statement more assertive.

### Ne

This is generally used to express agreement. It is usually used when responding to something that somebody else has said, although sometimes it is used when the speaker just assumes that the listener(s) will agree with them. It also has a kind of softening effect, which in some ways is the opposite of “yo”. Here are some examples:

This is delicious  
kore wa oishī desu

Yeah, (I agree,) it is delicious  
oishī desu **ne**

—

I want to go to the beach  
umi ni ikitai desu

That would be great! / Great idea!  
ī desu **ne!**

—

It's so hot...  
atsui desu **ne**...

### Yo + ne

“Yo” and “ne” are also often used together to form a kind of rhetorical question, where the person speaking is stating something that they believe to be true, while also seeking agreement or confirmation from the listener. This is similar to English sentence-ending expressions like “isn't it?”, “didn't you?”, etc.

You like takoyaki, don't you?  
(anata wa) takoyaki ga suki desu **yo ne**?

This is Asada-san's wallet, isn't it?  
kore wa asada san no saifu desu **yo ne**?

He understands Japanese, right?  
kare wa nihongo ga wakarimasu **yo ne**?

## 4.7 This, that and other variations

The Japanese words for “this” and “that” are very useful, but there are a few variations that you need to know and understand well. In this section, we'll look at the different words that can be used to say “this” and “that”, as well as some other words that have a similar meaning and form.

### New vocabulary

Nouns	
bank	ginkō
chair	isu
coffee	kōhī
desk	tsukue
hotel	hoteru
man	otoko no hito
music	ongaku

Adjectives	
awful (taste)	mazui
blue	aoi
cool, good-looking	kakkoī
heavy	omoi
light	karui
pretty	kirei



song	uta
tea	ocha
woman	onna no hito

Verbs (polite present tense)	
become	narimasu
stay (at accommodation)	tomarimasu
think (an opinion)	omoimasu

## This and that

Consider these sentences:

1. That is a car                      sore wa kuruma desu
2. That is a blue car               are wa aoi kuruma desu
3. That car is blue                sono kuruma wa aoi desu

We know that “sore” means “that”, but as you can see above, the word “that” is represented by “are” in sentence two and “sono” in sentence three. Why? There are two reasons:

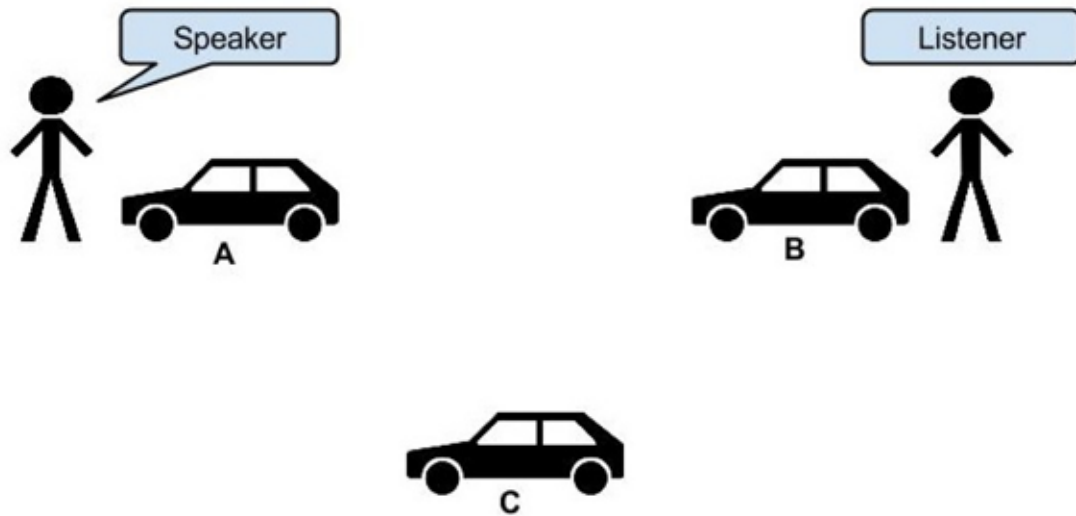
1. **The word for “that” changes according to where the object is in relation to the listener in the conversation.**

In English, “this” is used by the person speaking to refer to something near them, while “that” is used to refer to something that is not near the speaker.

In Japanese, however, there are three words instead of just two:

- “Kore” refers to something near the speaker
- “Sore” refers to something near the listener
- “Are” refers to something that is not near the speaker nor the listener - something that is “over there”

This is best shown in a diagram:



The speaker could refer to A using “kore”, B using “sore” and C using “are”.

In addition to these, there is also the word “dore”, a question word meaning “which”, such as in the question, “Which is your car?” (anata no kuruma wa dore desu ka).

**2. Japanese distinguishes between “that” when it’s used on its own as a noun, and when it is used as a determiner, as in “that x”.**

For each of “kore”, “sore”, “are” and “dore”, there is an equivalent word that is used when you are trying to say something like “this car” or “that pen”. To create these words, simply replace the “re” with “no”, as follows:

	This / That	This x / That x
This	kore	kono x
That	sore	sono x
That (over there)	are	ano x
Which?	dore	dono x

So, using the diagram from earlier, the speaker could talk about car A by saying “kono kuruma”, car B by saying “sono kuruma”, or car C by saying “ano kuruma”. They could also ask “which car” by saying “dono kuruma”.

**Important:** “Kore”, “sore”, “are” and “dore” should never be used for people. Doing so is very insulting as it implies that that person is an object, not a person. Instead, you should say “this/that/which person” by saying “kono/sono/ano/dono hito”.

Below are some example sentences using these words:

This coffee is awful  
**kono kōhī** wa mazui desu

I don't want to listen to this song  
(watashi wa) **kono uta** ga kikitakunai desu

That mobile phone is light  
**sono keitai** wa karui desu

Let's buy that desk  
**sono tsukue** wo kaimashō

That man (over there) is cool/good-looking  
**ano otoko no hito** wa kakkoī desu

That woman (over there) is pretty  
**ano onna no hito** wa kirei desu

## Exercise

Look around you and pick two things that are near you, two things near an imaginary person that you will speak to, and two things that are away from both you and the imaginary person. For each thing, write and say aloud two sentences, one with each of the following meanings:

- |                                     |                             |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. This/that is a [thing]           | eg. This/that is a chair    |
| 2. This/that [thing] is [adjective] | eg. This/that book is heavy |

## Answers

Your sentences should follow the patterns below. “Kore” and “kono” should be used for the things near you, “sore” and “sono” for the things near the imaginary person, and “are” and “ano” for the things that are not near either of you.

- |  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| 1. kore/sore/are wa [thing] desu             | eg. kore/sore/are wa isu desu      |
| 2. kono/sono/ano [thing] wa [adjective] desu | eg. kono/sono/ano hon wa omoi desu |

## Other variations

In addition to the above words for “this”, “that” and “which”, there are actually a few other words starting with “ko”, “so”, “a” and “do” that all use the same underlying principle of being defined by their location relative to the speaker. Here are the main ones:

Meaning	ko	so	a	do
Here/there/over there/where	koko	soko	asoko	doko
In this/that/what way	kō	sō	ā	dō
Polite form	kochira	sochira	achira	dochira
This/that/what kind of	konna	sonna	anna	donna

Let's take a closer look at each of these.

### Koko, soko, asoko, doko

This refers to a place or location, much like “here”, “there”, “over there” and “where” in English. As with other nouns, a particle is normally used to indicate the role of the place or location that is being defined. Here are some examples:

Let's eat here

**koko** de tabemashō

I will go there

(watashi wa) **soko** ni ikimasu

There is a bank over there

**asoko** ni ginkō ga arimasu

Where is the toilet?

toire wa **doko** desu ka

### Kō, sō, ā, dō

These words are very useful, but their meaning is difficult to define in English. They generally refer to how something is, what someone has said or how something has been done, with a meaning somewhere along the lines of “in this/that way”, “like this/that”, or “as you say”. “Sō” and “dō” are the two you will hear most. There is no need to use

particles with these words. Here are some examples, many of which you will likely hear very often:

That's right/true/correct

**sō** desu

Really? / Is that so?

**sō** desu ka

Yes, it is / Yes, that's right

**sō** desu yo

Yeah, that's quite true

**sō** desu ne

Yeah, that's true, isn't it?

**sō** desu yo ne

Let's do that

**sō** shimashō

I think so / I think that is true

**sō** omoimasu

How is the tea?

ocha wa **dō** desu ka

What's the matter?

**dō** shimashita ka

What shall we do?

**dō** shimashō ka

What do you think?

**dō** omoimasu ka

**Kochira, sochira, achira, dochira**

These are polite, generic words that can be used to mean “this/that/which” or “here/there/where”. Unlike “kore” etc., they can also be used to refer to people, as shown in the first example below.

This is Nakamoto-san  
**kochira** wa nakamoto san desu

There is (some) tea on that table  
**sochira** no tēburu ni ocha ga arimasu

Let's go that way (over there)  
**achira** ni ikimashō

Which car did you buy?  
**dochira** no kuruma wo kaimashita ka

**Konna, sonna, anna, donna**

These have a meaning similar to “this kind of...”, “that kind of...”, etc. They are used in sentences before nouns in much the same way as “kono”, “sono”, “ano” and “dono”, albeit with a meaning that is more vague. When pronouncing these words, be sure to apply equal weighting to the “n” sound before ending with “na”.

I like this kind of music too  
watashi mo **konna ongaku** ga suki desu

I want to stay at that kind of hotel  
**sonna** hoteru ni tomaritai desu

I want to become that kind of person  
(watashi wa) **anna** hito ni naritai desu

What kind of movies do you like?  
(anata wa) **donna** eiga ga suki desu ka

## 4.8 Relative locations

So far, we have learned that “ni” and “de” can be used to define the destination or the location where something exists or takes place. In this section, we will take that a step further by looking at how to say where things are, or where things are happening, relative to something else.

### New vocabulary

Nouns	
box	hako
door	doa
hospital	byōin
newspaper	shinbun
refrigerator	reizōko
remote control	rimokon
train	densha

Verbs (polite present tense)	
play, mess around	asobimasu
put, place	okimasu
read	yomimasu

Here are some of the main words that can be used to describe the location of things relative to other things or places.

left	hidari
right	migi
in front	mae
behind	ushiro
next to/beside	tonari
on top of/above	ue
underneath/below	shita
inside	naka
outside	soto

These words can be used on their own, or in combination with other things or places using the particle “no”. Here are some examples:

My left  
watashi no **hidari**

In front of the television  
terebi no **mae**

Behind the door  
doa no **ushiro**

Next to the hospital  
byōin no **tonari**

On top of the fridge  
reizōko no **ue**

Inside the train  
densha no **naka**

As with all other locations, these should be used in sentences with the appropriate particle. Most commonly, the particle to use will be:

- “ni” when it describes the destination
- “ni” when it describes the location that something exists
- “de” when it describes the location that an action takes place

There is a dog to my left  
**watashi no hidari ni** inu ga imasu

The remote control is in front of the TV  
rimokon wa **terebi no mae ni** arimasu

There is a ball behind the door  
**doa no ushiro ni** bōru ga arimasu

They will play soccer next to the hospital  
karera wa **byōin no tonari de** sakkā wo shimasu

He put the box on top of the refrigerator  
kare wa **reizōko no ue ni** hako wo okimashita



I read the paper on (inside) the train  
**densha no naka de** shinbun wo yomimashita

They played outside  
 karera wa **soto de** asobimashita

You can, of course, string together multiple locations by using the particle “no”, such as in the example below. Notice that the words describing the location appear in the reverse order to how they appear in English.

The ball is under the chair next to the TV  
 bōru wa terebi no tonari no isu no shita ni arimasu  
 TV      next to    chair    under

## Exercise

1. Look around you and describe where some things are in relation to other things. Write down and say aloud your sentences. Try to use each of: hidari, migi, mae, ushiro, tonari, ue, shita, naka, soto.
2. Pick three activities that you did yesterday, and describe where you did those activities, relative to a fixed location. Write down and say aloud each sentence.

## Answers

Your sentences should follow the pattern below:

1. [thing A] wa [thing B] no [relative location word] ni arimasu
2. [fixed location] no [relative location word] de [activity in past tense]

## 4.9 Other generally useful words

Below are some other common and useful words.

**hai** - yes

There are two things to be aware of with this word:

1. It doesn't always actually mean "yes", and is often used to simply reassure the speaker that you are listening. This is important because it can easily lead to misunderstandings, so beware.
2. When a yes/no question is asked, saying "hai" means that what the speaker asked is true, even if it is a negative question. For example, if there was a meeting yesterday that you didn't go to, and you are asked the question, "Didn't you go to the meeting?", in English you would normally reply, "No" or "No, I didn't". In Japanese, however, you would need to say "hai", or "hai, ikimasen deshita", because what they asked is true - you didn't go. Unlike English, in Japanese it is perfectly normal to match "hai" with a negative action. The reverse is true for "ie" below.

#### **ie - no**

Keep in mind that Japanese people will often find creative and indirect ways of saying "no", since it is not a part of their culture to be direct. As a result, this word is actually not as common as you would expect.

#### **iya - no**

This is a stronger word for no that is often used to show disagreement.

#### **etto / anō - Umm / ah**

These are used as filler words when thinking about what to say next. Depending on the person, the "e" or "o" in "etto" is sometimes stretched out.

#### **demo - but**

Use this at the beginning of a new sentence, as shown in the example:

I want to go to Japan. But, I don't have any money.  
(watashi wa) nihon ni ikitai desu. **demo**, okane ga arimasen.

#### **ga / keredomo - but**

These have the same meaning as "demo", but while "demo" is usually used at the beginning of a new sentence, "ga" and "keredomo" are generally used in the middle of a sentence to join two contrasting clauses together. Both can be polite, but "keredomo" is more often heard in its shortened and less polite form "kedo".

I want to go to Japan, but I don't have any money.  
 (watashi wa) nihon ni ikitai desu **ga**, okane ga arimasen.  
 (watashi wa) nihon ni ikitai desu **kedo**, okane ga arimasen.

### **kara - because / so**

When you want to give a reason for something happening, such as in the sentence, “X happened, so I did Y”, you can use “kara”. Similar to “ga” and “kedo”, this is used to join two independent clauses together into one sentence. The first clause - the one before “kara” - should always contain the reason or cause of the second clause.

I want to eat at that restaurant **so** I made a reservation /  
 I made a reservation **because** I want to eat at that restaurant  
 (watashi wa) ano resutoran de tabetai desu **kara** yoyaku wo shimashita

### **soshite - and then...**

This can be used at the beginning of a sentence to link activities together in a chain (another way to do this will be described in Chapter 9.4), as shown in the example:

I went to Tokyo. Then, I went to Sapporo.  
 tōkyō ni ikimashita. **soshite**, sapporo ni ikimashita.

### **kudasai - please**

If you need to ask for something or make a selection, such as when ordering food or being offered a choice of beverages, you can simply say the ‘thing’ you’re asking for followed by “kudasai”. “Kudasai” is actually a verb meaning “give” in an especially polite form, which is why it fits at the end of the sentence. It’s basically a polite way of saying “Give me ...”. When saying this, the thing you are asking for can be marked with the particle “wo”, although this is often omitted.

(May I have some) tea please  
 ocha (wo) **kudasai**

### **daijōbu - okay / fine**

This is a very useful word that can be used to say that things are okay, or to ask if they are.

Are you okay? / Is everything okay?

**daijōbu** desu ka

Yes, I'm fine / Yes, everything's fine

hai, **daijōbu** desu

**kekkō - no, thank you / I'm fine**

If you want to decline when somebody offers you something, you can just say “kekkō desu”. “Kekkō” literally translates as “fine” or “good”, but when used in response to an offering, a more accurate translation would be, “I’m fine, thank you”.

Would you like tea?

ocha wo nomimasuka [literally: Will you drink tea?]

No, I'm fine, thank you

īe, **kekkō** desu

**itai - hurts / ouch**

To say something hurts, say the body part followed by “ga itai desu”. Literally, “itai” is an adjective that means “painful”, but it is also the word Japanese people instinctively say when they hurt themselves, like “ouch” in English.

Ouch!

**itai!**

My hand hurts

te ga **itai** desu

**totemo - very**

This can be used immediately before any adjective to mean “very”.

This is very expensive

kore wa **totemo** takai desu

**takusan - lots, many, much**

This can be used immediately before a verb to emphasize that the action was done a great amount. It should generally only be used with verbs in their positive form.

I ate lots of sushi

sushi wo **takusan** tabemashita

There are many people

hito ga **takusan** imasu



## Chapter 5

# Numbers

Numbers are, of course, an essential part of life. In this chapter we will look at number formation and pronunciation, the need for counters, and how to use numbers in a sentence.

### 5.1 Number formation and pronunciation

Here are the numbers zero through nine:

0	zero / maru / rei
1	ichi
2	ni
3	san
4	shi / yon

5	go
6	roku
7	shichi / nana
8	hachi
9	kyū

Firstly, zero is most commonly pronounced in effectively the same way as English, albeit with a Japanese accent. There are other pronunciations, the most common of which being “maru” and “rei”, but in most situations, “zero” will suffice.

The numbers four and seven also have two alternative pronunciations. Generally, only “yon” and “nana” are used beyond ten. There are occasional exceptions to this, but in most cases, you won’t be mistaken if you use “yon” and “nana”.

As shown below, the number ten is pronounced “jū”, and the numbers 11 through 19 are pronounced by adding “jū” in front of the number in the “ones” column.

10	jū
11	jū ichi
12	jū ni
13	jū san
14	jū yon

15	jū go
16	jū roku
17	jū nana
18	jū hachi
19	jū kyū

Beyond this, the numbers 20 to 99 are pronounced by simply placing the number of ‘tens’ before “jū”, followed by the number of ‘ones’ (if there are any). The numbers 20 through 29 are therefore pronounced as follows:

20	ni jū
21	ni jū ichi
22	ni jū ni
23	ni jū san
24	ni jū yon

25	ni jū go
26	ni jū roku
27	ni jū nana
28	ni jū hachi
29	ni jū kyū

This pattern continues on infinitely, with new words being added at different increments, like 100 and 1000. Here are the first few incremental number words:

ten	jū
hundred	hyaku
thousand	sen
ten-thousand	man

For any number, just say each number together with its corresponding increment number. For example, the number 32,768 would be pronounced:

san **man** ni sen nana **hyaku** roku **jū** hachi

You have probably noticed that there is a unique word for “ten thousand”, unlike English which just combines the smaller increment numbers “ten” and “thousand”. Japanese doesn’t start combining number increments in this way until after 10,000, or “man”. The first number to do this is therefore 100,000, which is pronounced “jū man”, which literally translates as “ten ten-thousands”.



Basically, where English introduces new words every three zeros (thousand, million, billion etc.), Japanese introduces new words every four zeros: man (10,000), oku (100,000,000), etc. The number 1,000,000, for example, is therefore pronounced “hyaku man”, or “100 ten-thousands”.

This probably sounds confusing and unintuitive, but it’s the natural way of counting in languages like Japanese and Chinese. To Japanese people, the English way of using a new word every three zeros is unintuitive; it’s just a different perspective.

Unfortunately, these different perspectives make life harder when working with larger numbers. To help with this, it will help to remember that:

**One million = hyaku man**

By using this as a reference point, numbers like “ni sen man” will be much easier to figure out. Since you know that “sen” is 10 times larger than “hyaku”, if you know that “hyaku man” is a million, “ni sen man” must equal 20 million. This should be much easier than trying to calculate  $2,000 \times 10,000$ .

Below are some example numbers and their correct pronunciation:

52	gojū ni
203	nihyaku san
436	yonhyaku sanjū roku
7,011	nanasen jū ichi
9,745	kyūsen nanahyaku yonjū go
20,001	niman ichi
34,567	sanman yonsen gohyaku rokujū nana
456,789	yonjū go man rokusen nanahyaku hachijū kyū

Raw numbers can mostly be pronounced by just saying each number and increment word in the correct order as in the examples above, but there are a few exceptions. Here are all of the special cases that you need to be aware of:

Number	Pronunciation	Special rules
100	hyaku	Only “hyaku”, never “ichi hyaku” or “ippyaku”
300	san byaku	Not “san hyaku”
600	roppyaku	Not “roku hyaku”

800	happyaku	Not “hachi hyaku”
1000	sen / issen	Use “sen” for numbers between 1000 and 1999, but “issen” for higher numbers, such as 21,000 (ni man issen) or 10,000,000 (issen man)
3000	san zen	Not “san sen”
8000	hassen	Not “hachi sen”
10,000	ichi man	Always “ichi man”, not just “man”, even for numbers 10,000 to 19,999

The following four numbers demonstrate all of the above special cases:

1,100	sen hyaku
3,300	san zen san byaku
8,800	hassen happyaku
11,600	ichiman issen roppyaku

## Exercise

1. Say the following numbers in Japanese:

- a) 47
- b) 123
- c) 201
- d) 3,960
- e) 4,618
- f) 50,799
- g) 65,536
- h) 701,852
- i) 812,075
- j) 9,078,384

## Answers

1.

- a) yonjū nana
- b) hyaku nijū san

- c) nihyaku ichi
- d) sanzen kyūhyaku rokujū
- e) yonsen roppyaku jū hachi
- f) goman nanahyaku kyūjū kyū
- g) rokuman gosen gohyaku sanjū roku
- h) nanajū man issen happyaku gojū ni
- i) hachijū ichi man nisen nanajū go
- j) kyūhyaku nanaman hassen sanbyaku hachijū yon

## 5.2 Counters

While forming numbers in Japanese is quite straightforward, using them can be a little bit trickier. This is because all numbers used to define a quantity need to be used in the form of a counter, and these counters vary according to what is being counted.

For example, to say “I have two dogs” would require the number two to be used with the counter for small animals. Similarly, “I have two cars” would require the number two to be used with the counter for vehicles.

There are, in fact, a lot of different counters, some with very specific uses. Rather than trying to remember each and every one, there are a few that are more general in meaning and can be used more widely. Although there will sometimes be a more appropriate counter that you could use, it's better to use a counter that is “close enough” than none at all. The ones listed below will be enough to get you through most situations.

Counter	Usage
en	Yen
sai	Age
ko	General things
tsu	General things, usually small
nin	People
hiki	Animals

For a full list of Japanese counters, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese\\_counter\\_word](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_counter_word).

Generally, counters are added after the number to be used, although it's not always that simple. The following table shows the pronunciation for each of these counters for the numbers one through ten, as well as the associated question word meaning “how much?” or “how many?”. Counters with exceptional pronunciation are shown in bold.

Number	en	sai	ko	tsu	nin	hiki
1	ichi en	issai	ikko	hitotsu	hitori	ippiki
2	ni en	nisai	ni ko	futatsu	futari	ni hiki
3	san en	sansai	san ko	mitsu	san nin	san biki
4	yon en	yonsai	yon ko	yotsu	yo nin	yon hiki
5	go en	gosai	go ko	itsutsu	go nin	go hiki
6	roku en	rokusai	rokko	mutsu	roku nin	roppiki
7	nana en	nanasai	nana ko	nanatsu	nana nin	nana hiki
8	hachi en	hassai	hakko	yatsu	hachi nin	happiki
9	kyū en	kyūsai	kyū ko	kokonotsu	kyū nin	kyū hiki
10	jū en	jussai	jukko	tō	jū nin	juppiki
how many?	ikura	nan sai	nan ko	ikutsu	nan nin	nan biki

Here is a brief explanation of each of these counters and when to use them. An explanation of how they fit into sentences will follow.

### en

This is simply used when counting Japanese currency. Note that it is not pronounced “yen”.

### sai

This is used to count the age of people and animals. For ages beyond ten, simply express the number as usual, but with the last number pronounced as shown in the table above. Here are some examples:

11	jū issai
12	jū nisai
18	jū hassai
20	hatachi* / nijussai
85	hachijū gosai

\* For bonus points, also remember that age 20 is usually expressed as “hatachi”. “Hatachi” is an important age in Japan because it is the age from which people are considered adults. They even have a national holiday on the second Monday in January called “Coming of Age Day” (seijin no hi), where everyone who has turned 20 in the past year attends a special ceremony at their local city office.

## ko

The “ko” counter is widely used as a generic counter for non-living things. If all else fails, and you’re counting something that isn’t living, use this. Be sure to include a short pause when there is a double “k” sound, such as in “ikko”.

Any number beyond ten can be created using the regular number pronunciation, but with the last number pronounced as shown in the table above. For example:

11	jū ikko
12	jū niko
20	nijukko
100	hyakko
123	hyaku nijū san ko
456	yon hyaku gojū rokko

## tsu

The “tsu” counter is also widely used as a generic counter for non-living things, although usually not for large objects like cars or houses. It is probably more common than “ko”, but is generally used only for numbers up to nine. When there are ten items or more, “ko” is usually used instead.

You will have surely noticed that pronunciation for the “tsu” counter is completely different to the regular pronunciation for numbers. It may seem like a lot of effort to learn an entirely new set of numbers just for one counter, but the “tsu” counter is quite possibly the most common counter of all, and is also very similar to the counter for days (to be introduced in Chapter 6), so it is worth the effort.

## nin

This counter is for people. Note that although “one” and “two” have pronunciations that differ from the regular numbers, this is not used for numbers beyond ten, so 11 people is “jyūichi nin”, 12 people is “jyūni nin”, etc.

In addition to being able to be used in combination with nouns that refer to people, such as friends, men, women, students etc., this can also be used as a noun by itself in reference to a group of people. For example, the word “futari” could be used as a counter to mean “two” in the sentence, “There are two students over there”, or it can be used as a noun to mean “two people” in the sentence, “There are two people over there”. Here are these two sentences in Japanese:

There are **two students** over there  
asoko ni **futari no gakusei** ga imasu

There are **two people** over there  
asoko ni **futari** ga imasu

## hiki

This counter can generally be used for most living things that are not people. Technically, there are other counters for some living things, especially birds (wa) and larger animals (tō), but until you have time to learn those, you can get by with just “hiki”.

## 5.3 Using numbers in a sentence

Simply knowing numbers and counters is certainly helpful, but it’s obviously better if you know how to use them correctly. Let’s now look at how the counters introduced above can be used in a sentence.

### New vocabulary

Nouns	
box	hako
boy	otoko no ko
concert	raibu
fish	sakana
girl	onna no ko
hat	bōshi
monkey	saru
shirt	shatsu
shoes	kutsu
size	saizu
zoo	dōbutsuen

Verbs (polite present tense)	
carry (from A to B)	hakobimasu
catch (fishing)	tsurimasu
introduce	shōkai shimasu
order	chūmon shimasu
play, mess around	asobimasu

## Yen and age

The yen and age counters will mostly be used on their own to say how much something costs or how old someone is, respectively. This can be done with simple sentences like this:

This is 100 yen  
kore wa **hyaku en** desu

How much is this?  
kore wa **ikura** desu ka

I am 25 years old  
watashi wa **nijū go sai** desu

How old is he?  
kare wa **nansai** desu ka

You can also use the particle “de” with the “en” counter to describe how much you bought or sold something for, like so:

I bought this for 3,000 yen  
(watashi wa) kore wo **sanzen en de** kaimashita

He sold his phone for 20,000 yen  
kare wa keitai wo **niman en de** urimashita

To understand this fully, remember that “de” defines the means used to complete an action. If you think of currency as the means with which a sale is made, it makes sense that “de” is the appropriate particle. The same, of course, applies to other currencies like dollars (doru).

## General counters

There are two main ways in which other counters are used in a sentence. The simplest way is to **use them with the particle “no” immediately before the ‘thing’ that is being counted**. Below are some examples, with questions and answers for each counter. Note that full sentence answers are only provided for the sake of demonstrating the usage of counters; you wouldn’t normally answer questions in this manner.

How many hamburgers did you eat?  
**nan ko no** hanbāgā wo tabemashita ka?

I ate two hamburgers  
**niko no** hanbāgā wo tabemashita

—

How many golf balls did you buy?  
**ikutsu no** gorufu bōru wo kaimashita ka?

I bought six golf balls  
**mutsu no** gorufu bōru wo kaimashita

—

How many friends did he go with?  
kare wa **nan nin no** tomodachi to ikimashita ka?

He went with three friends  
kare wa **san nin no** tomodachi to ikimashita

—

How many dogs did Keiko see?  
keiko wa **nan biki no** inu wo mimashita ka?

Keiko saw five dogs  
keiko wa **gohiki no** inu wo mimashita

This same pattern can also be used for the yen and age counters, like in the following sentences:

He bought a 500 yen shirt  
kare wa **gohyaku en no** shatsu wo kaimashita

I met a 100 year-old woman  
**hyaku sai no** onna no hito ni aimashita



The second main way to use counters in a sentence is to place the number or question word **immediately before the verb, without a particle**. Note that this is generally only used when the ‘thing’ you are counting is the object (as denoted by “wo”) of the sentence, or when you are counting the number of things that exist (as denoted by “ga” and used with the verbs “imasu” and “arimasu”). The reason for this is that since the counter is being placed immediately before the verb and without a particle, there is an inherent relationship between the number and the verb. The things being counted must therefore be directly affected by that verb. Here are some examples:

How many hamburgers did you eat?  
hanbāgā wo **nanko** tabemashita ka?

I ate two hamburgers  
(hanbāgā wo) **niko** tabemashita

—

How many golf balls did you buy?  
gorufu bōru wo **ikutsu** kaimashita ka?

I bought six golf balls  
(gorufu bōru wo) **mutsu** kaimashita

—

How many dogs did Keiko see?  
keiko wa inu wo **nanbiki** mimashita ka?

Keiko saw five dogs  
(keiko wa inu wo) **gohiki** mimashita

Lastly, if you have a sentence with multiple different items that each need counters attached to them, you can do this by separating each item/counter combination with the particle “to”. When doing this, the block of words that refers to the things being counted should be kept intact, including the particles, as shown below:

There are three boys and four girls here

koko ni san nin no otoko no ko **to** yonin no onna no ko ga imasu

koko ni otoko no ko ga san nin **to** onna no ko ga yonin imasu

(Give me) two hamburgers and one beer please

futatsu no hanbāgā **to** hitotsu no bīru wo kudasai

hanbāgā wo futatsu **to** bīru wo hitotsu kudasai

## Exercise

1. Using the counters introduced in this chapter, translate the following sentences into Japanese. Write your answers down and say them out loud.
  - a) This hat is 2000 yen
  - b) He bought those shoes for 50,000 yen
  - c) She is 14 years old
  - d) He introduced his 62 year-old father
  - e) There are three sizes
  - f) Let's order two coffees
  - g) I bought six of these
  - h) They carried 8 boxes to the car
  - i) There were 10,000 people at the concert
  - j) She played at the park with five friends
  - k) I caught three fish
  - l) There are 25 monkeys at the zoo
2. Now do the same with the following questions:
  - a) How much is this hat?
  - b) How much did he buy those shoes for?
  - c) How old is she?
  - d) How old is his father?
  - e) How many sizes are there?
  - f) How many coffees shall we order?
  - g) How many of these did you buy?
  - h) How many boxes did they carry to the car?
  - i) How many people were at the concert?

- j) How many friends did she play with at the park?
- k) How many fish did you catch?
- l) How many monkeys are there at the zoo?

## Answers

1.

- a) kono bōshi wa nisen en desu
- b) kare wa goman en de sono/ano kutsu wo kaimashita, OR  
kare wa sono/ano kutsu wo goman en de kaimashita
- c) kanojo wa jūyon sai desu
- d) kare wa rokujū ni sai no otōsan wo shōkai shimashita
- e) mitsu/sanko no saizu ga arimasu, OR  
saizu ga mitsu/sanko arimasu
- f) kōhī wo futatsu/niko chūmon shimashō, OR  
futatsu/niko no kōhī wo chūmon shimashō
- g) kore wo rokko/mutsu kaimashita
- h) karera wa hakko/yatsu no hako wo kuruma ni hakobimashita, OR  
karera wa kuruma ni hakko/yatsu no hako wo hakobimashita, OR  
karera wa kuruma ni hako wo hakko/yatsu hakobimashita
- i) raibu ni ichiman nin (ga) imashita, OR  
ichiman nin ga raibu ni imashita
- j) kanojo wa kōen de gonin no tomodachi to asobimashita, OR  
kanojo wa gonin no tomodachi to kōen de asobimashita
- k) (watashi wa) sakana wo san biki tsurimashita, OR  
(watashi wa) san biki no sakana wo tsurimashita
- l) dōbutsuen ni nijū go hiki no saru ga imasu, OR  
dōbutsuen ni saru ga nijū go hiki imasu

2.

- a) kono bōshi wa ikura desu ka
- b) kare wa ikura de sono/ano kutsu wo kaimashita ka
- c) kanojo wa nansai desu ka
- d) kare no otōsan wa nansai desu ka
- e) ikutsu/nanko no saizu ga arimasu ka, OR  
saizu ga ikutsu/nanko arimasu ka

- f) kōhī wo ikutsu/nanko chūmon shimashō ka, OR  
ikutsu/nanko no kōhī wo chūmon shimashō ka
- g) kore wo ikutsu/nanko kaimashita ka
- h) karera wa ikutsu/nanko no hako wo kuruma ni hakobimashita ka, OR  
karera wa kuruma ni ikutsu/nanko no hako wo hakobimashita ka, OR  
karera wa kuruma ni hako wo ikutsu/nanko hakobimashita ka
- i) raibu ni nan nin (ga) imashita ka, OR  
nan nin ga raibu ni imashita ka
- j) kanojo wa kōen de nan nin no tomodachi to asobimashita ka, OR  
kanojo wa nan nin no tomodachi to kōen de asobimashita ka
- k) (anata wa) sakana wo nan biki tsurimashita ka, OR  
(anata wa) nan biki no sakana wo tsurimashita ka
- l) dōbutsuen ni nan biki no saru ga imasu ka, OR  
dōbutsuen ni saru ga nan biki imasu ka

## Chapter 6

# Expressing time

It goes without saying that the ability to talk about time is incredibly valuable. In the broadest sense, there are three main ways that time can be expressed - timing (when), period (for how long), and frequency (how often). In this chapter, we will look at how to express each of these time-related concepts.

Throughout the chapter, an explanation is provided for how to use the various time-related words and expressions in sentences, but don't worry too much about learning every single rule to perfection. Over time, as you hear other people using these expressions and practice using them yourself, you will develop a natural sense for when and how they are used. If necessary, you can come back to this chapter later to refine your understanding.

### 6.1 Timing

In both Japanese and English, there are numerous words that specifically exist to describe when things take place. These words can be divided into two main categories:

1. Words that describe a point in time relative to now, eg. Today, Tomorrow
2. Words that rely on context for specificity. eg. Friday, March

The distinction between these two categories helps in determining how to put these words into sentences. Basically, if you can differentiate between these two categories, you'll have an easier time remembering the correct way to describe the timing of actions. This will become apparent shortly.

Let's now look at each of these categories, including all the necessary vocabulary as well as how to use them in a sentence.

## New vocabulary

Nouns	
America	amerika
Australia	ōsutoraria
breakfast	asagohan
China	chūgoku
class	jugyō
game/match	shiai
London	rondon
meeting	kaigi
office	ofisu
South Korea	kankoku
university	daigaku

Verbs (polite present tense)	
arrive	tsukimasu
be born	umaremasu
begin/start	hajimarimasu
depart	shuppatsu shimasu
graduate	sotsugyō shimasu
leave	demasu
meet (for the first time)	deaimasu
reply	henji shimasu
ski	sukī shimasu
Adjectives	
busy	isogashī

## 1. Points in time relative to now

Words in this category describe points in time relative to the present moment, meaning that depending on when they are used, the exact time being referred to varies. Here are the main words that fit into this category.

now	ima
later	atode
yesterday	kinō
tomorrow	ashita
this week	konshū
last week	senshū
next week	raishū
this year	kotoshi
last year	kyonen
next year	rainen

today	kyō
tonight	kon'ya
the day before yesterday	ototoi
the day after tomorrow	asatte
this morning	kesa
this month	kongetsu
last month	sengetsu
next month	raigetsu
the year before last	ototoshi
the year after next	sarainen

**Using these words in sentences**

Using these words in a sentence to say when something happened or will happen is very easy - just put them at the beginning or after the “wa” **without a particle**. Here are some examples:

I played baseball yesterday  
**kinō** yakyū wo shimashita

I didn't eat breakfast today  
**kyō** asagohan wo tabemasen deshita

Let's go to the beach tomorrow  
**ashita** umi ni ikimashō

She graduated from university last week  
**senshū** kanojo wa daigaku wo sotsugyō shimashita

He will go to London next year  
 kare wa **rainen** rondon ni ikimasu

**Exercise**

1. For each of the following points in time, create a sentence that describes an activity you or someone else did or will do. Write down and say aloud each sentence. Feel free to use the “let's do...” and “I want to...” expressions for times in the future.
  - a) The year before last
  - b) Last year
  - c) Last month
  - d) Last week
  - e) Yesterday
  - f) This morning
  - g) Today (before now)
  - h) Today (after now)
  - i) Tonight
  - j) Tomorrow
  - k) The day after tomorrow
  - l) Next week

- m) Next month
- n) Next year
- o) The year after next

## 2. Words that rely on context for specificity

Words in this category include the time of day, days of the week, days of the month, months, seasons and years. What makes them context-dependent is that unlike words in the previous category, when used by themselves and without context, there is no way to determine which occurrence of that time, day, month or season is being referred to. For example, while “tomorrow” always refers to the day after the present one, without context, words like “morning”, “Sunday” and “September” could refer to any morning, Sunday or September in the past, present or future.

By adding context to these words, however, we can determine which morning, which Sunday or which September is being referred to. For example, if we say, “On Sunday”, and we are talking about something that we are going to do in the future, this context tells us that the speaker is most likely referring to the coming Sunday. If instead we were talking about things that have already happened, then the context implies that we are referring to the last Sunday gone. In both cases, the fact that the speaker is referring to the nearest Sunday in the past or future is implied by the lack of extra information. To refer to other Sundays, you will usually need to be more explicit by saying things like “On Sunday, January 5th, 2014”, or “On Sunday two weeks from now”.

### Why years are context-dependent

Although years are inherently specific, they are also included in this category because, technically, “2014” relies on the context of the Gregorian calendar. This is so ingrained in our lives that we don’t usually think about which calendar we are using, but without the context that this calendar provides, it would not be clear what “2014” actually refers to. Besides, Japan also has its own system for counting years based on the reign of the current emperor. For example, 2014 is Heisei 26. It’s not essential to learn the Japanese calendar since the Gregorian calendar is used for most things, although it does help to be aware of it. Plus, if a Japanese person asks you what year you were born and you reply using the Japanese calendar, they will most likely find it hilarious.



Here are the main time-related words that are dependent on context:

Days of the week	
Monday	getsuyōbi
Tuesday	kayōbi
Wednesday	suiyōbi
Thursday	mokuyōbi
Friday	kin'yōbi
Saturday	doyōbi
Sunday	nichiyōbi
what day?	nan'yōbi

Seasons (kisetsu)	
summer	natsu
autumn	aki
winter	fuyu
spring	haru
which season?	dono kisetsu

Months	
January	ichi gatsu
February	ni gatsu
March	san gatsu
April	shi gatsu
May	go gatsu
June	roku gatsu
July	shichi gatsu
August	hachi gatsu
September	ku gatsu
October	jū gatsu
November	jūichi gatsu
December	jūni gatsu
What month?	nan gatsu

Other	
morning	asa
afternoon	gogo
middle of the day	hiru
night	yoru
weekend	shūmatsu
beginning	hajime
end	owari
the first	saisho
the last	saigo
break/vacation	yasumi

In addition to these, this category includes years, the days of the month, and the time of day, each of which have their own counters. Let's take a look at each of these now.

### Years

The Japanese counter for years is “nen”, which is very simple and just needs to be added after the number of the year. Here are some examples:

2015	ni sen jūgo nen
2000	ni sen nen
1985	sen kyūhyaku hachijū go nen
‘99	kyūjū kyū nen
What year?	nan nen

One thing to note is that although in English, “1985” is normally expressed as “nineteen eighty five” rather than “one thousand nine hundred and eighty five”, in Japanese, years are always expressed like any other number, just with the “nen” counter added on the end. As shown above, it is also possible to abbreviate the century and just say, “99 nen”.

### Days of the month

Japanese has a specific counter used for days. These are equivalent to words like “first”, “second”, “ninth” and “tenth”, but unlike these English words, they are specific to days and therefore cannot be used for other things like placings in a race.

For the first ten days of the month, the days counter is much like the “tsu” counter. Beyond that, with a couple of exceptions, “nichi” is simply added to the end of the number.

1st	<b>tsuitachi</b>
2nd	<b>futsuka</b>
3rd	<b>mikka</b>
4th	<b>yokka</b>
5th	<b>itsuka</b>
6th	<b>muika</b>
7th	<b>nanoka</b>
8th	<b>yōka</b>
9th	<b>kokonoka</b>
10th	<b>tōka</b>
11th	jūichi nichi
12th	jūni nichi
13th	jūsan nichi
14th	<b>jūyokka</b>
15th	jūgo nichi
16th	jūroku nichi

17th	jūnana nichi
18th	jūhachi nichi
19th	jūku nichi
20th	<b>hatsuka</b>
21st	nijū ichi nichi
22nd	nijū ni nichi
23rd	nijū san nichi
24th	<b>nijū yokka</b>
25th	nijū go nichi
26th	nijū roku nichi
27th	nijū nana nichi
28th	nijū hachi nichi
29th	nijū <b>ku</b> nichi
30th	sanjū nichi
31st	sanjū ichi nichi
What day?	nan nichi

As you can see, beyond ten, the exceptions that need to be remembered are the 14th, 19th, 20th, 24th, and 29th. For all of these, though, saying the regular number followed by “nichi” will be understood, so there’s no need to worry about these exceptions too much. That said, I recommend remembering “hatsuka” for the 20th, as Japanese people will usually be very impressed if you use this correctly. The same applies for the word “hatachi” (age 20).

### Time of day

To express the time of day in hours and minutes, “ji” is added after the number of the hour, and “fun” is added after the number of minutes. Like most other counters, there are a couple of exceptions when it comes to pronunciation, so here is the full list with the exceptions shown in bold:

Hour	Number + ji
1	ichi ji
2	ni ji
3	san ji
4	<b>yo ji</b>
5	go ji

Minutes	Number + fun
1	<b>ippun</b>
2	ni fun
3	san fun
4	yon fun
5	go fun

6	roku ji
7	shichi ji
8	hachi ji
9	<b>ku ji</b>
10	jū ji
11	jūichi ji
12	jūni ji

6	<b>roppun</b>
7	nana fun
8	<b>happun</b>
9	kyū fun
10	<b>juppun</b>
half (ie. _:30)	han
other numbers	(end with above)

Now, using the above expressions of time, you can say any time of day by simply combining the hours and minutes. Here are some examples:

1:00	ichi ji
2:05	ni ji go fun
3:10	san ji juppun
4:15	yo ji jū go fun
5:30	go ji han / go ji san juppun
6:48	roku ji yonjū happun

### Using these words in sentences

To use these context-dependent time words in a sentence, they need to be coupled with a particle, usually “ni”. This brings us to a third usage for this particle:

#### The particle “ni” defines when an action takes place.

It is quite similar to the English prepositions of time “at”, “on” and “in”.

You’ll recall that the time words in category one can be used on their own without any particles. This is the main grammatical difference between the two categories, and is the reason it helps to be able to differentiate between them. If you can recognize the difference between the two categories, and remember that **relative time words are used on their own**, while **context-dependent time words are used with “ni”**, you’ll be able to use them correctly.

If you need help remembering this, notice that this distinction is remarkably similar to English and its omission/inclusion of prepositions with the two categories of time words. If a time expression would use “at”, “on” or “in” in English, the equivalent

expression in Japanese usually requires “ni”. Conversely, if there is no preposition of time in English, Japanese most likely doesn’t require a particle.

Here are some examples of context-dependent time words as they would appear in a sentence:

In 2001	2001 nen <b>ni</b>
In January	ichi gatsu <b>ni</b>
In summer	natsu <b>ni</b>
On the 1st	tsuitachi <b>ni</b>
On Monday	getsuyōbi <b>ni</b>
On the weekend	shūmatsu <b>ni</b>
At 3:30	san ji han <b>ni</b>
At night	yoru <b>ni</b>

These words often appear at the beginning of sentences, immediately after “wa” (if there is one) or between “wo” and the verb. However, since these words are paired with the particle “ni”, it is also possible to use them in different places in a sentence. Remember, the particle defines the role of the word before it, and this is more important than word order. As long as the particle is correct, its placement is not *as* important and generally only affects naturalness and flow, not so much the literal meaning.

This may leave you wondering where the most natural placement of time expressions is. Basically, it depends. As a general rule, **words that appear towards the end of a sentence are more important, or provide newer information, than those that appear near the beginning.** Placing the time between “wo” and the verb, for example, would emphasize the time the action occurred over the action itself or the person performing it. On the other hand, if the time expression is near the beginning of the sentence, then the activity or people/things involved in the activity is the point of focus, and the timing is merely additional information.

Here are some example sentences using these time words, each with multiple options for the placement of the timing word:

Hiroshi was born in 1984

hiroshi wa **1984 nen ni** umare mashita

**1984 nen ni** hiroshi wa umare mashita

I went to South Korea in January  
(watashi wa) **ichigatsu ni** kankoku ni ikimashita  
**ichigatsu ni** watashi wa kankoku ni ikimashita

Kanako bought a bicycle on Sunday  
**nichiyōbi ni** kanako wa jitensha wo kaimashita  
kanako wa **nichiyōbi ni** jitensha wo kaimashita  
kanako wa jitensha wo **nichiyōbi ni** kaimashita

Let's watch the soccer on the 23rd  
**nijūsan nichi ni** sakkā wo mimashō  
sakkā wo **nijūsan nichi ni** mimashō

We will eat lunch at one o'clock  
(watashi tachi wa) **ichi ji ni** hirugohan wo tabemasu  
**ichi ji ni** watashi tachi wa hirugohan wo tabemasu  
(watashi tachi wa) hirugohan wo **ichi ji ni** tabemasu

It is also possible to use question words in the same way. In chapter 4, we saw how “itsu” can be used to ask when something happened or is going to happen, but just like English, questions can be made more specific by using words like “nanji” (what time), “nan nichi” (what day of the month), etc. In such cases, since the timing is what is being questioned, the time expression is important and therefore less likely to come at the beginning of the sentence. Answers to such questions would also follow the same rule, since the timing of the activity is the new and important information.

Here are some examples of questions about specific times:

In what year was Hiroshi born?  
hiroshi wa **nan nen ni** umaremashita ka

In what month did you go to South Korea?  
(anata wa) **nangatsu ni** kankoku ni ikimashita ka

On what day (of the week) did Kanako buy her bicycle?  
kanako wa **nan'yōbi ni** jitensha wo kaimashita ka  
kanako wa jitensha wo **nan'yōbi ni** kaimashita ka

On what day (of the month) shall we watch the soccer?

**nan nichi ni** sakkā wo mimashō ka  
sakkā wo **nan nichi ni** mimashō ka

At what time will we eat lunch?

(watashi tachi wa) **nanji ni** hirugohan wo tabemasu ka  
(watashi tachi wa) hirugohan wo **nanji ni** tabemasu ka

## Exercise

For each of the following, have a mini conversation with yourself in which you ask a question about the specific timing of an activity, and then answer it. For the sake of practice, use full sentence answers. Be sure to write them down after you have said each of them out loud.

### 1. Past activities

- a) In what year...?
- b) In what season...?
- c) In what month...?
- d) On what day of the month...?
- e) On what day of the week...?
- f) At what time...?

### 2. Future activities (use a variety of expressions, including “-masu”, “mashō” and “-tai desu”)

- a) In what year...?
- b) In what season...?
- c) In what month...?
- d) On what day of the month...?
- e) On what day of the week...?
- f) At what time...?

## Time word combinations

In many cases, just one time word won't be enough, and you will need to use a combination. As a general rule, you can use any two time words together, regardless of category, by joining them with the particle “no”. They need to be expressed in **descending order of size**, so years will come before seasons or months, months before weeks or days,

etc. Notice in the examples below that specific times are expressed by first defining a broader period of time (often using a relative time word), and then using “no” to narrow down to the desired level of specificity. More literal English translations are provided in brackets where appropriate.

Yesterday afternoon  
kinō no gogo

Tomorrow morning  
ashita no asa

Last August (last year’s August)  
kyonen no hachi gatsu

Next summer (next year’s summer)  
rainen no natsu

Last weekend  
senshū no shūmatsu (or senshūmatsu)

Next Tuesday night (next week’s Tuesday night)  
raishū no kayōbi no yoru

The end of winter  
fuyu no owari

The first Monday in March  
sangatsu no saisho no getsuyōbi

You can use this to be more specific about the time of day too, by combining the time with the general words for morning, afternoon and night, as shown below. In this case, the inclusion of “no” is somewhat optional.

7:00 am	asa (no) shichi ji
11:05 am	asa (no) jūichi ji go fun
2:15 pm	gogo (no) ni ji jūgo fun



5:30 pm	gogo (no) go ji han
8:40 pm	yoru (no) hachi ji yon juppun
10:55 pm	yoru (no) jū ji gojū go fun

Note that when expressing dates, such as “December 31, 2015”, there is no need to insert “no” in between each unit. They are, however, still expressed in descending order of size. For example:

September 4, 1997	1997 nen kugatsu yokka
October 21, 2015	2015 nen jū gatsu nijū ichi nichi
March 9	san gatsu kokonoka
June 20	rokugatsu hatsuka

Similarly, the word “yasumi”, which literally means “rest” or “break”, is also often combined with other words without “no” to refer to a specific break, such as in the following examples:

Lunch break	hiru yasumi
Summer break	natsu yasumi
Spring break	haru yasumi

Dates and breaks can be further combined with more specific words like the time of day using “no”, like so:

4:30 on October 21, 2015  
2015 nen jū gatsu nijū ichi nichi no yojihan

The morning of June 20  
rokugatsu hatsuka no asa

The beginning of summer break  
natsu yasumi no hajime

## Using time word combinations in sentences

You may notice that all of these combinations end with a context-dependent (category two) time word. This makes sense, because relative time words (category one) are designed to provide a specific reference point, and we never need more than one of these. Combining two such words would result in phrases like “today’s tomorrow” or “next year’s this week”. These do make sense, but they aren’t particularly useful. You may occasionally hear things like “last year’s today” (kyonen no kyō), but this is relatively uncommon.

Since combinations of time words will almost always end with a word from category two, they generally **need to be followed by “ni”** when used in a sentence. This also means that they have the same flexibility as words from category two in terms of placement. Here are some examples:

I will watch TV at 8:30 tomorrow night  
**ashita no yoru (no) hachi ji han ni** terebi wo mimasu

We left home at 6 o’clock this morning  
 (watashi tachi wa) **kesa no roku ji ni** ie wo demashita

She was born on December 4th  
 kanojo wa **jūnigatsu yokka ni** umare mashita

They met at the beginning of spring break  
 karera wa **haruyasumi no hajime ni** deaimashita

## Exercise

1. Translate each of the following sentences into Japanese. Write each sentence down, and say them aloud.
  - a) I skied at Hakuba last winter
  - b) I didn’t eat breakfast last Thursday
  - c) He arrived at the office at 8:30 this morning
  - d) She was born on April 13th
  - e) Their train departs at 3:45 on Friday afternoon
  - f) I want to go to China in the summer break

## Answers

1.

- a) kyonen no fuyu ni hakuba de sukī (wo) shimashita
- b) senshū no getsuyōbi ni asagohan wo tabemasen deshita
- c) kare wa kesa (no) hachiji han ni ofisu ni tsukimashita
- d) kanojo wa shigatsu jūsan nichi ni umaremashita
- e) karera no densha wa kin'yōbi no gogo (no) sanji yonjū go fun ni shuppatsu shimasu
- f) (watashi wa) natsuyasumi ni chūgoku ni ikitai desu

## Other uses of time expressions

So far in this chapter, all of the expressions of time have been used to define when an action takes place. There are, however, a couple of other ways that expressions of time are used.

### Sentences ending in “desu”

Any expression of time (including those introduced later in this chapter) can be used like any other noun in sentences where the verb is “desu”. For example:

Today is Thursday  
kyō wa mokuyōbi desu

It is Thursday (today)  
(kyō wa) mokuyōbi desu

It is hot today  
kyō wa atsui desu

What time is it (now)?  
(ima wa) nanji desu ka

It is 12 o'clock  
jūni ji desu

I like Saturdays  
(watashi wa) doyōbi ga suki desu

The meeting is on Wednesday

kaigi wa suiyōbi desu

The game is at 2:30

shiai wa nijihan desu

You can see here that time words can be used before “wa” to be the topic, before “ga” to be the subject, or before “desu” to be the ‘thing’ that the topic or subject is being described as.

You are probably left wondering about a few of these sentences though.

For example, what happens when the English version of a sentence uses “it”? As described in Chapter 3.6, since anything that is understood from context can be ignored, there is no need for a word like “it” in Japanese. This means that sentences like “It’s Thursday” would simply become “mokuyōbi desu”. What this really is, though, is an abbreviated version of “*kyō wa mokuyōbi desu*”, where the “kyō” part is understood from context and is therefore omitted.

When “kyō wa” is included, there are two equivalent expressions in English - “Today is Thursday” and “It is Thursday today”. These mean the exact same thing, but it is because English has the word “it” that this is possible. The non-existence of “it” in Japanese simply means that an expression like the latter is not an option. To include the word “kyō”, we therefore need to recognize that it is, in fact, the topic of the sentence. This should help you understand why “It is hot today” becomes “kyō wa atsui desu”.

Another question that may arise is, why is there no particle “ni” after “suiyōbi” or “nijihan” in the last two sentences, even though the English translation includes the prepositions “on” and “at”? The reason for this is that “ni” is used to define the relationship between a time expression and an *action*. Although “desu” is a verb, it does not describe an action, so it does not make sense to use “ni”. In English, you could get away with saying “The meeting is Wednesday” or “The game is 2:30”, but these aren’t really correct. In any case, these two examples have been included simply to emphasize the point that “ni” is used to define *the timing of an action*, and does not simply mean “on”, “at” or “in”.

## Other particles

Other than “ni”, there are a few other ways that expressions of timing can be used in sentences that involve action, and these require different particles. Here are the most important ones:

### kara

This defines the **starting time or place of an action**. It is very much like “from” in English, and can be used with words representing a time or place. With time expressions, “kara” is sometimes interchangeable with “ni”, since the time that an action occurs and the time that an action starts can be the same thing (first example below). This does not apply, however, when describing the start of a recurring action such as a habit, since the action occurs multiple times but the habit only starts once (second example).

Class starts from 9 o'clock  
jugyō wa kuji **kara** hajimarimasu

From tomorrow, I will study Japanese every day  
ashita **kara** mainichi nihongo wo benkyō shimasu

I am (came) from Australia  
watashi wa ōsutoraria **kara** kimashita

### made

This defines the **ending time or place of an action**. It is mostly used to refer to time with the meaning “until”. It can also be used with words representing a place to define an end point, although this is less common since “ni” is the main particle used to define a destination.

I worked until 7 o'clock  
shichiji **made** shigoto (wo) shimashita

Summer vacation is from June until August  
natsuyasumi wa rokugatsu kara hachigatsu **made** desu

### made ni

This defines **the time by which an action is due to be completed**. It is basically the same as the English word “by” when it is used in relation to time. Since this implies a

deadline, it is mostly used with expressions like, “Please do this by...”, or, “I need to do this by...”, which we have not yet covered. The below examples are provided for your reference, but do not worry if you do not recognize the verb conjugations yet - these will be introduced later.

Please reply by next Friday  
raishū no kin'yōbi **made ni** henji shite kudasai

I need to return home by 6 o'clock  
rokuji **made ni** kaeranakereba narimasen

## Exercise

1. Translate each of the following sentences into Japanese. Write each sentence down and say them aloud.
  - a) What time is the movie?
  - b) The movie is at 7:30
  - c) From next month, we will play baseball every Saturday
  - d) They will be busy until next week
  - e) From when until when was she in America?
  - f) She was in America from March until last week
  - g) From what time until what time did you work?
  - h) I worked from 8 until 6

## Answers

1.
  - a) eiga wa nanji desu ka
  - b) eiga wa shijihan desu
  - c) raigetsu kara maishū no doyōbi ni yakyū wo shimasu
  - d) karera wa raishū made isogashī desu
  - e) kanojo wa itsu kara itsu made amerika ni imashita ka
  - f) kanojo wa sangatsu kara senshū made amerika ni imashita
  - g) (anata wa) nanji kara nanji made shigoto (wo) shimashita ka
  - h) (watashi wa) hachiji kara rokuji made shigoto (wo) shimashita

## 6.2 Period

In this section, you will learn the main words and word combinations that describe a period of time, as well as the different ways that such words can be used.

### New vocabulary

Nouns	
course	kōsu
kitchen	daidokoro
marathon	marason
project	purojekuto
room	heya
UK	igirisu
Adjectives	
enough	jūbun

Verbs (polite present tense)	
clean	sōji shimasu
complete	kansei shimasu
get married	kekkon shimasu
spend	kakemasu
take, cost	kakarimasu
wait	machimasu
walk	arukimasu
wash	araimasu

### Time counters

Describing a period or amount of time is done using time counters. These generally consist of a number combined with a variation of the time words used to express timing. These counters all end in “kan” (which is written using the character for “interval”), although in some cases this is optional. The table below contains all the main counters for periods of time:

	Seconds -byō (kan)	Minutes -fun (kan)	Hours -jikan	Days -kkakan / nichikan	Weeks -shūkan	Months -kagetsu (kan)	Years -nen (kan)
1	ichibyō (kan)	ippun (kan)	ichi jikan	ichinichi (kan)	isshūkan	ikkagetsu (kan)	ichi nen (kan)
2	nibyō (kan)	nifun (kan)	ni jikan	futsuka kan	ni shūkan	ni kagetsu (kan)	ni nen (kan)
3	sanbyō (kan)	sanfun (kan)	san jikan	mikka kan	san shūkan	san kagetsu (kan)	san nen (kan)
4	yonbyō (kan)	yonfun (kan)	yo jikan	yokka kan	yon shūkan	yon kagetsu (kan)	yo nen (kan)
5	gobyō (kan)	gofun (kan)	go jikan	itsuka kan	go shūkan	go kagetsu (kan)	go nen (kan)

6	rokubyō (kan)	roppun (kan)	roku jikan	muika kan	roku shūkan	rokkagetsu (kan)	roku nen (kan)
7	nanabyō (kan)	nanafun (kan)	nana jikan	nanoka kan	nana shūkan	nana kagetsu (kan)	nana nen (kan)
8	hachibyō (kan)	happun (kan)	hachi jikan	yōka kan	hasshūkan	hakkagetsu (kan)	hachi nen (kan)
9	kyūbyō (kan)	kyū fun (kan)	ku jikan	kokonoka kan	kyū shūkan	kyū kagetsu (kan)	kyū nen (kan)
10	jūbyō (kan)	juppun (kan)	jū jikan	tōka kan	jū shūkan	jukkagetsu (kan)	jū nen (kan)
how many?	nanbyō (kan)	nanpun (kan)	nanjikan	nannichi kan	nanshūkan	nankagetsu (kan)	nannen (kan)

## Using these words in sentences

There are a few ways to use these in sentences. The simplest is to use them without a particle after “wa”, or between “wo” and the verb, like so:

I cleaned my room for 1 hour  
 (watashi wa) **ichijikan** heya wo sōji shimashita  
 (watashi wa) heya wo **ichijikan** sōji shimashita

He will travel Japan for two weeks  
 kare wa **nishūkan** nihon wo ryokō shimasu  
 kare wa nihon wo **nishūkan** ryokō shimasu

I want to sleep for three days  
 (watashi wa) **mikkakan** netai desu

They waited for 40 minutes  
 karera wa **yonjuppun** machimashita

The particle “de” can also be applied, since the amount of time can be thought of as a means or a tool - that is, time is something that you use to complete the action. The difference between using “de” and no particle is that when “de” is used, it implies that the activity was *completed* in that amount of time. When no particle is used, it simply means that the action was performed for that long. Compare these two sentences:



ichi jikan heya wo sōji shimashita  
I cleaned my room **for** 1 hour

ichi jikan **de** heya wo sōji shimashita  
I cleaned my room **in** 1 hour

As you can see, the first sentence states **how long I spent** cleaning my room, while the second sentence states **how long it took me** to clean my room. In other words, sentence one is a general statement, while sentence two implies there was a specific task that needed completion. Here are some more examples using “de”:

She read the book in 45 minutes  
kanojo wa **yonjūgofun de** hon wo yomimashita

He completed the project in 6 months  
kare wa **rokkagetsu de** purojekuto wo kansei shimashita

I want to reach the hotel in two hours  
**nijikan de** hoteru ni tsukitai desu

As with words related to timing, these period of time counters can be used like any other nouns when the main verb of the sentence is “desu”. Here are some examples:

This movie is 95 minutes (long)  
kono eiga wa **kyūjū gofun** desu

One day is enough  
**ichinichi** wa jūbun desu

Two weeks is 14 days  
**nishūkan** wa jūyokkakan desu

## Exercise

1. Translate the following sentences into Japanese. Write down each of your answers and say them aloud.

- a) I walked for 3 hours
- b) She will study in the UK for 4 years
- c) He waited for 20 minutes
- d) They washed the car in 10 minutes
- e) He ran a marathon in 3 hours
- f) She fixed the door in 30 seconds
- g) How many minutes is this song?
- h) This course is 3 months (long)

## Answers

1.

- a) (watashi wa) sanjikan arukimashita
- b) kanojo wa yonenkan igirisu de benkyō shimasu
- c) kare wa nijuppun machimashita
- d) karera wa juppun de kuruma wo araimashita
- e) kare wa sanjikan de marason wo hashirimashita
- f) kanojo wa sanjū byō de doa wo naoshimashita
- g) kono uta wa nanpun desu ka
- h) kono kōsu wa sankagetsu (kan) desu

## Extra uses

This section contains some additional ways to use expressions for periods of time, but are less important than the others. Feel free to skip this section and come back to it later.

### Using period to describe timing

Just as in English expressions like “in three days”, it is also possible in Japanese to use a period of time to describe when something happened or is going to happen. This is done by combining the period of time with the words “go” and “mae”, followed by “ni”, as shown in the following table:

English	Japanese	Example	
In ...	[period of time] + go ni	In 5 days	itsukakan go ni
... ago	[period of time] + mae ni	4 months ago	yokkagetsu mae ni

The following examples demonstrate these expressions.

We will eat lunch in 10 minutes  
(watashi tachi wa) **juppun go ni** hirugohan wo tabemasu

She will go to Japan in 2 weeks  
kanojo wa **nishūkan go ni** nihon ni ikimasu

He left home 3 hours ago  
kare wa **sanjikan mae ni** ie wo demashita

They got married 5 years ago  
karera wa **gonen mae ni** kekkon shimashita

### **Kakarimasu / wo kakete**

Another option for describing how long an activity lasts is to use the verb “kakarimasu”, which when applied to a period of time means “to take”. This can be used instead of the verb that describes the action to say things like, “It took 5 minutes”. Note that when used like this, however, the action itself is not stated, and therefore needs to be clear from the context. That is, it needs to be clear what took 5 minutes. It is possible to include both “kakarimasu” and the action verb to say things like “It takes 5 minutes to walk to work from my house”, but this requires the action to be converted into a noun phrase, which is a more difficult topic that will be covered in Chapter 10.

When using “kakarimasu”, the time expression can be marked with the particle “ga”, although this can be omitted. To understand why “ga” is the appropriate particle, see Transitive and Intransitive Verbs in Chapter 8.7. This verb, by the way, can also be used with an amount of money to say how much something costs. The following sentences demonstrate the use of “kakarimasu”:

It took 5 minutes  
gofun (ga) **kakarimashita**

They took 3 hours by car  
karera wa kuruma de sanjikan (ga) **kakarimashita**

It will take 8 months

hakkagetsu (ga) **kakarimasu**

This cost 500 yen

kore wa gohyaku en (ga) **kakarimashita**

The te-form (to be introduced in Chapter 7) of a similar verb, “kakemasu”, can also be used in combination with the verb describing the action to put greater emphasis on the amount of time taken. This is done in the following way:

[period of time] + wo kakete

This can be used at various points in a sentence, but usually appears after “wa”, or at the beginning of the sentence when there is no “wa”.

This verb is much like the English word “spent”, such as in the sentence, “I spent 3 hours cleaning my room” (sanjikan wo kakete heya wo sōji shimashita). The only difference between this and “I cleaned my room for three hours” (heya wo sanjikan sōji shimashita) is that it places more emphasis on the amount of time spent. Like “kakarimasu”, this too can be used with amounts of money. Here are some examples of this expression:

I spent two hours cleaning the kitchen

(watashi wa) **nijikan wo kakete** daidokoro wo sōji shimashita

He spent 6 weeks fixing his car

kare wa **rokushūkan wo kakete** kuruma wo naoshimashita

They spent 3 months traveling in Japan

karera wa **sankagetsukan wo kakete** nihon wo ryokō shimashita

She spent 50,000 yen buying a bicycle

kanojo wa **goman en wo kakete** jitensha wo kaimashita

## 6.3 Frequency

There are a few ways to describe how often an activity happens, or its frequency. There are vague words like “always” and “sometimes”, expressions using numbers such as

“three times a day”, or more specialized phrases like “every day” and “every year”. Let’s take a look at each of these types of expressions.

### New vocabulary

Nouns	
abroad	kaigai
alarm	arāmu
cinema/movie theatre	eigakan
contract	keiyaku
home town	jimoto
news	nyūsu
Olympics	orinpikku
test	tesuto

Verbs (polite present tense)	
hold (events etc.)	kaisai shimasu
renew	kōshin shimasu
ring	narimasu
win	kachimasu

### Vague frequency words

The simplest but least specific way to talk about how often something occurs is to use words with meanings like “always” and “sometimes”. Here are the most common words:

always	itsumo
often	yoku
sometimes	tokidoki
occasionally	tama ni
hardly ever	metta ni
never	zenzen

**Important:** “Metta ni” and “zenzen” should always be used with a negative verb conjugation. Also note that “zenzen” has other uses that do not relate to time.

These words are used without particles (except for those with “ni” already included above), and will usually appear after “wa”, or in between “wo” and the verb. Here are some example sentences that include these words:

He always wins  
kare wa **itsumo** kachimasu

I often come to this restaurant  
(watashi wa) **yoku** kono resutoran ni kimasu

I eat sushi sometimes  
(watashi wa) **tokidoki** sushi wo tabemasu

She watches TV occasionally  
kanojo wa **tama ni** terebi wo mimasu

They hardly ever go to the cinema  
karera wa **metta ni** eigakan ni ikimasen

I never drink coffee  
watashi wa **zenzen** kōhī wo nomimasen

## Every...

The easiest way to be more specific about how often something occurs is to use expressions that mean “every ...”. For larger units of time, there are specific words with this kind of meaning. Other units of time and non-standard frequencies can be expressed by saying the period of time followed by “goto ni”, as will be explained shortly. Here are the most common “every ...” words:

every year	maitoshi
every month	maitsuki
every week	maishū
every weekend	maishūmatsu
every day	mainichi
every morning	maiasa
every evening	maiban
every [period of time]	[period of time] goto ni

These words can be used on their own without a particle, and will mostly appear at the beginning of a sentence, after “wa”, or between “wo” and the verb. Here are some examples:

I play basketball every week  
 watashi wa **maishū** basuke wo shimasu

There is a meeting every month  
**maitsuki** kaigi ga arimasu

He renews his contract every year  
 kare wa **maitoshi** keiyaku wo kōshin shimasu

She watches the news every night  
 kanojo wa **maiban** nyūsu wo mimasu

They can also be combined with context-dependent time words like days or months to say things like “every Monday” or “every April”. This is simply done like so:

[‘every’ word] + no + [context-dependent time word]

Saying “every Monday”, for example, would therefore be “maishū no getsuyōbi”, which could be more literally translated as “every week’s Monday”. Here are some more examples:

Every Tuesday	maishū no kayōbi
The third of every month	maitsuki no mikka
Every September	maitoshi no kugatsu
Every morning at 7 o’clock	maiasa no shichiji

Like other time word combinations, since these “every” combinations always end in a context-dependent time word, they should be followed by “ni” when used in a sentence, as shown in the examples below:

I play basketball every Sunday  
 watashi wa **maishū no nichiyōbi ni** basuke wo shimasu

There is a meeting on the first of every month  
**maitsuki no tsuitachi ni** kaigi ga arimasu

He renews his contract every April

kare wa **maitoshi no shigatsu ni** keiyaku wo kōshin shimasu

She watches the news at 6 o'clock every night  
kanojo wa **maiban no rokuji ni** nyūsu wo mimasu

The limitations of these words are that there is no specific 'every' word for smaller units like minutes and hours, and you can only use them when the frequency of something is every *one* week or every *one* month. An alternative that allows more flexibility is to combine a period of time with "goto ni", like so:

**[period of time] + goto ni**

This allows you to say things like "every hour" or "every two weeks". This can even be used to replace the specific "every" words that start with "mai", so you could say "every week" by saying "isshūkan goto ni" instead of "maishū". The latter is preferable, but the flexibility of "goto ni" makes it a simple alternative that you may find easier to remember in the short term. Here are some examples of "goto ni" being used in a sentence:

There is a test every two weeks  
nishūkan **goto ni** tesuto ga arimasu

The alarm rings every five minutes  
arāmu wa gofun **goto ni** narimasu

He travels abroad every six months  
kare wa rokkagetsu **goto ni** kaigai ni ryokō shimasu

The Olympics are held every four years  
orinpikku wa yonen **goto ni** kaisai saremasu<sup>2</sup>

## Number of times per...

The most flexible way to talk about frequency in specific terms is to say how many times something happens in a certain period. This is done like so:

.....  
2 "Saremasu" is the passive form of "shimasu". Basically, "kaisai shimasu" means "to hold", while "kaisai saremasu" means "to be held". The passive form will be explained in more detail in Chapter 12.4.



**[period of time] + ni + [number of times]**

This requires you to know the counter for the number of times something is done, “kai”. The “kai” counter for the numbers one through ten is as follows:

Once	ikkai
Twice	nikai
3 times	sankai
4 times	yonkai
5 times	gokai
6 times	rokkai
7 times	nanakai
8 times	hakkai
9 times	kyūkai
10 times	jukkai
How many times?	nankai

Like other counters, for numbers beyond ten, the number is pronounced as normal, except with the last digit being expressed as shown in the above table. Also, note that this is very similar to the counter for floors in a building. The floor counter, however, uses a different character when written, and usually has a different pronunciation for the number three (sangai).

If we now use “ni” to connect a number expressed using the “kai” counter with a period of time, we can form phrases like the following:

Once every three days	mikkakan ni ikkai
Twice a week	issshūkan ni nikai
15 times a month	ikkagetsu ni jūgokai
Once every 5 years	gonen ni ikkai
Ten times every 6 hours	rokujikan ni jukkai
How many times a day?	ichinichi ni nankai?

If the period of time is one day, one week, one month or one year, it is not necessary to say the period expression in full (such as “ichi nen kan”). Instead, the simple word for that unit of time can be used: hi, shū, tsuki or nen. The following expressions are therefore valid:

Three times a day	hi ni sankai
Twice a week	shū ni nikai
Five times a month	tsuki ni gokai
How many times a year?	nen ni nankai?

When used in a sentence, these expressions are used without a particle, and usually appear after “wa”, or between “wo” and the verb, as shown in the following examples.

How many times a day do you brush your teeth?  
(anata wa) **hi ni nankai** ha wo migakimasu ka

I go to Tokyo twice every 6 months  
(watashi wa) **sankagetsu ni nikai** tōkyō ni ikimasu

He plays soccer three times every two weeks  
kare wa **nishūkan ni sankai** sakkā wo shimasu

She returns to her home town twice a year  
kanojo wa **nen ni nikai** jimoto ni kaerimasu

## 6.4 Using expressions of time with nouns

### New vocabulary

economic conditions	keiki
rent	yachin

It is also possible to use expressions of time in combination with other words to talk about things of that time, frequency or period. You can do this by connecting the ‘thing’ with the time expression using the particle “no”. When used with “ima”, this allows you to talk about your or someone else’s current situation. Here are some examples:

His current job	kare no ima no shigoto
Current economic conditions	ima no keiki
Yesterday’s lunch	kinō no hirugohan

This month's rent	kongetsu no yachin
Every day's breakfast	mainichi no asagohan
The weekly meeting	maishū no kaigi
A three year contract	sannenkan no keiyaku
A two week break/vacation	nishūkan no yasumi



## Chapter 7

# Adjectives, nouns and adverbs

As essential parts of language, we have used adjectives, nouns and a few adverbs throughout this book to help us understand the basics of Japanese grammar. In this chapter, we will take a closer look at each of these parts of speech so that we can use them more accurately and effectively.

The main focus of this chapter is adjectives, as they are the most varied in terms of both their usage, as well as the forms that they take. Additionally, developing a solid understanding of adjectives will actually help us better understand how nouns fit into basic sentences, while also giving us the foundation we need to understand and use adverbs.

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to use adjectives and nouns in informal speech, the past tense and the negative form, as well as further enhance your descriptions with the use of adverbs.

### 7.1 Adjective types

Adjectives in Japanese can be divided into two categories, commonly known as i-adjectives and na-adjectives. The difference between these two types purely relates to syntax, meaning they only differ in how they are used to fit into sentences.

Essentially, all i-adjectives end with the “i” from the a-line of the syllabary (not the other “i” sounds like “ki” or “shi”), while most na-adjectives do not. “Na-adjectives” are called this because they need to be followed by “na” in certain situations. This will be explained shortly.

Let’s first look at some examples of each adjective type.

## i-adjectives

good	ī / yoi
bad	warui
happy	ureshī
sad	kanashī
delicious	oishī
awful (taste)	mazui
hot	atsui
cold	samui
interesting/funny	omoshiroi
boring	tsumaranai
fun	tanoshī
beautiful	utsukushī

fast, early	hayai
slow, late	osoi
new	atarashī
old	furui
ugly	minikui
cute	kawai
cheap	yasui
expensive	takai
noisy	urusai
want	hoshī
I want to...	-tai

## na-adjectives

well/spirited	genki
strange	hen
easy	kantan
quiet	shizuka
convenient	benri
inconvenient	fuben
pretty/clean	kirei

famous	yūmei
important	taisetsu
good at	jōzu
bad at	heta
necessary	hitsuyō
like	suki
hate	kirai

The first thing to note here is that “good” can be “ī” or “yoi”. It is usually (although not always) used as “ī” on its own, but becomes “yoi” when it is changed to another form, like a negative or past tense. This will become more clear as we use these other forms throughout this chapter.

Secondly, as you can see, there are in fact some na-adjectives that end in “i”. These are still classed as na-adjectives, though, because of how they are used in sentences. Unfortunately, on their own, there is no guaranteed rule that we can use to determine whether an adjective ending in “i” is an i-adjective or a na-adjective. For this reason, it may help to learn all na-adjectives by remembering them with the “na” included, for example, “genki na”, or “kirei na”. If you do this, however, you need to be sure to remove the “na” when it’s not needed, which will be explained below.

Also, if you recall from Chapter 4.4, the Japanese words for “like” and “want” are “suki” and “hoshī”, respectively, and they are both adjectives. The “I want...” expression introduced in Chapter 4.2, as well as “kirai”, the word for “hate”, are also adjectives. These are generally treated like any other adjective, with “suki” and “kirai” being na-adjectives, and “hoshī” and “-tai” being i-adjectives. They will be featured throughout this chapter to help further your understanding of their usage.

## 7.2 Using adjectives before nouns

### New vocabulary

bag	kaban
building	tatemono
country	kuni
food	tabemono
scenery	keshiki

Adjectives can be placed before nouns to add meaning to them, wherever they may appear in a sentence. With i-adjectives, we can just place them immediately before the noun, as shown here:

a good person	ī hito
a sad person	kanashī hito
an interesting movie	omoshiroi eiga
beautiful scenery	utsukushī keshiki
the car I want	(watashi no) hoshī kuruma
the movie I want to watch	(watashi no) mitai eiga

For na-adjectives, however, a “na” needs to be added at the end of the adjective in order to connect it to the noun, like so:

a famous person	yūmei na hito
a quiet person	shizuka na hito
a strange place	hen na basho
the car I like	(watashi no) suki na kuruma
the music I hate	(watashi no) kirai na ongaku

In this case, as long as you can recognize what type of adjective you are dealing with, you just need to know to include “na” if it is a na-adjective.

When an adjective is used before a noun as in the examples above, the combined phrase (adjective + noun) can then be used in a sentence as if it were just another noun. This is the same as English, as the examples below show:

He is a person  
kare wa **hito** desu

He is an interesting person  
kare wa **omoshiroi hito** desu

He is a strange person  
kare wa **hen na hito** desu

I watched a movie  
(watashi wa) **eiga** wo mimashita

I watched an interesting movie  
(watashi wa) **omoshiroi eiga** wo mimashita

I watched a strange movie  
(watashi wa) **hen na eiga** wo mimashita

This is a car  
kore wa **kuruma** desu



This is the car I want  
kore wa watashi no **hoshī kuruma** desu

This is the car I want to buy  
kore wa watashi no **kaitai kuruma** desu

This is the car I like  
kore wa watashi no **suki na kuruma** desu

This is the car I hate  
kore wa watashi no **kirai na kuruma** desu

## Exercise

1. Say and write down the following phrases in Japanese.

- a) a cold night
- b) a beautiful country
- c) an ugly building
- d) the bag I want
- e) the house I want to buy
- f) a quiet restaurant
- g) a convenient shop
- h) pretty scenery
- i) the food I hate
- j) the music I like

2. Say and write down the following sentences in Japanese.

- a) I like cold nights
- b) Japan is a beautiful country
- c) That (over there) is an ugly building
- d) The bag I want is expensive
- e) I found the house I want to buy
- f) I went to a quiet restaurant
- g) This is a convenient shop
- h) There is a lot of pretty scenery in Hokkaido

- i) She made the food I hate
- j) We listened to the music I like

## Answers

1.

- a) samui yoru
- b) utsukushī kuni
- c) minikui tatemono
- d) (watashi no) hoshī kaban
- e) (watashi no) kaitai ie
- f) shizuka na resutoran
- g) benri na mise
- h) kirei na keshiki
- i) (watashi no) kirai na tabemono
- j) (watashi no) suki na ongaku

2.

- a) watashi wa samui yoru ga suki desu
- b) nihon wa utsukushī kuni desu
- c) are wa minikui tatemono desu
- d) (watashi no) hoshī kaban wa takai desu
- e) (watashi no) kaitai ie wo mitsukemashita
- f) (watashi wa) shizuka na resutoran ni ikimashita
- g) kore wa benri na mise desu
- h) hokkaidō ni kirei na keshiki ga takusan arimasu
- i) kanojo wa watashi no kirai na tabemono wo tsukurimashita
- j) (watashi tachi wa) watashi no suki na ongaku wo kikimashita

## 7.3 Adjectives at the end of informal sentences

As discussed in Chapter 3.1, Japanese has different levels of politeness. “Desu” is the polite version of “to be”, but in informal language, when a sentence ends in an adjective, the “to be” verb is different according to which type of adjective is being used.

## New vocabulary

baby	akachan
town	machi

## na-adjectives

For na-adjectives, “desu” is just replaced by “da” to make it informal. Below are the polite and informal ways of saying different sentences using na-adjectives.

English	Polite	Informal
I am well	watashi wa genki desu	watashi wa genki da
This is strange	kore wa hen desu	kore wa hen da
Japanese is easy	nihongo wa kantan desu	nihongo wa kantan da
He is famous	kare wa yūmei desu	kare wa yūmei da
I like sushi	(watashi wa) sushi ga suki desu	(watashi wa) sushi ga suki da
I hate natto	(watashi wa) nattō ga kirai desu	(watashi wa) nattō ga kirai da

## i-adjectives

For i-adjectives, a polite sentence can be converted into an informal sentence by simply omitting “desu”.

English	Polite	Informal
That is good	sore wa ī desu	sore wa ī
I am happy	watashi wa ureshī desu	watashi wa ureshī
He is sad	kare wa kanashī desu	kare wa kanashī
This movie is boring	kono eiga wa tsumaranai desu	kono eiga wa tsumaranai
I want sushi	(watashi wa) sushi ga hoshī desu	(watashi wa) sushi ga hoshī
I want to watch a movie	(watashi wa) eiga ga mitai desu	(watashi wa) eiga ga mitai

One important thing to remember here is that “wa” is not equivalent to “is”. It may look like that in the informal sentences, but that is just your English-speaking brain recognizing a pattern and trying to tell you that words must go in a certain order. In this case, your brain is wrong. Thinking that “wa” means “is” will likely cause you confusion when using other verbs or more complicated sentences. As always, “wa” defines the

topic of the sentence, and the remainder of the sentence is like additional information related to that topic. Nothing has changed.

What this means is that in informal sentences that end in i-adjectives, the verb has effectively disappeared. In reality, it does exist, because a complete sentence absolutely must contain a verb, and all of the above sentences are grammatically complete. The best explanation as to why it doesn't appear is that the verb "to be" is actually included in i-adjectives when they are used in this way (but only then). This is a more accurate assessment, and also explains why i-adjectives have a past tense, as you will see in the next section.

Regardless of the technical reasoning, the important thing to remember is that i-adjectives can end informal sentences without any other verb present, and that "wa", as always, defines the topic of the sentence and does not mean "is".

## Exercise

1. Say and write down the following sentences in informal Japanese.

- a) This is fun
- b) That baby (over there) is cute
- c) Japanese TV is interesting/funny
- d) I want a new car
- e) I want to go to Okinawa
- f) This town is famous
- g) Your house is clean
- h) That man (over there) is strange
- i) I like dogs
- j) I hate noisy people

## Answers

1.

- a) kore wa tanoshī
- b) ano akachan wa kawai
- c) nihon no terebi wa omoshiroi
- d) (watashi wa) atarashī kuruma ga hoshī
- e) (watashi wa) okinawa ni ikitai
- f) kono machi wa yūmei da

- g) (anata no) ie wa kirei da
- h) ano otoko no hito wa hen da
- i) (watashi wa) inu ga suki da
- j) (watashi wa) urusai hito ga kirai da

## 7.4 Adjectives in the past tense

In English, we use the past tense of the verb “to be” to describe something in the past, for example, “That movie *was* interesting”. In Japanese, we do the same if we are using a na-adjective, but i-adjectives are treated differently. Let’s take a look at each now.

### na-adjectives

For na-adjectives, much like we change “is” to “was” in English, we just need to change the verb from “desu” into its past tense form, “deshita”. Note that the “i” sound in “deshita” is usually silent, and is therefore pronounced “deshta”.

That was strange  
sore wa **hen deshita**

He was famous  
kare wa **yūmei deshita**

That restaurant was quiet  
ano resutoran wa **shizuka deshita**

I liked ramen  
(watashi wa) rāmen ga **suki deshita**

I hated yakisoba  
yakisoba ga **kirai deshita**

The informal version of “deshita” is “datta”. Everything else remains the same, hence the less polite way to express the above sentences is as follows:

That was strange  
sore wa **hen datta**

He was famous  
kare wa **yūmei datta**

That restaurant was quiet  
ano resutoran wa **shizuka datta**

I liked ramen  
(watashi wa) rāmen ga **suki datta**

I hated yakisoba  
(watashi wa) yakisoba ga **kirai datta**

## i-adjectives

Unlike na-adjectives, i-adjectives themselves can actually be expressed in the past tense. This means that instead of changing “desu” to “deshita”, we change the adjective itself, and leave the “desu” as is.

To change an i-adjective into the past tense, remove the last “i” and add “katta”. Make sure that you only remove one “i” sound if it is an elongated “ī”. You’ll recall from Chapter 1 that these are actually two consecutive “i” sounds, with the first being attached to a consonant, such as in “shī”, so be sure to leave this sound intact by only removing the last “i”.

	Non-past tense	Past tense
good	yoi	yokatta
bad	warui	warukatta
happy	ureshī	ureshikatta
sad	kanashī	kanashikatta
interesting	omoshiroi	omoshirokatta
boring	tsumaranai	tsumaranakatta
I want...	hoshī	hoshikatta
I want to...	-tai	-takatta

To use these in sentences, we just put them where their non-past tense equivalent would go.

That was good  
sore wa **yokatta** desu

That movie was interesting  
sono eiga wa **omoshirokatta** desu

He was sad  
kare wa **kanashikatta** desu

I wanted a dog  
inu ga **hoshikatta** desu

I wanted to watch a movie  
(watashi wa) eiga ga **mitakatta** desu

Remember that since the adjective is already in the past tense, the verb “desu” remains unchanged.

In informal speech, the “desu” is simply left off, just as we saw with i-adjectives in the non-past tense.

That was good  
sore wa **yokatta**

That movie was interesting  
ano eiga wa **omoshirokatta**

He was sad  
kare wa **kanashikatta**

I wanted a dog  
inu ga **hoshikatta**

I wanted to watch a movie  
(watashi wa) eiga ga **mitakatta**

## Exercise

1. Convert each of these i-adjectives into the past tense.

a) ī / yoi

- b) warui
  - c) mazui
  - d) atsui
  - e) atarashī
  - f) furui
  - g) utsukushī
  - h) minikui
  - i) urusai
  - j) kawai
2. Say and write down each of the following sentences in Japanese in **both the polite and informal** forms.
- a) The train was inconvenient
  - b) Until last week, this town was quiet
  - c) In 1970, she was famous
  - d) I liked The Beatles
  - e) Last year, I hated him
  - f) The lake was cold
  - g) Today's lunch was delicious
  - h) The football match was fun
  - i) I wanted a new car
  - j) I wanted to sleep on the sofa

## Answers

1.

- a) yokatta
- b) warukatta
- c) mazukatta
- d) atsukatta
- e) atarashikatta
- f) furukatta
- g) utsukushikatta
- h) minikukatta
- i) urusakatta
- j) kawaikatta



2.

Polite:

- a) densha wa fuben deshita
- b) senshū made, kono machi wa shizuka deshita
- c) 1970 nen ni kanojo wa yūmei deshita
- d) (watashi wa) bītoruzu ga suki deshita
- e) kyonen, (watashi wa) kare ga kirai deshita
- f) mizūmi wa samukatta desu
- g) kyō no hirugohan wa oishikatta desu
- h) futtobōru no shiai wa tanoshikatta desu
- i) atarashī kuruma ga hoshikatta desu
- j) (watashi wa) sofa de netakatta desu

Informal:

- a) densha wa fuben datta
- b) senshū made, kono machi wa shizuka datta
- c) 1970 nen ni kanojo wa yūmei datta
- d) (watashi wa) bītoruzu ga suki datta
- e) kyonen, (watashi wa) kare ga kirai datta
- f) mizūmi wa samukatta
- g) kyō no hirugohan wa oishikatta
- h) futtobōru no shiai wa tanoshikatta
- i) atarashī kuruma ga hoshikatta
- j) (watashi wa) sofa de netakatta

## 7.5 Negatives of adjectives

In English, to say the negative of an adjective, we just use the word “not”, for example, “This is not good”, “That is not interesting”, etc. In Japanese, this too is done differently for na-adjectives and i-adjectives. Let’s take a look.

### na-adjectives

Na-adjectives are easy, as they simply require us to add “janai” to the end of the word without changing anything else.

not healthy/well	genki janai
not strange	hen janai
not quiet	shizuka janai
not famous	yūmei janai
don't like	suki janai
don't hate	kirai janai

## i-adjectives

To convert an i-adjective into the negative, we remove the “i” at the end, and add “kunai”, like so:

Positive		Negative	
good	ī / yoi	not good	yokunai
bad	warui	not bad	warukunai
happy	ureshī	not happy	ureshikunai
sad	kanashī	not sad	kanashikunai
I want...	hoshī	I don't want...	hoshikunai
I want to...	-tai	I don't want to...	-takunai

When the last sound before “kunai” is “shi”, the “i” sound after the “sh” is usually silent, so “ureshikunai” would be pronounced “ureshkunai”, and “hoshikunai” would be “hoshkunai”.

Note that these words are also subtly different from the word with the opposite meaning. For example, “not good” is not exactly the same as “bad”. Just as is the case in English, something can be neither good nor bad, but somewhere in between. The same applies for all adjectives of both types.

## Exercise

- Say and write down each of the following negative adjectives in Japanese.
  - not convenient
  - not inconvenient
  - not pretty

- d) not delicious
- e) not awful (taste)
- f) not cold
- g) not interesting/funny
- h) not fun
- i) not new
- j) not cute

## Answers

1.

- a) benri janai
- b) fuben janai
- c) kirei janai
- d) oishikunai
- e) mazukunai
- f) samukunai
- g) omoshirokunai
- h) tanoshikunai
- i) atarashikunai
- j) kawaikunai

## Using negative adjectives

Adjectives in their negative form can actually be used in all the same ways as adjectives in the normal, positive form. What makes life a bit easier is that both i-adjectives and na-adjectives actually become i-adjectives when they are negative. This means they all function in the same way as i-adjectives in the following ways:

- They can be placed immediately before nouns without adding “na”
- They can be used unmodified to end sentences in informal speech
- They can be converted to the past tense by replacing the last “i” with “katta”

Let's now look at each of these.

## Placing negative adjectives before nouns

When na-adjectives are placed before a noun, “na” needs to be inserted in between the adjective and the noun, such as in, “genki na hito”. Negative adjectives, however, can be placed immediately before a noun unmodified, just like all i-adjectives. Here are some examples:

a not good person  
yokunai hito

an uninteresting movie  
omoshirokunai eiga

not beautiful scenery  
utsukushikunai keshiki

the car I don't want  
watashi no hoshikunai kuruma

the bag I don't want to buy  
watashi no kaitakunai kaban

—

a not famous person  
yūmei janai hito

a not quiet person  
shizuka janai hito

a not strange place  
hen janai basho

the car I don't like  
watashi no suki janai kuruma

the food I don't hate  
 watashi no kirai janai tabemono

Some of the phrases above probably sound strange in English, but in Japanese they are quite natural. In English, we sometimes change the sentence around a bit to express the above ideas in a more natural way. For example, we might put “not” somewhere closer to the verb in the sentence, rather than near the adjective, or we might use what's known as a relative clause (eg. “scenery that is not beautiful”). In Japanese, simply placing the negative adjective before the noun like in the above examples is the most natural solution.

### Using negative adjectives to end sentences in informal speech

Just as i-adjectives can be used to end an informal sentence without using the word “da”, so too can negative adjectives. Here are some examples:

The sashimi is not bad  
 sashimi wa **warukunai**

This movie is uninteresting  
 kono eiga wa **omoshirokunai**

He's not famous  
 kare wa **yūmei janai**

That place isn't strange  
 ano basho wa **hen janai**

I don't like futons  
 (watashi wa) futon ga **suki janai**

Like before, there may not appear to be any verbs in these sentences, but they do exist as a part of the i-adjective formed by the negative ending.

### Converting negative adjectives to the past tense

To form the past tense of a negative adjective, the last “i” is replaced by “katta”. This means that for na-adjectives, “janai” becomes “janakatta”, and the “-kunai” ending of

i-adjectives becomes “-kunakatta”. The past tense of the above sentences in the informal (and polite) form would therefore be:

The sashimi was not bad  
sashimi wa **warukunakatta** (desu)

This movie was uninteresting  
kono eiga wa **omoshirokunakatta** (desu)

He was not famous  
kare wa **yūmei janakatta** (desu)

That place was not strange  
ano basho wa **hen janakatta** (desu)

I didn't like the futon  
(watashi wa) futon ga **suki janakatta** (desu)

## Exercise

1. Say and write down each of the following sentences in Japanese using the designated level of politeness. Note that the first three in particular are phrased in a way that is natural in Japanese, even if they seem odd in English.
  - a) [polite] He bought not delicious pizza
  - b) [informal] I want a not old TV
  - c) [polite] We went to a not famous town
  - d) [polite] They watched a movie I don't like
  - e) [informal] This house isn't clean
  - f) [informal] I don't like cheese
  - g) [informal] He isn't sad
  - h) [informal] Japanese isn't difficult
  - i) [informal] My car was not expensive
  - j) [informal] The test was not easy
  - k) [polite] She wasn't happy
  - l) [polite] It wasn't important

## Answers

1.

- a) kare wa oishikunai piza wo kaimashita
- b) (watashi wa) furukunai terebi ga hoshī
- c) watashi tachi wa yūmei janai machi ni ikimashita
- d) karera wa watashi no suki janai eiga wo mimashita
- e) kono ie wa kirei janai
- f) watashi wa chīzu ga suki janai
- g) kare wa kanashikunai
- h) nihongo wa muzukashikunai
- i) watashi no kuruma wa takakunakatta
- j) tesuto wa kantan janakatta
- k) kanojo wa ureshikunakatta desu
- l) taisetsu janakatta (the meaning of "it" is implied through context - see Chapter 3.6)

## 7.6 Informal questions using adjectives

As was explained in Chapter 4.5, you can convert any sentence into a yes/no question by simply adding “ka” after the verb. When speaking informally, however, questions are usually asked without “ka”, making them no different in appearance to regular statements. Instead, a questioning tone is used to indicate that a question is being asked.

For example, if you were to ask someone if they were cold, the polite way to say this is, “samui desu ka”. In informal speech, however, you would simply ask “samui?”, using a tone that rises at the end. Normally, saying “samui” with a non-questioning tone would be the equivalent of saying “I’m cold”, so the tone used in this case greatly affects the meaning of the sentence.

Thankfully, it is usually obvious when a question is being asked, and you will likely be able to instinctively use the correct tone of voice when asking informal questions, so there’s no need to worry about this too much. It’s just something to be aware of.

## 7.7 Adjective usage summary

The table below summarizes how i-adjectives and na-adjectives differ in terms of usage.

	i-adjectives	na-adjectives
Before nouns	Use as is (adj + noun)	Add “na” (adj + “na” + noun)
End of informal sentences	Use as is (without “desu”)	Change “desu” to “da”
Past tense		
- Polite	Replace last “i” with “katta” + “desu”	Change “desu” to “deshita”
- Informal	Replace last “i” with “katta”	Change “desu” to “datta”
Negative	Replace last “i” with “kunai”	Add “janai”
- Before nouns	Use negative form as is	Use negative form as is
- End of informal sentences	Use negative form as is	Use negative form as is
- Past tense	Change “kunai” to “kunakatta”	Change “janai” to “janakatta”

## 7.8 Using nouns in “to be” sentences

### New vocabulary

birthday	tanjōbi
brothers / siblings	kyōdai
capital city	shuto
couple	kappuru
dentist	haisha

doctor	isha
national holiday	shukujitsu
necklace	nekuresu
salaried employee	sararīman
tourist	kankōkyaku

Once you have mastered the different uses of adjectives, nouns are relatively straightforward. In sentences where the main verb is “to be”, nouns are treated much the same way as na-adjectives. This includes their use at the end of informal sentences, as well as in the past tense, the negative, and the negative past tense. Let’s look at some examples of each of these.

### At the end of informal sentences

When the last element in a sentence before the verb is a noun, and the verb is “to be”, we can turn a polite sentence into an informal one by changing “desu” to “da”.



This is a pen  
kore wa pen **da**

That is my mobile phone  
sore wa watashi no keitai **da**

He is a teacher  
kare wa sensei **da**

She is a fun person  
kanojo wa tanoshī hito **da**

## Past tense

Similarly, when used with a noun, “to be” can be turned into the past tense by changing “desu” to “deshita” in the polite form, or “datta” in the informal form.

Polite:  
She was a good student  
kanojo wa ī gakusei **deshita**

Until 1869, Kyoto was the capital of Japan  
1869 nen made, kyōto wa nihon no shuto **deshita**

Informal:  
Yesterday was my birthday  
kinō wa watashi no tanjōbi **datta**

That was my chocolate!  
sore wa watashi no chokorēto **datta** yo!

## Negative

The noun in a “to be” sentence can be made negative by adding “janai” after it. This can be made polite or informal by either including or excluding “desu”.

That is not my bag  
sore wa watashi no kaban **janai** (desu)

I am not a dentist  
watashi wa haisha **janai** (desu)

He is not a bad person  
kare wa warui hito **janai** (desu)

They are not a couple  
karera wa kappuru **janai** (desu)

## Negative past tense

To turn a negative “to be” sentence into the past tense, change “janai” into “janakatta”.  
Again, the inclusion or exclusion of “desu” determines the level of politeness.

That was not our bus  
are wa watashi tachi no basu **janakatta** (desu)

That man was not a doctor  
ano otoko wa isha **janakatta** (desu)

Last year was not a bad year  
kyonen wa warui ichinen **janakatta** (desu)

Yesterday was not my birthday  
kinō wa watashi no tanjōbi **janakatta** (desu)

## Exercise

1. Say and write down the following sentences in Japanese using the **polite** form:
  - a) Yesterday was Saturday
  - b) Last year, he was my teacher
  - c) That (over there) isn't a hospital
  - d) This isn't rain
  - e) That wasn't my coffee
  - f) It wasn't a party

2. Say and write down the following sentences in Japanese using the **informal** form:

- a) This is a beautiful necklace
- b) She is your older sister
- c) They are brothers
- d) Takamatsu-san is a salaried employee
- e) They were tourists
- f) He was a good student
- g) This isn't a window
- h) Today is not a national holiday
- i) That (over there) was not a monkey
- j) The shirt wasn't my size

## Answers

1.

- a) kinō wa doyōbi deshita
- b) kyonen, kare wa watashi no sensei deshita
- c) are wa byōin janai desu
- d) kore wa ame janai desu
- e) sore wa watashi no tabemono janakatta desu
- f) pāti janakatta desu

2.

- a) kore wa utsukushī nekuresu da
- b) kanojo wa anata no onēsan da
- c) karera wa kyōdai da
- d) takamatsu-san wa sararīman da
- e) karera wa kankōkyaku datta
- f) kare wa ī gakusei datta
- g) kore wa mado janai
- h) kyō wa shukujitsu janai
- i) are wa saru janakatta
- j) shatsu wa watashi no saizu janakatta

## 7.9 Adverbs

### New vocabulary

airport	kūkō	not very	amari
to dance	odorimasu	often	yoku
extremely (Kansai region)	meccha	quite	kanari
extremely (Kanto region)	chō	to run	hashirimasu
more, much, much more	motto	teacher	sensei
museum	hakubutsukan	workplace	shokuba

Adverbs are words like “quickly”, “always” and “very” that are used to add meaning to verbs, adjectives and other adverbs. They are kind of like adjectives that can be used where adjectives can’t, since adjectives can only be used with nouns. Most adverbs even derive from adjectives, and in Japanese, converting an adjective into an adverb is very easy. Here’s how it’s done:

Adjective type	Conversion to adverb	Example	
i-adjective	Change the last “i” to “ku”	quick → quickly	hayai → hayaku
na-adjective	Remove “na” and add “ni”	quiet → quietly	shizuka (na) → shizuka ni

These simple conversions are all you need to know in order to use the vast majority of adverbs in Japanese. However, in addition to those that derive from adjectives, there are also a number of adverbs that are standalone words. Here are some of the most useful ones, many of which we have seen before:

a lot, many	takusan
always	itsumo
a little bit	chotto
more, much, much more	motto
never, not at all	zenzen
quite	kanari
sometimes	tokidoki
very	totemo
not very	amari (with negative verb)

You may notice that a few of these are time-related words that were covered in Chapter 6. These are in fact adverbs, and they can be used in the same way that adverbs are. The same is true for many other time-related expressions. This helps explain why the particle used with some time expressions is “ni”, as that is what is used to turn na-adjectives into adverbs.

Also, when the word “i” is converted to its adverb form “yoku”, in addition to meaning “well”, it can also be used to mean “often”.

## Using adverbs

Not all adverbs are as versatile as others. Some, like the word “motto”, meaning “more”, can be used with all three word types - verbs, adjectives and other adverbs - while others, like “quickly”, can only be used with verbs. Although this may sound confusing, there is no need to concern yourself with remembering which adverbs can be used with which word types. Generally, the only reason a given adverb might not work with a certain word type is because it doesn’t make literal sense. For example, “very” cannot be used with verbs, but you are unlikely to mistakenly use it with a verb because it makes no sense to say something like, “He very slept”. Adverbs in Japanese are the same.

That said, the placement of an adverb is affected by the type of word it is modifying. Let’s take a look.

## Modifying verbs

If an adverb is modifying a verb, it can be placed basically anywhere in the sentence, as long as it comes *before* the verb that it relates to. It also will not usually be placed before the topic-defining particle “wa”. Here are some examples:

He **quickly** ran to school / He ran to school **quickly**

kare wa **hayaku** gakkō ni hashirimashita

kare wa gakkō ni **hayaku** hashirimashita

She **quietly** opened the door / She opened the door **quietly**

kanojo wa **shizuka ni** doa wo akemashita

kanojo wa doa wo **shizuka ni** akemashita

The placement of the adverb doesn’t really affect the meaning of the sentence, although since words that appear later in Japanese sentences generally carry more weight, the adverb will be emphasized more when placed immediately before the verb it modifies.

## Modifying adjectives and adverbs

When an adverb is used to modify something other than a verb - that is, an adjective or another adverb - its possible placement is much more restricted. In almost all cases, such adverbs should be placed immediately before the adjective or adverb that they relate to. Here are some examples, with the adverb in bold and the word it modifies underlined:

[Adjective]

This bag is **quite** light

kono kaban wa **kanari** karui desu

[Adverb]

He **very** quickly ran to school / He ran to school **very** quickly

kare wa **totemo** hayaku gakkō ni hashirimashita

kare wa gakkō ni **totemo** hayaku hashirimashita

Since adjectives and adverbs are descriptive words, adverbs that are used to modify them usually specify the degree of the description. For this reason, there are relatively few adverbs that can be used with adjectives and adverbs compared to those that can be used to modify verbs.

## Exercise

1. Say aloud and write down each of these sentences in polite Japanese.
  - a) They danced cutely
  - b) He often goes to the cinema
  - c) She waited quietly in front of the library
  - d) My car was a little bit expensive
  - e) This museum is quite interesting
  - f) I want to go to the airport much earlier

## Answers

1.

- a) karera wa kawaiku odorimashita
- b) kare wa yoku eigakan ni ikimasu

- c) kanojo wa eigakan no mae de shizuka ni machimashita, OR  
kanojo wa shizuka ni eigakan no mae de machimashita
- d) watashi no kuruma wa chotto takakatta desu
- e) kono hakubutsukan wa kanari omoshiroi desu
- f) motto hayaku kūkō ni ikitai desu

## Saying “very”

The most common adverb used with adjectives and other adverbs is, of course, “very”. In Japanese, however, there are two words that mean “very” - one that is used with positive statements, and one that is used with negative ones, which is like saying “not very”. Here are the words for “very” and “not very” in Japanese:

English	Japanese	Example	
very	totemo	very hot	totemo atsui
not very	amari	not very hot	amari atsukunai

The important thing to remember here is that “totemo” is used with adjectives in their **positive** form, while “amari” must be used with adjectives in the **negative** form. As explained above, these are usually placed immediately before the adjective or adverb that they affect.

Also, when these are used with the words “suki”, “kirai”, hoshi” and “-tai”, a better English translation than “very” would be “really”, since this is what we would use with the words “like”, “hate”, and “want” in English. This is simply because these words are adjectives in Japanese, but verbs in English, and the English word “very” cannot be used directly with verbs (eg. “He very likes sushi”). In terms of actual meaning, they are the same. Here are some examples:

He really hates sushi  
kare wa sushi ga totemo kirai desu

I really want to play basketball  
(watashi wa) basuke ga totemo shitai desu

She doesn't really like vegetables  
kanojo wa yasai ga amari suki janai desu

I don't really want to go to the park  
(watashi wa) amari kōen ni ikitakunai

There are also a couple of other words that are often used colloquially to say “very very”, “really really”, or “extremely”, although these vary from region to region. Here are the most common two words:

Very very, really really, extremely	Main region used
chō	Most of Japan, especially the Kanto region (around Tokyo)
meccha	Kansai

Here are some example sentences using these words:

This is extremely delicious!  
kore wa chō oishī!

I really really want to go to the beach  
(watashi wa) meccha umi ni ikitai!

## Exercise

- Say aloud and write down each of these sentences in informal Japanese.
  - Japan is a very beautiful country
  - This movie is very interesting
  - I really want a cat
  - The airport was very inconvenient
  - This bag isn't very expensive
  - I don't really want a red bicycle
  - I don't really like cheese
  - I really really like ramen! (Kanto region)
  - His house was extremely clean! (Kansai region)



## Answers

1.

- a) nihon wa totemo utsukushi kuni da
- b) kono eiga wa totemo omoshiroi
- c) (watashi wa) neko ga totemo hoshi
- d) kūkō wa totemo fuben datta
- e) kono kaban wa amari takakunai
- f) (watashi wa) akai jitensha ga amari hoshikunai
- g) (watashi wa) chīzu ga amari suki janai
- h) (watashi wa) rāmen ga chō suki da!
- i) kare no ie wa meccha kirei datta!

## Adverb + narimasu / shimasu

Two particularly common verbs that are used with adverbs are “narimasu” and “shimasu”. Let’s start by looking at an example of an adverb used with “narimasu”.

The bag became light(er) / The bag got light(er)  
 kaban ga karuku narimashita

The verb “narimasu” means “become”, and in this example, it describes a change in the bag’s weight from heavier to lighter. While normally, the adverb “karuku” would directly translate to English as “lightly”, when used with the verb “narimasu”, it actually defines the end result of the change; that is, what the bag becomes. The adverb form of “karui” is actually much like a noun followed by the particle “ni”, where the “ni” defines the destination. In this case, the destination is “karui”, and the verb that causes the bag to get to that destination is “narimasu”.

You’ll notice that the English translation of the above sentence could end in either the word “light” or “lighter”. The reason for this is because in most cases, Japanese doesn’t differentiate between these two concepts. It is possible to emphasize the relative nature of the word “lighter” by preceding it with the particle “yori” to say “yori karui”, but this is generally considered redundant in Japanese because adjectives, by their very nature, are relative terms. There is no need to explicitly say that something is “lighter”, because just by being “light”, it is implicitly lighter than whatever it is being compared to, which

in this example is its previous weight. This is one of those situations where it helps to remember that Japanese is a vague language.

The same principles apply to adverbs used with the more active verb “shimasu”. Normally, “shimasu” is the equivalent of the word “do”, but in this context it should be translated a little differently. Here’s an example:

I made the bag lighter  
(watashi wa) kaban wo karuku shimashita

When used with an adverb, “shimasu” is essentially a more active version of “narimasu”, similar in meaning to the English word “make”. If you consider that “narimasu” is used to describe something that has changed from one state to another by itself, “shimasu” is used to describe when someone or something has caused something else to change from one state to another.

The difference between “narimasu” and “shimasu” is also reflected in the particles that appear in each sentence. With “narimasu”, the bag performs the act of becoming lighter by itself, so the sentence only contains a subject (the bag); there is no object. The subject is marked by “ga”, and since there is no object, there is nothing to be marked by “wo”.

In contrast, the person performing the action of “shimasu” is separate from the thing they are performing that action on. The person that makes the bag lighter is the subject (although in this case it is also the topic, which supersedes its role as subject and is therefore marked by “wa”), and the bag is the item that the action is being performed on and is therefore marked by “wo”.

## Exercise

1. Say aloud and write down each of the following sentences in informal Japanese.
  - a) Sorry, I will be(come) late
  - b) He became sad
  - c) I want to become famous
  - d) The teacher will make the test more difficult
  - e) She made her room clean
  - f) I want to make the workplace fun

## Answers

1.

- a) gomennasai, (watashi wa) osoku narimasu
- b) kare wa kanashiku narimashita
- c) (watashi wa) yūmei ni naritai desu
- d) sensei wa tesuto wo motto muzukashiku shimasu
- e) kanojo wa heya wo kirei ni shimashita
- f) (watashi wa) shokuba wo tanoshiku shitai desu



## Chapter 8

# Verbs

So far, we have used verbs in a number of different tenses, but the only verb we have learnt to use in informal Japanese is “desu”. In this chapter, we will look at verbs in both the informal and polite forms, and take a closer look at the different verb tenses, including one new one. We will also cover a couple of key concepts that affect how verbs are used in sentences.

There are quite a few rules to remember in this chapter, but they are mostly straightforward, and there are very few exceptions to these rules. Verbs are the central part of any sentence, so once you have mastered the topics in this chapter, you will be able to express a wide range of ideas, using both informal and polite language.

Before getting started with new verb tenses, here’s a quick reminder of the verb endings for the polite verb tenses and expressions we have already covered:

	Positive	Negative (eg. I didn’t do...)
<b>Present/future</b>	-masu	-masen
<b>Past</b>	-mashita	-masendeshita
<b>I want to...</b>	-tai desu	-takunai desu
<b>Let’s...</b>	-mashō	-

## 8.1 Verb types

In order to be able to use the verb tenses introduced in this chapter, we first need to understand verb types. We have already learned a few polite verb tenses and expressions, but none of these are affected by the verb types we will look at here, so there has been no need to learn them. We need to understand them now, however, as the conjugation of informal verb tenses as well as some other tenses differs according to the verb type.

From a functional perspective, Japanese verbs are normally grouped into three categories: ru-verbs, u-verbs and irregular verbs. These names are based on the verb endings of the verbs in their dictionary form, but they can be confusing and misleading - all verbs end in “u”, and some “u” verbs end in “ru”! Instead, we’re going to categorize them as: **add-on verbs**, **vowel-changing verbs**, and **irregular verbs**.

### Add-on verbs (aka ru-verbs)

Add-on verbs are easy - they consist of a stem and an ending. The stem always remains the same, and the ending changes according to the tense and degree of politeness. Below are some examples. Don’t worry about trying to learn the different tenses just yet.

	Stem	Polite present	Polite past	Informal present	Informal potential (can)
watch	mi	mimasu	mimashita	miru	mirareru
eat	tabe	tabemasu	tabemashita	taberu	taberareru
sleep	ne	nemasu	nemashita	neru	nerareru
to be/there is (living)	i	imasu	imashita	iru	irareru

As you can see in the table above, all add-on verbs keep the same stem in all cases. A different ending is then added onto the stem for each tense and level of politeness. Notice that the ending in each tense is the same for every verb. Like all verbs, these appear in the dictionary in the informal present tense (eg. miru), which is why this is also called the dictionary form.

### Vowel-changing verbs (aka u-verbs)

Vowel-changing verbs are a little bit more tricky. Their stem effectively consists of two parts - a fixed part, and what we will call a “vowel-changing” part, which changes according to the tense and level of politeness to be used. In the examples below, the

vowel-changing part is underlined, while the verb ending is in bold. Again, don't worry about learning the different tenses just yet.

	Stem		Polite present	Polite past	Informal present	Informal potential (can)
	Fixed	Vowel-changing				
drink	no	mi	nom <u>i</u> masu	nom <u>i</u> mashita	nom <u>u</u>	nom <u>e</u> ru
listen	ki	ki	kik <u>i</u> masu	kik <u>i</u> mashita	kik <u>u</u>	kik <u>e</u> ru
use	tsuka	i	tsuk <u>a</u> masu	tsuk <u>a</u> mashita	tsuk <u>a</u>	tsuk <u>a</u> eru
make	tsuku	ri	tsuk <u>u</u> masu	tsuk <u>u</u> mashita	tsuk <u>u</u>	tsuk <u>u</u> eru

Here you can see that the vowel sound in the vowel-changing part is different for some of the tenses. The following table outlines how each tense of a vowel-changing verb is created (you don't need to remember these yet):

Polite present	"i" stays as "i", then "masu" is added to the end, eg. "nomimasu"
Polite past	"i" stays as "i", then "mashita" is added to the end, eg. "nomimashita"
Informal present	"i" becomes "u", and nothing else is added, eg. "nomu"
Informal potential	"i" becomes "e", then "ru" is added, eg. "nomeru"

When looking at these verbs with English lettering, it just looks like the vowel changes. What is actually happening, however, is that for each tense or politeness level, a different sound from the same line of the syllabary is used.

For example, you'll recall from Chapter 1 that the ma-line in the syllabary is "ma mi mu me mo". The polite tenses of "drink" both use the "i" variation, which is "mi" (nomimasu, nomimashita), the informal present tense uses "mu" (nomu), and the informal potential uses "me" (nomeru). It is important to see it this way because "m" and other consonants do not exist on their own in Japanese, so you will never see these verbs written without a vowel in the stem. For example, you will only ever see "drink" written as "nomu", "nomimasu" etc., and never as just "nom". After all, the only way to write these sounds in Japanese characters is with the vowel sound included.

The stem of these verbs is usually considered to be the fixed part plus the "i" variation of the vowel-changing part, that is, "nomi", "kiki", etc. However, since the stem changes for different tenses, there will be times throughout this book when the vowel sound

variation to be used with the stem needs to be made clear. For this, the following notation will be used: stem(<vowel>). This table shows some examples:

Notation	Example: “nomimasu”	Example: “kikimasu”
stem(a)	noma	kika
stem(i)	nomi	kiki
stem(u)	nomu	kiku
stem(e)	nome	kike
stem(o)	nomo	kiko

## Irregular verbs

Irregular verbs are the ones that don't fit into either of the above two categories and have to be remembered individually. Thankfully, there are only three, and you will hear them all the time.

	Polite present	Polite past	Informal present	Informal potential (can)
do	shimasu	shimashita	suru	dekiru
go	ikimasu	ikimashita	iku	ikeru
come	kimasu	kimashita	kuru	koreru

Looking at just these tenses, “go” and “come” don't look particularly different from the vowel-changing verbs. They do, however, vary slightly in certain tenses, so we'll keep them separate to reduce confusion later.

## Identifying verb types

Since the informal present tense of verbs is what appears in dictionaries, it is the most important tense to be able to identify. As discussed earlier, vowel-changing verbs are expressed in the informal present tense by using the “u” variation of the vowel-changing part of the stem (eg. “nomu”). Add-on verbs are expressed in the informal present tense by adding “ru” to the stem (eg. “miru”). Since all add-on verbs end in “ru”, any verb that ends in something other than “ru” must be a vowel-changing verb (eg. nomu, kiku).

The potentially confusing part is that some vowel-changing verbs have a stem that ends with a ra-line sound. This makes the informal present tense of these verbs end in



“ru” (eg. “tsukuru”), so they look just like add-on verbs. Take a look at these two verbs, for example:

English	Dictionary form	Type
to change	kaeru	add-on
to return home	kaeru	vowel-changing

So how do you tell them apart? Some dictionaries will tell you, referring to add-on verbs as “ru” or “ichidan” verbs, and vowel-changing verbs as “u” or “godan” verbs. The other option is to look at other tenses. In most of the other tenses, especially the most common ones, vowel-changing verbs will use something other than the “u” variation in the stem, and this will be different to the ending added to add-on verbs. Here are those two verbs again with the polite present tense added:

	Dictionary form	Polite present tense	Type
to change	kaeru	kaemasu	add-on
to return home	kaeru	kaerimasu	vowel-changing

In the polite present tense, we can differentiate between verb types because the vowel-changing verb keeps the ra-line sound, while the add-on verb loses the “ru”.

My recommendation is that from now on, when you learn new verbs, you start by learning the informal present tense (dictionary form) together with the polite present tense. This will give you everything you need to know to be able to convert verbs between tenses, while also being familiar with the dictionary form, which should be your default reference point for any verb.

One difficulty this creates is that in some ways, you will need to re-learn the verbs you already know to learn what type they are. The only reason this book didn’t teach you the verb type together with the verb at the beginning is because learning just the simpler polite tenses allows you to practice speaking Japanese much sooner without having to worry about too many technical details.

I warn you now, though, that when you start using and hearing informal verb tenses, you will likely have difficulty trying to figure out which verb is which, since different verbs sound the same in certain tenses. It does take time to get used to, so be patient.

In order to overcome this hurdle, it will help to treat each different form of a verb as a separate word. Being proficient at converting between tenses helps particularly with

new verbs, but it slows you down if you have to convert each verb every time you hear it. If instead you can remember, for example, that “katta” means “bought”, you don’t have to reverse-engineer it back to “kaimasu” every time you hear it to understand which verb it is. This does increase the number of words you have to remember, but since it saves you from making the conversion, it gives your brain faster access to words when you need them.

Having said that, it’s important to remember that speaking and understanding Japanese is a skill, not knowledge. The best way to improve your ability to use and identify verbs in real-time, as you say or hear them, is to practice saying and hearing them in context. Start by listening to as much informal conversation as you can and focus on identifying each verb that is used. It will be slow going at first, but this will allow you to quickly remember the different forms of the more common verbs, and develop a more intuitive ability to recognize the different forms of the verbs you are less familiar with.

Put lots of time into this, and it will make the transition to informal speech easier. The huge upside to this is that once you are comfortable with informal verb tenses, it opens up a whole new world of possible expressions, as you will learn in Chapter 10 when we look at noun phrases.

## 8.2 The present/future tense

### New vocabulary

snow	yuki
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In the previous section, we referred to the present tense on several occasions, but this is actually better described as the present/future tense. Generally, it can be used to talk about things that happen regularly or are ongoing, or things that will happen in the future, whether that be one second from now, or 100 years. Examples include:

- General statements of things that happen (eg. People make mistakes)
- Things that happen regularly or habitually (eg. I play basketball every Sunday)
- Things that are about to happen right now (eg. I’m going to the supermarket. See you later!)
- Things that will happen in the future (eg. I will ask him tomorrow)

These are some examples of when the present/future tense is NOT used:

- Things that are happening right now (I am eating dinner)
- To describe your current situation (I work for a big company, I live in Tokyo)

You might be wondering how you can tell if something that is being talked about happens in the present or future, since both take the same form. Generally, it is obvious from context. If it's a general statement, the idea being expressed will usually sound like a general expression of fact. If a frequency for the activity is defined or implied, it must be a regular or habitual activity. In most other cases, this tense refers to the future, whether the exact timing is defined or not.

The table below shows what add-on and vowel-changing verbs look like in the present/future tense. Even though we have already covered polite tenses, they will be included throughout this chapter for the sake of comparison, and so that you can find everything in one place.

Verb type	Informal (dictionary)	Polite
<b>Add-on</b>	stem + ru	stem + masu
<b>Vowel-changing</b>	stem(u)	stem(i) + masu

**Important:** The “u” in the “masu” ending is usually silent, and this should therefore be pronounced “mas”.

Below are some examples of each type, including the three irregular verbs:

Verb type	Stem	Informal (dictionary)	Polite
<b>Add-on</b>		<i>stem + ru</i>	<i>stem + masu</i>
eat	tabe	taberu	tabemasu
watch / see / look	mi	miru	mimasu
<b>Vowel-changing</b>		<i>stem(u)</i>	<i>stem(i) + masu</i>
drink	nomi	nomu	nomimasu
listen	kiki	kiku	kikimasu
<b>Irregular</b>			
do	shi	suru	shimasu
go	iki	iku	ikimasu
come	ki	kuru	kimasu

Here are some example sentences in the informal present/future tense:

It snows a lot in Hokkaido  
hokkaidō de yuki ga takusan furu

I go to school every day by train  
(watashi wa) mainichi densha de gakkō ni iku

I'm going to the park (from) now  
(watashi wa) ima kara kōen ni iku

We are getting married next year  
(watashi tachi wa) rainen kekkon suru

## Exercise

1. Complete the following table:

Verb in English	Verb type	Polite future/present	Informal future/present
to be (living)	Add-on	imasu	
sleep	Add-on		neru
wake up	Add-on	okimasu	
give	Add-on		ageru
teach/tell	Add-on	oshiemasu	
to be (non-living)	Vowel-changing		aru
buy	Vowel-changing	kaimasu	
read	Vowel-changing		yomu
write	Vowel-changing	kakimasu	
make	Vowel-changing		tsukuru
meet	Vowel-changing	aimasu	
speak	Vowel-changing		hanasu
swim	Vowel-changing	oyogimasu	
use	Vowel-changing		tsukau
understand	Vowel-changing	wakarimasu	

play	Vowel-changing		asobu
run	Vowel-changing	hashirimasu	
do	Irregular		suru
go	Irregular	ikimasu	
come	Irregular		kuru

2. Translate these sentences into informal Japanese.

- a) Suzuki-san will come (from) now
- b) I will wake up at 6am tomorrow
- c) I am playing baseball on Sunday
- d) They meet at the library every Thursday
- e) I swim at the beach 3 days a week
- f) She sometimes teaches English to children

3. Pick 5 activities that you do on a regular basis and describe them in informal Japanese. Be sure to include how often you perform each activity, and also try to include where the activity takes place.

4. Pick 5 activities that you are planning to do in the next week and describe them in informal Japanese. Try to include information about where and when you will do each activity.

## Answers

1.

Verb in English	Verb type	Polite future/present	Informal future/present
to be (living)	Add-on	imasu	<b>iru</b>
sleep	Add-on	<b>nemasu</b>	neru
wake up	Add-on	okimasu	<b>okiru</b>
give	Add-on	<b>agemasu</b>	ageru
teach/tell	Add-on	oshiemasu	<b>oshieru</b>
to be (non-living)	Vowel-changing	<b>arimasu</b>	aru
buy	Vowel-changing	kaimasu	<b>kau</b>
read	Vowel-changing	<b>yomimasu</b>	yomu

write	Vowel-changing	kakimasu	<b>kaku</b>
make	Vowel-changing	<b>tsukurimasu</b>	tsukuru
meet	Vowel-changing	aimasu	<b>au</b>
speak	Vowel-changing	<b>hanashimasu</b>	hanasu
swim	Vowel-changing	oyogimasu	<b>oyogu</b>
use	Vowel-changing	<b>tsukaimasu</b>	tsukau
understand	Vowel-changing	wakarimasu	<b>wakaru</b>
play	Vowel-changing	<b>asobimasu</b>	asobu
run	Vowel-changing	hashirimasu	<b>hashiru</b>
do	Irregular	<b>shimasu</b>	suru
go	Irregular	ikimasu	<b>iku</b>
come	Irregular	<b>kimasu</b>	kuru

2.

- a) suzuki san wa ima kara kuru
- b) (watashi wa) ashita (no) asa roku ji ni okiru
- c) (watashi wa) nichiyōbi ni yakyū wo suru
- d) karera wa maishū no mokuyōbi ni toshokan de au
- e) (watashi wa) shū ni sankai umi de oyogu
- f) kanojo wa tokidoki kodomo ni eigo wo oshieru

- 3. Each sentence should include the frequency of the activity (using phrases from chapter 6.3), the location marked by the particle “de” (or “ni” if describing a destination and an action involving movement like “go” or “visit”), and the verb in the informal present/future tense.
- 4. Each sentence should include when the activity will take place (using phrases from chapter 6.1), the location marked by the particle “de” (or “ni” if describing a destination and an action involving movement like “go” or “visit”), and the verb in the informal present/future tense.

## 8.3 The past tense

### New vocabulary

Africa	afurika
lake	mizūmi
mall	mōru
pasta	pasuta

science	kagaku
sound/noise	oto
station	eki
wine	wain

The past tense can be used generally to describe any event that started and ended before the present moment. There are other ways to talk about events in the past, but until you learn those, the regular past tense will sufficiently cover you in just about any situation.

Converting verbs to the past tense is easy, except in the case of vowel-changing verbs in the informal form. We'll learn about that soon, but let's first look at the other forms of the past tense:

Verb type	Informal (dictionary)	Polite
<b>Add-on</b>	stem + ta	stem + mashita
<b>Vowel-changing</b>	(See below)	stem(i) + mashita

**Important:** The “i” in the “mashita” ending is usually silent, and this should therefore be pronounced “mashta”.

Here are some examples of verbs in the past tense:

Verb	Stem	Informal (dictionary)	Polite
<b>Add-on</b>		<i>stem + ta</i>	<i>stem + mashita</i>
eat	tabe	tabeta	tabemashita
watch / see / look	mi	mita	mimashita
<b>Vowel-changing</b>		(See below)	<i>stem(i) + mashita</i>
drink	nomi	-	nomimashita
listen	kiki	-	kikimashita
<b>Irregular</b>			
do	shi	shita	shimashita

go	iki	itta	ikimashita
come	ki	kita	kimashita

## Vowel-changing verbs in the informal past tense

As you know, the last vowel sound in the stem of a vowel-changing verb is different for different tenses and levels of politeness. In most cases, you just need to change that vowel and add something after it to convert a verb into another tense. For the informal past tense, however, **the whole ending changes according to the vowel-changing part of the verb stem.**

This means that for words like “nomu” and “kiku”, instead of just changing the vowel sound, the “mu” and “ku”, respectively, are actually removed, and a different ending is added in their place. This table shows how verbs are transformed into the informal past tense based on the last sound in the stem (shown with the “u” variation):

Verb stem(u) ending	Past tense ending
u, tsu, ru	tta
bu, mu, nu	nda
ku	ita
gu	ida
su	shita (pronounced “shta”)

**Important:** These only apply to vowel-changing verbs. Do not use these transformations with add-on verbs or irregular verbs.

Here are some examples of each:

English	Dictionary form	Remove the stem(u) ending	Replace with past tense ending	Informal past tense
use	tsukau	u	tta	tsukatta
wait	matsu	tsu	tta	matta
make	tsukuru	ru	tta	tsukutta
jump/fly	tobu	bu	nda	tonda



read	yomu	mu	nda	yonda
die	shinu	nu	nda	shinda
listen	kiku	ku	ita	kiita = kita
swim	oyogu	gu	ida	oyoida
fix	naosu	su	shita	naoshita

Although they are tricky, it is quite important to learn how to do these transformations. You may be able to avoid using the informal past tense in basic sentences by using the much simpler polite present tense instead, but the informal tenses are used frequently in more complex sentences, including polite ones.

There are also other verb conjugations that follow this pattern. One such conjugation is what is known as the “te-form”, an extremely useful verb form that will be introduced in the next chapter. Aside from the present/future tense and the past tense, the “te-form” is the most important verb conjugation in Japanese, so although it will take some practice and revision, you need to learn how to do these conversions.

Let's now look at some example sentences in the informal past tense.

I watched the football game  
(watashi wa) futtobōru no shiai wo mita

He waited at the station  
kare wa eki de matta

She drank tea  
kanojo wa ocha wo nonda

We arrived at the hotel  
watashi tachi wa hoteru ni tsuita

They went to the mall  
karera wa mōru ni itta

## Exercise

1. Complete the following table:

Verb in English	Verb type	Polite past	Informal past
to be (living)	Add-on	imashita	
sleep	Add-on	nemashita	
wake up	Add-on	okimashita	
give	Add-on	agemashita	
teach/tell	Add-on	oshiemashita	
to be (non-living)	Vowel-changing	arimashita	
buy	Vowel-changing	kaimashita	
read	Vowel-changing	yomimashita	
write	Vowel-changing	kakimashita	
make	Vowel-changing	tsukurimashita	
meet	Vowel-changing	aimashita	
speak	Vowel-changing	hanashimashita	
swim	Vowel-changing	oyogimashita	
use	Vowel-changing	tsukaimashita	
understand	Vowel-changing	wakarimashita	
play	Vowel-changing	asobimashita	
run	Vowel-changing	hashirimashita	
do	Irregular	shimashita	
go	Irregular	ikimashita	
come	Irregular	kimashita	

2. Translate these sentences into informal Japanese.

- a) I ate some delicious pasta today
- b) We watched a very funny movie yesterday
- c) My older brother slept on the sofa
- d) I bought a new shirt
- e) He waited at the station for 15 minutes
- f) I ran a marathon last year

- g) The children played at the park this morning
  - h) He drank a lot of wine yesterday
  - i) My cat died last week
  - j) I heard a strange noise
  - k) She swam in the lake with her friends
  - l) We spoke with the teacher on Tuesday
  - m) I studied science at university
  - n) She went to Africa with her mother last year
  - o) They came to the hotel by bus
3. Pick 5 activities that you have done recently and describe them in informal Japanese. Try to include information about where and when you did each activity.

## Answers

1.

Verb in English	Verb type	Polite past	Informal past
to be (living)	Add-on	imashita	<b>ita</b>
sleep	Add-on	nemashita	<b>neta</b>
wake up	Add-on	okimashita	<b>okita</b>
give	Add-on	agemashita	<b>ageta</b>
teach/tell	Add-on	oshiemashita	<b>oshieta</b>
to be (non-living)	Vowel-changing	arimashita	<b>atta</b>
buy	Vowel-changing	kaimashita	<b>katta</b>
read	Vowel-changing	yomimashita	<b>yonda</b>
write	Vowel-changing	kakimashita	<b>kaita</b>
make	Vowel-changing	tsukurimashita	<b>tsukutta</b>
meet	Vowel-changing	aimashita	<b>atta</b>
speak	Vowel-changing	hanashimashita	<b>hanashita</b>
swim	Vowel-changing	oyogimashita	<b>oyoida</b>
use	Vowel-changing	tsukaimashita	<b>tsukatta</b>
understand	Vowel-changing	wakarimashita	<b>wakatta</b>
play	Vowel-changing	asobimashita	<b>asonda</b>

run	Vowel-changing	hashirimashita	<b>hashitta</b>
do	Irregular	shimashita	<b>shita</b>
go	Irregular	ikimashita	<b>itta</b>
come	Irregular	kimashita	<b>kita</b>

2.

- a) kyō, (watashi wa) oishī pasuta wo tabeta
- b) kinō, (watashi tachi) wa totemo omoshiroi eiga wo mita
- c) ani wa sofa de neta
- d) (watashi wa) atarashī shatsu wo katta
- e) kare wa eki de 15 fun matta
- f) kyonen, (watashi wa) marason wo hashitta
- g) kesa, kodomo tachi wa kōen de asonda
- h) kinō, kare wa wain wo takusan nonda
- i) senshū, (watashi no) neko ga shinda
- j) (watashi wa) hen na oto wo kīta
- k) kanojo wa tomodachi to mizūmi de oyoida
- l) (watashi tachi wa) kayōbi ni sensei to hanashita
- m) (watashi wa) daigaku de kagaku wo benkyō shita
- n) kyonen, kanojo wa okāsan to afurika ni itta
- o) karera wa basu de hoteru ni kita

3. Each sentence should include when the activity took place (using phrases from chapter 6.1), the location marked by the particle “de” (or “ni” if describing a destination and an action involving movement like “go” or “visit”), and the verb in the informal past tense.

## 8.4 Verb negatives

### New vocabulary

advice	adobaisu
hair	kami no ke
present	purezento

seafood	shīfūdo
Spanish (language)	supeingo

To say that you didn't or won't do something in English, we generally just insert the word “not” where appropriate. In Japanese, we actually need to conjugate the verb into its negative form.

## Negative present/future tense

The following table shows how verbs are adapted to the negative form in the future/present tense:

Verb type	Informal negative present/future tense	Polite negative present/future tense
<b>Add-on</b>	stem + nai	stem + masen
<b>Vowel-changing</b>	stem(a) + nai	stem(i) + masen

For the informal negative present/future tense, there are two main exceptions to this rule for vowel-changing verbs:

1. When the the vowel-changing part of the stem is from the a-line, it is changed to “wa”, not “a”. This is simply because it's easier to say. For example, for the verb “tsukau”, it is much easier to say “tsukaw**ana**i” than “tsuka**a**nai”.
2. For the negative of the verb “aru”, the word “nai” is used, *not* “aranai”. Technically, this is a different word (as evidenced by the fact that they use different kanji), but from a usage standpoint, “nai” is effectively the negative of “aru”. In other tenses, “aru” changes in the same way as other vowel-changing verbs.

Here are some examples, including the irregular verbs:

Verb	Stem	Informal negative present/future tense	Polite negative present/future tense
<b>Add-on</b>		<i>stem + nai</i>	<i>stem + masen</i>
eat	tabe	tabenai	tabemasen
watch / see / look	mi	minai	mimasen
<b>Vowel-changing</b>		<i>stem(a) + nai</i>	<i>stem(i) + masen</i>
drink	nomi	nomanai	nomimasen

listen	kiki	kikanai	kikimasen
wash	arai	arawanai	araimasen
to be/to have	ari	nai	arimasen
<b>Irregular</b>			
do	shi	shinai	shimasen
go	iki	ikanai	ikimasen
come	ki	konai	kimasen

It is also not uncommon for people to make the informal negative form more polite by adding “desu”. For example, instead of “ikimasen”, someone might say “ikanai desu” to say that they won’t go somewhere. Either option is acceptable, but the “-masen” version is a little more proper.

Here are some example sentences using verbs in their informal negative present/future tense:

She doesn’t eat seafood  
kanojo wa shīfūdo wo tabenai

I don’t drink beer  
watashi wa bīru wo nomanai

He never washes his hair  
kare wa zenzen kami no ke wo arawanai

They’re not coming to the party  
karera wa pātī ni konai

## Exercise

1. Complete the following table:

Verb in English	Verb type	Dictionary form	Informal negative present/future tense
to be (living)	Add-on	iru	
sleep	Add-on	neru	
wake up	Add-on	okiru	

give	Add-on	ageru	
teach/tell	Add-on	oshieru	
to be (non-living)	Vowel-changing	aru	
buy	Vowel-changing	kau	
read	Vowel-changing	yomu	
write	Vowel-changing	kaku	
make	Vowel-changing	tsukuru	
meet	Vowel-changing	au	
speak	Vowel-changing	hanasu	
swim	Vowel-changing	oyogu	
use	Vowel-changing	tsukau	
understand	Vowel-changing	wakaru	
play	Vowel-changing	asobu	
run	Vowel-changing	hashiru	
do	Irregular	suru	
go	Irregular	iku	
come	Irregular	kuru	

2. Say and write down each of the following sentences in informal Japanese.

- a) I don't have a younger brother
- b) I'm not waking up at 6 am
- c) He won't buy a new wallet
- d) There isn't a TV in this house
- e) I don't understand Spanish
- f) She doesn't read the newspaper very much (often)
- g) They never cook
- h) I'm not going to work today

## Answers

1.

Verb in English	Verb type	Dictionary form	Informal negative present/ future tense
to be (living)	Add-on	iru	<b>inai</b>
sleep	Add-on	neru	<b>nenai</b>
wake up	Add-on	okiru	<b>okinai</b>
give	Add-on	ageru	<b>agenai</b>
teach/tell	Add-on	oshieru	<b>oshienai</b>
to be (non-living)	Vowel-changing	aru	<b>nai</b>
buy	Vowel-changing	kau	<b>kawanai</b>
read	Vowel-changing	yomu	<b>yomanai</b>
write	Vowel-changing	kaku	<b>kakanai</b>
make	Vowel-changing	tsukuru	<b>tsukuranai</b>
meet	Vowel-changing	au	<b>awanai</b>
speak	Vowel-changing	hanasu	<b>hanasanai</b>
swim	Vowel-changing	oyogu	<b>oyoganai</b>
use	Vowel-changing	tsukau	<b>tsukawanai</b>
understand	Vowel-changing	wakaru	<b>wakaranai</b>
play	Vowel-changing	asobu	<b>asobanai</b>
run	Vowel-changing	hashiru	<b>hashiranai</b>
do	Irregular	suru	<b>shinai</b>
go	Irregular	iku	<b>ikanai</b>
come	Irregular	kuru	<b>konai</b>

2.

- a) (watashi wa) otōto ga inai
- b) watashi wa asa rokuji ni okinai
- c) kare wa atarashī saifu wo kawanai
- d) kono ie ni terebi ga nai
- e) watashi wa supeingo ga wakaranai



- f) kanojo wa amari shinbun wo yomanai
- g) karera wa zenzen ryōri (wo) shinai
- h) kyō (watashi wa) shigoto ni ikanai

## Negative past tense

Changing a negative verb into the past tense is very straightforward in both the informal and polite forms. Here's how it's done:

Verb type	Informal negative past tense	Polite negative past tense
<b>Add-on</b>	stem + nakatta	stem + masen deshita
<b>Vowel-changing</b>	stem(a) + nakatta	stem(i) + masen deshita

**Important:** The “i” in “deshita” is silent, and this should therefore be pronounced “deshta”.

You can see that for the informal form, the “nai” from the present/future tense is simply changed to “nakatta”, just like with the “kunai” and “janai” used to make adjectives and nouns negative. In the polite form, we just add “deshita” to the end of the negative present/future tense.

Here are some examples of the negative past tense.

Verb	Stem	Informal negative past tense	Polite negative past tense
<b>Add-on</b>		<i>stem + nakatta</i>	<i>stem + masen deshita</i>
eat	tabe	tabenakatta	tabemasen deshita
watch / see / look	mi	minakatta	mimasen deshita
<b>Vowel-changing</b>		<i>stem(a) + nakatta</i>	<i>stem(i) + masen deshita</i>
drink	nomi	nomanakatta	nomimasen deshita
listen	kiki	kikanakatta	kikimasen deshita
wash	arai	arawanakatta	araimasen deshita
to be/to have	ari	nakatta	arimasen deshita
<b>Irregular</b>			
do	shi	shinakatta	shimasen deshita
go	iki	ikanakatta	ikimasen deshita
come	ki	konakatta	kimasen deshita

Just like in the present tense, the informal negative form is sometimes made more polite by adding “desu”. For example, instead of “tabemasen deshita”, you could say “tabenakatta desu” to say that you didn’t eat something. Again, either option is acceptable, but the “-masen deshita” version is a little more proper.

Here are some example sentences using verbs in their informal negative past tense:

She didn’t eat breakfast this morning  
kesa, kanojo wa asagohan wo tabenakatta

You didn’t listen to my advice  
(anata wa) watashi no adobaisu wo kikanakatta

I didn’t use her computer  
(watashi wa) konojo no konpyūta wo tsukawanakatta

He didn’t come to school today  
kyō kare wa gakkō ni konakatta

## Exercise

1. Say and write down each of the following sentences in informal Japanese.

- a) I didn’t give her a present
- b) He didn’t close the door
- c) There wasn’t a toilet in that shop (over there)
- d) They didn’t buy ice cream
- e) She didn’t make this bread
- f) I didn’t clean my teeth this morning
- g) We didn’t order this
- h) They didn’t go to the beach today

## Answers

1.

- a) (watashi wa) kanojo ni purezento wo agenakatta
- b) kare wa doa wo shimenakatta
- c) ano mise ni toire ga nakatta

- d) karera wa aisu kurīmu wo kawanakatta
- e) kanojo wa kono pan wo tsukuranakatta
- f) kesa, watashi wa ha wo migakanakatta
- g) (watashi tachi wa) kore wo chūmon shinakatta
- h) kyō, karera wa umi ni ikanakatta

## 8.5 The potential tense

### New vocabulary

again	mata
to cancel	kyanseru suru
kilometers	kiro
loud/noisy	urusai
piano	piano

to play (a stringed instrument)	hiku
scary	kowai
shoes	kutsu
staff	sutaffu
voice	koe

The potential tense allows us to talk about what a person is capable of; in other words, what they can or can't do. In English, we do this by inserting the word “can”, but Japanese requires us to conjugate the verb itself. This is fairly straightforward, but varies slightly for each verb type.

An important difference between Japanese and English is that in Japanese, the potential tense is rarely used when asking for permission or making a request. For example, in English, you might say, “Can I watch TV?” or “Can you please pass me the salt?”, but in Japanese, this would be an incorrect usage of this tense.<sup>3</sup> In Japanese, the potential tense is only ever used to describe a person's ability to perform the action.

The following table shows the rules for conjugating add-on and vowel-changing verbs into the potential tense.

Verb type	Informal (dictionary)	Polite
<b>Add-on</b>	stem + rareru	stem + raremasu
<b>Vowel-changing</b>	stem(e) + ru	stem(e) + masu

<sup>3</sup> Technically, this is incorrect English as well, since the words “may” and “would” should be used, respectively, instead of “can”, but it is common practice nonetheless.

Below are some examples of each type, including the three irregular verbs:

Verb type	Stem	Informal	Polite
<b>Add-on</b>		<i>stem + rareru</i>	<i>stem + raremasu</i>
eat	tabe	taberareru	taberaremasu
watch / see / look	mi	mirareru	miraremasu
<b>Vowel-changing</b>		<i>stem(e) + ru</i>	<i>stem(e) + masu</i>
drink	nomi	nomeru	nomemasu
listen	kiki	kikeru	kikemasu
<b>Irregular</b>			
do	shi	dekiru	dekimasu
go	iki	ikeru	ikemasu
come	ki	korareru / koreru	koraremasu / koremasu

For add-on verbs, you will often hear people leave off the “ra” part of the verb ending, so for example, instead of saying “taberareru”, they might say “tabereru”. Either is acceptable, but the version that includes “ra” is technically more correct.

There are a few verbs that are never used in this tense because it doesn’t make much sense. For example, “wakaru” (understand) is never used in this form because this verb already describes a capability - the ability to understand. In English, there is a subtle difference between saying “understand” and “can understand”, but these ultimately mean the same thing. In Japanese, you will never hear a person say “wakareru” to mean “can understand”. Another verb not used in the potential tense is “aru”, presumably because “aru” is used to mean “to be” for non-living things, and non-living things can’t have abilities.

## Exercise

1. Complete the following table.

Verb in English	Verb type	Dictionary form	Potential tense
to be (living)	Add-on	iru	
sleep	Add-on	neru	
wake up	Add-on	okiru	

give	Add-on	ageru	
teach/tell	Add-on	oshieru	
to be (non-living)	Vowel-changing	aru	<i>-not used-</i>
buy	Vowel-changing	kau	
read	Vowel-changing	yomu	
write	Vowel-changing	kaku	
make	Vowel-changing	tsukuru	
meet	Vowel-changing	au	
speak	Vowel-changing	hanasu	
swim	Vowel-changing	oyogu	
use	Vowel-changing	tsukau	
understand	Vowel-changing	wakaru	<i>-not used-</i>
play	Vowel-changing	asobu	
run	Vowel-changing	hashiru	
do	Irregular	suru	
go	Irregular	iku	
come	Irregular	kuru	

## Answers

1.

Verb in English	Verb type	Dictionary form	Potential tense
to be (living)	Add-on	iru	<b>irareru</b>
sleep	Add-on	neru	<b>nerareru</b>
wake up	Add-on	okiru	<b>okirareru</b>
give	Add-on	ageru	<b>agerareru</b>
teach/tell	Add-on	oshieru	<b>oshierareru</b>
to be (non-living)	Vowel-changing	aru	<i>-not used-</i>
buy	Vowel-changing	kau	<b>kaeru</b>
read	Vowel-changing	yomu	<b>yomeru</b>

write	Vowel-changing	kaku	<b>kakeru</b>
make	Vowel-changing	tsukuru	<b>tsukureru</b>
meet	Vowel-changing	au	<b>aeru</b>
speak	Vowel-changing	hanasu	<b>hanaseru</b>
swim	Vowel-changing	oyogu	<b>oyogeru</b>
use	Vowel-changing	tsukau	<b>tsukaeru</b>
understand	Vowel-changing	wakaru	<i>-not used-</i>
play	Vowel-changing	asobu	<b>asoberu</b>
run	Vowel-changing	hashiru	<b>hashireru</b>
do	Irregular	suru	<b>dekiru</b>
go	Irregular	iku	<b>ikeru</b>
come	Irregular	kuru	<b>korareru / koreru</b>

## Using the potential tense in a sentence

These tenses can generally be used in a sentence like any other, except for one small difference:

**For verbs in the potential tense, the object of the verb is marked using the particle “ga”, not “wo”.**

This is similar to the “I want to...” expression, in which the “wo” marking the object is also replaced by “ga”. Much like with the “I want to...” expression, it is not uncommon to hear “wo” used incorrectly with these verbs instead of “ga”. Ultimately, you’re not going to have any problems using “wo” with this verb tense, so don’t worry about it too much. Just be aware that “ga” is the correct particle to use.

Also be aware that in cases where “wo” wouldn’t normally appear, there is no need to forcibly insert “ga” into the sentence. There doesn’t have to be a “ga”, and particles like “ni” and “de” should be used in the same way they normally would. Only “wo”, where it appears, should be changed.

Here are some example sentences using this tense in a mixture of polite and informal Japanese:

I can be here (stay) until 8:00  
(watashi wa) hachi ji made koko ni irareru

He can play the piano  
kare wa piano ga hikemasu

They can use chopsticks  
karera wa ohashi ga tsukaeru

You can make a reservation online  
intānetto de yoyaku dekimasu

Can you come to tomorrow's meeting?  
(anata wa) ashita no kaigi ni koremasuka

## Exercise

1. Say aloud and write down each of the following sentences in either informal or polite Japanese, as indicated.
  - a) [polite] I can eat sushi
  - b) [informal] I can teach you English
  - c) [polite] Can you wake up at 7am?
  - d) [polite] I can speak Japanese
  - e) [polite] She can run 15km
  - f) [informal] He can read kanji
  - g) [informal] I can play until 6 o'clock
  - h) [polite] Can you play golf?
  - i) [informal] I can go to the post office in the afternoon
  - j) [informal] I can come by car next week

## Answers

1.
  - a) (watashi wa) sushi ga taberaremasu
  - b) (watashi wa) anata ni eigo ga oshierareru
  - c) asa shichi ji ni okiraremasu ka
  - d) (watashi wa) nihongo ga hanasemasu
  - e) kanojo wa jūgo kiro hashiremasu
  - f) kare wa kanji ga yomeru

- g) (watashi wa) roku ji made asoberu
- h) (anata wa) gorufu ga dekimasu ka
- i) (watashi wa) gogo ni yūbinkyoku ni ikeru
- j) raishū, (watashi wa) kuruma de koreru

## Other forms of the potential tense

Like the other tenses, the potential tense can also be expressed in the negative, the past, and the negative past tenses. Once you know the standard form of the potential tense outlined above, these other forms are very easy, as all verb types follow the same, basic rules. The following table summarizes the changes made to the standard potential tense to form each alternative, with examples:

Potential verb form	Informal	Polite
<b>Negative (can't)</b>	<i>Replace "ru" with "nai"</i>	<i>Change "masu" to "masen"</i>
taberareru	taberarenai	taberaremasen
nomeru	nomenai	nomemasen
dekiru	dekinai	dekimasen
<b>Past (was able to)</b>	<i>Replace "ru" with "ta"</i>	<i>Change "masu" to "mashita"</i>
taberareru	taberareta	taberaremashita
nomeru	nometa	nomemashita
dekiru	dekita	dekimashita
<b>Negative past (couldn't)</b>	<i>Replace "ru" with "nakatta"</i>	<i>Change "masu" to "masen deshita"</i>
taberareru	taberarenakatta	taberaremasen deshita
nomeru	nomenakatta	nomemasen deshita
dekiru	dekinakatta	dekimasen deshita

Here are some example sentences using these various forms of the potential tense.

I can't eat natto  
watashi wa nattō ga taberarenai

She can't speak English  
kanojo wa eigo ga hanasemasen



I was able to buy a new refrigerator  
atarashī reizōko ga kaeta

They were able to cancel their tickets  
karera wa chiketto ga kyanseru dekimashita

I couldn't sleep last night  
kinō no yoru nerarenakatta

He couldn't renew his contract  
kare wa keiyaku ga kōshin dekimasen deshita

## Exercise

1. Complete the following table.

Verb in English	Dictionary Form	Polite negative potential	Informal past potential	Informal negative past potential
to be (living)	iru	iraremasen		
sleep	neru		nerareta	
wake up	okiru			okirarenakatta
buy	kau	kaemasen		
read	yomu		yometa	
write	kaku			kakenakatta
make	tsukuru	tsukuremasen		
speak	hanasu		hanaseta	
play	asobu			asobenakatta
do	suru	dekimasen		
go	iku		iketa	
come	kuru			korenakatta

2. Say aloud and write down each of the following sentences in either polite or informal Japanese, as indicated:

- a) [Informal] I can't play golf
- b) [Informal] He can't eat sashimi

- c) [Polite] I can't go to the post office today
- d) [Polite] They can't open the window
- e) [Informal] The staff were able to speak English
- f) [Informal] We were able to meet at the airport
- g) [Polite] She was able to fix my phone
- h) [Polite] We were able to practice for 2 hours
- i) [Informal] She couldn't buy the shoes she wanted
- j) [Informal] I couldn't wake up this morning
- k) [Polite] He couldn't go to work last week
- l) [Polite] They couldn't come to the meeting

## Answers

1.

Verb in English	Dictionary Form	Polite negative potential	Informal past potential	Informal negative past potential
to be (living)	iru	iraremasen	<b>irareta</b>	<b>irarenakatta</b>
sleep	neru	<b>neraremasen</b>	nerareta	<b>nerarenakatta</b>
wake up	okiru	<b>okiraremasen</b>	<b>okirareta</b>	okirarenakatta
buy	kau	kaemasen	<b>kaeta</b>	<b>kaenakatta</b>
read	yomu	<b>yomemasen</b>	yometa	<b>yomenakatta</b>
write	kaku	<b>kakemasen</b>	<b>kaketa</b>	kakenakatta
make	tsukuru	tsukuremasen	<b>tsukureta</b>	<b>tsukurenakatta</b>
speak	hanasu	<b>hanasemasen</b>	hanaseta	<b>hanasenakatta</b>
play	asobu	<b>asobemasen</b>	<b>asobeta</b>	asobenakatta
do	suru	dekimasen	<b>dekita</b>	<b>dekinakatta</b>
go	iku	<b>ikemasen</b>	iketa	<b>ikenakatta</b>
come	kuru	<b>koremasen</b>	<b>koreta</b>	korenakatta

2.

- a) (watashi wa) gorufu ga dekinai
- b) kare wa sashimi ga taberarenai
- c) kyō (watashi wa) yūbinkyoku ni ikemasen

- d) karera wa mado ga akeraremasen
- e) sutaffu wa eigo ga hanaseta
- f) (watashi tachi wa) kūkō de aeta
- g) kanojo wa watashi no keitai ga naosemashita
- h) (watashi tachi) wa ni jikan renshū dekimashita
- i) kanojo wa hoshī kutsu ga kaenakatta
- j) kesa (watashi wa) okirarenakatta
- k) senshū kare wa shigoto ni ikemasendeshita
- l) karera wa kaigi ni koremasendeshita

### Watching, seeing, listening and hearing

A couple of verbs to be careful of here are “miru” and “kiku”. The reason for this is that in the potential tense, they refer to the person’s ability to watch or listen, not whether or not they can see or hear. It is the same as the difference in English between “I can watch” and “I can see”, or between “I can listen” and “I can hear”. In both cases, the former describes what the person is able to control themselves, while the latter describes factors that are somewhat out of their control.

The table below shows the different words used to express these ideas.

Verb	Positive	Negative
<b>can watch</b>	mirareru / miraremasu	mirarenai / miraremasen
<b>can see</b>	mieru / miemasu	mienai / miemasen
<b>can listen</b>	kikeru / kikemasu	kikenai / kikemasen
<b>can hear</b>	kikoeru / kikoemasu	kikoenai / kikoemasen

The following sentences demonstrate how each of these is used.

I can’t watch scary movies  
(watashi wa) kowai eiga ga **miraremasen**

I can’t see the TV  
(watashi wa) terebi ga **miemasen**

I can’t listen to loud music  
(watashi wa) urusai ongaku ga **kikemasen**

I can't hear the teacher  
(watashi wa) sensei ga **kikoemasen**

These can, of course, also be expressed in the past tense. This is done in the same way as for other verbs in the potential tense, with “-ta” and “-mashita” endings in the positive, and “-nakatta” and “-masen deshita” endings in the negative.

## Exercise

1. Say aloud and write down each of the following sentences in informal Japanese:

- a) We can watch this movie next week
- b) They can see the restaurant
- c) I can listen to music on my phone
- d) I can hear a strange sound
- e) She can't see the ball
- f) He couldn't watch yesterday's soccer match
- g) They can't hear my voice
- h) I can't listen to this boring music

## Answers

1.

- a) (watashi tachi wa) raishū kono eiga ga mirareru
- b) karera wa resutoran ga mieru
- c) (watashi wa) keitai de ongaku ga kikeru
- d) (watashi wa) hen na oto ga kikoeru
- e) kanojo wa bōru ga mienai
- f) kare wa kinō no sakkā no shiai ga mirarenakatta
- g) karera wa watashi no koe ga kikoenai
- h) (watashi wa) kono tsumaranai ongaku ga kikenai

## 8.6 Let's...

In Chapter 4.2, we looked briefly at the polite version of the “Let’s...” expression, in which verbs end with “-mashō”. As was touched on at that time, this can also be turned into a question meaning “Shall we...” by adding “ka” on the end: “-mashō ka”.

Truthfully, this expression does not literally mean “let’s...”, but rather is more accurately an expression of intent. In most cases, it just has a meaning equivalent to “Let’s do...”, but the “intent” interpretation will become more relevant later when you learn some other expressions that incorporate this one. For now, keep it simple and only use this expression when it makes sense to say “Let’s...” or “Shall we...”. Just be aware that you may hear it used in other ways in which “Let’s...” wouldn’t really be an appropriate translation.

As you would expect, there is also an informal form of this expression. The following table shows how to create the “Let’s...” expression for add-on and vowel-changing verbs in both informal and polite Japanese.

Verb type	Informal (dictionary)	Polite
<b>Add-on</b>	stem + yō	stem + mashō
<b>Vowel-changing</b>	stem(ō)	stem(i) + mashō

Below are some examples of each type, including the three irregular verbs:

Verb type	Stem	Informal (dictionary)	Polite
<b>Add-on</b>		<i>stem + yō</i>	<i>stem + mashō</i>
eat	tabe	tabeyō	tabemashō
watch / see / look	mi	miyō	mimashō
<b>Vowel-changing</b>		<i>stem(ō)</i>	<i>stem(i) + masu</i>
drink	nomi	nomō	nomimashō
listen	kiki	kikō	kikimashō
<b>Irregular</b>			
do	shi	shiyō	shimashō
go	iki	ikō	ikimashō
come	ki	koyō	kimashō

Here are some example sentences of this expression in informal language:

Let's eat ramen today  
kyō, rāmen wo **tabeyō**

Let's drink some water  
mizu wo **nomō**

Let's go to Kyoto next year  
rainen, kyōto ni **ikō**

Shall we come here again?  
mata koko ni **koyō** ka

## Exercise

1. Complete the following table:

Verb in English	Verb type	Dictionary form	Informal "Let's..."
to be (living)	Add-on	iru	
sleep	Add-on	neru	
wake up	Add-on	okiru	
give	Add-on	ageru	
teach/tell	Add-on	oshieru	
to be (non-living)	Vowel-changing	aru	
buy	Vowel-changing	kau	
read	Vowel-changing	yomu	
write	Vowel-changing	kaku	
make	Vowel-changing	tsukuru	
meet	Vowel-changing	au	
speak	Vowel-changing	hanasu	
swim	Vowel-changing	oyogu	
use	Vowel-changing	tsukau	
understand	Vowel-changing	wakaru	
play	Vowel-changing	asobu	

run	Vowel-changing	hashiru	
do	Irregular	suru	
go	Irregular	iku	
come	Irregular	kuru	

2. Say aloud and write down each of the following sentences in informal Japanese:

- a) Let's give her this beautiful dress
- b) Shall we wake up at 6:30 tomorrow?
- c) Let's meet at the station tonight
- d) Let's make okonomiyaki
- e) Shall we use my computer?
- f) Shall we study Japanese tomorrow?
- g) Let's go by bus
- h) Let's come to Japan again next year

## Answers

1.

Verb in English	Verb type	Dictionary form	Informal "Let's..."
to be (living)	Add-on	iru	iyō
sleep	Add-on	neru	neyō
wake up	Add-on	okiru	okiyō
give	Add-on	ageru	ageyō
teach/tell	Add-on	oshieru	oshieyō
to be (non-living)	Vowel-changing	aru	arō
buy	Vowel-changing	kau	kaō
read	Vowel-changing	yomu	yomō
write	Vowel-changing	kaku	kakō
make	Vowel-changing	tsukuru	tsukurō
meet	Vowel-changing	au	aō
speak	Vowel-changing	hanasu	hanasō
swim	Vowel-changing	oyogu	oyogō

use	Vowel-changing	tsukau	<b>tsukaō</b>
understand	Vowel-changing	wakaru	<b>wakarō</b>
play	Vowel-changing	asobu	<b>asobō</b>
run	Vowel-changing	hashiru	<b>hashirō</b>
do	Irregular	suru	<b>shiyō</b>
go	Irregular	iku	<b>ikō</b>
come	Irregular	kuru	<b>koyō</b>

2.

- a) kanojo ni kono utsukushī wanpīsu wo ageyō
- b) ashita (no) rokujihan ni okiyō ka
- c) kon'ya eki de aō
- d) okonomiyaki wo tsukurō
- e) watashi no konpyūta wo tsukaō ka
- f) ashita nihongo wo benkyō shiyō ka
- g) basu de ikō
- h) rainen mata nihon ni koyō

## 8.7 Transitive and intransitive verbs

### New vocabulary

candle	rōsoku
elevator	erebēta
hand	te
lights	denki

milk	miruku / gyūnyū
stamp	kitte
strong	tsuyoi
wind	kaze

The concept of transitive and intransitive verbs exists in English, but it is not as important as in Japanese, and you are likely not aware of it. It's important in Japanese because a large number of verbs have two alternate versions - a transitive one, and an intransitive one. In order to use the correct one, you need to understand the difference between them.



## What are transitive and intransitive verbs?

Transitive verbs are those that require an object. This means that the person or thing performing the action must be doing that action to something else. For example, if I buy a sandwich, then I am performing the act of buying on that sandwich. The sandwich is the object, and since the act of buying requires that something is bought, “buy” is a transitive verb.

Intransitive verbs, on the other hand, do not take an object. The person or thing performing the action does it alone, and nothing else is directly affected. For example, if I sleep, then I don’t *sleep something* in the same way that I would *buy something*. I can “buy a sandwich”, but I can’t “sleep a bed”. “Sleep” does not take an object, and is therefore an intransitive verb.

Some verbs are both transitive and intransitive. They can be used as either, depending on the situation. For example, the following two sentences are both grammatically correct:

I opened the door.

The door opened.

In the first sentence, “open” is used as a transitive verb, with “I” as the subject and the door as the object. I performed the act of opening on the door.

In the second sentence, however, “open” is used as an intransitive verb. This time, the door is the subject, and there is no object. The door is performing the act of opening by itself. Of course, there has to be something that caused the door to open, but all we are concerned about here is the *expression* of what happened, not what actually happened.

The important point here is that even though each sentence uses the verb “open” in a different way, the word itself stays the same.

Unfortunately, Japanese isn’t quite so simple. A large number of verbs in Japanese actually have a transitive version and a separate intransitive version. “Open” is one of these. Here are our example sentences again with Japanese translations.

I opened the door

(watashi ga) doa wo **akemashita**

The door opened

doa ga **akimashita**

As you can see, the first sentence uses “akemashita”, a transitive verb, while the second uses “akimashita”, which is intransitive. Although they both mean “open”, and both use the same kanji when written in Japanese, these words have subtly different nuances, and cannot be interchanged. This means we need to learn what they are and when to use each alternative.

## Using transitive and intransitive verbs

The key difference between a transitive and intransitive verb is who or what is performing the action. If the person or thing is performing the action on something else, then the verb should be transitive. If instead they are performing the action by themselves, the intransitive verb should be used. Here are some examples that demonstrate this:

I <b>open</b> the door	watashi ga doa wo <b>akeru</b>
The door <b>opens</b>	doa ga <b>aku</b>
I <b>close</b> the window	watashi ga mado wo <b>shimeru</b>
The window <b>closes</b>	mado ga <b>shimaru</b>
I <b>drop</b> the pen	watashi ga pen wo <b>otosu</b>
The pen <b>falls</b>	pen ga <b>ochiru</b>
I <b>move</b> the car	watashi ga kuruma wo <b>ugokasu</b>
The car <b>moves</b>	kuruma ga <b>ugoku</b>
I <b>take/spend</b> time	watashi ga jikan wo <b>kakeru</b>
It <b>takes</b> time	jikan ga <b>kakaru</b>
I <b>raise</b> my hand	watashi ga te wo <b>ageru</b>
The elevator <b>goes up</b>	erebēta ga <b>agaru</b>
I <b>put</b> the book in the box	watashi ga hon wo hako ni <b>ireru</b>
I <b>enter</b> the room	watashi ga heya ni <b>hairu</b>
I <b>turn on</b> the lights	watashi ga denki wo <b>tsukeru</b>
The lights <b>come on</b>	denki ga <b>tsuku</b>

I <b>turn off</b> the lights	watashi ga denki wo <b>kesu</b>
The lights <b>go out</b>	denki ga <b>kieru</b>
I <b>collect</b> stamps	watashi ga kitte wo <b>atsumeru</b>
People <b>gather</b>	hito ga <b>atsumaru</b>

### Using “wa” and “ga”

In the example sentences above, it is also possible to say “watashi wa” instead of “watashi ga”. The “ga” alternative was used here for the sake of easy comparison with the intransitive verb sentences. As mentioned earlier, the difference between “wa” and “ga” is subtle and quite complex, and will be explained in detail in Chapter 11.3.

The important thing to notice here is the particles used. Every sentence includes the subject-defining particle “ga”, and in all cases it is attached to the person or thing performing the action. The difference between each pair of sentences is whether or not there is something else that is affected by that action, as defined by “wo”.

For example, in the sentence “watashi ga denki wo kesu”, the person speaking is saying that they are the ones turning the lights off. “I” am taking action, therefore “watashi” is followed by “ga”. By comparison, when the sentence is “denki ga kieru”, the lights are turning off by themselves. The lights are taking action, so “denki” is followed by “ga”.

Just as importantly, there is an “wo” in all of the sentences that use transitive verbs, but not in the ones using intransitive verbs. You’ll recall that “wo” defines the object of a sentence - the thing being acted upon. Since intransitive verbs do not take objects, there can never be an “wo” connected directly with an intransitive verb. By definition, only transitive verbs can be connected to the particle “wo” because only transitive verbs take objects.

One thing to be careful of, though, is that even when there is an object, it won’t always be included in the sentence. If it is understood from context, it will likely be omitted, together with the particle “wo”. Even when that’s the case, a transitive verb should be used because what’s important is not whether the sentence contains an object, but whether or not it could.

For example, if we’re talking about the door, and questioning why it is open, I could say “kare ga aketa”. Although I have not mentioned the object or used the particle “wo”,

I must use the transitive verb because the person who performed the act of opening, “kare”, performed it on the door, as is understood from the context. If I mistakenly said “kare ga aita”, that would imply that he himself opened, which makes no sense at all.

The exception to this is with verbs in the “I want to...” form and the potential tense. For these, the particle “wo” should be changed to “ga”, so a sentence like, “I want to open the door”, would be, “watashi wa doa ga aketai desu”, while “I can open the door” would be “watashi wa doa ga akeraremasu”. Note that in these cases, “watashi” is usually followed by “wa” because it’s rare for “ga” to appear twice in the same clause. Again, the choice between “wa” and “ga” is quite tricky and will be covered in more detail in Chapter 11.3.

In summary, when looking at transitive and intransitive verbs, the particles are important, but what matters most is that you understand the true difference between the meanings of these two verb types. Once you understand this and get used to using them, differentiating between their uses will become second nature.

## Differentiating between transitive and intransitive verbs

Although there are no specific rules for identifying these verb types, there are a few way you can generally tell whether a verb is transitive or intransitive. Take another look at the verbs from the examples in the previous section:

Transitive		Intransitive	
open	akeru	open	aku
close	shimeru	close	shimaru
drop	otosu	fall	ochiru
move	ugokasu	move	ugoku
take/spend (money, time)	kakeru	take (money, time)	kakaru
raise	ageru	go up	agaru
put (in)	ireru	enter	hairu
turn on	tsukeru	come on	tsuku
turn off, extinguish	kesu	go off	kieru
collect	atsumeru	gather	atsumaru

Looking at these, you may notice the following patterns:

- Transitive verbs often have an “e” sound and are add-on verbs (shimeru, kakeru, ageru, atsumeru, akeru, ireru, tsukeru)

- Intransitive verbs often have an “a” sound (shimaru, kakaru, agaru, atsumaru), or are vowel-changing verbs (aku, hairu, tsuku)
- Generally, only transitive verbs end in “su” (otosu, ugokasu, kesu)

These are not definite rules by any means, but they can be useful when trying to identify a verb's type or for guessing one version of the verb based off the other.

## Exercise

1. Say aloud and write down each of the following sentences in polite Japanese. Unlike in the examples above, use the particle “wa” to mark words representing people.
  - a) She opened the window
  - b) The door didn't close
  - c) He dropped his phone in the toilet
  - d) I can't move this desk
  - e) It took 3 hours by bus
  - f) We went up to his office by elevator
  - g) He put the milk in the refrigerator
  - h) I'll turn the TV on
  - i) The candle went out by (due to) the strong wind
  - j) They gather in the library every Tuesday

## Answers

1.
  - a) kanojo wa mado wo akemashita
  - b) doa ga shimarimasen deshita
  - c) kare wa keitai wo toire ni otoshimashita, OR  
kare wa toire ni keitai wo otoshimashita
  - d) (watashi wa) kono tsukue ga ugokasemasen
  - e) basu de sanjikan (ga) kakarimashita
  - f) (watashi tachi wa) erebēta de kare no ofisu ni agarimashita
  - g) kare wa miruku/gyūnyū wo reizōko ni iremashita, OR  
kare wa reizōko ni miruku/gyūnyū wo iremashita
  - h) (watashi wa) terebi wo tsukemasu
  - i) tsuyoi kaze de rōsoku ga kiemashita
  - j) karera wa maishū no kayōbi ni toshokan de atsumarimasu



## Chapter 9

# The te-form

The te-form is a special verb form that is used in a wide range of situations, such as continuous tenses, commands and requests, and when linking multiple actions together in a sequence. In this chapter, we will look at how the te-form is created, and some of the main ways in which it can be used.

When generally referring to verbs in the te-form, the following notation will be used: verb(te).

### 9.1 Converting to the te-form

#### New vocabulary

die	shinu
have, hold, carry, own	motsu
live, reside	sumu
take off (clothing)	nugu
take, pick up	toru

Verbs can be converted into the te-form in much the same way as they are converted into the informal past tense. In fact, for all verb types, the only difference is that the last

sound is “te” or “de” instead of “ta” or “da”. The te-form is not technically a tense, and there is only one version, with no differentiation between polite and informal.

Add-on verbs and irregular verbs in the te-form look like this:

Verb type	Dictionary form	Te-form
<b>Add-on</b>	stem + ru	stem + te
<b>Irregular</b>		
do	suru	shite
go	iku	itte
come	kuru	kite

For vowel-changing verbs, we do the same transformations as for the informal past tense, but using “te” and “de” instead of “ta” and “da”.

Verb stem ending	Te-form ending
u, tsu, ru	tte
bu, mu, nu	nde
ku	ite
gu	ide
su	shite (pronounced “shte”)

Here are some examples:

English	Dictionary form	Stem ending	Te-form ending	Te-form
meet	au	u	tte	atte
hold/carry	motsu	tsu	tte	motte
take/pick up	toru	ru	tte	totte
play	asobu	bu	nde	asonde
live/reside	sumu	mu	nde	sunde
die	shinu	nu	nde	shinde
walk	aruku	ku	ite	aruite
take off (clothes)	nugu	gu	ide	nuide
talk	hanasu	su	shite	hanashite



## Exercise

1. Complete the following table:

Verb in English	Verb type	Dictionary form	Te-form
to be (living)	Add-on	iru	
sleep	Add-on	neru	
wake up	Add-on	okiru	
give	Add-on	ageru	
teach/tell	Add-on	oshieru	
to be (non-living)	Vowel-changing	aru	
buy	Vowel-changing	kau	
read	Vowel-changing	yomu	
write	Vowel-changing	kaku	
make	Vowel-changing	tsukuru	
meet	Vowel-changing	au	
speak	Vowel-changing	hanasu	
swim	Vowel-changing	oyogu	
use	Vowel-changing	tsukau	
understand	Vowel-changing	wakaru	
play	Vowel-changing	asobu	
run	Vowel-changing	hashiru	
do	Irregular	suru	
go	Irregular	iku	
come	Irregular	kuru	

## Answers

1.

Verb in English	Verb type	Dictionary form	Te-form
to be (living)	Add-on	iru	<b>ite</b>
sleep	Add-on	neru	<b>nete</b>

wake up	Add-on	okiru	<b>okite</b>
give	Add-on	ageru	<b>agete</b>
teach/tell	Add-on	oshieru	<b>oshiete</b>
to be (non-living)	Vowel-changing	aru	<b>atte</b>
buy	Vowel-changing	kau	<b>katte</b>
read	Vowel-changing	yomu	<b>yonde</b>
write	Vowel-changing	kaku	<b>kaite</b>
make	Vowel-changing	tsukuru	<b>tsukutte</b>
meet	Vowel-changing	au	<b>atte</b>
speak	Vowel-changing	hanasu	<b>hanashite</b>
swim	Vowel-changing	oyogu	<b>oyoide</b>
use	Vowel-changing	tsukau	<b>tsukatte</b>
understand	Vowel-changing	wakaru	<b>wakatte</b>
play	Vowel-changing	asobu	<b>asonde</b>
run	Vowel-changing	hashiru	<b>hashitte</b>
do	Irregular	suru	<b>shite</b>
go	Irregular	iku	<b>itte</b>
come	Irregular	kuru	<b>kite</b>

## 9.2 Continuous tenses

### New vocabulary

to belong	shozoku suru
big	ōki
company	kaisha
to have (a pet)	kau

homework	shukudai
HR department	jinjibu
to love	ai suru
to work	hataraku

The first use of the te-form we will look at is to talk about actions that are currently taking place at a given moment, such as in the sentences, “I am watching TV”, or “I was watching TV at 8 o’clock yesterday”. This is done by adding the appropriate form of the verb “imasu” (“iru”) after the main verb in the te-form. Everything else in the sentence remains the same.

Verb tense	Informal	Polite
Present continuous	verb(te) + iru	verb(te) + imasu
Past continuous	verb(te) + ita	verb(te) + imashita

These tenses can generally be used any time to talk about something that is in progress or continuing, in a very similar way to how they are used in English. Here are some examples in both informal and polite language:

**I am watching** TV

watashi wa terebi wo **mite iru**

watashi wa terebi wo **mite imasu**

**He is eating** sushi

kare wa sushi wo **tabete iru**

kare wa sushi wo **tabete imasu**

**She was playing** tennis

kanojo wa tenisu wo **shite ita**

kanojo wa tenisu wo **shite imashita**

**They were drinking** tea

karera wa ocha wo **nonde ita**

karera wa ocha wo **nonde imashita**

You can see from these examples that the te-form of the verb is much like the “-ing” form of English verbs. They are similar, as both allow us to use certain verbs together with other verbs, but they are not exactly the same, so try not to remember them as such.

Also, there is an important difference to English that should be noted. In English, it is possible to use the present continuous tense to talk about your plans. For example, you could say, “I am eating sushi tomorrow with my friends”. Even though the verbs in this example are “am eating”, which is the present continuous tense, this sentence is clearly referring to the future, not what is happening right now. It is essentially the same as saying “I will eat sushi tomorrow”.

*You cannot do this in Japanese.* You cannot say, “ashita, watashi wa tomodachi to sushi wo tabete imasu”. This tense is not used in this way in Japanese. Instead, you would

just use the present/future tense and say, “ashita, watashi wa tomodachi to sushi wo tabemasu”.

There are circumstances where you can use the present continuous tense to refer to something taking place in the future, but it is more like saying, “I will be eating...”. It is relatively uncommon and not worth thinking about at this stage, so we won’t go into it here. As a general rule, just don’t use the present continuous tense to talk about the future in Japanese until you are more familiar with it.

## Negative continuous tenses

Just as with other tenses, these too can be expressed in the negative form to describe things that you or someone else isn’t doing. To do this, we just change the verb “iru” to its negative form, like so:

Verb tense	Informal negative	Polite negative
Present continuous	verb(te) + inai	verb(te) + imasen
Past continuous	verb(te) + inakatta	verb(te) + imasen deshita

The examples below demonstrate the use of negative continuous tenses.

They’re not doing their homework  
karera wa shukudai wo **shite inai**

She’s not listening  
kanojo wa **kite imasen**

He wasn’t watching the game  
kare wa shiai wo **mite inakatta**

I wasn’t waiting  
(watashi wa) **matte imasen deshita**

## Differences between continuous tenses in English and Japanese

One area in which Japanese and English continuous tenses differ is with certain verbs that talk about the current situation. English has a group of verbs called “non-continuous” or “stative” verbs, which are often used in the regular present tense even when referring to an action that is currently in progress.

For example, it is normal to say “I live in Japan” for the present, or “I lived in Japan” for the past, even though the act of “living” in Japan is, or was, in progress. It is possible to use the continuous tense and say, “I am/was living in Japan”, but this doesn’t have quite the same meaning, and isn’t the standard way of expressing this basic idea in English.

However, actions that are represented by non-continuous verbs in English are usually expressed using continuous tenses in Japanese. The phrase, “I live in Japan”, in Japanese would be, “watashi wa nihon ni **sunde iru**”. To directly translate English and use the present/future tense to say, “watashi wa nihon ni sumimasu”, would instead refer to future plans to live in Japan, not the current situation.

Here are some other verbs that fall into this category, along with example sentences in a mixture of polite and informal speech.

English verb	English example	Japanese verb	Japanese example
to love	I <b>love</b> you	ai suru	(watashi wa anata wo) <b>ai shite iru</b>
to work	He <b>works</b> at the post office	hataraku	kare wa yūbinkyoku de <b>hataraitte imasu</b>
to own/have	I <b>have</b> a blue motorbike	motsu	(watashi wa) aoi baiku wo <b>motte iru</b>
to have (a pet)	She <b>has</b> 3 dogs	kau*	kanojo wa inu wo sanbiki <b>katte iru</b>
to belong	They <b>belong</b> to the HR department	shozoku suru	karera wa jinjibu ni <b>shozoku shite imasu</b>

\* The verb “kau”, meaning “to have (a pet)”, looks the same as the word for “buy”, but it is a different word that uses a different kanji when written in Japanese.

Ultimately, the key to using this correctly is to avoid translating from English, and instead think about whether or not the action is of an ongoing nature. For all verbs in Japanese, if the action began at some point in the past, and has not yet finished, then the present continuous tense should be used.

## Exercise

- Say aloud and write down each of the following sentences in informal Japanese:
  - She is writing a book

- b) Taro is reading the newspaper
  - c) I was sleeping on the sofa
  - d) He was using the company's computer
  - e) You're not listening to me
  - f) They're not speaking (in) English
  - g) He wasn't waiting at the station
  - h) Miho wasn't watching
  - i) She has a big dog
  - j) He doesn't love her
2. Think of 5 things that other people are doing right now and describe them using polite Japanese. Try to include information about where each person is doing that activity.

## Answers

- 1.
- a) kanojo wa hon wo kaite iru
  - b) Tarō wa shinbun wo yonde iru
  - c) (watashi wa) sofa de nete ita
  - d) kare wa kaisha no konpyūtā wo tsukatte ita
  - e) anata wa watashi wo kīte inai
  - f) karera wa eigo de hanashite inai
  - g) kare wa eki de matte inakatta
  - h) Miho wa mite inakatta
  - i) kanojo wa ōkī inu wo katte iru
  - j) kare wa kanojo wo ai shite inai
2. Each sentence should include (where possible) the location marked by the particle “de” (or “ni” if describing a destination and an action involving movement like “go” or “visit”), and the verb in the te-form followed by “imasu”.

## 9.3 Commands and requests

### New vocabulary

a bit	chotto
article	kiji
to do ones best, work hard	ganbaru
to hurry	isogu
phone number	denwa bangō

Another very common use of the te-form is in commanding and requesting people to perform actions, such as, “Come here!”, or “Come here, please”. To do this, simply end the sentence with the verb in the te-form for a command, or add “kudasai” (please) to soften it and make it a request instead. There is usually no topic or subject in these types of sentences because commands and requests, by their very nature, are usually directed at the person being spoken to, hence the person who should perform the action is obvious.

Here are some example sentences:

Look at this!  
kore wo **mite**

Hurry up!  
**isoide**

Come here  
koko ni **kite**

Do your best/Good luck  
**ganbatte**

Please take off your shoes  
kutsu wo **nuide kudasai**

Please wait  
**matte kudasai**

Please wait a bit  
chotto **matte kudasai**

### **Ganbatte!**

The word “ganbatte” is worth mentioning because it is very common, yet there isn’t really an equivalent word in English. It is the te-form of the verb “ganbaru”, which means something like “to do your best”, or “to work hard”. Japanese people are often told that the English translation is “to fight”, and for this reason you might occasionally hear them chanting or yelling “fai-to!” at sporting events.

In any case, “ganbatte” is usually said to a person as a form of encouragement before or during something challenging, such as a competition, an exam, or even just everyday work. Since it is often said before the event, it is sometimes translated to English as “Good luck”, although “Do your best” or “Work hard” is usually more appropriate, since effort, not luck, is what is being encouraged. In its regular form, “ganbaru” or “ganbarimasu” is often said by a person about to take on a challenge, as if to say, “I will do my best”.

A common alternative way to soften commands in colloquial speech that allows you to avoid the formality of the word “kudasai” is to add “ne” after the te-form verb. For example, “chotto matte ne” would be a casual way of saying “wait a second”, while “ganbatte ne” is a more relaxed way to encourage someone. You will likely hear this a lot, but remember that it should only be used in informal settings, or when the person speaking is of a higher standing than the person being spoken to.

### **Exercise**

1. Say aloud and write down each of the following sentences in Japanese:
  - a) Wake up!
  - b) Please return home by 6 o'clock
  - c) Read this article



- d) Please tell (teach) me your phone number
- e) Close the door!
- f) Please speak in Japanese
- g) Wash your hands over there
- h) Please gather in the library at 3 o'clock

## Answers

1.

- a) okite!
- b) rokuji made ni (ie ni) kaette kudasai
- c) kono kiji wo yonde
- d) denwa bangō wo oshiete kudasai
- e) doa wo shimete!
- f) nihongo de hanashite kudasai
- g) asoko de te wo aratte
- h) sanji ni toshokan de atsumatte kudasai

## 9.4 Linking multiple actions together in a sequence

### New vocabulary

bullet train	shinkansen
Chinese (language)	chūgokugo
to go for a walk	sanpo suru
head	atama
to hit, bump (transitive)	butsukeru

to quit	yameru
to sell	uru
to stand up	tatsu
the world	sekai
to wear, put on (lower body)	haku

We can use the te-form to talk about multiple actions that take place together or in a sequence. When describing multiple actions together, the te-form is used for all of the verbs except the last one. The tense used for the last verb then applies to all of the preceding verbs that appeared in the te-form. There is no limit to the number of actions that can be linked together, and this can be done in virtually any tense, as long as it makes logical sense. Here are some examples:

He went to the convenience store and bought a sandwich  
kare wa konbini ni **itte** sandoicchi wo kaimashita

This morning, I woke up, ate breakfast and cleaned my teeth  
kesa, watashi wa **okite**, asagohan wo **tabete**, ha wo migakimashita

I want to go to Japan and ride the bullet train  
(watashi wa) nihon ni **itte** shinkansen ni noritai desu

When the actions occurring together happen in a sequence, we can further emphasize the order of the different actions by including the particle “kara” after the te-form of the verb. This is like saying “and then” or “before”, as shown in the examples below. Just be aware that this shouldn’t be used too many times in one sentence or it becomes repetitive.

I went to the library and then I went to school  
(watashi wa) toshokan ni **itte kara** gakkō ni ikimashita

Please take your shoes off before going (entering) inside  
kutsu wo **nuide kara** naka ni haitte kudasai

It is also possible to link sentences together when the verb is “desu”, albeit in a fairly limited way. The te-form of “desu” is “de”, and this can be added after a noun in place of “desu” to allow one sentence to lead into another. Unlike other verbs, however, this does not describe actions occurring in a sequence because “desu” only describes the state of being, not an actual action. Here are some examples of “de” being used in place of “desu” to link two sentences together.

This is a pen, and that is a pencil  
kore wa pen **de**, sore wa enpitsu desu

Today is fine (weather), and it will rain tomorrow  
kyō wa hare **de**, ashita ame ga furimasu

## Exercise

1. Say aloud and write down each of the following sentences in informal or polite Japanese, as indicated:
  - a) [Informal] He stood up and hit his head
  - b) [Polite] She put on shoes and went to the mall
  - c) [Informal] We ate dinner and watched a movie, then went for a walk in the park
  - d) [Polite] Next year, I will go to China and study Chinese
  - e) [Informal] Tomorrow, we will go to Akihabara and buy a new TV
  - f) [Informal] They're eating yakiniku and drinking beer
  - g) [Polite] I want to sell my car and buy a motorbike
  - h) [Polite] I want to quit my job and travel the world
  - i) [Polite] Let's go to Shinjuku and do karaoke
  - j) [Informal] Let's return home and go to sleep
  - k) [Polite] This is my car, and that (over there) is his motorbike

## Answers

1.
  - a) kare wa tatte atama wo butsuketa
  - b) kanojo wa kutsu wo haite mōru in ikimashita
  - c) (watashi tachi wa) bangohan wo tabete eiga wo mite kara, kōen de sanpo shita
  - d) rainen (watashi wa) chūgoku ni itte chūgokugo wo benkyō shimasu
  - e) ashita, (watashi tachi wa) akihabara ni itte atarashī terebi wo kau
  - f) karera wa yakiniku wo tabete būru wo nonde iru
  - g) (watashi wa) kuruma wo utte baiku ga kaitai desu
  - h) (watashi wa) shigoto wo yamete sekai ga ryokō shitai desu
  - i) shinjuku ni itte karaoke wo shimashō
  - j) ie ni kaette neyō
  - k) kore wa watashi no kuruma de, are wa kare no baiku desu

## 9.5 Describing the means by which an action is completed

### New vocabulary

to be late	okureru
candy, sweets	okashi
to do exercise	undō suru
island	shima
to kick	keru
to lose weight	yaseru

to oversleep, sleep in	nebō suru
to pass (a test)	gōkaku suru
to put on weight, get fat	futoru
rich	okanemochi
sick	byōki

Similarly to how we can link actions together that occur in a sequence, we can also link actions together to imply that one action enabled another to occur, or to describe the means by which an action takes place. In other words, it can be used to show cause and effect, much like saying “I did A by doing B” or “I did A and B happened”. Here are some examples:

He opened the door by kicking it  
kare wa doa wo **kette** akemashita

They became rich by selling cameras  
karera wa kamera wo **utte** okanemochi ni narimashita

She lost weight by exercising every day  
kanojo wa mainichi **undō shite** yasemashita

I ate lots of candy and became sick  
okashi wo takusan **tabete** byōki ni narimashita

In each of these examples, you can see that the first action leads directly to the second action, either as the means by which it occurs (eg. kicking the door open), or as its cause (eg. becoming sick due to eating lots of candy).

You'll no doubt notice that these sentences appear exactly the same as those in the previous section that showed actions in a sequence. The truth is, both instances describe

actions that occur together or in a sequence; the difference just comes down to the interpretation of the effect of one action on the other.

In Chapter 2, we learned about the particle “de”, and how it is used to define either the location where an action takes place, or the means by which an action is completed. In many ways, the te-form is like the verb version of the particle “de”. They cannot always be used in the same ways, but if you think of the particle “de” as describing the means by which an action takes place, then using a verb in the te-form has the same effect. The only difference is that the means is in the form of a verb, not a noun.

One very common way in which verbs are used together like this is when describing the mode of transportation in the form of a verb. Rather than just saying something like, “I walked to the park”, in Japanese, the verb describing the movement, such as “go” or “come” is usually included as well. The following examples demonstrate this:

I walked to the park  
(watashi wa) kōen ni **aruite** ikimashita

He ran here  
kare wa koko ni **hashitte** kimashita

She rode her bike to school  
kanojo wa gakkō ni jitensha ni **notte** ikimashita

One way in which the te-form is very similar to the particle “de” is that it makes the word order more flexible. Normally, the verb comes at the end of a sentence or clause, but when a verb is in the te-form and used to describe the means by which an action occurs, it is no longer the main verb, and can therefore be moved around like a “noun + de” combination. Here are the above example sentences again with the word order rearranged:

I walked to the park  
(watashi wa) **aruite** kōen ni ikimashita

He ran here  
kare wa **hashitte** koko ni kimashita

She rode her bike to school  
kanojo wa jitensha ni **notte** gakkō ni ikimashita

In all of these examples, the verb in the te-form has been moved closer to the beginning of the sentence, just like might be done with the particle “de”. If we compare the first example to similar sentences where the means of transport is a car, you can see how similar the te-form of verbs is to the particle “de”:

**kuruma de** kōen ni ikimashita  
**aruite** kōen ni ikimashita  
kōen ni **kuruma de** ikimashita  
kōen ni **aruite** ikimashita

As mentioned above, this doesn’t mean that you can always use “de” and the te-form of verbs in the same way. For example, since nouns don’t represent an action, you can’t use a noun with “de” to form a command or a continuous tense, so while it’s fine to say “hashitte kudasai” to ask someone to run, you can’t say “kuruma de kudasai” to tell someone to travel by car; the latter still needs a verb. Because of this, it is somewhat inaccurate to think of “de” and the te-form as being perfectly equal. However, being aware of their similarities should hopefully help you when forming sentences that use the te-form to describe the means by which actions take place.

## Exercise

1. Say aloud and write down each of the following sentences in informal or polite Japanese, as indicated:
  - a) [Polite] I overslept and was late to the meeting
  - b) [Informal] He gained weight by eating cake every day
  - c) [Polite] She broke her computer by dropping it
  - d) [Informal] He took his jacket off and became cold
  - e) [Polite] I will study lots and pass the test
  - f) [Informal] I drank a lot of coffee and (now I) can’t sleep
  - g) [Polite] They ran to the post office
  - h) [Informal] I want to swim to that island over there

## Answers

1.

- a) watashi wa nebōshite kaigi ni okuremashita
- b) kare wa mainichi kēki wo tabete futotta
- c) kanojo wa konpyūta wo otoshite kowashimashita
- d) kare wa uwagi wo nuide samuku natta
- e) (watashi wa) takusan benkyō shite tesuto ni gōkaku shimasu
- f) kōhī wo takusan nonde nerarenai
- g) karera wa yūbinkyoku ni hashitte ikimashita, OR  
karera wa hashitte yūbinkyoku ni ikimashita
- h) ano shima ni oyoide ikitai, OR  
oyoide ano shima ni ikitai

## 9.6 The negative te-form

### New vocabulary

to apply, put on (liquids such as creams, paints etc.)	nuru
to forget	wasureru
to sit	suwaru
sunscreen	hiyakedome
to wear, put on (upper body)	kiru

Verbs in the negative can also be expressed in the te-form. Although the transformation is easy, there are actually two versions of the te-form for negatives, and each have different uses. To keep things simple and avoid confusion, we will only look at one for now - the one that relates most to the te-form uses introduced in this chapter. The other will be explained in Chapter 12.3.1.

To form the first version of the negative te-form of a verb, we just add “de” to the end of the verb in its negative informal tense. The verb ending therefore becomes “naide”, such as in the following examples:

Verb	Negative	Negative te-form
suru	shinai	shinaide
miru	minai	minaide
iku	ikanai	ikanaide
taberu	tabenai	tabenaide

This version of the negative te-form has two main uses:

- In commands and requests in the negative, eg. Please don't go over there
- To describe actions that didn't (or will not) happen when linking actions together in a sequence, eg. He didn't eat before going to school

Note that the negative te-form is not used with continuous tenses. As explained earlier, to describe something that is not happening, the verb should be used in the regular te-form, with the verb “iru” expressed in the negative. For example, to say “He is not watching TV”, you would say “kare wa terebi wo mite inai”. Much like English, there only needs to be one verb in the negative form to make the whole clause negative, and with continuous tenses, that verb should be “iru”.

Here are some examples of the negative te-form in action:

Don't watch TV!  
terebi wo **minaide**!

Please don't close the door  
doa wo **shimenaide** kudasai

He didn't eat breakfast before going to school  
kare wa asagohan wo **tabenaide** gakkō ni ikimashita

She went to the beach without putting on sunscreen  
kanojo wa hiyakedome wo **nuranaide** umi ni ikimashita

## Exercise

1. Say aloud and write down each of the following sentences in polite Japanese:
  - a) Don't wear that shirt



- b) Don't give chocolate to the dog
- c) Please don't forget your jacket
- d) Please don't sit on this chair
- e) He rode his bicycle without wearing shoes
- f) She didn't wash her hands before eating pizza
- g) I went to bed (slept) without cleaning my teeth
- h) They didn't make a reservation before going to the restaurant

## Answers

1.

- a) sono shatsu wo kinaide
- b) inu ni chokorēto wo agenaide
- c) uwagi wo wasurenaide kudasai
- d) kono isu ni suwaranaide kudasai
- e) kare wa kutsu wo hakanaide jitensha ni norimashita
- f) kanojo wa te wo arawanaide piza wo tabemashita
- g) (watashi wa) ha wo migakanaide nemashita
- h) karera wa yoyaku shinaide resutoran ni ikimashita

## 9.7 The te-form of adjectives

### New vocabulary

dark	kurai
dirty	kitanai
leg	ashi
pink	pinku (na)

sign	kanban
small	chīsai
smelly	kusai

As we learned in Chapter 7, Japanese adjectives are different from English adjectives in one major way - they can be conjugated into different tenses. With that in mind, you probably won't be surprised to learn that adjectives also have a te-form.

Converting adjectives into the te-form is easy. For i-adjectives, we remove the last “i” sound and replace it with “kute”. For na-adjectives, we just add “de” on the end instead of “na”.

Adjective type	Te-form	Example
i-adjective	Remove “i”, add “kute”	atsui → atsukute
na-adjective	Add “de” (without “na”)	kirei → kirei de

The i-adjective conversion applies to all types of words that have been converted into a form that is the same as i-adjectives, such as verbs in the “I want to...” form with the “-tai” ending (eg. ikitakute), and negative adjectives ending in “nai” (eg. yokunakute).

Like with verbs, the te-form of adjectives has a number of uses. Two of the main uses of the te-form of adjectives are:

- To apply multiple descriptions to something, eg. The **big, red** dog
- To describe a reason for something, eg. I can’t eat this **because it’s hot**

Let’s take a closer look at each of these.

## Applying multiple descriptions

Multiple adjectives can be strung together in a sentence by expressing all but the last adjective using the te-form. The following example sentences demonstrate this:

That dog (over there) is big and scary  
ano inu wa **ōkikute kowai** desu

Japanese is easy and interesting  
nihongo wa **kantan de omoshiroi** desu

The small, black cat is under the table  
**chīsakute kuroi** neko wa tēburu no shita ni imasu

Note that when doing this, the natural-sounding order of the adjectives won’t always be the same as English. For example, some people may express the last example by saying “kurokute chīsai neko”, or “black, small cat”. This sounds less natural in English because we usually use adjectives of size before colors, not after, but the same isn’t always true in Japanese. This is not really worth worrying about because ultimately, no matter what word order you use, if the words are correct, then the meaning will be understood. Just be aware that the order may differ from English, and as you hear and speak Japanese more, you will develop an intuitive understanding of what sounds most natural.

## Describing a reason

Adjectives can be used in the te-form to describe a reason for something. When this is done, the meaning of the sentence is much like an English sentence that includes “because”. As with other “because”-type sentences, the order of the reason and the outcome is the opposite of how it is usually expressed in English. When using the word “because” in English, it is normal to express the outcome first, followed by “because” and then the reason. In Japanese, however, the reason comes first (in the te-form), and the outcome comes after. The example sentences below, which use an adjective as a reason, should help clarify this.

I can't walk because my leg hurts  
ashi ga **itakute** arukenai

I won't buy these shoes because they're expensive  
kono kutsu wa **takakute** kawanai

I couldn't see the sign because it was dark  
**kurakute** kanban ga mienakatta

I don't want to carry this bag because it's heavy  
kono kaban wa **omokute** mochitakunai

Notice that in each of these, the reason comes first, followed by the outcome. This is generally how outcomes and their reasons, of all types, are expressed in Japanese. We can, however, re-phrase these expressions using the English word “so” in order to match the word order to the Japanese sentence while still expressing the same basic idea. Here are the English sentences re-phrased:

My leg hurts so I can't walk  
These shoes are expensive so I won't buy them  
It was dark so I couldn't see the sign  
This bag is heavy so I don't want to carry it

## Exercise

1. Complete the following table:

Adjective in English	Standard form	Te-form	Negative te-form
good	ī / yoi		yokunakute
bad	warui	warukute	
happy	ureshī		ureshikunakute
sad	kanashī	kanashikute	
hot	atsui		atsukunakute
cold	samui	samukute	
interesting	omoshiroi		omoshirokunakute
boring	tsumaranai	tsumaranakute	
old	furui		furukunakute
new	atarashī	atarashikute	
want	hoshī		hoshikunakute
I want to...	-tai	-takute	
well/spirited	genki (na)		genki janakute
strange	hen (na)	hen de	
easy	kantan (na)		kantan janakute
quiet	shizuka (na)	shizuka de	
convenient	benri (na)		benri janakute
famous	yūmei (na)	yūmei de	
like	suki (na)		suki janakute
hate	kirai (na)	kirai de	

2. Say aloud and write down each of the following sentences in polite Japanese:

- a) She bought a pink, cute bag
- b) They entered the dark, scary house
- c) Your shoes are dirty and smelly
- d) This is my new, expensive watch
- e) I ate lots of sushi because it was delicious
- f) I quit my job because I want to travel
- g) I don't want to watch this movie because it's boring
- h) He goes to that shop every day because it is convenient

## Answers

1.

Adjective in English	Standard form	Te-form	Negative te-form
good	ī / yoi	<b>yokute</b>	yokunakute
bad	warui	warukute	<b>warukunakute</b>
happy	ureshī	<b>ureshikute</b>	ureshikunakute
sad	kanashī	kanashikute	<b>kanashikunakute</b>
hot	atsui	<b>atsukute</b>	atsukunakute
cold	samui	samukute	<b>samukunakute</b>
interesting	omoshiroi	<b>omoshirokute</b>	omoshirokunakute
boring	tsumaranai	tsumaranakute	<b>tsumaranakunakute</b>
old	furui	<b>furukute</b>	furukunakute
new	atarashī	atarashikute	<b>atarashikunakute</b>
want	hoshī	<b>hoshikute</b>	hoshikunakute
I want to...	-tai	-takute	<b>-takunakute</b>
well/spirited	genki (na)	<b>genki de</b>	genki janakute
strange	hen (na)	hen de	<b>hen janakute</b>
easy	kantan (na)	<b>kantan de</b>	kantan janakute
quiet	shizuka (na)	shizuka de	<b>shizuka janakute</b>
convenient	benri (na)	<b>benri de</b>	benri janakute
famous	yūmei (na)	yūmei de	<b>yūmei janakute</b>
like	suki (na)	<b>suki de</b>	suki janakute
hate	kirai (na)	kirai de	<b>kirai janakute</b>

2.

- a) kanojo wa pinku de kawai kaban wo kaimashita
- b) karera wa kurakute kowai ie ni hairimashita
- c) anata no kutsu wa kitanakute kusai desu
- d) kore wa watashi no atarashikute takai tokei desu
- e) sushi wa/ga oishikute (watashi wa) takusan tabemashita
- f) (watashi wa) ryokō shitakute shigoto wo yamemashita
- g) kono eiga wa/ga tsumaranakute (watashi wa) mitakunai desu
- h) ano mise wa benri de (kare wa) mainichi ikimasu



## Chapter 10

# The Magic of Noun Phrases

This chapter is where we really take things to the next level. You probably haven't heard of noun phrases before, but they are an essential part of any language, and complex noun phrases allow us to communicate with much more detail. In this chapter, we'll look at what noun phrases are, how they fit into sentences, and also cover a number of ways that noun phrases can be formed in Japanese. Once you understand everything in this chapter, you will have the foundations to understand almost anything the Japanese language will throw at you.

### 10.1 What are noun phrases?

As you know, nouns are words that represent things, whether they be physical or abstract. A noun phrase is just a sequence of words that together, as a whole, represent things in the same way that a single noun does. They are phrases that act as nouns grammatically.

The following are all noun phrases:

- car
- a car
- a blue car

- the blue car over there
- the blue car over there that's being washed by the guy wearing the red hat

These are all noun phrases because they all represent a thing - a car. "Car", in this case, is what is known as the **head noun**, and the only difference between each example is the amount of additional detail that is attached to this head noun. All of them can be used as a single block to fit into a sentence in exactly the same way as a plain old noun. Let's try it.

- I bought a car last week
- I bought a blue car last week
- I bought the blue car over there last week
- I bought the blue car over there that's being washed by the guy wearing the red hat last week

What this means is that if we know how to form noun phrases, we can add a lot more detail to our sentences. It allows us to include more information about every single noun, and then just slot that into a sentence without changing anything else. As the examples above show, it doesn't matter if we're just talking about "a car", or "the blue car over there that's being washed by the guy wearing the red hat", as long as we are using a noun phrase, we can insert it into a sentence in exactly the same way.

We have actually used some noun phrases in Japanese already, albeit very simple ones. Technically, a noun on its own is a noun phrase, but we have also created larger noun phrases when we joined two nouns together with "no" to say things like "watashi no kuruma" (my car). The same is true when we use an adjective (or two) before a noun, like when we say "aoi kuruma" (blue car). We can also combine these two to say, "watashi no aoi kuruma" (my blue car), and this also constitutes a single noun phrase.

There are, however, more ways to form noun phrases. Below are the main ones covered in this book:

- Determiner only - "This is my car"
- Adjective that describes a 'thing' - "This is a blue car"
- Verb that adds extra information- "This is the car that I bought"
- Verb as the action itself - "I saw him buying a car"
- Location preposition - "The car over there is blue"



We've already covered the first two, and you should have no problems using them in sentences. For the rest of this chapter, we will focus on the other three ways listed above, which will greatly increase the depth of expression you're capable of in Japanese.

## 10.2 Forming noun phrases using verbs that add extra information

### New vocabulary

colleagues	dōryō
Japanese bar/restaurant	izakaya
people	hito tachi
reason	riyū
sake, alcohol	osake

Using verbs to create noun phrases is particularly powerful because by combining verbs with nouns, we can actually turn almost complete sentences into noun phrases. These in turn can then be inserted into other, longer sentences like any other noun or noun phrase. Consider this example:

He bought some bread at the supermarket.

If we want to talk more about the bread in this sentence, without starting a new sentence, we can convert the entire sentence into a noun phrase built around the word “bread”, and then use that noun phrase as part of a longer sentence. The above sentence converted into a noun phrase looks like this:

The **bread** (that) he bought at the supermarket

As you can see here, by taking a complete sentence and rearranging it a little, we can turn it into a noun phrase. This can then be inserted into a longer sentence like so:

I like the bread (that) he bought at the supermarket.

In Japanese, turning a basic sentence into a noun phrase is relatively easy. Here's the original sentence again with a Japanese translation using polite language:

He bought some bread at the supermarket  
kare wa sūpā de pan wo kaimashita

Now, this is what the equivalent noun phrase looks like:

The bread (that) he bought at the supermarket  
kare ga sūpā de katta **pan**

To create this noun phrase, we have altered the original sentence in three ways:

- Put the head noun (pan) at the end, after the verb
- Changed the verb into the informal form (katta)
- Changed the particle “wa” to “ga”

Here is a quick explanation of each of these changes:

### **Putting the head noun at the end**

For any noun phrase, the head noun - the thing that we're talking about - is the last word in the noun phrase. This is always true, regardless of how many other words or what type of elements are included in the phrase. Even when using adjectives or other nouns, the head noun comes last. For example, if talking about a car, whether we say “aoi kuruma”, “watashi no kuruma”, “watashi no aoi kuruma”, or “kare ga katta kuruma”, the head noun, “kuruma”, always comes at the end.

### **Changing the verb into the informal form**

Except in rare, overly polite cases where the verb might remain in a polite tense, a verb in a noun phrase is always expressed in the informal form of whatever tense is being used. This does not, however, make the noun phrase informal. Any verbs that appear within a noun phrase are not the main verb of the sentence and are there for purely functional reasons, so politeness is not an issue. Instead, the politeness of a sentence is dependent mostly on the main verb at the end of the sentence. As long as the main verb in each clause is polite, the whole sentence will be polite too.

### Changing the particle from “wa” to “ga”

Not all noun phrases will contain these particles, but when they do, “ga” should always be used. The reason for this is that the particle “wa” defines the topic of a sentence, but a noun phrase alone is not enough to form a complete sentence. If something is not a complete sentence, it cannot have a topic, and “wa” should not be used. Since a noun phrase is not a complete sentence, “ga” should be used instead.

—

We can now put this into a sentence as if it were any other noun:

I like the bread that he bought at the supermarket  
watashi wa **kare ga sūpā de katta pan** ga suki desu

The bread that he bought at the supermarket is over there  
**kare ga sūpā de katta pan** wa asoko ni arimasu

We ate the bread that he bought at the supermarket  
watashi tachi wa **kare ga sūpā de katta pan** wo tabemashita

As you can see here, the noun phrase can be treated as a single block, and just be followed by whichever particle is appropriate within that sentence. As mentioned above, the fact that we use the informal form of the verb inside the noun phrase does not affect the overall politeness of the sentence. The main verb - the one at the end - determines how polite a sentence is, so all of the above examples are in the polite form.

### Using different head nouns

In our example above, we took a basic sentence, extracted the word “bread”, and built a noun phrase around that word. However, there are other elements in the sentence that we can build noun phrases around. Here are some of the different noun phrases that can be created from our original sentence, “He bought some bread at the supermarket”:

- The **bread** (that) he bought at the supermarket
- The **supermarket** where he bought the bread
- The **person** who bought the bread at the supermarket
- The **reason** (why) he bought the bread at the supermarket

In the first three examples, we have extracted “the bread, “the supermarket, and “the person” (he), respectively, and created a noun phrases that centers on those things. In the fourth sentence, we have actually added an extra element - the reason - but the concept is the same. In all cases, we can insert the full noun phrase into a sentence and still retain all of the extra information about the chosen element.

When we do this in English, we usually use the word “that” or question words like “where”, “who”, “why” and “which” to connect the head noun to the rest of the information. Sometimes we leave these words out to save time and because we can, but we always have the option to use one of these words because that is how English connects the verb to the head noun.

This is where Japanese is nice and easy. No matter which element you build your noun phrase around, no extra words are needed. All you have to do is make the three changes listed above: put the noun at the end, use the informal verb form, and change “wa” to “ga” when necessary.

Let’s take a look at how each of the alternative noun phrases above are formed in Japanese.

The **person** who bought the bread at the supermarket  
sūpā de pan wo katta **hito**

The **supermarket** where he bought the bread  
kare ga pan wo katta **sūpā**

The **reason** (why) he bought the bread at the supermarket  
kare ga sūpā de pan wo katta **riyū**

The structure here is basically the same as when we used “bread” as the head noun. All we have had to do is take out the head noun element (in the first sentence, “hito” is used as a substitute for the personal pronoun “he”) and put it at the end after the verb. We can now insert these noun phrases into other sentences like any other noun phrase. Let’s try it using the example where the head noun is “hito”:

I don’t like the person who bought the bread at the supermarket  
watashi wa **sūpā de pan wo katta hito** ga suki janai desu

The person who bought the bread at the supermarket is over there  
**sūpā de pan wo katta hito** wa asoko ni imasu

We saw the person who bought the bread at the supermarket  
 watashi tachi wa **sūpā de pan wo katta hito** wo mimashita

Reading the last example, you may notice that there are two possible interpretations. “At the supermarket” could refer to where the person bought the bread, or it could refer to where the person was seen. This ambiguity is present in both English and Japanese, and is a result of the fact that both verbs in the sentence (buy and see) can be associated with a location, and because there is a certain amount of freedom that exists with word order.

This ambiguity is sometimes avoidable, but not always. If the location refers to the main verb - in this case “see” - then the word order can be changed so that the meaning is more clear. For example, in English, we could say, “At the supermarket, we saw the person who bought the bread”. By putting “at the supermarket” at the beginning, it is separated from the noun phrase, and therefore must relate to the main verb; the ambiguity is removed.

In the example above, however, the location refers to where the person bought the bread, and must therefore be grouped together with the rest of the noun phrase that defines the bread, since noun phrases cannot be split up. The only way a sentence like this can be changed is to re-order the words within the noun phrase. However, this can't really be done in English. The best we can do is change the noun phrase to, “the person who, at the supermarket, bought the bread”, but this is obviously quite unnatural.

Fortunately, Japanese offers us a bit more freedom. Because of the flexibility in word order afforded to us by particles, it is perfectly fine to change the noun phrase to, “pan wo sūpā de katta hito”. By putting the location in the middle of the noun phrase, it can no longer be interpreted as part of the main sentence, so the ambiguity is removed.

That said, you don't want to be thinking about these kinds of minor technicalities when you're speaking Japanese; that will only cause you to over-think things, which is not recommended. The point is simply that certain ambiguities will arise in Japanese, just as they do in English. The flexibility of Japanese grammar sometimes allows us to avoid these kinds of ambiguities, but like many other things, context will usually be enough to make the intended meaning clear. Just be aware that ambiguities do exist, and when context doesn't help to clarify things, you can always ask.

## Exercise

1. Convert the following sentences into different noun phrases, as indicated.

a)

I watched a movie last week  
watashi wa senshū eiga wo mimashita

- i. The **movie** I watched last week
- ii. The **person** who watched the movie last week
- iii. The **reason** why I watched the movie last week

b)

They are drinking sake at an izakaya  
karera wa izakaya de osake wo nonde imasu

- i. The **sake** they are drinking at the izakaya
- ii. The **izakaya** where they are drinking sake
- iii. The **people** drinking sake at the izakaya

c)

He will eat ramen with Yamamoto-san tomorrow  
kare wa ashita yamamoto san to rāmen wo tabemasu

- i. The **ramen** he will eat with Yamamoto-san tomorrow
- ii. The **person** who will eat ramen with Yamamoto-san tomorrow
- iii. The **reason** he will eat ramen with Yamamoto-san tomorrow

d)

She was reading a book at the library  
kanojo wa toshokan de hon wo yonde imashita

- i. The **book** she was reading at the library
- ii. The **library** where she was reading the book
- iii. The **person** who was reading a book at the library

e)

I go to that supermarket every week  
watashi wa maishū ano sūpā ni ikimasu

- i. The **supermarket** I go to every week
  - ii. The **person** who goes to that supermarket every week
  - iii. The **reason** I go to that supermarket every week
2. Write down and say aloud each of the following sentences in polite Japanese.
- a) The movie I saw last week was boring
  - b) The people drinking sake at the izakaya are my colleagues
  - c) The ramen he will eat with Yamamoto-san tomorrow is expensive and delicious
  - d) I really like (love) the book that she was reading at the library
  - e) He saw Takuya at the supermarket I go to every week

## Answers

1.

a)

- i. watashi ga senshū mita eiga
- ii. senshū eiga wo mita hito
- iii. watashi ga senshū eiga wo mita riyū

b)

- i. karera ga izakaya de nonde iru osake
- ii. karera ga osake wo nonde iru izakaya
- iii. izakaya de osake wo nonde iru hito tachi

c)

- i. kare ga ashita yamamoto san to taberu rāmen
- ii. ashita yamamoto san to rāmen wo taberu hito
- iii. kare ga ashita yamamoto san to rāmen wo taberu riyū

d)

- i. kanojo ga toshokan de yonde ita hon
- ii. kanojo ga hon wo yonde ita toshokan
- iii. toshokan de hon wo yonde ita hito

e)

- i. (watashi ga) maishū iku sūpā
- ii. maishū ano sūpā ni iku hito
- iii. (watashi ga) maishū ano sūpā ni iku riyū

2.

- a) (watashi ga) senshū mita eiga wa tsumaranakatta desu
- b) izakaya de osake wo nonde iru hito tachi wa watashi no dōryō desu
- c) kare ga ashita yamamoto san to taberu rāmen wa takakute oishī desu
- d) watashi wa kanojo ga toshokan de yonde ita hon ga daisuki desu
- e) kare wa (watashi ga) maishū iku sūpā de takuya wo mimashita

## 10.3 Forming noun phrases that describe the location of something

### New vocabulary

bed	beddo
to chase	oikakeru
mouse	nezumi

When you want to talk about a particular ‘thing’ and specify it by describing its location, the appropriate noun phrase can be formed in much the same way as any other noun phrase. Here is an example of how a basic sentence defining an object’s location can be turned into a noun phrase:

The bread is on the table  
pan wa tēburu ni arimasu

The bread on the table is not delicious  
tēburu ni aru pan wa oishikunai desu



All that has happened here is the head noun “bread” has been moved to the end of the sentence after the verb “aru”. If instead of bread we were talking about a living thing, the verb would be “iru”.

The dog is over there  
inu wa asoko ni imasu

I gave some bread to the dog over there  
(watashi wa) asoko ni iru inu ni pan wo agemashita

An important difference between English and Japanese in these noun phrases is that the English noun phrases do not contain a verb, while the Japanese ones do. This is because in English, we just need to attach the location information to the noun using a preposition like “on”, “in” or “at”, such as in the phrase, “the bread on the table”. This doesn’t work in Japanese, so it would be wrong to say something like “tēburu ni pan” and treat it as a noun phrase. The verb is necessary, so always remember to include “aru” or “iru” as appropriate.

Both of the above noun phrases, and any others like them, can also be used in the past tense, like so:

Where is the bread that was on the table?  
tēburu ni atta pan wa doko desu ka?

I gave some bread to the dog that was over there  
(watashi wa) asoko ni ita inu ni pan wo agemashita

You’ll notice that in the English sentences, we had to add “that was” in order to use these noun phrases in the past tense. Since our original phrase, “the dog over there”, doesn’t contain a verb, one needs to be added so that that verb can be conjugated in the past tense. We therefore effectively expand the original phrase to, “the dog that is over there”, and then change the verb “is” to “was”. In Japanese, however, since the verb is already included in the present tense version of the phrase, it just needs to be changed to the past tense, and everything else remains the same.

## Exercise

1. Convert the following sentences into noun phrases based around the location of the item being described. Be sure to include all of the information from the original sentence.

a)

The chair is next to the desk  
isu wa tsukue no tonari ni arimasu

the chair next to the desk

b)

The cat is under the bed  
neko wa beddo no shita ni imasu

the cat under the bed

c)

There was a mobile phone here  
koko ni keitai ga arimashita

the mobile phone that was here

d)

There is a movie theater in Umeda  
umeda ni eigakan ga arimasu

the movie theater in Umeda

e)

The dog is outside  
inu wa soto ni imasu

the dog (that is) outside

2. Write down and say aloud each of the following sentences in polite Japanese.

- a) Please use the chair next to the desk.
- b) The cat under the bed is chasing a mouse.
- c) Where is the mobile phone that was here?
- d) Let's go to the movie theater in Umeda.
- e) The dog outside is noisy.

## Answers

1.

- a) tsukue no tonari ni aru isu
- b) beddo no shita ni iru neko
- c) koko ni atta keitai
- d) umeda ni aru eigakan
- e) soto ni iru inu

2.

- a) tsukue no tonari ni aru isu wo tsukatte kudasai
- b) beddo no shita ni iru neko wa nezumi wo oikakete imasu
- c) koko ni atta keitai wa doko desu ka
- d) umeda ni aru eigakan ni ikimashō
- e) soto ni iru inu wa urusai desu

## 10.4 Forming noun phrases based around the action itself

### New vocabulary

boss	jōshi
to know	shiru
to learn	manabu
mountain	yama
postcard	hagaki

Sometimes, we want to talk about actions as if they are things. Actions are, of course, expressed using verbs, but in both Japanese and English, we need to convert these verbs into noun phrases in order to talk about the action itself. Let's start with an example:

Learning Japanese is fun

In this sentence, the subject is “learning Japanese”, an action. However, it has been turned into a noun phrase by using what's called the *gerund* form of the verb “learn”. In Japanese, an action can be turned into a noun phrase and used in a similar way by adding “no” after the verb in its informal form, like so:

Learning Japanese is fun  
nihongo wo manabu no wa tanoshī desu

This is almost the same as when we added the noun after the verb in the previous section to build a noun phrase around the head noun “bread”. The only difference is that this time, since we want to use the action itself as the head noun, we follow the verb in its informal form with “no” instead of another noun like “bread”. Let's try it again with our sentence about bread.

He bought some bread at the supermarket  
 kare wa sūpā de pan wo kaimashita

Buying bread at the supermarket is easy  
sūpā de pan wo kau no wa kantan desu

The element “he” has been removed here to make the sentence a general statement, rather than about a specific person. It can be included, but it would change the meaning to something like, “his buying bread at the supermarket”.

In any case, the important thing is that the original sentence can be easily turned into a noun phrase, where the action is the ‘thing’ being talked about, by adding “no” after the verb in its informal form.

An alternative to using “no” after the verb is to use the word “koto”. The meaning is essentially the same, but you will likely hear “no” more often in spoken language. Here is the first example again, together with the “koto” version:

Learning Japanese is fun  
 nihongo wo manabu **no** wa tanoshī desu  
 nihongo wo manabu **koto** wa tanoshī desu

So what's the difference? Not much. For the most part, “no” and “koto” can be used interchangeably, although there are a few situations where only one or the other is appropriate. It is a little bit like the difference between these two sentences:

I like watching movies  
 I like to watch movies

Much like “miru no” and “miru koto”, “watching” and “to watch” have basically the same meaning in most contexts. In some cases, they are not interchangeable (for example, you wouldn't say “I want watching a movie” or “To watch movies is fun”), but in the majority of cases, they are. So with that in mind, we can express the same idea in two different ways in Japanese like so:

eiga wo miru no ga suki desu  
 eiga wo miru koto ga suki desu

However, it would not be accurate to say, for example, that the “no” version is equivalent to using “watching”, and the “koto” version is equivalent to “to watch”. They are just two similar ways of expressing the same idea, and when used in this way, “no” and “koto” are so close in meaning that it is not worth worrying about the finer details. You would be better off just using “no” most of the time, and as your Japanese improves, you will develop a feel for which one is more appropriate in different circumstances.

One more thing to remember with these kinds of noun phrases is that the verbs need to be in the appropriate tense. The above examples are general statements, so the dictionary form of the verb is used. When talking about a specific action, however, the verb describing that action needs to be in the tense that reflects the action's timing. Here is an example:

I saw him eating sushi  
 (watashi wa) kare ga sushi wo tabete iru no wo mimashita

In this case, the action of ‘him’ eating sushi is ongoing, so it should be expressed in the present continuous tense. If the action is completed at the time the action described by the main verb occurs, then it should be in the past tense, like so:

I saw that he ate our sushi  
(watashi wa) kare ga watashi tachi no sushi wo tabeta no wo mimashita

Here, the action being referred to occurred in the past, so the past tense is used. The finer details relating to the rules for verb tenses in noun phrases are actually fairly tricky as they are quite different from English. To avoid confusion, we won’t cover that here, but it is explained in more detail in Appendix 1: Understanding verb tenses in noun phrases.

To summarize, much like when turning a sentence into a noun phrase using a head noun such as “bread”, there are three basic rules for building a noun phrase around the action itself. These slightly different rules that relate to actions are as follows:

1. Put “no” or “koto” at the end after the verb
2. Change the verb into the informal form in the appropriate tense
3. Change the particle “wa” to “ga”

## Exercise

1. For each of the following, translate the second sentence into Japanese using a noun phrase based on the first sentence. Express all your answers in polite Japanese, and be sure to use the correct tense when converting the first sentence into a noun phrase.

a)

I run in the mountains  
watashi wa yama de hashirimasu

Running in the mountains is difficult

b)

He is making dinner  
kare wa bangohan wo tsukutte imasu

I saw him making dinner

c)

It takes 3 hours  
sanjikan (ga) kakarimasu

I didn't know that it takes 3 hours

d)

They are speaking in Japanese  
karera wa nihongo de hanashite imasu

I can hear them speaking in Japanese

e)

You sent your grandmother a postcard  
(anata wa) obāsan ni hagaki wo okurimashita

I saw that you sent your grandmother a postcard

f)

You got married in this park  
(anata wa) kono kōen de kekkon shimashita

I forgot that you got married in this park

g)

She listens to music in her room  
kanojo wa heya de ongaku wo kikimasu

She likes listening to music in her room

h)

I write emails to my boss  
watashi wa jōshi ni mēru wo kakimasu

I don't like writing emails to my boss

## Answers

1.

- a) yama de hashiru no wa muzukashī desu
- b) (watashi wa) kare ga bangohan wo tsukutte iru no wo mimashita
- c) sanjikan (ga) kakaru no wo shirimasen deshita
- d) watashi wa karera ga nihongo de hanashite iru no ga kikoemasu
- e) (watashi wa) (anata ga) obāsan ni hagaki wo okutta no wo mimashita
- f) (watashi wa) anata ga ano kōen de kekkon shita no wo wasuremashita
- g) kanojo wa\* heya de ongaku wo kiku no ga suki desu
- h) watashi wa\* jōshi ni mēru wo kaku no ga suki janai desu

\* For g) and h), “wa” is not changed to “ga” because the topic of the main sentence is the same as that of the noun phrase. The “kanojo” and “watashi” from the first sentences has effectively been dropped, since it is obvious from the context of the new sentence that is who is being spoken about.

## 10.5 Including multiple pieces of information in a noun phrase

### New vocabulary

closet	kurōzetto
to get to know	shiriau
magazine	zasshi
picture / painting	e
possible	kanō

to put (an object) on, to place	oku
to receive	morau
to remember	oboeru
steak	sutēki
show (TV/radio)	bangumi

With any noun phrase, it is possible to include as much or as little description as you want - there is no real limit. How this is done, though, depends on what the extra information actually relates to. There are three basic scenarios where additional information can be added:

- Adding multiple descriptions to a single head noun
- Adding extra detail related to an action
- Stacking noun phrases within noun phrases



Let's now take a look at each of these.

### **Adding multiple descriptions to a single head noun**

If we look at the different ways of forming noun phrases introduced in this chapter, plus the ones covered earlier in this book, they can be broken down into two main groups: those that focus on a 'thing,' and those that focus on an action. For now, we are interested in the noun phrases that are focused on a 'thing,' such as the following:

- This bread
- The delicious bread
- The bread that he bought at the supermarket
- The bread on the table

When talking about a particular thing, we will sometimes want to describe it in greater detail, which requires us to combine multiple descriptions together into a single noun phrase. For example, we can take all of the noun phrases about bread above, and combine them into a single, more detailed noun phrase like this one:

This delicious bread on the table that he bought at the supermarket

When doing this in Japanese, it will help to recognize that there are three word types that can be used to manipulate the head noun:

- Determiners, such as “kono” or “watashi no”
- Adjectives
- Verbs, including “aru” and “iru”

In English, we can also use location prepositions to add information, but since this is done using the verbs “aru” and “iru” in Japanese, they can be treated the same as other verbs.

Let's now look at our noun phrases about bread, and see how we can combine them into a single, more descriptive noun phrase. Here are the individual noun phrases:

This bread  
kono pan

The delicious bread  
oishī pan

The bread that he bought at the supermarket  
kare ga sūpā de katta pan

The bread on the table  
tēburu ni aru pan

We already know how to combine the first two:

This delicious bread  
kono oishī pan

As a general rule, whenever you have an adjective (eg. oishī), it will usually be the last item before the head noun. This means that when you have another item like a determiner (eg. kono), this will come *before* the adjective, as in the example above.

The other important rule is that when combining different noun phrases together, the descriptive parts of each one (that is, everything before the head noun “pan”) should be used as they are - they don’t need to be changed in any way. We can see this here, with both “kono” and “oishī” being used unchanged.

Both of these rules are also true for verb-based descriptions. Let’s start by combining just the adjective description with the location description:

The delicious bread on the table  
tēburu ni aru oishī pan

Notice here that:

1. The adjective comes immediately before the noun
2. The descriptions are unchanged from when they were used on their own

If we now want to add in “kono” as well, the best place to put it is after the verb but before the adjective, like so:

This delicious bread on the table  
tēburu ni aru kono oishī pan

When adding in the last piece of information (that he bought the bread at the supermarket), we have a choice: it can go either before or after the location description. Since these are both expressed using verbs in Japanese, they can really be used in any order, along with any other verb-based description we care to include. This means that both of the following are acceptable:

This delicious bread on the table that he bought at the supermarket  
 tēburu ni aru, kare ga sūpā de katta kono oishī pan  
 kare ga sūpā de katta, tēburu ni aru kono oishī pan

One thing to be aware of is that it helps to include a comma, or a pause when spoken, in between each verb-based description to make it clear that these are separate descriptions relating to the same head noun. Without the pause, the middle part of the second phrase above would become, “kare ga sūpā de katta tēburu ni aru...”, which could be interpreted to mean that ‘he’ bought the *table* at the supermarket, not the bread. The pause or comma helps to clarify that these are separate descriptions.

To summarize, the three types of descriptions that can be attached to a head noun should be used in the following order:

Verbs → Determiners → Adjectives

This is not a rule that is set in concrete, and you will certainly hear people use different word ordering - such is the flexibility of the Japanese language! However, if you use these elements in this order, your sentences will usually sound natural.

### **Adding extra detail when describing an action**

For noun phrases focused on actions, adding extra information is quite straightforward, and is actually nothing that we haven’t already covered. Basically, all of the information relating to the action can just be included in the sentence before it is converted to a noun phrase with “no” or “koto”. Consider these examples:

Eating bread  
 pan wo taberu no

Eating this bread  
 kono pan wo taberu no

Eating delicious bread  
oishi pan wo taberu no

Eating bread at home  
ie de pan wo taberu no

For all of these, the extra information is just included in the part that leads up to the verb, either using different particles, or by expanding on the nouns that exist within it, like “oishi pan”. Up until “no”, it is just like a regular sentence; there is nothing special done to the verb itself. This means that to add all of these pieces of information together into one noun phrase, we would just treat it like a regular sentence, and then add “no”:

I eat this delicious bread at home  
(watashi wa) ie de kono oishi pan wo taberu

Eating this delicious bread at home  
ie de kono oishi pan wo taberu **no**

This can then be used in another sentence in the same way as any other noun phrase, like this:

I like eating this delicious bread at home  
watashi wa ie de kono oishi pan wo taberu no ga suki desu

## Stacking noun phrases within noun phrases

Since all sentences can be turned into noun phrases, and these noun phrases can then be inserted into longer sentences which can themselves be turned into noun phrases, we can, in theory, build a never ending chain of noun phrases within noun phrases within noun phrases. Of course, we don't want to do this too much or we end up with ridiculous sentences like this one:

This is the car that my friend bought from the tall man whose mother lives in the green house with the white front door that I made using materials I was given by my old roommate who always wears a purple suit to work.

It is, however, quite common to have two or three noun phrases nested within each other. To do this, we can just take any noun within a sentence or other noun phrase and use a more detailed noun phrase in its place. Here is an example of how to do this:

He likes bread  
kare wa pan ga suki desu

+

The bread that is on the table  
tēburu ni aru pan

=

He likes the bread that is on the table  
kare wa tēburu ni aru pan ga suki desu

+

The table that I bought last week  
**watashi ga senshū katta tēburu**

=

He likes the bread that is on the table that I bought last week  
kare wa watashi ga senshū katta tēburu ni aru pan ga suki desu

Realistically, most noun phrases that are used inside other noun phrases will be based on an adjective or location because nesting verb-based noun phrases within each other quickly becomes a mouthful, and usually isn't necessary. For example, in a situation where someone would use the sentence above, it would probably be obvious which table the bread in question is on. If not, a simple description like "the table over there" or "the blue table" would be sufficient. Nevertheless, in both Japanese and English, it is possible, and occasionally necessary, to create or understand sentences like the one above, and now you know how!

## Exercise

1. For each question below, translate each noun phrase into Japanese. The last phrase in each set combines the other individual noun phrases together.

a)

- i. clothes
- ii. dirty clothes
- iii. the clothes they are washing
- iv. the dirty clothes they are washing

b)

- i. these shoes
- ii. old shoes
- iii. the shoes that I'm wearing
- iv. these old shoes that I'm wearing

c)

- i. that (TV) show
- ii. an interesting show
- iii. the show he is watching
- iv. that interesting show he is watching

d)

- i. four steaks
- ii. big steaks
- iii. the steaks that he bought
- iv. the steaks in the refrigerator
- v. the four big steaks in the refrigerator that he bought

e)

- i. my shirts
- ii. five shirts
- iii. white shirts
- iv. the shirts in your closet
- v. my five white shirts in your closet

2. For each of the following, say aloud and write down the second sentence in polite Japanese. Use the first sentence as the basis for building the noun phrase to be used in your translation.

a)

Honda-san is going to Sapporo today  
kyō honda san wa sapporo ni ikimasu

I forgot that Honda-san is going to Sapporo today

b)

I play soccer with my friends at the park on weekends  
shūmatsu ni tomodachi to kōen de sakkā wo shimasu

I like playing soccer at the park with my friends on weekends

c)

I received a beautiful painting from her 10 years ago  
jū nen mae ni kanojo ni/kara utsukushī e wo moraimashita

I remember I received a beautiful painting from her 10 years ago

d)

He learned Japanese without going to Japan  
kare wa nihon ni ikanaide nihongo wo manabimashita

It's possible to learn Japanese without going to Japan

e)

He was wearing a blue shirt at the party on Wednesday  
suiyōbi ni kare wa pāti de aoi shatsu wo kite imashita

I saw him wearing a blue shirt at the party on Wednesday

f)

She is reading a magazine next to the convenience store over there  
kanojo wa asoko no konbini no tonari de zasshi wo yonde imasu

I can see her reading a magazine next to the convenience store over there

3. Say aloud and write down each of the following sentences in polite Japanese.

- a) I forgot to give him the expensive wine that I bought in France last month
- b) I ate a delicious lunch at a new restaurant in Namba with some friends that I met (got to know) at university
- c) I remember seeing her put her wallet on the table in the kitchen

## Answers

1.

a)

- i. fuku
- ii. kitanai fuku
- iii. karera ga aratte iru fuku
- iv. karera ga aratte iru kitanai fuku

b)

- i. kono kutsu
- ii. furui kutsu
- iii. watashi ga haite iru kutsu
- iv. watashi ga haite iru kono furui kutsu

c)

- i. ano bangumi
- ii. omoshiroi bangumi
- iii. kare ga mite iru bangumi
- iv. kare ga mite iru ano omoshiroi bangumi



d)

- i. yotsu no sutēki
- ii. ōkī sutēki
- iii. kare ga katta sutēki
- iv. reizōko ni aru sutēki
- v. kare ga katta, reizōko ni aru yotsu no ōkī sutēki, OR  
reizōko ni aru, kare ga katta yotsu no ōkī sutēki

e)

- i. watashi no shatsu
- ii. itsutsu no shatsu / gochaku no shatsu
- iii. shiroi shatsu
- iv. anata no kurōzetto ni aru shatsu
- v. anata no kurōzetto ni aru, watashi no itsutsu/gochaku no shiroi shatsu

2.

- a) (watashi wa) kyō honda san ga sapporo ni iku no wo wasuremashita
- b) (watashi wa) shūmatsu ni tomodachi to kōen de sakkā wo suru no ga suki desu
- c) (watashi wa) jū nen mae ni kanojo ni/kara utsukushī e wo moratta no wo oboete imasu
- d) nihon ni ikanaide nihongo wo manabu no wa kanō desu
- e) (watashi wa) suiyōbi ni kare ga pātī de aoi shatsu wo kite iru no wo mimashita
- f) (watashi wa) kanojo ga asoko no konbini no tonari de zasshi wo yonde iru no ga miemasu

3.

- a) (watashi wa) sengetsu furansu de katta takai wain wo kare ni ageru no wo wasuremashita
- b) (watashi wa) daigaku de shiriatta tomodachi to nanba ni aru atarashī resutoran de oishī hirugohan wo tabemashita
- c) (watashi wa) kanojo ga saifu wo daidokoro ni aru tēburu ni oku no wo mita no wo oboete imasu

## 10.6 Differentiating between noun phrases and clauses

### New vocabulary

day	hi
necklace	nekuresu
sky	sora

If we zoom out from the individual words in a sentence, there are three main types of word clusters in Japanese: noun phrases, independent clauses and conditional clauses. The reason we want to understand these is because each particle in Japanese is limited in terms of the types of clusters they can be attached to, and it's not uncommon to hear even advanced Japanese speakers make fundamental mistakes with regards to their use of particles.

You already know about noun phrases, so here is a quick explanation of the other two.

**Independent clauses** are basically phrases that describe a subject doing an action. This includes when the subject is omitted from the sentence or when the action is simply 'being'. It is essentially any phrase that is able to stand on its own as a complete sentence. In Japanese, this includes any phrase that ends in "da" or "desu", another verb, or an i-adjective. To clarify, the reason i-adjectives are included is because when used in their informal form at the end of a sentence, i-adjectives effectively include the word "da" or "desu", as was explained in Chapter 7.3.

Although independent clauses can stand alone as complete sentences, we can also use multiple independent clauses in a single sentence by joining them together with connective words like "and", "but" or "so". Here is an example:

I want to go to the park but it is raining  
kōen ni ikitai desu ga, ame ga futte imasu

This sentence consists of two independent clauses, linked by the particle "ga", meaning "but".

A **conditional clause** is, as the name suggests, a clause that expresses a condition using words like "if" and "when". For example, "If you go to the park" is a conditional clause because it describes the condition that affects some other action. Conditional clauses, in both Japanese and English, usually do not stand on their own as individual

sentences because the condition needs to be related to some other action. Also, some Japanese conditional clauses actually take on the form of a noun phrase, meaning there is a certain amount of overlap between these two types of word clusters. We have not covered conditional clauses yet, but the most common ones will be introduced in Chapter 12.2.

Now that we've got our definitions out of the way, let's look at why they are important.

A big mistake many people learning Japanese make is that they often use independent clauses in the same way as noun phrases, which generally doesn't work. More specifically, particles like “wa” (topic), “ga” (subject), “wo” (object), “de” (location, means) and “ni” (destination, location) can only be used with noun phrases. Using them after either type of clause described above (except where a conditional clause takes the form of a noun phrase) would be incorrect.

This is the same in English; generally, subjects and objects of a sentence must be noun phrases, and it is incorrect to use verbs and adjectives in the form of independent clauses in these roles. You would not, for example, say “Every week, I watch he plays soccer”, because the object - “he plays soccer” - is in the form of an independent clause. For this sentence to be correct, “He plays soccer” needs to be converted to the noun phrase “him play soccer”. The same principle applies in Japanese.

The whole purpose of this chapter is to help you turn independent clauses into noun phrases so you can correctly use them together with these particles when forming complex sentences. Let's look at some examples of what happens when we form such sentences without first converting clauses into noun phrases, or when we do the conversion but use the resulting noun phrase incorrectly.

## **I like eating sushi**

### Mistaken Japanese sentence

sushi wo taberu ga suki desu ≈ I like eat sushi

### Why it's wrong

“Sushi wo taberu” is an independent clause, but the particle “ga” defines the subject of a clause, which can only be a noun. In both English and Japanese, the “eat sushi” part needs to be converted into a noun phrase before it can be used in this way. In English, it needs to be changed to “eating sushi” or “to eat sushi”, while in Japanese, it needs to be changed to “sushi wo taberu no” or “sushi wo taberu koto”.

Correct sentence

I like eating sushi / I like to eat sushi  
sushi wo taberu **no** ga suki desu  
sushi wo taberu **koto** ga suki desu

**Please stop watching television**

Mistaken Japanese sentence

terebi wo miru wo yamete kudasai ≈ Please stop watch television

Why it's wrong

Similar to the previous example, “terebi wo miru” is an independent clause that needs to be converted into a noun phrase before it can be used as the object of a sentence, as defined by “wo”. This can be done by adding “no” (“koto” is less appropriate in this case).

Correct sentence

Please stop watching television  
terebi wo miru **no** wo yamete kudasai

**It's a hot day, but I want to play outside**

Mistaken sentence

atsui hi ga soto de asobitai desu ≈ Hot day, but I want to play outside

Why it's wrong

In this case, the opposite mistake has been made. “Atsui hi” is a noun phrase, but the particle “ga”, when used to mean “but”, should only be used after an independent clause. The part before “ga” needs to be able to stand on its own as a complete sentence, which means it needs a verb. We can solve this problem by simply adding “da” or “desu” after “hi” (option 1 below). Another option is to turn the noun phrase back into a basic clause by removing “hi”, although when doing this, we either need to add “desu” to make the first clause polite (option 2), or remove “desu” from the second clause to make it informal (option 3). This is to ensure that the politeness of the whole sentence is consistent.

Correct sentence

It's a hot day, but I want to play outside

(1) atsui hi **desu** ga soto de asobitai desu

It's hot, but I want to play outside

(2) atsui **desu** ga soto de asobitai desu

(3) atsui ga soto de asobitai

Ultimately, the difference between noun phrases and clauses affects the particles that we can use with them. There are certain particles that can only be used after nouns or noun phrases, and others that can only be used after independent clauses. A few can be used with both, but many of the most common particles only have one use, so in order to use them correctly, you need to know what word types can be used with each particle. In the next chapter, we will take a closer look at many of the most common particles, including which word or phrase types they can be used with.

**Exercise**

1. For each of the following phrases, identify whether they are noun phrases or independent clauses.
  - a) gorufu wo suru
  - b) kare ga kaita hon
  - c) ano mado wo shimenakatta hito
  - d) watashi wa kaigai ni ikitai
  - e) kawai neko
  - f) soto de matte iru no
  - g) doa wo akeyō
  - h) watashi ga gakkō ni aruku no
  - i) karera ga kamera wo tsukatte iru
  - j) kare ga shigoto wo yameta koto
  - k) kanojo ni agetai nekuresu
  - l) sora ga aoi

## Answers

1.

- a) Independent clause
- b) Noun phrase
- c) Noun phrase
- d) Independent clause
- e) Noun phrase
- f) Noun phrase
- g) Independent clause
- h) Noun phrase
- i) Independent clause
- j) Noun phrase
- k) Noun phrase
- l) Independent clause

## Chapter 11

# Particles

We have used a number of different particles throughout this book so far. This chapter aims to give you a deeper understanding of particles so that you can confidently use the correct ones in any given situation. This will include a brief explanation of the different types of particles and the most common particles of each type, a look at certain particle/verb combinations to be aware of, a detailed analysis of the difference between “wa” and “ga”, and a brief overview of some useful particle combinations. There are quite a large number of particles, with varying degrees of usefulness, so not all of them will be covered in this chapter. Instead, our focus will be on the particles that are most useful in daily conversation.

### 11.1 Types of particles

#### New vocabulary

amusement park	yūenchi
to be careful	ki wo tsukeru
to be found	mitsukaru
city	toshi
to decide	kimeru

Japanese food	washoku
key	kagi
model	moderu
previous	mae no
to search	sagasu

elephant	zō
good (skillful or tasty)	umai
half	hanbun

smartphone	sumaho
to throw out	suteru
warm	atatakai

In Chapter 2, the following broad definition was given for particles:

Particles determine the role of each word relative to the verb

This isn't actually entirely accurate. This is an over-simplified definition, and there are in fact different types of particles that relate to words in different ways. We won't go into the details of all the different types of particles, and there is no need to remember the different types, but a brief explanation of the main types of particles should help you to use them correctly, and clear up any confusion you may have over how different particles can be used. Note that some particles fit into multiple categories - sometimes with very different meanings, and sometimes with very similar ones.

## Case markers

These are the main particles, and are really the ones that fit the general definition from Chapter 2 above; that is, they define the role of each word relative to the verb. They include key particles like “ga”, “wo”, “ni” and “de”, and are the ones that define the core components of each sentence. Below is a summary of the most important case markers. Bare in mind, however, that some of these particles have other uses that fall into other particle categories.

**GA** defines the subject, or the person or thing that is doing the action described by the relevant verb. The subject must always be expressed as a noun phrase.

**WO**, pronounced “o”, defines the object, or the person or thing that the action is being done to. This object must also always be expressed as a noun phrase.

**NI** defines the destination of an action that involves movement (or the origin if using a passive verb, as will be explained in Chapter 12.4). It can also define the location that something is in when using verbs like “aru” and “iru”. The destination or location must always be expressed as a noun phrase.



**DE** defines the location where an action takes place. This location must always be expressed as a noun phrase.

**TO** defines who or what else is involved in an action, much like the English preposition “with”. Since this person or thing is involved in the action in the same way as the subject, it too must always be expressed as a noun phrase. Also see Parallel markers below.

**TO** can also be used to define a quotation. Since any expression can be quoted, the quotation can take the form of any phrase type, including noun phrases and clauses, although clauses are more common. See Chapter 11.2 for a detailed explanation of how to use quotations.

**HE**, pronounced “e”, defines the destination of an action that involves movement, very much like “ni”. There are a few situations where one is preferable over the other, although for the most part, they are interchangeable. As with “ni”, the destination defined by “he” must always be expressed as a noun phrase.

**KARA** defines the starting point or origin in terms of either time or location. Whether the starting point refers to a time or location, it must always be expressed as a noun phrase. (Note: Apart from frequencies, most time expressions that do not already end in a particle are noun phrases).

**YORI** defines the starting point or origin, much like the particle “kara” above. The difference between the two is negligible, although “kara” is much more common, and also more flexible. Like “kara”, “yori” should also only be used after noun phrases.

**YORI** can also be used to make comparisons. This is done by placing it after the noun or clause that is the basis for comparison. The part of the sentence that comes after “yori” should be a descriptive phrase that includes either an adjective or an adverb. Here are some examples:

Elephants are bigger than dogs  
zō wa inu **yori** ōkī desu

This car is faster than the previous model  
kono kuruma wa mae no moderu **yori** hayai desu

She can dance better than me  
kanojo wa watashi **yor**i umaku odoremasu

## Parallel markers

These are basically used to join two or more words or phrases together. This group includes the particle “no” as it is used to say things like “watashi no kuruma” or “tarō no hon”. When two phrases, usually noun phrases, are joined together with parallel markers, they are effectively grouped together to become a single phrase, which can then be inserted into a sentence like any other single phrase. Here is a summary of the most common parallel markers:

**NO** indicates a relationship of possession. When two words or phrases are joined together by the particle “no”, the thing after “no” belongs to the thing before it. Both sides of “no” must take the form of noun phrases.

**KA** can be used to list alternatives, much like the English word “or”. It can be used with either noun phrases or clauses, but all of the alternatives listed must be of the same phrase type; that is, noun phrases with noun phrases, or clauses with clauses, not a combination of both. Also, when used with clauses especially, “ka” should be used after every alternative, including the last one.

I want to go to Tokyo or Osaka  
tōkyō **ka** ōsaka ni ikitai desu

I can't decide whether to go to Tokyo or go to Osaka  
tōkyō ni iku **ka** ōsaka ni iku **ka** kimeraremasen

In the second example above, the English sentence could be expressed much more simply, but it is written like this because this is the natural way to express this kind of idea in Japanese. This is mainly because there is no word in Japanese that takes the meaning of “whether”, so the two (or more) options need to be expressed in full as actions, each followed by the particle “ka”.

**TO** is used to list multiple people or things and join them together into a single noun phrase. This noun phrase can then be used in a sentence like any other noun phrase, being marked by particles like “wa”, “ga”, “wo” and “ni”, or even the case marker version of “to”.

This is very similar to, although slightly different from, the case marker particle “to”. The case marker version, as described above, defines somebody or something that is *also* performing the action, like the English word “with”. It defines the relationship between that person or thing and the *verb*; that is, who else is doing the action. The parallel marker version simply joins noun phrases together into a single noun phrase like the word “and”, which can then be used like any other noun phrase.

The following example uses the case marker version of “to”:

I went to Tokyo with Yamazaki-san  
 watashi wa yamazaki san **to** tōkyō ni **ikimashita**

In this case, the “to” relates directly to the verb “ikimashita”. Here is an example using the parallel marker “to”:

I went to Tokyo and Osaka  
 watashi wa tōkyō to ōsaka ni ikimashita

In this case, “tōkyō to ōsaka” have been joined together to become a single noun phrase. The “to” does not relate directly to the verb - it simply joins the two place names together to form a single noun phrase. This, as a whole, is then defined as the destination and linked to the verb by the particle “ni”. We can also use it with other particles, like so:

Tokyo and Osaka are big cities  
tōkyō to ōsaka wa ōkī toshi desu

Both versions of “to” are also often used together, such as in this example, where the first “to” is a parallel marker, and the second “to” is a case marker:

I went to Tokyo with Yamazaki-san and Kawaguchi-san  
 watashi wa yamazaki-san to kawaguchi-san **to** tōkyō ni ikimashita

Like the case marker version, the parallel marker version of “to” should only be used to join noun phrases.

There is no real need to be able to differentiate between each version of “to”. They are simply highlighted here to help you understand why sometimes “to” is used to form a list, with the words on either side of “to” being ‘equal’ (eg. “tōkyō to ōsaka”), while at

other times, “to” just marks another person or thing that is involved in the action (eg. “watashi wa yamazaki san to tōkyō ni ikimashita”).

**YA** is used to link things together to form an incomplete list. It is much like the parallel marker “to”, but because it indicates that the list is incomplete, it adds a meaning that is similar to the words “like”, “such as” or “et cetera” in English. In most cases, the last item in a list of things separated by “ya” will be followed by the particle “nado”. Here is an example:

I bought coffee, tea, milk, etc. / I bought things like coffee, tea and milk  
kōhī **ya** ocha **ya** gyūnyū **nado** wo kaimashita

In the above sentence, the speaker is implying that they bought several other things as well, most likely things that would normally be associated with coffee, tea and milk. There is no limit to the number of items that can be listed with “ya”, although since the entire purpose of “ya” and “nado” is to be a little bit vague and avoid including unnecessary detail, the number of items listed will usually be limited to two or three. Both “ya” and “nado” should only be used with noun phrases.

**SHI** is used to list multiple activities (verbs) or characteristics (adjectives), while placing emphasis on how many different activities or characteristics there are. Because of this inherent emphasis, each activity or characteristic description normally contains the particle “mo”, meaning “also” (see Binding Particles below for a more detailed explanation of “mo”). Here are some examples:

They went shopping and also saw a movie  
karera wa kaimono **mo** shita **shi**, eiga **mo** mita

Noguchi-san is here, and so is Sato-san  
koko ni noguchi san **mo** iru **shi**, satō san **mo** imasu

As for this restaurant, the scenery is pretty and the food is delicious  
kono resutoran wa, keshiki **mo** kirei da **shi**, ryōri **mo** oishī

As in the above examples, “shi” should only be used after an independent clause. This can be expressed in either the polite or informal form, although the informal form is more common, and is still sufficiently polite as long as the sentence ends with a polite verb, such as in the second example above.

## Sentence-ending particles

These are added to the end of a sentence in order to alter it in some way. By far the most important of these to know is “ka” as it is used to turn a phrase into a question. Another common one is yet another usage of the particle “no”, as explained below. Most other sentence ending particles are just colloquialisms that add a bit of emotion to the original sentence. They are far less common, and would be better to learn as you come across them in regular conversation. As you would expect, sentence-ending particles should generally be placed at the end of an independent clause. Here are the most common ones:

**KA** turns a sentence into a question. The sentence can be in any tense and any level of politeness.

**NO** can be placed at the end of a sentence to help emphasize a particular word or phrase within that sentence.

For example, in informal situations, it is possible to ask a question without using “ka” by just speaking with a questioning intonation. However, when the person asking the question is surprised or excited about what they are asking, they can express this feeling by speaking in an excited way and adding the particle “no” at the end. Here is an example of a basic question, expressed both with and without “no”.

Are you going to Japan?  
(anata wa) nihon ni iku?

Are you going to Japan!?  
(anata wa) nihon ni iku **no!**

When written in text, the only way to differentiate between these sentences in English is through the use of exclamation marks, so the difference is not completely obvious. When spoken, however, the added emphasis in the question ending in “no” is clear.

For non-questions, the same basic rule applies, with “no” adding emphasis to a particular word or phrase in the sentence. In addition to the use of “no”, the part of the sentence being emphasized should be stressed when spoken. Here are some examples, with the emphasized words in italics:

*I went!*  
*watashi* ga itta **no**!

He *threw out* my blue shirt!  
 kare wa watashi no aoi shatsu wo *suteta* **no**!

Statements like these can also be followed by “da” or “desu”, although in such cases, the “no” is usually abbreviated to just “n”. Here are the above examples again with “da” and “desu” added.

*I went!*  
*watashi* ga itta **n da**!  
*watashi* ga itta **n desu**!

He *threw out* my blue shirt!  
 kare wa watashi no aoi shatsu wo *suteta* **n da**!  
 kare wa watashi no aoi shatsu wo *suteta* **n desu**!

These kinds of expressions are also often used in combination with “yo”, which further strengthens the emphasis. In such cases, the use of “da” or “desu” after “no” is still optional, although “no yo” at the end of a sentence sounds quite feminine, and is generally only used by females. As such, if using “no” and “yo” together in informal settings, males should end their sentences with “nda yo”.

*I went!*  
 [Informal] *watashi* ga itta **n da yo**!  
 [Feminine] *watashi* ga itta **no yo**!  
 [Polite] *watashi* ga itta **n desu yo**

He *threw out* my blue shirt!  
 [Informal] kare wa watashi no aoi shatsu wo *suteta* **n da yo**!

[Feminine] kare wa watashi no aoi shatsu wo *suteta* **no yo!**

[Polite] kare wa watashi no aoi shatsu wo *suteta* **n desu yo!**

To ask polite questions that carry the emphasis that “no” brings, the ending should simply be changed to “n desu ka”, as these examples show:

Are you going to Japan!?

nihon ni iku **n desu ka!?**

Did he throw out your blue shirt!?

kare wa anata no aoi shatsu wo suteta **n desu ka!?**

One important rule to be aware of in relation to this use of “no” is that when it comes after a noun or na-adjective, this word should be followed by a “na”. While normally a sentence ending in a noun or na-adjective would be followed by “da” or “desu”, this effectively needs to be changed to “na” in order to be followed by “no”. The following examples demonstrate this:

This is a pen

kore wa pen **da**

Is this a *pen*!?

[Informal] kore wa pen **na** no!?

[Polite] kore wa pen **nan** desu ka!?

—

That’s right

sō desu

*That’s* right

[Informal] sō **nan** da yo

[Feminine] sō **na no** yo

[Polite] sō **nan** desu yo

The following table summarizes the different ways that “no” can be used at the end of a sentence to add emphasis:

Setting	Original verb	Emphasized statement	Question
<b>Informal</b>	da	nano / nanda / nanda yo / nano yo (feminine)	nano?
	Other	no / nda / nda yo / no yo (feminine)	no?
<b>Polite</b>	desu	nandesu / nandesu yo	nan desu ka?
	Other	ndesu / ndesu yo	n desu ka?

**NA** can be used to form a very strong negative command. By putting “na” at the end of a sentence in the informal, non-negative present tense, you can command or order someone to *not* do the action described by the sentence.

Don’t come here!

koko ni kuru **na**!

Don’t close the door!

doa wo shimeru **na**

The most important thing to remember with this kind of expression is that despite being a negative command, the verb is in the positive form. Also note that you *cannot* form a positive command by using “na” after a verb in its negative form.

## Interjectory particles

As explained in Chapter 4.6, these particles are used to add emotion or emphasis to an otherwise straightforward sentence. They normally appear at the end of a sentence, although they can also be inserted into a sentence anywhere there is a pause. Here are the most common ones:

**YO** is used to make assertions, and adds a moderate level of emphasis to a sentence. It is often used when the speaker is providing new information, confirming that something has or will be done, giving an opinion, or expressing disagreement.

**NE** is generally used to express agreement, and has a kind of softening effect on the overall sentence.



## Conjunctive particles

In English, a conjunction is a word like “so” or “but” that is used to connect two separate clauses together. In Japanese, there is a group of particles that take on this role. Included in this group are particles that we have already learned, like “ga” when used to mean “but”, and “kara” when used to mean “so” or “because”.

Conjunctive particles should generally be placed at the end of a clause. Although they are usually followed by a connected clause, the second clause is not mandatory, as long as the context allows it. For example, if someone asks you why you did something, you could explain with a sentence that just ends in “kara” or “kara desu”, much like you might answer a question by saying, “Because ...” in English. The explanations below will further clarify this.

**GA** is used to connect two contrasting clauses, much like the English words “but” or “though”. This can be used in between two clauses of a contrasting nature, or at the end of a single clause if the contrasting idea is understood from context, like in the second example below:

I want to go to Japan **but** I don't have any money  
 (watashi wa) nihon ni ikitai desu **ga** okane ga arimasen

I can't go to Japan. I want to go, **though**...  
 nihon ni ikemasen. ikitai desu **ga**...

Sometimes, “ga” is also used as a way to lead one phrase into another, even if the ideas expressed in each clause are not of a contrasting nature. Here are a couple of examples:

Excuse me. How much is this?  
 sumimasen **ga**, kore wa ikura desu ka

I'm starting; is that okay (good)?  
 kore kara hajimarimasu **ga**, ī desu ka?

**KEREDOMO** is also used to connect two contrasting clauses. It is interchangeable with “ga”, and is very often used in its shortened and less polite form “kedo”. “Keredo” is also quite common, and is more polite than “kedo”.

**KARA** connects two clauses together, with the first providing an explanation or reason for the second, similar to the English words “because” and “so”. The important difference between “kara” and “because” is that within a sentence, “because” appears before the reason, whereas “kara” always comes after it. This makes “so” a more accurate direct translation of “kara”.

The reason clause is often expressed in the informal form, even in polite language, with the last verb in the sentence making the whole sentence polite.

I can't go to Japan **because** I don't have any money. / I don't have any money **so** I can't go to Japan  
(watashi wa) okane ga nai **kara** nihon ni ikemasen

In the following example, the second clause is omitted by person B because it is understood from context.

A: Why don't you go to Japan?

A: dōshite nihon ni ikimasen ka?

B: Because I don't have any money.

B: okane ga nai **kara** desu.

**NODE** also connects a reason clause with a result clause, and is essentially a more polite version of “kara”. However, it is almost always used after a verb in the informal form, as there is usually a clause that follows it that would be expressed with the appropriate level of politeness. When placed after a clause ending in a noun or na-adjective, “na” should be used instead of “da”, as shown in the second example below:

I can't go to Japan **because** I don't have any money  
okane ga nai **node** nihon ni ikemasen

This is a new car, so please be careful  
kore wa atarashī kuruma **na node**, ki wo tsukete kudasai

**NONI** connects two clauses together, taking on a meaning similar to “even though” in English. It is usually only used after independent clauses ending in a verb in its informal

form, and like “*node*”, when the clause before it ends in a noun or *na*-adjective, “*na*” should be used instead of “*da*”. Here are some examples:

He bought a new TV **even though** he doesn’t have any money.  
 kare wa okane ga nai **no ni** atarashī terebi wo katta

**Even though** I looked for my keys for an hour, I didn’t find them.  
 ichi jikinan kagi wo sagashita **no ni**, mitsukarimasen deshita

**Even though** it’s my computer, she is always using it.  
 watashi no konpyūta **na noni**, itsumo kanojo ga tsukatte iru

## Binding particles

These are quite possibly the most confusing group of particles because they can be used either in place of or together with other particles, particularly case markers, to change the inherent meaning of a sentence. They can be placed after various word types depending on the particle, but will most often be found after noun phrases or other particles. We will start by looking at “*mo*”, because although it is not the most important binding particle, it is probably the easiest to understand.

**MO**, as discussed in Chapter 4.1, can be used instead of a particle like “*wo*” to add the meaning of “also” to a sentence, such as in this example from earlier:

I ate ramen  
 (watashi wa) rāmen wo tabemashita

I **also** ate yakisoba  
 (watashi wa) **yakisoba mo** tabemashita

It can also be used in the place of the subject marker “*ga*”, or after other particles like “*ni*”, “*de*”, and “*kara*”. These kinds of particle combinations will be explained in Chapter 11.4.

**WA** defines the topic of a sentence, which is actually a concept that doesn’t exist in English grammar. The topic is the main thing that is being talked about, and it provides

context, or additional context, for everything that follows in the sentence. The most difficult part about “wa” is that the topic of a sentence is often the same as the subject, meaning that either “wa” or “ga” could be used after a given word in many situations. There is, however, a difference between defining a certain word as the topic as opposed to the subject, so it is important to understand the difference between these two concepts. This will be explained in detail in Chapter 11.3.

**DEMO** is much like the English word “even” as it appears in sentences like, “Even I can do that”. Let’s take a look:

I can do that  
watashi wa sore ga dekimasu

**Even** I can do that  
watashi **demo** sore ga dekimasu

In this example, you can see that by replacing “wa” with “demo”, the meaning of “even” is added. This is quite similar to the way “mo” can be used to replace other particles to add the meaning of “also”. It keeps the fundamental message of the sentence – that ‘I’ can do ‘that’ – while implying that other people are capable too. Here are some more examples:

**Even** my grandfather has a smartphone  
(watashi no) ojīchan **demo** sumaho wo motte iru yo

**Even** today is warmer than yesterday  
kyō **demo** kinō yori atatakai desu

One similar but slightly different usage of “demo” is to imply that something is just one option among many. For example, a common question asked by someone hosting a visitor might be:

ocha demo nomimasu ka

This is a polite way of asking a person if they would like to drink some tea, but the use of “demo” implies that tea is just one of a number of possible options. It is more open than a simple yes/no question, giving the visitor the option to request something

other than tea. Of course, even if the question were just, “ocha wo nomimasu ka”, the visitor could still ask for something other than tea, but by using “demo”, the host is more obviously indicating that other options are available. Here are some more examples of this, including some cases where “demo” is combined with other particles:

Shall we watch a movie (or something)?  
eiga **demo** mimashō ka?

I want to eat Japanese food (or something)  
washoku **demo** tabetai desu

**SHIKA** is similar to the English adverb “only”. It often takes the place of the particles “ga” and “wo”, and can also be used after other particles like “ni”, “de” and the case marker version of “to”. The most important thing about “shika” is that it is only ever used with verbs in their negative form, despite having a positive meaning in relation to the thing that it marks. Here is an example:

I only have 100 yen  
(watashi wa) hyaku en shika motte inai

In this sentence, I am saying that I have 100 yen, yet the verb is expressed in the negative form. Rather than translate “shika” as “only”, it may be better to think of it as “apart from”. We could then express the English sentence as, “Apart from 100 yen, I don’t have anything”. This puts the verb in its negative form, making it more equivalent to the Japanese sentence, even if it is a less natural English translation. It is still not perfect, but it fairly accurately expresses the same idea.

Here are some more example sentences using “shika”, including some that combine “shika” with other particles:

I only did half of my homework  
(watashi wa) shukudai no hanbun **shika** yaranakatta

I only want to go to that new amusement park  
(watashi wa) ano atarashī yūenchi **ni shika** ikitakunai

These shoes can only be bought here  
kono kutsu wa koko **de shika** kaemasen

## 11.2 Particle/verb combinations

### New vocabulary

air conditioner	eakon
to ride	noru
to say	iu
to stand	tatsu
to visit	hōmon suru

The fundamental rule of particles is that they relate directly to the word or phrase that comes *before* them. That does not mean, however, that they are not affected by what comes *after* them. In particular, certain verbs should only be used with certain particles, and the appropriate particle is not always what you might expect.

For example, in English, the verb “to ride” looks like any other transitive verb. A sentence like “I rode the train” has the same fundamental structure as the sentence, “I opened the door”. However, in Japanese, the correct way to say each of these is “densha *ni* norimashita” and “doa *wo* shimemashita”, respectively. The appropriate particle to be used with the verb ride is “ni”, not “wo”, even though the train is what is being ridden in the same way that the door is what is being closed.

The reason for this is that the act of riding, as Japanese treats it, is actually the movement from being off something to being on it, so the particle “ni” is used to define the destination of this movement. “Noru” can be used to simply describe somebody as currently being on a particular mode of transport, but even then, the appropriate particle is “ni”.

There are several other interesting particle/verb combinations like this one that may, at first, seem unintuitive coming from English. While not an exhaustive list by any means, here are some of the more common verbs that use somewhat unexpected particles.

#### **noru**

English meaning: to ride

Particle to use: ni (not wo)

Reasoning: As noted above, the mode of transport being ridden is the destination of the movement defined by “noru”.

Examples:

He is riding the bus  
kare wa basu ni notte imasu

Get on the train please  
densha ni notte kudasai

### **au / deau / hōmon suru**

English meaning: to meet / to meet for the first time / to visit

Particle to use: ni (not wo)

Reasoning: Like “noru”, the person being met or visited is the destination of the act of meeting. In English, the person being met or visited is the object of the appropriate verb, but in Japanese, they are always the destination of that action.

Examples:

I will meet my friend tomorrow  
ashita (watashi wa) tomodachi **ni** aimasu

I met her (for the first time) at a party  
(watashi wa) pāti de kanojo **ni** deaimashita

She visited her grandmother yesterday  
kinō (kanojo wa) obāsan **ni** hōmon shimashita

### **wakaru**

English meaning: to understand

Particle to use: ga (not wo)

Reasoning: This is actually an intransitive verb in Japanese, so it does not take an object. Unlike English, where the thing being understood is expressed as the *object* of the verb “understand” (eg. I understand Japanese), in Japanese, the thing being understood is the *subject* of the verb “wakaru” (eg. nihongo ga wakarimasu). On a grammatical level, this makes “wakaru” more similar to the passive verb phrase “to

be understood”, because in a sentence like, “Japanese is understood”, the thing being understood is defined as the subject of the sentence.

Ultimately, all this means is that instead of marking the thing being understood with “wo”, “ga” should be used instead. The person by whom it is understood is either implied by context, or can be specified by making them the topic of the sentence marked by “wa”.

Examples:

I understand Japanese  
(watashi wa) nihongo **ga** wakarimasu

He doesn't understand how to use the air conditioner  
kare wa eakon no tsukaikata<sup>4</sup> ga wakarimasen

### omou / iu

English meaning: think / say

Particle to use: to (not wo)

Reasoning: In Japanese, anything that is thought or said is generally expressed in the form of a quotation, and “to” is the particle that marks such a quotation. While in English we would often say things like, “He said he wants to buy a new car”, in Japanese, what the person thought or said is expressed as a quotation, so the sentence sounds more like, “He said, ‘I want to buy a new car’”. This will not always be obvious, however, since the subject of the sentence being quoted (ie. “I want to buy a new car”) will often be omitted. Regardless, things that people think or say are almost always expressed as quotations in Japanese, so “to” should be the particle used.

Examples (quotation is underlined):

I think Japanese is easy  
(watashi wa) nihongo wa kantan da **to** omoimasu

He was saying that he wants to buy a new car  
kare wa (watashi wa) atarashī kuruma ga kaitai **to** itte imashita

4 “Tsukaikata” means “how to use”, as will be explained in Chapter 12.5.12



### Pronunciation of “iu”

As a side note, the verb “iu” is often pronounced as “yū”, even when conjugated in other forms. This makes things like “itte imashita” often sound like “yutte imashita”. The reason for this is simply that in its dictionary form, “iu” sounds a lot like “yū”, and this sound has been carried over into other forms of the verb. Technically it might be considered incorrect, but in spoken language, this pronunciation is extremely common.

### suwaru / tatsu

English meaning: sit / stand

Particle to use: ni (not de)

Reasoning: For most actions, the place where the action takes place is marked by the particle “de”, but for verbs like “suwaru” and “tatsu”, the place where a person is sitting or standing is treated as the destination of that action. Much like “noru”, “suwaru” refers to the movement of going from a non-sitting position to a sitting position, so whatever the person is sitting on is the destination. The same applies to “tatsu”.

Although “de” seems the more appropriate particles in this case, it would actually define what body part is used to sit or stand, so “ashi de tatsu” would indicate that somebody is standing on their legs/feet.

Examples:

He is sitting on the sofa

kare wa sofa ni suwatte imasu

Please don't sit on the table

tēburu ni suwaranaide kudasai

I am standing on the roof

watashi wa yane ni tatte imasu

Please stand over there

asoko ni tatte kudasai

### 11.3 The difference between “wa” and “ga”

One of the most difficult concepts to understand in Japanese is the difference between the particles “wa” and “ga”. It is not uncommon for people to study Japanese for years, and even speak the language to a considerable degree of fluency, and still not really know when to use “wa” and when to use “ga”. Hopefully, the explanation that follows will help clarify the roles of these two particles.

#### Understanding the difference between “wa” and “ga”

Most books and other resources, this one included, state that “wa” defines the topic of a sentence, while “ga” defines the subject. This is accurate, but it doesn’t really tell us much, or help us differentiate between them. The difference is also much more complicated than just these simple definitions, although it does give us a good starting point.

So what’s the difference between the topic and subject?

- The topic is what is being talked about in that sentence.
- The subject is the person or thing that performs the action described by the verb.

The confusion between these two stems from the fact that what is being talked about, and the person performing the action, are often the same thing. Take the following example:

Taro went to the supermarket  
tarō wa sūpā ni ikimashita

Here, Taro is the one who is being talked about, and he is also the one performing the act of “going”. This means that either “wa” or “ga” could be used in this case, although changing “wa” to “ga” would change the emphasis of the sentence.

Essentially, “ga” places the emphasis of a sentence on the subject, so it should only be used when the subject represents new or important information. If we care most about who did something, then “ga” should be used to emphasize that point. If, however, we care more about other factors like what they did, where they did it, or why, then “wa” should be used to take the emphasis away from the “who”.

The following example, which is easily translated into English with a comparable difference in meaning, helps to illustrate this point:

He is a spy  
kare **wa** supai desu

He is the spy  
kare **ga** supai desu

The first sentence, where “wa” is used, is just stating a simple fact - that the specified person is a spy. This sentence would normally be used to answer the question, “What is he?” We already know about the person ‘he’, but want to know more about him. This new information comes after “wa”.

By contrast, in the second sentence, there is an implication that we already know that a spy is present. In English, the word ‘the’ implies that the existence of a spy is known, and by saying that ‘he’ is the spy, we are answering the question, “Who is the spy?” In this case, the fact that ‘he’ is the spy is the new information, hence it is followed by “ga”.

This same idea applies to other sentences, even if the difference may not be as obvious in English. Consider these sentences:

Taro went to the supermarket  
tarō wa sūpā ni ikimashita

*Taro* went to the supermarket  
tarō ga sūpā ni ikimashita

The first sentence defines Taro as the topic, and is a basic statement telling us that he went to the supermarket. It answers the question, “What did Taro do?”, or possibly “Where did Taro go?”

The second sentence, on the other hand, defines Taro as the subject. As was the case with the spy example, the use of “ga” puts the emphasis on the fact that Taro is the one who went to the supermarket, making this an appropriate answer to the question, “Who went to the supermarket?” In English, the word order remains the same, so the difference between these two statements is not as obvious. The different emphasis therefore needs to be expressed in English by stressing the word “Taro”.

One common situation where the difference between “wa” and “ga” is particularly important is when making choices. In Japanese, when someone gives you a choice between a number of options, asking you which you would like, the normal way to

respond to this directly translates as saying which option is “good”. However, particle choice is crucial. Compare these two sentences:

This is good  
kore **wa** ī desu

*This* is good  
kore **ga** ī desu

Again, the sentence using “wa” is just a basic statement describing the attributes of “this”. The “ga” version, however, places the emphasis on the thing referred to as “this”, implying that that is what the speaker wants. Without “ga”, there is no such emphasis, and it is still unclear as to which you want to choose. In fact, depending on intonation, “kore wa ī desu” can actually mean that you *don’t* want that thing, a bit like saying, “I’m fine (without this) thanks”. Although only a subtle difference, this example shows how important the choice between “wa” and “ga” can sometimes be.

## The subject is not always the topic

To summarize what we have covered so far, “ga” is used to mark the subject when it contains new or important information. If we are more concerned about other pieces of information, “ga” should be replaced by “wa” so that the subject is re-defined as the topic. This removes the emphasis away from the “who”, and instead just provides context for the rest of the sentence.

This helps us to choose between “wa” and “ga” when it’s possible to use either, but the truth is, there are many times when the thing being talked about in a sentence (the topic) is not the person doing the action (the subject).

One particularly common situation where the topic and subject are different is when talking about things we like and hate. Consider the following sentence:

I like sushi  
watashi wa sushi ga suki desu

Unlike our previous examples, in this sentence, the topic and the subject are different things. The topic, or the thing we are talking about, is “watashi”, which provides context for the rest of the sentence. Within that context, the subject, “sushi”, is then described as performing the act of being (“desu”), and what it is being is liked.

As this example shows, the topic, as defined by “wa”, is not always the person or thing that is performing the action. In fact, “wa” can define any number of things as the topic of a sentence, including the object, destinations, locations, or virtually anything else. This may sound confusing, but as you will soon see, the rules we applied when choosing between “wa” and “ga” are the same in other cases too.

## Re-defining “wa” in English

In order to go any further, we need to have a clear understanding of how “wa” can be expressed in English. We already know that it is the topic of a sentence, and that this means it is the thing that is being talked about, but we need a better way to express it.

The best way to directly translate “wa” into English would be with a phrase like, “When talking about...”. This can be applied in almost any situation involving “wa”, and as long as we accept that our English sentence might sound a bit funny or even be grammatically wrong, we will be able to come up with direct translations that accurately represent whatever is being said in Japanese. Let’s try a few examples from earlier:

When talking about Taro, went to the supermarket  
tarō wa sūpā ni ikimashita

When talking about him, is a spy  
kare wa supai desu

When talking about me, sushi is liked  
watashi wa sushi ga suki desu

The English sentences above are obviously a little bit odd, but by having “wa” translated as, “When talking about”, we can effectively create the appropriate context in the same way that “wa” creates context in Japanese.

## Using “wa” in place of “wo”

Now that we have a way to express “wa” in English, let’s try using it as a replacement for the object particle “wo”:

When talking about this chair, bought  
kono isu wa kaimashita

Here, the topic has been defined as “kono isu”, which in a normal sentence would actually be the object marked by “wo”. The difference here is the same as was the case when “wa” replaced “ga”. By defining “kono isu” as the topic, it is considered to be old or unimportant information, and the emphasis shifts to what comes *after* “wa”. The new or important information is therefore the fact that the chair was bought. Again, by defining “kono isu” as the topic, the speaker is simply clarifying the context for the rest of the sentence.

Note, however, that in the above example, nobody has been defined as the person who bought the chair. As we know, this implies that the person speaking is most likely talking about themselves, so there is no need to clarify this with “watashi wa”. The speaker could include this if they wanted to, but it really isn’t necessary; we already know that they are answering the question, “Did you buy this chair?”

What happens, though, if we change the question to, “Who bought this chair?” The answer would obviously need to include a reference to a person, but which particle should we use with that person? Let’s try it:

Who bought this chair?

dare ga kono isu wo kaimashita ka

When talking about this chair, he bought

kono isu **wa** kare **ga** kaimashita

The particle to use after “kare” is, of course, “ga”. As the person who performed the act of buying, “he” is the subject, and since this is new and important information, it should be marked with “ga”. At the same time, because “kono isu” was specified in the question, the person answering already knows what item they are talking about, so they can replace “wo” with “wa” in order to take the emphasis away from the chair, and place it somewhere else.

Ultimately, “wo” follows the same rules as “ga” in that it is used to mark new or important information. Like “ga”, if the thing being defined by “wo” as the object is already understood from context, and we want to emphasize a different part of the sentence, “wo” can be changed to “wa” to create this effect.

One thing that you may have noticed about the question above is that the question word “dare” is marked by “ga”. Given what we know about “ga”, this makes perfect sense because the important piece of information that is being asked about in that question is “who”. Since question words almost always represent the information being sought, this

information must be important, and should therefore be marked by “ga” when it is the subject, or “wo” when it is the object.

## Combining “wa” with other particles

This basic principles of using “wa” to change the emphasis of a sentence can also be applied to other particles, although in a slightly different way. “Wa” can be used together with particles like “ni”, “de”, “to”, “kara” and “made” to define the topic of a sentence as the destination, location, companion or something else. Let’s look at an example:

When talking about ‘to the meeting’, went  
kaigi **ni wa** ikimashita

This is a little bit more awkward to express in English with the phrase, “When talking about”, but the effect in Japanese is the same. The only difference is that the particle “ni” needs to be kept in order for the relationship between the destination and the verb to be clear. If “ni” were not included, it would still be quite obvious that the meeting is the destination of the verb “ikimashita”, and you will sometimes hear people say a phrase like this without “ni”, but in most cases, it is best to leave “ni” in to ensure clarity. This combining of particles, by the way, should never be done with “ga” or “wo”.

In every other way, however, the use of “wa” here is the same as before. By placing “wa” after “kaigi ni”, it implies that “to the meeting” is old or unimportant information, and that the emphasis should instead be on the fact that the person went, answering the question, “Did you go to the meeting?” We can also change this around to answer a different question, such as “Who went to the meeting?”

Who went to the meeting?  
dare ga kaigi ni ikimashita ka?

When talking about ‘to the meeting’, Usui-san went  
kaigi **ni wa** usui san ga ikimashita

Like before, the important information in this sentence is the person performing the action, and this is marked by “ga”. Meanwhile, the known information - that the destination is the meeting - is marked by “ni wa” as a way to clarify that that is what is being talked about. A more simple way to answer the above question would be to simply say, “Usui-san ga ikimashita”, since the destination is already known, but by including

“kaigi ni” and marking it with “wa”, it removes any possibility of confusion. This usually isn’t necessary, but in some cases, where, for example, a number of different destinations are being discussed, including it ensures that the listener knows which destination is being referred to.

Other particles can also be combined with “wa” in the same way with the same effect. More such combinations will be covered in Chapter 11.4.

## Using “wa” to express contrast

One way that “wa” is often used in everyday conversation is to highlight a contrast in relation to certain actions. This is done by using “wa” in the same way as has been described so far, so it isn’t really anything new. The only difference is that multiple clauses are used together and each one is given a different topic. Here is a basic example with a natural English translation:

I went to the party, but Takashi didn’t go  
 watashi **wa** pātī ni itta ga, takashi **wa** ikanakatta

This is quite straightforward, but for the sake of clarity, here is the English translation again using our alternative expression for “wa”:

When talking about me, went to the party, but when talking about Takashi, didn’t go

By defining a different topic in each clause, we are able to compare the actions of each of those topics, while placing the emphasis of each clause on the action and whether or not it was performed. In doing so, the contrast between the actions of the two people is highlighted.

Now let’s look at an example that’s not so straightforward:

I like sushi, but I don’t like sashimi  
 sushi **wa** suki desu ga, sashimi **wa** suki janai desu

The alternative English translation for this would be:

When talking about sushi, is liked, but when talking about sashimi, is not liked



Normally, when talking about the things we like, the thing being described as liked is marked by the particle “ga”. As you know, this is because in such cases, that is the new and important piece of information. When we want to highlight the contrasting nature of two things, however, the important part of each clause is not the food, but whether or not that food is liked. It is, of course, important that the food being described in each clause is made clear, but the emphasis of this sentence should be on the part describing it as liked or not liked; that is where the contrast lies.

Here is another example:

I bought bread, but I didn't buy milk  
pan **wa** katta kedo, gyūnyū **wa** kawanakatta

Here, “wo” has been replaced by “wa” in both clauses so as to contrast the statuses of bread and milk. Again, the use of “wa” shifts the emphasis of each clause onto the action.

It's also possible to use “wa” to highlight a contrast like this without actually mentioning a second object or action. Consider this example:

I bought bread  
pan **wa** katta

In a sentence like this, it is implied that there are some things that have not been bought. There is still a sense of contrast, except because only one thing has been mentioned, it is not completely clear what it is being contrasted with. In most cases, however, the thing that hasn't been bought will be understood from context, such as in this conversation:

A: Did you buy bread and milk?

A: pan to gyūnyū wo katta?

B: I bought bread

B: pan **wa** katta

In this case, without saying so, person B is implying that they did not buy milk. The same idea applies when talking about things we like:

A: Do you like sushi, sashimi, etc.?

A: sushi ya sashimi nado wa suki desu ka?

B: I like sushi

B: sushi **wa** suki desu

Similar to the previous example, the implication here is that person B does not like sashimi, or at least does not like it as much as sushi.

Even when someone asks a question about just one thing, it is quite natural to use “wa” in the answer. Remember, “ga” puts the emphasis on whatever comes before it, so if you were asked if you liked sushi, replying with “sushi ga suki desu” would be placing the emphasis on the “sushi”, when really, the new and more important information is the fact that you like it. Using “wa” to talk about things in a contrasting way is just one more way of using “wa”; it does not mean it can only be used in such situations.

## Choosing particles in noun phrases

One important thing to remember about noun phrases is that they should never contain the particle “wa”. The reason for this is that “wa” is used to define the topic of a clause, and since noun phrases are one piece that exist within a clause, and not really a clause themselves, they cannot have a topic. Let’s look at an example:

I broke the chair that Mari bought

watashi wa **mari ga katta isu** wo kowashimashita

The noun phrase within this sentence is “mari ga katta isu”. The “ga” in a noun phrase like this should never be replaced by “wa” because that would result in Mari being defined as the topic for the entire clause, not just the noun phrase. This is how such a sentence would look:

watashi **wa** mari **wa** katta isu wo kowashimashita

In this mistaken sentence, Mari has become the topic for the whole sentence. She has effectively become linked to the verb “kowashimashita”, implying that she is the one that broke the chair. The original topic, “watashi”, is effectively meaningless, and Mari is no longer directly linked with the act of buying the chair. The result is an unnatural sentence with a confusing meaning.

You may be wondering, then, how you would contrast a chair that Mari bought with one bought by someone else. The key is to remember that you are comparing the chairs,

not the people. The “wa” should therefore be placed after the word “isu”, which comes at the end of the noun phrase, as shown below:

I like the chair that Mari bought, but I don't like the chair that Kenta bought  
mari ga katta isu **wa** suki desu ga, kenta ga katta isu **wa** suki janai desu

In both sides of this sentence, the noun phrases describing the chairs are defined as the topic, with the noun phrases only containing the particle “ga”, not “wa”.

The same rule should be applied to all particles. That is, “wa” should never appear inside a noun phrase - not as a replacement of “ga” or “wo”, nor in combination with other particles like “ni”, “de” and “to”.

### **In summary**

The difficulty in understanding the difference between “wa” and “ga” is not really about choosing one or the other; it is about understanding the true meaning of “wa”. While particles like “ga”, “wo”, “ni” and “de” have specific purposes that directly connect a noun phrase to a verb, “wa” is a special particle that can be substituted or inserted into a sentence to provide context for the rest of the sentence, and change where the emphasis lies.

The most important things to remember in relation to these particles are that:

- Using “wa” is like saying, “When talking about...”
- Important or new information should come after “wa”
- Phrases marked by “ga” and “wo” contain new or important information
- Replacing “ga” or “wo” with “wa” removes the emphasis from the phrases they mark and shifts it towards the back of the sentence
- The same applies when “wa” is used together with other particles, like “ni”, “de” and “to”; and
- “Wa” should never appear inside a noun phrase

## 11.4 Combining particles

### New vocabulary

airplane	hikōki
date (romantic)	dēto
to end	owaru
festival	matsuri
France	furansu

Germany	doitsu
tour	tsuā
United Kingdom	igirisu
the way (route)	michi

So far, most of our examples and exercises have used only one particle to mark each word or phrase. As briefly introduced in the previous section, it is also possible to combine particles together to express different relationships.

There are a lot of possible particle combinations, but we will focus on the most common ones. Specifically, we will look at some of the possible combinations involving the particles “no”, “mo” and “wa”

### Particles combined with “no”

Particles are often combined with “no” as a shorter way of creating a descriptive noun phrase. In English, for example, a sentence like “The train coming from Shinjuku” could have the verb removed to become, “The train from Shinjuku”. In Japanese, the particle “no” is often used to shorten sentences in this way. Here are some of the more common particle combinations involving “no”:

**KARA NO** can be used to describe something as being from somewhere or someone. Since “kara” can be used to define the origin of something like the word “from”, we can use “kara no” to talk about something that is from a particular person or place, like so:

The train from Shinjuku  
shinjuku **kara no** densha

A souvenir from Takuya  
takuya **kara no** omiyage

**MADE NO** can be used in a similar way to “kara no” to describe something specific that ends at a certain time. Expressions that use “made no” usually sound odd when

translated directly to English because in English, a verb would normally be needed for the sentence to sound natural (as shown in brackets below), but they are perfectly fine without the verb in Japanese.

The festival (that ran) until yesterday was fun  
Kinō made no matsuri wa tanoshikatta desu

This is the tour (that runs) until Friday  
 kore wa kin'yōbi made no tsuā desu

**HE NO** is used to describe something by its destination. While normally “ni” can be used to define the destination of a motion, “he no” is basically always used to describe things by their destination, since “ni no” sounds quite awkward.

I don't know the way to Tokyo  
 (watashi wa) tōkyō he no michi ga wakarimasen

My present to her was expensive  
watashi no kanojo he no purezento wa takakatta desu

**TO NO** can be used to describe an event based on the other person or people involved in the event.

My date with her is on Saturday  
(watashi no) kanojo to no dēto wa doyōbi desu

Our contract with that company ends tomorrow  
(watashi tachi no) ano kaisha to no keiyaku wa ashita owarimasu

**DE NO** is usually used to define something by the place where it occurs.

Let's go to the festival at the park  
kōen de no matsuri ni ikimashō

Concerts (held) outside are fun  
soto de no raibu wa tanoshī

## Particles combined with “mo”

While “mo” can replace particles like “ga” and “wo” to add the meaning of “also”, with other particles, it is necessary to keep the original particle and use it together with “mo” so that the role of the preceding word is still clear. For example, when defining an ‘also’ destination, keeping “ni” and saying “ni mo” ensures that it is clear that this is marking the destination of the action.

Additionally, when using “mo”, it is possible to string multiple words together, separated only by “mo” and the other particle, to emphasize the number of things in the list. This is shown in some of the examples below.

**NI MO** is used to define an “also” destination.

I went to France last year. I also went to the UK.  
kyonen, furansu ni ikimashita. igirisu **ni mo** ikimashita.

Yesterday, I rode a train, a bus and a plane.  
Kinō, densha **ni mo** basu **ni mo** hikōki **ni mo** norimashita

**DE MO** is used to describe where else something can or does take place. The combination of “de” and “mo” could be viewed as simply another usage of the particle “demo”, but in this case, by thinking of it as two separate particles combined, the role each word has in the sentence should be more clear.

Let’s swim in the pool. Let’s also swim in the sea.  
Pūru de oyogimashō. Umi **de mo** oyogimashō.

(You) can buy bread at the supermarket and also at the convenience store  
pan wa sūpā **de mo** konbini **de mo** kaemasu

## Particles combined with “wa”

As was introduced in Chapter 11.3, the topic-defining particle “wa” can be used with many more things than just a person or object. It can be a location, a destination, a companion, or any other noun phrase. Much like “mo”, however, things like destinations and locations still need to be defined as such using the particles “ni” and “de”, even when “wa” is added.

The addition of “wa” after another particle takes the emphasis away from the word that it marks, and pushes it towards the back of the sentence. Like other uses of “wa”, it is similar to saying, “When talking about...”, as this sets up the context for the rest of the sentence in the same way as “wa”. The main difference of “wa” being combined with another particle, however, is that instead of the topic just being a thing, like “I” or “Japan”, the thing being talked about would be translated to English as a prepositional phrase, such as “to me”, or “in Japan”. The examples provided below should help clarify this.

**NI WA** defines the topic of a sentence as the destination of an action involving movement, or the location of something when using “aru” and “iru”.

When talking about ‘to Germany’, I haven’t been  
(watashi wa) doitsu **ni wa** itta koto ga arimasen<sup>5</sup>

When talking about ‘in here’, there are lots of people  
koko **ni wa** hito ga takusan imasu

**DE WA** turns the location where something takes place, or the means by which the action is done, into the topic of the sentence.

When talking about ‘at my hotel’, the food is cheap  
watashi no hoteru **de wa**, tabemono wa yasui desu

By bus, it takes one hour  
basu **de wa** ichijikan kakarimasu

**TO WA** defines the topic of a sentence as the person or thing with whom the action is performed.

With him, I play tennis every week  
kare **to wa**, maishū tenisu wo shimasu

As for her, she plays with the dog, but she doesn’t play with the cat  
kanojo wa, **inu to wa** asobimasu ga, neko **to wa** asobimasen

.....  
5 The expression “have done” referring to past experience will be introduced in Chapter 12.1.3.

**KARA WA** defines the topic of a sentence as the point of origin of an action involving movement.

From her, I received a bicycle  
kanojo **kara wa**, jitensha wo moraimashita

From here, it will take one hour, but from your house, it will take two hours  
koko **kara wa** ichijikan kakaru kedo, anata no ie **kara wa** nijikan kakaru



## Chapter 12

# Lots and lots of expressions

At this point, we have covered all of the fundamental rules of the Japanese language. You can talk about things in the past, present and future, and can describe them in great detail. In this chapter, you will learn a wide range of additional expressions. The expressions are grouped where appropriate and presented in order of general usefulness, but there is no need to learn them in this order, so feel free to pick and choose the expressions you want to learn.

### 12.1 Very useful expressions

The first set of expressions we will look at are not related to each other in any particular way. They are all just very common expressions.

#### 12.1.1 Anything, something, nothing, and other similar words

##### New vocabulary

bathroom	furoba
to need	iru
to respect	sonkei suru

seat	seki
things	mono

Words like “anything” and “something” are expressed in Japanese by combining question words, such as “nani” and “dare”, with certain particles. Although there is a general pattern for this, it can be a little bit confusing because the meanings of these words can change depending on whether they are used with a positive verb or a negative verb. For example, “dare mo” means “everybody” when used with a positive verb, but means “nobody” when used with a negative verb.

Let’s take a look at each question word and the different words that can be formed by combining them with particles.

Where	doko
anywhere	doko demo
somewhere	dokoka
everywhere	doko mo (positive verb)
nowhere / not anywhere	doko mo (negative verb)

When used in sentences, these words each behave slightly differently. “Dokoka” should be treated like a noun, and should be followed by whichever other particle is necessary to define its role in the sentence. The other words, however, should be treated as a noun that already has a particle attached. This means that when used in a sentence, “dokoka” will often be followed by “ga” or “de”, while the other words will be followed immediately by a verb. The examples below demonstrate this:

You can buy water anywhere  
mizu wa **doko demo** kaemasu

He went somewhere  
kare wa **dokoka ni** ikimashita

Let’s wait somewhere  
**dokoka de** machimashō

I searched everywhere  
**doko mo** sagashimashita

There are no seats anywhere  
**doko mo** seki ga nai

As you can see, “dokoka” acts like any other noun, while “doko demo” and “doko mo” are followed immediately by the verb without any other particle.

There is, however, one more consideration. In these combinations, the particles “demo” and “mo” can only really take the place of “ga” or “wo”. When using “doko demo” and “doko mo” with a verb that has a destination, for example, the particle “ni” needs to be inserted in between “doko” and the other particle. Here are some examples of this:

You can go anywhere in Japan by bullet train  
shinkansen de nihon no **doko ni demo** ikemasu

I don't have a car, so I can't go anywhere  
watashi wa kuruma ga nai kara, **doko ni mo** ikenai

He has been everywhere  
kare wa **doko ni mo** itta koto ga arimasu

With a couple of exceptions, the same rules apply to the other words introduced below.

What	nani
anything	nan demo
something	nanika
everything / all of	subete, zenbu
nothing / not anything	nani mo (negative verb only)

Although you may occasionally hear “nani mo” used with a positive verb to mean “everything”, “subete” and “zenbu” are far more common. Like “nanika”, they should always be followed by the appropriate particle. Otherwise, these words follow the same rules as the words based on “doko”, as shown below:

He can do anything  
kare wa **nan demo** dekiru

Let's buy something  
**nanika wo** kaimashō

I gave her all of my things  
(watashi wa) **subete** no mono wo kanojo ni agemashita

I don't want to do anything  
watashi wa **nani mo** shitakunai

There is nothing inside the box  
hako no naka ni **nani mo** arimasen

I can become anything  
watashi wa **nani ni demo** naremasu

Who	dare
anybody	dare demo
somebody	dareka
everybody	dare mo (positive verb)
nobody / not anybody	dare mo (negative verb)

Again, these words are used in sentences in the same way as the other words, but for one exception; the word “daremo” can also be defined as the subject followed by “ga” when used with a positive verb. This simply defines everybody as the people performing the action, as the examples below show.

Note that the word “everybody” can also be expressed as “minna” in informal settings or “minasan” in polite conversation. The difference between these and “dare mo” is that “dare mo” refers to everyone in general, while “minna” and “minasan” usually refer to everyone within a specific group of people.

Anybody can learn Japanese  
**dare demo** nihongo ga manaberu

Somebody is listening to music  
**dareka ga** ongaku wo kīte iru

Everybody knows that  
sore wa **daremo ga** shitte iru

Everybody respects her  
**daremo ga** kanojo wo sonkei shite iru

There is nobody here  
 koko ni **dare mo** inai

He gave presents to everybody  
 kare wa **dare ni mo** purezento wo ageta

She didn't ask anybody  
 kanojo wa **dare ni mo** kikanakatta

When	itsu
any time	itsu demo
sometime	itsuka
always	itsumo
never	zenzen

As time-related phrases, these are a little different to the others. All of these are essentially adverbs, and can therefore be inserted into a sentence anywhere that makes sense, and without the use of an additional particle.

Please come any time  
**itsu demo** kite kudasai

Let's meet again sometime  
 mata **itsuka** aimashō

He is always eating ramen  
 kare wa **itsumo** rāmen wo tabete iru

He never cleans the bathroom  
 kare wa **zenzen** furoba wo sōji shinai

Which	dore
whichever / any one of them	dore demo
one of them	dore ka
all of them	dore mo (positive verb)
none / not any of them	dore mo (negative verb)

These are all straightforward, following the same usage rules as the words based on “doko”. They are rarely combined with other particles like “ni”, however, since it doesn’t often make sense to do so.

Any one of them is fine  
**dore demo** ī yo

Please give one of them to him  
**doreka wo** kare ni agete kudasai

All of them are delicious  
**dore mo** oishi

I don’t need any of them  
 (watashi wa) **dore mo** iranai

### 12.1.2 Giving and receiving - ageru, kureru, morau

#### New vocabulary

boyfriend	kareshi
to give (towards you)	kureru
guitar	gitā
headphones	iyahon
salt	shio

In Japanese, the verbs used for giving and receiving can be a little bit confusing, so they require special attention. The reason for this is because the word “give” is actually different depending on the direction that the act of giving is occurring.

**Giving - “ageru” and “kureru”**

The two words meaning “to give” are “ageru” and “kureru”. “Ageru” is used when the direction of the giving is going away from yourself, or between two third parties. “Kureru” is used when the giving is coming towards yourself. Consider these sentences:

I give the book to her  
 He gives the book to her  
 She gives the book to me

In the first two sentences, the verb to use in Japanese would be “ageru”, while in the third sentence, “kureru” is appropriate. It is actually exactly the same as for the verbs “go” and “come”. Consider these sentences:

I go to her  
 He goes to her  
 She comes to me

In both English and Japanese, we use either “go” or “come” based on the direction of the movement relative to ourselves. The default option is “go”, but in the case where the movement is towards us, “come” is used instead.

In Japanese, this exact same principle applies to the verbs meaning “to give”. Basically, when the action is giving, the default verb to use should be “ageru”, but in the case where the direction of the giving is towards us, “kureru” should be used instead. Here are some examples:

I will give you a present tomorrow  
 (watashi wa) ashita (anata ni) purezento wo **ageru**

She gave him a new guitar  
 kanojo wa kare ni atarashī gitā wo **agemashita**

Daisuke gave me his headphones  
 daisuke wa (watashi ni) iyahon wo **kuremashita**

Let's give them some food  
 karera ni tabemono wo **ageyō**

I want to give this to my friend  
(watashi wa) kore wo tomodachi ni **agetai** desu

Ayumi didn't give me anything  
ayumi wa (watashi ni) nani mo **kurenakatta**

Compared to “ageru”, “kureru” is a bit more limited in how it is used, especially given the polite and indirect nature of Japanese culture. For example, you would never use “kureru” in its te-form to form the command “kurete”. Instead, you would use the extremely forceful and impolite form “kure!”, or the more polite “kudasai”, which is actually a form of the super-polite equivalent of “kureru”, “kudasaru”. Here are some examples:

Please give me the salt  
shio wo kudasai

Give me your wallet!  
saifu wo kure!

Also, since “kureru” is invariably used for the actions of other people, when talking about the future, it is often used as part of less certain expressions, such as “He said he would give me ...” or “I think she will give me ...”. This is because we can only speculate about the future actions of other people, and Japanese does not really allow concrete statements to be made about uncertain things. Here are some examples:

He said he would give me his text book  
kare wa (watashi ni) tekisuto wo **kureru to imashita**

I think she will give me her camera  
kanojo wa (watashi ni) kamera wo **kureru to omoimasu**

They might give us a bit more time  
(karera wa) mō chotto jikan wo kureru **kamo shiremasen**<sup>6</sup>

.....  
6 See Chapter 12.5.10



Interestingly, the use of “kureru” is not limited to when you yourself are the recipient. As long as the receiver is closer to you compared with the giver, “kureru” is the more appropriate verb to use. For example, if you are talking to Taro about something that somebody else gave him, you should still use “kureru” to describe the act of giving because Taro is closer to you than the person who gave that something to Taro.

As for that shirt, did Maiko give it to you?  
sono shatsu wa Maiko ga kureta no?

### Receiving - “morau”

When it comes to receiving, things are much more straightforward, but a little bit of care is still required with regards to particles. In the English sentence, “Taro received a book from Maiko”, it is important to recognize that Taro is the subject of the sentence; he is the one performing the act of receiving. In Japanese, the same rule applies, and the person receiving the item should be marked by “ga” or “wa”, like so:

Taro received a book from Maiko  
**tarō wa** maiko ni hon wo **moraimashita**

What you may find confusing here is the use of the particle “ni”. “Ni” is normally used to mark the destination of an action involving movement, but because the verb “morau” carries a passive meaning, the opposite is true. That means the origin of the act of giving, which in this case is Maiko, is marked by the particle “ni”. It is possible to use the particle “kara” in this situation, and you are free to use this if you find it less confusing, but you will no doubt hear “ni” used commonly by other people. Here are some more examples:

I received a letter from my mom  
watashi wa haha **ni/kara** tegami wo **moraimashita**

She received a necklace from her boyfriend  
kanojo wa kareshi **ni/kara** nekuresu wo **moraimashita**

The only time other than with the verb “morau” (or its super-polite counterpart “itadaku”) that the meaning of “ni” is reversed in this way is when regular verbs are expressed in the passive form. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 12.4. In all other cases of actions that involve movement, “ni” defines the destination.

### 12.1.3 Have done - shita koto ga aru

This expression is used to talk about experience, and is often compared to the English expression “I have done...”. It is formed in the following way:

[verb in informal past tense] + koto ga aru

The final verb, “aru”, is mostly expressed in the present tense, but can also be expressed in the past tense to describe something that had or hadn’t been done at a specific time in the past. Here are some examples:

I have been to Japan  
watashi wa nihon ni itta **koto ga arimasu**

I haven’t ridden a plane  
watashi wa hikōki ni notta **koto ga arimasen**

One year ago, I hadn’t been abroad  
ichinen mae, (watashi wa) kaigai ni itta **koto ga nakatta**

The “koto” in these expressions turns the act of going to Japan, etc., into a noun phrase that describes experience performing that action. By combining this with the verb “aru”, this expression states that that experience exists. Since an experience can only exist if it has already occurred, the verb before “koto” should always be in the past tense.

### 12.1.4 Mine, yours, old ones and new ones - watashi no, furui no

As you know, the particle “no” is used to indicate possession of an item, but it is also possible to use “no” to indicate possession without actually specifying what the item is. In English, we do this using words like “mine” and “yours”. In Japanese, we just leave off the word that would otherwise come after “no”, so instead of saying “watashi no pen”, we would simply say “watashi no”. The following examples should help clarify this:

This is **mine**  
kore wa **watashi no** desu

That car is **his**  
 ano kuruma wa **kare no** da

This is **Hiroki's**  
 kore wa **hiroki no** desu

A similar effect can be created with adjectives. Instead of referring to the old book as “furui hon”, if it is clear that a book is what is being spoken about, then the thing being described - in this case “hon” - can be replaced by “no”. This results in a phrase similar to the English expression, “the old one”. Here are some examples:

Pass me the old one  
**furui no** wo (watashi ni) watashite kudasai

Where's the new one?  
**atarashī no** wa doko desu ka?

Which is the one you like?  
 (anata ga) **suki na no** wa dore?

As in the last example, na-adjectives should retain the “na” when the original noun is replaced by “no”.

## 12.2 Conditional expressions

Conditional expressions in English are basically expressions that use the words “if” and “when” to describe a condition that affects another action. In Japanese, there are a number of different conditional expressions, each with different uses. In some cases these are interchangeable, but in many situations, one expression will sound more natural than the others. We will now take a look at the main conditional expressions in Japanese, but keep in mind that it is better not to worry too much about the subtle differences between each expression. Over time, you will get a natural feel for when to use each one.

## 12.2.1 If/when - tara

### New vocabulary

bored, free	hima
bus stop	basutei
dishes	shokki

Probably the most flexible conditional expression is “-tara”. It can be used to say “if X happens” or “when X happens”, and it can be used to talk about your own actions, the actions of other people, or just actions that occur on their own (intransitive verbs). It can also be used to talk about things in both the past and the future.

The “-tara” expression is formed in a similar way to the te-form and the informal past tense, as shown in the following table:

Verb type		Formation of -tara ending	Example
<b>Add-on</b>		stem + tara	tabetara
<b>Vowel-changing</b>	<b>u, tsu, ru</b>	-ttara	kattara
	<b>bu, mu, nu</b>	-ndara	asondara
	<b>ku</b>	-itara	kītara
	<b>gu</b>	-idara	oyoidara
	<b>su</b>	-shitara	hanashitara
<b>Irregular</b>	<b>suru</b>	shitara	-
	<b>iku</b>	ittara	-
	<b>kuru</b>	kitara	-

For verbs in the negative form, the “nai” ending is simply changed to “nakattara”. For verbs expressed in the continuous form, the “-te iru” ending is changed to “-te itara”.

Essentially, it is the same as the informal past tense, but with “ra” added on the end. Here are some examples of “-tara” being used in a sentence:

If you go to the supermarket, please buy some milk  
(anata ga) sūpā ni **ittara**, gyūnyū wo katte kudasai

If I buy a car, I can go to the beach every weekend  
(watashi wa) kuruma wo **kattara**, maishūmatsu umi ni ikemasu

When I opened the door, there was a dog  
(watashi ga) doa wo **aketara**, inu ga imashita

When I grow up (become big), I want to become a doctor  
(watashi wa) ōkiku **nattara**, isha ni naritai desu

If the train doesn't come, what shall we do?  
densha ga **konakattara**, dō shiyō?

When I was waiting at the bus stop, I saw Suzuki-san  
basutei de **matte itara**, suzuki san wo mimashita

The “-tara” ending can also be added to the end of adjectives and nouns. For i-adjectives, this is done by adding “ra” after the adjective expressed in its past tense. Na-adjectives and nouns should be followed by “dattara”, which is the “-tara” form of the verb “desu”. Here are some examples:

If you are cold, I will lend you a jacket  
**samukattara**, uwagi wo kashite ageru<sup>7</sup> yo

If you are bored, please wash the dishes  
hima **dattara**, shokki wo aratte kudasai

If tomorrow is his birthday, let's buy him a present today  
ashita ga kare no tanjōbi **dattara**, kyō purezento wo katte agemashō

### 12.2.2 If - nara

#### New vocabulary

to lend	kasu
online	netto de
to return (something)	kaesu
vending machine	jidōhanbaiki
(what) on earth	ittai (nani)

7 The te-form followed by “ageru” is used to indicate a favor is being done. This is explained in detail in Chapter 12.3.3.

The particle “nara” is similar to the word “if”, but is only really used when it is certain or almost certain that the specified activity did or will occur. It is similar in meaning to the English expression, “If it is the case that...” when used with verbs, or “In the case of...” when used with nouns.

In a sentence, “nara” can be added either directly after a noun phrase, or directly after a clause expressed in the informal form. The clause can be in any tense that makes logical sense. Here are some examples:

If (it is the case that) you will return it by Friday, I will lend you my car  
kin'yōbi made ni kaeshite kureru **nara**, kuruma wo kashite ageru<sup>8</sup> yo

If we are going to buy it online, let's order it soon/quickly  
(watashi tachi wa) netto de kau **nara**, hayaku chūmon shiyō

If it is the case that you didn't go to school today, what on earth did you do?  
kyō gakkō ni ikanakatta **nara**, ittai nani wo shimashita ka?

In the case of this vending machine, there is water  
kono jidōhanbaiki **nara** mizu ga aru yo

### 12.2.3 If - sureba

This conditional expression is mostly used to talk about future actions in a hypothetical way, where it is not yet known whether or not the action will occur. For this reason, it is not used in the way that “when” is used in English, and should only be used to mean “if”.

This expression is formed using the “e” sound variation for vowel-changing verbs followed by “ba”. For add-on verbs, “reba” is added after the stem. The following table shows how each verb type is converted to the “sureba” expression:

Verb type	If
Add-on	stem + reba
Vowel-changing	stem(e) + ba

8 The te-form followed by “ageru” is used to indicate a favor is being done. This is explained in detail in Chapter 12.3.3.

Below are some examples of each type, including the three irregular verbs:

Verb type	Stem	If
<b>Add-on</b>		<i>stem + reba</i>
eat	tabe	tabereba
watch / see / look	mi	mireba
<b>Vowel-changing</b>		<i>stem(e) + ba</i>
drink	nomi	nomeba
listen	kiki	kikeba
<b>Irregular</b>		
do	-	sureba
go	-	ikeba
come	-	kureba

For verbs in the negative form, “nai” is changed to “nakereba”. For verbs expressed in the continuous present/future tense, “-te iru” is changed to “-te ireba”.

Here are some examples of this expression:

If we pay cash, will it become cheaper?  
genkin de **haraeba**, yasuku narimasu ka?

If you don't have a ticket, you can't enter  
chiketto ga **nakereba** hairemasen

If you are carrying a bag, please put it over there  
kaban wo **motte ireba**, asoko ni oite kudasai

This expression is commonly used for discussing the best course of action. This is done by saying “i” after the verb expressed in this form. Here are some examples of both questions and answers using “sureba i”:

Q: Should I wait here? (literally: If I wait here, is that good?)

Q: koko de **mateba i** desu ka?

A: No, you should go over there (literally: No, if you go over there, that is good)

A: *ie, asoko ni ikeba i* desu

—

Q: What should I do when I arrive at Ikebukuro station?

Q: *ikebukuro eki ni tsuitara do sureba i* desu ka?

A: Please wait in front of the station

A: *eki no mae de matte kudasai*

#### 12.2.4 If - **suru to**

##### New vocabulary

instruction manual	setsumeisho
left hand side	hidari gawa
straight	massugu
to get sunburnt	hiyake suru

The particle “to” can be used after a verb in the informal present/future tense to describe what will happen if a certain action is performed. It is similar to both “-tara” and “nara” (when used for future actions), as well as “sureba”, but “to” implies a slightly stronger connection between the first action and the second. For this reason, it is often used when giving instructions, or when the consequences of the first action are undesirable. Here are some examples:

If you eat (your) vegetables, you will become strong  
*yasai wo taberu to tsuyoku naru yo*

If you open the window, it will get hot  
*mado wo akeru to atsuku narimasu yo*

If you go straight, there will be a convenience store on the left hand side  
*massugu iku to, hidari gawa ni konbini ga arimasu*



If I drink coffee at night, I become unable to sleep  
 (watashi wa) yoru ni kōhī wo **nomu to** nerarenaku narimasu

As these examples show, “to” is used to describe a direct link between one action and another. Because of this link, this expression is particularly common when describing the negative implications of not doing a certain action, such as in these examples:

If we don’t put on sunscreen, we will definitely get sunburnt  
 (watashi tachi wa) hiyakedome wo **nuranai to**, zettai ni hiyake suru yo

If you don’t read the instructions, you will break it  
 setsumeisho wo **yomanai to** kowashite shimau<sup>9</sup> yo

If we don’t leave now, we will be late  
 ima **denai to** okurete shimaimasu yo

### 12.2.5 When - toki

#### New vocabulary

to do	yaru
free time	hima na toki
garbage	gomi

policeman	keisatsukan
to put out, to take out	dasu
weather	tenki

The word “toki” is a noun that can be used like any other noun to form a noun phrase that takes the meaning of, “When...”. Literally, “toki” means “time”, so you can think of this expression as meaning, “At the time of...”. This expression can be formed in the following ways:

[informal verb] + toki  
 [i-adjective] + toki  
 [na-adjective] + na toki  
 [noun] + no toki

9 See Chapter 12.3.6 for an explanation of the “-te shimau” expression.

Here are some examples:

When I went to Japan, I ate lots of sushi  
(watashi wa/ga) nihon ni itta **toki**, sushi wo takusan tabemashita

When you leave the house, please take out the garbage  
(anata ga) ie wo deru **toki**, gomi wo dashite kudasai

When the weather is good, we ride our bicycles to the park  
tenki ga i **toki**, (watashi tachi wa) kōen ni jitensha ni notte ikimasu

When it's quiet, I like to read the newspaper  
shizuka na **toki**, shinbun wo yomu no ga suki da

When I was a child, I wanted to become a policeman  
(watashi wa/ga) kodomo **no toki**, keisatsukan ni naritakatta desu

When he was a student, he ate ramen every day  
kare wa gakusei **no toki**, mainichi rāmen wo tabeta

When a noun is followed by “no toki”, as in the last two examples, an equivalent English sentence would normally include the verb “was”, but there is no need for such a verb in the Japanese sentence.

Sometimes, a noun phrase ending in “toki” will be followed by the particle “ni”. When this is done, the overall meaning of the sentence does not really change, but the addition of “ni” puts greater emphasis on the timing of the activity, giving it more importance. If, for example, we re-phrase the second example above to say “ie wo deru toki ni”, the implication would be that the person must take out the garbage when they leave the house, not at some other time. The following examples demonstrate this:

Please take out the garbage when you leave the house, (not now)  
(ima janakute), ie wo deru **toki ni** gomi wo dashite kudasai

Please do that when I'm not here  
sore wa watashi ga (koko ni) inai **toki ni** yatte kudasai

Let's go to the park in our free time (literally: “when we are free”)  
hima na **toki ni** kōen ni ikimashō

I will call you when it is my lunch break  
hiruyasumi no **toki ni** denwa shimasu

## 12.3 Te-form expressions

The te-form of verbs forms the basis of several common expressions in Japanese. In this section, we will look at some of the more common ones.

### 12.3.1 The other negative te-form

Before looking at the different expressions that make use of the te-form, we need to take another look at the negative te-form. In chapter 9.6, it was mentioned that there are two alternative te-forms for verbs in the negative, and the “naide” version was introduced. The other version is much like the te-form of adjectives, with the informal “nai” ending being changed to “nakute”, as shown below:

Verb	Negative	Negative te-form
suru	shinai	shinakute
miru	minai	minakute
iku	ikanai	ikanakute
taberu	tabenai	tabenakute

The difference between “nakute” and “naide” is that “nakute” has quite a descriptive feel, while “naide” has a more active connotation. This is consistent with the fact that the “nakute” ending is the same as the negative te-form ending for adjectives. The implications of this will become more apparent over time as you become more familiar with the many different uses of the te-form, some of which are introduced below. To help you reach that point, the explanation of the te-form expressions that follow include guidelines for which negative te-form, if any, should be used with each.

### 12.3.2 I'm glad/It's a good thing... - te yokatta

#### New vocabulary

to charge (a battery)	jūden suru
sunglasses	sangurasu

One very common colloquial expression is to add “yokatta” after a verb in the te-form. This is used when the person speaking is relieved or glad that a certain action was or was not taken. Here are some examples:

Today's weather is horrible, so it's a good thing we went yesterday  
kyō no tenki wa hidoi kara, kinō **itte yokatta** desu

I'm glad I charged my phone this morning  
kesa keitai wo jūden **shite yokatta**

Negative verbs should be expressed with the “nakute” ending, like so:

It's a good thing I didn't forget my sunglasses  
sangurasu wo **wasurenakute yokatta**

I'm glad there isn't a test today  
kyō tesuto ga **nakute yokatta**

In some cases, such as the last example, it may seem odd that “yokatta” is expressed in the past tense, even though the verb refers to something in the future. “Yokatta” should, however, always be in the past tense in expressions like this because no matter when the action takes place, the knowledge about whether or not the action will take place is a known fact that has been decided in the past.

### 12.3.3 Doing something for someone - te ageru, te kureru

In English, when we talk about doing something for someone, we will often include words like “for you” or “for him” to show that a favor is being done. In Japanese, the same sentiment is expressed by adding the words for giving and receiving at the end of the sentence (see Chapter 12.1.2 for a detailed explanation of these words), like so:

[verb in te-form] + ageru/kureru

[negative verb with “naide” ending] + ageru/kureru

The “give” verbs can be expressed in any tense that makes sense. Here are some examples:

I bought him a book

(watashi wa) kare ni hon wo **katte ageta**

He is going to make dinner for her

kare wa kanojo ni bangohan wo **tsukutte ageru**

She didn't send me a postcard

kanojo wa hagaki wo **okutte kurenakatta**

They didn't forget me

karera wa watashi wo **wasurenaide kureta**

It does not matter whether or not the person receiving the favor is explicitly defined; as long as someone is doing something for someone, then a giving or receiving word should be added at the end of the sentence to reflect that generosity. In the second example above, it is perfectly fine to omit “kanojo ni” if it is understood from context who the dinner was made for, but whether it is included or not, the verb “ageru” should always be added at the end as long as there is a recipient of the action.

The use of “ageru” and “kureru” can also make it unnecessary to include other information. In the third example above, the Japanese sentence does not include a word meaning “me”, but because the sentence ends in “kureru”, it is clear that the postcard was sent in the direction of the person speaking. The Japanese sentence could also potentially be interpreted as “She sent us a postcard”, but in most cases, it will be obvious from the context whether the speaker means “me” or “us”.

#### 12.3.4 Doing something and coming back - te kuru

In Japanese, when talking about going somewhere for a specific purpose and then coming back, it is common practice to add “kuru” in an appropriate form at the end of the sentence. Here is an example:

I'm going to the supermarket (and then coming back)  
(watashi wa) sūpā ni itte kimasu

You will recall from Chapter 9.4 that it is possible to string multiple activities together in a sequence by expressing all but the last verb in the te-form. That is exactly what is happening in this expression; one action is being performed, and after that, the person will come back to where they started. This may seem unnecessary, and indeed it is possible to express the same idea without “kuru”, but it is extremely common, and almost sounds unnatural when it is left out.

Adding “kuru” also has the added effect of implying that the person must go somewhere else to perform the action, which helps to clarify exactly what the person will do. In English, we will often say things like, “I will go and...”, but in Japanese, this can effectively be substituted for, “I will do ... and come back”. The following examples demonstrate this:

I went and bought a newspaper (and then came back)  
shinbun wo **katte kimashita**

Let's go and eat lunch (and then come back)  
hirugohan wo **tabete koyō**

Go and have a look (and then come back)  
**mite kite**

In all of these examples, the meaning of “go” in the English sentences is effectively replaced by “-te kuru”. Although they are different literally, the meaning is the same.

### 12.3.5 Taking and bringing - motte iku/kuru, tsurete iku/kuru

In Japanese, there are no words that directly translate as “take” or “bring”, so these concepts are expressed by combining the word “motsu”, meaning to hold or carry, with the verbs “iku” (go) and “kuru” (come). Here are some examples:

He brought his computer  
kare wa konpyūta wo **motte kimashita**

I will take my guitar  
(watashi wa) gitā wo **motte ikimasu**

Negative verbs should be expressed using the “naide” version of the negative te-form, followed by “iku” or “kuru”, like so:

Did you come without your camera!?  
kamera wo **motanaide kita** no!?

In most cases, however, it sounds more natural to use the regular te-form “motte”, and instead express “iku” or “kuru” in the negative of the appropriate tense. Here is the above sentence re-written in this way:

Didn't you bring your camera!?  
kamera wo **motte konakatta** no!?

Although this second sentence uses the verb “kuru” in the negative form, it does not mean “didn't come”. The negative verb ending applies to the whole phrase, and since “motte kuru” as a whole means “bring”, the verbs in this sentence translate as “didn't bring”. As is the case in English, for sentences like this, the second option above is usually more natural than the first.

Importantly, the word “motsu” should only be used for things that are physically carried from one place to the other. To say that you brought or took a person or animal somewhere, the word “tsureru” should be used instead, like so:

I brought my dog  
inu wo **tsurete kimashita**

Please take him to the hospital  
kare wo byōin ni **tsurete itte** kudasai

Won't you bring your wife?  
okusan wo **tsurete kimasen** ka?<sup>10</sup>

.....  
10 Negative questions are explained in Chapter 12.5.14

### 12.3.6 Doing something completely or making a mistake - te shimau

When the word “shimau” is used after a verb in the te-form, it emphasizes that the action has been completed in full. It can be used simply for this emphasis, but in most cases, it implies that the completion of that action is regrettable in some way. The following examples demonstrate this:

I ate all the chocolate  
chokorēto wo zenbu **tabete shimatta**

I dropped my mobile phone  
keitai wo **otoshite shimatta**

I was late to the meeting  
kaigi ni **okurete shimaimashita**

All of the above sentences could be expressed without the addition of “shimau”, but its inclusion adds that feeling of regret that the speaker has, as though what happened was unintended and the result is undesirable.

### 12.3.7 Doing something in preparation - te oku

#### New vocabulary

floor	yuka
to hang out to dry	hosu
laundry	sentakumono

The word “oku” is used after a verb in the te-form to say that the action is being done deliberately in preparation for something, without necessarily specifying exactly what that something is. Here are some examples:

I bought tickets yesterday (in preparation)  
kinō chiketto wo **katte okimashita**



It will rain later so please close the windows (in preparation for when it rains)  
 atode ame ga furimasu kara mado wo **shimete oite** kudasai

Let's ask now (in preparation for later)  
 ima **kīte okimashō**

When a verb is expressed in the negative te-form (naide), the addition of “oku” still indicates that something is being prepared for, but instead, the person is being very deliberate about not doing that particular action. Here are some examples:

It will rain later, so please don't hang out the laundry  
 atode ame ga furimasu kara, sentakumono wo **hosanaide oite** kudasai

I dropped this on the floor, so it would be better not to eat it  
 kore wa yuka ni otoshite shimatta node, **tabenaide oita** hō ga ī<sup>11</sup>

### 12.3.8 Apologizing and thanking for specific things - te sumimasen, te arigatō

#### New vocabulary

cracker(s)	kurakkā
glasses (eye)	megane
graduation ceremony	sotsugyōshiki

As you know, the words “sumimasen” and “gomennasai” can be used on their own to apologize, but they can also be used in a sentence to apologize for a specific action. This is done by expressing the action with a verb in the te-form, and following it with the appropriate apology word.

Sorry/excuse me for being late  
 osoku **natte** sumimasen

Sorry I broke your (eye) glasses  
 (anata no) megane wo **kowashite** gomennasai

.....  
 11 The “hō ga ī” expression is explained in chapter 12.5.5

Since the action being apologized for is likely regrettable, this is often combined with the “-te shimau” expression, with “shimau” also being expressed in the te-form. The following examples demonstrate this:

Sorry/excuse me for being late  
osoku **natte shimatte** sumimasen

Sorry I broke your (eye) glasses  
(anata no) megane wo **kowashite shimatte** gomennasai

For negative verbs, the “nakute” ending is normally used for apologies, as shown in the following examples:

Sorry I can't go to your graduation ceremony  
(anata no) sotsugyōshiki ni **ikenakute** gomennasai

Sorry there aren't any of the crackers you like  
(anata no) suki na kurakkā ga **nakute** gomen ne

### Being late

There are three common ways that the concept of “being late” is expressed in Japanese. The first two use the verbs “okureru” and “chikoku suru”, which both mean “to be late”. The third combines the adjective “osoi”, meaning “late” or “slow”, with the verb “naru” to become “osoku naru”. This could be translated literally to mean “become late”, but it has essentially the same meaning as “okureru” and “chikoku suru”, hence these three expressions are mostly interchangeable.

The same general rules apply for thanking someone with “arigatō (gozaimasu)”. The only difference is that when thanking someone, the word “kureru” (or the more polite “kudasaru”) would normally be added in between the main verb and “arigatō”, since an expression of thanks usually means that a favor has been done. This, however, is still optional. Here are some examples:

Thanks for buying milk  
gyūnyū wo **katte** arigatō

Thank you for listening  
**kīte kudasatte** arigatō gozaimasu

Thanks for washing the car  
kuruma wo **aratte kurete** arigatō

The other difference between thanking and apologizing is that for thanking, negative verbs are usually expressed with the “naide” ending, as shown below:

Thank you for not buying that ugly sofa  
ano minikui sofa wo **kawanaide kurete** arigatō

Thank you for not turning on the light  
denki wo **tsukenaide kurete** arigatō

### 12.3.9 Even if - temo

#### New vocabulary

to appear (in a match, on TV, etc.)	deru
to be on time	ma ni au
definitely	zettai ni

Adding the particle “mo” after a verb or adjective in the te-form turns the phrase into an expression that means “even if...”. This is essentially the verb-based equivalent of the binding particle “demo” introduced in Chapter 11.1. Here are some examples:

Even if we leave now, we won’t be on time for the meeting  
(watashi tachi wa) ima **detemo**, kaigi ni ma ni aimasen

Even if tomorrow is cold, I will definitely go for a walk  
ashita ga **samukutemo**, zettai ni sanpo shimasu

For verbs in the negative form, the “nakute” ending should be used, as shown below:

Even if you don't want to eat ice cream, I do (want to eat it)  
(anata wa) aisu ga **taketakunakutemo**, watashi wa tabetai desu

Even if he doesn't appear (in the match), we can still win  
kare ga (shiai ni) **denakutemo**, watashi tachi wa mada kateru yo

### 12.3.10 Giving and asking for permission - temo ī

#### New vocabulary

not allowed, naughty	dame
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One particularly common usage of “temo” is to say “temo ī”, meaning “(you) may”. As you know, the word “ī” means “good” or “okay”, so this expression could more literally be translated as, “Even if you do ..., it is okay”. In most cases, “ī” will be followed by “yo” (or “desu yo” in polite speech) to soften it, since granting permission is usually something done with some level of compassion. Here are some examples:

You may enter  
**haitte mo ī** (yo)

You may go home when you have finished  
owattara **kaettemo ī** desu

This phrase can also be used to ask for permission by adding “ka” to the end of the sentence to form a question, or even just using a questioning tone.

May I sit here?  
koko ni **suwattemo ī desu ka?**

May I watch TV?  
terebi wo **mitemo ī?**

In English, a question like this would normally be answered with just “yes” or “no”, but in Japanese, questions are mostly answered by explicitly repeating the verb used in either its positive or negative form, depending on the answer. The words for “yes” or “no” can also be included, but they are rarely used alone.

For these questions, an appropriate response would be “(hai), ī desu yo” for yes, or “(īe), dame desu (yo)” for “no”. The word “dame” roughly translates to English as “not allowed” or “naughty”, and can also be used on its own to tell someone they’ve done something wrong. The following example conversations demonstrate how each of these responses may be given in Japanese:

May I sit here?

koko ni **suwattemo** ī desu ka?

Yes you may

(hai), ī desu yo

—

May I watch TV?

terebi wo **mitemo** ī?

You may not

**dame** da yo

This expression is also commonly used for negative verbs, which take the form of “nakutemo”. Here are some examples:

You don’t have to wait for me

watashi wo **matanakutemo** ī desu yo

Is it okay if I don’t go to school today?

kyō, gakkō ni **ikanakutemo** ī?

### 12.3.11 Forbidding or saying what shouldn't be done - te wa ikenai/dame

#### New vocabulary

photograph	shashin
scissors	hasami
to take (a photograph/video)	toru
to touch	sawaru
unacceptable	ikenai, ikemasen

The opposite of giving someone permission to do something is to forbid it, or to tell them it shouldn't be done. In Japanese, this can be expressed using the te-form followed by “wa ikenai” or “wa dame”:

[verb in te-form] + wa ikenai/dame

[negative verb with “nakute” ending] + wa ikenai/dame

“Dame”, as described earlier, has a meaning similar to “not allowed” or “naughty”, and “ikenai” (or “ikemasen” in the polite form) is essentially the same. The only real difference is that “dame” is quite harsh, while “ikenai” and “ikemasen” are much softer, somewhat like the word “unacceptable”. For this reason, “dame” is rarely used in polite settings, with “ikemasen” being used instead.

The reason that the particle used here is “wa” and not “mo” is because “mo” has the underlying meaning of “also”. Saying “-temo dame” would mean that that activity is *also* not allowed, so without context, the implication is that most other activities in the world are not allowed either, which is an overly negative assumption. By using “wa” instead, the specified activity is being explicitly singled out, implying that it is the exception. The only time “mo” would be used with “dame” or “ikenai” would be in a situation where several things are all being described as forbidden together. This is because in such a context, each activity being described would *also* not be allowed.

Here are some examples of this expression:

In Japan, you are not allowed to wear shoes inside the house  
 nihon de wa, ie no naka de kutsu wo **haite wa ikemasen**

You may not take photographs inside the shrine  
 jinja no naka de shashin wo **totte wa ikemasen**

Don't run with scissors (literally: You may not carry scissors and run)  
 hasami wo motte **hashitte wa dame** da yo

Colloquially, “tewa” is often contracted into “cha”, as shown in the following examples:

If you don't do your homework, you may not watch TV  
 shukudai wo shinai to terebi wo **micha** ikenai

You can't touch that!  
 sore wo **sawaccha** dame da yo!

This expression can also be used with verbs in the negative te-form. The result is a double negative (eg. “You may not not do your homework”) that effectively means “I/you must”. This is actually quite common, and will be explained with examples in Chapter 12.5.1.

### 12.3.12 Things that haven't been done - Another use of the present continuous tense

Although the present continuous tense is normally used to refer to actions that are or were happening at a given moment, the negative form of the present continuous tense is actually also often used to talk about things that a person hasn't done yet, but still could.

Where the negative of the *regular past* tense is used to say, “I didn't do X”, the negative of the *present continuous* tense can be used to say, “I haven't done X”. The difference between “didn't do” and “haven't done” is that the former implies that the opportunity to do X has passed. “Haven't done”, on the other hand, implies that X could still be done at some point in the future.

In Japanese, the same differentiation can be made by saying either “X wo shinakatta” or “X wo shite inai”.

The reason for this is because in the present, the state of having not done X is still continuing, but could change. In such a situation, the present continuous tense can be used. In contrast, if it is no longer possible to do X because the opportunity has passed, then the regular past tense is preferable.

This is probably a bit confusing, so let's look at an example.

If someone asked you, “Did you buy milk?”, and you had, you could simply state that by saying “katta”. However, if you hadn’t bought milk, instead of using the past tense and saying “kawanakatta”, it would be more appropriate to say, “katte inai”. This is because the state of not having bought milk is still continuing; in time, your answer might change. It’s the same as saying “No, I haven’t”, as opposed to “No, I didn’t”.

If, however, the question gave a specific time frame, for example, “Did you buy milk yesterday?”, then you would need to say “kawanakatta” because yesterday has finished, and the fact that you did not buy milk yesterday cannot change - your answer will always be “No, I didn’t”.

Basically, if the action hasn’t been performed, but the opportunity to perform the action is still alive given the context, the negative present continuous tense should be used. Here are some more examples:

Have you thrown out the garbage?  
gomi wo suteta?

No I haven’t  
**sutete inai**

—

Have you received the postcard I sent you?  
watashi ga okutta hagaki wo moraimashita ka?

No, I haven’t  
īe, **moratte imasen**

—

I exercised yesterday, but I haven’t exercised today  
kinō undō shimashita ga, kyō wa **undō shite inai**

Remember that this only applies to the *negative* form. In the positive, if something has been done, then the action has been completed so the past tense is used.



## 12.4 The passive voice

### New vocabulary

to include (intransitive)	fukumu
steel	tekkō

In both Japanese and English, it is possible to flip many sentences around and express them in a passive way. Consider these sentences:

He saw me

I was seen by him

Both sentences refer to the same event, but the first uses what is known as the active voice, while the second uses the passive voice. These two voices essentially allow us to describe the same event from two different perspectives. In terms of meaning, the main difference is that the focus of a passive sentence is on the action itself, rather than the person performing the action. That is, in the second sentence, we are more concerned with the fact that I was seen, rather than who it was that saw me.

The passive voice also allows us to talk about an action without actually specifying who performed it. For example, we could just say “I was seen”, without actually specifying who it was that saw me. Again, the focus in this case is on the action rather than the person who performed it.

From a grammatical standpoint, the key difference between the above two example sentences is that the subject and object of the verb “to see” have been swapped. As you can see, the word referring to “he/him” is the subject in the active sentence, but the object of the passive sentence. The reverse is true for “I/me”. In English, we also need to insert the verb “to be” in order to form a passive sentence, while also changing the main verb to the appropriate form (the past participle).

To see the changes that need to be made in Japanese, let’s look at an example:

He saw me

kare wa watashi wo mimashita

I was seen by him  
watashi wa kare ni miraremashita

Firstly, as you can see, the subject/topic has changed from “kare” to “watashi”. This is the same as English.

Like English, the verb form also changes, with “mimashita” being converted to its passive form, “miraremashita”. The following table shows how to change add-on and vowel-changing verbs into the passive form:

Verb type	Passive form
<b>Add-on</b>	stem + rareru
<b>Vowel-changing</b>	stem(a) + reru

Below are some examples of each type, including the three irregular verbs:

Verb type	Passive meaning	Passive form
<b>Add-on</b>		<i>stem + rareru</i>
eat	to be eaten by	taberareru
watch / see / look	to be seen by	mirareru
<b>Vowel-changing</b>		<i>stem(a) + reru</i>
say	to be told by	iwareru
listen	to be heard by	kikareru
<b>Irregular</b>		
do	to be done by	sareru
go	to be gone by*	ikareru
come	to be come by*	korareru

- \* Some verbs, such as “iku” and “kuru” do not make much sense in the passive form on their own, but they can make sense when combined with other verbs. One such example would be “motte ikareru”, which means “to be taken by”.

The third and possibly more confusing change is that the particle following “kare” has become “ni”. As stated above, in English, the passive voice is formed by swapping the subject and the object. In Japanese, the object becomes the subject, but the original subject is treated differently. Instead of becoming the object of the sentence, the original subject is treated as the origin of that action. With the verb “to see” for example, if

something “was seen”, or “mirare mashita”, then the person who did the seeing is where that act of seeing originated.

This may sound confusing, but it explains why “ni” is the particle to use. As you know, “ni” is normally used to mark the destination of an action involving movement. For passive verbs, however, this role is reversed, and “ni” is used instead to mark the origin. The following example, using the verb “iu”, shows this more clearly.

He told me to stop (literally: He said to me, “stop!”)  
kare wa **watashi ni** “yamete!” to **imashita**

I was told by him to stop  
watashi wa **kare ni** “yamete!” to **iware mashita**

In this case, “ni” is used in both the active and passive sentences, but their roles are different. In the active sentence, it marks the destination of the action; that is, who “stop!” is being said to. In the passive sentence, however, it marks the origin of the action, or in other words, where the call of “stop!” originated.

Although most verbs do not have this element of direction when used in the active voice, in the passive voice, there is always a direction that applies to the action, with the person performing the action being the origin. As such, whenever the person or thing performing the action is included in a passive sentence, the particle “ni” is used. Here are some more examples:

The cake was eaten by somebody!  
kēki ga dareka ni **taberareta!**

I was asked a difficult question by him  
(watashi wa) kare ni muzukashī shitsumon wo **kikare mashita**

I was brought here by Yamamoto-san  
watashi wa yamamoto san ni koko ni **tsurete korare mashita**

Although the above sentences may seem unnatural in English, these kinds of ideas are often expressed in the passive form in Japanese. This is because Japanese people tend to feel more comfortable using indirect language. By using the passive form, the speaker

can easily speak from the perspective of themselves, rather than talk directly about the actions of others.

The passive form is also useful when you want to talk about a particular action without mentioning who that action was performed by, either because you don't know, or because it's not important. The following examples demonstrate this:

It says (is written) here that it closes at 3 o'clock  
 koko ni, san ji ni shimaruru to **kakarete iru**

Batteries are included  
 denchi wa **fukumarete iru**

He is riding a bicycle made from steel  
 kare wa tekkō de **tsukurareta** jitensha ni notte imasu

In summary, to form the passive voice in Japanese, three things need to be changed:

1. The object of the original, active sentence becomes the subject
2. The verb is changed to its passive form, and
3. The subject of the active sentence, if included, is marked by the particle “ni” to define the action's origin

## 12.5 Other expressions

### 12.5.1 Need to, have to

#### New vocabulary

to go/come and pick up	mukae ni iku/kuru
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Japanese does not have a single word that takes the meaning of “need to” or “have to” in the same way that English does. Instead, this concept is expressed using a double negative to say that it is unacceptable to not perform the desired action. This is done by combining any of “shinakereba”, “shinai to” or “shinakute wa” with the words “naranai”, “ikenai” or “dame”. The following is a complete list of ways to say, “I must do...”:

- shinakereba naranai
- shinakereba ikenai
- shinakereba dame
- shinai to naranai
- shinai to ikenai
- shinai to dame
- shinakute wa naranai
- shinakute wa ikenai
- shinakute wa dame

Although all of the above options are possible, some are more common than others. The main ones to use are:

- shinakereba naranai
- shinai to ikenai

All of these should, of course, be expressed in the polite form in polite situations. The most commonly used polite option is:

- shinakereba narimasen

Here are some example sentences using the more common expressions from above:

I need to go to the post office  
 yūbinkyoku ni **ikanakereba naranai**  
 yūbinkyoku ni **ikanai to ikenai**  
 yūbinkyoku ni **ikanakereba narimasen** (polite)

We have to pick up Noriko in the afternoon  
 gogo ni noriko wo **mukae ni ikanakereba naranai**  
 gogo ni noriko wo **mukae ni ikanai to ikenai**  
 gogo ni noriko wo **mukae ni ikanakereba narimasen**

These expressions can also form part of noun phrases that describe things that have to have something done to them, such as in the following examples:

There is something (a thing) I have to go and buy  
**kai ni ikanai to ikenai mono** ga aru

I hate that I have to do homework every day!  
 mainichi shukudai wo **shinai to ikenai no** ga kirai!

## 12.5.2 Already, yet and still - mō, mada

### New vocabulary

already	mō
still, not yet	mada

In English, the adverbs “already”, “yet” and “still” are used to emphasize whether or not something has or has not happened. Consider these sentences:

I have already eaten lunch  
 I’m already eating lunch  
 I am still eating lunch  
 I haven’t eaten lunch yet

In Japanese, these same ideas can be expressed, but instead of having three words, there are only two - “mada” and “mō”. Essentially, “mō” is the same as “already”, while “mada” is the equivalent of both “yet” and “still”. Let’s look at the above four sentences in Japanese:

I have **already** eaten lunch  
 (watashi wa) **mō** hirugohan wo tabemashita

I am **already** eating lunch  
 (watashi wa) **mō** hirugohan wo tabete imasu

I am **still** eating lunch  
 (watashi wa) **mada** hirugohan wo tabete imasu

I haven't eaten lunch **yet**  
 (watashi wa) **mada** hirugohan wo tabete imasen

“Mō” is quite simple as it is usually always “already”, but “mada” can be a little more confusing as its English meaning changes according to the verb tense. Just remember that if it is used with an action that has not happened yet, it means “(not) yet”, and if it refers to an action that has started but is still ongoing, it means “still”.

### 12.5.3 About/concerning - ni tsuite

#### New vocabulary

about...	...ni tsuite
culture	bunka
to email, to send an email	mēru suru
explanation	setsumei
particle	joshi

With verbs involving discussion like “talk” and “ask”, you will often need to specify what the discussion is about, or what it is concerning. This is expressed in Japanese by adding “ni tsuite” after the topic being discussed. The following examples demonstrate this:

I don't want to talk about money  
 okane **ni tsuite** hanashitakunai desu

I emailed him about tomorrow, but he didn't reply  
 ashita **ni tsuite** kare ni mēru shita kedo, henji shite kurenakatta

This expression can also be used with nouns by modifying it to “ni tsuite no”, as shown below:

I read an interesting article about Japanese culture  
 nihon no bunka **ni tsuite no** omoshiroi kiji wo yomimashita

I didn't understand his explanation about particles  
 kare no joshi **ni tsuite no** setsumei ga wakaranakatta

### 12.5.4 While doing - shinagara

“Nagara” is a verb ending used to describe two actions being performed simultaneously, similar to the English phrase, “While doing...”. First, let’s look at how each verb type is modified to end in “nagara”.

Verb type		Formation	Example
<b>Add-on</b>		stem + nagara	tabenagara
<b>Vowel-changing</b>		stem(i) + nagara	kikinagara
<b>Irregular</b>	<b>suru</b>	shi + nagara	shinagara
	<b>iku</b>	iki + nagara	ikinagara
	<b>kuru</b>	ki + nagara	kinagara

This is then used in a sentence like so:

[first action]-nagara + [second action]

The second action can be expressed in any tense, and this tense applies to both actions, since they are done simultaneously. Here are some examples:

I ran while listening to music

(watashi wa) ongaku wo **kikinagara** hashirimashita

Let’s walk and talk (talk while walking)

**arukinagara** hanashimashō

Generally, the second action is the main action being spoken about, with the first action - the one expressed in the “nagara” form - just being supplementary information. The “nagara” verb is a bit like a description of the background upon which the other action is being performed. In the above examples, the main activities are running and talking, respectively. However, the emphasis on the main action is not always particularly strong, and both actions can carry relatively equal weight. This means that if you are ever unsure which action should be expressed in the “nagara” form, it probably doesn’t matter.



## 12.5.5 Go and do, come and do - shi ni iku, shi ni kuru

### New vocabulary

to borrow

kariru

In Japanese it is possible to talk about things that you go somewhere else to do, much like the English expressions “go and do X” or “go to do Y”. This is done by adding “ni iku” to the stem of the verb describing the action that is being done elsewhere, like so:

Verb type		Formation	Example
Add-on		stem + ni iku	tabe ni iku
Vowel-changing		stem(i) + ni iku	kiki ni iku
Irregular	suru	shi + ni iku	shi ni iku
	iku, kuru	N/A	-

The verb “iku” can then be conjugated into whichever tense is applicable. Here are some examples:

He went to buy bread

kare wa pan wo **kai ni ikimashita**

Let's go and watch a movie

eiga wo **mi ni ikō**

By using the verb “kuru” instead of “iku”, the reverse expression meaning “come and do X” can also be formed, such as in these examples:

She came to borrow my car

kanojo wa watashi no kuruma wo **kari ni kimashita**

They came to pick up their bags

karera wa kaban wo **tori ni kimashita**

### 12.5.6 It's easy/difficult to... - shiyasui, shinikui

Saying whether something is easy or difficult to do can be done in Japanese by adding “yasui” or “nikui”, respectively, to the end of a verb. The following table illustrates how this is done:

Verb type		Easy to... / Difficult to...	Example
<b>Add-on</b>		stem + yasui / nikui	tabeyasui / tabenikui
<b>Vowel-changing</b>		stem(i) + yasui / nikui	nomiyasui / nominikui
<b>Irregular</b>	<b>suru</b>	shi + yasui / nikui	shiyasui / shinikui
	<b>iku</b>	iki + yasui / nikui	ikiyasui / ikinikui
	<b>kuru</b>	ki + yasui / nikui	kiyasui / kinikui

In both cases, the resulting word is an i-adjective, which can be used like any other i-adjective, as shown in the following examples:

This tea is easy to drink  
kono ocha wa **nomiyasui** desu

That sign is difficult to read  
ano kanban wa **yominikui** desu

I received a really easy-to-use camera from her  
kanojo kara totemo **tsukaiyasui** kamera wo moraimashita

I need to fix this hard-to-close door  
kono **shimenikui** doa wo naosanai to ikenai

### 12.5.7 Making comparisons - yori ... hō ga

#### New vocabulary

complicated	fukuzatsu (na)
cramped, small	semai
simple	shinpuru

smell	nioi
to smell (like), be odorous	nioi ga suru
spacious	hiroi

In Chapter 11.1, the particle “*yor*” was introduced as a way to define the basis for a comparison, such as in the following sentence:

Today is hotter than yesterday  
*kyō wa kinō yori* atsui desu

One further application of this, which has more flexibility, is to combine “*yor*” with a noun phrase ending in the word “*hō*”. “*Hō*” roughly translates as “the way of”, although such a direct translation would rarely be used in English. The above sentence could be re-phrased using “*hō*” as follows:

Today is hotter than yesterday  
*kinō yori kyō no hō ga* atsui desu

Although the English translation is the same in both cases, there is a subtle difference in Japanese. In the first example, where “*hō*” isn’t used, “*kyō*” is defined as the topic, which therefore places greater emphasis on what follows; that is, that *yesterday* is the day that today is hotter than. In the second example, however, “*kyō no hō*” is followed by “*ga*”, so there is a greater emphasis on the fact that *today* is the hotter day.

Ultimately, it does not make much difference, but the “*hō*” expression has other uses that make it more flexible. For starters, we can remove “*kinō yori*” from the second sentence above, and still keep the comparative meaning, like so:

Today is hotter  
*kyō no hō ga* atsui desu

The use of “*hō*” allows us to say that today is hotter, without specifying what today is hotter than. Of course, for this to make sense, it has to be understood from context what today is being compared to.

The biggest advantage of “*hō*”, however, is that it makes it easier to compare other things, like verbs and adjectives. It allows us to say things like:

It would be better to wait here than to go inside  
*naka ni hairu yori, koko de matta hō ga i* desu

To fully understand how to use this expression, we need to know how to combine different phrase types with each of “yori” and “hō ga”.

“Yori” can be placed after almost any type of phrase without altering the phrase at all, as long as the phrase type that comes before “yori” is consistent with what comes after it. The only rule is that when a verb is used immediately before “yori”, it should always be expressed in the present/future tense.

The following table shows how “hō” can be combined with different phrase types:

Word type	Noun phrase ending in hō	Example
<b>Noun</b>	[noun] + no hō	kyō no hō
<b>I-adjective</b>	[adjective] + hō	atsui hō
<b>Na-adjective</b>	[adjective] + na hō	shizuka na hō
<b>Positive verb</b>	[verb in informal past tense] + hō	shita hō
<b>Negative verb</b>	[verb in informal present/future tense] + hō	shinai hō

The most important point to take away from this table is that when comparing actions, the *past tense* should be used for verbs in their positive form, while the *present/future tense* should be used for verbs in their negative form. The reason for this, and for why the verb before “yori” should be in the present/future tense, is quite complicated and doesn’t need to be fully understood. However, if you would like a deeper understanding, the text box below provides a brief explanation.

### Verb tenses in the “yori...hō ga” expression

In general, when talking about an action that will be done, there will be a time when that action is in the past. In the “yori...hō ga” expression, the description that follows “hō ga” applies to that future time, so the past tense should be used for the verb before it. When talking about an action that is not done, however, there is never a time when the action is in the past. The action is in a perpetual state of non-completion, and the description that follows “hō ga” applies to that ongoing state. Negative verbs before “hō ga” should therefore be expressed using the present/future tense.

The same applies to the verb before “yori”. Since the final description applies to the alternative action (the one before “hō”), in that context, the action before “yori” is also never completed, and should therefore be expressed in the present/future tense.

For a more thorough explanation of this, refer to Appendix 1: Understanding verb tenses in noun phrases.

Here are some examples of this expression:

I prefer cold weather

(watashi wa) samui tenki **no hō ga** suki desu

When it comes to kitchens, spacious is easier to use than cramped

daidokoro wa semai **yori** hiroi **hō ga** tsukaiyasui desu

Simple is better than complicated

fukuzastu **yori** shinpuru **na hō ga** ī desu

It's raining, so it would be better to go to the movies than play outside

ame ga futte iru kara, soto de **asobu yori**, eigakan ni **itta hō ga** ī

This smells strange, so I think it would be better not to eat it

kore wa hen na nioi ga suru kara, **tabenai hō ga** ī to omoimasu

One additional thing to keep in mind is that although the phrase type that comes before “yori” needs to be consistent with what comes after it, it does not necessarily need to be consistent with the phrase type immediately before “hō”. The following sentence is one such example:

It would be better to go by car than by bus  
 basu **yori** kuruma de itta **hō** ga ī desu

In this case, the mode of transport is being compared, not the action itself, so although the “yori...hō ga” pattern is still used, the things being compared are independent from “hō ga”.

### 12.5.8 Should - hazu, beki

#### New vocabulary

exam	shiken
frequently	hinpan ni
information	jōhō
next	tsugi

should (expectation)	hazu
should (obligation)	beki
turn (in a sequence)	ban
to trust	shinrai suru

In Japanese, there are a couple of different expressions that can be translated into English to mean “should”, but they are not interchangeable. Consider these two sentences:

He should be able to go to the meeting  
 You should go to the meeting

Although both sentences use the word “should”, they have fundamentally different meanings. The first sentence expresses an expectation regarding the current situation; that is, the expectation that ‘he’ will come to the meeting. In the second sentence, however, “should” is used to say what action is in the person’s best interests, almost as if the person has an obligation to go to the meeting.

In Japanese, this difference is important, as the word used to mean “should” is different in each case.

**hazu**

When a person is describing their expectation, the Japanese equivalent to the word “should” is “hazu”. This word is a noun and is mostly used as the head noun of a noun phrase and followed by “desu” or “da”. The word before “hazu” can be a verb expressed in any tense, an adjective, or even a noun followed by “no”, as shown in the following examples:

It should be here  
koko ni **aru hazu** desu

I should be able to play tennis on Saturday  
(watashi wa) doyōbi ni tenisu ga **dekiru hazu** desu

He should have been able to go to the meeting  
kare wa kaigi ni **iketa hazu** desu

Okinawa should be hot  
okinawa wa **atsui hazu** da

Tomorrow's exam should be easy  
ashita no shiken wa **kantan na hazu** da

It should be my turn next (literally: Next should be my turn)  
tsugi wa **watashi no ban no hazu** da

**beki**

When a person is describing what action is in their own or someone else's best interest, or what they are obligated to do, the word “beki” is used. This fits into sentences in a similar way as “hazu”, as it usually appears as the head noun of a noun phrase, except it can only be used after a verb in the informal present tense (dictionary form). To describe what somebody should have done in the past, “desu” should be expressed in the past tense. Similarly, for negatives, the verb should remain unchanged in its positive form, with “janai” being added after “beki” instead. Here are some examples:

You should go to tomorrow's meeting  
(anata wa) ashita no kaigi ni iku **beki** desu

I should read the newspaper more frequently, shouldn't I?  
(watashi wa) shinbun wo motto hinpan ni yomu **beki** da yone?

You should have waited until 5 o'clock  
(anata wa) goji made matsu **beki datta**

Even if they're cheap, you shouldn't buy things you don't need  
yasukutemo, iranai mono wo kau **beki janai**

When used with “beki”, the verb “suru” is an exception in that the “ru” is usually dropped. The resulting phrase is “su beki”, as shown in the following examples:

You should practice Japanese every day  
mainichi nihongo wo renshū **subeki** desu

We shouldn't trust old information  
(watashi tachi wa) furui jōhō wo shinrai **subeki janai** desu

You may occasionally hear a Japanese person say “suru beki”, and you can get away with using this yourself, but it is technically incorrect.

### 12.5.9 Describing an incomplete list of activities - tari ... tari suru

#### New vocabulary

to climb	noboru
to do laundry	sentaku suru
Mount Fuji	fuji san

In Chapter 11.1, we learned about the particles “ya” and “nado”, which are used together to describe a vague or incomplete list of things. The same kind of vague list can be built for actions by using the “-tari” verb ending. Consider this example:

We did some shopping, saw a movie, drank tea, etc.  
(watashi tachi wa) kaimono wo **shitari**, eiga wo **mitari**, ocha wo **nondari** shimashita.



Here, the speaker is talking about several things that they did, while also implying that they did other things as well. Much like sentences using “ya” and “nado”, this kind of sentence is deliberately vague.

The “-tari” verb ending is formed in the same way as the informal past tense, with the addition of “ri”, as shown below:

Verb type		Formation of -tari ending	Example
<b>Add-on</b>		stem + tari	tabetari
<b>Vowel-changing</b>	<b>u, tsu, ru</b>	-ttari	kattari
	<b>bu, mu, nu</b>	-ndari	asondari
	<b>ku</b>	-itari	kītari
	<b>gu</b>	-idari	oyoidari
	<b>su</b>	-shitari	hanashitari
<b>Irregular</b>	<b>suru</b>	shi + tari	shitari
	<b>iku</b>	ittari	ittari
	<b>kuru</b>	ki + tari	kitari

For verbs in the negative form, the “nai” ending is changed to “nakattari”. For verbs expressed in the continuous form, the “-te iru” ending is changed to “-te itari”.

The pattern to follow when using this expression is as follows:

[action]-tari, [action]-tari, ..., [action]-tari + suru

There is no limit to the number of activities that can be listed using this expression. However, like “ya” and “nado”, since this is a deliberately vague expression, the number of activities is usually limited to three or four. It is also possible and not uncommon to list just one activity.

The important part to remember is that the sentence is not complete until the verb “suru” is added in the appropriate tense, which can be basically anything. You will sometimes hear “tari” used without “suru” at the end, and this is acceptable in certain contexts, but generally, “suru” needs to be included in order for the phrase to be a complete sentence. Here are some more examples:

Today, I cleaned the house, did the laundry, etc.

kyō, ie wo **sōji shitari**, fuku wo **sentaku shitari** shimashita

I want to go to Japan and climb Mount Fuji, ride the bullet train, etc.  
 nihon ni itte, fuji san wo **nobottari**, shinkansen ni **nottari** shitai

I love music, and I am always (doing things like) dancing  
 watashi wa ongaku ga daisuki de, itsumo **odottari** shite imasu

### 12.5.10 Discussing plans - **tsumori**

In both English and Japanese, there are different ways to express our plans based on how certain it is that those plans will go ahead. While we don't often think about it, in English, we tend to use the word "will", or say things like "I'm going to the mall tomorrow" when our plans are certain. If, on the other hand, our plans are fairly certain but there is still a chance - even a small one - that they will not eventuate, we tend to insert phrases like, "I'm planning to..." or "I intend to..." to express that lower level of certainty, no matter how small.

In Japanese, definite plans are, as you know, expressed by simply using the present/future tense. Less concrete plans can be expressed by adding the word "tsumori" after a verb in the informal present/future tense. This forms a noun phrase that usually comes at the end of a sentence followed by "desu" or "da". Here are some examples:

I plan to go to the mall tomorrow  
 ashita (watashi wa) mōru ni iku **tsumori** desu

I intend to leave home at 6am  
 asa roku ji ni ie wo deru **tsumori** da

I planned to buy a new shirt, but there wasn't enough time  
 atarashi shatsu wo kau **tsumori** deshita ga, jikan ga nakatta desu

As the last example shows, even when talking about the plans you had for the past, the verb (in this case "kau") is expressed in the present/future tense. The past tense use of "deshita" makes the whole clause a reference to the past.

### 12.5.11 Expressing uncertainty - **kamo shiremasen**

An easy and useful way to add a degree of uncertainty to any phrase is to add "kamo shiremasen", or "kamo shirenai", at the end of the sentence. This is similar to inserting a word like "might" or "could be" into an English sentence. It is also often used as a way to

be more indirect when saying “no” to someone, which is important in Japanese culture, where directness is often considered impolite.

This expression can be added after any noun phrase or clause, with clauses mostly ending in verbs in their informal form. Here are some examples:

I might not be able to go  
(watashi wa) ikenai **kamo shiremasen**

There might be a convenience store over there  
asoko ni konbini ga aru **kamo shirenai**

That might be the case  
sō **kamo shirenai**

This is very handy when you are not 100% certain of something, or even when you want to speak in a vague or indirect way. Since Japanese is generally a vague and non-specific language, and directness is not often well received, this expression is very common.

## 12.5.12 How to do things - yarikata

### New vocabulary

to be mistaken	machigatte iru
to make a mistake	machigaeru
to show	miseru

Any verb can be turned into a noun that means “how to ...” or “the way to...”. This is done by adding “kata”, which loosely translates as “way”, to the verb stem. Here is how “kata” is added to each verb type:

Word type		How to...	Example
Add-on verb		stem + kata	tabekata
Vowel-changing verb		stem(i) + kata	tsukurikata
Irregular verb	suru	shi + kata	shikata
	iku	iki + kata	ikikata
	kuru	ki + kata	kikata

These can then be used in a sentence like any other noun, as these examples show:

I don't know how to eat this  
kore no **tabekata** ga wakarimasen

He showed me how to open the window  
kare ga mado no **akekata** wo misete kuremashita

I've forgotten how to go to the airport  
kūkō he no **ikikata** wo wasuremashita

You're doing it wrong (literally: Your way of doing it is mistaken)  
(anata no) **yarikata** ga machigatte iru yo

Please teach me how to practice karate  
karate no **renshū shikata** wo oshiete kudasai

The verb “suru” on its own is rarely expressed in this way as “shikata”. The verb “yaru”, also meaning “do”, is usually used instead. However, for verbs that consist of a word followed by “suru”, like “renshū suru”, only “shikata” is appropriate.

### 12.5.13 Trying - shiyō to suru, shite miru

#### New vocabulary

ATM	ATM (ei tī emu)
to break (intransitive)	kowareru
to restart (a machine)	saikidō suru
to withdraw	orosu

In English, the word “try” has two main meanings:

1. To test or evaluate something to see what the result is, eg. Sushi is delicious. Try it!
2. To attempt to do or achieve something, eg. He tried to run 10km but stopped at 5km.

This difference is important because in Japanese, they are completely separate concepts that are expressed in completely different ways. Let's take a look at each of these:

### Testing or evaluating something

To say that you or someone else is trying something to see what the result will be, the verb is expressed in the te-form followed by the verb “miru”, like so:

[verb(te)] + miru

This is literally like saying, “Do and see”, meaning that you will do the action, and see what the result is. This can also be used simply to mean “do and see”, even if the word “try” would not be appropriate.

Here are some examples:

Sushi is delicious. Try it!  
sushi wa oishī yo. **tabete mite!**

Did you try restarting your computer?  
konpyūta wo **saikidō shite mimashita** ka

Let's try turning the lights off  
denki wo **keshite miyō**

In the English translations of all of the above sentences, the word “try” could be removed, and the entire sentence re-phrased to say “do and see”. Although it may not always sound natural, it is a useful way determine which “try” expression to use if you are ever unsure.

### Describing an attempt

To express an attempt to do or achieve something, the action being attempted is expressed using the same verb ending as the “Let's...” expression, followed by “to suru”, as shown in the following table:

Verb type	To try to...	Example
Add-on	stem + yō + to suru	miyō to suru
Vowel-changing	stem(ō) + to suru	kikō to suru

Irregular		
do	shiyō + to suru	shiyō to suru
go	ikō + to suru	ikō to suru
come	koyō + to suru	koyō to suru

The verb “suru” at the end can be expressed in any tense or level of politeness that makes sense. Here are some examples:

He tried to run 10km but stopped at 5km  
 kare wa jukkiro **hashirō to shita** kedo, go kiro de yameta

I’m trying to open the window  
 mado wo **akeyō to shite imasu**

I tried to withdraw money, but the ATM is broken  
 okane wo **orosō to shita** kedo, ATM ga kowarete iru

Although it may look like it, this verb ending does not give the sentences the meaning, “Let’s try”. The “Let’s...” interpretation of the “-yō” or “-ō” verb ending is simply the most accurate way to translate it into English when it is used on its own. When followed by “to suru”, however, it forms a set expression meaning “try to”. If we want to say, “Let’s try to...”, we can do so by using the “shiyō” form of “suru” at the end of the phrase, like so:

Let’s try to fix the car  
 kuruma wo **naosō to shiyō**

This kind of expression is not very common, however, as it implies that you don’t really expect to succeed. Instead, you would more likely use a more positive statement like, “kuruma wo naosō” (Let’s fix the car), or even the other “try” expression, “kuruma wo naoshite miyō” (Let’s fix the car and see).

#### 12.5.14 Negative questions - shimasen ka, janai no?

In English, we sometimes ask questions using a verb in the negative form, such as, “Won’t you come with me?” or, “Didn’t you see him yesterday?”. The same kinds of

questions are often asked in Japanese, usually either as invitations, or when the person asking the question is expecting the answer to confirm that the action being described didn't happen (eg. "No, I didn't see him"). In the case of invitations, although the verb is expressed negatively, it is very much a positive invitation - that is, the person asking the question is hoping that the response will be positive. Here are some examples of negative questions:

Won't you go and see a movie with me on Friday?  
kin'yōbi ni watashi to eiga wo mi ni **ikanai**?

Didn't you buy bread yesterday?  
kinō pan wo **kawanakatta no**?

Won't you lend me your car?  
(watashi ni) kuruma wo **kashite kuremasen ka**

A particularly common group of negative questions is regular statements followed by a questioning, "janai desu ka". A person would use this to seek confirmation of what they already believe ("Isn't the party tomorrow?"), as opposed to asking a simple question ("Is the party tomorrow?"). Particularly with verbs and i-adjectives, this is commonly preceded by "n", the contraction of the sentence-ending particle "no" (see Chapter 11.1). Here are some examples:

Isn't the party tomorrow?  
pāti wa ashita **janai desu ka**

Wouldn't it be better to go?  
itta hō ga **in janai**?

Isn't my jacket on the bed?  
watashi no uwagi wa beddo ni **arun janai no**?

## 12.5.15 Before/after doing... - mae ni, ato ni

### New vocabulary

a bit more	mō chotto
details	shōsai
report	repōto
to save money	chokin suru

To describe when one action occurs relative to another, we can use the words “mae ni” and “ato ni” to form noun phrases meaning “before” and “after”, respectively. These words can be attached to verbs in the informal form, or connected to nouns with the particle “no”. The following table shows how these words can be used to form noun phrases:

Word type	Before	After
<b>Noun</b>	[noun] + no mae ni	[noun] + no ato ni
<b>Verb</b>	[verb in informal present/future tense] + mae ni	[verb in informal past tense] + ato ni

Here are some examples of these expressions:

Please read the report before the meeting  
kaigi **no mae ni** repōto wo yonde oite kudasai

Before I left the house, I hung out the laundry  
ie wo **deru mae ni**, sentakumono wo hoshite okimashita

Before we buy a new house, let's save a bit more money  
atarashī ie wo **kau mae ni**, mō chotto chokin shite okimashō

After my lunch break, I need to go and renew my passport  
hiruyasumi **no ato ni**, pasupōto wo kōshin shi ni ikanakereba narimasen

After the match ended, we all (everyone) went to karaoke  
shiai ga **owatta ato ni**, minna de karaoke ni ikimashita



After I have spoken with her, I will send you the details via email  
 kanojo to **hanashita ato ni**, shōsai wo mēru de (anata ni) okurimasu

The important thing to remember is that no matter whether we are talking about the future or the past, the verb before “mae” should always be in the informal present/future tense, and the verb before “ato” should always be in the informal past tense. The reason for this is that in Japanese, unlike English, it is not relevant when the first action occurred in relation to now. All that matters is when the action occurred relative to the other action.

If, for example, we say “gakkō ni iku mae ni, terebi wo mimashita”, the act of watching TV happened before going to school. Relative to the timing of watching TV, the act of going to school is in the future, hence the present/future tense should be used. On the other hand, if we say “gakkō ni itta ato ni, terebi wo mimashita”, then relative to the timing of watching TV, the act of going to school is in the past, so the past tense is used. For a more thorough explanation of why verb tenses differ from English in these situations, see Appendix 1: Understanding verb tenses in noun phrases.

### 12.5.16 For/in order to - tame ni

#### New vocabulary

ferris wheel	kanransha
to save (money)	tameru

The expression “tame ni” can be added after a noun or verb to define the purpose or reason for a particular action.

#### With nouns

When used with a noun, “tame ni” defines who or what the action is done *for*, and is used in a sentence like so:

[person/thing] + no tame ni

Here are some examples:

Let's buy this book **for our mother**  
 kono hon wo **haha no tame ni** kaimashō

Did you make this **for me**?

kore wo **watashi no tame ni** tsukutta no?

I went to Tokyo **for** a concert

(watashi wa) **raibu no tame ni** tōkyō ni ikimashita

### With verbs

When used with a verb, “tame ni” takes the meaning of “in order to” or “so that”. In other words, it defines what purpose the action is being done *for*. The part of the sentence that comes before “tame ni” will therefore usually describe a goal, while the part that follows it describes the action to be taken in order to achieve that goal.

The action taken to achieve the goal can be expressed in any tense or level of politeness, as is appropriate. The verb describing the goal, however, should always be expressed in the present/future tense, as shown below:

[goal, using verb in present/future tense] + tame ni + [action taken to achieve the goal]

Here are some examples:

In order **to become a doctor**, I will study a lot

(watashi wa) isha ni **naru tame ni**, takusan benkyō shimasu

I need to save money **to buy a new computer**

atarashī konpyūta wo **kau tame ni** okane wo tamenai to ikenai

We waited an hour **to ride the ferris wheel**

**kanransha ni noru tame ni** ichijikan machimashita

## 12.5.17 Whether or not - kadōka

### New vocabulary

address	jūsho
to answer	kotaeru
to confirm	kakunin suru
correct	tadashī

One useful application of the question particle “ka” is to combine it with “dōka” to effectively say “whether or not”. This can be added basically anywhere the particle “ka” might be used, although the verb before the first “ka” is usually expressed in the informal form. “Kadōka” is then often followed by a phrase equivalent to something we might say before “whether or not” in English, such as, “I don’t know...” or “I will ask him...”. The following examples demonstrate this:

I don’t know whether or not it will rain tomorrow  
ashita ame ga furu **kadōka** wakarimasen

I don’t know whether or not they won  
karera ga katta **kadōka** wakarimasen

I asked him whether or not he is coming, but he didn’t answer  
kare ga kuru **kadōka** kīte mita kedo, kotaete kurenakatta

Please confirm whether or not your address is correct  
(anata no) jūsho ga tadashī **kadōka** kakunin shite kudasai

### 12.5.18 Too... - sugiru

#### New vocabulary

luggage	nimotsu
meat	niku

In English, when we want to describe something as being excessive in some way, we use the word “too” before the appropriate adjective. Similarly, when we want to say that someone has performed a certain action excessively, we add a phrase like “too much” or “too far”, as in the sentences, “He bought too much” or “He went too far”.

In Japanese, the same idea can be expressed for both adjectives and verbs by attaching the word “sugiru” to the end of the word. “Sugiru” is itself an add-on verb, meaning it can be expressed in different tenses and with different levels of politeness. The following table shows how “sugiru” can be attached to each word type:

Word type		Too... / too much...	Example
I-adjective		Replace “i” with “sugiru”	atsusugiru
Na-adjective		Replace “na” with “sugiru”	hen sugiru
Add-on verb		stem + sugiru	tabesugiru
Vowel-changing verb		stem(i) + sugiru	tsukurisugiru
Irregular verb	suru	shi + sugiru	shisugiru
	iku	iki + sugiru	ikisugiru
	kuru	ki + sugiru	kisugiru

Below are some examples of “sugiru”. Notice that since “sugiru” is itself a verb, it can be expressed in different tenses where appropriate.

This house is too scary  
kono ie wa **kowasugiru**

This town is too quiet  
kono machi wa **shizuka sugimasu**

I ate too much pasta  
(watashi wa) pasuta wo **tabesugimashita**

I don't want to use too much money  
(watashi wa) okane wo **tsukaisugitakunai**

Don't buy too much meat  
niku wo **kaisuginaide**

He brought too much luggage  
kare wa nimotsu wo motte **kisugita**

## 12.5.19 Describing how things look/appear -sō

### New vocabulary

cup	koppu
election	senkyo

to hit, bump into (intransitive)	butsukaru
to lose (not win)	makeru
tree	ki

The “sō” ending in Japanese can be added to adjectives or verbs to describe how something appears. For adjectives, this transforms a sentence like, “You are cold”, to, “You look cold”. For verbs, this is used to describe something that hasn’t happened yet, but looks like it will or is about to. The following table shows how “sō” can be added to each word type:

Word type		Formation of “-sō”	Example
<b>I-adjective</b>		Change the last “i” to “sō”	muzukashisō
<b>Na-adjective</b>		Replace “na” with “sō”	benrisō
<b>Add-on verb</b>		stem + sō	tabesō
<b>Vowel-changing verb</b>		stem(i) + sō	kikisō
<b>Irregular verb</b>	<b>suru</b>	shi + sō	shisō
	<b>iku</b>	iki + sō	ikisō
	<b>kuru</b>	ki + sō	kisō

An exception to this is the adjective “i/yoi”, which should be changed to “yosasō”. Similarly, when the adjective or verb is expressed as a negative, the “nai” ending should be changed to “nasasō”.

When the “sō” ending is added to a word in this way, it becomes a na-adjective. This can be used like any other na-adjective, although in most cases, it will come at the end of a sentence followed by “desu” or “da”, such as in the following examples:

You look cold!  
(anata wa) **samusō** da!

He doesn’t look very happy  
kare wa amari **ureshikunasasō** desu

The cup looks like it will fall from the table  
koppu ga tēburu kara **ochisō** da

It looks/seems like they will lose at the next election  
karera wa tsugi no senkyo de **makesō** desu

He looks like he is going to hit that tree  
kare wa ano ki ni **butsukarisō** da

It appears she won't be able to come  
kanojo wa **korenasasō** desu

## 12.5.20 Apparently, it seems/looks like - sō, rashī, mitai, yō

### New vocabulary

to catch (a cold)	hiku
a cold (illness)	kaze
dangerous	abunai

The words “sō”, “rashī”, “mitai” and “yō” can be added after certain phrases to indicate that the information being conveyed is not necessarily fact, but rather just what someone perceives to be true. Who that someone is is determined by which word is used. This is equivalent to using words like “apparently” and “seem” in English.

These words are attached to different word types like so:

Word	Formation
<b>sō</b>	[independent clause in informal form] + sō
<b>rashī</b>	[noun, adjective or informal verb] + rashī
<b>mitai</b>	[noun, adjective or informal verb] + mitai
<b>yō</b>	Form a noun phrase with the head noun “yō”

Although these words are added to phrases in different ways, once formed, they are all used in the same way, with “sō”, “mitai” and “yō” being na-adjectives, and “rashī” being an i-adjective. In terms of meaning, however, they are slightly different, so we need to take a closer look.

The words “sō” and “rashī” are primarily used to convey information that has come from a source other than oneself. For example, if you heard some interesting news and wanted to convey that to someone else, you would add “sō” or “rashī” to the end of the sentence to indicate that this is second-hand information. Here are some examples:

Apparently, there is a convenience store over there  
asoko ni konbini ga aru **sō** desu

Apparently, swimming at that beach is dangerous  
ano umi de oyogu no wa abunai **sō** desu

Apparently, he likes ice cream  
kare wa aisu ga suki **rashī** desu

Apparently, she caught a cold  
kanojo wa kaze wo hīta **rashī** desu

In all of these sentences, the addition of “sō” and “rashī” turns an otherwise simple, direct statement into a communication of external information. In some cases, one of these two words may sound more natural than the other, but they are generally interchangeable.

### Different kinds of “sō”

Although similar, this “sō” is not the same as when “sō” is added at the end of a verb or adjective to describe how things look, as described in Chapter 12.5.19. Compare these two sentences:

Apparently, there is a convenience store over there  
asoko ni konbini ga **aru sō** desu

It looks like there is a convenience store over there  
asoko ni konbini ga **arisō** desu

In the first sentence, the speaker is relaying information that they heard somewhere else, while in the second sentence, the speaker is expressing their own expectation of where a convenience store might be. Although these meanings are similar, they are subtly different.

In contrast, a person would use “mitai” or “yō” to tell someone how they themselves perceive things to be. Consider the following examples:

It seems he will come  
kare wa kuru **mitai** desu

It seems that bread is delicious  
ano pan wa oishī **mitai** da

It seems they already left the house  
karera wa mō ie wo deta **yō** desu

You are like a child  
anata wa kodomo no **yō** da

In all of these, the speaker is expressing what they themselves believe to be true based on information they have. Each statement could, of course, be expressed without “mitai” or “yō”, but by including these words, the speaker implies that they are expressing their own thoughts, not facts. The difference between “mitai” and “yō” is much like “sō” and “rashī” in that although they are sometimes used in slightly different circumstances, they are mostly interchangeable.

### 12.5.21 Letting or making someone do something - saseru

#### New vocabulary

to drive	untēn suru
host family	hosuto famirī
natto	nattō
Prime Minister	sōri daijin

In Japanese, the expression used to talk about someone letting someone else do something, or someone making someone else do something, is the same. Even though these two concepts - “letting” and “making” - are very different in English, with the former describing someone receiving permission, and the latter implying that someone has been forced to do something, Japanese does not differentiate between them. Instead,



context is relied upon to determine whether the person who eventually performs the action is doing so because they want to and are allowed, or because they have been forced to.

To express these ideas, verb endings are changed in the following ways:

Verb type		Letting or making	Example
Add-on		stem + saseru	tabesaseru
Vowel-changing		stem(a) + seru	kikaseru
Irregular	suru	saseru	-
	iku	ikaseru	-
	kuru	kosaseru	-

Using these verbs in a sentence is fairly straightforward, but there are three important rules to remember when doing so:

1. The subject is the person who is making or letting the other person perform the action
2. For intransitive verbs, the person who is being made or allowed to perform the action is marked by the particle “wo”
3. For transitive verbs, the person who is being made or allowed to perform the action is marked by the particle “ni”

The first rule should be fairly intuitive as it works the same way as English. In the sentence, “Atsushi made him eat sushi”, Atsushi is the subject because he is the one who is making the other person eat. The same applies in Japanese.

The other two rules are more complicated. When the “saseru” ending is added, intransitive verbs like “iku” are effectively turned into transitive verbs. The person being made or allowed to perform the action then becomes the object of that verb. Let’s compare it to a regular transitive verb:

I ate sushi  
watashi wa sushi wo **tabemashita**

I made/let Hiroshi go  
watashi wa hiroshi wo **ikasemashita**

The English sentence structure is different in each case, but in Japanese, the relationship between the key words is the same; just like sushi is the thing that has been eaten, Hiroshi is the thing that has been made/allowed to go. “Hiroshi” is therefore the object, and this should be marked by “wo”.

Transitive verbs are different, however, because they already have an object. Whether you say “I ate sushi” or “I made him eat sushi”, the thing being eaten is still sushi. We therefore need a different particle to identify who it is that has been made to perform the act of eating. That particle is “ni”, and this is based on the idea that the person who eventually performs the act of eating is the destination of the other person’s permission or force. Let’s look at an example.

He made Maki eat (her) vegetables  
kare wa Maki ni yasai wo **tabesasemashita**

In this case, the vegetables are the object, so this is marked by “wo”. Maki is then marked by the particle “ni” because she is the one being made to eat her vegetables, and is therefore the destination of the other person’s force. The same applies when the meaning is “let”:

He let Maki eat chocolate  
kare wa Maki ni chokorēto wo **tabesasemashita**

Similarly, the chocolate is the object marked by “wo”, while Maki is marked by “ni” as she is the destination of the permission to perform the act of eating.

Here are some more example sentences, using both transitive and intransitive verbs:

He is going to make her buy the tickets  
kare wa **kanojo ni** chiketto wo kawaseru

The boss made Kudo-san write the report  
jōshi wa **kudō san ni** repōto wo kakasemashita

My dad let my older brother drive the car  
chichi wa **ani ni** kuruma wo unten saseta

Let's make them wait  
**karera wo** mataseyō

The teacher didn't let her go home  
 sensei wa **kanojo wo** kaerasenakatta

Please let me go by airplane  
 (**watashi wo**) hikōki de ikasete kudasai

“Making” and “letting” can also be expressed in the passive form. This is done by changing “(s)aseru” to “(s)aserareru”. The rules for using this in a sentence are the same as for other passive verbs, with the subject becoming the person who is made or allowed to perform the action, and “ni” marking the *origin* of that force or permission. The following examples demonstrate this:

I was made to eat natto by my host family  
 watashi wa hosuto famirī ni nattō wo **tabesaserareta**

I was allowed to meet the prime minister  
 (watashi wa) sōri daijin ni **awaseraremashita**

### 12.5.22 I have a feeling... - **ki ga suru**

The expression “ki ga suru” can be added after an independent clause to describe something that you have feeling may be true, but are not sure of. This will often be preceded by “yō na” to become “yō na ki ga suru”, which adds an extra element of uncertainty to the expression. Here are some examples:

I have a feeling it was on the table  
 tēburu ni atta **ki ga suru**

I have a feeling it would be better not to do that  
 sore wo shinai hō ga i **ki ga suru**

I have a feeling he won't be able to come  
 kare wa korenai **yō na ki ga suru**

## 12.5.23 No choice but to... - suru shika nai

### New vocabulary

to give up	akirameru
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As explained in Chapter 11.1, the particle “shika” can be placed after a noun phrase and followed by a verb in the negative form to mean “only”. This particle can also be used after verbs in the dictionary form, together with the word “nai/arimasen” to say, “We have no choice but to...”. Such sentences are formed like so:

[verb in dictionary form] + shika nai/arimasen

Here are some examples:

We have no choice but to wait until tomorrow  
(watashi tachi wa) ashita made **matsu shika arimasen**

It was becoming dark, so I had no choice but to go home  
kuraku natte ita kara, **kaeru shika nakatta**

You have no choice but to buy a new one  
(anata wa) atarashī no wo **kau shika arimasen**

Do we have no choice but to give up?  
**akirameru shika nai** no?

As these examples show, the timing of the unavoidable action is described by changing the tense of the final verb “aru” accordingly.

## 12.5.24 Turning adjectives into nouns -sa

### New vocabulary

to appreciate, to thank	kansha suru
kind	yasashī

to put up with	taeru
to be surprised	bikkuri suru

Most English adjectives can be converted into nouns with a similar meaning. For many of them, this is done by adding “ness” to the end of the word. For example, the adjective “kind” can be converted into the noun “kindness”, which can then be used like any other noun. Japanese adjectives can be similarly converted into nouns by replacing either “i” (for i-adjectives) or “na” (for na-adjectives) with “sa”. Here are some examples:

Adjective (English)	Adjective (Japanese)	Noun (E)	Noun (J)
<b>kind</b>	yasashī	kindness	yasashisa
<b>cold</b>	samui	coldness	samusa
<b>hot</b>	atsui	heat	atsusa
<b>quiet</b>	shizuka (na)	quietness	shizukasa
<b>pretty/clean</b>	kirei (na)	prettiness/cleanliness	kireisa

The new words formed by adding “sa” can then be used in a sentence like other nouns. Here are some examples:

I appreciate your kindness  
anata no **yasashisa** ni kansha shimasu

I can't put up with this heat any more  
kono **atasusa** wa mō taerarenai

I was surprised by the cleanliness of his room  
kare no heya no **kireisa** ni bikkuri shita



## Appendix 1

# Understanding verb tenses in noun phrases

There is an important difference between how Japanese and English treat verbs in noun phrases. Consider the following sentences:

When Yoshi **arrived** in Tokyo, he went to the hotel  
yoshi wa tōkyō ni **tsuita** toki, hoteru ni ikimashita

When Yoshi **arrives** in Osaka, please call me  
yoshi ga ōsaka ni **tsuita** toki, (watashi ni) denwa shite kudasai

In the first example, the words “arrive” and “tsuku” are in the past tense in both English and Japanese. In the second example, however, “arrive” is in the present tense, but the word “tsuku” is in the past tense. The reason for this is because the timing that relates to verbs in conditional clauses and noun phrases is different in each language.

In English, the important piece of timing information is the timing of the action *relative to the present moment*. If the action took place in the past, the past tense is used. If the action will take place in the future, the present tense is usually used. It may seem

odd that the present tense is used for future actions, but this is just one of the quirks of the English language, and is the reason that many non-native English speakers would mistakenly express the second sentence above as, “When Yoshi will arrive in Tokyo, please call me”.

Regardless, in Japanese, the important piece of timing information is the timing of the action *relative to the main verb* in the sentence. In the first example, the main action is the act of going to the hotel. Since Yoshi’s arrival in Tokyo happened before he went to the hotel, from the perspective of the main action, his arrival occurred in the past, so the past tense is used. Similarly, in the second example, relative to the time that the person should call “me”, Yoshi will have already arrived in Osaka. The act of arriving will be in the past relative to that point in time, so the past tense is used.

This difference in perspective applies to noun phrases of all types, and all verb tenses. Here is an example from Chapter 10.4, slightly modified for the sake of comparison:

I saw that he **was eating** sushi  
(watashi wa) kare ga sushi wo **tabete iru** no wo mimashita

In this case, the English sentence uses the past continuous tense for “eat”, but in Japanese, “taberu” is expressed in the present continuous tense. This is because ‘he’ was in the process of eating sushi at the time that ‘I’ saw him.

A more clear example that shows these different perspectives is when using the words “mae” and “ato” to say “before” and “after”. Consider these sentences from Chapter 12.5.15:

Before I left the house, I hung out the laundry  
ie wo **deru mae ni**, sentakumono wo hoshite okimashita

After I have spoken with her, I will send you the details via email  
kanojo to **hanashita ato ni**, shōsai wo mēru de (anata ni) okurimasu

In the first example, both actions described in the sentence occurred in the past, but because the word “mae” is used to form a noun phrase describing when ‘I’ left the house, the verb in that noun phrase - “deru” - needs to be expressed from the perspective of main verb in the sentence. At the time that ‘I’ hung out the laundry, the act of leaving the house was in the future, so “deru” needs to be expressed in the present/future tense.



The opposite situation occurs in the second example. The overall sentence refers to the future, but at the time that the main verb in the sentence - “okurimasu” - takes place, the act of speaking with “her” will be in the past. The verb “hanasu” should therefore be expressed in the past tense.

Another example is this one from Chapter 12.5.7, where the past tense is used even though the action being referred to is in the present or future:

It would be better to wait here than to go inside  
naka ni hairu yori, koko de **matta hō** ga ī desu

This is a bit trickier to make sense of, but essentially, the main verb here is “desu”, and this is used to describe the act of ‘waiting here’ as good (“ī”). The timing that this description applies to is actually a hypothetical future, where we are looking back and evaluating the outcome of having waited. At that hypothetical future time, the act of waiting is in the past, so the past tense is used for that verb.

By contrast, the act of ‘going inside’ will not have occurred at that future time. Instead, it will be in a perpetual state of non-completion, not occurring in the past, present or future. For this reason, the dictionary form is used to refer to the act of ‘going inside’ in general terms.

The same reasoning can be applied to why the negative present/future tense is used when a negative verb appears before “hō”, such as in this example, also from Chapter 12.5.7:

This smells strange, so I think it would be better not to eat it  
kore wa hen na nioi ga suru kara, **tabenai hō** ga ī to omoimasu

Here, too, the act of ‘not eating’ does not occur at any time in the past, present or future. It is therefore described in general terms, which is done using the negative of the dictionary form.

In summary, the tense used for verbs that appear within noun phrases is sometimes different in English and Japanese because the perspective that applies to these actions is different. While in English we almost always talk about things from the perspective of the present, in Japanese sentences, verbs that appear within noun phrases should be expressed from the perspective of the main action in that sentence.



## Appendix 2

# Verb dictionary (English - Japanese)

This dictionary contains all of the verbs that appear in the examples and exercises in this book. Japanese verbs are presented in their dictionary form (informal present tense) and in the polite present tense to assist with verb type identification. Verbs that are part of a transitive/intransitive verb pair (refer to Chapter 8.7) are marked with a [t] for transitive and [i] for intransitive.

English	Dictionary form (informal present tense)	Polite present tense
answer	kotaeru	kotaemasu
appear (in a match, on TV etc.)	deru	demasu
apply (liquids such as creams, paints etc,)	nuru	nurimasu
appreciate	kansha suru	kansha shimasu
arrive	tsuku	tsukimasu
ascend [i]	agaru	agarimasu
ask	kiku	kikimasu
be	da	desu
be (living)	iru	imasu

English	Dictionary form (informal present tense)	Polite present tense
be (non-living)	aru	arimasu
be audible	kikoeru	kikoemasu
be born	umareru	umaremasu
be careful	ki wo tsukeru	ki wo tsukemasu
be found [i]	mitsukaru	mitsukarimasu
be late	okureru	okuremasu
be mistaken [i]	machigau	machigaimasu
be on time	ma ni au	ma ni aimasu
be surprised	bikkuri suru	bikkuri shimasu
be visible	mieru	miemasu
become	naruru	narimasu
become empty	suku	sukimasu
begin [i]	hajimaru	hajimarimasu
belong	shozoku suru	shozoku shimasu
borrow	kariru	karimasu
break [i]	kowareru	kowaremasu
break [t]	kowasu	kowashimasu
bump [t]	butsukeru	butsukemasu
bump into [i]	butsukaru	butsukarimasu
buy	kau	kaimasu
call	denwa suru	denwa shimasu
cancel	kyanseru suru	kyanseru shimasu
carry	motsu	mochimasu
carry (from A to B)	hakobu	hakobimasu
catch (a cold)	hiku	hikimasu
catch (fishing)	tsuru	tsurimasu
change	kaeru	kaemasu
charge (a battery)	jūden suru	jūden shimasu
chase	oikakeru	oikakemasu
choose	sentaku suru	sentaku shimasu
clean	migaku	migakimasu

English	Dictionary form (informal present tense)	Polite present tense
clean	sōji suru	sōji shimasu
climb	noboru	noborimasu
close [i]	shimaru	shimarimasu
close [t]	shimeru	shimemasu
collect [t]	atsumeru	atsumemasu
come	kuru	kimasu
come and pick up	mukae ni kuru	mukae ni kimasu
come on [i]	tsuku	tsukimasu
complete	kansei suru	kansei shimasu
confirm	kakunin suru	kakunin shimasu
cook	ryōri suru	ryōri shimasu
cost [i]	kakaru	kakarimasu
dance	odoru	odorimasu
decide [t]	kimeru	kimemasu
depart	shuppatsu suru	shuppatsu shimasu
die	shinu	shinimasu
do	suru	shimasu
do	yaru	yarimasu
do laundry	sentaku suru	sentaku shimasu
do one's best	ganbaru	ganbarimasu
drink	nomu	nomimasu
drive	untan suru	untan shimasu
drop [t]	otosu	otoshimasu
dry [i]	kawaku	kawakimasu
eat	taberu	tabemasu
email	mēru suru	mēru shimasu
end	owaru	owarimasu
enter [i]	hairu	hairimasu
exercise	undō suru	undō shimasu
extinguish [t]	kesu	keshimasu
fall (rain, snow etc.)	furu	furimasu

English	Dictionary form (informal present tense)	Polite present tense
fall [i]	ochiru	ochimasu
finish	owaru	owarimasu
fix	naosu	naoshimasu
fly	tobu	tobimasu
forget	wasureru	wasuremasu
gather [i]	atsumaru	atsumarimasu
get fat	futoru	futorimasu
get sunburnt	hiyake suru	hiyake shimasu
get to know	shiriau	shiraiimasu
give	ageru	agemasu
give (towards yourself)	kureru	kuremasu
give up	akirameru	akiramemasu
go	iku	ikimasu
go and pick up	mukae ni iku	mukae ni ikimasu
go for a walk	sanpo suru	sanpo shimasu
go off, go out [i]	kieru	kiemasu
go shopping	kaimono suru	kaimono shimasu
go up [i]	agaru	agarimasu
graduate	sotsugyō suru	sotsugyō shimasu
hang out (clothes etc.)	hosu	hoshimasu
have	motsu	mochimasu
have (a pet)	kau	kaimasu
have (non-living)	aru	arimasu
hit [i]	butsukaru	butsukarimasu
hit [t]	butsukeru	butsukemasu
hold	motsu	mochimasu
hold (events etc.)	kaisai suru	kaisai shimasu
hurry	isogu	isogimasu
include	fukumu	fukumimasu
introduce	shōkai suru	shōkai shimasu
jump	tobu	tobimasu

English	Dictionary form (informal present tense)	Polite present tense
kick	keru	kerimasu
know	shiru	shirimasu
learn	manabu	manabimasu
leave [i]	deru	demasu
lend	kasu	kashimasu
listen	kiku	kikimasu
live (reside)	sumu	sumimasu
lose	makeru	makemasu
lose weight	yaseru	yasemasu
love	ai suru	ai shimasu
make	tsukuru	tsukurimasu
make a mistake [t]	machigaeru	machigaemasu
make a phone call	denwa suru	denwa shimasu
make a reservation	yoyaku suru	yoyaku shimasu
marry	kekkon suru	kekkon shimasu
meet	au	aimasu
meet (for the first time)	deau	deaimasu
mess around	asobu	asobimasu
move [i]	ugoku	ugokimasu
move [t]	ugokasu	ugokashimasu
need	iru	irimasu
open [i]	aku	akimasu
open [t]	akeru	akemasu
order	chūmon suru	chūmon shimasu
oversleep, sleep in	nebō suru	nebō shimasu
own	motsu	mochimasu
pass (a test)	gōkaku suru	gōkaku shimasu
pick up	toru	torimasu
place (an object)	oku	okimasu
place an order	chūmon suru	chūmon shimasu
play (a stringed instrument)	hiku	hikimasu

English	Dictionary form (informal present tense)	Polite present tense
play, mess around	asobu	asobimasu
play football	futtobōru suru	futtobōru shimasu
practice	renshū suru	renshū shimasu
put (an object) on	oku	okimasu
put in [t]	ireru	iremasu
put on (liquids such as creams, paints etc,)	nuru	nurimasu
put on (lower body)	haku	hakimasu
put on (upper body)	kiru	kimasu
put on weight	futoru	futorimasu
put out [t]	dasu	dashimasu
put up with	taeru	taemasu
quit	yameru	yamemasu
raise [t]	ageru	agemasu
read	yomu	yomimasu
receive	morau	moraimasu
remember	oboeru	oboemasu
renew	kōshin suru	kōshin shimasu
reply	henji suru	henji shimasu
respect	sonkei suru	sonkei shimasu
restart (a machine)	saikidō suru	saikidō shimasu
return (home) [i]	kaeru	kaerimasu
return (something) [t]	kaesu	kaeshimasu
ride	noru	norimasu
ring	naru	narimasu
run	hashiru	hashirimasu
save (money)	tameru	tamemasu
save money	chokin suru	chokin shimasu
say	iu	īmasu
search	sagasu	sagashimasu
see (spot, notice)	mikakeru	mikakemasu
sell	uru	urimasu



English	Dictionary form (informal present tense)	Polite present tense
send	okuru	okurimasu
send email	mēru suru	mēru shimasu
show	miseru	misemasu
shut [t]	shimeru	shimemasu
sit	suwaru	suwarimasu
ski	sukī suru	sukī shimasu
sleep	neru	nemasu
smell (emit a smell)	nioi ga suru	nioi ga shimasu
speak	hanasu	hanashimasu
spend (money, time) [t]	kakeru	kakemasu
spot (see)	mikakeru	mikakemasu
stand (up)	tatsu	tachimasu
start [i]	hajimaru	hajimarimasu
stay (at accommodation)	tomaru	tomarimasu
stop	yameru	yamemasu
study	benkyō suru	benkyō shimasu
swim	oyogu	oyogimasu
take	toru	torimasu
take (a photograph/video)	toru	torimasu
take (a shower)	abiru	abimasu
take (money, time) [i]	kakaru	kakarimasu
take (money, time) [t]	kakeru	kakemasu
take off (clothes)	nugu	nugimasu
take out [t]	dasu	dashimasu
talk	hanasu	hanashimasu
teach	oshieru	oshiemasu
tell	oshieru	oshiemasu
thank	kansha suru	kansha shimasu
there is (living)	iru	imasu
there is (non-living)	aru	arimasu
think (opinion)	omou	omoimasu
throw out	suteru	sutemasu

English	Dictionary form (informal present tense)	Polite present tense
touch	sawaru	sawarimasu
travel	ryokō suru	ryokō shimasu
trust	shinrai suru	shinrai shimasu
turn off [t]	kesu	keshimasu
turn on [t]	tsukeru	tsukemasu
understand	wakaru	wakarimasu
use	tsukau	tsukaimasu
visit	hōmon suru	hōmon shimasu
wait	matsu	machimasu
wake up	okiru	okimasu
walk	aruku	arukimasu
wash	arau	araimasu
watch	miru	mimasu
wear (lower body)	haku	hakimasu
wear (upper body)	kiru	kimasu
win	katsu	kachimasu
withdraw	orosu	oroshimasu
work	hataraku	hatarakimasu
work	shigoto suru	shigoto shimasu
work hard	ganbaru	ganbarimasu
write	kaku	kakimasu

## Appendix 3

# Verb dictionary (Japanese - English)

This dictionary contains all of the verbs that appear in the examples and exercises in this book. Japanese verbs are presented in their dictionary form (informal present tense) and in the polite present tense to assist with verb type identification. Verbs that are part of a transitive/intransitive verb pair (refer to Chapter 8.7) are marked with a [t] for transitive and [i] for intransitive.

Dictionary form (informal present tense)	Polite present tense	English
abiru	abimasu	take (a shower)
agaru	agarimasu	ascend, go up [i]
ageru	agemasu	raise [t]
ageru	agemasu	give
ai suru	ai shimasu	love
akeru	akemasu	open [t]
akirameru	akiramemasu	give up
aku	akimasu	open [i]
arau	araimasu	wash
aru	arimasu	be, there is, have (non-living)

Dictionary form (informal present tense)	Polite present tense	English
aruku	arukimasu	walk
asobu	asobimasu	play, mess around
atsumaru	atsumarimasu	gather [i]
atsumeru	atsumemasu	collect [t]
au	aimasu	meet
benkyō suru	benkyō shimasu	study
bikkuri suru	bikkuri shimasu	be surprised
butsukaru	butsukarimasu	hit, bump into [i]
butsukeru	butsukemasu	hit, bump [t]
chokin suru	chokin shimasu	to save money
chūmon suru	chūmon shimasu	order, place an order
da	desu	be
dasu	dashimasu	put out, take out [t]
deau	deaimasu	meet (for the first time)
denwa suru	denwa shimasu	call, make a phone call
deru	demasu	leave [i], appear (in a match, on TV etc.)
fukumu	fukumimasu	include
furu	furimasu	fall (rain, snow etc.)
futoru	futorimasu	put on weight, get fat
futtabōru suru	futtabōru shimasu	play football
ganbaru	ganbarimasu	do one's best, work hard
gōkaku suru	gōkaku shimasu	pass (a test)
hairu	hairimasu	enter [i]
hajimaru	hajimarimasu	begin, start [i]
hakobu	hakobimasu	carry (from A to B)
haku	hakimasu	wear, put on (lower body)
hanasu	hanashimasu	speak, talk
hashiru	hashirimasu	run
hataraku	hatarakimasu	work
henji suru	henji shimasu	reply
hiku	hikimasu	catch (a cold)

Dictionary form (informal present tense)	Polite present tense	English
hiku	hikimasu	play (a stringed instrument)
hiyake suru	hiyake shimasu	get sunburnt
hōmon suru	hōmon shimasu	visit
hosu	hoshimasu	hang out (clothes etc.)
iku	ikimasu	go
ireru	iremasu	put in [t]
iru	imasu	be, there is (living)
iru	irimasu	need
isogu	isogimasu	hurry
iu	īmasu	say
jūden suru	jūden shimasu	charge (a battery)
kaeru	kaerimasu	return (home) [i]
kaeru	kaemasu	change
kaesu	kaeshimasu	return (something) [t]
kaimono suru	kaimono shimasu	go shopping
kaisai suru	kaisai shimasu	hold (events etc.)
kakaru	kakarimasu	take (money, time), cost [i]
kakeru	kakemasu	spend, take (money, time) [t]
kaku	kakimasu	write
kakunin suru	kakunin shimasu	confirm
kansei suru	kansei shimasu	complete
kansha suru	kansha shimasu	appreciate, thank
kariru	karimasu	borrow
kasu	kashimasu	lend
katsu	kachimasu	win
kau	kaimasu	have (a pet)
kau	kaimasu	buy
kawaku	kawakimasu	dry [i]
kekkon suru	kekkon shimasu	marry
keru	kerimasu	kick
kesu	keshimasu	turn off, extinguish [t]

Dictionary form (informal present tense)	Polite present tense	English
ki wo tsukeru	ki wo tsukemasu	be careful
kieru	kiemasu	go off, go out [i]
kikoeru	kikoemasu	be audible
kiku	kikimasu	listen, ask
kimeru	kimemasu	decide [t]
kiru	kimasu	wear, put on (upper body)
kōshin suru	kōshin shimasu	renew
kotaeru	kotaemasu	answer
kowareru	kowaremasu	break [i]
kowasu	kowashimasu	break [t]
kureru	kuremasu	give (towards yourself)
kuru	kimasu	come
kyanseru suru	kyanseru shimasu	cancel
ma ni au	ma ni aimasu	be on time
machigaeru	machigaemasu	make a mistake [t]
machigau	machigaimasu	be mistaken [i]
makeru	makemasu	lose
manabu	manabimasu	learn
matsu	machimasu	wait
mēru suru	mēru shimasu	email, send email
mieru	miemasu	be visible
migaku	migakimasu	clean
mikakeru	mikakemasu	spot, see
miru	mimasu	watch
miseru	misemasu	to show
mitsukaru	mitsukarimasu	be found [i]
morau	moraimasu	receive
motsu	mochimasu	hold, carry, own, have
mukae ni iku	mukae ni ikimasu	go and pick up
mukae ni kuru	mukae ni kimasu	come and pick up
naosu	naoshimasu	fix
naru	narimasu	ring

Dictionary form (informal present tense)	Polite present tense	English
naruru	narimasu	become
nebō suru	nebō shimasu	oversleep, sleep in
neru	nemasu	sleep
nioi ga suru	nioi ga shimasu	smell (emit a smell)
noboru	noborimasu	climb
nomu	nomimasu	drink
noru	norimasu	ride
nugu	nugimasu	take off (clothes)
nuru	nurimasu	apply, put on (liquids such as creams, paints etc.)
oboeru	oboemasu	remember
ochiru	ochimasu	fall [i]
odoru	odorimasu	dance
oikakeru	oikakemasu	chase
okiru	okimasu	wake up
oku	okimasu	place, put (an object) on
okureru	okuremasu	be late
okuru	okurimasu	send
omou	omoimasu	think (opinion)
orosu	oroshimasu	withdraw
oshieru	oshiemasu	teach, tell
otosu	otoshimasu	drop [t]
owaru	owarimasu	end, finish
oyogu	oyogimasu	swim
renshū suru	renshū shimasu	practice
ryokō suru	ryokō shimasu	travel
ryōri suru	ryōri shimasu	cook
sagasu	sagashimasu	search
saikidō suru	saikidō shimasu	restart (a machine)
sanpo suru	sanpo shimasu	go for a walk
sawaru	sawarimasu	touch
sentaku suru	sentaku shimasu	do laundry

Dictionary form (informal present tense)	Polite present tense	English
sentaku suru	sentaku shimasu	choose
shigoto suru	shigoto shimasu	work
shimaru	shimarimasu	close (I)
shimeru	shimemasu	close, shut [t]
shinrai suru	shinrai shimasu	trust
shinu	shinimasu	die
shiriau	shiriaimasu	get to know
shiru	shirimasu	know
shōkai suru	shōkai shimasu	introduce
shozoku suru	shozoku shimasu	belong
shuppatsu suru	shuppatsu shimasu	depart
sōji suru	sōji shimasu	clean
sonkei suru	sonkei shimasu	respect
sotsugyō suru	sotsugyō shimasu	graduate
sukī suru	sukī shimasu	ski
suku	sukimasu	become empty
sumu	sumimasu	live (reside)
suru	shimasu	do
suteru	sutemasu	throw out
suwaru	suwarimasu	sit
taberu	tabemasu	eat
taeru	taemasu	put up with
tameru	tamemasu	save (money)
tatsu	tachimasu	stand (up)
tobu	tobimasu	jump, fly
tomaru	tomarimasu	stay (at accommodation)
toru	torimasu	take, pick up
toru	torimasu	take (a photograph/video)
tsukau	tsukaimasu	use
tsukeru	tsukemasu	turn on [t]
tsuku	tsukimasu	come on [i]
tsuku	tsukimasu	arrive



Dictionary form (informal present tense)	Polite present tense	English
tsukuru	tsukurimasu	make
tsuru	tsurimasu	catch (fishing)
ugokasu	ugokashimasu	move [t]
ugoku	ugokimasu	move [i]
umareru	umaremasu	be born
undō suru	undō shimasu	exercise
untēn suru	untēn shimasu	drive
uru	urimasu	sell
wakaru	wakarimasu	understand
wasureru	wasuremasu	forget
yameru	yamemasu	quit, stop
yaru	yarimasu	do
yaseru	yasemasu	lose weight
yomu	yomimasu	read
yoyaku suru	yoyaku shimasu	make a reservation



## Appendix 4

# Non-verb dictionary (English - Japanese)

This dictionary contains all of the vocabulary that appears in the examples and exercises in this book, except verbs. For an English-Japanese verb dictionary, see Appendix 2.

English	Japanese
a bit	chotto
a bit more	mō chotto
a cold (illness)	kaze
a lot	takusan
about...	...ni tsuite
above	ue
abroad	kaigai
address	jūsho
advice	adobaisu
Africa	afurika
afternoon	gogo
again	mata
air conditioner	eakon
airplane	hikōki

English	Japanese
airport	kūkō
alarm	arāmu
alcohol	osake
all of them	doremo
already	mō
always	itsumo
America	amerika
amusement park	yūenchi
any time	itsudemo
anybody	daredemo
anything	nandemo
anywhere	dokodemo
apple	ringo
April	shigatsu

English	Japanese
article	kiji
ATM	ATM (ē tī emu)
August	hachigatsu
Australia	ōsutoraria
autumn	aki
awful (taste)	mazui
baby	akachan
bad	warui
bag	kaban
ball	bōru
bank	ginkō
baseball	yakyū
basketball	basuke, basuketto bōru
bathroom	furoba
beach	umi
beautiful	utsukushi
bed	beddo
beer	bīru
beginning	hajime
behind	ushiro
below	shita
beside	tonari
bicycle	jitensha
big	ōkī
birthday	tanjōbi
black	kuroi
blue	aoi
book	hon
bored	hima (na)
boring	tsumaranai
boss	jōshi

English	Japanese
box	hako
boy	otoko no ko
boyfriend	kareshi
bread	pan
break	yasumi
breakfast	asagohan
brothers, siblings	kyōdai
building	tatemono
bullet train	shinkansen
bus	basu
busy	isogashī
but	demo
cake	kēki
camera	kamera
candle	rōsoku
candy	okashi
capital city	shuto
car	kuruma
cat	neko
chair	isu
cheap	yasui
cheese	chīzu
child	kodomo
child (someone else's)	okosan
China	chūgoku
Chinese (language)	chūgokugo
chocolate	chokorēto
choice	sentaku
chopsticks	ohashi
cinema	eigakan
city	toshi

English	Japanese
class	jugyō
clean	kirei (na)
closet	kurōzetto
clothes	fuku
coffee	kōhī
cola	kōra
cold	samui
colleagues	dōryō
company	kaisha
complicated	fukuzatsu
computer	konpyūtā
concert	raibu
contract	keiyaku
convenience store	konbini
convenient	benri (na)
cooking	ryōri
cool	kakkoī
correct	tadashī
couch	sofa
counters	
- age	sai
- animals	hiki
- days	kakan, nichikan
- day of the month	ka, nichi
- hour of the day	ji
- hours	jikan
- minutes	fun (kan)
- months	kagetsu (kan)
- people	nin
- seconds	byō
- things (general)	ko
- things (general, small)	tsu

English	Japanese
- times (number of)	kai
- weeks	shūkan
- years	nen
- yen	en
country	kuni
couple (romantic)	kappuru
course	kōsu
cracker	kurakkā
cramped	semai
culture	bunka
cup	koppu
cute	kawaiī
dad	chichi
dangerous	abunai
dark	kurai
date (romantic)	dēto
daughter (someone else's)	ojōsan
daughter (your own)	musume
day	hi
day after tomorrow	asatte
December	jūnigatsu
definitely	zettai ni
delicious	oishī
dentist	haisha
desk	tsukue
details	shōsai
difficult	muzukashī
dinner	bangohan
dirty	kitanai
dishes	shokki

English	Japanese
doctor	isha
dog	inu
door	doa
dress	wanpīsu
early	hayai
easy	kantan (na)
economic conditions	keiki
eight	hachi
election	senkyo
elephant	zō
elevator	erebēta
email	mēru
end	owari
English (language)	eigo
enough	jūbun
every day	mainichi
every evening	maiban
every month	maitsuki
every morning	maiasa
every week	maishū
every weekend	maishūmatsu
every year	maitoshi
every... (period of time)	... goto ni
everybody	daremo
everything	subete
everything	zenbu
everywhere	dokomo
exam	shiken
excuse me	sumimasen
expensive	takai
explanation	setsumeī

English	Japanese
famous	yūmei (na)
fast	hayai
father (someone else's)	otōsan
February	nigatsu
ferris wheel	kanransha
festival	matsuri
fine	daijōbu (na)
fine (health-wise)	genki (na)
first	saisho
fish	sakana
five	go
floor	yuka
food	tabemono
football	futtobōru
four	shi, yon
France	furansu
free (unoccupied)	hima (na)
free time	hima na toki
frequently	hinpan ni
Friday	kin'yōbi
friend(s)	tomodachi
fruit	kudamono
fun	tanoshī
funny	omoshiroi
game (a single match)	shiai
garbage	gomi
Germany	doitsu
girl	onna no ko
glasses (eye)	megane
golf	gorufu
good	ī, yoi

English	Japanese
good (skillful or tasty)	umai
good evening	konbanwa
good morning	ohayō gozaimasu
good night	oyasuminasai
goodbye	sayonara
good-looking	kakkoī
graduation ceremony	sotsugyōshiki
grandchild	mago
grandchild (someone else's)	omagosan
grandfather (someone else's)	ojisan
grandfather (your own)	sofu
grandmother (someone else's)	obāsan
grandmother (your own)	sobo
green	midori
guitar	gitā
hair	kami no ke
half	hanbun
hamburger	hanbāgā
hand	te
happy	ureshī
hat	bōshi
hate	kirai (na)
he	kare
head	atama
headphones	iyahon
heavy	omoi
hello	konnichiwa

English	Japanese
here	koko
home	ie
home town	jimoto
homework	shukudai
hospital	byōin
host family	hosuto famirī
hot	atsui
hot dog	hotto doggu
hotel	hoteru
house	ie
how	dōyatte
how many	ikutsu
how much	ikura
HR department	jinjibu
hurts	itai
husband (other person's)	goshujin
husband (your own)	shujin
I	watashi (see also: watakushi, boku, atashi, ore, uchi)
ice cream	aisu kurimu
I'm okay, no thank you	kekkō
important	taisetsu (na)
in front	mae
in that way	sō
in that way (over there)	ā
in this way	kō
in what way	dō
inconvenient	fuben (na)
information	jōhō

English	Japanese
inside	naka
instruction manual	setsumeisho
interesting	omoshiroi
Internet	intānetto
island	shima
jacket	uwagi
January	ichigatsu
Japan	nihon
Japanese (language)	nihongo
Japanese bar/ restaurant	izakaya
Japanese food	washoku
job	shigoto
July	shichigatsu
June	rokugatsu
key	kagi
kilometers	kiro
kind	yasashī
kitchen	daidokoro
lake	mizūmi
last	saigo
last month	sengetsu
last week	senshū
last year	kyonen
later	atode
laundry	sentakumono
left	hidari
left hand side	hidari gawa
leg	ashi
letter	tegami
library	toshokan
light	karui

English	Japanese
lights	denki
like	suki (na)
London	rondon
loud	urusai
love	daisuki
luggage	nimotsu
lunch	hirugohan
magazine	zasshi
mall	mōru
man	otoko no hito
many	takusan
marathon	marason
March	sangatsu
match	shiai
May	gogatsu
me	watashi (see also: watakushi, boku, atashi, ore, uchi)
meat	niku
meeting	kaigi
middle of the day	hiru
milk	miruku, gyūnyū
minutes	fun
mobile phone	keitai (denwa)
model	moderu
mom	haha
Monday	getsuyōbi
money	okane
monkey	saru
morning	asa
mother	okāsan
motorbike	baiku
Mount Fuji	fuji san



English	Japanese
mountain	yama
mouse	nezumi
movie	eiga
movie theatre	eigakan
much	takusan
music	ongaku
name	namae
national holiday	shukujitsu
natto	nattō
naughty	dame (na)
necessary	hitsuyō (na)
necklace	nekuresu
never	zenzen
new	atarashī
news	nyūsu
newspaper	shinbun
next	tsugi
next month	raigetsu
next to	tonari
next week	raishū
next year	rainen
nice to meet you	hajimemashite
night	yoru
nine	kyū
no	īe
no	iya
no thank you, I'm okay	kekkō
nobody	daremo
noise	oto
noisy	urusai
none of them	doremo

English	Japanese
not allowed	dame (na)
not very	amari
not yet	mada
nothing	nanimo
November	jūichigatsu
now	ima
nowhere	dokomo
October	jūgatsu
office	ofisu
okay	daijōbu (na)
old	furui
older brother	ani
older brother (someone else's)	onīsan
older sister	ane
older sister (someone else's)	onēsan
Olympics	orinpikku
on top of	ue
one	ichi
one of them	doreka
online	netto de
order	chūmon
ouch	itai
outside	soto
over there	asoko
painting	e
parents (other person's)	goryōshin
parents (your own)	ryōshin
park	kōen
particles	joshi
part-time job	arubaito

English	Japanese
party	pāti
passport	pasupōto
pasta	pasuta
pen	pen
pencil	enpitsu
people	hito tachi
person	hito
phone	denwa
phone number	denwa bangō
photograph	shashin
piano	piano
picture	e
pink	pinku (na)
pizza	piza
plan	tsumori
please	kudasai
policeman	keisatsukan
possible	kanō (na)
post office	yūbinkyoku
postcard	hagaki
practice	renshū
present (gift)	purezento
pretty	kirei (na)
previous	mae no
Prime Minister	sōri daijin
project	purojekuto
quiet	shizuka (na)
rain	ame
ramen	rāmen
reason	riyū
red	akai
refrigerator	reizōko

English	Japanese
remote control	rimokon
rent	yachin
report	repōto
reservation	yoyaku
restaurant	resutoran
rich	okanemochi (na)
right	migi
road	michi
room	heya
route, the way	michi
rubbish	gomi
sad	kanashī
sake (alcohol)	osake
salaried employee	sararīman
salt	shio
sandwich	sandoicchi
Saturday	doyōbi
scary	kowai
scenery	keshiki
school	gakkō
science	kagaku
scissors	hasami
sea	umi
seafood	shīfūdo
season	kisetsu
seat	seki
see you later	mata ne
September	kugatsu
seven	shichi, nana
she	kanojo
shirt	shatsu
shitsumon	question

English	Japanese
shoes	kutsu
shop	mise
shopping	kaimono
should (expectation)	hazu
should (obligation)	beki
show (TV/radio)	bangumi
shower	shawā
siblings, brothers	kyōdai
sick	byōki (na)
sign	kanban
simple	shinpuru
six	roku
size	saizu
sky	sora
small	chīsai
small (cramped)	semai
smartphone	sumaho
smell	nioi
smelly	kusai
snow	yuki
soccer	sakkā
sofa	sofa
somebody	dareka
something	nanika
sometime	itsuka
somewhere	dokoka
son (someone else's)	musukosan
son (your own)	musuko
song	uta
sorry	gomennasai
sound	oto

English	Japanese
South Korea	kankoku
souvenir	omiyage
spacious	hiroii
Spanish (language)	supeingo
sport	supōtsu
spring	haru
spy	supai
staff	sutaffu
stamp	kitte
station	eki
steak	sutēki
steel	tekkō
still	mada
stomach	onaka
store	mise
straight	massugu (na)
strange	hen (na)
strong	tsuyoi
student	gakusei
summer	natsu
Sunday	nichiyōbi
sunglasses	sangurasu
sunscreen	hiyakedome
supermarket	sūpā
sweets	okashi
swimming pool	pūru
swing (play equipment)	buranko
table	tēburu
tall	takai
tea	ocha
teacher	sensei
teeth	ha

English	Japanese
ten	jū
tennis	tenisu
test	tesuto
thank you	arigatō
thank you (polite)	arigatō gozaimasu
that	sore
that (over there)	are
that	achira
(over there, polite)	
that (polite)	sochira
that kind of	sonna
that kind of	anna
(over there)	
that x	sono
that x (over there)	ano
the day before yesterday	ototoi
then, and then	soshite
there	soko
they	karera
things	mono
this	kore
this (polite)	kochira
this kind of	konna
this month	kongetsu
this morning	kesa
this week	konshū
this x	kono
this year	kotoshi
three	san
throat	nodo
Thursday	mokuyōbi
ticket	chiketto

English	Japanese
time	jikan
today	kyō
toilet	toire
tomorrow	ashita
tonight	kon'ya
tour	tsuā
tourist	kankōkyaku
town	machi
train	densha
trash	gomi
travel	ryokō
tree	ki
Tuesday	kayōbi
turn (in a sequence)	ban
TV	terebi
two	ni
ugly	minikui
umm	anō, etto
unacceptable	ikenai, ikemasen
underneath	shita
United Kingdom	igirisu
university	daigaku
us	watashi tachi
vacation	yasumi
vegetables	yasai
very	totemo
visa	biza
voice	koe
volleyball	barē, barēbōru
wallet	saifu
want	hoshī

English	Japanese
warm	ataatakai
water	mizu
way (route)	michi
we	watashi tachi
weather	tenki
Wednesday	suiyōbi
weekend	shūmatsu
well (health-wise)	genki (na)
what	nan
what	nan, nani
what day?	nan'yōbi
what kind of	donna
what month?	nangatsu
when	itsu
where	doko
which	dore
which (polite)	dochira
which x	dono
whichever	doredemo
white	shiroi
who	dare
why	dōshite, nande
wife (someone else's)	okusan
wife (your own)	tsuma
wind	kaze
window	mado
wine	wain
winter	fuyu
woman	onna no hito
work	shigoto
world	sekai

English	Japanese
year after next	sarainen
year before last	ototoshi
years	nen
yellow	kīroi
yen	en
yes	hai
yesterday	kinō
you	anata
younger brother (someone else's)	otōtosan
younger brother (your own)	otōto
younger sister (someone else's)	imōtosan
younger sister (your own)	imōto
you're welcome	dō itashimashite
zoo	dōbutsuen



## Appendix 5

# Non-verb dictionary (Japanese - English)

This dictionary contains all of the vocabulary that appears in the examples and exercises in this book, except verbs. For a Japanese-English verb dictionary, see Appendix 3.

Japanese	English
ā	in that way (over there)
abunai	dangerous
achira	that (over there, polite)
adobaisu	advice
afurika	Africa
aisu kurīmu	ice cream
akachan	baby
akai	red
aki	autumn
amari	not very
ame	rain

Japanese	English
amerika	America
anata	you
ane	older sister
ani	older brother
anna	that kind of (over there)
ano	that x (over there)
anō	umm
aoi	blue
arāmu	alarm
are	that (over there)
arigatō	thank you
arigatō gozaimasu	thank you (polite)

Japanese	English
arubaito	part-time job
asa	morning
asagohan	breakfast
asatte	day after tomorrow
ashi	leg
ashita	tomorrow
asoko	over there
atama	head
atarashī	new
atashi	I, me (for women/ girls only)
ataakai	warm
ATM (ē tī emu)	ATM
atode	later
atsui	hot
baiku	motorbike
ban	turn (in a sequence)
bangohan	dinner
bangumi	show (TV/radio)
barē, barēbōru	volleyball
basu	bus
basuke, basuketto	basketball
bōru	
beddo	bed
beki	should (obligation)
benri (na)	convenient
bīru	beer
biza	visa
boku	I, me (for men/boys only)
bōru	ball
bōshi	hat
bunka	culture

Japanese	English
buranko	swing (play equipment)
byō	seconds, counter for seconds
byōin	hospital
byōki (na)	sick
chichi	dad
chiketto	ticket
chīsai	small
chīzu	cheese
chokorēto	chocolate
chotto	a bit
chūgoku	China
chūgokugo	Chinese (language)
chūmon	order
daidokoro	kitchen
daigaku	university
daijōbu (na)	okay, fine
daisuki	love
dame (na)	not allowed, naughty
dare	who
daredemo	anybody
dareka	somebody
daremo	everybody, nobody
demo	but
denki	lights
densha	train
denwa	phone
denwa bangō	phone number
dēto	date (romantic)
dō	in what way
dō itashimashite	you're welcome



Japanese	English
doa	door
dōbutsuen	zoo
dochira	which (polite)
doitsu	Germany
doko	where
dokodemo	anywhere
dokoka	somewhere
dokomo	everywhere, nowhere
donna	what kind of
dono	which x
dore	which
doredemo	whichever
doreka	one of them
doremo	all of them, none of them
dōryō	colleagues
dōshite	why
dōyatte	how
doyōbi	Saturday
e	painting, picture
eakon	air conditioner
eiga	movie
eigakan	cinema, movie theatre
eigo	English (language)
eki	station
en	yen, counter for yen
enpitsu	pencil
erebēta	elevator
etto	umm
fuben (na)	inconvenient
fuji san	Mount Fuji

Japanese	English
fuku	clothes
fukuzatsu	complicated
fun (kan)	minutes, counter for minutes
furansu	France
furoba	bathroom
furui	old
futtobōru	football
fuyu	winter
gakkō	school
gakusei	student
genki (na)	fine, well (health-wise)
getsuyōbi	Monday
ginkō	bank
gitā	guitar
go	five
gogatsu	May
gogo	afternoon
gomennasai	sorry
gomi	garbage, rubbish, trash
gorufu	golf
goryōshin	parents (other person's)
goshujin	husband (other person's)
... goto ni	every... (period of time)
gyūnyū	milk
ha	teeth
hachi	eight
hachigatsu	August
hagaki	postcard

Japanese	English
haha	mom
hai	yes
haisha	dentist
hajime	beginning
hajimemashite	nice to meet you
hako	box
hanbāgā	hamburger
hanbun	half
haru	spring
hasami	scissors
hayai	fast, early
hazu	should (expectation)
hen (na)	strange
heya	room
hi	day
hidari	left
hidari gawa	left hand side
hiki	counter for animals
hikōki	airplane
hima (na)	bored, free
hima na toki	free time
hinpan ni	frequently
hiro	spacious
hiru	middle of the day
hirugohan	lunch
hito	person
hito tachi	people
hitsuyō (na)	necessary
hiyakedome	sunscreen
hon	book
hoshī	want
hosuto famirī	host family
hoteru	hotel

Japanese	English
hotto doggu	hot dog
ī	good
ichi	one
ichigatsu	January
ie	house, home
īe	no
igirisu	United Kingdom
ikenai, ikemasen	unacceptable
ikura	how much
ikutsu	how many
ima	now
imōto	younger sister (your own)
imōtosan	younger sister (someone else's)
intānetto	Internet
inu	dog
isha	doctor
isogashī	busy
isu	chair
itai	ouch, hurts
itsu	when
itsudemo	any time
itsuka	sometime
itsumo	always
iya	no
iyahon	headphones
izakaya	Japanese bar/ restaurant
ji	counter for hour of the day
jikan	time, counter for hours
jimoto	home town

Japanese	English
jinjibu	HR department
jitensha	bicycle
jōhō	information
joshi	particles
jōshi	boss
jū	ten
jūbun	enough
jūgatsu	October
jūgyō	class
jūichigatsu	November
jūnigatsu	December
jūsho	address
ka, nichi	counter for days of the month
kakan, nichikan	counter for number of days
kaban	bag
kagaku	science
kagetsu (kan)	counter for months
kagi	key
kai	counter for number of times
kaigai	abroad
kaigi	meeting
kaimono	shopping
kaisha	company
kakkoī	cool, good-looking
kamera	camera
kami no ke	hair
kanashī	sad
kanban	sign
kankoku	South Korea
kankōkyaku	tourist

Japanese	English
kanō (na)	possible
kanojo	she
kanransha	ferris wheel
kantan (na)	easy
kappuru	couple (romantic)
kare	he
karera	they
kareshi	boyfriend
karui	light
kawai	cute
kayōbi	Tuesday
kaze	wind
kaze	a cold (illness)
keiki	economic conditions
keisatsukan	policeman
keitai (denwa)	mobile phone
keiyaku	contract
kēki	cake
kekko	no thank you, I'm okay
kesa	this morning
keshiki	scenery
ki	tree
kiji	article
kinō	yesterday
kin'yōbi	Friday
kirai (na)	hate
kirei (na)	pretty, clean
kiro	kilometers
kīroi	yellow
kisetsu	season
kitanai	dirty

Japanese	English
kitte	stamp
ko	counter for general things
kō	in this way
kochira	this (polite)
kodomo	child
koe	voice
kōen	park
kōhī	coffee
koko	here
kon'ya	tonight
konbanwa	good evening
konbini	convenience store
kongetsu	this month
konna	this kind of
konnichiwa	hello
kono	this x
konpyūtā	computer
konshū	this week
koppu	cup
kōra	cola
kore	this
kōsu	course
kotoshi	this year
kowai	scary
kudamono	fruit
kudasai	please
kugatsu	September
kūkō	airport
kuni	country
kurai	dark
kurakkā	cracker(s)

Japanese	English
kuroi	black
kurōzetto	closet
kuruma	car
kusai	smelly
kutsu	shoes
kyō	today
kyōdai	brothers, siblings
kyonen	last year
kyū	nine
machi	town
mada	still, not yet
mado	window
mae	in front
mae no	previous
mago	grandchild
maiasa	every morning
maiban	every evening
mainichi	every day
maishū	every week
maishūmatsu	every weekend
maitoshi	every year
maitsuki	every month
marason	marathon
massugu (na)	straight
mata	again
mata ne	see you later
matsuri	festival
mazui	awful (taste)
megane	glasses (eye)
mēru	email
michi	the way, route, road
midori	green

Japanese	English
migi	right
minikui	ugly
miruku	milk
mise	shop, store
mizu	water
mizūmi	lake
mō	already
mō chotto	a bit more
moderu	model
mokuyōbi	Thursday
mono	things
mōru	mall
mukae ni (iku/kuru)	(to go/come and) pick up
musuko	son (your own)
musukosan	son (someone else's)
musume	daughter (your own)
muzukashī	difficult
naka	inside
namae	name
nan	what
nan, nani	what
nan'yōbi	what day?
nana	seven
nande	why
nandemo	anything
nangatsu	what month?
nanika	something
nanimo	nothing
natsu	summer
nattō	natto
neko	cat

Japanese	English
nekuresu	necklace
nen (kan)	year, counter for years
netto de	online
nezumi	mouse
ni	two
nichi, ka	counter for days of the month
nichikan, kakan	counter for number of days
nichiyōbi	Sunday
nigatsu	February
nihon	Japan
nihongo	Japanese (language)
niku	meat
nimotsu	luggage
nin	counter for people
nioi	smell
...ni tsuite	about...
nodo	throat
nyūsu	news
obāsan	grandmother (someone else's)
ocha	tea
ofisu	office
ohashi	chopsticks
ohayō gozaimasu	good morning
oishī	delicious
ojisan	grandfather (someone else's)
ojōsan	daughter (someone else's)
okane	money
okanemochi (na)	rich

Japanese	English
okāsan	mother
okashi	candy, sweets
ōkī	big
okosan	child (someone else's)
okusan	wife (someone else's)
omagosan	grandchild (someone else's)
omiyage	souvenir
omoi	heavy
omoshiroi	interesting, funny
onaka	stomach
onēsan	older sister (someone else's)
ongaku	music
onīsan	older brother (someone else's)
onna no hito	woman
onna no ko	girl
ore	I, me (informal, for men/boys only)
orinpikku	Olympics
osake	sake, alcohol
ōsutoraria	Australia
oto	sound, noise
otoko no hito	man
otoko no ko	boy
otōsan	father (someone else's)
otōto	younger brother (your own)
ototoi	the day before yesterday

Japanese	English
otōtosan	younger brother (someone else's)
ototoshi	year before last
owari	end
oyasuminasai	good night
pan	bread
pasupōto	passport
pasuta	pasta
pāti	party
pen	pen
piano	piano
pinku (na)	pink
piza	pizza
purezento	present (gift)
purojekuto	project
pūru	swimming pool
question	shitsumon
raibu	concert
raigetsu	next month
rainen	next year
raishū	next week
rāmen	ramen
reizōko	refrigerator
renshū	practice
repōto	report
resutoran	restaurant
rimokon	remote control
ringo	apple
riyū	reason
roku	six
rokugatsu	June
rondon	London

Japanese	English
rōsoku	candle
ryokō	travel
ryōri	cooking
ryōshin	parents (your own)
sai	counter for age
saifu	wallet
saigo	last
saisho	first
saizu	size
sakana	fish
sakkā	soccer
samui	cold
san	three
sandoicchi	sandwich
sangatsu	March
sangurasu	sunglasses
sarainen	year after next
sararīman	salaried employee
saru	monkey
sayonara	goodbye
sekai	world
seki	seat
semai	cramped, small
sengetsu	last month
senkyo	election
sensei	teacher
senshū	last week
sentaku	choice
sentakumono	laundry
setsumei	explanation
setsumeisho	instruction manual
shashin	photograph
shatsu	shirt

Japanese	English
shawā	shower
shi	four
shiai	game, match
shichi	seven
shichigatsu	July
shifūdo	seafood
shigatsu	April
shigoto	work, job
shiken	exam
shima	island
shinbun	newspaper
shinkansen	bullet train
shinpuru	simple
shio	salt
shiroi	white
shita	underneath, below
shizuka (na)	quiet
shokki	dishes
shōsai	details
shū	week
shūkan	counter for weeks
shujin	husband (your own)
shukudai	homework
shukujitsu	national holiday
shūmatsu	weekend
shuto	capital city
sō	in that way
sobo	grandmother (your own)
sochira	that (polite)
sofa	sofa, couch
sofu	grandfather (your own)

Japanese	English
soko	there
sonna	that kind of
sono	that x
sora	sky
sore	that
sōri daijin	Prime Minister
soshite	then, and then
soto	outside
sotsugyōshiki	graduation ceremony
subete	everything
suiyōbi	Wednesday
suki (na)	like
sumaho	smartphone
sumimasen	excuse me
sūpā	supermarket
supai	spy
supeingo	Spanish (language)
supōtsu	sport
sutaffu	staff
sutēki	steak
tabemono	food
tadashī	correct
taisetsu (na)	important
takai	expensive, tall
takusan	a lot, many, much
tanjōbi	birthday
tanoshī	fun
tatemono	building
te	hand
tēburu	table
tegami	letter

Japanese	English
tekkō	steel
tenisu	tennis
tenki	weather
terebi	TV
tesuto	test
toire	toilet
tomodachi	friend(s)
tonari	next to, beside
toshi	city
toshokan	library
totemo	very
tsu	counter for general (small) things
tsuā	tour
tsugi	next
tsukue	desk
tsuma	wife (your own)
tsumaranai	boring
tsumori	plan
tsuyoi	strong
uchi	I, me (informal, mainly for women/girls)
ue	above, on top of
umai	good (skillful or tasty)
umi	sea, beach
ureshī	happy
urusai	loud, noisy
ushiro	behind
uta	song
utsukushī	beautiful
uwagi	jacket



Japanese	English
wain	wine
wanpīsu	dress
warui	bad
washoku	Japanese food
watakushi	I, me (formal)
watashi	I, me
watashi tachi	we, us
yachin	rent
yakyū	baseball
yama	mountain
yasai	vegetables
yasashī	kind
yasui	cheap
yasumi	break, vacation
yoi	good
yon	four
yoru	night
yoyaku	reservation
yūbinkyoku	post office
yūenchi	amusement park
yuka	floor
yuki	snow
yūmei (na)	famous
zasshi	magazine
zenbu	everything
zenzen	never
zettai ni	definitely
zō	elephant