Japanese Grammar Guide Tae Kim

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**Chapter 1**

**Introduction**

**1.1 The problem with conventional textbooks** The problem with conventional textbooks is that they often have the following goals.

1. They want readers to be able to use functional and polite Japanese as quickly as possible.

2. They don't want to scare readers away with terrifying Japanese script and Chinese char acters.

3. They want to teach you how to say English phrases in Japanese.

Traditionally with romance languages such as Spanish, these goals present no problems or are nonexistent due to the similarities to English. However, because Japanese is different in just about every way down to the fundamental ways of thinking, these goals create many of the confusing textbooks you see today. They are usually filled with complicated rules and countless number of grammar for specific English phrases. They also contain almost no Kanji and so when you finally arrive in Japan, lo and behold, you discover you can't read menus, maps, or essentially anything at all because the book decided you weren't smart enough to memorize Chinese characters.

The root of this problem lies in the fact that these textbooks try to teach you Japanese with English. They want to teach you on the first page how to say, "Hi, my name is Smith," but they don't tell you about all the arbitrary decisions that were made behind your back. They probably decided to use the polite form even though learning the polite form before the dictionary form makes no sense. They also might have decided to include the subject even though it's not necessary and omitted most of the time. In fact, the most common way to say something like "My name is Smith" in Japanese is to say "Smith". That's because most of the information is understood from the context and is therefore omitted. But does most textbooks explain the way things work in Japanese fundamentally? No, because they're too busy trying to push you out

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*1.2. A JAPANESE GUIDE TO LEARNING JAPANESE GRAMMARCHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION*

the door with "useful" phrases right off the bat. The result is a confusing mess of "use this if you want to say this" type of text and the reader is left with a feeling of confusion about how things actually *work*.

The solution to this problem is to explain Japanese from a Japanese point of view. Take Japanese and explain how it works and forget about trying to force what you want to say in English into Japanese. To go along with this, it is also important to explain things in an order that makes sense in Japanese. If you need to know [A] in order to understand [B], don't cover [B] first just because you want to teach a certain phrase.

Essentially, what we need is a *Japanese* guide to learning Japanese grammar.

**1.2 A Japanese guide to learning Japanese grammar**

This guide is an attempt to systematically build up the grammatical structures that make up the Japanese language in a way that makes sense in Japanese. It may not be a practical tool for quickly learning immediately usable phrases such as for travel. However, it will logically create successive building blocks that will result in a solid grammatical foundation. For those of you who have learned Japanese from textbooks, you may see some big differences in how the material is ordered and presented. This is because this guide does not seek to forcibly create artificial ties between English and Japanese by presenting the material in a way that makes sense in English. Instead, examples with translations will show how ideas are expressed in Japanese resulting in simpler explanations that are easier to understand.

In the beginning, the English translations for the examples will also be as literal as possible to convey the Japanese sense of the meaning. This will often result in grammatically incor rect translations in English. For example, the translations might not have a subject because Japanese does not require one. In addition, since the articles "the" and "a" do not exist in Japanese, the translations will not have them as well. And since Japanese does not distin guish between a future action and a general statement (such as "I will go to the store" vs. "I go to the store"), no distinction will necessarily be made in the translation. It is my hope that the explanation of the examples will convey an accurate sense of what the sentences actually mean **in Japanese**. Once the reader becomes familiar and comfortable thinking in Japanese, the translations will be less literal in order to make the sentences more readable and focused on the more advanced topics.

Be aware that there are advantages and disadvantages to systematically building a grammatical foundation from the ground up. In Japanese, the most fundamental grammatical concepts are often the most difficult to truly understand. This means that the hardest part of the language will come first. Textbooks usually don't take this approach; afraid that this will scare away or frus trate those interested in the language. Instead, they try to delay going deeply into the hardest conjugation rules with patchwork and gimmicks so that they can start teaching useful expres sions right away. This is a fine approach for some, however; it can create more confusion and trouble along the way, much like building a house on a poor foundation. The hard parts must be

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*CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION 1.3. SUGGESTIONS*

covered no matter what. However, if you cover them in the beginning, the easier parts will be all that much easier because they'll fit nicely on top of the foundation you have built. Japanese is syntactically much more consistent than English. If you learn the hardest conjugation rules, most of remaining grammar builds upon similar or identical rules. The only difficult part from there on is sorting out and remembering all the various possible expressions and combinations in order to use them in the correct situations.

Note: You will see half brackets like these: 「」 in the text. These are the Japanese version of quotation marks.

**1.3 Suggestions**

Here's my advice for practicing Japanese: if you find yourself trying to figure out how to say an English thought in Japanese, save yourself the trouble and stop because you won't get it right most of the time. You should always keep in mind that **if you don't know how to say it already, then you don't know how to say it.** Instead, if you can, ask someone how to say it in Japanese including a full explanation of the answer and start practicing **from Japanese**. Language is not a math problem; you don't have to figure out the answer. If you practice from the answer, you will develop good habits that will help you formulate correct and natural Japanese sentences.

This is why I'm a firm believer of learning by example. Examples and experience will be your main tools in mastering Japanese. Therefore, even if you don't understand something com pletely the first time, just move on and keep referring back as you see more examples. This will allow you to get a better sense of how it's used in many different contexts. Even this guide will not have all the examples to cover every situation. But lucky for you, Japanese is everywhere, especially on the web. I recommend practicing Japanese as much as possible and referring to this guide only when you cannot understand the grammar.

The Internet alone has a rich variety of reading materials including websites, bulletin boards, and online chat. Buying Japanese books or comic books is also an excellent (and fun) way to increase your vocabulary and practice reading skills. It's also important to keep in mind that it is impossible to learn good speaking and listening skills without actually conversing in Japanese. Practicing listening and speaking skills with fluent speakers of Japanese is a *must* if you wish to master conversational skills. While audio listening material can be very educational, there is nothing better than interacting with a real human for learning pronunciation, intonation, and natural conversation flow. If you have specific questions that are not addressed in this guide, you can ask them on my online forum at http://www.guidetojapanese.org/forum.

Don't feel discouraged by the vast amount of material that you will need to master. Remember that every new word or grammar learned is one step closer to mastering the language!

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**Chapter 2**

**The Writing System**

**2.1 The Scripts**

Japanese consists of two scripts (referred to as *kana*) called *Hiragana* and *Katakana*, which are two versions of the same set of sounds in the language. Hiragana and Katakana consist of a little less than 50 "letters", which are actually simplified Chinese characters adopted to form a phonetic script.

Chinese characters, called *Kanji* in Japanese, are also heavily used in the Japanese writing. Most of the words in the Japanese written language are written in Kanji (nouns, verbs, adjec tives). There exists over 40,000 Kanji where about 2,000 represent over 95% of characters actually used in written text. There are no spaces in Japanese so Kanji is necessary in dis tinguishing between separate words within a sentence. Kanji is also useful for discriminating between homophones, which occurs quite often given the limited number of distinct sounds in Japanese.

Hiragana is used mainly for grammatical purposes. We will see this as we learn about particles. Words with extremely difficult or rare Kanji, colloquial expressions, and onomatopoeias are also written in Hiragana. It's also often used for beginning Japanese students and children in place of Kanji they don't know.

While Katakana represents the same sounds as Hiragana, it is mainly used to represent newer words imported from western countries (since there are no Kanji associated with words based on the roman alphabet). The next three sections will cover Hiragana, Katakana, and Kanji.

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*2.2. INTONATION CHAPTER 2. THE WRITING SYSTEM* **2.2 Intonation**

As you will find out in the next section, every character in Hiragana (and the Katakana equivalent) corresponds to a [vowel] or [consonant + vowel] syllable sound with the single exception of the 「ん」 and 「ン」 characters (more on this later). This system of letter for each syllable sound makes pronunciation absolutely clear with no ambiguities. However, the simplicity of this system does not mean that pronunciation in Japanese is simple. In fact, the rigid structure of the fixed syllable sound in Japanese creates the challenge of learning proper intonation.

Intonation of high and low pitches is a crucial aspect of the spoken language. For example, ho mophones can have different pitches of low and high tones resulting in a slightly different sound despite sharing the same pronunciation. The biggest obstacle for obtaining proper and natural sounding speech is incorrect intonation. Many students often speak without paying attention to the correct enunciation of pitches making speech sound unnatural (the classic foreigner's ac cent). It is not practical to memorize or attempt to logically create rules for pitches, especially since it can change depending on the context or the dialect. The only practical approach is to get the general sense of pitches by mimicking native Japanese speakers with careful listening and practice.

**2.3 Hiragana**

*Hiragana* is the basic Japanese phonetic script. It represents every sound in the Japanese language. Therefore, you can theoretically write everything in Hiragana. However, because Japanese is written with no spaces, this will create nearly indecipherable text.

Here is a table of Hiragana and similar-sounding English consonant-vowel pronunciations. It is read up to down and right to left, which is how most Japanese books are written. In Japanese, writing the strokes in the correct order and direction is important, especially for Kanji. Because handwritten letters look slightly different from typed letters (just like how 'a' looks totally different when typed), you will want to use a resource that uses handwritten style fonts to show you how to write the characters (see below for links). I must also stress the importance of correctly learning how to pronounce each sound. Since every word in Japanese is composed of these sounds, learning an incorrect pronunciation for a letter can severely damage the very foundation on which your pronunciation lies.

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*CHAPTER 2. THE WRITING SYSTEM 2.3. HIRAGANA*

Hiragana - Click for stroke order and sound

| **n** | **w** | **r** | **y** | **m** | **h** | **n** | **t** | **s** | **k** |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ん  (n) | わ | ら | や | ま | は | な | た | さ | か | あ | **a** |
|  | ゐ \* | り |  | み | ひ | に | ち  (chi) | し  (shi) | き | い | **i** |
|  |  | る | ゆ | む | ふ  (fu) | ぬ | つ  (tsu) | す | く | う | **u** |
|  | ゑ \* | れ |  | め | へ | ね | て | せ | け | え | **e** |
|  | を  (o) | ろ | よ | も | ほ | の | と | そ | こ | お | **o** |

\* = no longer used

You can listen to the pronunciation for each character by clicking on it in chart. If your browser doesn't support audio, you can also download them. There are also other free resources with audio samples.

Hiragana is not too tough to master or teach and as a result, there are a variety of web sites and free programs that are already available on the web. I also suggest recording yourself and comparing the sounds to make sure you're getting it right.

When practicing writing Hiragana by hand, the important thing to remember is that the stroke order and direction of the strokes matter. There, I underlined, italicized, bolded, and highlighted it to boot. Trust me, you'll eventually find out why when you read other people's hasty notes that are nothing more than chicken scrawls. The only thing that will help you is that everybody writes in the same order and so the "flow" of the characters is fairly consistent. I strongly recommend that you pay close attention to stroke order from the beginning starting with Hiragana to avoid falling into bad habits. While there are many tools online that aim to help you learn Hiragana, the best way to learn how to write it is the old fashioned way: a piece of paper and pen/pencil. Below are handy PDFs for Hiragana writing practice.

• Hiragana trace sheets

• japanese-lesson.com

• Hiroshi & Sakura

As an aside, an old Japanese poem called「いろは」was often used as the base for ordering of Hiragana until recent times. The poem contains every single Hiragana character except for 「ん」 which probably did not exist at the time it was written. You can check out this poem for yourself in this wikipedia article. As the article mentions, this order is still sometimes used in ordering lists so you may want to spend some time checking it out.

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*2.3. HIRAGANA CHAPTER 2. THE WRITING SYSTEM*

Notes

1. Except for「し」、「ち」、「つ」、and「ん」、you can get a sense of how each letter is pronounced by matching the consonant on the top row to the vowel. For example, 「き」 would become / ki / and 「ゆ」 would become / yu / and so on.

2. As you can see, not all sounds match the way our consonant system works. As written in the table, 「ち」 is pronounced "chi" and 「つ」 is pronounced "tsu".

3. The / r / or / l / sound in Japanese is quite different from any sound in English. It involves more of a roll and a clip by hitting the roof of your mouth with your tongue. Pay careful attention to that whole column.

4. Pay careful attention to the difference between / tsu / and / su /.

.

.

5. The「ん」character is a special character because it is rarely used by itself and does not have a vowel sound. It is attached to another character to add a / n / sound. For example, 「かん」 becomes 'kan' instead of 'ka', 「まん」 becomes 'man' instead of 'ma', and so on and so forth.

6. You must learn the correct stroke order and direction! Use either of the following pdf practice sheets.

• Hiragana trace sheets

• japanese-lesson.com

• Hiroshi & Sakura

**2.3.1 The Muddied Sounds**

Once you memorize all the characters in Hiragana, there are still some additional sounds left to be learned. There are five more consonant sounds that are written by either affixing two tiny lines similar to a double quotation mark called *dakuten* (濁点) or a tiny circle called *handakuten* (半濁点). This essentially creates a "muddy" or less clipped version of the consonant (technically called a voiced consonant or 「濁り」, which literally means to become muddy).

All the voiced consonant sounds are shown in the table below.

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*CHAPTER 2. THE WRITING SYSTEM 2.3. HIRAGANA*

Voiced Hiragana - Click for Sound

| **p** | **b** | **d** | **z** | **g** |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ぱ | ば | だ | ざ | が | **a** |
| ぴ | び | ぢ  (ji) | じ  (ji) | ぎ | **i** |
| ぷ | ぶ | づ  (dzu) | ず | ぐ | **u** |
| ぺ | べ | で | ぜ | げ | **e** |
| ぽ | ぼ | ど | ぞ | ご | **o** |

Note

• Notice that 「ぢ」 sounds essentially identical to 「じ」 and both are pronounced as / ji /, while 「づ」 is pronounced like / dzu /..

.

**2.3.2 The Small** 「や」、「ゆ」、**and** 「よ」

You can also combine a consonant with a / ya / yu / yo / sound by attaching a small 「や」、 「ゆ」、or 「よ」 to the / i / vowel character of each consonant.

All small や、ゆ、and よ combinations in Hiragana - Click for Sound

| **p** | **b** | **j** | **g** | **r** | **m** | **h** | **n** | **c** | **s** | **k** |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | ぴゃ びゃ |  | じゃ ぎゃ |  | りゃ みゃ ひゃ |  |  | にゃ ちゃ | しゃ | きゃ | **ya** |
|  | ぴゅ びゅ |  | じゅ ぎゅ |  | りゅ みゅ ひゅ |  |  | にゅ ちゅ | しゅ | きゅ | **yu** |
|  | ぴょ びょ |  | じょ ぎょ |  | りょ みょ ひょ |  |  | にょ ちょ | しょ | きょ | **yo** |

Notes

1. The above table is the same as before. Match the top consonants to the vowel sound on the right. Ex: きゃ= kya.

2. Also note that since「じ」is pronounced / ji /, all the small「や」、「ゆ」、「よ」sounds .

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are also based off of that, namely: / jya / jyu / jyo /.

3. The same thing also applies to 「ち」 which becomes / cha / chu / cho / and 「し」 which becomes / sha / shu / sho /. (Though arguably, you can still think of it as / sya / syu / syo /.)

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*2.3. HIRAGANA CHAPTER 2. THE WRITING SYSTEM* **2.3.3 The Small** 「つ」

A small 「つ」 is inserted between two characters to carry the consonant sound of the second character to the end of the first. For example, if you inserted a small 「つ」 between 「び」 and 「く」 to make 「びっく」, the / k / consonant sound is carried back to the end of the first character to produce "bikku". Similarly, 「はっぱ」 becomes "happa", 「ろっく」 becomes "rokku" and so on and so forth.

**Examples**

1. ざっし (zas-shi) - magazine

2. カップ (kap-pu) - cup

Notes

1. A small 「つ」 is used to carry the consonant sound of the second character to the end of the first. Ex: 「がっき」 = "gakki".

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2. The addition of another consonant almost always creates the characteristic clipping sound. But make sure you're clipping with the right consonant (the consonant of the second char acter).

**2.3.4 The Long Vowel Sound**

Whew! You're almost done. In this last portion, we will go over the long vowel sound which is simply extending the duration of a vowel sound. You can extend the vowel sound of a character by adding either 「あ」、 「い」、or 「う」 depending on the vowel in accordance to the following chart.

Extending Vowel Sounds

| **Vowel Sound** | **Extended by** |
| --- | --- |
| / a / | あ |
| / i / e / | い |
| / u / o / | う |

For example, if you wanted to create an extended vowel sound from 「か」, you would add 「あ」 to create 「かあ」. Other examples would include: 「き → きい」, 「く → くう」, 「け

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*CHAPTER 2. THE WRITING SYSTEM 2.4. KATAKANA*

→ けい」, 「こ → こう」, 「さ → さあ」 and so on. The reasoning for this is quite simple. Try saying 「か」 and 「あ」 separately. Then say them in succession as fast as you can. You'll notice that soon enough, it sounds like you're dragging out the / ka / for a longer duration than just saying / ka / by itself. When pronouncing long vowel sounds, try to remember that they are really two sounds merged together.

It's important to make sure you hold the vowel sound long enough because you can be saying things like "here" (ここ) instead of "high school" (こうこう) or "middle-aged lady" (おばさん) instead of "grandmother" (おばあさん) if you don't stretch it out correctly!

**Examples**

1. がくせい (ga-ku-se) - student

2. せんせい (sen-se) - teacher

3. きょう (kyo) - today

4. おはよう (o-ha-yo) - good morning

5. おかあさん (o-ka-san) - mother

There are rare exceptions where an / e / vowel sound is extended by adding 「え」 or an / o / vowel sound is extended by 「お」. Some examples of this include 「おねえさん」、「おお い」、and 「おおきい」. Pay careful attention to these exceptions but don't worry, there aren't too many of them.

**2.4 Katakana**

As mentioned before, *Katakana* is mainly used for words imported from foreign languages. It can also be used to emphasize certain words similar to the function of *italics*. For a more complete list of usages, refer to the Wikipedia entry on katakana.

Katakana represents the same set of phonetic sounds as Hiragana except all the characters are different. Since foreign words must fit into this limited set of [consonants+vowel] sounds, they undergo many radical changes resulting in instances where English speakers can't understand words that are supposed to be derived from English! As a result, the use of Katakana is ex tremely difficult for English speakers because they expect English words to sound like... well... English. Instead, it is better to completely forget the original English word, and treat the word as an entirely separate Japanese word, otherwise you can run into the habit of saying English words with English pronunciations (whereupon a Japanese person may or may not understand what you are saying).

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Katakana - Click for stroke order and sound

| **n** | **w** | **r** | **y** | **m** | **h** | **n** | **t** | **s** | **k** |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ン  (n) | ワ | ラ | ヤ | マ | ハ | ナ | タ | サ | カ | ア | **a** |
|  | ヰ \* | リ |  | ミ | ヒ | ニ | チ  (chi) | シ  (shi) | キ | イ | **i** |
|  |  | ル | ユ | ム | フ  (fu) | ヌ | ツ  (tsu) | ス | ク | ウ | **u** |
|  | ヱ \* | レ |  | メ | ヘ | ネ | テ | セ | ケ | エ | **e** |
|  | ヲ \*  (o) | ロ | ヨ | モ | ホ | ノ | ト | ソ | コ | オ | **o** |

\* = obsolete or rarely used

Katakana is significantly tougher to master compared to Hiragana because it is only used for certain words and you don't get nearly as much practice as you do with Hiragana. To learn the proper stroke order (and yes, you need to), here are links to practice sheets for Katakana.

• Katakana trace sheets

• japanese-lesson.com

• Hiroshi & Sakura

Also, since Japanese doesn't have any spaces, sometimes the symbol 「・」 is used to show the spaces like 「ロック・アンド・ロール」 for "rock and roll". Using the symbol is completely optional so sometimes nothing will be used at all.

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*CHAPTER 2. THE WRITING SYSTEM 2.4. KATAKANA*

Notes

1. All the sounds are identical to what they were for Hiragana.

2. As we will learn later,「を」is only ever used as a particle and all particles are in Hiragana. Therefore, you will almost never need to use 「ヲ」 and it can be safely ignored. (Unless you are reading very old telegrams or something.)

3. The four characters 「シ」、「ン」、「ツ」、and 「ソ」 are fiendishly similar to each other. Basically, the difference is that the first two are more "horizontal" than the second two. The little lines are slanted more horizontally and the long line is drawn in a curve from bottom to top. The second two have almost vertical little lines and the long line doesn't curve as much as it is drawn from top to bottom. It is almost like a slash while the former is more like an arc. These characters are hard to sort out and require some patience and

practice.

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4. The characters 「ノ」、「メ」、and 「ヌ」 are also something to pay careful attention to, as well as, 「フ」、「ワ」、 and 「ウ」. Yes, they all look very similar. No, I can't do anything about it.

5. You must learn the correct stroke order and direction! Use the following pdf practice sheets to practice.

• Katakana trace sheets

• japanese-lesson.com

• Hiroshi & Sakura

6. Sometimes 「・」 is used to denote what would be spaces in English.

**2.4.1 The Long Vowel Sound**

Long vowels have been radically simplified in Katakana. Instead of having to muck around thinking about vowel sounds, all long vowel sounds are denoted by a simple dash like so: ー.

**Examples**

1. ツアー (tsu-a) - tour

2. メール (me-ru) - email

3. ケーキ (ke-ki) - cake

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*2.4. KATAKANA CHAPTER 2. THE WRITING SYSTEM*

Summary

• All long vowel sounds in Katakana are denoted by a dash. For example, "cute" would be written in Katakana like so: 「キュート」..

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**2.4.2 The Small** 「ア、イ、ウ、エ、オ」

Due to the limitations of the sound set in Hiragana, some new combinations have been devised over the years to account for sounds that were not originally in Japanese. Most notable is the lack of the / ti / di / and / tu / du / sounds (because of the / chi / tsu / sounds), and the lack of the / f / consonant sound except for 「ふ」. The / sh / j / ch / consonants are also missing for the / e / vowel sound. The decision to resolve these deficiencies was to add small versions of the five vowel sounds. This has also been done for the / w / consonant sound to replace the obsolete characters. In addition, the convention of using the little double slashes on the「ウ」vowel (ヴ) with the small「ア、イ、エ、オ」to designate the / v / consonant has also been established but it's not often used probably due to the fact that Japanese people still have difficulty pronouncing / v /. For instance, while you may guess that "volume" would be pronounced with a / v / sound, the Japanese have opted for the easier to pronounce "bolume" (ボリューム). In the same way, vodka is written as "wokka" (ウォッカ) and not「ヴォッカ」. You can write "violin" as either「バ イオリン」 or 「ヴァイオリン」. It really doesn't matter however because almost all Japanese people will pronounce it with a / b / sound anyway. The following table shows the added sounds that were lacking with a highlight. Other sounds that already existed are reused as appropriate.

Additional sounds

| **v** | **w** | **f** | **ch** | **d** | **t** | **j** | **sh** |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ヴァ | ワ | ファ | チャ | ダ | タ | ジャ | シャ | **a** |
| ヴィ | ウィ | フィ | チ | ディ | ティ | ジ | シ | **i** |
| ヴ | ウ | フ | チュ | ドゥ | トゥ | ジュ | シュ | **u** |
| ヴェ | ウェ | フェ | チェ | デ | テ | ジェ | シェ | **e** |
| ヴォ | ウォ | フォ | チョ | ド | ト | ジョ | ショ | **o** |

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*CHAPTER 2. THE WRITING SYSTEM 2.4. KATAKANA*

Notes

1. Notice that there is no / wu / sound. For example, the Katakana for "woman" is written as "u-man" (ウーマン).

2. While the / tu / sound (as in "too") can technically be produced given the rules as「トゥ」, foreign words that have become popular before these sounds were available simply used .

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/ tsu / to make do. For instance, "tool" is still 「ツール」 and "tour" is similarly still 「ツ アー」.

3. Back in the old days, without these new sounds, there was no choice but to just take characters off the regular table without regard for actual pronunciation. On old buildings, you may still see 「ビルヂング」 instead of the modern spelling 「ビルディング」.

**2.4.3 Some examples of words in Katakana**

Translating English words into Japanese is a knack that requires quite a bit of practice and luck. To give you a sense of how English words become "Japanified", here are a few examples of words in Katakana. Sometimes the words in Katakana may not even be correct English or have a different meaning from the English word it's supposed to represent. Of course, not all Katakana words are derived from English.

Sample Katakana Words

| **English** | **Japanese** |
| --- | --- |
| America | アメリカ |
| Russia | ロシア |
| cheating | カンニング (cunning) |
| tour | ツアー |
| company employee | サラリーマン (salary man) |
| Mozart | モーツァルト |
| car horn | クラクション (klaxon) |
| sofa | ソファor ソファー |
| Halloween | ハロウィーン |
| French fries | フライドポテト (fried potato) |

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*2.5. KANJI CHAPTER 2. THE WRITING SYSTEM* **2.5 Kanji**

**2.5.1 What is Kanji?**

In Japanese, nouns and stems of adjectives and verbs are almost all written in Chinese char acters called *Kanji*. Adverbs are also fairly frequently written in Kanji as well. This means that you will need to learn Chinese characters to be able to read most of the words in the language. (Children's books or any other material where the audience is not expected to know a lot of Kanji is an exception to this.) Not all words are always written in Kanji however. For example, while the verb "to do" technically has a Kanji associated with it, it is always written in Hiragana.

This guide begins using Kanji from the beginning to help you read "real" Japanese as quickly as possible. Therefore, we will go over some properties of Kanji and discuss some strategies of learning it quickly and efficiently. Mastering Kanji is not easy but it is by no means impossible. The biggest part of the battle is mastering the skills of learning Kanji and time. In short, memoriz ing Kanji past short-term memory must be done with a great deal of study and, most importantly, for a long time. And by this, I don't mean studying five hours a day but rather reviewing how to write a Kanji once every several months until you are sure you have it down for good. This is another reason why this guide starts using Kanji right away. There is no reason to dump the huge job of learning Kanji at the advanced level. By studying Kanji along with new vocabulary from the beginning, the immense job of learning Kanji is divided into small manageable chunks and the extra time helps settle learned Kanji into permanent memory. In addition, this will help you learn new vocabulary, which will often have combinations of Kanji you already know. If you start learning Kanji later, this benefit will be wasted or reduced.

**2.5.2 Learning Kanji**

All the resources you need to begin learning Kanji are on the web for free. You can use dictionar ies online such as Jim Breen's WWWJDIC or jisho.org. They both have great Kanji dictionaries and stroke order diagrams for most Kanji. Especially for those who are just starting to learn, you will want to repeatedly write out each Kanji to memorize the stroke order. Another important skill is learning how to balance the character so that certain parts are not too big or small. So make sure to copy the characters as close to the original as possible. Eventually, you will naturally develop a sense of the stroke order for certain types of characters allowing you to bypass the drilling stage. All the Kanji used in this guide can be easily looked up by copying and pasting to an online dictionary.

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*CHAPTER 2. THE WRITING SYSTEM 2.5. KANJI* **2.5.3 Reading Kanji**

Almost every character has two different readings called ⾳読み (おんよみ) and 訓読み (くん よみ). ⾳読み is the original Chinese reading while 訓読み is the Japanese reading. Kanji that appear in a compound or 熟語 is usually read with ⾳読み while one Kanji by itself is usually read with 訓読み. For example,「⼒」(ちから) is read with the 訓読み while the same character in a compound word such as「能⼒」is read with the ⾳読み (which is「りょく」in this case).

Certain characters (especially the most common ones) can have more than one ⾳読み or 訓読 み. For example, in the word 「怪⼒」, 「⼒」 is read here as 「りき」 and not 「りょく」. Certain compound words also have special readings that have nothing to do with the readings of the individual characters. These readings must be individually memorized. Thankfully, these readings are few and far in between.

訓読み is also used in adjectives and verbs in addition to the stand-alone characters. These words often have a string of kana (called okurigana) that come attached to the word. This is so that the reading of the Chinese character stays the same even when the word is conjugated to different forms. For example, the past form of the verb 「⾷べる」 is 「⾷べた」. Even though the verb has changed, the reading for 「⾷」 remain untouched. (Imagine how difficult things could get if readings for Kanji changed with conjugation or even worse, if the Kanji itself changed.) Okurigana also serves to distinguish between intransitive and transitive verbs (more on this later).

Another concept that is difficult to grasp at first is that the actual readings of Kanji can change slightly in a compound word to make the word easier to say. The more common transformations include the / h / sounds changing to either / b / or / p / sounds or 「つ」 becoming 「っ」 . Examples include: 「⼀本」、「徹底」、and 「格好」.

Yet another fun aspect of Kanji you'll run into are words that practically mean the same thing and use the same reading but have different Kanji to make just a slight difference in meaning. For example 「聞く」(きく) means to listen and so does 「聴く」(きく). The only difference is that 「聴く」 means to pay more attention to what you're listening to. For example, listening to music almost always prefers 「聴く」 over 「聞く」. 「聞く」 can also mean 'to ask', as well as, "to hear" but 「訊く」(きく) can only mean "to ask". Yet another example is the common practice of writing「⾒る」as「観る」when it applies to watching a show such as a movie. Yet another interesting example is 「書く」(かく) which means "to write" while 描く (かく) means "to draw". However, when you're depicting an abstract image such as a scene in a book, the reading of the same word 「描く」 becomes 「えがく」. There's also the case where the meaning and Kanji stays the same but can have multiple readings such as 「今⽇」 which can be either「きょう」、「こんじつ」, or「こんにち」. In this case, it doesn't really matter which reading you choose except that some are preferred over others in certain situations.

Finally, there is one special character 々that is really not a character. It simply indicates that the previous character is repeated. For example, 「時時」、「様様」、「⾊⾊」、「⼀⼀」 can and usually are written as 「時々」、「様々」、「⾊々」、「⼀々」.

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*2.5. KANJI CHAPTER 2. THE WRITING SYSTEM*

In addition to these "features" of Kanji, you will see a whole slew of delightful perks and surprises Kanji has for you as you advance in Japanese. You can decide for yourself if that statement is sarcasm or not. However, don't be scared into thinking that Japanese is incredibly hard. Most of the words in the language usually only have one Kanji associated with it and a majority of Kanji do not have more than two types of readings.

**2.5.4 Why Kanji?**

Some people may think that the system of using separate, discrete symbols instead of a sensible alphabet is overly complicated. In fact, it might not have been a good idea to adopt Chinese into Japanese since both languages are fundamentally different in many ways. But the purpose of this guide is not to debate how the language should work but to explain why **you** must learn Kanji in order to learn Japanese. And by this, I mean more than just saying, "That's how it's done so get over it!".

You may wonder why Japanese didn't switched from Chinese to romaji to do away with having to memorize so many characters. In fact, Korea adopted their own alphabet for Korean to greatly simplify their written language with great success. So why shouldn't it work for Japanese? I think anyone who has learned Japanese for a while can easily see why it won't work. At any one time, when you convert typed Hiragana into Kanji, you are presented with almost always at least two choices (two homophones) and sometimes even up to ten. (Try typing "kikan"). The limited number of set sounds in Japanese makes it hard to avoid homophones. Compare this to the Korean alphabet which has 14 consonants and 10 vowels. Any of the consonants can be matched to any of the vowels giving 140 sounds. In addition, a third and sometimes even fourth consonant can be attached to create a single letter. This gives over 1960 sounds that can be created theoretically. (The number of sounds that are actually used is actually much less but it's still much larger than Japanese.)

Since you want to read at a much faster rate than you talk, you need some visual cues to instantly tell you what each word is. You can use the shape of words in English to blaze through text because most words have different shapes. Try this little exercise: Hi, enve thgouh all teh wrods aer seplled icorrenctly, can you sltil udsternand me?" Korean does this too because it has enough characters to make words with distinct and different shapes. However, because the visual cues are not distinct as Kanji, spaces needed to be added to remove ambiguities. (This presents another problem of when and where to set spaces.)

With Kanji, we don't have to worry about spaces and much of the problem of homophones is mostly resolved. Without Kanji, even if spaces were to be added, the ambiguities and lack of visual cues would make Japanese text much more difficult to read.

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**Chapter 3**

**Basic Grammar**

**3.1 Basic Grammatical Structures**

Now that we have learned how to write Japanese, we can begin going over the basic gram matical structure of the language. This section primarily covers all the parts of speech: nouns, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs. It will also describe how to integrate the various parts of speech into a coherent sentence by using particles. By the end of this section, you should have an understanding of how basic sentences are constructed.

**3.2 Expressing State-of-Being**

**3.2.1 Declaring something is so and so using** 「だ」

**Vocabulary**

1. ⼈【ひと】- person

2. 学⽣【がく・せい】- student

3. 元気【げん・き】- healthy; lively

＊ Used as a greeting to indicate whether one is well

One of the trickiest part of Japanese is that there is no verb for the state-of-being like the verb "to be" in English. You can, however, declare what something is by attaching the Hiragana character 「だ」 to a noun or na-adjective **only**. (We will learn about na-adjectives in the section on adjectives later.)

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*3.2. EXPRESSING STATE-OF-BEING CHAPTER 3. BASIC GRAMMAR*

Declaring that something is so using 「だ」

• Attach 「だ」 to the noun or na-adjective

Example: ⼈＋だ＝⼈だ.

.

**Examples**

1. ⼈だ。

Is person.

2. 学⽣だ。

Is student.

3. 元気だ。

Is well.

Seems easy enough. Here's the real kicker though.

Note

**A state-of-being can be implied without using**. 「だ」**!**

You can say you're doing well or someone is a student without using「だ」at all. For example, below is an example of a very typical greeting among friends. Also notice how the subject isn't even specified when it's obvious from the context.

**Typical casual greeting**

Ａ：元気？

A: (Are you) well?

Ｂ：元気。

B: (I'm) well.

So you may be wondering, "What's the point of using「だ」?" Well, the main difference is that a declarative statement makes the sentence sound more emphatic and forceful in order to make it more... well declarative. Therefore, it is more common to hear men use 「だ」 at the end of sentences.

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*CHAPTER 3. BASIC GRAMMAR 3.2. EXPRESSING STATE-OF-BEING*

The declarative 「だ」 is also needed in various grammatical structures where a state-of-being must be explicitly declared. There are also times when you cannot attach it. It's all quite a pain in the butt really but you don't have to worry about it yet.

**3.2.2 Conjugating to the negative state-of-being**

**Vocabulary**

1. 学⽣【がく・せい】- student

2. 友達【とも・だち】- friend

3. 元気【げん・き】- healthy; lively

＊ Used as a greeting to indicate whether one is well

In Japanese, negative and past tense are all expressed by conjugation. We can conjugate a noun or adjective to either its negative or past tense to say that something is *not* [X] or that something *was* [X]. This may be a bit hard to grasp at first but none of these state-of-being conjugations make anything declarative like 「だ」 does. We'll learn how to make these tenses declarative by attaching 「だ」 to the end of the sentence in a later lesson.

First, for the negative, attach 「じゃない」 to the noun or na-adjective.

Conjugation rules for the negative state-of-being

• Attach 「じゃない」 to the noun or na-adjective

Example: 学⽣＋じゃない＝学⽣じゃない.

.

**Examples**

1. 学⽣じゃない。

Is not student.

2. 友達じゃない。

Is not friend.

3. 元気じゃない。

Is not well.

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*3.2. EXPRESSING STATE-OF-BEING CHAPTER 3. BASIC GRAMMAR* **3.2.3 Conjugating to the past state-of-being**

**Vocabulary**

1. 学⽣【がく・せい】- student

2. 友達【とも・だち】- friend

3. 元気【げん・き】- healthy; lively

＊ Used as a greeting to indicate whether one is well

We will now learn the past tense of the state-of-being. To say something *was* something, attach 「だった」 to the noun or na-adjective.

In order to say the negative past (*was not*), conjugate the negative to the negative past tense by dropping the 「い」 from 「じゃない」 and adding 「かった」.

Conjugation rules for the past state-of-being

1. **Past state-of-being:** Attach 「だった」 to the noun or na-adjective Example: 友達＋だっ た ＝友達だった

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.

2. **Negative past state-of-being:** Conjugate the noun or na-adjective to the negative first and then replace the 「い」 of 「じゃない」 with 「かった」

Example: 友達じゃない → 友達じゃなかった＝友達じゃなかった

**Examples**

1. 学⽣だった。

Was student.

2. 友達じゃなかった。

Was not friend.

3. 元気じゃなかった。

Was not well.

**3.2.4 Conjugation summary**

We've now learned how to express state-of-being in all four tenses. Next we will learn some particles, which will allow us assign roles to words. Here is a summary chart of the conjugations we learned in this section.

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*CHAPTER 3. BASIC GRAMMAR 3.3. INTRODUCTION TO PARTICLES*

Summary of state-of-being

|  | **Positive** | **Negative** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Non-Past** | 学⽣ (だ) | Is student 学⽣じゃない Is not student |
| **Past** | 学⽣だった | Was student 学⽣じゃなかった Was not student |

**3.3 Introduction to Particles** （は、も、が）

**3.3.1 Defining grammatical functions with particles**

We want to now make good use of what we learned in the last lesson by associating a noun with another noun. This is done with something called particles. Particles are one or more Hiragana characters that attach to the end of a word to define the grammatical function of that word in the sentence. Using the correct particles is very important because the meaning of a sentence can completely change just by changing the particles. For example, the sentence "Eat fish." can become "The fish eats." simply by changing one particle.

**3.3.2 The** 「は」 **topic particle**

**Vocabulary**

1. 学⽣【がく・せい】- student

2. うん - yes (casual)

3. 明⽇【あした】- tomorrow

4. ううん - no (casual)

5. 今⽇【きょう】- today

6. 試験【しけん】- exam

The first particle we will learn is the topic particle. The topic particle identifies what it is that you're talking about, essentially the topic of your sentence. Let's say a person says, "Not student." This is a perfectly valid sentence in Japanese but it doesn't tell us much without knowing what the person is talking about. The topic particle will allow us to express what our sentences are about. The topic particle is the character 「は」. Now, while this character is normally pronounced as /ha/, it is pronounced /wa/ only when it is being used as the topic particle.

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*3.3. INTRODUCTION TO PARTICLES CHAPTER 3. BASIC GRAMMAR* **Example 1**

ボブ：アリスは学⽣？

Bob: Is Alice (you) student?

アリス：うん、学⽣。

Alice: Yeah, (I) am.

Here, Bob is indicating that his question is about Alice. Notice that once the topic is established, Alice does not have to repeat the topic to answer the question about herself.

**Example 2**

ボブ：ジョンは明⽇？

Bob: John is tomorrow?

アリス：ううん、明⽇じゃない。

Alice: No, not tomorrow.

Since we have no context, we don't have enough information to make any sense of this con versation. It obviously makes no sense for John to actually **be** tomorrow. Given a context, as long as the sentence has something to do with John and tomorrow, it can mean anything. For instance, they could be talking about when John is taking an exam.

**Example 3**

アリス：今⽇は試験だ。

Alice: Today is exam.

ボブ：ジョンは？

Bob: What about John?

アリス：ジョンは明⽇。

Alice: John is tomorrow. (As for John, the exam is tomorrow.)

The last example shows how generic the topic of a sentence is. A topic can be referring to any action or object from anywhere even including other sentences. For example, in the last sentence from the previous example, even though the sentence is about when the exam is for John, the word "exam" doesn't appear anywhere in the sentence!

We'll see a more specific particle that ties more closely into the sentence at the end of this lesson with the identifier particle.

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*CHAPTER 3. BASIC GRAMMAR 3.3. INTRODUCTION TO PARTICLES* **3.3.3 The** 「も」 **inclusive topic particle**

**Vocabulary**

1. 学⽣【がく・せい】- student

2. うん - yes (casual)

3. でも - but

4. ううん - no (casual)

Another particle that is very similar to the topic particle is the inclusive topic particle. It is essen tially the topic particle with the additional meaning of "also". Basically, it can introduce another topic in addition to the current topic. The inclusive topic particle is the 「も」 character and its use is best explained by an example.

**Example 1**

ボブ：アリスは学⽣？

Bob: Is Alice (you) student?

アリス：うん、トムも学⽣。

Alice: Yeah, and Tom is also student.

The inclusion of 「も」 must be consistent with the answer. It would not make sense to say, "I am a student, and Tom is also not a student." Instead, use the 「は」 particle to make a break from the inclusion as seen in the next example.

**Example 2**

ボブ：アリスは学⽣？

Bob: Is Alice (you) student?

アリス：うん、でもトムは学⽣じゃない。

Alice: Yeah, but Tom is not student.

Below is an example of inclusion with the negative.

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*3.3. INTRODUCTION TO PARTICLES CHAPTER 3. BASIC GRAMMAR* **Example 3**

ボブ：アリスは学⽣？

Bob: Is Alice (you) student?

アリス：ううん、トムも学⽣じゃない。

Alice: No, and Tom is also not student.

**3.3.4 The** 「が」 **identifier particle**

**Vocabulary**

1. 誰【だれ】- who

2. 学⽣【がく・せい】- student

3. 私【わたし】- me; myself; I

Ok, so we can make a topic using the 「は」 and 「も」 particle. But what if we donʼt know what the topic is? What if I wanted to ask, “Who is the student?”What I need is some kind of identifier because I don't know who the student is. If I use the topic particle, the question would become, “Is who the student?”and that doesn't make any sense because "who" is not an actual person.

This is where the 「が」 particle comes into play. It is also referred to as the subject particle but I hate that name since "subject" means something completely different in English grammar. Instead, I call it the *identifier particle* because the particle indicates that the speaker wants to identify something unspecified.

**Example 1**

ボブ：誰が学⽣？

Bob: Who is the one that is student?

アリス：ジョンが学⽣。

Alice: John is the one who is student.

Bob wants to identify who among all the possible candidates is a student. Alice responds that John is the one. Notice, Alice could also have answered with the topic particle to indicate that, speaking of John, she knows that he is *a* student (maybe not *the* student). You can see the difference in the next example.

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*CHAPTER 3. BASIC GRAMMAR 3.3. INTRODUCTION TO PARTICLES*

**Example 2**

1. 誰が学⽣？

Who is the one that is student?

2. 学⽣は誰？

(The) student is who?

The first sentence seeks to identify a specific person for "student" while the second sentence is simply talking about the student. You cannot replace 「が」 with 「は」 in the first sentence because "who" would become the topic and the question would become, "Is who a student?"

The two particles 「は」 and 「が」 may seem very similar only because it is impossible to translate them directly into English. For example, the two sentences below have the same English translation.\*

**Example 3**

1. 私は学⽣。

I (am) student.

2. 私が学⽣。

I (am) student.

However, they only seem similar because English cannot express information about the context as succinctly as Japanese sometimes can. In the first sentence, since 「私」 is the topic, the sentence means, "Speaking about me, I am a student".

However, the second sentence is specifying who the 「学⽣」 is. If we want to know who the student is, the 「が」 particle tells us it's 「私」. You can also think about the 「が」 particle as always answering a silent question. The second sentence might be answering a question, "Who is the student?" I often translate the topic particle as "as for; about" and the identifier particle as "the one; the thing" to illustrate the difference.

1. 私は学⽣。

As for me, (I am) student.

2. 私が学⽣。

I (am) the one (that is) student.

The 「は」 and 「が」 particles are actually quite different if you think of it the right way. The 「が」 particle identifies a specific property of something while the 「は」 particle is used only to bring up a new topic of conversation. This is why, in longer sentences, it is common to separate

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*3.4. ADJECTIVES CHAPTER 3. BASIC GRAMMAR*

the topic with commas to remove ambiguity about which part of the sentence the topic applies to.

\*Well technically, it's the most likely translation given the lack of context.

**3.4 Adjectives**

**3.4.1 Properties of Adjectives**

Now that we can connect two nouns together in various ways using particles, we want to describe our nouns with adjectives. An adjective can directly modify a noun that immediately follows it. It can also be connected in the same way we did with nouns using particles. All adjectives fall under two categories: *na-adjectives* and *i-adjectives*.

**3.4.2 The na-adjective**

**Vocabulary**

1. 静か【しず・か】(na-adj) - quiet

2. ⼈【ひと】- person

3. きれい (na-adj) - pretty; clean

4. 友達【とも・だち】- friend

5. 親切【しん・せつ】(na-adj) - kind

6. ⿂【さかな】- fish

7. 好き【す・き】(na-adj) - likable; desirable

8. ⾁【にく】- meat

9. 野菜【や・さい】- vegetables

The na-adjective is very simple to learn because it acts essentially like a noun. All the conjugation rules for both nouns and na-adjectives are the same. One main difference is that a na-adjective can directly modify a noun following it by sticking 「な」 between the adjective and noun. (Hence the name, na adjective.)

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*CHAPTER 3. BASIC GRAMMAR 3.4. ADJECTIVES*

**Examples**

1. 静かな⼈。

Quiet person.

2. きれいな⼈。

Pretty person.

You can also use adjectives with particles just like we did in the last lesson with nouns.

**Examples**

1. 友達は親切。

Friend is kind.

2. 友達は親切な⼈だ。

Friend is kind person.

As shown by the following examples, the conjugation rules for na-adjectives are the same as nouns.

**Examples**

1. ボブは⿂が好きだ。

Bob likes fish.

2. ボブは⿂が好きじゃない。

Bob does not like fish.

3. ボブは⿂が好きだった。

Bob liked fish.

4. ボブは⿂が好きじゃなかった。

Bob did not like fish.

If it bothers you that "like" is an adjective and not a verb in Japanese, you can think of 「好き」 as meaning "desirable". Also, you can see a good example of the topic and identifier particle working in harmony. The sentence is about the topic "Bob" and "fish" identifies specifically what Bob likes.

You can also use the last three conjugations to directly modify the noun. (Remember to attach 「な」 for positive non-past tense.)

**Examples**

1. ⿂が好きな⼈。

Person that likes fish.

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2. ⿂が好きじゃない⼈。

Person that does not like fish.

3. ⿂が好きだった⼈。

Person that liked fish.

4. ⿂が好きじゃなかった⼈。

Person that did not like fish.

Here, the entire clause 「⿂が好き」、「⿂が好きじゃない」、etc. is modifying "person" to talk about people that like or dislike fish. You can see why this type of sentence is useful because 「⼈は⿂が好 きだ」 would mean "People like fish", which isn't always the case.

We can even treat the whole descriptive noun clause as we would a single noun. For instance, we can make the whole clause a topic like the following example.

**Examples**

1. ⿂が好きじゃない⼈は、⾁が好きだ。

Person who does not like fish like meat.

2. ⿂が好きな⼈は、野菜も好きだ。

Person who likes fish also like vegetables.

**3.4.3 The i-adjective**

**Vocabulary**

1. 嫌い【きら・い】(na-adj) - distasteful, hateful

2. ⾷べ物【た・べ・もの】- food

3. おいしい (i-adj) - tasty

4. ⾼い【たか・い】(i-adj) - high; tall; expensive

5. ビル - building

6. 値段【ね・だん】- price

7. レストラン - restaurant

8. あまり／あんまり - not very (when used with negative)

9. 好き【す・き】(na-adj) - likable; desirable

10. いい (i-adj) - good

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*CHAPTER 3. BASIC GRAMMAR 3.4. ADJECTIVES*

All i-adjectives always end in the Hiragana character: 「い」. However, you may have noticed that some na-adjectives also end in 「い」 such as 「きれい (な)」. So how can you tell the difference? There are actually very few na-adjectives that end with 「い」 that is usually not written in Kanji. Two of the most common include: 「きれい」 and 「嫌い」. Almost all other na-adjectives that end in 「い」 are usually written in Kanji and so you can easily tell that it's not an i-adjective. For instance, 「きれい」 written in Kanji looks like 「綺麗」 or 「奇麗」. Since the 「い」 part of 「麗」 is part of a Kanji character, you know that it can't be an i-adjective. That's because the whole point of the「い」in i-adjectives is to allow conjugation without changing the Kanji. In fact, 「嫌い」 is one of the rare na-adjectives that ends in 「い」without a Kanji. This has to do with the fact that「嫌い」is actually derived from the verb「嫌う」.

Unlike na-adjectives, you do **not** need to add 「な」 to directly modify a noun with an i-adjective.

**Examples**

1. 嫌いな⾷べ物。

Hated food.

2. おいしい⾷べ物。

Tasty food.

Remember how the negative state-of-being for nouns also ended in 「い」 (じゃない)? Well, just like the negative state-of-being for nouns, you can never attach the declarative 「だ」 to i-adjectives.

**Do NOT attach** 「だ」 **to i-adjectives.**

Now that we got that matter cleared up, below are the rules for conjugating i-adjectives. Notice that the rule for conjugating to negative past tense is the same as the rule for the past tense.

Conjugation rules for i-adjectives

**Negative**: First remove the trailing 「い」 from the i-adjective and then attach 「くない」 Example: ⾼い → ⾼くない

**Past-tense**: First remove the trailing 「い」 from the i-adjective or negative i-adjective and then attach 「かった」

Examples

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1. ⾼い → ⾼かった

2. ⾼くない → ⾼くなかった

Summary of i-adjective conjugations

|  | **Positive** | **Negative** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Non-Past** | ⾼い | ⾼くない |
| **Past** | ⾼かった | ⾼くなかった |

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**Examples**

1. ⾼いビル。

Tall building.

2. ⾼くないビル。

Not tall building.

3. ⾼かったビル。

Building that was tall.

4. ⾼くなかったビル。

Building that was not tall.

Note that you can make the same type of descriptive noun clause as we have done with na-adjectives. The only difference is that we don't need 「な」 to directly modify the noun.

**Example**

• 値段が⾼いレストランはあまり好きじゃない。

Don't like high price restaurants very much.

In this example, the descriptive clause 「値段が⾼い」 is directly modifying 「レストラン」.

**3.4.4 An annoying exception**

**Vocabulary**

1. 値段【ね・だん】- price

2. あまり／あんまり - not very (when used with negative)

3. いい (i-adj) - good

4. 彼【かれ】- he; boyfriend

5. かっこいい (i-adj) - cool; handsome

There is one i-adjective meaning "good" that acts slightly differently from all other i-adjectives. This is a classic case of how learning Japanese is harder for beginners because the most common and useful words also have the most exceptions. The word for "good" was originally 「よい (良い)」. However, with time, it soon became 「いい」. When it is written in Kanji, it is usually read as 「よい」 so 「いい」

is almost always Hiragana. That's all fine and good. Unfortunately, all the conjugations are still derived from 「よい」 and not 「いい」. This is shown in the next table.

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Another adjective that acts like this is 「かっこいい」 because it is an abbreviated version of two words merged together: 「格好」 and 「いい」. Since it uses the same 「いい」, you need to use the same conjugations.

Conjugation for 「いい」

|  | **Positive** | **Negative** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Non-Past** | いい | よくない |
| **Past** | よかった | よくなかった |

Conjugation for 「かっこいい」

|  | **Positive** | **Negative** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Non-Past** | かっこいい | かっこよくない |
| **Past** | かっこよかった | かっこよくなかった |

Take care to make all the conjugations from 「よい」 not 「いい」.

**Examples**

1. 値段があんまりよくない。

Price isn't very good.

2. 彼はかっこよかった！

He looked really cool!

**3.5 Verb Basics**

**3.5.1 Role of Verbs**

**Vocabulary**

1. ⾷べる【た・べる】(ru-verb) - to eat

2. 分かる【わ・かる】(u-verb) - to understand

3. ⾒る【み・る】(ru-verb) - to see

4. 寝る【ね・る】(ru-verb) - to sleep

5. 起きる【お・きる】(ru-verb) - to wake; to occur

6. 考える【かんが・える】(ru-verb) - to think

7. 教える【おし・える】(ru-verb) - to teach; to inform

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*3.5. VERB BASICS CHAPTER 3. BASIC GRAMMAR*

8. 出る【で・る】(ru-verb) - to come out

9. いる (ru-verb) - to exist (animate)

10. 着る【き・る】(ru-verb) - to wear

11. 話す【はな・す】(u-verb) - to speak

12. 聞く【き・く】(u-verb) - to ask; to listen

13. 泳ぐ【およ・ぐ】(u-verb) - to swim

14. 遊ぶ【あそ・ぶ】(u-verb) - to play

15. 待つ【ま・つ】(u-verb) - to wait

16. 飲む【の・む】(u-verb) - to drink

17. 買う【か・う】(u-verb) - to buy

18. ある (u-verb) - to exist (inanimate)

19. 死ぬ【し・ぬ】(u-verb) - to die

20. する (exception) - to do

21. 来る【く・る】(exception) - to come

22. お⾦【お・かね】- money

23. 私【わたし】- me, myself, I

24. 猫【ねこ】- cat

We've now learned how to describe nouns in various ways with other nouns and adjectives. This gives us quite a bit of expressive power. However, we still cannot express actions. This is where verbs come in. Verbs, in Japanese, always come at the end of clauses. Since we have not yet learned how to create more than one clause, for now it means that any sentence with a verb must end with the verb. We will now learn the three main categories of verbs, which will allow us to define conjugation rules. Before learning about verbs, there is one important thing to keep in mind.

Note

**A grammatically complete sentence requires a verb only (including state-of-being).** .

Or to rephrase, unlike English, the only thing you need to make a grammatically complete sentence is a verb and nothing else! That's why even the simplest, most basic Japanese sentence cannot be translated into English!

A grammatically complete sentence:

• ⾷べる。

Eat. (possible translations include: I eat/she eats/they eat)

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*CHAPTER 3. BASIC GRAMMAR 3.5. VERB BASICS* **3.5.2 Classifying verbs into ru-verbs and u-verbs**

Before we can learn any verb conjugations, we first need to learn how verbs are categorized. With the exception of only two exception verbs, all verbs fall into the category of *ru-verb* or *u-verb*.

All ru-verbs end in 「る」 while u-verbs can end in a number of u-vowel sounds including 「る」 . Therefore, if a verb does **not** end in 「る」, it will always be an u-verb. For verbs ending in 「る」, if the vowel sound preceding the「る」is an /a/, /u/ or /o/ vowel sound, it will always be an u-verb. Otherwise, if the preceding sound is an /i/ or /e/ vowel sound, it will be a ru-verb **in most cases**. A list of common exceptions are at the end of this section.

**Examples**

1. ⾷べる - 「べ」 is an e-vowel sound so it is a ru-verb

2. 分かる - 「か」 is an a-vowel sound so it is an u-verb

If you're unsure which category a verb falls in, you can verify which kind it is with most dictionaries. There are only two exception verbs that are neither ru-verbs nor u-verbs as shown in the table below.

Examples of different verb types

| **ru-verb** | **u-verb** | **exception** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ⾒る | 話す | する |
| ⾷べる | 聞く | 来る |
| 寝る | 泳ぐ |  |
| 起きる | 遊ぶ |  |
| 考える | 待つ |  |
| 教える | 飲む |  |
| 出る | 買う |  |
| いる | ある |  |
| 着る | 死ぬ |  |

**Examples**

Here are some example sentences using ru-verbs, u-verbs, and exception verbs.

1. アリスは⾷べる。

As for Alice, eat.

2. ジムが来る。

Jim is the one that comes.

3. ボブもする。

Bob also do.

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4. お⾦がある。

There is money. (lit: Money is the thing that exists.)

5. 私は買う。

As for me, buy.

6. 猫はいる。

There is cat. (lit: As for cat, it exists.)

**3.5.3 Appendix: iru/eru u-verbs**

**Vocabulary**

1. 要る【い・る】(u-verb) - to need

2. 帰る【かえ・る】(u-verb) - to go home

3. 切る【き・る】(u-verb) - to cut

4. しゃべる (u-verb) - to talk

5. 知る【し・る】(u-verb) - to know

6. ⼊る【はい・る】(u-verb) - to enter

7. ⾛る【はし・る】(u-verb) - to run

8. 減る【へ・る】(u-verb) - to decrease

9. 焦る【あせ・る】(u-verb) - to be in a hurry

10. 限る【かぎ・る】(u-verb) - to limit

11. 蹴る【け・る】(u-verb) - to kick

12. 滑る【すべ・る】(u-verb) - to be slippery

13. 握る【にぎ・る】(u-verb) - to grasp

14. 練る【ね・る】(u-verb) - to knead

15. 参る【まい・る】(u-verb) - to go; to come

16. 交じる【まじ・る】(u-verb) - to mingle

17. 嘲る【あざけ・る】(u-verb) - to ridicule

18. 覆る【くつがえ・る】(u-verb) - to overturn

19. 遮る【さえぎ・る】(u-verb) - to interrupt

20. 罵る【ののし・る】(u-verb) - to abuse verbally

21. 捻る【ひね・る】(u-verb) - to twist

22. 翻る【ひるが・える】(u-verb) - to turn over; to wave

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*CHAPTER 3. BASIC GRAMMAR 3.6. NEGATIVE VERBS*

23. 滅⼊る【めい・る】(u-verb) - to feel depressed

24. 蘇る【よみがえ・る】(u-verb) - to be resurrected

Below is a list of u-verbs with a preceding vowel sound of /i/ or /e/ ("iru" or "eru" sound endings). The list is **not** comprehensive but it does include many of the more common verbs categorized roughly into three levels.

iru/eru u-verbs grouped (roughly) by level

| **Basic** | **Intermediate** | **Advanced** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 要る | 焦る | 嘲る |
| 帰る | 限る | 覆る |
| 切る | 蹴る | 遮る |
| しゃべる | 滑る | 罵る |
| 知る | 握る | 捻る |
| ⼊る | 練る | 翻る |
| ⾛る | 参る | 滅⼊る |
| 減る | 交じる | 蘇る |

**3.6 Negative Verbs**

Now that we've seen how to declare things and perform actions with verbs, we want to be able to say the negative. In other words, we want to say that such-and-such action was *not* performed. This is done by conjugating the verb to the negative form just like the state-of-being for nouns and adjectives. However, the rules are a tad more complicated.

**3.6.1 Conjugating verbs into the negative**

**Vocabulary**

1. ある (u-verb) - to exist (inanimate)

2. いる (ru-verb) - to exist (animate)

3. ⾷べる【た・べる】(ru-verb) - to eat

4. 買う【か・う】(u-verb) - to buy

5. 待つ【ま・つ】(u-verb) - to wait

6. する (exception) - to do

7. 来る【く・る】(exception) - to come

8. ⾒る【み・る】(ru-verb) - to see

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9. 寝る【ね・る】(ru-verb) - to sleep

10. 起きる【お・きる】(ru-verb) - to wake; to occur

11. 考える【かんが・える】(ru-verb) - to think

12. 教える【おし・える】(ru-verb) - to teach; to inform

13. 出る【で・る】(ru-verb) - to come out

14. 着る【き・る】(ru-verb) - to wear

15. 話す【はな・す】(u-verb) - to speak

16. 聞く【き・く】(u-verb) - to ask; to listen

17. 泳ぐ【およ・ぐ】(u-verb) - to swim

18. 遊ぶ【あそ・ぶ】(u-verb) - to play

19. 飲む【の・む】(u-verb) - to drink

20. 帰る【かえ・る】(u-verb) - to go home

21. 死ぬ【し・ぬ】(u-verb) - to die

22. お⾦【お・かね】- money

23. 私【わたし】- me, myself, I

24. 猫【ねこ】- cat

We will now make use of the verb classifications we learned in the last section to define the rules for conjugation. But before we get into that, we need to cover one very important exception to the negative conjugation rules: 「ある」.

• ある (u-verb) - to exist (inanimate)

• いる (ru-verb) - to exist (animate)

「ある」 is an u-verb used to express existence of inanimate objects. The equivalent verb for animate objects (such as people or animals) is 「いる」, which is a normal ru-verb. For example, if you wanted to say that a chair is in the room, you would use the verb 「ある」, but if you wanted to say that a *person* is in the room, you must use the verb 「いる」 instead. These two verbs 「ある」 and 「いる」 are quite different from all other verbs because they describe existence and are not actual actions. You also need to be careful to choose the correct one based on animate or inanimate objects.

Anyway, the reason I bring it up here is because the negative of 「ある」 is 「ない」 (meaning that something does not exist). The conjugation rules for all other verbs are listed below as well as a list of example verbs and their negative forms.

＊ = exceptions particular to this conjugation

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*CHAPTER 3. BASIC GRAMMAR 3.6. NEGATIVE VERBS*

Conjugation rules for negative verbs

• **For ru-verbs:** Drop the 「る」 and attach 「ない」

Example: ⾷べ ~~る~~ + ない = ⾷べない

• ＊ **For u-verbs that end in** 「う」**:** Replace 「う」 with 「わ」 and attach 「ない」 Example: 買 ~~う~~ + わ + ない = 買わない

• **For all other u-verbs:** Replace the u-vowel sound with the a-vowel equivalent and attach 「な

い」

.

.

Example: 待 ~~つ~~ + た = 待たない

• **Exceptions:**

1. する → しない

2. くる → こない

3. ＊ある → ない

Negative form conjugation examples

| **ru-verb u-verb exception** |
| --- |
| ⾒る →  ⾒ない 話す →  話さない する → しない |
| ⾷べる →  ⾷べない 聞く →  聞かない くる → こない |
| 寝る →  寝ない 泳ぐ →  泳がない ＊ある → ない |
| 起きる →  起きない 遊ぶ →  遊ばない |
| 考える →  考えない 待つ →  待たない |
| 教える →  教えない 飲む →  飲まない |
| 出る →  出ない ＊買う →  買わない |
| 着る →  着ない 帰る →  帰らない |
| いる →  いない 死ぬ →  死なない |

**Examples**

Here are the example sentences from the last section conjugated to the negative form.

1. アリスは⾷べない。

As for Alice, does not eat.

2. ジムが遊ばない。

Jim is the one that does not play.

3. ボブもしない。

Bob also does not do.

4. お⾦がない。

There is no money. (lit: Money is the thing that does not exist.)

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*3.7. PAST TENSE CHAPTER 3. BASIC GRAMMAR*

5. 私は買わない。

As for me, not buy.

6. 猫はいない。

There is no cat. (lit: As for cat, does not exist.)

**3.7 Past Tense**

We will finish defining all the basic properties of verbs by learning how to express the past and past negative tense of actions. I will warn you in advance that the conjugation rules in this section will be the most complex rules you will learn in all of Japanese. On the one hand, once you have this section nailed, all other rules of conjugation will seem simple. On the other hand, you might need to refer back to this section many times before you finally get all the rules. You will probably need a great deal of practice until you can become familiar with all the different conjugations.

**3.7.1 Past tense for ru-verbs**

**Vocabulary**

1. 出る【で・る】(ru-verb) - to come out

2. 捨てる【す・てる】(ru-verb) - to throw away

3. ご飯【ご・はん】- rice; meal

4. ⾷べる【た・べる】(ru-verb) - to eat

5. 映画【えい・が】- movie

6. 全部【ぜん・ぶ】- everything

7. ⾒る【み・る】(ru-verb) - to see

We will start off with the easy ru-verb category. To change a ru-verb from the dictionary form into the past tense, you simply drop the 「る」 and add 「た」.

To change ru-verbs into the past tense

Drop the 「る」 part of the ru-verb and add 「た」

Examples

.

.

1. 出る → 出た

2. 捨てる → 捨てた

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*CHAPTER 3. BASIC GRAMMAR 3.7. PAST TENSE*

**Examples**

1. ご飯は、⾷べた。

As for meal, ate.

2. 映画は、全部⾒た。

As for movie, saw them all.

**3.7.2 Past tense for u-verbs**

**Vocabulary**

1. 話す【はな・す】(u-verb) - to speak

2. 書く【か・く】(u-verb) - to write

3. 泳ぐ【およ・ぐ】(u-verb) - to swim

4. 飲む【の・む】(u-verb) - to drink

5. 遊ぶ【あそ・ぶ】(u-verb) - to play

6. 死ぬ【し・ぬ】(u-verb) - to die

7. 切る【き・る】(u-verb) - to cut

8. 買う【か・う】(u-verb) - to buy

9. 持つ【も・つ】(u-verb) - to hold

10. する (exception) - to do

11. 来る【く・る】(exception) - to come

12. ⾏く【い・く】(u-verb) - to go

13. 今⽇【きょう】- today

14. ⾛る【はし・る】(u-verb) - to run

15. 友達【とも・だち】- friend

16. 私【わたし】- me, myself, I

17. 勉強【べん・きょう】- study

Changing a u-verb from dictionary form to the past tense is difficult because we must break up u-verbs into four additional categories. These four categories depend on the last character of the verb. The table below illustrates the different sub-categories. In addition, there is one exception to the rules, which is the verb 「⾏く」. I've bundled it with the regular exception verbs 「する」 and 「来る」 even though 「⾏ く」 is a regular u-verb in all other conjugations.

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*3.7. PAST TENSE CHAPTER 3. BASIC GRAMMAR*

Past tense conjugations for u-verbs

| **Ending** | **Non-Past** | **changes to...** | **Past** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| す | 話す | す → した | 話した |
| く  ぐ | 書く  泳ぐ | く → いた  ぐ → いだ | 書いた  泳いだ |
| む  ぬ | 飲む  死ぬ | む → んだ  ぬ → んだ | 飲んだ  死んだ |
| ぶ  る  つ | 遊ぶ  切る  持つ | ぶ → んだ  る →った  つ →った | 遊んだ  切った  持った |

う 買う う →った 買った

\* exceptions particular to this conjugation

**Examples**

1. 今⽇は、⾛った。

As for today, ran.

2. 友達が来た。

Friend is the one that came.

3. 私も遊んだ。

I also played.

4. 勉強は、した。

About study, did it.

**3.7.3 Past-negative tense for all verbs**

**Vocabulary**

1. 捨てる【す・てる】(ru-verb) - to throw away 2. ⾏く【い・く】(u-verb) - to go

3. ⾷べる【たべ・る】(ru-verb) - to eat

4. する (exception) - to do

5. お⾦【お・かね】- money

6. ある (u-verb) - to exist (inanimate)

7. 私【わたし】- me, myself, I

8. 買う【か・う】(u-verb) - to buy

9. 猫 【ねこ】- cat

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Exceptions

| **Non-Past** | **Past** |
| --- | --- |
| する | した |
| くる | きた |
| ⾏く | ⾏った\* |

*CHAPTER 3. BASIC GRAMMAR 3.8. PARTICLES USED WITH VERBS* 10. いる (ru-verb) - to exist (animate)

The conjugation rules for the past-negative tense are the same for *all* verbs. You might have noticed that the negative of just about everything always end in 「ない」. The conjugation rule for the past-negative tense of verbs is pretty much the same as all the other negatives that end in 「ない」. You simply take the negative of any verb, remove the 「い」 from the 「ない」 ending, and replace it with 「かった」.

To change verbs into the past-negative tense

Change the verb to the negative and replace the 「い」 with 「かった」

Examples

.

.

1. 捨てる → 捨てない → 捨てなかった

2. ⾏く → ⾏かない → ⾏かなかった

**Examples**

1. アリスは⾷べなかった。

As for Alice, did not eat.

2. ジムがしなかった。

Jim is the one that did not do.

3. ボブも⾏かなかった。

Bob also did not go.

4. お⾦がなかった。

There was no money. (lit: As for money, did not exist.)

5. 私は買わなかった。

As for me, did not buy.

6. 猫はいなかった。

There was no cat. (lit: As for cat, did not exist.)

**3.8 Particles used with verbs** （を、に、へ、で）

In this section, we will learn some new particles essential for using verbs. We will learn how to specify the direct object of a verb and the location where a verb takes place whether it's physical or abstract.

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*3.8. PARTICLES USED WITH VERBS CHAPTER 3. BASIC GRAMMAR* **3.8.1 The direct object** 「を」 **particle**

**Vocabulary**

1. ⿂【さかな】- fish

2. ⾷べる【た・べる】(ru-verb) - to eat

3. ジュース - juice

4. 飲む【の・む】(u-verb) - to drink

5. 街【まち】- town

6. ぶらぶら - wandering; aimlessly

7. 歩く【ある・く】(u-verb) - to walk

8. ⾼速【こう・そく】- high-speed

9. 道路【どう・ろ】- route

10. ⾛る【はし・る】(u-verb) - to run

11. 毎⽇【まい・にち】- everyday

12. ⽇本語【に・ほん・ご】- Japanese (language)

13. 勉強【べん・きょう】- study

14. する (exception) - to do

15. メールアドレス - email address

16. 登録【とう・ろく】- register

The first particle we will learn is the object particle because it is a very straightforward particle. The 「を」 character is attached to the end of a word to signify that that word is the direct object of the verb. This character is essentially never used anywhere else. That is why the katakana equivalent 「ヲ」 is almost never used since particles are always written in hiragana. The 「を」 character, while technically pronounced as /wo/ essentially sounds like /o/ in real speech. Here are some examples of the direct object particle in action.

**Examples**

1. ⿂を⾷べる。

Eat fish.

2. ジュースを飲んだ。

Drank juice.

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*CHAPTER 3. BASIC GRAMMAR 3.8. PARTICLES USED WITH VERBS*

Unlike the direct object we're familiar with in English, places can also be the direct object of motion verbs such as 「歩く」 and 「⾛る」. Since the motion verb is done *to* the location, the concept of direct object is the same in Japanese. However, as you can see by the next examples, it often translates to something different in English due to the slight difference of the concept of direct object.

1. 街をぶらぶら歩く。

Aimlessly walk through town. (Lit: Aimlessly walk town)

2. ⾼速道路を⾛る。

Run through expressway. (Lit: Run expressway)

When you use 「する」 with a noun, the 「を」 particle is optional and you can treat the whole [noun+ する] as one verb.

1. 毎⽇、⽇本語を勉強する。

Study Japanese everyday.

2. メールアドレスを登録した。

Registered email address.

**3.8.2 The target** 「に」 **particle**

**Vocabulary**

1. ⽇本【に・ほん】- Japan

2. ⾏く【い・く】(u-verb) - to go

3. 家【1) うち; 2) いえ】- 1) one's own home; 2) house

4. 帰る【かえ・る】(u-verb) - to go home

5. 部屋【へ・や】- room

6. 来る【く・る】(exception) - to come

7. アメリカ - America

8. 宿題【しゅく・だい】- homework

9. 今⽇【きょう】- today

10. 明⽇【あした】- tomorrow

11. 猫【ねこ】- cat

12. いる (ru-verb) - to exist (animate)

13. いす - chair

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*3.8. PARTICLES USED WITH VERBS CHAPTER 3. BASIC GRAMMAR*

14. 台所【だい・どころ】- kitchen

15. ある (u-verb) - to exist (inanimate)

16. いい (i-adj) - good

17. 友達【とも・だち】- friend

18. 会う【あう】(u-verb) - to meet

19. 医者【い・しゃ】- doctor

20. なる (u-verb) - to become

21. 先週【せん・しゅう】- last week

22. 図書館【と・しょ・かん】- library

23. 来年【らい・ねん】- next year

The 「に」 particle can specify a target of a verb. This is different from the 「を」 particle in which the verb does something *to* the direct object. With the 「に」 particle, the verb does something *toward* the word associated with the 「に」 particle. For example, the target of any motion verb is specified by the 「に」 particle.

**Examples**

1. ボブは⽇本に⾏った。

Bob went to Japan.

2. 家に帰らない。

Not go back home.

3. 部屋にくる。

Come to room.

As you can see in the last example, the target particle always targets "to" rather than "from". If you wanted to say, "come from" for example, you would need to use「から」, which means "from". If you used「に」 , it would instead mean "come *to*". 「から」 is also often paired with 「まで」, which means "up to".

1. アリスは、アメリカからきた。

Alice came from America.

2. 宿題を今⽇から明⽇までする。

Will do homework from today to tomorrow.

The idea of a target in Japanese is very general and is not restricted to motion verbs. For example, the location of an object is defined as the target of the verb for existence (ある and いる). Time is also a common target. Here are some examples of non-motion verbs and their targets

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*CHAPTER 3. BASIC GRAMMAR 3.8. PARTICLES USED WITH VERBS*

1. 猫は部屋にいる。

Cat is in room.

2. いすが台所にあった。

Chair was in the kitchen.

3. いい友達に会った。

Met good friend.

4. ジムは医者になる。

Jim will become doctor.

5. 先週に図書館に⾏った。

Went to library last week.

Note: Don't forget to use 「ある」 for inanimate objects such as the chair and 「いる」 for animate objects such as the cat.

While the 「に」 particle is not always required to indicate time, there is a slight difference in meaning between using the target particle and not using anything at all. In the following examples, the target particle makes the date a specific target emphasizing that the friend will go to Japan at that time. Without the particle, there is no special emphasis.

1. 友達は、来年、⽇本に⾏く。

Next year, friend go to Japan.

2. 友達は、来年に⽇本に⾏く。

Friend go to Japan next year.

**3.8.3 The directional** 「へ」 **particle**

**Vocabulary**

1. ⽇本【に・ほん】- Japan

2. ⾏く【い・く】(u-verb) - to go

3. 家【1) うち; 2) いえ】- 1) one's own home; 2) house

4. 帰る【かえ・る】(u-verb) - to go home

5. 部屋【へ・や】- room

6. 来る【く・る】(exception) - to come

7. 医者【い・しゃ】- doctor

8. なる (u-verb) - to become

9. 勝ち【か・ち】- victory

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*3.8. PARTICLES USED WITH VERBS CHAPTER 3. BASIC GRAMMAR* 10. 向かう【むか・う】(u-verb) - to face; to go towards

While 「へ」 is normally pronounced /he/, when it is being used as a particle, it is always pronounced /e/ (え). The primary difference between the 「に」 and 「へ」 particle is that 「に」 goes *to* a target as the final, intended destination (both physical or abstract). The 「へ」 particle, on the other hand, is used to express the fact that one is setting out towards *the direction* of the target. As a result, it is only used with directional motion verbs. It also does not guarantee whether the target is the final intended destination, only that one is heading towards that direction. In other words, the 「に」 particle sticks to the destination while the 「へ」 particle is fuzzy about where one is ultimately headed. For example, if we choose to replace 「に」 with 「へ」 in the first three examples of the previous section, the nuance changes slightly.

**Examples**

1. ボブは⽇本へ⾏った。

Bob headed towards Japan.

2. 家へ帰らない。

Not go home toward house.

3. 部屋へくる。

Come towards room.

Note that we cannot use the 「へ」 particle with verbs that have no physical direction. For example, the following is incorrect.

• 医者へなる。

(Grammatically incorrect version of 「医者になる」.)

This does not mean to say that 「へ」 cannot set out towards an abstract concept. In fact, because of the fuzzy directional meaning of this particle, the 「へ」 particle can also be used to talk about setting out towards certain future goals or expectations.

• 勝ちへ向かう。

Go towards victory.

**3.8.4 The contextual** 「で」 **particle**

**Vocabulary**

1. 映画館【えい・が・かん】- movie theatre

2. ⾒る【み・る】(ru-verb) - to see

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*CHAPTER 3. BASIC GRAMMAR 3.8. PARTICLES USED WITH VERBS*

3. バス - bus

4. 帰る【かえ・る】(u-verb) - to go home

5. レストラン - restaurant

6. 昼ご飯【ひる・ご・はん】- lunch

7. ⾷べる【た・べる】(ru-verb) - to eat

8. 何【なに／なん】- what

9. 暇【ひま】- free (as in not busy)

The 「で」 particle will allow us to specify the context in which the action is performed. For example, if a person ate a fish, where did he eat it? If a person went to school, by what means did she go? With what will you eat the soup? All of these questions can be answered with the 「で」 particle. Here are some examples.

**Examples**

1. 映画館で⾒た。

Saw at movie theater.

2. バスで帰る。

Go home by bus.

3. レストランで昼ご飯を⾷べた。

Ate lunch at restaurant.

It may help to think of 「で」 as meaning "by way of". This way, the same meaning will kind of translate into what the sentence means. The examples will then read: "Saw by way of movie theater", "Go home by way of bus", and "Ate lunch by way of restaurant."

**Using** 「で」 **with** 「何」

The word for "what" (何) is quite annoying because while it's usually read as 「なに」, sometimes it is read as 「なん」 depending on how it's used. And since it's always written in Kanji, you can't tell which it is. I would suggest sticking with 「なに」 until someone corrects you for when it should be 「なん」. With the 「で」 particle, it is read as 「なに」 as well. (Hold the mouse cursor over the word to check the reading.)

1. 何できた？

Came by the way of what?

2. バスできた。

Came by the way of bus.

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*3.8. PARTICLES USED WITH VERBS CHAPTER 3. BASIC GRAMMAR*

Here's the confusing part. There is a colloquial version of the word "why" that is used much more often than the less colloquial version 「どうして」 or the more forceful 「なぜ」. It is also written as 「何で」 but it is read as 「なんで」. This is a completely separate word and has nothing to do with the 「で」 particle.

1. 何できた？

Why did you come?

2. 暇だから。

Because I am free (as in have nothing to do).

The 「から」 here meaning "because" is different from the 「から」 we just learned and will be covered later in the compound sentence section. Basically the point is that the two sentences, while written the same way, are read differently and mean completely different things. Don't worry. This causes less confusion than you think because 95% of the time, the latter is used rather than the former. And even when 「なにで」 is intended, the context will leave no mistake on which one is being used. Even in this short example snippet, you can tell which it is by looking at the answer to the question.

**3.8.5 When location is the topic**

**Vocabulary**

1. 学校【がっ・こう】- school

2. ⾏く【い・く】(u-verb) - to go

3. 図書館【と・しょ・かん】- library

4. どこ - where

5. イタリア - Italy

6. レストラン - restaurant

7. どう - how

There are times when the location of an action is also the topic of a sentence. You can attach the topic particle (「は」 and 「も」) to the three particles that indicate location (「に」、「へ」、「で」) when the location is the topic. We'll see how location might become the topic in the following examples.

**Example 1**

ボブ：学校に⾏った？

Bob: (Did you) go to school?

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*CHAPTER 3. BASIC GRAMMAR 3.8. PARTICLES USED WITH VERBS*

アリス：⾏かなかった。

Alice: Didn't go.

ボブ：図書館には？

Bob: What about library?

アリス：図書館にも⾏かなかった。

Alice: Also didn't go to library.

In this example, Bob brings up a new topic (library) and so the location becomes the topic. The sentence is actually an abbreviated version of 「図書館には⾏った？」 which you can ascertain from the context.

**Example 2**

ボブ：どこで⾷べる？

Bob: Eat where?

アリス：イタリアレストランではどう？

Alice: How about Italian restaurant?

Bob asks, "Where shall we eat?" and Alice suggests an Italian restaurant. A sentence like, "How about..." usually brings up a new topic because the person is suggesting something new. In this case, the location (restaurant) is being suggested so it becomes the topic.

**3.8.6 When direct object is the topic**

**Vocabulary**

1. ⽇本語【に・ほん・ご】- Japanese (language)

2. 習う【なら・う】(u-verb) - to learn

The direct object particle is different from particles related to location in that you cannot use any other particles at the same time. For example, going by the previous section, you might have guessed that you can say 「をは」 to express a direct object that is also the topic but this is not the case. A topic can be a direct object without using the 「を」 particle. In fact, putting the 「を」 particle in will make it wrong.

**Examples**

1. ⽇本語を習う。

Learn Japanese.

2. ⽇本語は、習う。

About Japanese, (will) learn it.

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*3.9. TRANSITIVE AND INTRANSITIVE VERBS CHAPTER 3. BASIC GRAMMAR* Please take care to not make this mistake.

• ⽇本語をは、習う。

(This is incorrect.)

**3.9 Transitive and Intransitive Verbs**

In Japanese, sometimes there are two types of the same verb often referred to as *transitive* and *intran sitive verbs*. The difference between the two is that one verb is an action done by an active agent while the other is something that occurs without a direct agent. In English, this is sometimes expressed with the same verb, such as: "The ball dropped" vs "I dropped the ball" but in Japanese it becomes  「ボー ルが落ちた」 vs 「ボールを落とした」. Sometimes, the verbs changes when translated into English such as "To put it in the box" (箱に⼊れる) vs "To enter the box" (箱に⼊る) but this is only from the differences in the languages. If you think in Japanese, intransitive and transitive verbs have the same meaning except that one indicates that someone had a direct hand in the action (direct object) while the other does not. While knowing the terminology is not important, it is important to know which is which in order to use the correct particle for the correct verb.

Since the basic meaning and the kanji is the same, you can learn two verbs for the price of just one kanji! Let's look at a sample list of intransitive and transitive verbs.

Transitive and Intransitive Verbs

| **Transitive** | **Intransitive** |
| --- | --- |
| 落とす | to drop 落ちる to fall |
| 出す | to take out 出る to come out; to leave |
| ⼊れる | to insert ⼊る to enter |
| 開ける | to open 開く to be opened |
| 閉める | to close 閉まる to be closed |
| つける | to attach つく to be attached |
| 消す | to erase 消える to disappear |
| 抜く | to extract 抜ける to be extracted |

**3.9.1 Pay attention to particles!**

The important lesson to take away here is to learn how to use the correct particle for the correct type of verb. It might be difficult at first to grasp which is which when learning new verbs or whether there even is a transitive/intransitive distinction. If you're not sure, you can always check whether a verb is transitive or intransitive by using an online dictionary such as jisho.org

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*CHAPTER 3. BASIC GRAMMAR 3.10. RELATIVE CLAUSES AND SENTENCE ORDER*

**Examples**

1. 私が電気をつけた。

I am the one that turned on the lights.

2. 電気がついた。

The lights turned on.

3. 電気を消す。

Turn off the lights.

4. 電気が消える。

Lights turn off.

5. 誰が窓を開けた？

Who opened the window?

6. 窓がどうして開いた？

Why has the window opened?

The important thing to remember is that intransitive verbs *cannot* have a direct object because there is no direct acting agent. The following sentences are grammatically incorrect.

1. 電気をついた。

(「を」 should be replaced with 「が」 or 「は」)

2. 電気を消える。

(「を」 should be replaced with 「が」 or 「は」)

3. どうして窓を開いた？

(「を」 should be replaced with 「が」 or 「は」)

The only time you can use the 「を」 particle for intransitive verbs is when a location is the direct object of a motion verb as briefly described in the previous section.

1. 部屋を出た。

I left room.

**3.10 Relative Clauses and Sentence Order**

**3.10.1 Treating verbs and state-of-being like adjectives**

Have you noticed how, many forms of verbs and the state-of-being conjugate in a similar manner to i adjectives? Well, that is because, in a sense, they are adjectives. For example, consider the sentence: "The person who did not eat went to bank." The "did not eat" describes the person and in Japanese, you can directly modify the noun 'person' with the clause 'did not eat' just like a regular adjective. This very simple realization will allow us to modify a noun with any arbitrary verb phrase!

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*3.10. RELATIVE CLAUSES AND SENTENCE ORDER CHAPTER 3. BASIC GRAMMAR* **3.10.2 Using state-of-being clauses as adjectives**

**Vocabulary**

1. 国際【こく・さい】- international

2. 教育【きょう・いく】- education

3. センター- center

4. 登場【とう・じょう】- entry (on stage)

5. ⼈物【じん・ぶつ】- character

6. ⽴⼊【たち・いり】- entering

7. 禁⽌【きん・し】- prohibition, ban

8. 学⽣【がく・せい】- student

9. ⼈【ひと】- person

10. 学校【がっ・こう】- school

11. ⾏く【い・く】(u-verb) - to go

12. ⼦供【こ・ども】- child

13. ⽴派【りっ・ぱ】(na-adj) - fine, elegant

14. ⼤⼈【おとな】- adult

15. なる (u-verb) - to become

16. 友達【とも・だち】- friend

17. いい (i-adj) - good

18. 先週【せん・しゅう】- last week

19. 医者【い・しゃ】- doctor

20. 仕事【し・ごと】- job

21. 辞める【や・める】(ru-verb) - to quit

The negative, past, and negative past conjugations of verbs can be used just like adjectives to directly modify nouns. However, we cannot do this with the plain non-past state-of-being using 「だ」. (I told you this was a pain in the butt.) The language has particles for this purpose, which will be covered in the next section.

Note

**You cannot use** 「だ」 .

**to directly modify a noun with a noun like you can with** 「だった」、「じゃ

.

ない」、**and** 「じゃなかった」**.**

You can, however, have a string of nouns placed together when they're not meant to modify each other. 64

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For example, in a phrase such as "International Education Center" you can see that it is just a string of nouns without any grammatical modifications between them. It's not an "Education Center that is In ternational" or a "Center for International Education", etc., it's just "International Education Center". In Japanese, you can express this as simply 「国際教育センタ」 (or 「センター」 ). You will see this chaining of nouns in many combinations. Sometimes a certain combination is so commonly used that it has almost become a separate word and is even listed as a separate entry in some dictionaries. Some examples include: 「登場⼈物」、 「⽴⼊禁⽌」、or 「通勤⼿当」. If you have difficulties in figuring out where to separate the words, you can paste them into the WWWJDICs Translate Words in Japanese Text function and it'll parse the words for you (most of the time).

**Examples**

Here are some examples of direct noun modifications with a *conjugated* noun clause. The noun clause has been highlighted.

1. 学⽣じゃない⼈は、学校に⾏かない。

Person who is not student do not go to school.

2. ⼦供だったアリスが⽴派な⼤⼈になった。

The Alice that was a child became a fine adult.

3. 友達じゃなかったアリスは、いい友達になった。

Alice who was not a friend, became a good friend.

4. 先週医者だったボブは、仕事を辞めた。

Bob who was a doctor last week quit his job.

**3.10.3 Using relative verb clauses as adjectives**

**Vocabulary**

1. 先週【せん・しゅう】- last week

2. 映画【えい・が】- movie

3. ⾒る【み・る】(ru-verb) - to see

4. ⼈【ひと】- person

5. 誰【だれ】- who

6. いつも - always

7. 勉強【べん・きょう】- study

8. する (exception) - to do

9. ⾚い【あか・い】(i-adj) - red

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10. ズボン - pants

11. 買う【か・う】(u-verb) - to buy

12. 友達【とも・だち】- friend

13. 晩ご飯【ばん・ご・はん】- dinner

14. ⾷べる【た・べる】(ru-verb) - to eat

15. 銀⾏【ぎん・こう】- bank

Verbs clauses can also be used just like adjectives to modify nouns. The following examples show us how this will allow us to make quite detailed and complicated sentences. The verb clause is highlighted.

**Examples**

1. 先週に映画を⾒た⼈は誰？

Who is person who watched movie last week?

2. ボブは、いつも勉強する⼈だ。

Bob is a person who always studies.

3. ⾚いズボンを買う友達はボブだ。

Friend who buy red pants is Bob.

4. 晩ご飯を⾷べなかった⼈は、映画で⾒た銀⾏に⾏った。

Person who did not eat dinner went to the bank she saw at movie.

**3.10.4 Japanese Sentence Order**

**Vocabulary**

1. 私【わたし】- me; myself; I

2. 公園【こう・えん】- (public) park

3. お弁当【お・べん・とう】- box lunch

4. ⾷べる【た・べる】(ru-verb) - to eat

5. 学⽣【がく・せい】- student

6. ⾏く【い・く】(u-verb) - to go

Now that we've learned the concept of relative clauses and how they are used as building blocks to make sentences, I can go over how Japanese sentence ordering works. There's this myth that keeps floating around about Japanese sentence order that continues to plague many hapless beginners to Japanese. Here's how it goes.

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The most basic sentence structure in English can be described as consisting of the following elements in this specific order: [Subject] [Verb] [Object]. A sentence is not grammatically correct if any of those elements are missing or out of order.

Japanese students will tell you that Japanese, on the other hand, while frothing at the mouth, is completely backwards!! Even some Japanese teacher might tell you that the basic Japanese sentence order is [Subject] [Object] [Verb]. This is a classic example of trying to fit Japanese into an English-based type of thinking. Of course, we all know (right?) that the real order of the fundamental Japanese sentence is: [Verb]. Anything else that comes before the verb doesn't have to come in any particular order and nothing more than the verb is required to make a complete sentence. In addition, the verb must always come at the end. That's the whole point of even having particles so that they can identify what grammatical function a word serves no matter where it is in the sentence. In fact, nothing will stop us from making a sentence with [Object] [Subject] [Verb] or just [Object] [Verb]. The following sentences are all complete and correct because the verb is at the end of the sentence.

**Grammatically complete and correctly ordered sentences**

1. 私は公園でお弁当を⾷べた。

2. 公園で私はお弁当を⾷べた。

3. お弁当を私は公園で⾷べた。

4. 弁当を⾷べた。

5. ⾷べた。

So don't sweat over whether your sentence is in the correct order. Just remember the following rules. Japanese sentence order

• A complete sentence requires a main verb that must come at the end. This also includes the implied state-of-being.

Examples

1. ⾷べた

2. 学⽣ (だ)

.

.

• Complete sentences (relative clauses) can be used to modify nouns to make sentences with nested relative clauses except in the case of 「だ」.

Example

お弁当を⾷べた学⽣が公園に⾏った。

Student who ate lunch went to the park.

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*3.11. NOUN-RELATED PARTICLES CHAPTER 3. BASIC GRAMMAR* **3.11 Noun-related Particles** （と、や、とか、の）

**3.11.1 The last three particles (Not!)**

We have already gone over very powerful constructs that can express almost anything we want. We will see the 「の」 particle will give us even more power by allowing us to define a generic, abstract noun. We will also learn how to modify nouns directly with nouns. The three particles we will cover can group nouns together in different ways.

This is the last lesson that will be specifically focused on particles but that does *not* mean that there are no more particles to learn. We will learn many more particles along the way but they may not be labeled as such. As long as you know what they mean and how to use them, it is not too important to know whether they are particles or not.

**3.11.2 The Inclusive** 「と」 **particle**

**Vocabulary**

1. ナイフ - knife

2. フォーク - fork

3. ステーキ - steak

4. ⾷べる【た・べる】(ru-verb) - to eat

5. 本【ほん】- book

6. 雑誌【ざっ・し】- magazine

7. 葉書【はがき】- postcard

8. 買う【か・う】(u-verb) - to buy

9. 友達【とも・だち】- friend

10. 話す【はな・す】(u-verb) - to speak

11. 先⽣【せん・せい】- teacher

12. 会う【あ・う】(u-verb) - to meet

The「と」particle is similar to the「も」particle in that it contains a meaning of inclusion. It can combine two or more nouns together to mean "and".

1. ナイフとフォークでステーキを⾷べた。

Ate steak by means of knife and fork.

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2. 本と雑誌と葉書を買った。

Bought book, magazine, and post card.

Another similar use of the 「と」 particle is to show an action that was done together with someone or something else.

1. 友達と話した。

Talked with friend.

2. 先⽣と会った。

Met with teacher.

**3.11.3 The Vague Listing** 「や」 **and** 「とか」 **particles**

**Vocabulary**

1. 飲み物【の・み・もの】- beverage

2. カップ - cup

3. ナプキン - napkin

4. いる (u-verb) - to need

5. 靴【くつ】- shoes

6. シャツ - shirt

7. 買う【か・う】(u-verb) - to buy

The 「や」 particle, just like the 「と」 particle, is used to list one or more nouns except that it is much more vague than the 「と」 particle. It implies that there may be other things that are unlisted and that not all items in the list may apply. In English, you might think of this as an "and/or, etc." type of listing.

1. 飲み物やカップやナプキンは、いらない？

You don't need (things like) drink, cup, or napkin, etc.?

2. 靴やシャツを買う。

Buy (things like) shoes and shirt, etc...

「とか」 also has the same meaning as 「や」 but is a slightly more colloquial expression.

1. 飲み物とかカップとかナプキンは、いらない？

You don't need (things like) drink, cup, or napkin, etc.?

2. 靴とかシャツを買う。

Buy (things like) shoes and shirt, etc...

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*3.11. NOUN-RELATED PARTICLES CHAPTER 3. BASIC GRAMMAR* **3.11.4 The** 「の」 **particle**

**Vocabulary**

1. 本【ほん】- book

2. アメリカ - America

3. ⼤学【だい・がく】- college

4. 学⽣【がく・せい】- student

5. それ - that

6. その - abbreviation of 「それの」

7. シャツ - shirt

8. 誰【だれ】- who

9. これ - this

10. この - abbreviation of 「これの」

11. あれ - that (over there)

12. あの - abbreviation of 「あれの」

13. ⽩い【し・ろい】(i-adj) - white

14. かわいい (i-adj) - cute

15. 授業【じゅ・ぎょう】- class

16. ⾏く【い・く】(u-verb) - to go

17. 忘れる【わす・れる】(ru-verb) - to forget

18. こと - event, matter

19. 毎⽇【まい・にち】- every day

20. 勉強【べん・きょう】- study

21. する (exception) - to do

22. ⼤変【たい・へん】(na-adj) - tough, hard time

23. 同じ【おな・じ】- same

24. 物【もの】- object

25. ⾷べる【た・べる】(ru-verb) - to eat

26. ⾯⽩い【おも・し・ろい】(i-adj) - interesting

27. 静か【しず・か】(na-adj) - quiet

28. 部屋【へ・や】- room

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29. ⼈【ひと】- person

30. 学校【がっ・こう】- school

The「の」particle has many uses and it is a very powerful particle. It is introduced here because like the 「と」 and 「や」 particle, it can be used to connect one or more nouns. Let's look at a few examples.

1. ボブの本。

Book of Bob.

2. 本のボブ。

Bob of book.

The first sentence essentially means, "Bob's book." (not a lost bible chapter). The second sentence means, "Book's Bob" which is probably a mistake. I've translated the first example as "book of Bob" because the 「の」 particle doesn't always imply possession as the next example shows.

1. ボブは、アメリカの⼤学の学⽣だ。

Bob is student of college of America.

In normal English, this would translate to, "Bob is a student of an American college." The order of modifi cation is backwards so Bob is a student of a college that is American. 「学⽣の⼤学のアメリカ」means "America of college of student" which is probably an error and makes little sense. (America of student's college?)

The noun that is being modified can be omitted if the context clearly indicates what is being omitted. The following highlighted redundant words can be omitted.

1. そのシャツは誰のシャツ？

Whose shirt is that shirt?

2. ボブのシャツだ。

It is shirt of Bob.

to become:

1. そのシャツは誰の？

Whose shirt is that?

2. ボブのだ。

It is of Bob.

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(「その」 is an abbreviation of 「それ + の」 so it directly modifies the noun because the 「の」 particle is intrinsically attached. Other words include 「この」 from 「これの」 and 「あの」 from 「あれの」.)

The 「の」 particle in this usage essentially replaces the noun and takes over the role as a noun itself. We can essentially treat adjectives and verbs just like nouns by adding the 「の」 particle to it. The particle then becomes a generic noun, which we can treat just like a regular noun.

1. ⽩いのは、かわいい。

Thing that is white is cute.

2. 授業に⾏くのを忘れた。

Forgot the event of going to class.

Now we can use the direct object, topic, and identifier particle with verbs and adjectives. We don't nec essarily have to use the 「の」 particle here. We can use the noun 「物」, which is a generic object or 「こと」 for a generic event. For example, we can also say:

1. ⽩い物は、かわいい。

Thing that is white is cute.

2. 授業に⾏くことを忘れた。

Forgot the thing of going to class.

However, the 「の」 particle is very useful in that you don't have to specify a particular noun. In the next examples, the 「の」 particle is not replacing any particular noun, it just allows us to modify verb and adjective clauses like noun clauses. The relative clauses are highlighted.

1. 毎⽇勉強するのは⼤変。

The thing of studying every day is tough.

2. 毎⽇同じ物を⾷べるのは、⾯⽩くない。

It's not interesting to eat same thing every day.

Even when substituting「の」for a noun, you still need the「な」to modify the noun when a na-adjective is being used.

• 静かな部屋が、アリスの部屋だ。

Quiet room is room of Alice.

becomes:

• 静かなのが、アリスの部屋だ。

Quiet one is room of Alice.

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\*Warning: This may make things seem like you can replace any arbitrary nouns with 「の」 but this is not so. It is important to realize that the sentence must be about the clause and not the noun that was replaced. For example, in the last section we had the sentence, 「学⽣じゃない⼈は、 学校に⾏かな い」. You may think that you can just replace 「⼈」 with 「の」 to produce 「学⽣じゃないのは、学 校に⾏かない」 . But in fact, this makes no sense because the sentence is now about the clause "Is not student". The sentence becomes, "The thing of not being student does not go to school" which is complete gibberish because not being a student is a state and it doesn't make sense for a state to go anywhere much less school.

**3.11.5 The** 「の」 **particle as explanation**

**Vocabulary**

1. 今【いま】- now

2. 忙しい【いそが・しい】(i-adj) - busy

3. 学⽣【がく・せい】- student

4. 飲む【のむ】- to drink

5. どこ - where

6. ⾏く【い・く】(u-verb) - to go

7. 授業【じゅ・ぎょう】- class

8. ある (u-verb) - to exist (inanimate)

9. ううん - casual word for "no" (nah, uh-uh)

10. その - that (abbr. of それの)

11. ⼈【ひと】- person

12. 買う【か・う】(u-verb) - to buy

13. 先⽣【せん・せい】- teacher

14. 朝ご飯【あさ・ご・はん】- breakfast

15. ⾷べる【た・べる】(ru-verb) - to eat

16. どうして - why

The 「の」 particle attached at the end of the last clause of a sentence can also convey an explanatory tone to your sentence. For example, if someone asked you if you have time, you might respond, "The thing is I'm kind of busy right now." The abstract generic noun of "the thing is..." can also be expressed with the「の」particle. This type of sentence has an embedded meaning that explains the reason(s) for something else.

The sentence would be expressed like so:

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• 今は忙しいの。

The thing is that (I'm) busy now.

This sounds very soft and feminine. In fact, adult males will almost always add a declarative「だ」unless they want to sound cute for some reason.

• 今は忙しいのだ。

The thing is that (I'm) busy now.

However, since the declarative 「だ」 cannot be used in a question, the same 「の」 in questions do not carry a feminine tone at all and is used by both males and females.

• 今は忙しいの？

Is it that (you) are busy now? (gender-neutral)

To express state-of-being, when the 「の」 particle is used to convey this explanatory tone, we need to add 「な」 to distinguish it from the 「の」 particle that simply means "of".

1. ジムのだ。

It is of Jim. (It is Jim's.)

2. ジムなのだ。

It is Jim (with explanatory tone).

Besides this one case, everything else remains the same as before.

In actuality, while this type of explanatory tone is used all the time,「のだ」is usually substituted by「ん だ」. This is probably due to the fact that「んだ」is easier to say than「のだ」. This grammar can have what seems like many different meaning because not only can it be used with all forms of adjectives, nouns, and verbs it itself can **also** be conjugated just like the state-of-being. A conjugation chart will show you what this means.

There's really nothing new here. The first chart is just adding 「んだ」 (or 「なんだ」) to a conjugated verb, noun, or adjective. The second chart adds 「んだ」 (or 「なんだ」) to a non-conjugated verb, noun, adjective and then conjugates the 「だ」 part of 「んだ」 just like a regular state-of-being for nouns and na-adjectives. Just don't forget to attach the 「な」 for nouns as well as na-adjectives.

「んだ」 attached to different conjugations (Substitute 「の」 or 「のだ」 for 「んだ」)

|  | **Noun/Na-Adj** | **Verb/I-Adj** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Plain** | 学⽣なんだ | 飲むんだ |
| **Negative** | 学⽣じゃないんだ | 飲まないんだ |
| **Past** | 学⽣だったんだ | 飲んだんだ |
| **Past-Neg** | 学⽣じゃなかったんだ | 飲まなかったんだ |

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「んだ」 is conjugated (Substitute 「の」 for 「ん」 and 「の」 or 「のだ」 for 「んだ」)

|  | **Noun/Na-Adj** | **Verb/I-Adj** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Plain** | 学⽣なんだ | 飲むんだ |
| **Negative** | 学⽣なんじゃない | 飲むんじゃない |
| **Past** | 学⽣なんだった | 飲むんだった |
| **Past-Neg** | 学⽣なんじゃなかった | 飲むんじゃなかった |

I would say that the past and past-negative forms for noun/na-adjective in the second chart are almost never used (especially with 「の」) but they are presented for completeness.

The crucial difference between using the explanatory 「の」 and not using anything at all is that you are telling the listener, "Look, here's the reason" as opposed to simply imparting new information. For example, if someone asked you, "Are you busy now?" you can simply answer,「今は忙しい」. However, if someone asked you, "How come you can't talk to me?" since you obviously have some explaining to do, you would answer, 「今は忙しいの」 or 「今は忙しいんだ」. This grammar is indispensable for seeking explanations in questions. For instance, if you want to ask, "Hey, isn't it late?" you can't just ask, 「遅くない？」 because that means, "It's not late?" You need to indicate that you are seeking explanation in the form of 「遅いんじゃない？」.

Let's see some examples of the types of situations where this grammar is used. The examples will have literal translation to make it easier to see how the meaning stays the same and carries over into what would be very different types of sentences in normal English. A more natural English translation is provided as well because the literal translations can get a bit convoluted.

**Example 1**

アリス：どこに⾏くの？

Alice: Where is it that (you) are going?

ボブ：授業に⾏くんだ。

Bob: It is that (I) go to class.

Alice: Where are you going? (Seeking explanation)

Bob: I'm going to class. (Explanatory)

**Example 2**

アリス：今、授業があるんじゃない？

Alice: Isn't it that there is class now?

ボブ：今は、ないんだ。

Bob: Now it is that there is no class.

Alice: Don't you have class now? (Expecting that there is class)

Bob: No, there is no class now. (Explanatory)

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*3.11. NOUN-RELATED PARTICLES CHAPTER 3. BASIC GRAMMAR* **Example 3**

アリス：今、授業がないんじゃない？

Alice: Isn't it that there isn't class now?

ボブ：ううん、ある。

Bob: No, there is.

Alice: Don't you not have class now? (Expecting that there is no class)

Bob: No, I do have class.

**Example 4**

アリス：その⼈が買うんじゃなかったの？

Alice: Wasn't it that that person was the one to buy?

ボブ：ううん、先⽣が買うんだ。

Bob: No, it is that teacher is the one to buy.

Alice: Wasn't that person going to buy? (Expecting that the person would buy) Bob: No, the teacher is going to. (Explanatory)

**Example 5**

アリス：朝ご飯を⾷べるんじゃなかった。

Alice: It is that breakfast wasn't to eat.

ボブ：どうして？

Bob: Why?

Alice: Should not have eaten breakfast, you know. (Explaining that breakfast wasn't to be eaten) Bob: How come?

Don't worry if you are thoroughly confused by now, we will see many more examples along the way. Once you get the sense of how everything works, it's better to forget the English because the double and triple negatives can get quite confusing such as Example 3. However, in Japanese it is a perfectly normal expression, as you will begin to realize once you get accustomed to Japanese.

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*CHAPTER 3. BASIC GRAMMAR 3.12. ADVERBS AND SENTENCE-ENDING PARTICLES* **3.12 Adverbs and Sentence-ending particles**

**3.12.1 Properties of Adverbs**

**Vocabulary**

1. 早い【はや・い】(i-adj) - fast; early

2. きれい (na-adj) - pretty; clean

3. 朝ご飯【あさ・ご・はん】- breakfast

4. ⾷べる【た・べる】(ru-verb) - to eat

5. ⾃分【じ・ぶん】- oneself

6. 部屋【へ・や】- room

7. 映画【えい・が】- movie

8. たくさん - a lot (amount)

9. ⾒る【み・る】- to see; to watch

10. 最近【さい・きん】- recent; lately

11. 全然【ぜん・ぜん】- not at all (when used with negative)

12. 声【こえ】- voice

13. 結構【けっ・こう】- fairly, reasonably

14. ⼤きい【おお・きい】(i-adj) - big

15. この - this (abbr. of これの)

16. 町【まち】- town

17. 変わる【か・わる】(u-verb) - to change

18. 図書館【と・しょ・かん】- library

19. 中【なか】- inside

20. 静か【しず・か】(na-adj) - quiet

Unlike English, changing adjectives to adverbs is a very simple and straightforward process. In addition, since the system of particles make sentence ordering flexible, adverbs can be placed anywhere in the clause that it applies to as long as it comes *before* the verb that it refers to. As usual, we have two separate rules: one for i-adjectives, and one for na-adjectives.

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*3.12. ADVERBS AND SENTENCE-ENDING PARTICLES CHAPTER 3. BASIC GRAMMAR*

How to change an adjective to an adverb

• **For i-adjectives:** Substitute the 「い」 with 「く」.

Example: 早い → 早く

.

.

• **For na-adjectives:** Attach the target particle 「に」.

Example: きれい → きれいに

• ボブは朝ご飯を早く⾷べた。

Bob quickly ate breakfast.

The adverb 「早く」 is a little different from the English word 'fast' in that it can mean quickly in terms of speed *or* time. In other words, Bob may have eaten his breakfast early or he may have eaten it quickly depending on the context. In other types of sentences such as 「早く⾛った」, it is quite obvious that it probably means quickly and not early. (Of course this also depends on the context.)

• アリスは⾃分の部屋をきれいにした。

Alice did her own room toward clean.

The literal translation kind of gives you a sense of why the target particle is used. There is some argument against calling this an adverb at all but it is convenient for us to do so because of the grouping of i adjectives and na-adjectives. Thinking of it as an adverb, we can interpret the sentence to mean: "Alice did her room cleanly." or less literally: "Alice cleaned her room." (「きれい」 literally means "pretty" but if it helps, you can think of it as, "Alice prettied up her own room.")

Note: Not all adverbs are derived from adjectives. Some words like 「全然」 and 「たくさん」 are adverbs in themselves without any conjugation. These words can be used without particles just like regular adverbs.

1. 映画をたくさん⾒た。

Saw a lot of movies.

2. 最近、全然⾷べない。

Lately, don't eat at all.

**Examples**

Here are some more examples of using adverbs.

1. ボブの声は、結構⼤きい。

Bob's voice is fairly large.

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*CHAPTER 3. BASIC GRAMMAR 3.12. ADVERBS AND SENTENCE-ENDING PARTICLES*

2. この町は、最近⼤きく変わった。

This town had changed greatly lately.

3. 図書館の中では、静かにする。

Within the library, [we] do things quietly.

**3.12.2 Sentence-ending particles**

**Vocabulary**

1. いい (i-adj) - good

2. 天気【てん・き】- weather

3. そう - (things are) that way

4. ⾯⽩い【おも・しろ・い】(i-adj) - interesting

5. 映画【えい・が】- movie

6. 全然【ぜん・ぜん】- not at all (when used with negative)

7. 時間【じ・かん】- time

8. ある (u-verb) - to exist (inanimate)

9. ⼤丈夫【だい・じょう・ぶ】(na-adj) - ok

10. 今⽇【きょう】- today

11. うん - yes (casual)

12. でも - but

13. 明⽇【あした】- tomorrow

14. ⾬【あめ】- rain

15. 降る【ふ・る】(u-verb) - to precipitate

16. ⿂【さかな】- fish

17. 好き【す・き】(na-adj) - likable

Sentence-ending particles are particles that always come at the end of sentences to change the "tone" or "feel" of a sentence. In this section, we will cover the two most commonly used sentence-ending particles.

**3.12.3** 「ね」 **sentence ending**

People usually add「ね」to the end of their sentence when they are looking for (and expecting) agreement to what they are saying. This is equivalent to saying, "right?" or "isn't it?" in English.

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*3.12. ADVERBS AND SENTENCE-ENDING PARTICLES CHAPTER 3. BASIC GRAMMAR* **Example 1**

ボブ：いい天気だね。

Bob: Good weather, huh?

アリス：そうね。

Alice: That is so, isn't it?

The literal translation of 「そうね」 sounds a bit odd but it basically means something like, "Sure is". Males would probably say, 「そうだね」.

**Example 2**

アリス：おもしろい映画だったね。

Alice: That was interesting movie, wasn't it?

ボブ：え？全然おもしろくなかった。

Bob: Huh? No, it wasn't interesting at all.

Since Alice is expecting agreement that the movie was interesting Bob is surprised because he didn't find the movie interesting at all. (「え」 is a

sound of surprise and confusion.)

**3.12.4** 「よ」 **sentence ending**

When 「よ」 is attached to the end of a sentence, it means that the speaker is informing the listener of something new. In English, we might say this with a, "You know..." such as the sentence, "You know, I'm actually a genius."

**Example 1**

アリス：時間がないよ。

Alice: You know, there is no time.

ボブ：⼤丈夫だよ。

Bob: It's ok, you know.

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