

Unit 1. Vocabulary Tips

Greetings

おはようございます [oHAYOU GOZAIMAs[u]] — Good morning!

こんにちは [koNNICHI WA] — Hello! (literally means ‘today’)
It is the most common way to greet someone.

こんばんは [koMBAN WA] — Good evening!
(literally means ‘this evening’)

いい天気ですね [II TEnki des[u] ne] — The weather is good,
isn’t it?

さむいですね [saMUi des[u] ne] — It’s cold, isn’t it?

おげんきですか [o-GEEnki des[u] ka] — How are you doing?

ありがとうございます [aRIgatou gozaimas[u]] — Thank you very
much!

Means more like ‘thank you in advance,’ or is said when your conversation partner has just done something for you not so long time ago.

ありがとうございました [aRIgatou gozaimash[i]ta] — Thank you
very much!

More like reminding a person, that you remember his or her favor, ‘Thank you for the previous time’.

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さようなら [saYOUNARA] — Goodbye (quite formal)

しつれいします [sh[i]TSUrei shimas[u]] — Excuse me

Literally means 'Sorry for being rude'.

Sometimes is used as a way of saying "Goodbye" (addressed to a person in a higher position, when you leave before him or her).

すみません [suMIMASEn] — Excuse me (before asking a question (although, with personal questions we would better use しつれいですが)).

Also can be used as "Thank you" (when the favor a person did for you is connected with some inconveniences to that person).

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When we ask somebody おげんきですか, we put an **O-prefix** to show our respect to that person. Grammatically this prefix means that we talk not about ourselves. That is why if we were asked this question, we will not use honorific prefix O, since we do not use grammar particles which are morphologically showing respect, to ourselves. .

For the same reason, when we ask somebody about this person's name in Japanese, we put O-prefix behind the word なまえ, meaning 'a name':

おなまえは (なんですか)

(the part inside the brackets sometimes can be omitted)

What is your name?

Continuing the topic of the honorific grammar particles, we must mention honorific suffixes. The most common ones are さん, さま or せんせい (literally means 'a teacher' but as a honorific suffix can also be used towards doctors, researchers, famous artists, etc). For the reason already explained, when we answer the question about our name, we do not use any honorific suffix (even if we are teachers or doctors).

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おげんきですか , which literally means ‘Are you doing well?’ we can ask only to those whom we have not seen for a while. If you met a person yesterday or a couple of days ago, you should better use another conversation starter, such as **いい天気ですね** ‘The weather is good, right?’ or **さむいですね** ‘It’s cold, isn’t it?’.

An emotive sentence-ending particle **ね** said shortly with the voice pitch rising while pronouncing it, is a way of forming of a tag-question, and can be roughly translated as ‘...isn’t it?’, or ‘...yeah, right?’. If **ね** is pronounced longly with a flat intonation, it means, that speaker is impressed with a thing he or she is talking about.

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There are two expressions in Japanese, which mean 'Thank you':

ありがとうございます and ありがとうございました

We mentioned about their differences above. Also, すみません can be used as 'Thank you' as well, for example:

—すみません、ペンをかしていただけますか。

Excuse me, could you lend me a pen?

—はい、どうぞ。

Yes, sure.

—すみません。

Thank you.

At schools or universities teachers and lecturers use さようなら to say 'Goodbye', while students (as well as company employees) say しつれいします。

しつれいします is also used as 'Hello' when a person comes into a room.