

Genki Grammar Index

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1 です, は particle, Questions, の particle

1.1 X は Y です

～です。 It is ～.

Examples:

じゅう に じ はん

十二時半です。

(It) is half past twelve.

がくせい

学生です。

(I) am a student.

にほん ご

日本語です。

(My major) is the Japanese language.

Note that none of the sentences have a subject. This is common in Japanese, where context is relied on instead.

To make what we are talking about explicit, we can use the は particle. When は is used as a particle it is pronounced as わ.

X は Y です。 X is Y.

Examples:

わたし

私は スーキムです。

I am Sue Kim.

やました

せんせい

山下さんは先生です。

Mr. Yamashita is a teacher.

メアリーさんは じん アメリカ人です。

Mary is an American.

In Japanese, there is nothing that corresponds to the english "a", nor the plural "-s". Without context, a sentence like "学生です" is therefore ambiguous. It may mean "{We are/You are/They are} students" as well as "{I am/You are/She is} a student".

1.2 Question Sentences

To form a question in Japanese you add か to the end of the sentence.

りゅうがくせい

留学生です。

(I am) an international student.

りゅうがくせい

留学生ですか。

(Are you) an international student?

Questions can also be formed using a "question word" like "何" (なん) (what).

せんこう なん
専攻は何ですか。

せんこう えいご
専攻は英語です。

いまなん じ
今何時ですか。

いま
今くじです。

なんさい
メアリーさんは何歳ですか。

じゅうきゅうさい
十九歳です。

なんねんせい
何年生ですか。

に ねんせい
二年生です。

でんわ ばんごう
電話番号は何ですか。

1 8 6 の 7 3 4 3 です。

What is your major?

(My major) is English.

What time is it now?

It is nine o'clock.

How old are you, Mary?

I'm nineteen years old.

What year are you in college?

I'm on my second year.

What is your telephone number?

It is 186-7343.

Note that question marks are not used in Japanese.

1.3 noun₁ の noun₂

の is a possessive particle that connects two nouns like "s" in English (The cat's leg). The phrase "さくら大学の学生" means "a student at Sakura University". The second noun 学生 provides the main idea (being a student) and the first noun さくら大学 makes it more specific. の is more versatile than the English counterpart.

Examples:

でんわ ばんごう
たけしさんの電話番号

Takeshi's phone number

だいがく せんせい
大学の先生

A college professor

にほん ご がくせい
日本語の学生

A student of the Japanese language

にほん だいがく
日本の大学

A college in Japan

Note how English changes word order, in Japanese the main idea always comes at the end. Generally speaking, it works as such:

noun ₁ の noun ₂ noun ₂ of noun ₁
--

The result of using の between two nouns is also a noun.

2 This, here, whos', negation and other basics

2.1 これ、それ、あれ、どれ

To say "This" or "That", これ and それ are used in Japanese respectively. これ refers to something close to the speaker and それ refers to something close to the listener.

これはいくらですか。

How much is this?

さんぜんえん

それは三千円です。

That is 3,000 yen.

In Japanese there is an additional word, あれ, which refers to something that is neither closer to the speaker nor the listener.

わたし
これは私のペンです。

This is my pen. (Close to me)

それは私のペンです。

That is my pen. (Close to the listener)

あれは私のペンです。

That is my pen (over there). (Close to neither)

There is also the word どれ, which means "which".

どれですか。

Which one is it (that you are talking about)?

Question words like どれ and なに cannot be followed by the は particle, instead が must be used.

どれが あなたのペンですか。

Which one is your pen?

2.2 この、その、あの、どの +noun

If you want to be more specific than これ, それ, etc you can use この、その、あの、どの.

とけえ
この時計 はいくらですか。

How much is this watch?

とけえ さんぜんえん
その時計 は三千円です。

That watch is 3,000 yen.

とけえ さんぜん ごひゃくえん
あの時計 は三千五百 円です。

That watch (over there) is 3,500 yen.

とけえ さんぜん ごひゃくえん
どの時計 は三千五百 円ですか。

Which watch is 3,500 yen??

これ (は ~) / この noun(は ~)	close to the person speaking
それ (は ~) / その noun(は ~)	close to the person listening
あれ (は ~) / あの noun(は ~)	far from both people
どれ (は ~) / どの noun(は ~)	distance not known

2.3 ここ、そこ、あそこ、どこ

ここ, そこ, etc are words for places.

ここ	here, near me
そこ	there, near you
あそこ	over there
どこ	where

You can ask for directions:

すみません。^{ゆうびんきょく}郵便局はどこですか。

Excuse me. Where is the post office?

If the listener is close by, they can answer with:

^{ゆうびんきょく}(郵便局) はそこです。

(The post office is) right over there.

2.4 だれの noun

The question word for "who" is ^{だれ}誰, and for "whose" we add the possessive particle の: ^{だれ}誰の.

これは^{だれ}誰の カバンですか。

Whose bag is this?

それは^{だれ}スーさんの カバンです。

That is Sue's bag.

2.5 noun も

The particle も can be used to say "Item A is this, and item B is this too."

たけしさんは日本人です。

Takeshi is a Japanese person.

みちこさんも 日本人です。

Michiko is Japanese, too.

A は X です。 A is X.
B も X です。 B is also X.

2.6 noun じゃないです

To negate a statement of the form X は Y です, where Y is a noun, you can replace です with じゃないです。

^{やまだ}山田さんは学生じゃないです。

Mr. Yamada is not a student.

じゃないです is very colloquial, the formal correspondent is じゃありません, and an even more formal version is ではありません (for written language).

(X は)Y		X is Y.
(X は)Y	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{じゃないです。} \\ \text{じゃありません。} \\ \text{ではありません。} \end{array} \right.$	X is not Y.

2.7 ～ね/～よ suffix

There are suffixes in Japanese that are used depending on how the speakers views the interaction. If the speaker is seeking confirmation or agreement they may use ね ("right?") as a suffix.

リーさんの^{せんこう}選考は^{ぶんがく}文学ですね。

Ms. Lee, your major is literature, right?

これは^{にく}肉じゃないですね。

This is not meat, is it?

Another suffix, よ, is used if the speaker wants to assure the listener of what has been said ("I tell you").

とんかつは^{さかな}魚じゃないですよ。

Let me assure you. "Tonkatsu" is not fish.

スミスさんはイギリス人ですよ。

(In case you're wondering,) Mr. Smith is British.

3 Verbs, word order, adverbs and the は particle

3.1 Verb Conjugation

There are two kinds of verbs that follow regular conjugation patterns, ru-verbs and u-verbs.

	ru-verb	u-verb
dictionary forms	^た 食べる	^い 行く
present, affirmative	^た 食べます	^い 行きます
present, negative	^た 食べません	^い 行きません
stems	^た 食べ	^い 行き

Examples of ru-verbs are ^た食べる (To eat)、^ね寝る (To sleep)、^お起きる (To wake up)、^み見る (To see).

Examples of u-verbs are ^の飲む (To drink)、^よ読む (To read)、^{はな}話す (To speak)、^き聞く (To hear)、^い行く (To go)、^{かえ}帰る (To return).

There are also two irregular verbs, ^{する}する (to do) and ^{くる}くる (to come).

dictionary forms	^{する} する	^{くる} くる
present, affirmative	^{します} します	^{きます} きます
present, negative	^{しません} しません	^{きません} きません
stems	^{します} します	^き き

Note how ru-verbs conjugate by removing the る and adding for example ます, u-verbs conjugate differently, the last hiragana-character in the verb goes to the い version of its group, and for example ます is then appended. In both cases, they conjugate by transforming to their stem form before the "conjugation-suffix" is appended.

If you see the vowels あ、お、う before the る in the dictionary forms, you can be absolutely sure that the verb is an u-verb.

3.2 Verb Types and the "Present Tense"

If a verb is conjugated in the "present tense", it either means:

1. That a person habitually engages in these activities
2. That a person is planning to perform the activities in the future

Habitual examples:

私はよくテレビを^よ読みます。

I often watch TV.

メアリーさんは時々朝ご飯を^{ときどきあさ}食べ^{はん}ません。

Mary sometimes doesn't eat breakfast.

Future examples:

私は明日京都に行きます。

I will go to Kyoto tomorrow.

スーさんは今日うちに帰りません。

Sue will not return home today.

3.3 Particles

The particle を indicates "direct objects", the kind of things that are directly involved in, or affected by, the event. Note that this particle is pronounced "お".

コーヒーを飲みます。

I drink coffee.

音楽を聞きます。

I listen to music.

テレビを見ます。

I watch TV.

The particle で indicates where the event described by the verb takes place.

図書館で本を読みます。

I will read books in the library.

家でテレビを見ます。

I will watch TV at home.

The particle に has many meanings, but here we will learn two:

1. The goal toward which things move.
2. The time at which an event takes place.

(1) goal of movement examples:

私は今日学校に行きません。

I will not go to school today.

私はうちに帰ります。

I will return home.

(2) time examples:

日曜日に京都に行きます。

I will go to Kyoto on Sunday.

十一時に寝ます。

I will go to bed at eleven.

Approximate time references can be made by substituting ごろ or ごろに for に. Example:

十一時ごろに寝ます。

I will go to bed at about eleven.

The particle へ, too, indicates the goal of movement. The sentences following (1) above can therefore be rewritten using へ instead of に. Note that this particle is pronounced "え".

私は今日学校^{がっこう}へ 行きません。

I will not go to school today.

私はうちへ 帰ります。

I will return home.

へ cannot replace に in the examples following (2).

3.4 Time Reference

The particle に needs to be used with (1) days of the week like "on sunday" and (2) numerical time expressions like "at 10:45" and "in September".

日曜日^{にちようび い}に行きます。

I will go on Sunday.

十時四十五分^おに起きます。

I get up at 10:45.

九月^{くがつ お}に帰ります。

I will go back in September.

You do not use the に particle with (1) time expressions that are relative to the present, such as "today", "tomorrow" or "yesterday", (2) time expressions describing regular intervals, such as "every day", and (3) the word for "when".

明日^{あした き}来ます。

I will come tomorrow.

毎晩^{まいばん}テレビを見ます。

I watch TV every evening.

いつ 行きますか。

When will you go?

The に particle is normally not used with (1) parts of the day like "in the morning" and "at night", and (2) the word for "weekend", however it can be done.

朝^{あさ しんぶん よ}(に)新聞を読みます。

I read the newspaper in the morning.

週末^{しゅうまつ なに}(に)何をしますか。

What will you do on weekends?

3.5 ～ ませんか

You can use ませんか to extend an invitation.

昼ご飯^{ひる はん}を食べませんか。

What do you say to having lunch with me?

いいですね。

Sounds great

テニスをしませんか。

Will you play tennis with me?

うーん、ちょっと。

Um, it's slightly (inconvenient for me at this moment).

3.6 Word Order

Japanese word order is fairly flexible. In general, sentences are made up of several noun-particle sequences followed by a verb or adjective which is then

followed by a suffix like か, ね or よ. The orders of the noun-particle sequences are to a large extent free. Typical examples are listed below:

私は 今日 ^{としょかん} 図書館で 日本語を 勉強します。
 topic time place object verb
I will study Japanese in the library today.

私は よく ^{しちじ} 七時ごろ 家へ 帰ります。
 topic frequency time goal verb
I often go home around 7 o'clock.

3.7 Frequency Adverbs

You can add frequency adverbs such as ^{まいにち}毎日(everyday), ^{とき}よく (often) and ^{ときどき}時々(sometimes) to a sentence to describe how often you do something.

^{ときどき きっさてん}私は時々喫茶店に行きます。 I sometimes go to a coffee shop.

There are also infrequency adverbs such as ぜんぜん (never) and あまり (not often), to use an infrequency adverb the sentence needs to have a negative end, in other words you need to conclude it with for example ません.

私はぜんぜん テレビを見ません。 I do not watch TV at all.

たけしさんはあまり ^{べんきょう}勉強しません。 Takeshi does not study much.

3.8 The Topic Particle は

The は particle marks the topic, which is a broader category than a subject. Examples:

^{しゅうまつ}メアリーさん、週末はたいてい何をしますか Mary, what do you usually do on the weekend?

今日は京都に行きます。 I'm going to Kyoto today.

Here は puts the time expressions as the topic of each sentence, its effect can be paraphrased as "Let's talk about weekends; what do you do on weekends?" and "Let me say what I will do today; I will go to Kyoto".

^{ばん} ^{はん}晩ご飯は How about diner?

食べません I will not eat.

In this example は is used to direct the listeners attention to the dinner as a topic, thereby prompting the listening to comment or complete the sentence.

4 •

4.1 X があります/います

X があります means "there is/are X (nonliving thing)".

あそこにマクドナルドがあります。

There's a McDonald's over there.

4.2 Describing Where Things Are

4.3 Past Tense of です

4.4 Past Tense of Verbs

4.5 も

4.6 一時間

4.7 たくさん

4.8 と

5 •

5.1 Adjectives

5.2 好き (な)/きらい (な)

5.3 ～ ましょう/～ ましょうか

5.4 Counting

6 •

6.1 Te-form

6.2 ～ てください

6.3 ～ もいいます

6.4 ～ てはいけません

6.5 Describing Two Activities

6.6 ～ から

6.7 ～ ましょうか

7 •

7.1 ~ ている

7.2 メアリーさんは髪が長いです

7.3 Te-forms for Joining Sentences

7.4 verb stem + にいく

7.5 Counting People

8 •

8.1 Short Forms

8.2 Informal Speech

8.3 ～とおもいます/～ といっていました

8.4 ～ ないでください

8.5 verb のがすきです

8.6 が

8.7 何か and 何も

9 •

9.1 Past Tense Short Forms (verbs)

9.2 Qualifying Nouns with Verbs and Adjectives

9.3 まだ～ていません

9.4 ～から

10 •

10.1 Comparison between Two items

10.2 Comparison among Three or More Items

10.3 adjective/noun + の

10.4 ~ つもりだ

10.5 adjective + なる

10.6 どこかに/どこにも

10.7 で

11 •

11.1 ～たい

11.2 ～たり ～たりする

11.3 ～ことがある

11.4 noun A や noun B

12 •

12.1 ～ んです

12.2 ～ すぎる

12.3 ～ ほうがいいです

12.4 ～ ので

12.5 ～ なければいけません/～ なきゃいけません

12.6 ～ でしょう