

Character Profile

Meaning:
anger

Joyo yomi:

On: ド

Kun: いかる, おこる

In names: None

Types of on-yomi:

呉音 (ごおん, from Chinese readings of the 5th–6th c.): 又 [unused now]

漢音 (かんおん, from Chinese readings of the 7th–8th c.): ド

Keywords for remembering the yomi:

ド: 怒鳴る (どなる: to shout)

いかる: 怒り (いかり: anger)

おこる: 怒りっぽい (おこりっぽい: hot-tempered)

Relative importance and difficulty:

1436th most-used kanji in newspapers

Learned in junior high school in Japan

JLPT level: N2

Radical:

心 (こころ: the “heart” radical)

Note: To learn more about this radical, see [Radical Note 61](#).

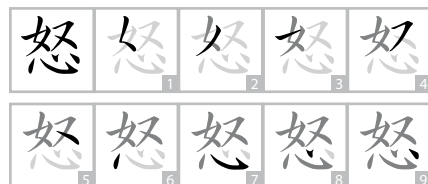
Don't confuse 怒 with these look-alikes (where blue marks an on-echo of ド in certain kanji containing the 奴 shape):

奴 (1638: guy, ド), 努 (555: effort, ド), 怒 (1964: grudge)

Don't confuse 怒 with these sound-alikes:

おこる: 起こる (250: to occur), 興る (650: to rise)

Strokes: 9



Read All About It!

Halpern	1639/2228
Henshall	1639/1774
Kanshudo	Click here
Denshi Jisho	Click here

Flying Off the Handle

I'm not a big fan of anger. Well, of course, my own anger strikes me as perfectly valid, but other people's anger bothers me immensely.

For one thing, it all comes on so fast. One minute we appear to be rational creatures who can listen thoughtfully and consider multiple points of view. Another minute we're snarling beasts.

Then, too, anger transforms the way we look and sound. It makes our bodies feverishly hot as blood “boils” and faces redden with fury. On top of that, nostrils flare and veins in the forehead bulge. When the “anger” kanji 怒 teams up with various body parts, the resulting terms convey these sorts of changes:

怒った顔 (おこったかお: angry face) **angry + face**

怒り肩 (いかりがた: square shoulders) **anger + shoulders**

To find out how the Japanese detect anger, disappointment, pride, and shame in the shoulders, see [essay 1212](#) on 肩.

目を三角にして怒る (めをさんかくにしておこる: to be really angry)
eyes + triangles (2nd and 3rd kanji) + to be angry

This last expression surprises me. English speakers often say that the eyes “narrow” with anger. Perhaps it's different in Japan, though. A native speaker tells me that eyes seem to grow larger with anger. Whereas they're normally ovals with two corners, rage makes them expand until they become nearly triangular.

Anger makes us ugly! You know how a man might say, “You're beautiful when you're angry,” attempting to mollify a raging bull of a wife? He's probably lying. After all, beauty pageant contestants make an effort to smile, rather than foam at the mouth.



The Kinugawa (鬼怒川) River in Tochigi Prefecture, near the town of Nikko. The name 鬼怒川 means “Angry Demon River.” Before it was dammed, the river was probably a lot wilder. Now the placid waters seem unlikely to harbor demons!

Photo Credit: Eve Kushner

Etymology Box

It's tempting to see 怒 as having three parts, but etymologically it divides into an upper half and lower half. The 心 on the bottom means "heart, feelings," according to Henshall in his newer edition. And the 奴 (usually "slave, servant") acts phonetically here, expressing either "strain, stretch, tense" or "exert extreme force," depending on which scholar you ask. In both cases, the whole 怒 character means "one's mind becomes tense/extreme," which is to say "become angry."

Here's how the character once looked:



© Richard Sears
Seal-script version.

What a mess! It's almost enough to make someone angry!

Waves of Anger

I'll admit it. I find other people's anger downright terrifying. To overcome my fear, perhaps I should envision anger as mere waves of energy, not unlike waves at the beach. One word about ocean waves actually contains 怒:

怒濤 (どとう: surging waves) **raging + waves**

The second kanji is non-Joyo.

It's oddly comforting to think of waves as angry, because I'm not the least bit afraid of large, forceful breakers. (Of course I would see things differently if I had experienced a tsunami.) The next term goes so far as to turn a raging tide into a positive entity:

怒濤の勢い (どとうのいきおい: with great vigor; in leaps and bounds)
raging + waves + vigor

This expression literally means "with the force of surging waves." A sample sentence:

彼の出世は怒濤の勢いだ。
His career is progressing in leaps and bounds.
彼* (かれ: he); 出世 (しゅっせ: successful career)

What a way to harness the power of waves!

Time for a Quick Quiz.

A Happy Collision

Anger is about collisions. People butt heads and cultures clash. Fortunately, there's also such a thing as a happy collision. That is, when it comes to 怒, the original Halpern and Henshall numbers match! Both are 1639. The two numbering systems have overlapped with all the drama of an eclipse and all the rarity of a blue moon!

Quick Quiz 1

You've seen this word:

怒濤 (どとう: surging waves) **raging + waves**

Here's a synonym (in which the second kanji is non-Joyo):

狂瀾 (きょうらん: raging waves) **crazy + large waves**

If you put these words together, what do you get:

狂瀾怒濤 (きょうらんどとう)
crazy + large waves + raging + waves

- a. flood
- b. tsunami
- c. tumultuous state of affairs
- d. doing "the wave" at a game

Suffixes for Temperamental Types

Here's a sentence that sums up most of what I learned from waiting tables:

空きっ腹になると人は怒りっぽくなる。

A hungry person is an angry person.

空きっ腹 (すきっぱら: hunger, empty stomach); 人 (ひと: person)

I bet you're wondering about the word in red. Maybe you're even angry that I haven't yet defined it! Simmer down. Here it is:

怒りっぽい (おこりっぽい: hot-tempered; quick to take offense; touchy)

The -っぽい suffix means "having the tendency to."

Here's a similar word:

怒りん坊 (おこりんぼう: short-tempered or irritable person)

anger + suffix conveying derision



Sign for hot springs (温泉, おんせん) in 鬼怒川 (きぬがわ), a town in Tochigi Prefecture. Photo Credit: Eve Kushner

Answer to Quick Quiz 1

c. 狂瀾怒濤 (きょうらんどとう: crazy + large waves + raging + waves) means "tumultuous state of affairs." That's the metaphorical meaning. Literally, 狂瀾怒濤 refers to water so churned up that it can cause a whirlpool.

Anger: The Noun

I have a local friend, Takashi Tanemori, who survived the Hiroshima bombing. Most of his family did not. Because of the exposure to radiation, he's slowly going blind. Although he once seethed with rage, he now gives inspirational talks in English about how he has learned to forgive. In one such speech, he discussed two いかり homonyms:

怒り (いかり: anger)

錨 (いかり: anchor)

The second kanji is non-Joyo. (Takashi-san didn't mention the non-Joyo part or anything about kanji. Too bad, because I'm sure the audience would have been particularly inspired by that!) Anyway, he found a deeper meaning in this coincidence, reasoning that anger is an anchor that weighs us down, keeping us stuck in the past. (As he also noted, "anger" and "anchor" even sound alike!)

Glad, Sad, Mad

Have you ever heard the expression “glad, sad, mad” or some permutation of it? This phrase is supposed to be a tool for helping people express their feelings, but I find it appallingly simplistic and condescending. Just because some people are emotionally stunted doesn’t mean that they can only speak monosyllabically!

I think I’ve found the equivalent Japanese expression, though it doesn’t sound like it’s geared toward the kindergarten set:

喜怒哀楽 (きどあいらく:
human feelings)
joy + anger + sorrow +
amusement

A sample sentence gives a sense of how people typically use this common expression:

喜怒哀楽を見せるな。
Don’t let your feelings show.
見せる (みせる: to show,
display)

Because the compound is a bit long, people abbreviate it, omitting half the emotions:

喜怒 (きど: human feelings; joy and
anger) joy + anger

Dictionaries disagree about whether this shortened version means just “joy and anger” or represents the full gamut of human feelings. In any case, one thing is clear. People around the world like to speak about feelings with as few syllables as possible!

Some sample sentences with 怒り:

怒りで彼は体が震えた。
He trembled with anger.
体 (からだ: body); 震える (ふるえる: to shake)

彼の怒りは欲求不満から生じた。
His anger was borne of frustration.
欲求不満 (よっきゅうふまん: frustration);
生じる (しょうじる: to result from)

老人の怒りは和らいだ。
The old man’s anger melted.
老人 (ろうじん: old person); 和らぐ (やわらぐ: to soften)

What a nice story these sentences tell, one after the other! I found them in Breen’s dictionary, but they seem to be about Takashi-san, don’t they?

Anger: The Verbs

Now we’ve arrived at the trickiest thing about 怒. The two main verbs featuring 怒 look exactly the same but have different yomi and somewhat different meanings:

怒る (おこる: (1) to get angry; (2) to tell someone off; scold)

怒る (いかる: (1) to get angry; (2) to be angular; be square)

(For more examples of pairs with unhelpful okurigana, see “[Yomi Confusion](#)” in Thematic Explorations.)

If you’re expressing anger about private things or everyday happenings, either おこる or いかる will work. Actually, either will work most of the time, because people don’t always distinguish between these words. One native speaker muses, “We may sometimes use them incorrectly, but it doesn’t matter so much, I suppose.” (Perhaps no one dares to correct an angry person about a slight yomi mistake!)

To be a purist, opt for いかる in the following circumstances:

- When expressing anger about abstract themes (e.g., politics or social problems).
- When discussing violent natural movements (of the wind and, yes, of the waves), as in 波がいかる, where 波 (なみ) means “waves.”
- When forming the gerund 怒り (いかり: angering), because おこり doesn’t exist. The Japanese title for *The Grapes of Wrath* is 怒りの葡萄 (いかりのぶどう), where 葡萄 consists of non-Joyo kanji.
- In writing literary texts. Authors tend to use いかる more often, although either yomi will work.

When a writer uses 怒, you often can’t tell which yomi was intended, but sometimes you can. A native speaker tells me, “It often happens that we can pick the correct reading at once (and a good writer makes that the case as much as possible).”

The Etymologies of おこる and いかる¹

The yomi おこる has several kanji representations, including 起こる (to occur, happen). In fact, according to one dictionary, 怒る (おこる) and 起こる have the same root. As the theory goes, おこる originally referred to a state where things gain force, later coming to mean “anger.”

Meanwhile, いかる is thought to have had a connection to 角立つ (かどだつ: to be sharp, be rough, **angle + to take form**). These verbs sound extremely different, but the meanings are related. The term いかる originally meant “to be angular, have sharp corners.” If your feelings have “sharp corners,” it means you’re angry. So it’s not just the eyes that become angular with rage. Feelings also develop corners!

Incidentally, with all of this etymological overlap, I began to wonder if the words “angle” and “anger” might share a root. They don’t!

Set expressions contain a particular yomi, so you’ll have to use whichever one belongs to that phrase. We’ve already seen some examples:

怒り肩 (いかりがた: square shoulders) **anger + shoulders**

怒りっぽい (おこりっぽい: hot-tempered; quick to take offense; touchy)

怒りん坊 (おこりんぼう: short-tempered or irritable person)
anger + suffix conveying derision

The sidebar contains notes on the etymological differences between おこる and いかる.¹

When a sentence refers to “scolding” someone, only おこる works. In the following example, the word in red has that meaning:

それをそのままにしておきなさい。そうしないと怒られますよ。
Leave it as it is, or you will be scolded.
まま* (as it is now); -ておく (to do in preparation)

The yomi of this passive form has to be おこられます. By contrast, in the following sentences, you can read 怒る (in all of its conjugations) as either いかる or おこる. You can also interpret the series of sentences as a narrative.

父はすぐに怒る。
My father gets angry easily.
父* (ちち: (my) father)

怒るとまるでライオンのようだ。
When he gets angry, he’s a lion.
まるで ... ようだ (just like)

父は喜んでいどころか、とても怒っている。
Far from being pleased, my father is very angry.
喜ぶ (よろこぶ: to be pleased); どころか (far from)

彼は君に対してとても怒っている。
He’s very angry with you.
君* (きみ: you); に対して (にたいして: toward)

彼があなたのことで怒るのも無理ないね。
It’s understandable that he’s angry with you.
無理ない (むりない: understandable)

君が怒っているのも当然だ。
You have good reason to be angry, too.
当然 (とうぜん: natural)

How to Get Someone Mad

By putting the 怒る verbs into one of the causative forms (there are two, with four possible yomi in all), we can say that we’re angering someone. That is, we’re causing them to be angry:

怒らせる (おこらせる or いからせる: to anger (someone); provoke; offend)

怒らす (おこらす or いからす: to anger (someone); provoke; offend)

A sample sentence with 怒らす:

その猫を怒らすと引っかくよ。

The cat will scratch you if you provoke him.

猫 (ねこ: cat); 引っかく (ひっかく: to scratch, claw)

As we heard earlier, when he gets angry, he's a lion. Oh, wait, that was about a person!

Time for another Quick Quiz!

Quick Quiz 2

What do you think the following expression might mean:

怒りを遷す (いかりをうつす) **anger + to substitute**

- a. to be so angry that one lashes out at unrelated things
- b. to resent a substitute teacher for being a substitute
- c. to numb anger with food or alcohol
- d. to put on a happy face when feeling enraged



The Zuien (随縁) Country Club has many courses, including the 鬼怒川森林コース in Tochigi Prefecture. As you know, 鬼怒川 (きぬがわ) is a town near Nikko. And 森林 (しんりん) means "forest." As for 随縁 (at the mercy of + connection), this word comes from Buddhism and means "following destiny." The kanji 随 is non-Joyo.

Photo Credit: Eve Kushner

Answer to Quick Quiz 2

a. 怒りを遷す (いかりをうつす: **anger + to substitute**) means “to be so angry that one lashes out at unrelated things.” It also means “to have an outburst of anger.” This phrase supposedly originated with Confucius, and people rarely use it in daily conversation. Instead, to convey that anger is coming out sideways, the Japanese use the following expressions:

八つ当たりする (やつあたりする)

8 + to treat unkindly

怒りが漏れ出してくる (いかりがもれだしてくる)

anger + to leak + to come out

The verb 漏れ出す (もれだす) means “to leak out.”

I know that false option b (to resent a substitute teacher for being a substitute) sounds silly, but I feel that way whenever I arrive at a yoga class and find that my beloved regular teacher isn't there. Instead, a stranger starts telling me what to do with my body and correcting my mistakes. Absurdly, the anger isn't just a 30-second phenomenon. I struggle with it for at least half a class!

Give a Shout!

When you think of angry animals, which ones come to mind? The lion is obvious (though it doesn't truly roar out of anger). Camels are said to be spiteful, spit-ful creatures. A rabid dog is no one's friend. But what about a chirping bird?! Pairing 怒 with 鳴 yields this on-kun hybrid:

怒鳴る (どなる: to shout; yell)

anger + to sound

Originally, 鳴 meant “bird call,” which makes sense, given its parts: 口 (mouth) and 鳥 (bird). This character later came to mean “non-human sound,” which is to say “noises coming from animals and doorbells alike.” And yet in 怒鳴る it's most certainly humans who are doing the shouting, so the inclusion of 鳴 seems funny to me. Some sample sentences:

大声で怒鳴るな。

Don't raise your voice at me.

大声 (おおごえ: loud voice)

私に怒鳴ったりしないでよ。

Don't yell at me.

私* (わたし: I, me)

怒鳴ってはいけません。ちゃんと聞こえていますから。

Don't shout. I can hear you fine.

ちゃんと (perfectly, properly); 聞こえる (きこえる: to be audible)

女房に怒鳴ってたのはお前か。

Were you shouting at my wife?

女房 (にょうぼう: wife); お前 (おまえ: you, with a derogatory nuance)

警官は怒鳴って命令をした。

The police officer barked orders.

警官 (けいかん: policeman); 命令 (めいれい: order)

Oh, he barked! Well, that sounds like an animal cry, after all!

At the sidebar² you'll find several words with 怒鳴り as a base.

More Words to Shout About²

The following 怒鳴り spinoffs all pertain to shouting:

怒鳴り声 (どなりこえ: angry voice; one's voice when shouting with anger)
to shout (1st 2 kanji) + voice

怒鳴り付ける (どなりつける: to shout at)
to shout (1st 2 kanji) + to perform an action vigorously

怒鳴り込む (どなりこむ: to storm in with a yell)
to shout (1st 2 kanji) + to enter

That's quite specific! How about storming out with a yell?!

怒鳴り散らす (どなりちらす: to yell; rant, rave)
to shout (1st 2 kanji) + to scatter

This term suggests that the person has lost control and is going on and on, perhaps nonsensically. In terms of the breakdown, I like the idea that a rant "scatters" words.

怒鳴り立てる (どなりたてる: to shout)
to shout (1st 2 kanji) + emphatic verbal suffix

Even though 立 means "to stand up" and even though Breen defines 怒鳴り立てる as "to stand and shout," you don't actually have to stand with this term. The suffix -立てる sometimes emphasizes the preceding verb. That's the case here, according to a native speaker.

There are many words for "shouting," but apparently none for "twist and shout."

Flying Into a Rage

Let's turn now to expressions about flying into a rage. (Even though anger is an anchor, it somehow makes us airborne!) With the first term, we can choose between two yomi:

怒り出す (いかりだす or おこりだす: to fly into a rage; lose one's temper)
anger + to come out

Some sentences:

彼は黙ったままでいた。すると、彼女はさらに怒り出した。
He remained silent, so she got even angrier.
黙る (だまる: to become silent); さらに (even more)

義兄は些細なことですぐ怒り出す。
My brother-in-law is ready to lose his temper over trivial things.
義兄 (ぎけい: brother-in-law); 些細 (ささい: trivial)

In 些細, the first kanji is non-Joyo. Odd-looking, isn't it?!

If we take 怒り出す and insert our "bird call" kanji (for full-throated shouting), we produce this expression:

怒鳴り出す (どなりだす: to start shouting)
to shout (1st 2 kanji) + to come out

A sample sentence:

お金をくれと言ったら、父はかっとなって怒鳴り出した。
When I asked Dad for money, he blew up and started to yell at me.
お金 (おかね: money); 言う* (いう: to say); かっ (flaring up; flying into a rage)

Here's another expression about blowing up:

むきになって怒る (むきになっておこる: to flare up)

The first half, むきになる, means "to take serious offense," for example at a joke or at something particularly unimportant. For that reason, むきになって怒る can have the nuance of blowing things out of proportion.

Fits of Rage

After someone flies off the handle (another antigravity exercise in anger!), they become consumed with rage. Here's the way to talk about that rage:

激怒 (げきど: rage; indignation; exasperation) **intense + anger**

Once again, the following sentences form a narrative:

彼は話を聞いて激怒した。
He got mad when he heard the story.
話 (はなし: story); 聞く (きく: to hear)

私は何も言わなかった、そしてそのことで彼は一層激怒した。
I said nothing, which made him more furious.
何も ... ない (なにも ... ない: nothing);
一層 (いっそう: much more)

The Sounds of Anger

If I told you that *かんかん* was onomatopoeic, what emotion would you hear? This word conveys a clanging noise, such as the sound of metal pieces striking each other.

By itself, *かんかん* translates as “anger, flare-up, intense heat.” For instance, you could say this:

彼は**カンカン**だ。
He's angry.

太陽が**カンカン**照りつけます。
The sun is beating down.
太陽 (たいよう: sun); 照りつける (てりつける: to beat down on)

Katakana makes this word stand out more.

But you're wondering how any of this ties in with a discussion of 怒! Fair question. As it turns out, *かんかん* teams up with 怒 in one expression:

かんかんに怒る (かんかんにおこる: to get very mad)

A sample sentence:

彼女は夫の浮気を知って
かんかんに怒っている。
She's furious at her husband because she found out he's been cheating on her.
彼女* (かのじょ: she); 夫 (おとと: husband); 浮気 (うわき: infidelity); 知る (しる: to know)

Here's another bit of onomatopoeia: プリプリ. This word has multiple meanings: “(1) angrily; in a huff; (2) tender (as when pasta is al dente).” The sound mimics the sound of elasticity, particularly that of food; imagine what you might hear if you gave tender pasta a twang.

Incidentally, *Breen* lists yet another definition: “high on marijuana.” However, my proofreader can't confirm this and doesn't agree. He says, “The closest I can think of is the slang term *ラリ* for “to get high on drugs.”

Much like *カンカン*, the word *プリプリ* joins 怒 to form an expression:

プリプリ怒る (プリプリおこる: to be in a huff)

彼は彼らの仕打ちに**激怒**していた。
He was furious at what they did to him.
彼ら (かれら: they); 仕打ち (しうち: mean treatment)

彼は**激怒**して部屋を出た。
He left the room in a rage.
部屋 (へや: room); 出る (でる: to leave)

“Mad” can mean both “angry” and “insane.” That makes sense. Angry people act insane, and insane people are often angry. As it happens, the characters for “angry” and “insane” team up in this word:

怒り狂う (いかりくるう: to rage) **anger + to be crazy**

A sentence:

彼は**怒り狂**っていた。
He was beside himself with rage.

“Beside himself”—there's a phrase that's even harder to deconstruct than “mad” or all the “flying” terms! Time for your Verbal Logic Quiz!

Verbal Logic Quiz

What do you suppose the following word could mean:

怒り上戸 (おこりじょうど) **anger + above, over + door**

- a. anger during home renovation over a spouse's choice of a door
- b. anger over having one's head hit by a door
- c. anger so strong that one person pushes another against a door
- d. quarrelsome drinker

怒

怒

怒

怒

A sentence:

彼女は、映画がつまらなかった
と言ってプリプリ怒っている。
She's angry, saying the movie
was boring.
映画 (えいが: movie)

As プリプリ can mean "angrily; in a huff," it seems redundant to say プリプリ怒る, but I suppose that helps drive the point home. Plus, unlike カンカン, プリプリ can't stand on its own; it needs to have 怒る or する trailing afterward.

If all this anger unsettles you, here's some good news about the last sample sentence. According to one native speaker, "The anger qualified by プリプリ is less serious than that qualified by カンカン. You may still be able to get someone プリプリ into a better mood, but your chances are quite slim for someone カンカン."

Answer to the Verbal Logic Quiz

d. 怒り上戸 (おこりじょうご: **anger + above, over + door**) means "quarrelsome drinker." In 怒り上戸, the 怒り retains its usual properties. That is, it means "anger" and has the yomi おこり (not いかり). But 上戸 (じょうご), which means "heavy drinker" or "drinker's habits," is the type of ateji where the usual meanings no longer matter. The roots of the word may go back to old ways of categorizing families according to the number of adult male members. The "door" kanji 戸 is a counter for "households." The 上 (as opposed to 中 and 下, which are respectively "middle" and "low") represented a populous family. A larger family tends to drink more saké, so 上戸 came to mean "one who drinks a lot."

Master the material in this essay by playing games from our partner Kanshudo!