

GRAMMAR IN DEPTH

This section is an overview of basic Japanese grammar. The section provides in-depth explanations of many of the grammatical elements and sentence structures introduced in Lessons 1 through 10. The section also explains some basic grammatical concepts, such as aspect and ellipsis, which will help you to understand the mechanics of the Japanese Language.

A. Basic sentence structures

There are three basic sentence structures in Japanese: (1) XはN-Prt V, (2) XはYです, and (3) XはYがZ.

1. XはN₁-Prt₁(N₂-Prt₂)V

“XはN₁-Prt₁(N₂-Prt₂)V” is one of the most frequently-used sentence structures. What kind of N-Prts occur depends on the verb.

- (1) 東大寺は奈良にあります。(The Todaiji Temple is in Nara.)
とうだいじ なら
- (2) 私は自転車で学校に行きます。(I go to school by bike.)
わたし じてんしゃ がっこう い
- (3) カレンさんはエリックさんにCDをあげました。(Karen-san gave Eric-san a CD.)

2. XはYです

“XはYです” is used to express the idea of “X is Y” in English. Here, X is a noun, and Y is an *i*-adjective, a *na*-adjective, or a noun.

- (1) この魚は新鮮です。(This fish is fresh.)
この さかな あたら
- (2) アキさんの部屋はきれいです。(Aki-san's room is clean.)
アキさん の へや
- (3) ケントさんはカナダ人です。(Kent-san is a Canadian.)
ケントさん カナダ じん

In addition to the above use, “XはYです” is used to express a variety of meanings when the meaning relationship between X and Y is understood from the situation or context. For example, in (4), Speaker A first tells Speaker B that Speaker A drinks milk every morning. After that, Speaker B can tell what he/she drinks every morning, using “XはYです,” without repeating the same verb and adverb.

- (4) A: 私は毎朝ミルクを飲みます。(I drink milk every morning.)
わたし まいあさ の
 B: そうですか。私はコーヒーです。(Is that so? I drink coffee. (lit. I'm coffee.))
わたし

Another example is (5), which literally means “Tanaka-san is New York now.”

- (5) 田中さんは今ニューヨークです。
田中さん いま

However, since it is obvious that Tanaka-san is not New York, it's interpreted as “Tanaka-san is in New York now,” “Tanaka-san lives in New York now,” “Tanaka-san works in New York now,” etc., depending on the context.

As a matter of fact, in many situations, “XはYです” is used instead of “XはYにあります/います,” because when Y represents a location, it is easy to interpret “XはYです” as “X exists in Y.”

- (6) 本屋は学生会館の一階です。(The bookstore is on the first floor of the Student Union.)
ほんや がくせいかいがん いっかい
- (7) ナイフとフォークはその引き出しです。(Knives and forks are in that drawer.)
ひきだし

3. XはYがZ (See L.6 #7 and L.8 #2.)

The sentence structure “XはYがZ” is used when the predicate involves expressions of preference (e.g., 好き, きらい), skills (e.g., 上手, 得意, 苦手), desire (e.g., ほしい), and ability (e.g., できる, 分かる). In this use, Y represents what the person likes, is good at, wants, etc.

- (1) エリさんは寿司が大好きです。(Eri-san loves sushi.)
エリさん すし だいす
- (2) 私はスポーツが苦手です。(I'm not good at sports.)
わたし スポーツ にがて

- (3) 私はロシア語が少し分かります。(I understand some Russian.)
わたし りおしあご すこ お

“X は Y が Z” is also used to describe characteristics of X. In this use, Y represents a part of X or something that characterizes X.

- (4) 私は目が悪いです。(I have bad eyesight.)
わたし め わる
 (5) 東京は人が多いです。(There are many people in Tokyo.)
とうきょう ひと おお
 (6) この店はパスタがおいしいです。(This store serves good pasta dishes.)
みせ

B. Particles

Attached to nouns, sentences, etc., particles indicate the relations of the preceding nouns to the predicates, add additional meanings to the preceding words or phrases, or indicate the functions of the preceding sentences.

1. Case particles

Particles that indicate the semantic relation of the preceding noun and the predicate are called case particles. が, を, に, へ, で, と, から and まで are case particles.

1-1. が

が is commonly referred to as “subject marker.” When the predicate is an action verb, X in “X が” is the actor of the action. When the predicate is a state word (e.g., an adjective, a state verb like ある, a noun + です), X is someone or something in that state.

- (1) あ、ワシが飛んでいますよ！(Look! An eagle is flying!)
わたし
 (2) A：この建物に何がありますか。(What is in this building?)
たてもの なに
 B：本屋やカフェテリアがあります。(A bookstore and a cafeteria are there.)
ほんや
 (3) 私の犬は足が短いです。(My dog has short legs.)
わたし いぬ あし みじか

1-2. を

を marks the direct objects of verbs.

- (1) まりさんはビールを3杯飲みました。(Mari-san drank three beers.)
ばい の
 (2) 私は新聞を読みません。(I don't read newspapers.)
わたし しんぶん よ

Note that what is recognized as direct objects in English are not necessarily presented with を in Japanese.

- (3) want X → X がほしい call X → X に電話する meet X → X に／と会う
でんわ あ

An important rule regarding を is that を cannot be used more than once for a single verb. The following sentence is ungrammatical. (See L.3 言語ノート *Suru*-verbs.)

- (4) × ガンを研究をする → ガンを研究する／ガンの研究をする (to do research on cancers)
けんきゅう けんきゅう けんきゅう

1-3. に

に is used with nouns that indicate times, locations of existence, destinations, spaces to enter, surfaces of contact, indirect objects, etc.

- (1) 今朝6時に起きました。(I got up at six this morning.) [time]
けさ じ お
 (2) 今、京都にいます。(I'm in Kyoto now.) [location of existence]
いま きょうと
 (3) 明日、広島に行きます。(I'm going to Hiroshima tomorrow.) [destination]
あした ひろしま い
 (4) これからお風呂に入ります。
はい
 (I'm taking a bath now. /lit. I'm entering a bath now.) [space to enter]

- (5) T シャツに富士山の絵を描きました。
(I drew a picture of Mt. Fuji on a T-shirt.) [surface of contact]
- (6) リズさんに日本のおみやげをあげました。
(I gave Liz-san a Japanese souvenir.) [indirect object]
- (7) リズさんはエミさんにキーホルダーをもらいました。
(I got a keychain from Emi-san.) [indirect object]
- (8) 一週間に三回ジムへ行きます。(I go to the gym three times a week.) [duration]

に is also used with the *masu*-stems of motion verbs (e.g., 行く, 来る, etc.) to indicate purpose.

(See L.8 #5.)

- (9) ニューヨークへミュージカルを見に行きたいです。
(I want to go to New York to see a musical.)

1-4. へ

へ marks the direction of a moving action such as 行く, 来る and 帰る.

- (1) デパートへ買い物に行きます。(I'm going to a department store to shop.)

A direction can be marked by に, too. The difference between the direction marker に and へ is very subtle. The essential difference between the two is that when に is used, the speaker recognizes the place as the destination or the point of contact as the result of a moving action, whereas when へ is used, the speaker recognizes the place as the direction to which the person/thing moves.

1-5. で

で is used to mark places of actions/events, means, etc.

- (1) 私はいつも図書館で勉強します。(I always study at the library.) [place of an action]
- (2) 今晚この公園でコンサートがあります。
(There is a concert in this park this evening.) [place of an event]
- (3) この夏、船でアラスカへ行きます。(I'm going to Alaska by boat this summer.) [means]
- (4) 初めて日本語でメールを書きました。
(I wrote an email in Japanese for the first time.) [means (language)]
- (5) とうふでサラダを作りました。(I made a salad with tofu.) [means (materials)]
- (6) アイさんは一人でジャパンハウスをそうじしました。
(Ai-san cleaned the Japan House by herself.) [means (a number of people)]

1-6. と

と represents the idea of “with” as in “I played tennis with John.”

- (1) 私はジョンさんとテニスをしました。(I played tennis with John-san.)

と is also used when verbs and adjectives represent a reciprocal relationship, as in (2) ~ (4).

- (2) リサさんはマットさんと結婚しました。(Lisa-san married Matt-san.)
- (3) マキさんは正夫さんとけんかしました。(Maki-san had a fight with Masao-san.)
- (4) この自転車は私の自転車と同じです。(This bike is the same as my bike.)

Other reciprocal words include 会う (to meet), 話し合う (to discuss), and 違う (to differ).

In addition, と is used as a quotative marker, as in (5) and (6).

- (5) 信二さんは日本へ帰りたいと言っていました。
しんじ にほん かえ
 (Shinji-san said that he wanted to return to Japan.)
- (6) 日本は食べ物おいしいと思います。
にほん た もの おも
 (I think that foods are delicious in Japan.)

1-7. から and まで

から and まで mark starting points and ending points, respectively.

- (1) この店は朝9時から夜10時まで開いています。
みせ あさ じ よる じ ま
 (This store is open from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.)
- (2) ホテルから空港までバスで行きました。
くうこう
 (I took a bus from the hotel to the airport.)

1-8. Absence of が and を

The case particles が and を do not appear in certain structures.

a. When は and も mark “Nが” or “Nを,” they supersede が and を.

- (1) 私は魚が大好きですが、肉があまり好きじゃありません。
わたし ぎかな す にく す
 (I like fish, but I don't like meat so much.)
- (2) 父はワインや酒を飲みますが、ウイスキーを飲みません。
ちち さけ の
 (My father drinks wine and sake, but not whisky.)
- (3) 私はサッカーが好きです。バスケットボールも好きです。
わたし す
 (I like soccer. I like basketball, too.)
- (4) 母はお酒を飲みません。コーヒーを飲みません。
はは さけ の
 (My mother doesn't drink alcohol. She doesn't drink coffee, either.)

Note that when は and も mark nouns with the other case particles, they form double particles.

- (5) この町にはとてもいい図書館があります。
まち としょかん
 (There is a very good library in this town.)
- (6) この小説はネットでも読むことができます。
しょうせつ とも
 (You can read this novel on the Internet, too.)
- (7) あの人はデートしたくないです。
ひと
 (I don't want to date that person.)

b. が and を usually drop after 何か and だれか.

- (8) 何かを飲みましょうか。
なに の
 (Shall we drink something?)
- (9) この部屋にだれかいますか。
へや
 (Is someone in this room?)

2. Adverbial particles

Some adverbial particles indicate the preceding elements' functions in the sentences, and others add additional meanings to the preceding elements.

2-1. は

a. は is used to present topics.

- (1) 黒田先生は私の日本語の先生です。
くろだ せんせい わたし にほんご せんせい
 (Prof. Kuroda is my Japanese teacher.)
- (2) A: 私は音楽が好きです。
わたし おんがく す
 (I like music.)
- B: そうですか。音楽は何が好きですか。
おんがく なに す
 (Is that so? What kind of music do you like?)

b. は is used to mark contrastive elements.

- (3) 私はスペイン語は少し分かりますが、ポルトガル語は分かりません。
(I understand some Spanish, but don't understand Portuguese.)

c. は indicates elements of negation.

- (4) 姉はラップはあまり好きじゃありません。
(My elder sister doesn't like rap so much. (She likes other types of music, though.))
- (5) 私は明日はクラスに行きません。
(I'm not going to class tomorrow. (I'm going to class on other days, though.))
- (6) 私は明日クラスには行きません。
(I'm not going to class tomorrow. (I'm going to other places, though.))

d. は does not occur after Q-words and Q-words + か.

- (7) × 明日のパーティーにだれは来ますか。→ あしたのパーティーにだれが来ますか。
(Who's coming to tomorrow's party?)
- (8) × 何かは冷蔵庫にありますか。→ 冷蔵庫に何かありますか。
(Is there something in the refrigerator?)

2-2. も

a. も is used to mean "also; too; either."

- (1) 上野さんは画家です。(Ueno-san is a painter.) 川田さんも画家です。(Kawada-san is also a painter.)
- (2) ベンさんは学生じゃありません。(Ben-san is not a student.) アンさんも学生じゃありません。(Ann-san is not a student, either.)
- (3) ピーターはサッカーが好きです。(Peter likes soccer.) テニスも好きです。(He likes tennis, too.)

Note that the second sentence in (1) cannot be used as a second sentence in (4).

- (4) 川田さんは高校の先生です。(Kawada-san is a high-school teacher.) × 川田さんも画家です
／× 川田さんは画家もです。(Kawada-san is also a painter.)

b. When も follows Q-words in negative sentences, it means "no ~; (not) any ~."

- (5) 今、何も食べたくありません。(I don't want to eat anything now.)
- (6) この部屋にはだれもいません。(No one is in this room.)
- (7) にゃん太郎はどこにもいません。(We can't find Nyantaro anywhere.)

3. Sentence particles

Sentence particles are attached to sentences and indicate that the speaker is asking the hearer a question, asking for confirmation or agreement from the hearer, emphasizing what he/she is saying, etc.

3-1. か [Question]

- (1) もう昼ご飯を食べましたか。(Have you eaten your lunch yet?)
- (2) これはだれの自転車ですか。(Whose bike is this?)

In casual speech, か drops and the sentence is pronounced with rising intonation. (When written, “?” is used to indicate that the sentence is a question.)

- (3) 今晚、パーティーに行く か ? (Are you going to the party tonight?)
こんばん パーティー い

3-2. ね [Confirmation/agreement]

- (1) 今日、宿題はないですね。↑ (We have no homework today, have we?) [confirmation]
きょう しゅくだい
 (2) この宿題は難しいですね。↓ (This homework is difficult, isn't it?) [agreement]
しゅくだい むずか

3-3. よ [Emphasis]

- (1) たこやきはおいしいですよ。↑ (Takoyaki is delicious, I tell you.)
 (2) あした郵便局は休みですよ。↑ (The post office is closed tomorrow, you know.)
ゆうびんきょく やす

4. Noun-listing particles

4-1. と vs. や

と and や both list nouns. The difference is that “A と B” implies “A and B, and that’s all” (i.e., exhaustive listing) while “A や B” implies “A, B, etc.” (i.e., non-exhaustive listing). (See L.3 #2 and #5.)

- (1) 天ぷらとみそしるをつきました。 (I made *tempura* and miso soup (and nothing else).)
てん つ
 (2) 野菜や果物をかいました。 (I bought vegetables and fruits (and more).)
や さい くだもの か

4-2. か

か lists nouns as alternatives; i.e., “A か B” means “A or B.” (See L.8 #4.)

- (1) 私はすしか天ぷらが食べたいです。 (I want to eat sushi or *tempura*.)
わたし てん た

5. Prenominal particles

Prenominal particles occur before nouns and indicate that the preceding words modify the following nouns.

5-1. な

な is used when *na*-adjectives modify nouns. (See L.4 #3.)

- (1) 静な町 (a quiet town) ; 便利なアプリ (a handy app)
しず まち べんり

な is also used with nouns when the following words contain の or ん in the first syllable, such as ので and んです. (See L.8 #6 and #7, and L.9 #2.)

- (2) 今日は日曜日なので、郵便局は休みです。 (Today is Sunday, so the post office is closed.)
きょう にちようび ゆうびんきょく やす
 (3) 私は肉を食べません。ベジタリアンなんです。 (I don't eat meat. I'm a vegetarian.)
わたし にく た

5-2. の

の is used when nouns modify nouns. (See L.1 #1 and L.5 #1.)

- (1) 私の車 (my car) ; 大学の図書館 (a university library) ; テーブルの下 (under the table)
わたし くるま だいがく としょかん した

6. Preverbal particle に

The preverbal particle に is affixed to *na*-adjectives and indicates that the preceding *na*-adjectives modify the following verbs. (See L.10 #1.)

- (1) となりの部屋が静かになりました。 (The room next door became quiet.)
へや しず
 (2) トイレがきれいにになりました。 (The bathroom is clean now.)

C. Polite forms and plain forms

Verbs, *i*-adjectives and *da* have polite forms and plain forms, as seen below:

	Polite	Plain
Verb	話します はな 話しました はな	話す はな 話した はな
<i>i</i> -adjective	高いです たか 高かったです たか	高い たか 高かった たか
<i>Da</i>	(静か／学生) です しず かくせい (静か／学生) でした しず かくせい	(静か／学生) だ しず かくせい (静か／学生) だった しず かくせい

Polite forms are used in polite speech (e.g., when you want to talk to someone politely, when you talk to a person you don't know well, etc.) and plain forms are used in casual speech (e.g., when you talk to your friends, family members, etc.). (See L.8 #3.)

- (1) (A student to his teacher) テストは難しいですか。(Is the test difficult?)
- (2) (Student X to Student Y) 漢字は難しい？ (Is kanji difficult?)
- (3) (A teacher to his/her students) 週末はどうでしたか。(How was the weekend?)
- (4) (Student X to Student Y) 週末はどうだった？ (How was the weekend?)

In casual speech, *だ* usually drops unless it is followed by sentence particles. (See E. Auxiliaries, 1. *Da*.)

Plain forms are also used in certain grammatical structures, such as *ので*, *んだ*, *ことがある*, *ことができる*, *と言う・思う*, etc.

- (5) スペインに行くので、今、スペイン語を勉強しています。
(I'm going to Spain, so I'm studying Spanish now.)
- (6) 今晚、パーティーに行きません。あしたテストがあるんです。
(I'm not going to the party tonight. I have a test tomorrow.)
- (7) 漢字を 500 くらい読むことができます。(I can read about 500 kanji characters.)
- (8) 漢字は面白いと思います。(I think kanji is interesting.)

D. Aspect

The state of an action is called “aspect.” When an action is ongoing, the aspect is called “progressive,” and when an action has been completed, the aspect is called “perfect.” In Japanese, these aspects are expressed using grammar elements such as auxiliary verbs and adverbs.

1. V-te いる

V-*te* いる represents either a progressive action or a perfect action depending on the type of verb. If a verb represents an action that can continue (e.g., 話す, 飲む), V-*te* いる represents a progressive action.

(See E. Auxiliaries, 2. (V-*te*)いる)

- (1) 田中さんはチャンさんと話しています。(Tanaka-san is talking with Chan-san.)

2. もう and まだ

The adverbs **もう** and **まだ** are used to indicate the aspect of an action clearly. **もう** indicates that the current state of X has changed from the state of X some time ago (T_1), and **まだ** indicates that the state of X hasn't changed since some time ago (T_1). The following chart shows what **もう** and **まだ** mean when they are used with the affirmative and negative forms of V-*te* いる and the past forms of verbs.

Meaning		Point T_1 —————> Point T_2 (one point in the past) (the moment of speech)		
		at T_1	at T_2	Example
まだ： The state at T_2 remains the same as the state at T_1 .	(a)	I was eating lunch.	I am eating lunch.	私は <u>まだ</u> 昼ご飯を食べています。 (I am <u>still</u> eating lunch.)
	(b)	I was not eating lunch.	I am not eating lunch.	私は <u>まだ</u> 昼ご飯を食べてい <u>ません</u> 。 (I <u>haven't</u> eaten lunch <u>yet</u> .)
もう： The state at T_2 has changed from the state at T_1 .	(c)	I was eating lunch.	I am not eating lunch.	私は <u>もう</u> 昼ご飯を食べてい <u>ません</u> 。 (I am <u>not</u> eating lunch <u>any longer</u> .)
	(d)	I was eating lunch.	I finished my lunch.	私は <u>もう</u> 昼ご飯を食 <u>べ</u> ました。 (I have <u>already</u> eaten lunch.)
	(e)	I was not eating lunch.	I am eating lunch.	私は <u>もう</u> 昼ご飯を食 <u>べ</u> ています。 (I have <u>already</u> begun eating lunch.)

もう and **まだ** are also used with other forms of verbs as well as adjectives and nouns, as seen below. The core meanings of **もう** and **まだ** are the same here.

- (1) まだ帰りません。(I'm not going home yet.)
- (2) もう帰ります。(I'm going home now (so the state will change).)
- (3) 私はこの文法がまだよく分かりません。(I still don't understand this grammar well.)
- (4) あの店はサービスが悪いです。もう行きません。
(The service is bad at that restaurant. I won't go there anymore.)
- (5) 北海道の3月はまだ寒いです。(It's still cold in March in Hokkaido.)
- (6) ストーブをつけたので、もう寒くないです。
(I turned on the heater, so it's not cold anymore.)
- (7) まだ晩ご飯の時間じゃないですが、もうおなかがすきました。
(It's not dinner time yet, but I'm already hungry.)

E. Auxiliaries

Affixed to nouns, adjectives, and/or verbs, auxiliaries add meanings to the preceding words. Auxiliaries conjugate. The conjugation patterns vary; some conjugate like verbs, some like *i*-adjectives, etc.

1. Da (Here, *da* is used to refer to **だ** and conjugated forms collectively.)

Da is an auxiliary that is affixed to nouns, *na*-adjectives, and other sentence elements that do not conjugate. Because such elements cannot indicate a tense and a politeness level by themselves when used as a predicate, *da* is affixed to them in order to indicate a tense and a politeness level.

- (1) 私の母は小学校の先生です。(My mother is an elementary school teacher.)
- (2) この町のバスはあまり便利じゃないです。(The buses in this town are not very convenient.)
- (3) 映画は4時からだ。(The movie is from four o'clock.)

Da conjugates as follows:

		Plain form	Polite form	<i>Te</i> -form
Non-past	Affirmative	だ	です	で
	Negative	じゃない	じゃないです／じゃありません	
Past	Affirmative	だった	でした	
	Negative	じゃなかった	じゃなかったです／ じゃありませんでした	

じゃないです, じゃありません, じゃなかったです and じゃありませんでした are all polite negative forms. Recently, じゃないです and じゃなかったです are more commonly used than じゃありません and じゃありませんでした. However, depending on how you say it, じゃないです may sound like a strong denial and can offend the hearer.

The negative polite forms じゃないです and じゃありません are colloquial versions of ではないです and ではありません, respectively. In written Japanese, ではないです and ではありません are commonly used.

だ drops in casual speech unless it is followed by sentence particles.

- (4) A: カラオケは好き だ? (Do you like karaoke?)
 B: うん、好きだよ／好き だ。(Yeah, I do.) (× うん、好きだ。)
- (5) A: あの人は先生 だ? (Is that person a teacher?)
 B: いや、学生だよ／学生 だ。(No, he/she is a student.) (× いや、学生だ。)

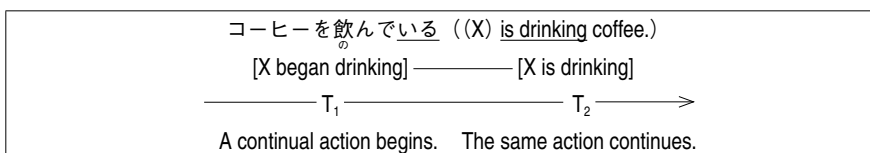
2. (V-te) いる (See D. Aspect, 1. V-te いる.)

Besides being used as a main verb, いる is also used as an auxiliary verb. The auxiliary verb いる occurs with the *te*-forms of verbs. The core meaning of “V-*te* いる” is as follows:

- (i) At one point in the past (T_1), someone did something or something happened.
 (ii) The state caused by the action in (i), whether it was a continual action or a momentary action, remains the same up to the moment of speech (T_2).

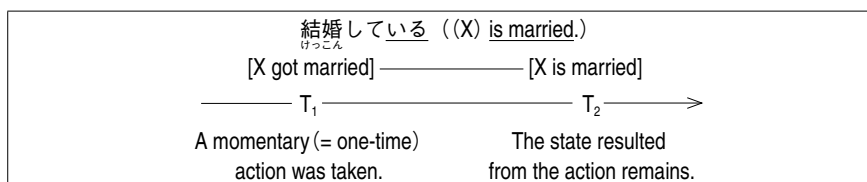
More specifically, “V-*te* いる” means the following:

a. Action in progress

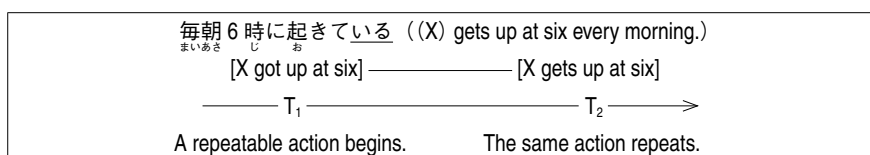


- (1) 私は今、メールを書いています。(I'm writing an email now.)
 (2) 黒田先生は学生と話しています。(Prof. Kuroda is talking with a student.)

b. Resultant state



- (3) この貝は死んでいます。(This shellfish is dead.)
 (4) このコピー機はこわれています。(This copy machine is broken.)

c. Habitual action

- (5) 毎日 5 キロ走っています。(I run 5 km every day.)
- (6) ルームメイトと私は一日に 30 分瞑想 (meditation) をしています。
- (My roommate and I practice meditation for 30 minutes every day.)

Some verbs can represent either a continual action or a momentary action. Thus, V-te いる with those verbs can express both an action in progress and a resultant state, as in (7) and (8).

- (7) 京子さんは今、リビングで着物を着ています。
- (Kyoko-san is putting on a *kimono* in the living room now.)
- [着る here represents a continual action. → 着ています: an action in progress]
- (8) 京子さんは今日、着物を着ています。
- (Kyoko is in *kimono* today. (Kyoko-san put on a *kimono* today, and she is still in it.)
- [着る here represents a momentary action. → 着ています: a resultant state]

d. The meanings of 行っている, 来ている and 帰っている

Verbs that represent a movement from one point to another (e.g., 行く, 来る, 帰る) are called motion verbs. “V-te いる” with a motion verb does not represent a progressive action. Rather, it represents a resultant state, as shown in (9) and (10).

- (9) ブラウンさんは今、日本に行っています。(Brown-san went to Japan and is there now.)
- (10) 今井さんはオフィスに帰っています。(Imai-san came back to the office and is here now.)

e. The meanings of 持っている

One of the meanings of 持つ is “to grab something.” Thus, 持っている literally means “X grabbed something and the state resulted from that action remains,” i.e., “X has something in his/her hand.”

- (11) ユキさんは左手にスマホを持っています。(Yuki-san has a smartphone in her left hand.)

Another meaning of 持つ is “to acquire possession.” With this meaning, 持っている means “to possess.”

- (12) リーさんはバンコクにオフィスビルを持っています。
- (Li-san has an office building in Bangkok.)

f. The meaning of 住む

The English verb *live* is a state verb (i.e., a verb that represents a state), but 住む is not. Thus, to express the idea of “to live,” 住んでいる is used rather than 住む.

- (13) 兄はオーストラリアに住んでいます。(My elder brother lives in Australia.)
- Cf. 私は来月から東京に住みます。(I’m going to live in Tokyo starting next month.)
- (14) 私は 2 年前、シンガポールに住んでいました。
- (I lived in Singapore two years ago.)
- × 私は 2 年前、シンガポールに住みました。

3. (V-te) みる (See L.7 #6.)

The core meaning of “V-te みる” is “V and see.”

- (1) 日本語で手紙を書いてみます。
にほんご てがみ か
 (I'll write a letter in Japanese and see what'll happen./I'll try to write a letter in Japanese.)
- (2) 日本語で手紙を書いてみました。(I wrote a letter in Japanese to see what would happen.)
にほんご てがみ か

Note that (2) means “I wrote a letter in Japanese,” not “I tried to write a letter in Japanese (but didn't).” Thus, this construction cannot be used to express the idea that someone tried to do something, but he/she didn't. (3) is ungrammatical.

- (3) × 私は日本語で手紙を書いてみましたが、書きませんでした。
わたし にほんご てがみ か

4. (V-masu) たい “want to V” (See L.7 #5.)

たい is an auxiliary *i*-adjective with the meaning of “want (to V).” It is attached to the *masu*-stems of verbs. Because たい is an *i*-adjective, it conjugates as follows:

	Non-past		Past	
	Affirmative	Negative	Affirmative	Negative
Polite	(行き)たいです	(行き)たくないです	(行き)たかったです	(行き)たくなかったです
Plain	(行き)たい	(行き)たくない	(行き)たかった	(行き)たくなかった

- (1) 冷たいビールが飲みたいです。(I want to drink cold beer.)
つめ の
- (2) 子供の時、トラックを運転したかったです。
こども とし うんてん
 (When I was a child, I wanted to drive a truck.)

When a third person wants to do something, V-*masu* たい is used rather than V-*masu* たい.

(See E. Auxiliaries, 5. (Adj(*i*)-stem) がる below.)

5. (Adj(*i*)-stem) がる “show signs of” (See L.7 #4 ~ 5.)

がる is attached to the stems of *i*-adjectives and expresses a third person's desire, feelings (e.g., うれしい (happy), かなしい (sad), さびしい (lonely)) and sensations (e.g., 暑い (hot), 寒い (cold), 痛い (painful)). がる is an auxiliary *u*-verb, so the *te*-form is がって. In order to express a third person's desire, feelings, etc., がる is commonly used in the form of がっている. (See 言語ノート in L.9.)

- (1) ケンさんは彼女をほしがっています。(Ken-san wants a girlfriend.)
かのじょ
- (2) 高木さんは日本へ帰りたがっています。(Takagi-san wants to go back to Japan.)
たかぎ にほん かえ
- (3) メイさんは地震をこわがっています。(May-san is afraid of earthquakes.)
じしん

がる is used with only a limited number of *na*-adjectives (e.g., 得意がる (proud), いやがる (resist V), めいわくがる (annoyed)).

6. そう [impression] (See L.9 #3.)

そう is affixed to the stems of *i*-adjectives and *na*-adjectives. It is primarily used to express the speaker's impression from what he/she sees, but it is also used to express his/her impression about something (or someone) after hearing or reading about it (or him/her).

- (1) (After hearing about a course) そのコースは宿題が多くて大変そうですね。
しゅくだい おお たいへん
 (That course sounds tough with a lot of homework, doesn't it?)
- (2) (After reading reviews on a restaurant) このレストランはおいしそうです。
 (It sounds like this restaurant serves delicious dishes.)

The negative ending ない changes to なさ before そう.

- (3) (After reading a movie review) この映画はあまりおもしろくなさそうです。
(It sounds like this movie is not very interesting.)

Although it is not very common, そう is sometimes used with the negative forms of verbs, as in (4).

- (4) 前田さんは日本の歴史をあまり知らなさそうです。
(It looks like Maeda-san doesn't know much about Japanese history.)

そう is an auxiliary *na*-adjective; the noun-modifying form is そんな and the adverb form is そうに.

- (5) おいしそんなケーキをもらいました。(lit. I received a delicious-looking cake.)
(6) 便利そんな時計ですね。(lit. (That's) a handy-looking watch, isn't it?)
(7) みんな楽しそうに歌を歌っています。(It looks like everybody is singing songs happily.)

F. Nominalizers

Nominalizers are affixed to phrases and sentences to change them to noun-equivalents. (Cf. English nominalizers: *to* in "I like to travel alone," and *that* in "I know that Harry loves Meghan.")

1. の

The nominalizer の is used in certain sentence patterns, including X が好きだ／きらいだ／上手だ／下手だ／得意だ／苦手だ.

- (1) チョイさんは動物の写真をとるのが好きです。
(Choi-san likes to take pictures of animals.)
(2) 私は人の前で話すのが苦手です。(I'm bad at speaking in front of people.)

As a matter of fact, のです consists of the nominalizer の and です, which means that "S のです" has the same structure as "N です." (In casual speech, んです is used instead of のです. In this case, the nominalizer is ん. (See H. Important sentence patterns, 3. んです sentences.)

2. こと

The nominalizer こと is used in sentence patterns such as ～ことを知っている, ～ことを忘れる, ～は～ことだ, ～ことができる, and ～ことがある.

- (1) 日本ではコンビニでコピーができることを知っていますか。
(Do you know that in Japan you can make copies at convenience stores?)
(2) 今晚ユキさんが来ることを忘れていました。
(I'd forgotten that Yuki-san is coming (to my place) tonight.)
(3) 私のしゅみは絵を描くことです。(My hobby is painting.)
(4) 私のアパートから富士山を見ることができます。(I can see Mr. Fuji from my apartment.)
(5) アイスランドへ行ったことがありますか。(Have you ever been to Iceland?)

G. Connecting verbs, adjectives, and sentences

In Japanese, verbs, adjectives, and sentences are connected in various ways. One way is by using the *te*-forms of verbs, *i*-adjectives and です, and another way is by using conjunctions such as から and ので.

1. *Te*-forms (See L6 #1 and L.7 #1.)

a. When *te*-forms are used alone, i.e., when they are not followed by auxiliary verbs such as いる and ください, *te*-forms indicate that the sentences do not end there. They are often translated as *and* in English.

- (1) 週末、ジムへ行って運動しました。(I went to a gym and exercised during the weekend.)
しゅうまつ い うんどう
- (2) 兄は目が大きくて、イケメンです。(My elder brother is a handsome man with big eyes.)
あに め
- (3) 私はユア大学の四年生で、ビジネスを専攻しています。
わたし だいがく よ ねんせい せんこう
 (I'm a senior at Yua University and a business major.)

Note that *te*-forms do not carry any information regarding tenses and politeness levels. Those are indicated in the main predicates.

b. The *te*-forms of verbs carry various meanings. Their meanings are determined according to the context. A common meaning is that the action represented by V-*te* is taken before the action represented by the following verb (i.e., two actions in sequence), as in (1). Other meanings include means, manners, and reasons, as in (4)~(6).

- (4) 私はいつも歩いて大学へ行きます。(I always go to the university on foot.) [means]
わたし ある だいがく い
- (5) ゆかりさんはきものを着てレセプションに行きました。
き
 (Yukari-san went to the reception in a *kimono*.) [manner]
- (6) 村山さんは社長とけんかをして会社をやめました。
むらやま しゃちょう かいしゃ
 (Murayama-san had a fight with the president, and quit the company) [reason]

c. In ～ていい／よくない, the preceding *te*-form represents the reason that something is good or not good.

- (7) このアパートはキャンパスに近くていいです。
ちか
 (This apartment is close to the campus and good.)
- (8) 私の部屋はうるさくてよくないです。(My room is noisy and not good.)
わたし へ や

2. ので vs. から

ので and から both indicate a reason. (See L.7 #2 and L.8 #7.) The difference between ので and から is that ので presents a reason without making a point that the preceding statement is the reason for what is said in the main clause. On the other hand, when S から is used, S is emphasized as a reason more than S ので. (In this respect, you may say that ので is an “implicit *because*” and から is an “explicit *because*.”) Because of this, から is not appropriate in some situations. For example, in (1) and (2), the から sentences sound like the speaker emphasizes the reasons, which have nothing to do with the hearer, in asking for information or asking a favor; therefore, the sentences sound self-centered and rude to the hearer.

- (1) 日本料理を食いたい { ので／?? から }、いいレストランを教えてくださいませんか。
にほんりょうり た おし
 (I want to eat Japanese dishes. Could you give me (the name of) a good restaurant?/
 Because I want to eat Japanese dishes, could you give me (the name of) a good restaurant?)
- (2) 日本に留学します { ので／?? から }、推薦状を書いてくださいませんか。
にほん りゅうがく すいせんじょう か
 (I'm going to study in Japan. Do you mind writing a recommendation letter for me?/
 Because I'm going to study in Japan, do you mind writing a recommendation letter for me?)

Note that in (2), the polite form します is used before ので, but this is not ungrammatical. In fact, this is a way to express the speaker's politeness to his/her addressee.

H. Important sentence patterns

1. ある／いる sentences (= existential sentences)

Sentences that involve ある and いる are called existential sentences. Existential sentences appear in several different sentence patterns.

a. XにYがある／いる (See L.5 #2.)

This pattern involves no topic (i.e., は is not used). It is used, for example, when you describe what you have just seen, as in (1) and (2).

- (1) あ、車くるまの下したにネコねこがいますよ。(Look! There's a cat under the car!)
- (2) あそこあそこにラーメン屋やがありますよ。ラーメンを食たべましょう。
(There's a *ramen* shop there. Let's have *ramen*.)

b. XにはYがある／いる

In this pattern, X (= location) is presented as the topic; therefore, the focus is on Y (= what exists in X).

- (3) 私は京都きょうとが大好きです。京都きょうとにはお寺でらや神社じんじややきれいな所ところがたくさんあります。
(I love Kyoto. There are many temples, shrines, and beautiful spots in Kyoto.)

c. XはYがある／いる (See L.5 #6.)

In this sentence pattern, there is no location particle に. Because of this, this sentence pattern conveys the meaning of possession rather than the meaning of existence.

- (4) 私わたしはお金かねがあまりありません。(I don't have much money.)
- (5) リンさんは弟おとうとが二人ふたりいます。(Lin-san has two younger brothers.)

d. XでYがある (See L.5 #7.)

This sentence pattern is used to tell someone that an event takes place in a certain place. Note that the location particle で is used instead of に.

- (6) 今日きょう、キャンパスキャンパスで学生がくせいのデモがあります。(There's a student rally on campus today.)

e. YはXにある／いる (See L.5 #5)

In this sentence pattern, Y (= what exists) is presented as the topic; therefore, the focus is on X (= where Y is).

- (7) 本屋ほんやは学生会館がくせいかいかんにあります。(The bookstore is in the Student Union Building.)

2. ～ませんか “Would you like ~?” vs. ～ましょう “Let's ~.”

The difference between ～ませんか and ～ましょう is that ～ませんか is a hearer-centered expression while ～ましょう is a speaker-centered expression. Thus, ～ませんか sounds like the speaker respects hearer's intention, whereas ～ましょう has no such implication.

Another difference is that ～ませんか is used both (a) when only the hearer is the actor, as in (1), and (b) when both the speaker and the hearer are the actors, as in (2). ～ましょう, on the other hand, is used only when both the speaker and the hearer are the actors.

- (1) 今晚こんばん、私わたしのうちに来きませんか。(Would you like to come to my house this evening?)
(× 私わたしのうちに来きましょう。)
- (2) いっしょに映画えいがに行いきませんか。(Would you like to go to a movie together?)
Cf. いっしょに映画えいがに行いきましょう。(Let's go to a movie together.)

Another important point is that ～ませんか is not appropriate when it has already been decided or it is known that the action will be taken. For example, a teacher can say (3) to his/her students in the classroom, but he/she cannot use ～ませんか in this situation.

- (3) では、これから漢字を勉強しましょう。(Now, let's study kanji.)
 (× では、これから勉強しませんか。)

3. んです sentences (See L.8 #6 and L.9 #2)

んです and its variations (e.g., のです, んだ, の) are used in various situations.

a. Asking for an explanation, providing an explanation, and asking for confirmation

One typical situation in which んです is used is when the speaker asks for an explanation from the hearer about what the speaker has just recognized in the way the hearer appears. For example, if the speaker sees the hearer reading a travel guide, he/she may say (1), using んです. In this case, the sentence without んです is not acceptable.

- (1) 旅行するんですか。((I see you reading a travel guide. Is it that) you're going on a trip?)
 (× 旅行しますか。)

んです is used when the speaker provides an explanation, too. For example, if the speaker notices that the hearer sees him/her reading a travel guide, he/she provides an explanation using んです, as in (2). Here again, the sentence without んです is not acceptable.

- (2) ヨーロッパへ行くんです。(You see me reading a travel guide. It is that) I'm going to Europe.)
 (× ヨーロッパへ行きます。)

んです is also used when the speaker has learned something that the hearer already knows, and wants to ask the hearer about it or confirm it with the hearer. (3) and (4) are examples of this situation.

- (3) どうしてパーティーに来なかったんですか。(Why (is it that) you didn't come to the party?)
 (× どうしてパーティーに来ませんでしたか。)
 (4) ケイさんとデートするんですか。((Is it that) you are going to have a date with Kay-san?)
 (× ケイさんとデートしますか。)

Another situation in which んです is used is when the speaker provides an explanation of what he/she has just said. (5) is an example.

- (5) ピーナッツは食べません。ピーナッツ・アレルギーなんです。
 (I don't eat peanuts. I have a peanut allergy.)

What is common in all the situations above is that some kind of information, whether visual or linguistic, is shared between the speaker and the hearer first and that the speaker is asking a question, or making a statement, about it.

b. Lead-in sentences before asking a favor, asking a question, etc.

んですが is used in lead-in sentences before sentences that ask a favor, ask a question, etc., as in (6) and (7).

- (6) 先生、質問があるんですが、いいですか。
 (Professor, I have a question. Is it all right (to ask)?)

- (7) ジョンさん、ちょっとお願いがあるんですが、いいですか。
(John-san, I have a favor to ask of you. It is all right (to ask)?)

c. Assertion with emotion

んです is used when the speaker asserts something with emotion, as in (8).

- (8) A : とうふはきらいです。(I don't like tofu.)
B : でも、とうふは体にいいんですよ。(But tofu is good for you, you know.)

Using んです properly is very important, because not using んです when it should be used or using んです when it shouldn't be used can cause confusion or a misunderstanding for the hearer. For example, (9) is simply asking the hearer if the hearer is going to Kim-san's birthday party, while (10) sounds like the speaker has learned from someone that the hearer is going to Kim-san's birthday party, and asking the hearer if it is true. Thus, in some situations (10) may sound accusatory.

- (9) キムさんの誕生日パーティーに行きますか。
(Are you going to Kim-san's birthday party?)
(10) キムさんの誕生日パーティーに行くんですか。
(Are you going to Kim-san's birthday party?)

4. Reporting sentences (See L.9 #5.)

Reporting sentences are sentences that convey to the hearer what someone (= X) said.

In reporting sentences, when X is a third person, 言っていました is commonly used.

- (1) アイさんは、ゆみさんは結婚していると言っていました。
(Ai-san said that Yumi-san is married.)

言っています is another common form when X is a third person. This form implies that the speaker assumes that what X said is what X still thinks at the moment of speech.

- (2) アイさんは、ゆみさんは結婚していると言っています。
(Ai-san says that Yumi-san is married.)

言いました is yet another form. This form simply describes X's saying something as his/her act in the past rather than reporting what X said. In (3), for example, the focus is on Ai's act of saying something at one point in the past.

- (3) アイさんは、ゆみさんは結婚していると言いました。
(Ai-san said that Yumi-san is married.)

To directly quote what someone said, you use the quotation marks (「 」). Note that the quotative marker と is necessary in this construction, too.

- (4) アイさんは、「ゆみさんは結婚しています。」と言っていました。
(Ai-san said, "Yumi-san is married.")

5. Comparative sentences

Comparatives sentences appear in a variety of sentence patterns. One of them is "X と Y とどちらの方が Adj." (See L.10 #5-2-1.) In this pattern, "V-plain.non-past の" can be used in the positions of X and Y. (See F. Nominalizers, 1.の.)

- (1) A : 野球を見るのとするのとどちらの方が好きですか。
(Which do you prefer, watching baseball or playing it?)

B : (するより) 見る方が好きです。(I prefer watching it (to playing it).)

Note that in (1B) の is not necessary after 見る because 方 serves as a nominalizer.

1. Ellipsis

In Japanese, some sentence elements are usually left unsaid in certain situations.

a. The first person and second person pronouns

The first person and second person pronouns are usually left unsaid unless they are contrastive elements or elements under focus.

(1) Ø きのうユキさんとカラオケに行きました。(I went to karaoke with Yuki-san yesterday.)

(2) Ø 来学期も日本語を取りますか。(Are you going to take a Japanese course next term, too?)

Cf. きみさんはパーティーに行きますが、私は行きません。

(Kimi-san is going to the party, but I'm not.) [contrastive]

b. The same topics in second sentences

When two adjacent sentences share the same topic, the one in the second sentence is usually omitted.

(3) リンさんはこの大学の四年生です。Ø コンピュータを専攻しています。

(Lin-san is a senior at this university. He/she is majoring in computer science.)

c. Elements that appeared in the preceding sentences

The elements that appeared in the preceding sentences are usually omitted except for the predicates.

(4) A : もう教科書を買いましたか。(Have you bought the textbook yet?)

B : はい、Ø 買いました。(Yes, I have.)

(5) A : アフリカに行ったことがありますか。(Have you ever been to Africa?)

B : いいえ、Ø ありません。(No, I haven't.)

(6) たこやきは日本の食べ物です。私も時々 Ø 作ります。

(Takoyaki is a Japanese food. I sometimes make it, too.)

d. The same predicates in questions

The same predicates are usually not repeated in questions, as in (7-A₂).

(7) A₁ : クリスさん、日本の食べ物は何か好きですか？

(What Japanese food do you like, Chris-san?)

B : すきやきが好きです／すきやきです。(I like *sukiyaki*.)

A₂ : マリアさんは Ø ? (Maria-san, (what do you like)?)

e. Sentences after “S んですが”

んですが is used in lead-in sentences when asking a question, asking a favor, etc. (See H. Important sentence patterns, 3. んです sentences.) In this case, the main sentences are often omitted, as in (8).

(8) A : 上野さん、ちょっとお願いがあるんですが、Ø。

(lit. Ueno-san, I have a favor to ask of you, but ...)

B : はい、何ですか。(Yes, what is it?)