

Japanese is Possible!
Lesson 5

Here come the verbs

- Verb use
- Past tense
- Useful Words
- Study Tips

Using verbs

In the present tense, it's very easy to make simple sentences with Japanese verbs. Why? Because in plain speech, they require no conjugation. In Japanese, the predicate verb (the main verb of a sentence), will always be at the end of a sentence, with the exception of particles that may follow it. Let's look at an example (from now on, any vocabulary that you don't recognize and that has not been explained in a previous lesson will be at the bottom of the lesson):

Tanaka san wa mizu o nomu.
[Tanaka *tpc* water *oj* drink.]
Tanaka drinks water.

Note: I have used the arbitrary abbreviations *tpc* to show that *wa* marks a topic and *oj* to show that *o* marks an object. I will also use *sj* to show that *ga* marks a subject.

Ame ga furu.
[Rain *sj* precipitate.]
It's raining.

Kore o kau ka.
[This *oj* buy?]
Will you buy this?

Itsu gohan o taberu?
[When meal *oj* eat?]
When will you eat?

See? It's pretty simple at this point. You can see that I put "you" in a number of the translations. The speaker could just have easily been referring anyone else, depending on the context, but if you ask something like the above and you are not talking about anybody in particular, the listener will assume that you are referring to him or her.

Now that you know how to place a verb into a sentence, let's take it up a notch with:

Conjugation

Conjugation wise, there are three types of Japanese verbs: *ichidan* verbs, *godan*

verbs, and irregular verbs. Ichidan means "one step" and verbs are put into this category because they are conjugated rather easily. Other teaching methods refer to them as ru verbs or vowel verbs. The title godan, meaning "five step" will be explained later. Godan verbs are also known as "u" verbs or consonant verbs.

Let's start with ichidan verbs first, since they are the simplest.

Ichidan verbs

All ichidan end with either -eru or -iru. So if you see a verb with any ending other than this, it's not an ichidan verb.

Like I said, ichidans are relatively easy to conjugate and all you have to do to change a plain ichidan verb into the past tense, all you have to do is take the -ru off the end and replace it with -ta.

taberu --> tabeta
oshieru--> oshieta
iru --> ita

Godan verbs

Godan verbs are not so easy, so I have them herded into some groups that conjugate similarly.

-U, -TSU, -RU
-MU, -NU, -BU
-KU
-GU
-SU

You can see that godan verbs may also end in -ru. This means that you have to learn whether any particular verb with -iru or -eru at the end is ichidan or godan. I would say that there are more ichidan verbs ending in -eru than godan verbs, and more godan verbs ending in -iru than ichidan. But there are a lot of both in both groups.

To conjugate verbs that end in -u preceded by a vowel, -tsu or -ru , remove the final syllable (the ending) and replace it with -tta:

matsu --> matta
hashiru --> hashitta
toru --> totta
kau --> katta

Verbs with -mu, -nu or bu conjugate by removing the ending and adding -nda:
yomu --> yonda (there aren't very many -mu verbs)
shinu --> shinda (this is the only -nu verb)
yobu --> yonda (this is the same as for yomu, gotta look at context for these)
tobu --> tonda

For verbs with -ku, change it to -ita
tataku --> tataita

-gu changes to -ida
isogu --> isoida

and finally,

Verbs with -su change it to -shita
hanasu --> hanashita
desu --> deshita

There are four verbs that conjugate irregularly in the past tense:

suru --> shita

iku --> itta (this is its only irregular conjugation)

kuru --> kita

da --> datta

You can use the past tense just as you would use the present tense. Simply put it at the end of the sentence.

Uta o utatta.

[Song *oj* sang.]

[I] sang a song.

Nihongo o hanashita.

[Japanese *oj* spoke.]

[I] spoke Japanese.

Michio san ga tabeta.

[Michio *sj* ate.]

Michio ate./Michio has eaten.

Kuruma o oshita.

[Car *oj* pushed.]

[She] pushed the car.

Useful words to add to your list

Miscellaneous words:

san - this word is added to the end of a person's name to show simple respect for that person. Many people equate it with "Mr." or "Mrs." but it's a little different. It can be used with first names as well as surnames, and should not be forgotten. You should use it any time you refer to another person, but never when referring to yourself.

itsu - when

Michio - a female given name

Tanaka - a surname

Pronouns:

kore - this

sore - that

are - that over there

ame - rain

gohan - a meal, boiled rice

kuruma - car

mizu - water

nihongo - the Japanese language

okane - money

sora - sky

terebi - T.V.

uta - song

Adjectives:

atsui - hot

ii - good

samui - cold

warui - bad

Verbs:

erabu - to choose
furu - to precipitate, to fall (for rain, snow, etc.)
hashiru - to run (godan)
iku - to go
iru - to exist (for animate objects: people, large animals, etc.) (ichi)
isogu - to hurry
kau - to buy
kiku - to listen
kuru - to come
matsu - to wait
motsu - to have
nomu - to drink
oshieru - to teach (ichidan)
osu - to push
shinu - to die
suru - to do
tataku - to hit
tobu - to jump, to fly
toru - to take
utau - to sing
yobu - to call
yomu - to read

Study Tips

To get ready for your study of Japanese, I suggest getting a good book. You can find some on my book recommendation page here: [Book Recommendations](#).

A review of study tips:

- Study with siblings/friends
- Talk to Japanese people in various chat rooms, including www.wbs.net
- Don't worry about what you don't know
- Practice often
- Review lists/flashcards often
- Study often (but not as often as you review lists)
- Use words in sentences
- Listen in Anime/songs/video games for words you just learned
- Learn the lyrics to songs you enjoy
- Pull out cool phrases from Anime, and look them up in a dictionary

Next Time

- Some more use with verbs
- How to use a few particles
- And, like always, more useful words

