

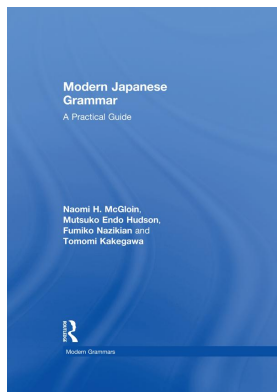
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Verbs

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12

Verbs

12.1 Conjugation of verbs

Japanese verbs are grouped into three types, the **-ru**, **-u**, and irregular types depending on the conjugational patterns. The plain nonpast form of **-ru** verbs ends with **-iru** or **-eru**. The plain nonpast form of **-u** verbs ends with **-u**, **-tsu**, **-ru** (... **aru**, ... **uru**, ... **oru**), **-mu**, **-bu**, **-nu**, **-su**, **-ku**, or **-gu**. However, there are u-verbs such as **kaeru** 'to return home,' **hairu** 'to enter,' **hashiru** 'to run,' and **kiru** 'to cut,' which end with **-iru** or **-eru**.

(1) **-ru** verbs

The basic conjugations of the **-ru** type are as follows.

Dict. form ⁽¹⁾	食べる taberu 'eat'	寝る neru 'sleep'	起きる okiru 'get up'	着る kiru 'wear'	教える oshieru 'teach'
Plain, neg., nonpast	食べない tabenai	寝ない nenai	起きない okinai	着ない kinai	教えない oshienai
Polite/nonpast	食べます tabemasu	寝ます nemasu	起きます okimasu	着ます kimasu	教えます oshiemasu
Plain, aff., nonpast	食べる taberu	寝る neru	起きる okiru	着る kiru	教える oshieru
Conditional	食べれば tabereba	寝れば nereba	起きれば okireba	着れば kireba	教えれば oshiereba
Volitional	食べよう tabeyoo	寝よう neyoo	起きよう okiyoo	着よう kiyoo	教えよう oshieyoo

⁽¹⁾ Dictionary form is the same as the plain affirmative nonpast form.

The plain past form of **-ru** verbs is formed by replacing **-ru** with **-ta**. **-Ta** indicates past tense.

Plain, aff. past	食べた tabeta 'ate'	寝た neta 'slept'	起きた okita 'got up'	着た kita 'wore'	教えた oshieta 'taught'
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(2) -u verbs

The basic conjugations of the -u type verbs are as follows.

Dict. form	書く kaku 'write'	読む yomu 'read'	話す hanasu 'speak'	死ぬ shinu 'die'	待つ matsu 'wait'
Plain, neg., nonpast	書かない kakanai	読まない yomanai	話さない hanasanai	死なない shinanai	待たない matanai
Polite, nonpast	書きます kakimasu	読みます yomimasu	話します hanashimasu	死にます shinimasu	待ちます machimasu
Plain, aff., nonpast	書く kaku	読む yomu	話す hanasu	死ぬ shinu	待つ matsu
Conditional	書けば akeba	読めば yomeba	話せば hanaseba	死ねば shineba	待てば mateba
Volitional	書こう kakoo	読もう yomoo	話そう hanasoo	死のう shinoo	待とう matoo

The plain past form of -u verbs varies depending on the last syllable of the dictionary form of the verb.

■ (i) -u, -tsu and -ru endings → -tta

Dict. form	買う kau	待つ matsu	走る hashiru
Plain past	買った katta 'bought'	待った matta 'waited'	走った hashitta 'ran'

■ (ii) -mu, -bu and -nu endings → -nda

Dict. form	読む yomu	呼ぶ yobu	死ぬ shinu
Plain past	読んだ yonda 'read'	呼んだ yonda 'called'	死んだ shinda 'died'

■ (iii) -su ending → -shita

Dict. form	話す hanasu	のばす nobasu
Plain past	話した hanashita 'talked'	のばした nobashita 'extended'

■ (iv) -ku ending → -ita

Dict. form	書く kaku	歩く aruku
Plain past	書いた kaita 'wrote'	歩いた aruita 'walked'

One exception for this group is **iku** 'to go.' The plain past form of **iku** is **itta** (行く → 行った).

Conjugation of verbs

■ (v) **-gu** ending → **-ida**

Dict. form	泳ぐ oyogu	ぬぐ nugu
Plain past	泳いだ oyoida 'swam'	ぬいだ nuida 'took (e.g. a coat) off'

(3) **Irregular verbs**

There are two irregular verbs, **kuru** 'to come' and **suru** 'to do.'

Dict. form	くる kuru 'come'	する suru 'do'
Plain, neg., nonpast	こない konai	しない shinai
Polite, nonpast	きます kimasu	します shimasu
Plain, aff., nonpast	くる kuru	する suru
Conditional	くれば kureba	すれば sureba
Volitional	こよう koyoo	しよう shiyoo

The plain past forms of the irregular verbs are as follows.

Dict. form	くる kuru	する suru
Plain, past	きた kita 'came'	した shita 'did'

(4) **te-forms**

V-**te** forms can be obtained by changing the past tense morpheme **ta** to **te**. When the past tense morpheme has a voiced sound /d/, **da** changes to **de**. **Te**-forms are used to link clauses and also in many constructions with auxiliary verbs.

▶ 19.2; 22.1

Many Japanese verbs end with the sound **-ru**. Obviously, all the **ru**-verbs and irregular verbs do, and many of the **u**-verbs as well. In fact, **-ru** is the 'default' ending so that it is attached to newly coined verbs, other than those that take **suru** 'to do'; e.g. **sabo-ru** 'to play hooky (from "sabotage" in French),' **guugu-ru** 'to search using Google,' **nabi-ru** 'to navigate,' **sutanba-ru** 'to stand by.'

NOTE

12.2 Transitive and intransitive verbs

Intransitive verbs do not require a direct object. They only require the subject of the sentence. Intransitive verbs represent movements, events or spontaneous changes.

今朝私は10キロ歩いた。

Kesa watashi wa juk-kiro aruita.

I walked 10 km this morning.

台風で木が倒れた。

Taifuu de ki ga taoreta.

Because of a typhoon, trees fell down.

花が咲いた。

Hana ga saita.

Flowers bloomed.

Intransitive verbs expressing motion take the particle **o** to express traversed space; e.g. **kawa o oyogu** ‘swim the river’ vs. **kawa de oyogu** ‘swim in the river’.

この道をまっすぐ行ってください。

Kono michi o massugu itte kudasai.

Please go straight ahead on/along this street.

公園を通って行ってください。

Koon o tootte itte kudasai.

Please go passing through/via the park.

Transitive verbs require a direct object in addition to the subject of the sentence. Transitive verbs typically express actions with someone acting upon something or someone else; i.e. the direct object.

Many verbs come in intransitive and transitive pairs. There are ten major types of pairs depending on the suffixes. The verbs ending in **-su** are all transitive, and their intransitive counterparts end in **-ru**. One cannot say that all the verbs ending in **-ru** are intransitive, however.

Type	Intransitive verbs	Transitive verbs
-u/-eru	開く aku ‘open’	開ける akeru ‘open’
-aru/-eru	閉まる shimaru ‘close’	閉める shimeru ‘close’
-waru/-eru	変わる kawaru ‘change’	変える kaeru ‘change’
-ru/-su	直る naoru ‘be fixed’	直す naosu ‘fix’
-eru/-asu	出る deru ‘go out’	出す dasu ‘take out’
-eru/-yasu	冷える hieru ‘get chilled’	冷やす hiyasu ‘chill’
-reru/-su	壊れる kowareru ‘break’	壊す kowasu ‘break’
-eru/-u	割れる wareru ‘break’	割る waru ‘break’
-ru/-seru	乗る noru ‘get on’	乗せる noseru ‘put on’
-iru/-osu	起きる okiru ‘get up’	起こす okosu ‘wake up’

12.3 Action and stative verbs

Action verbs describe volitional actions such as ‘to eat,’ ‘to walk,’ and ‘to study.’ Stative verbs describe the state of someone or something such as ‘to exist,’ ‘to possess,’ or ‘to be able to do.’

The following are examples of stative verbs.

あそこに大きい犬がいる。

Asoko ni ookii inu ga iru. (existence – animate)

There is a big dog over there.

病院は駅のそばにある。

Byooin wa eki no soba ni aru. (existence – inanimate)

The hospital is near the station.

田中さんは運転ができる。

Tanaka-san wa unten ga dekiru. (ability)

Mr/Ms Tanaka can drive (a car).

▶ 40; 41

12.4 Punctual and durative verbs

Punctual verbs express an event or an action, which takes place instantaneously. They include **korobu** ‘to fall down,’ **kekkon suru** ‘to marry,’ **kuru** ‘to come,’ and **iku** ‘to go.’ With these verbs, there is a clear difference in the state before and after the action or event takes place; therefore, they are also called ‘change-of-state verbs.’ For example, before **okiru** ‘to awake,’ one is asleep, but after it, one is awake. Similarly, before **shinu** ‘to die,’ one is alive, but after it, one is dead.

Durative verbs represent an action or a process, which assumes duration. Some examples are **yomu** ‘to read,’ **kaku** ‘to write,’ **taberu** ‘to eat,’ **utau** ‘to sing,’ **hashiru** ‘to run,’ and **benkyoo suru** ‘to study.’

▶ 19.2.1

12.5 Controllable and non-controllable verbs

Verbs can be categorized into controllable and non-controllable. Controllable verbs describe actions that the agent (doer) is able to control. Non-controllable verbs indicate actions and events that happen beyond the speaker’s control or ability. When there is a transitive–intransitive pair of verbs, the transitive verbs express controllable actions while the intransitive counterparts usually express non-controllable, spontaneous happenings.

風で窓が開いた。

Kaze de mado ga aita.

The window opened because of the wind.

暑いから、窓を開けた。

Atsui kara, mado o aketa.

I opened the window because it was hot.

Spontaneous verbs such as **mieru** ‘can see,’ **kikoeru** ‘can hear,’ **ureru** ‘sell well,’ and **kireru** ‘cut well’ express non-controllable situations.

パワーポイントのスライドがよく見えない。

Pawaapointo no suraido ga yoku mienai.

I cannot see the Powerpoint slides very well (they are not visible).

声が小さくてよく聞こえない。

Koe ga chiisakute yoku kikoenai.

Your/his/her voice is too soft and I can’t hear too well (it is not audible).

今年はこのタイプのデザインが売れるでしょう。

Kotoshi wa kono taipu no dezain ga ureru deshoo.

This type of design will sell well this year.

The corresponding transitive verbs such as **miru** ‘to look (at), watch, see,’ **kiku** ‘to listen, hear,’ and **uru** ‘to sell’ can be used to describe controllable situations when they are used in the potential form.

ニューヨークに行ったら、色々なミュージカルが見られますよ。

Nyuu Yooku ni ittara, iroiro na myuujikaru ga miraremasu yo.

You can see all kinds of musicals if you go to New York.

このチャンネルで日本の歌が聴けます。

Kono channeru de Nihon no uta ga kikemasu.

You can listen to Japanese music on this channel.

12.6 Potential verbs

Potential forms express the meanings of potentiality and ability. The formation depends on the types of verbs; **-ru**, **-u** and irregular verbs. With **-ru** verbs, the final **-ru** is replaced by **-rareru**; with **-u** verbs, the final **-u** is replaced by **-eru**. The potential forms of the irregular verbs **suru** and **kuru** are **dekiru** and **korareru**, respectively. In conversation **-rareru** is often shortened to **-reru** as in **mireru** ‘can see,’ **tabereru** ‘can eat’ and **koreru** ‘can come.’

Ru-verbs

<i>Dictionary form</i>	<i>Potential plain nonpast</i>
食べる taberu ‘eat’	食べられる taberareru
寝る neru ‘sleep’	寝られる nerareru
教える oshieru ‘teach’	教えられる oshierareru
見る miru ‘see’	見られる mirareru
着る kiru ‘wear’	着られる kirareru

U-verbs

<i>Dictionary form</i>	<i>Potential plain nonpast</i>
読む yomu ‘read’	読める yomeru
買う kau ‘buy’	買える kaeru
書く kaku ‘write’	書ける kakeru
立つ tatsu ‘stand’	立てる tateru
話す hanasu ‘speak’	話せる hanaseru

Irregular verbs

<i>Dictionary form</i>	<i>Potential plain nonpast</i>
する suru ‘do’	できる dekiru
くる kuru ‘come’	こられる korareru

If the verb is transitive, the potential sentence often takes the form [(N1 **wa/ga**) N2 **ga** potential verb]. N2 **ga** represents the object of the verb.

田中さんは中国語が話せます。

Tanaka-san wa Chuugokugo ga hanasemasu.

Mr/Ms Tanaka can speak Chinese.

さしみが食べられますか。

Sashimi ga taberaremasu ka.

Can you eat sashimi?

Benefactive (giving and receiving) verbs

秋葉原に行くと電気製品が安く買えます。

Akihabara ni iku to denki-seihin ga yasuku kaemasu.

If you go to Akihabara, you can buy electronic items cheaply.

私はテニスができます。

Watashi wa tennis ga dekimasu.

I can play tennis.

The particle **o** is often used to mark N2 in the potential construction.

あなたはこの状況をどう変えられると思いますか。

Anata wa kono jōkyō o dō kaerareru to omoimasu ka.

How do you think you can change the present situation?

今学期の終わりまでに漢字を千読み書きできるようになりたい。

Kongakki no owari made ni kanji o sen yomi-kaki dekiru yoo ni naritai.

I would like to become able to read and write one thousand **kanji** by the end of this semester.

When **o** is used, the focus of the utterance is on the action performed by the verb, and the implication is that one has control over the situation, such as being able to change ‘the present situation’ or ‘being able to learn **kanji**.’

▶ 51

It should be noted that some stative verbs, such as **mieru** ‘to be visible,’ **kikoeru** ‘to be audible,’ and **wakaru** ‘to understand,’ do not have potential forms, as they express non-controllable, spontaneous situations.

12.7

Benefactive (giving and receiving) verbs

There is a category called ‘giving and receiving’ verbs, e.g. **ageru** ‘to give,’ **kureru** ‘to give (me),’ and **morau** ‘to receive.’ The use of these verbs implies that the speaker views the transaction to be beneficial to the receiver and/or that a favor is being done; hence the label ‘benefactive.’ There are verbs in Japanese that express the meaning of giving and receiving without such an implication; e.g. **watasu** ‘to give, to hand over,’ **uketoru** ‘to receive.’

The choice of benefactive verb depends on the giver, the receiver, and from whose viewpoint the event is being described. The direct object and the indirect object are marked by the particles **o** and **ni**, respectively. **Ageru** is used when the speaker gives something to someone or when a third party gives something to someone else.

私は田中さんに北海道のおみやげをあげました。

Watashi wa Tanaka-san ni Hokkaido no omiyage o agemashita.

I gave Mr/Ms Tanaka a souvenir from Hokkaido.

マリはケンに帽子をあげました。

Mari wa Ken ni booshi o agemashita.

Mari gave Ken a hat.

Kureru is used when someone gives something to the speaker. Since **watashi ni** ‘to me’ is the default case, it is not usually overtly expressed.

これは友達が結婚祝いに（私に）くれたテレビです。

Kore wa tomodachi ga kekkon iwai ni (watashi ni) kureta terebi desu.

This is a TV set which my friend gave me for my wedding.

クリスマスに両親がアイパッドをくれました。

Kurisumasu ni ryooshin ga aipaddo o kuremashita.

My parents gave me an iPad for Christmas.

The verb **kureru** is also used when someone gives something to the speaker's in-group members, such as his/her family member or close friend.

山田さんは卒業祝いに弟に時計をくれました。

Yamada-san wa sotsugyoo iwai ni ootoo ni tokee o kuremashita.

Mr/Ms Yamada gave my brother a watch for his graduation.

Morau is used when the speaker (or his/her in-group member) receives something from someone or when a third party receives something from someone else. In this case, the receiver is the subject of the sentence. As in other types of sentences, **watashi** 'I' is not overtly expressed when it is obvious. The person from whom one receives (i.e. source) is marked by the particle **ni** or **kara** 'from,' and the direct object is marked by the particle **o**.

(私は) いつも叔母に色々な物をもらいます。

(Watashi wa) itsumo oba ni iroiro na mono o moraimasu.

I always receive various things from my aunt.

去年の誕生日に母は父に指輪をもらいました。

Kyonen no tanjoobi ni haha wa chichi ni yubiwa o moraimashita.

On her birthday last year, my mother received a ring from my father.

To indicate the source (i.e. giver), the particle **ni** is preferred when the receiver has a personal relationship with him/her, whereas **kara** is preferred when there is no such relationship (e.g. the source is an institution) or when the speaker puts the person at a distance.

(私は) 大学生のとき、国から奨学金をもらった。

(Watashi wa) daigakusee no toki, kuni kara shoogakukin o moratta.

When I was in college, I received a scholarship from the government.

この年になって親からお金をもらうのは気が引ける。

Kono toshi ni natte oya kara o-kane o morau no wa ki ga hikeru.

At my age, it's hard to ask for (receive) money from my parents.

One and the same event can be described with the verb **ageru** 'to give' or **morau** 'to receive,' depending on whose point of view the speaker takes. For example, **Mari wa Ken ni booshi o ageta** 'Mari gave Ken a hat' is a description from the giver Mari's point of view, while **Ken wa Mari ni booshi o moratta** 'Ken received a hat from Mari' is one from the receiver Ken's point of view. Unlike in English, in which the speaker can be the source (e.g. 'Mary received a bouquet of roses from me'), **watashi ni** 'from me' is rare in Japanese. The speaker usually speaks from his/her own point of view. The event therefore would be most likely expressed as 'I gave Mary a bouquet of roses.' Similarly, when an outsider (e.g. acquaintance Ms Tanaka) receives something from an insider (e.g. sister), one would say 'My sister gave Mr/Ms Tanaka a book,' rather than 'Mr/Ms Tanaka received a book from my sister.' It is easier to take the viewpoint of someone with whom the speaker identifies, such as him-/herself and in-group members, than that of someone he/she does not know.

夫は見知らぬ子供にチョコレートあげた。

Otto wa mishiranu kodomo ni chokoreeto o ageta.

My husband gave chocolate to a child he didn't know.

When the subject functions as the topic (as in the majority of sentences), marked by **wa**, the speaker is taking the viewpoint of the subject noun. With a non-topic subject, marked by **ga**, the subject's viewpoint is not reflected. For example, the first sentence below describes what happened from the viewpoint of the topic ('my wife'), but it is described from the speaker's viewpoint in the second sentence. By using **kureru** 'someone gives me,' the speaker expresses that the receiver ('my wife') has benefited from the event, and that he/she has, too, by extension.

妻は電車で隣に座った人に地下鉄の地図をもらった。

Tsuma wa densha de tonari ni suwatta hito ni chikatetsu no chizu o moratta.

My wife was given a subway map by someone who sat next to her on the train.

電車で隣に座った人が妻に地下鉄の地図をくれた。

Densha de tonari ni suwatta hito ga tsuma ni chikatetsu no chizu o kureta.

Someone who sat next to my wife on the train gave her a subway map.

There are different forms of giving and receiving verbs depending on the relative statuses among the giver, the receiver and the speaker. Although **yaru** 'to give' is traditionally expected to describe giving to someone lower in rank (e.g. one's own child, younger siblings, subordinates at work, animals, flowers), a recent trend, especially among women, is to use the politer verb **ageru** for all of them, as well as for giving to equals.

X > Y: X is socially higher X = Y: X is socially equal X < Y: X is socially lower

someone gives me	Giver > Receiver	くださる	kudasaru
	Giver = Receiver	くれる	kureru
	Giver < Receiver	くれる	kureru
I or another gives to someone	Giver < Receiver	さしあげる	sashiageru
	Giver = Receiver	あげる	ageru
	Giver > Receiver	あげる	ageru
	Giver > Receiver	やる	yaru
I or another receives from someone	Giver > Receiver	いただく	itadaku
	Giver = Receiver	もらう	morau
	Giver < Receiver	もらう	morau

Here are some examples of each case:

先生がこの辞書をくださいました。

Giver > Receiver

Sensee ga kono jisho o kudasaimashita.

My teacher gave this dictionary to me.

同僚が（私に）この本をくれた。

Giver = Receiver

Dooryoo ga (watashi ni) kono hon o kureta.

My colleague gave me this book.

弟がこの車をくれた。

Giver < Receiver

Ootoo ga kono kuruma o kureta.

My little brother gave me this car.

私は先生にギフトカードをさしあげた。

Giver < Receiver

Watashi wa sensee ni gifuto kaado o sashiageta.

I gave a gift card to my teacher.

私は友達に誕生日のプレゼントをあげた。

Giver = Receiver

Watashi wa tomodachi ni tanjoobi no purezento o ageta.

I gave a birthday present to my friend.

毎日花に水をやってね。

Giver > Receiver

Mainichi hana ni mizu o yatte ne.

Please water the flowers every day. (lit. give water to flowers)

(私は) 先生にこの本をいただいた。

Giver > Receiver

(Watashi wa) sensee ni kono hon o itadaita.

I got this book from my teacher.

(私は) 友達にこのペンをもらった。

Giver = Receiver

(Watashi wa) Tomodachi ni kono pen o moratta.

I got this pen from a friend.

(私は) 弟に本をもらった。

Giver < Receiver

(Watashi wa) ootoo ni hon o moratta.

(I) got a book from my little brother.

▶ 19.2.8; 42; 43; 73; 78.1.2

12.8 Verbs of wearing

Japanese has several verbs meaning ‘to wear, to put on (clothes)’ depending on the manner in which one puts things on and where on the body they are worn.

はく	haku	(shoes, pants, skirts, socks, etc.)
着る	kiru	(shirts, jackets, blouses, sweaters, etc.)
かぶる	kaburu	(hats, caps, helmets, etc.)
する	suru	(accessories, scarves, neckties, etc.)
かける	kakeru	(glasses, sunglasses, etc.)
しめる	shimeru	(neckties, belts, seat belts, obi, etc.)

These verbs are used in the form of **-te imasu**, when referring to the current state or a habitual action.

田中さんは赤いスカートをはいている人です。

Tanaka-san wa akai sukaato o haite iru hito desu.

Ms Tanaka is the person who has a red skirt on.

Other examples follow.

寒かったら、このセーターを着てください。

Samukattara, kono seetaa o kite kudasai.

If you are cold, please put on this sweater.

今日は寒いから、帽子をかぶった方がいいですよ。

Kyoo wa samui kara, booshi o kabutta hoo ga ii desu yo.

It’s cold today, so you’d better put on a hat.

山田さんはいつもすてきなスカーフをしていますね。

Yamada-san wa itsumo suteki na sukaafu o shite imasu ne.

Ms Yamada always has a nice scarf on.

スミスさんはあのめがねをかけている人です。

Sumisu-san wa ano megane o kakete iru hito desu.

Mr/Ms Smith is that person who has glasses on.