

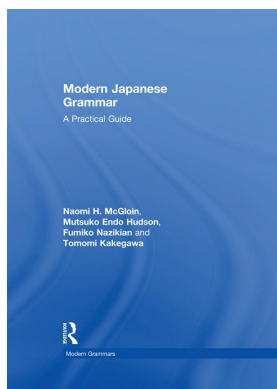
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On: 03 Oct 2023

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

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Modern Japanese Grammar A Practical Guide

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Negation

Publication details

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203856628.ch15>

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Published online on: 04 Oct 2013

How to cite :- Naomi H. McGloin, Mutsuko Endo Hudson, Fumiko Nazikian, Tomomi Kakegawa.

04 Oct 2013, *Negation from: Modern Japanese Grammar, A Practical Guide* Routledge

Accessed on: 03 Oct 2023

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203856628.ch15>

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15

Negation

15.1 Negative verbs, adjectives and nouns

Negative forms are constructed by attaching a suffix **-(a)nai** or **-en**. Examples for nonpast negative forms are given in the table below. For past tense, change **-nai** to **-nakatta** and **(-i)masen** to **(i)masen deshita**. Note that the **-nai** is an **i**-adjective.

▶ 12.1; 13.1.1; 13.2.1

	<i>Plain negative</i>	<i>Polite negative</i>
Nouns 'is not Japanese'	日本人じゃない Nihonjin ja nai	日本人じゃありません Nihonjin ja arimasen 日本人じゃないです Nihonjin ja nai desu
Na adjectives 'is not pretty, clean'	きれいじゃない kiree ja nai	きれいじゃありません kiree ja arimasen きれいじゃないです kiree ja nai desu
I-adjectives 'is not tasty'	おいしくない oishiku nai	おいしくありません oishiku arimasen おいしくないです oishiku nai desu
Verbs 'not eat'	食べない tabe-nai	食べません tabemasen 食べないです tabe-nai desu
'not drink'	飲まない nom-anai	飲みません nomimasen 飲まないです nom-anai desu

There are several patterns for verbal negative forms:

- (1) **-ru** verbs: **-ru** → **-nai** (e.g. **tabe-ru** 'to eat' → **tabe-nai**)
- (2) **-u** verbs: **-u** → **-anai** (e.g. **yom-u** 'to read' → **yom-anai**, **tats-u** 'to stand' → **tat-anai**)
- (3) For **-u** verbs whose dictionary forms end in **u** (う) (e.g. **ka-u** 'to buy,' **su-u** 'to inhale,' **yu-u** ← **i-u** 'to say'), insert 'w' as in **kaw-anai**, **suw-anai** and **iw-anai**.

- (4) The negative form of **aru** ‘to exist’ is simply **nai**.

庭に木がある。→庭に木がない。

Niwa ni ki ga aru. → **Niwa ni ki ga nai.**

There is a tree in the yard/garden. → There is no tree / are no trees in the yard/garden.

- (5) Irregular verbs: **suru** ‘to do’ → **shi-nai**; **kuru** ‘to come’ → **ko-nai**

There are two polite negative forms, **-masen** and **-nai desu**. While **-masen** is a more established form, **-nai desu** is used very often, especially in conversation. The **-nai desu** form tends to occur in answers to questions. By using **-nai desu**, the speaker focuses on and emphasizes the **negative** fact. Hence, when a negative sentence is used for affirmative meanings as in invitations (**Kore tabemasen ka** ‘would you like to (Lit. won’t you) eat it?’), **-nai desu ka** is unacceptable.

じゃ、毎日運動するんですか。

Ja, mainichi undoo suru n desu ka.

Then, you exercise every day?

いいえ、毎日ではないですよ。

Iie, mainichi wa shinai desu yo.

No, not every day.

15.2 Limiting the scope of negation

Wa after a word or a phrase functions to specify what is being negated. In the following sentence, for example, the speaker is not saying that he/she does not drink all drinks but that he/she does not drink beer.

▶ 11.3

ビールは飲みません。

Biiru wa nomimasen.

I don’t drink beer (implying that I drink other things.)

Similarly,

家では勉強できません。

Uchi de wa benkyoo dekimasen.

I can’t study at home (implying that I do study elsewhere.)

日本人のようには話せません。

Nihonjin no yoo ni wa hanasemasen.

I can’t speak like a Japanese (although I do speak Japanese.)

このごろは寒くはないです。

Konogoro wa samuku wa nai desu.

It hasn’t been cold recently (though not exactly warm.)

Other ways of limiting the scope of negation involve the use of **to wa kagiranai** ‘not necessarily the case,’ **wake de wa nai** ‘it does not mean’ or the like.

日本人がみんな寿司が好きだとは限らない。

Nihonjin ga minna sushi ga suki da to wa kagiranai.

It’s not necessarily the case that all Japanese like sushi.

いつもビデオゲームをしているわけではない。

Itsumo bideogeemu o shite iru wake de wa nai.

(I) am not always playing the video game.

15.3 Negative *-te* forms (*-nakute* vs. *-naide*)

The negative *-te* form for adjectives and the copula is **-nakute**.

お手洗いじゃなくて、お寺です。

O-tearai ja nakute, o-tera desu.

It's a temple, not a restroom.

あまり高くなって、よかった。

Amari takaku nakute yokatta.

I am glad that it was not too expensive.

There are two negative *-te* forms for verbs: **-nakute** and **-naide**. There are three principles one can follow in using these forms.

1. If you want to indicate the sense of 'without doing something' or 'instead of doing something,' use **-naide**. **-Nakute** is ungrammatical in this case.

宿題をしないで授業に出るのはよくない。

Shukudai o shi-naide jogyoo ni deru no wa yoku nai.

It's not good to attend class without having done homework.

きのうはパーティーに行かないで、勉強した。

Kinoo wa paatii ni ik-anaide benkyoo shita.

Yesterday I studied instead of going to the party.

2. In constructions such as V(neg)-**te kudasai**, V(neg)-**te hoshii**, V(neg)-**te morau**, where V(neg) and the following words form a larger verb phrase, use **-naide**. Again **-nakute** is ungrammatical in these constructions.

忘れないでくださいね。

Wasure-naide kudasai ne.

Please do not forget.

見ないでほしい。

Mi-naide hoshii.

I want you not to look (at it).

大きな声で話さないでもらいたい。

Ookina koe de hanas-anaide morai-tai.

I would like (you) not to talk in a loud voice.

3. When a V(neg) phrase indicates a reason or cause, **-nakute** is preferred.

理由が分からなくて困っています。

Riyuu ga wakar-anakute komatte imasu.

I don't understand the reason, and I am at a loss.

日本語でうまく言えなくて、恥ずかしかったです。

Nihongo de umaku ie-nakute hazukashikatta desu.

I could not say (it) well in Japanese, and I was embarrassed.

15.4

Expressions requiring a negative ending

Some adverbs and other words typically co-occur with negative predicates. Some of these include:

あ(ん)まり ¹	a(n)mari	‘not much’
決して	kesshite	‘not at all, never’
ちっとも ²	chittomo	‘not at all’
ぜんぜん ³	zenzen	‘not at all’
別に ²	betsuni	‘not particularly’
めったに	mettani	‘rarely’
ろくに	rokuni	‘hardly’
まさか ²	masaka	‘no way (could it be true)’
一 + counter	ichi + counter	‘not even one’
もだれ/何/どこへ/ どこに+も	mo dare/nani/doko e/ doko ni + mo	‘no one/nothing/nowhere’

¹ **A(n)mari** can sometimes co-occur with affirmative predicates, as in **A(n)mari atsukute nemurenakatta** ‘it was so hot I could not sleep;’ the implication is negative in the sense that it was too hot.

² These adverbs indicate that the following predicates are in negative form; therefore, even when they stand alone (without accompanying negative predicates), the remark is interpreted to be in the negative.

³ **Zenzen** can sometimes be used in affirmative sentences also, as in **zenzen daijoobu** ‘it’s totally fine.’

NOTE

▶ 14.3

最近の映画はあんまり面白くない。

Saikin no eiga wa anmari omoshirokunai.

Recent movies are not that interesting.

秘密ですから、決して言わないでください。

Himitsu desu kara, kesshite iwanaide kudasai.

It’s a secret, so please don’t tell anyone.

ちっともわからない。

Chittomo wakaranai.

I don’t understand it at all.

Q: どこかわるいんですか。

Doko ka warui n desu ka.

Is something wrong?

A: いえ、別に。

Ie, betsuni.

No, not particularly.

まさかスピード違反でつかまるとは思わなかった。

Masaka supiido ihan de tsukamaru to wa omowanakatta.

I did not imagine that I would ever be stopped for speeding.

今日は客が一人も来なかった。

Kyoo wa kyaku ga hitori mo konakatta.

Not one customer came today.

辞書は一冊も持っていない。

Jisho wa issatsu mo motte inai.

I don’t have a single dictionary.

一日中何も食べないのはよくない。

Ichinichi-juu nani mo tabenai no wa yokunai.

It’s not good not to eat anything all day.

家にはだれもいませんでした。

Uchi ni wa dare mo imasen deshita.

There was nobody at home.

▶ 4.4

Shika ‘only’ also occurs always with negative predicates (or with words with negative meaning; e.g. **dame** ‘no good, bad’). However, the meaning in this case is not negative. In the following sentence, for example, the speaker does not deny ‘reading.’ Rather, the speaker negates reading other things besides ‘comic books.’

▶ 10.3

漫画しか読まない。

Manga shika yomanai.

(I) read only comic books.

スミスさんは日本語でしか話さない。

Sumisu-san wa Nihongo de shika hanasanai.

Mr/Ms Smith speaks only in Japanese.

15.5 Other ways of expressing negation

15.5.1 *mono (desu) ka*

V + **mono desu ka/mon desu ka/mon ka** with falling intonation is used to impart negative meaning rhetorically.

あの人に私の気持ちがわかるもん (です) か。

Ano hito ni watashi no kimochi ga wakaru mon (desu) ka.

He can't possibly understand my feeling.

一日に漢字を百も覚えられるもん (です) か。

Ichinichi ni kanji o hyaku mo oboerareru mon (desu) ka.

There is no way one can memorize a hundred **kanji** in a day.

▶ 18.3

15.5.2 Prefixes *mu, hi, fu, and mi*

Sino-Japanese negative prefixes 無 **mu**, 非 **hi**, 不 **fu** and 未 **mi** occur as components of words (nouns or **na**-adjectives.) The following are some of the commonly used words that have these prefixes.

無：無関心	mukanshin	uninterested
無意味	muimi	meaningless
無免許	mumenkyo	no license
無能	munoo	incompetence
無意識	muishiki	unconscious

政治に無関心な人は多い。

Seeji ni mukanshin na hito wa ooi.

There are many people uninterested in politics.

無免許運転をしてはいけない。

Mumenkyo unten o shite wa ikenai.

You should not drive a car without a license.

不：不公平	fukoohee	unfair
不便	fuben	inconvenient
不足	fusoku	lack, insufficiency
不景気	fukeeki	recession, bad economic condition
不幸	fukoo	unhappiness, misfortune
不自然	fushizen	unnatural

最近、寝不足だ。

Saikin nebusoku da.

Lately, (I am suffering from) lack of sleep.

携帯電話がないと不便だろう。

Keetai denwa ga nai to fuben daroo.

I think it is inconvenient not to have a cell phone.

非：非常識	hijooshiki	lacking in common sense
非現実的	higenjitsuteki	unrealistic
非協力的	hikyooriyokuteki	uncooperative
非社交的	hishakooteiki	anti-social
非凡	hibon	extraordinary

夜中に電話をかけてくるなんて、非常識だ。

Yonaka ni denwa o kakete kuru nante, hijooshiki da.

(He) is lacking in common sense to call (me) in the middle of night.

世界から戦争がなくなることを期待するのは、非現実的なことだろう。

Sekai kara sensoo ga nakunaru koto o kitai suru no wa, higenjitsuteki na koto daroo.

It's probably unrealistic to expect wars to disappear from the world.

未：未完成	mikansee	unfinished
未解決	mikaiketsu	unresolved
未婚	mikon	unmarried
未成年	miseenen	minor, underage
未知	michi	unknown

未婚の女性が増えている。

Mikon no josee ga fuete iru.

Unmarried women are increasing in number.

未解決の問題が多い。

Mikaiketsu no mondai ga ooi.

There are many unsolved problems.