

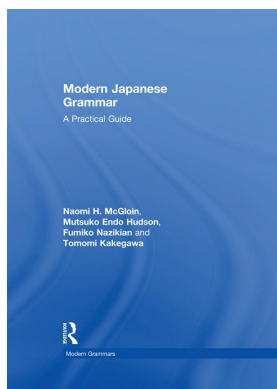
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Modern Japanese Grammar A Practical Guide

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Formal nouns

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18

Formal nouns

Formal nouns are so called because they are nouns only in form. They must always be modified, such as by a demonstrative (e.g. **sonna** ‘that kind of’) and a clause, and cannot stand alone. There are a variety of formal nouns in Japanese.

18.1 *koto*

Koto (lit. ‘thing’) refers to intangible and abstract things such as facts, concepts, and information. **Koto** as a formal noun turns a clause into a noun phrase. The predicate in the **koto** clause must appear in plain form. **Koto** is used to describe events, actions, or information in a rather formal, abstract and general way, and hence it often occurs with verbs of learning, deduction and thinking.

▶ 26

山田さんが有名な学者であることを知っていますか。

Yamada-san ga yuumei na gakusha de aru koto o shitte imasu ka.

Do you know that Mr/Ms Yamada is a famous scholar?

冬になると鬱病になる人が増えることがわかった。

Fuyu ni naru to utsubyoo ni naru hito ga fueru koto ga wakatta.

I realized that people get depressed more in winter.

今すぐ日本の景気をよくすることは難しい。

Ima sugu Nihon no keeki o yoku suru koto wa muzukashii.

It is difficult to improve Japan’s economy in a short period.

日本人にとって正月を家族と過ごす事はとても大切なことです。

Nihonjin ni totte shoogatsu o kazoku to sugosu koto wa totemo taisetsu na koto desu.

It is important for Japanese people to spend time together with their family on New Year’s Day.

趣味はドライブに行っておいしいものを食べることです。

Shumi wa doraibu ni itte oishii mono o taberu koto desu.

My hobby is to go for a drive and to eat delicious food.

Koto is also used in several constructions when talking about one’s experience, ability, decision, etc. They include (V(plain nonpast) + **koto**) **ni suru** ‘to decide to’, (V(plain nonpast) + **koto**) **ni naru** ‘it is decided to’, (V(plain) + **koto**) **ga dekiru** ‘can, it is possible to’, (V(plain past) + **koto**) **ga aru** ‘to have the experience of doing something,’ and (V(plain nonpast) + **koto**) **ga aru** ‘there are times when.’

▶ 44; 51.1; 86.2

三月にアメリカへ出張することになりました。

Sangatsu ni Amerika e shutchoo suru koto ni narimashita.

It has been decided that I will go on business to the U.S. in March.

今年で会社を辞めることにしました。

Kotoshi de kaisha o yameru koto ni shimashita.

I have decided to resign from my company this year.

三か国語を話すことができます。

San-ka-kokugo o hanasu koto ga dekimasu.

I can speak three languages.

沖縄に行ったことがあります。

Okinawa ni itta koto ga arimasu.

I have been to Okinawa.

時々暑くて眠れないことがあります。

Tokidoki atsukute nemurenai koto ga arimasu.

There are times when I can't sleep because it is too hot.

18.2 *no*

18.2.1 *no*

No functions as a nominalizer by making a clause into a noun phrase. **No** is used when the main verb expresses perceptions, concrete actions or events, including verbs of seeing and hearing, discovery, helping and stopping.

▶ 26.1

私は田中さんがバイオリンを弾くのを聴いた。

Watashi wa Tanaka-san ga baiorin o hiku no o kiita.

I heard Mr/Ms Tanaka play the violin.

私は佐藤さんが彼女と会っているのを見た。

Watashi wa Satoo-san ga kanojo to atte iru no o mita.

I saw Mr Sato meeting with his girlfriend.

休みの日はゆっくり散歩するのが好きだ。

Yasumi no hi wa yukkuri sanpo suru no ga suki da.

I love taking a stroll when I have a day off.

山田さんが帰ってくるのを待ちましょう。

Yamada-san ga kaette kuru no o machimashoo.

Let's wait for Mr/Ms Yamada to return.

病気になってから、タバコをすうのをやめました。

Byooki ni natte kara tabako o suu no o yamemashita.

I have given up smoking since I got sick.

A **no**-clause can function as an object, as in the above examples. It can also function as the subject of the sentence.

一流の大学に入るのは難しい。

Ichiryuu no daigaku ni hairu no wa muzukashii.

Getting into a first-rate university is difficult.

たばこをすうのは体によくない。

Tabako o suu no wa karada ni yokunai

Smoking is not good for one's health.

There are cases where both **no** and **koto** can be used. However, there is a difference in meaning and context. See 26.1 for details.

18.2.2 *no da/desu*

No very frequently occurs followed by a copula **da** or **desu** as in **n da**, **n desu**, **no da**, **no desu** or **no**, at the end of sentences. Its basic function is to mark information as known or to present the information as accessible. The actual effect of this expression, however, varies greatly depending on the situation and sentence types.

Most often the sentence with **no da** gives an explanatory tone.

A: どうして来なかったんですか。

Dooshite konakatta n desu ka.

Why is it that you did not come?

B: へんな物を食べたせいとお腹が痛かったんです。

Hen na mono o tabeta see ka onaka ga itakatta n desu.

(It is that) I had a stomachache, perhaps because I ate something bad.

B is explaining why he/she did not come.

石川: 田中君、剣道にこってるみたいだね。

Ishikawa: Tanaka-kun, kendoo ni kotteru mitai da ne.

Tanaka-kun, it seems like you are really into kendo.

田中: うん、とっても面白いんだ。

Tanaka: Un, tottemo omoshiroi n da.

Yeah, it is really interesting.

In questions, **no da** is used when one forms an assumption based on what one observes or knows and then asks whether that assumption is correct.

風邪をひいたんですか。

Kaze o hiita n desu ka.

(Is it that) you caught a cold? (Am I correct in assuming you caught a cold?)

This sentence might be uttered when the speaker observes that the addressee is coughing, for example.

パーティーへ行くんですか。

Paatii e iku n desu ka.

Are you going to the party? (Am I correct in assuming that you are going to the party?)

One might say this when one observes that the addressee is all dressed up. Such an assumption does not exist with a sentence without **no da**.

No often creates a sense of shared feeling or rapport between the speaker and the addressee, and hence it often gives a soft, less imposing tone. It is very frequently used in giving background information for what comes next or as an introduction to more important information that comes next. This is generally the case for phrases such as **n desu kedo** and **n desu ga**.

ちょっと話したいことがあるんだけど、

Chotto hanashitai koto ga aru n da kedo,

I have something I want to talk to you about, . . .

ちょっと伺いたいことがあるんですが、よろしいでしょうか。

Chotto ukagaitai koto ga aru n desu ga, yoroshii deshoo ka.

I have something I would like to ask you. Is it OK?

あしたコンパがあるんだけど、行かない?

Ashita konpa ga aru n da kedo, ikanai?

There is a social tomorrow. Won't you come?

It should be noted, however, that **no da**, when used with **kara**, gives a strong reproachful tone.

せっかく私が作ったんだから、こわさないでください。

Sekkaku watashi ga tsukutta n da kara, kowasanaide kudasai.

I took so much trouble to make it, so please don't break it.

若いんだから、もうちょっと頑張ってください。

Wakai n da kara, moo chotto ganbatte kudasai.

(The fact is that) you are young, so try a little harder.

The last sentence might be said to someone who is not trying very hard.

18.3 *mono*

Mono and its colloquial form **mon** literally refer to 'tangible things' and have many idiomatic expressions as a formal noun modified by the preceding clause. In these expressions, **mono** is often associated with emotions of the speaker and is used to convey nostalgic feeling, strong desire, conviction and the like. The following are some examples.

(a) General truth/conviction

V nonpast plain + **mono da/desu** conveys what the speaker/writer thinks is generally the case.

努力すればだれでも成功するものです。

Doryoku sureba dare demo seekoo suru mono desu.

If you try hard, you should succeed.

年を取ると忘れっぽくなるものです。

Toshi o toru to wasureppoku naru mono desu

It is generally the case that when you grow old, you become forgetful.

This construction can also be used to order the addressee to do something by stressing what s/he is saying as a general truth or a social norm.

ご近所の人に会ったら、ご挨拶するものですよ。

Go-kinjo no hito ni attara go-aisatsu suru mono desu yo.

When you meet your neighbors, you are supposed to greet them.

もらったら、お返しするもんですよ。

Morattara okaeshi suru mon desu yo.

When you receive a gift from someone, you should give a return gift.

(b) Nostalgic reminiscence

When the predicate preceding **mono desu** is in the past tense, it is often used when the speaker recalls something with a kind of nostalgic or sentimental feeling.

子供の頃はこの川で魚釣りをしたものです。

Kodomo no koro wa kono kawa de sakanatsuri o shita mono desu.

I used to fish in this river when I was a kid.

この辺は昔、店がたくさんあってにぎやかだったものです。

Kono hen wa mukashi, mise ga takusan atte nigiyaka datta mono desu.

This area used to be bustling with many shops.

(c) Desire

V + **tai mono desu ne** is used to state one's desire emphatically.

The speaker expresses his/her strong feeling.

一度アフリカに行ってみたいものですね。

Ichido Afurika ni itte mitai mono desu ne.

I would really like to go to Africa once!

(d) Strong negative feeling

Mono/mon (desu) ka with a falling intonation expresses the speaker's strong negation.

そんなこと、あるもの/もんですか。

Sonna koto aru mono/mon desu ka.

How can that be! (= That is impossible).

あんな所、行くもの/もんですか。

Anna tokoro iku mono/mon desu ka.

How can I go there! (= That is impossible).

(e) Justifying a reason

Mon at the end of the sentence can express the speaker's justification of his/her action. The expression tends to be used by younger women or children.

A: どうして食べないの?

Dooshite tabenai no?

Why don't you eat it?

B: だって、おいしくないんだもん。

Datte, oishikunai n da mon.

Because it's not tasty.

(f) Giving a reason

S mon(o) desu/da kara can be used to give a reason. In such a case, the reason is a personal one, not known to the other party.

A: 遅い! 遅い!

Osoi! Osoi!

You are late! You are late!

B: ごめん。道が込んでいたもんだから。

Gomen. Michi ga konde ita mon da kara.

Sorry. It's because the traffic was slow.

松田: あら、本田さん、いらっしゃい。

Matsuda: Ara, Honda-san, irasshai.

Oh, hi, Honda-san. Welcome!

本田: あのう、ちょっと近くに来たものですから...

Honda: Anoo, chotto chikaku ni kita mono desu kara...

Um, since I was in the neighborhood...

18.4 yoo

Yoo has various idiomatic uses. V(plain nonpast) + **yoo ni suru** indicates the speaker's conscious effort and is equivalent to the English meaning of 'make an effort to.'

甘い物は食べないようにしています。

Amai mono wa tabenai yoo ni shite imasu.

I am trying not to eat sweet things.

V(plain nonpast) + **yoo ni naru** 'reach the point where' expresses a gradual change in abilities, habits, or conditions.

このごろ肉より魚を食べるようになりました。

Kono goro niku yori sakana o taberu yoo ni narimashita.

I have come to eat more fish than meat lately.

健康のために運動するようになりました。

Kenkoo no tame ni undoo suru yoo ni narimashita.

For the sake of my health I started exercising.

Yoo ni naru is similar to **koto ni naru** in the sense that both express some change or result. However, they are different in the sense that **koto ni naru** implies that some decision was made, while **yoo ni naru** simply describes a gradual change.

Yoo ni can also introduce a manner clause as in the following examples.

先日お話ししたように、今週の金曜日から留守にします。

Senjitsu o-hanashi shita yoo ni, konshuu no kin'yooobi kara rusu ni shimasu.

As I mentioned the other day, I will be out of town from this Friday.

北海道は「日本のウィスコンシン」と呼ばれるように、湖が多くてきれいです。

Hokkaido wa 'Nihon no Wisukonshin' to yobareru yoo ni, mizuumi ga ookute kiree desu.

As Hokkaido is called 'the Wisconsin of Japan,' it has many lakes and is pretty.

18.5 tokoro

Tokoro meaning 'place' can be used as a formal noun in various contexts. It highlights a particular point of time or aspect of an event, action, or process:

Expressions focusing on the aspect of process:

今会社から帰ったところでは。

Ima kaisha kara kaetta tokoro desu.

I (have) just returned from work.

今出かけるところです。

Ima dekakeru tokoro desu.

I am about to leave.

兄の日記を読んでいるところを見られてしまった。

Ani no nikki o yonde iru tokoro o mirarete shimatta.

I was caught (at the moment) when I was reading my brother's diary.

Other expressions:

今日はお忙しいところをお集りいただき、ありがとうございます。

Kyoo wa o-isogashii tokoro o o-atsumari itadaki, arigatoo gozaimasu.

Thank you for coming today, (at a time) when you must be busy.

夕ご飯を食べているところに父から電話があった。

Yuugohan o tabete iru tokoro ni chichi kara denwa ga atta.

There was a call from my father, (at the time) when I was eating dinner.

その仕事が終わったところで、一休みしましょう。

Sono shigoto ga owatta tokoro de, hitoyasumi shimashoo.

Let's take a break, (at the point) when you are finished with the job.

▶ 23.3; 27.4.2

18.6 wake

Wake 'reason' is often used with the copula as in **wake da/desu**. Preceded by a clause, this phrase expresses the speaker's logical or deductive judgment on what has been said or observed.

- | | |
|--|---|
| (1) V(plain) wake da
[飲む/飲んだ] わけだ | [nomu/nonda] wake da |
| (2) Adj. (i)(plain) wake da
[高い/高かった] わけだ | [takai/takakatta] wake da |
| (3) Adj (na)/datta wake da
[上手な/上手だった] わけだ | [joozuna/joozu datta] wake da |
| (4) N to yuu/datta wake da
[学生という/学生だった] わけだ | [gakusee to yuu/gakusee datta] wake da |

■ **wake da**: no wonder, that is why, that explains

A: 来年アメリカに留学するつもりです。

Rainen Amerika ni ryuugaku suru tsumori desu.

I am planning to study in America next year.

B: それで今、一生懸命英語を勉強しているわけですね。

Sorede ima isshookenmee Ego o benkyoo shite iru wake desu ne.

No wonder you are studying English so hard.

In this example, on the basis of what he has heard, Speaker B draws the conclusion that it is no wonder A studies English so hard.

A: 山田さん、今旅行中ですよ。

Yamada-san, ima ryokoo-chuu desu yo.

Mr/Ms Yamada is on a trip now.

B: それで、昨日会議に来なかったわけですね。

Sorede kinoo kaigi ni konakatta wake desu ne.

No wonder he was not at the meeting yesterday.

Here, based on what speaker A said about Mr/Ms Yamada, speaker B deduces the reason why speaker A did not attend the meeting yesterday.

■ **wake da**: that means

A: 妻は明日から2週間ギリシャに行きます。

Tsuma wa ashita kara nishuukan Girisha ni ikimasu.

My wife is going to Greece tomorrow for two weeks.

B: じゃあ、今月の末まで家にいらっしゃらないわけですね。

Jaa, kongetsu no sue made ie ni irassharanai wake desu ne.

Then, (that means) she will not be home till the end of this month.

Here speaker B makes the deduction 'speaker A's wife will not be home till the end of the month,' by referring to what speaker A has said.

A: 卒業論文の締め切りがあと2週間なんです。

Sotsugyoo ronbun no shimokiri ga ato nishuukan na n desu.

Two more weeks are left till the deadline for my graduation thesis.

B: ということは、今月はとても忙しいわけですね。

To yuu koto wa, kongetsu wa totemo isogashii wake desu ne.

That means you must be very busy this month.

In this example speaker B concludes that speaker A must be very busy because he has to finish his thesis in two weeks.

▶ 47.1; 73.1; 78.1.2

tsumori

Tsumori is a formal noun and cannot be used independently. It must be preceded by a clause or a demonstrative. The most common meaning of **tsumori** is to express the speaker's intention to carry out a future action. Hence verbs used for this type of **tsumori** must concern the speaker's controllable actions.

来年心理学を勉強するつもりです。

Rainen shinrigaku o benkyoo suru tsumori desu.

I am going to study psychology next year.

週末は友達とドライブに行くつもりです。

Shuumatsu wa tomodachi to doraibu ni iku tsumori desu.

I am going out for a drive with my friends on the weekend.

A: 明日の集会に行きますか。

Ashita no shuukai ni ikimasu ka.

Are you going to the meeting tomorrow?

B: はい、そのつもりです。

Hai, sono tsumori desu.

Yes, I intend to.

Tsumori can be negated in two ways, **V-nai + tsumori** 'to intend not to do . . .' and **V + tsumori ga/wa nai** 'to have no intention of doing . . .' The latter expresses much stronger negative determination than does the former.

もう酒は飲まないつもりです。

Moo sake wa nomanai tsumori desu.

I do not intend to drink sake any more.

もう酒を飲むつもりはありません。

Moo sake o nomu tsumori wa arimasen.

I have no intention of drinking sake any more.

When the predicate of the clause is not associated with future actions, **tsumori** expresses the subject's belief, which often is not shared by others. In these cases, the preceding element of **tsumori** is an action verb (past tense), a stative verb, an adjective, or a noun + **no**.

先週お渡ししたつもりですが。

Senshuu owatashi shita tsumori desu ga.

I think I gave it to you last week, but . . .

彼はあれでもハンサムなつもりなんです。

Kare wa are demo hansamu na tsumori nan desu.

He thinks he is handsome (even though he is not).

私は77歳ですが、まだまだ若いつもりです。

Watashi wa nanajuunana sai desu ga, madamada wakai tsumori desu.

Although I am 77 years old, I think of myself as still young.

全部わかっているつもりになっている。

Zenbu wakatte iru tsumori ni natte iru.

(He) thinks he knows everything.

あれで女優のつもりだ。

Are de joyuu no tsumori da.

And she thinks she is an actress!

18.8

hazu

Hazu is a formal noun, which must be modified by demonstratives or clauses. Clause + **hazu da** means ‘to be expected, to be supposed to.’ The expression refers to the speaker’s expectation or anticipation, which are presented as natural outcomes of reasoning. Since **hazu** expresses the speaker’s natural expectation based on some reliable information, it cannot be used to refer to his/her own volitional actions.

A: お父さん、いる？

Otoosan, iru?

Is Dad there?

B: 6時頃家を出たから、そっちに着いているはずだけど。

Rokuji goro ie o deta kara, sotchi ni tsuite iru hazu dakedo.

He left home around six, so he should be there.

A: まだ来てないよ。

Mada kite nai yo.

He is not here yet.

B: そんなはずないよ。もう2時間たっているよ。

Sonna hazu nai yo. Moo ni-jikan tatte iru yo.

That shouldn’t be. It has been two hours (since he left the house).

In this example speaker B expects his father to be there. This expectation is based on the facts that his father left home about six o’clock and that it usually does not take two hours to get there. In response to speaker A’s reply that his father is not there yet, speaker B says that it shouldn’t be so.

A: 田中さん、昨日の同窓会に出席したか知ってる？

Tanaka-san, kinoo no doosookai ni shusseki shita ka shitte ru?

Do you know whether Mr/Ms Tanaka attended the reunion yesterday?

B: クラスメートに会いたって言って (い) たから、出たはずだよ。

Kurasumeeto ni aitai tte itte (i)ta kara, deta hazu da yo.

He/she should have because he/she said he/she wanted to see his/her classmates.

In this example speaker B expects that Mr Tanaka did attend the reunion party. She makes an assumption based on the conversation she had with Mr Tanaka.

そのケーキはよく売れているから、おいしいはずですよ。

Sono keeki wa yoku urete iru kara, oishii hazu desu yo.

The cake must be tasty, because it sells very well.

Here the speaker expects/assumes that the cake is delicious because it has been popular and sells well.

18.9

Other frequently used formal nouns

There are other frequently used formal nouns. They include **bakari**, **dake**, and **tame**.

18.9.1

bakari

Bakari has various meanings.

- V (past plain) **bakari** means ‘just did something’ and emphasizes the immediacy in time.

今家に着いたばかりです。

Ima ie ni tsuita bakari desu.

I (have) just got home.

父は買ったばかりのスーツを着て出かけた。

Chichi wa katta bakari no suutsu o kite dekaketa.

My father went out in the suit that he had just recently bought.

- N **bakari**: ‘just, nothing but’, ‘all s/he eats, buys etc., is . . .’ (exaggeration)

うちの子は肉ばかり食べています。

Uchi no ko wa niku bakari tabete imasu.

My child eats nothing but meat.

- V-te **bakari iru** ‘one does nothing but . . .’, ‘all one does seems to be . . .’ (exaggeration)

毎日ビデオゲームをしてばかりいます。

Mainichi bideo geemu o shite bakari imasu.

(He) does nothing but play video games every day.

- Number **bakari**: approximately, about (sounds a little affected)

五分ばかり待ちました。

Gofun bakari machimashita.

(I) waited about five minutes.

▶ 81.2

18.9.2 *dake*

Dake meaning ‘only, just’ minimizes the amount, action, state, etc. that precedes it.

五分話ただけではどんな人かわかりません。

Gofun hanashita dake de wa donna hito ka wakarimasen.

You can’t tell what kind of person (he) is by just talking with (him) for five minutes.

一つだけ質問してもいいですか。

Hitotsu dake shitsumon shite mo ii desu ka.

May I ask just one question?

あのレストランは雰囲気がいいだけです。料理はあまりおいしくありません。

Ano resutoran wa fun’iki ga ii dake desu. Ryoori wa amari oishiku arimasen.

The only good thing about that restaurant is that it has a nice atmosphere.
The food is not too good.

In some contexts, **dake** indicates an amount ‘that much.’

どうぞ、好きなだけ取ってください。

Doozo, suki na dake totte kudasai.

Please take as much as you want.

あれだけ親切な人も珍しい。

Are dake shinsetsu na hito mo mezurashii.

Such a generous person is rare.

▶ 10.3

18.9.3 *tame*

Clause + **tame** can express purpose or reason.

▶ 47

In the purpose construction **CLAUSE1 tame ni CLAUSE2** ('in order to do V1, (one) does V2'), V1 must be in plain form in nonpast tense while V2 can be in plain or **desu/masu** form and in any tense. Also, the subject of V1 and V2 must be the same.

(私は) 日本文化の研究をするために日本へ行きます。

(Watashi wa) Nihon bunka no kenkyuu o suru tame ni Nihon e ikimasu.

I am going to Japan in order to do research on Japanese culture.

In the reason construction **CLAUSE1 tame ni CLAUSE2** ('due to the fact that CLAUSE 1, CLAUSE 2 results'), the predicate in both clauses can be anything – verb, adjective or copula, and the tense does not matter. **Tame** in this usage is appropriate in formal speech and in writing.

このあたりは化学薬品の工場が多いために空気が汚染されている。

Kono atari wa kagaku yakuhin no koojoo ga ooi tame ni kuuki ga osen sarete iru.

Because this area has many chemical factories, the air is polluted.

When **tame** is modified by a noun, **N no tame** can express purpose, reason or benefit.

これは登山のための靴です。(purpose)

Kore wa tozan no tame no kutsu desu.

These are shoes for mountain climbing.

大雪のためにフライトがキャンセルされた。(reason)

Ooyuki no tame ni furaito ga kyanseru sareta.

The flight was canceled because of heavy snow.

彼は家族のために一生懸命働いた。(benefit)

Kare wa kazoku no tame ni issloo kenmee hataraita.

He worked very hard for his family.

▶ 47.3