

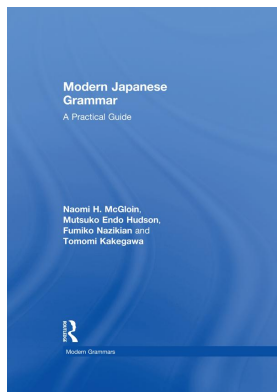
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## **Modern Japanese Grammar A Practical Guide**

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### **Conditional clauses**

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# 24

## Conditional clauses

There are four major conditional clauses, marked by **to**, **ba**, **tara** and **nara**. They express the meaning of ‘if’ and/or ‘when’. **To** and **tara** can refer to events in the past and express the meaning of ‘when’.

▶ 55 for more discussion of similarities and differences among these forms.

### 24.1 to ‘if, when, whenever’

In S1 **to** S2, S2 represents a natural, logical, or inevitable consequence of S1. **To** clauses are formed by adding **to** to the plain nonpast forms of verbs, adjectives, and the copula.

	<i>Plain nonpast form</i>	<i>To conditional</i>
ru-verbs	寝る <b>neru</b> ‘to sleep’	寝ると <b>neru to</b>
u-verbs	読む <b>yomu</b> ‘to read’	読むと <b>yomu to</b>
Irregular verbs	来る <b>kuru</b> ‘to come’	来ると <b>kuru to</b>
	する <b>suru</b> ‘to do’	すると <b>suru to</b>
-(i) adjectives	高い <b>takai</b> ‘to be expensive’	高いと <b>takai to</b>
(na adj. +) <b>desu</b>	(静か)だ ( <b>shizuka</b> ) <b>da</b> ‘to be (quiet)’	～だと <b>da to</b>
(noun +) <b>desu</b>	(学生)だ ( <b>gakusee</b> ) <b>da</b> ‘to be (student)’	～だと <b>da to</b>

#### Natural consequence

この辺は冬になると、雪がたくさん降る。

**Kono hen wa fuyu ni naru to, yuki ga takusan furu.**

When the winter comes, it snows a lot in this area.

毎年4月になると、桜の花がきれいだ。

**Maitoshi shigatsu ni naru to, sakura no hana ga kiree da.**

Every year, when it’s April, the cherry blossoms are beautiful.

あの角を右に曲がると、大きなスーパーが見えます。

**Ano kado o migi ni magaru to, ookina suupaa ga miemasu.**

When you turn right at the corner, you will see a big supermarket.

#### Inevitable consequence

甘いものばかり食べていると、太りますよ。

**Amai mono bakari tabete iru to futorimasu yo.**

If you eat nothing but sweets, you will get fat.

この薬を飲むと、眠くなります。

**Kono kusuri o nomu to, nemuku narimasu.**

When you take this medicine, you will get sleepy.

24.2 **ba and nara 'if, provided that'**

**Ba** indicates a condition–consequence relation and expresses the meaning of ‘provided that.’ **Ba** forms are obtained as follows. With ALL types of verbs: the final **-u** → **-eba**. With **i** adjectives: **-i** → **kereba**. With the copula: (noun/**na** adjective) **da** → (noun/**na** adjective) **nara(ba)**.

	Plain nonpast form	Ba conditional
ru-verbs	寝る <b>neru</b> ‘to sleep’	寝れば <b>nereba</b>
u-verbs	読む <b>yomu</b> ‘to read’	読めば <b>yomeba</b>
Irregular verbs	来る <b>kuru</b> ‘to come’ する <b>suru</b> ‘to do’	来れば <b>kureba</b> すれば <b>sureba</b>
-i adjectives (negative form)	高い <b>takai</b> ‘expensive’ 高くない <b>takakunai</b> ‘not expensive’	高ければ <b>takakereba</b> 高くなければ <b>takakunakereba</b>
(na adj. +) <b>desu</b> (noun +) <b>desu</b>	(静か)だ ( <b>shizuka</b> ) <b>da</b> ‘to be (quiet)’ (学生)だ ( <b>gakusee</b> ) <b>da</b> ‘to be (student)’	～なら (ば) <b>nara(ba)</b> ～なら (ば) <b>nara(ba)</b>

**Ba** expresses a necessary condition in which the event described in the main clause is to occur or to be true.

これを見れば、わかります。

**Kore o mireba, wakarimasu.**

If you look at this, you will understand.

日本で勉強すれば、日本語が上手になります。

**Nihon de benkyoo sureba, Nihongo ga joozu ni narimasu.**

If you study in Japan, your Japanese will improve.

安ければ、買います。

**Yasukereba, kaimasu.**

If it is inexpensive, I will buy it.

健康なら (ば)、それで十分です。

**Kenkoo nara, sore de juubun desu.**

As long as I am in good health, that will be enough.

18歳以上の人なら、誰でも応募できます。

**Juuhachi sai ijoo no hito nara, dare demo oobo dekimasu.**

If you are over 18 years old, you (lit. anyone) can apply.

24.3 **tara 'if/when'**

**Tara** has both a temporal meaning ‘when’ and a conditional meaning ‘if’. The clause + **tara** structure is formed by adding **ra** to the past plain forms of predicates.

	Plain past	Conditional forms
ru verbs	食べた <b>tabeta</b> ‘ate’	食べたら <b>tabetara</b>
u verbs	書いた <b>kaita</b> ‘wrote’	書いたら <b>kaitara</b>
irregular verbs	した <b>shita</b> ‘did’ 来た <b>kita</b> ‘came’	したら <b>shitara</b> 来たら <b>kitara</b>
i adjectives	寒かった <b>samukatta</b> ‘was/were cold’	寒かったら <b>samukattara</b>
negative	食べなかった <b>tabenakatta</b> ‘did not eat’	食べなかったら <b>tabenakattara</b>
(na adj. +) <b>desu</b> (noun +) <b>desu</b>	(有名) だった ( <b>yuumee</b> ) <b>datta</b> ‘was/were famous’ (休み) だった ( <b>yasumi</b> ) <b>datta</b> ‘was a holiday’	～だったら <b>dattara</b> ～だったら <b>dattara</b>

When the event described in the **tara** clause is certain to occur, it expresses the meaning of ‘when.’ If the situation is uncertain, the **tara** clause expresses the meaning of ‘if.’

■ ‘when’

春になったら必ず帰るからね。

**Haru ni nattara kanarazu kaeru kara ne.**

When spring comes, I will be back for sure.

学期が始まったら忙しくなるから、今のうちにゆっくりしておこう。

**Gakki ga hajimattara isogashiku naru kara, ima no uchi ni yukkuri shite okoo.**

When the semester starts, I will be busy, so I will spend some relaxing time now.

■ ‘if’

今度失敗したら、もうチャンスはない。

**Kondo shippai shitara, moo chansu wa nai.**

If I fail this time, there won’t be any more chances.

インターンシップがもらえたら、日本に行きます。

**Intaanshippu ga moraetara, Nihon ni ikimasu.**

If I can get an internship, I will go to Japan.

The **-tara** clause can also express an event or a situation which is contrary to facts.

もしあの時あの電車に乗っていたら、死んでいたかもしれません。

**Moshi ano toki ano densha ni notte itara, shinde ita kamo shiremasen.**

If I had taken the train that day, I might have been killed.

もし私があなただったら、行かないと思う。

**Moshi watashi ga anata dattara, ikanai to omou.**

If I were in your place, I don’t think I would go.

In S1 **tara** S2, when S2 is in the past tense, S2 indicates something beyond the speaker’s control and/or an unexpected event.

お風呂に入ったら、電話がなった。

**Ofuro ni haittara, denwa ga natta.**

When I had just got into the bath, the phone rang.

窓を開けたら、虫が入ってきた。

**Mado o aketara, mushi ga haitte kita.**

When I opened the window, bugs came in.

The examples below are ungrammatical because the consequence expressed in the main clause is controllable by the speaker and is not something unexpected.

\*お風呂に入ったら、歌を歌った。

\***Ofuro ni haittara, uta o utatta.**

When I took a bath, I sang a song.

\*窓を開けたら、新鮮な空気をすった。

\***Mado o aketara, shinsen na kuuki o sutta.**

When I opened the window, I took a deep breath of fresh air.

24.4 (no) *nara* 'if it is the case' (assertion)

Clause **nara** is used when the speaker makes an assumption based on what has been said and/or what can be surmised from the context.

A: もうそろそろ、車を買ひ替えようと思ひているんですが...

**Moo sorosoro kuruma o kaikaeyoo to omotte iru n desu ga...**

I am thinking of replacing my car with a new one...

B: 車を買ひなら、いいディーラーを知っていますよ。

**Kuruma o kau nara, ii diiraa o shitte imasu yo.**

If you are buying a car, I know a good car dealer.

In the above example, the conditional clause 'if you are buying a car' in speaker B's remark is based on what speaker A has just said.

A: アメリカに留学しようと思ひているんですが...

**Amerika ni ryuugaku shiyoo to omotte iru n desu ga...**

I am thinking of studying in America, but...

B: アメリカに留学するなら、TOEFLを受けなければなりません。

**Amerika ni ryuugaku suru nara, TOEFL o ukenakereba narimasen.**

If you are going to study in America, you need to take the TOEFL exam.

► 55 for differences among the conditionals