

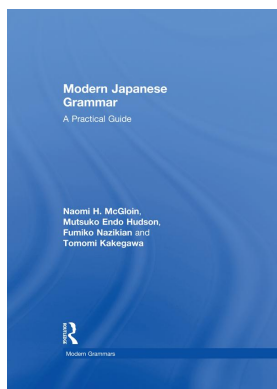
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Sentences and sentence patterns

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Sentences and sentence patterns

5.1 Sentences

5.1.1 Formal and informal style sentences

Informal style sentences end with the main predicate in plain form, while in formal style sentences, the main predicate is in polite form. All predicates in Japanese have both a plain form and a polite form. (See 6.2 regarding how they are used.) The following illustrates sentences with predicates in plain and polite nonpast affirmative forms.

	<i>Nonpast plain form</i>	<i>Nonpast polite form</i>
Verb:	-u or -ru ik-u 'go'; tabe-ru 'eat'	-(i)masu ik-imasu ; tabe-masu
i-Adjective:	-i yasu-i 'is cheap'	-i desu yasu-i desu
Copula:	da shizuka da 'is quiet'	desu shizuka desu

► 6.2; 12.1; 13

5.1.2 Affirmative and negative sentences

A negative sentence is formed by changing the main predicate into a negative form, typically represented by **-na-** or **-n-**.

► 15.1 on conjugation patterns.

	<i>Nonpast plain affirmative</i>	<i>Nonpast plain negative</i>
Verb	-u or -ru ik-u 'go'; tabe-ru 'eat'	-anai or -nai ik-anai ; tabe-nai
i-Adjective:	-i yasu-i 'is cheap'	-ku nai yasu-ku nai
Copula:	da shizuka da 'is quiet'	ja nai or de wa nai shizuka ja¹ nai
	<i>Nonpast polite affirmative</i>	<i>Nonpast polite negative</i>
Verb	-(i)masu ik-imasu 'go'; tabe-masu 'eat'	-(i)masen ik-imasen ; tabe-masen
i-Adjective:	-i desu yasu desu 'is cheap'	-ku nai desu / -ku arimasen yasuku nai desu / yasuku arimasen
Copula:	desu shizuka desu 'is quiet'	ja nai desu or ja arimasen shizuka ja nai desu / shizuka ja arimasen

¹ **ja** can be replaced by **de wa** in a more formal style.

5.1.3

Past and nonpast tense sentences

A past tense sentence is marked by the past tense morpheme **-ta** appearing at the end of the main predicate.

► 12.1; 13.1.1; 13.2.1 on conjugation patterns.

	<i>Past affirmative plain form</i>	<i>Past affirmative polite form</i>
Verb:	-ta it-ta 'went'; tabe-ta 'ate'	-(i)mashita ik-imashita ; tabe-mashita
i-Adjective:	-katta yasu-katta 'was cheap'	-katta desu yasu-katta desu
Copula:	datta shizuka datta 'was quiet'	deshita shizuka deshita
	<i>Past negative plain form</i>	<i>Past negative polite form</i>
Verb:	-(a)na katta ik-anakatta tabe-nakatta	-masen deshita ik-imasen deshita tabe-masen deshita
i-Adjective:	-ku nakatta yasuku nakatta	-ku nakatta desu or -ku arimasen deshita yasuku nakatta desu or yasuku arimasen deshita
Copula:	ja nakatta shizuka ja nakatta	ja nakatta desu or ja arimasen deshita shizuka ja nakatta desu or shizuka ja arimasen deshita

5.2

Sentence patterns

5.2.1

Nominal (copulative) sentences

The idea of X is Y, where both X and Y are noun phrases, is expressed by X **wa** (or **ga**) Y **da** in Japanese. **Da** (informal style), **desu** (formal style), and **de aru** (literary form) are called *copulas*. This structure is generally used to describe the identity or attributes of the subject.

花子は学生だ。

Hanako wa gakusee da. (informal style)

Hanako is a student.

花子は学生です。

Hanako wa gakusee desu. (formal style)

Hanako is a student.

我が輩は猫である。(literary)

Wagahai wa neko de aru.

I am a cat.

► Appendices (conjugation tables)

Given a specific context, a nominal predicate sentence can express a wide variety of meanings beyond the identity or attribute of the subject. For example, this construction can be used as an answer to a question such as the following.

Q: 明日は何をしますか。

Ashita wa nani o shimasu ka.

What are you going to do tomorrow?

Sentence patterns

A: 子供はサッカーです。私は買い物です。

Kodomo wa sakkaa desu. Watashi wa kaimono desu.

The kids (will play) soccer. I (will go) shopping.

Taken out of context, **Kodomo wa sakkaa desu** would mean ‘the kids are soccer,’ which does not make sense. However, in this context, the meaning ‘what the kids will do is play soccer’ is clear, and therefore, the X **wa** Y **da/desu** structure can be used.

Similarly, a sentence such as **watashi/boku wa Y da/desu** ‘As for me, it is Y’ is often used in a restaurant to express that what the speaker is ordering is Y.

In informal style speech, the copula **da** is often omitted.

Q: 何にする？

Nani ni suru?

What are you going to have?

A: 私はてんぷら。

Watashi wa tempura.

I will have the tempura.

僕はカツどん (だ)。

Boku wa katsudon (da).

I will have the breaded pork cutlet on rice.

5.2.2

Adjectival sentences

In X is Y, Y can be an adjective. There are two types of adjectives, **i**-type and **na**-type. The **desu** used with **i**-adjectives indicates *politeness*, while that used with **na**-adjectives is a copula.

東京は大きい。(i-adjective)

Tookyoo wa ookii.

Tokyo is big.

東京はにぎやかだ。(na-adjective)

Tookyoo wa nigiyaka da.

Tokyo is lively.



5.2.3

Existential sentences

The structure [place **ni** X **ga aru/iru**] expresses the existence of a thing or a person. The verb **aru** is used to state the existence of an inanimate object, while **iru** is used for an animate object such as a person or an animal. **Ga** marks the subject, a thing or a person that exists.

ここに本がある。

Koko ni hon ga aru.

There is a book here.

あそこに子供がいる。

Asoko ni kodomo ga iru.

There is a child over there.

This should be distinguished from the pattern [X **wa** place **ni aru/iru**], which identifies the location where something/somebody exists. In this structure, X **wa** is the topic of the sentence and the speaker is pointing out where X is.

学校はあそこにある。

Gakkoo wa asoko ni aru.

The school is over there.

子供は家にいる。

Kodomo wa uchi ni iru.

The child is at home.

5.2.4

Verbal sentences

A verb can be intransitive (taking no object), transitive (taking one object), or ditransitive (taking two objects). In general, the subject is marked by **ga** or **wa**, the direct object by **o**, and the indirect object by **ni**. When the context makes it clear, all elements except the verb can be omitted.

花子が来た。

Hanako ga kita. (intransitive verb)

Hanako came.

花子が本を読んだ。

Hanako ga hon o yonda. (transitive verb)

Hanako read a book.

花子が太郎にメールを書いた。

Hanako ga Taroo ni meeru o kaita. (ditransitive verb)

Hanako wrote an email to Taro.

▶ 12

5.2.5

Topic-comment sentences

One of the most common structures in Japanese is the so-called *topic-comment* structure [X wa Y]. X represents the topic of the sentence, and Y is a comment on X. In many cases, X corresponds to a constituent of Y, such as the subject, object, or possessor.

Almost any noun, with its associated particle, can be made into a topic of the sentence. In **Hanako ga Ginza de hon o katta** ‘Hanako bought a book in Ginza,’ for example, the subject **Hanako ga**, the direct object **hon o**, or the location **Ginza de** can be topicalized. The topic particle **wa** replaces **ga** and **o**, but follows other particles like **de** (location) and **to** (partner); **X de wa** (in place X, . . .), **X to wa** (with X, . . .). It normally appears at the beginning of a sentence.

花子は 本を買った。

Hanako wa hon o katta.

Speaking of Hanako, (she) bought a book. (Hanako bought a book.)

Here, the topic **Hanako** is the subject of the verb **katta** ‘bought’ in the comment part Y.

この本は 花子買った。

Kono hon wa Hanako ga katta.

As for this book, Hanako bought (it).

In the above sentence, the topic **kono hon** is the direct object of the verb in the comment part Y.

In many cases, Y is simply a statement which is relevant to the topic X. There is no constituent of Y that corresponds to X. The following sentences, for example, have both a topic and a subject.

象は鼻が長い。

Zoo wa hana ga nagai.

As for elephants, trunks are long. (Elephants have long trunks.)

日本は春と秋がいい。

Nihon wa haru to aki ga ii.

As for Japan, spring and fall are good (seasons).

▶ 1.4; 11