

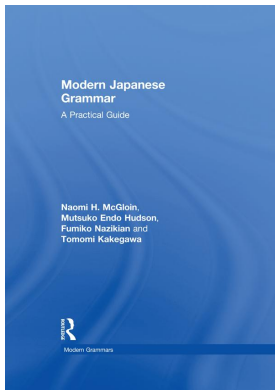
This article was downloaded by: 10.2.97.136

On: 21 Sep 2023

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

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Modern Japanese Grammar A Practical Guide

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Apologies and forgiveness

Publication details

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203856628.ch60>

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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, *Apologies and forgiveness from: Modern Japanese Grammar, A Practical Guide* Routledge
Accessed on: 21 Sep 2023

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203856628.ch60>

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Apologies and forgiveness

Apologies express one's acknowledgement of failure to fulfil a responsibility or to meet someone's expectation. An apology expresses one's regret, which then indicates one's humility or consideration for others. Generally, Japanese are more ready to apologize than Americans, seeing it as preferable to take responsibility instead of blaming others. There are a variety of expressions of apology depending on the level of politeness.

60.1 Apologies to a social superior

The following expressions are commonly used when apologizing to a social superior.

すみません。

Sumimasen.

I am sorry.

申し訳ありません。

Mooshiwake arimasen.

I am sorry.

申し訳ございません。(VF)

Mooshiwake gozaimasen.

I am sorry.

会議に遅れてすみません。

Kaigi ni okurete sumimasen.

I am sorry for being late for the meeting.

会議に遅れまして申し訳ありません。(VF)

Kaigi ni okuremashite mooshiwake arimasen.

I am very sorry for being late for the meeting.

Sumimasen 'I am sorry' and **mooshiwake arimasen** can be used to express gratitude too. For example, when the host offers tea, **sumimasen** 'I am sorry' and **mooshiwake arimasen** can be used in the sense of 'thank you for your trouble.'

▶ 59.2

60.2 Apologies to an equal or a subordinate

The following formulaic expressions can be used when apologizing to an equal or a subordinate.

ごめんなさい。

Gomennasai.

I am sorry.

ごめん。

Gomen.

Sorry.

Both **gomennasai** and **gomen** are used in casual situations and among close friends. **Gomennasai** sounds slightly more polite than **gomen**. **Gomennasai** tends to be used by female speakers. When young children apologize to their parents or teachers, they use **gomennasai**, not **gomen**. **Gomen** is used when the speakers are very close to each other or the speakers feel they are socially equal to each other.

一郎： ごめん！電車で遅れちゃって。
Ichiroo: Gomen! Densha ni okurechatte.
 Ichiro: Sorry, sorry to be late.
 和雄： 遅い、遅い！
Kazuo: Osoi, osoi!
 You are late!

Another casual expression used in making an apology is **warui**. **Warui** is an adjective and literally means 'bad.' The expression is never used with **desu**, which marks formal style.

わるい、わるい。
Warui warui!
 Sorry, sorry!

60.3 Responding to an apology

Here are some appropriate expressions when responding to an apology.

あ、いいえ。だいじょうぶです。
A, iie. Daijoubu desu.
 Oh, no. It is O.K.
 どうぞお気になさらないでください。(F)
Doozo o-ki ni nasaranaide kudasai.
 That is fine. Don't worry.
 気にしないで。(I)
Ki ni shinaide.
 That is fine. Don't worry.

60.4 Expressing and responding to forgiveness

Expressions of forgiveness include **shikata ga nai desu ne** 'it can't be helped,' **kore kara ki o tsukete kudasai** 'Please be careful from now on,' etc. In responding to forgiveness, expressions such as **hontoo ni sumimasen deshita** 'I am truly sorry' or **hontoo ni arigatoo gozaimasu** 'Thank you very much' are commonly used.