

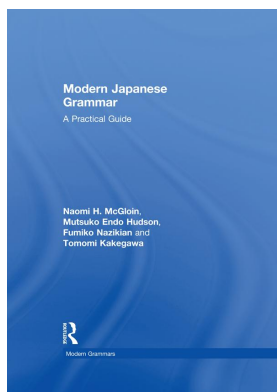
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Modern Japanese Grammar A Practical Guide

Naomi H. McGloin, Mutsuko Endo Hudson, Fumiko Nazikian, Tomomi Kakegawa, Sarah Butler

Permission

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Naomi H. McGloin, Mutsuko Endo Hudson, Fumiko Nazikian, Tomomi Kakegawa

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78

Permission

78.1 Seeking permission

To seek permission, as in ‘May I come in?’, ‘Is it OK to come in?’, ‘Do you mind if I come in?’, or ‘Let me come in,’ Japanese uses a number of expressions. There are also varying degrees of politeness associated with these expressions. The most common and neutral way of seeking permission is to use **V-te mo ii desu ka** and its stylistic variations.

78.1.1 V-te mo ii desu ka and its stylistic variants

This expression literally means ‘is it all right if I do . . .?’ Changing **ii desu ka** to **yoroshii desu ka** or **yoroshii deshoo ka** makes it more polite, while **ii?** is very casual. The words **kamaimasen ka** or **kamawanai?** can be substituted for **ii desu ka**.

この部屋を使ってもいいですか。

Kono heya o tsukatte mo ii desu ka.

Is it all right to use this room? (May I use this room?)

この部屋を使ってもよろしいでしょうか。(VF)

Kono heya o tsukatte mo yoroshii deshoo ka.

Is it all right to use this room? (May I use this room?)

ペン借りてもいい? (I)

Pen karite mo ii?

May I borrow your pen?

お金はあとで払ってもかまいませんか。(F)

O-kane wa ato de haratte mo kamaimasen ka.

Is it all right to pay the money later?

たばこすってもかまわない? (I)

Tabako sutte mo kamawanai?

Is it OK if I smoke?

It is good practice to provide a reason for seeking permission, using expressions such as . . . **n da/desu kedo**, . . . **n desu ga**.

▶ 18.2.2; 22.5

ちょっと買い物に行きたいんですけど、自転車使ってもいいでしょうか。

Chotto kaimono ni ikitai n desu kedo, jitensha tsukatte mo ii deshoo ka.

I would like to go shopping. May I use your bicycle?

78.1.2 Causative form + verbs of receiving *itadaku/morau*

The use of the causative form of verbs with verbs of receiving is also very common in seeking permission. The literal sense of this expression is that the speaker receives the benefit of someone letting him/her do something. There are basically five ways to use this construction.

▶ 20.4.3

78.1.2.1 **-(s)asete itadakemasen ka/- (s)asete moraemasen ka**

In this construction, the verbs *itadaku/morau* are in the potential form, meaning 'is it possible?; may I?'

コンピューターを使わせていただけませんか。(VF)

Konpyuutaa o tsukawasete itadakemasen ka.

Would you let me use your computer?

その本ちょっとコピーさせてもらえませんか。

Sono hon chotto kopii sasete moraemasen ka.

Would you let me copy the book? (May I copy the book?)

ちょっと待たせてもらえないかな。(I)

Chotto matasete moraenai ka na.

I wonder if you would let me wait a little. (Please let me wait a little.)

荷物おかせてもらえる？(I)

Nimotsu okasete moraeru?

Can you let me keep my luggage here?

78.1.2.2 **-(s)asete itadakitai n desu ga/- (s)asete moraitai n desu ga**

Here the desiderative form of *itadaku/morau* is used.

▶ 63.1.2

用紙に先生のお名前を書かせていただきたいんですが、よろしいでしょうか。(VF)

Yooshi ni sensee no o-namae o kakasete itadakitai n desu ga, yoroshii deshoo ka.

I would like to ask you to let me put your name on the (application) form. Is it all right, Professor?

写真をとらせてもらいたいんですが、いいですか。

Shashin o torasete moraitai n desu ga, ii desu ka.

I would like you to let me take pictures. Is it OK?

そのペン使わせてもらいたいんだけど、いい？(I)

Sono pen tsukawasete moraitai n da kedo, ii?

I want to ask you to let me use the pen. OK?

78.1.2.3 **-(s)asete itadaite mo ii desu ka/- (s)asete moratte mo ii desu ka**

Here, the standard *-te mo ii desu ka* is used with V(causative) *itadaku/morau*.

もう少し考えさせていただいてもよろしいでしょうか。(VF)

Moo sukoshi kangaesasete itadaite mo yoroshii deshoo ka.

Would you let me think (about it) a little more?

ちょっと言わせてもらってもいいですか。

Chotto iwasete moratte mo ii desu ka.

Would you let me say something?

ちょっとここにおかせてもらってもいい？(I)

Chotto koko ni okasete moratte mo ii?

Will you let me keep my (luggage) here?

78.1.2.4

... *dekiru* 'can'

-(S)asete itadaku/-(s)asete morau can be embedded in the *koto* (ga) *dekiru* phrase.

ここで待たせていただくこと、できますか。(F)

Koko de matasete itadaku koto, dekimasu ka.

Can you let me wait here?

ちょっと考えさせてもらうこと、できる？(I)

Chotto kangaesasete morau koto, dekiru?

Can you let me think (about it) a little?

▶ 51.1

78.1.2.5

-(s)asete itadaku wake ni wa ikanai deshoo ka

This is a very polite way of asking permission, which is most appropriate if you think it will be rather difficult to obtain permission or if you think what you are asking is somewhat beyond a reasonable request.

試験を一日早く受けさせていただくわけにはいかないでしょうか。(VF)

Shiken o ichinichi hayaku ukasesete itadaku wake ni wa ikanai deshoo ka.

Is it not possible for you to allow me to take the exam one day early?

一週間休暇をとらせていただくわけにはいかないでしょうか。(VF)

Isshuukan kyuuka o torasete itadaku wake ni wa ikanai deshoo ka.

Is it at all possible for you to let me take a one-week vacation?

車を使わせてもらうわけにはいかないかなあ。(I)

Kuruma o tsukawasete morau wake ni wa ikanai ka naa.

I wonder if it is at all possible for you to let me use your car.

▶ 18.6

78.1.3

Causative form + verbs of giving *kudasaru/kureru*

You can also use the causative form of verbs followed by *kudasai* or *kureru*. This expression, however, is not as polite as the one with the verbs of receiving (cf. 78.1.2).

ちょっと休ませてください。

Chotto yasumasete kudasai.

Please let me rest a little.

ちょっと考えさせてくれる？

Chotto kangaesasete kureru?

Will you let me think (about it) a little?

78.2

Giving permission

The form *V-te mo ii desu* and its stylistic variants can be used to give permission.

ひらがなで書いてもいいです。

Hiragana de kaite mo ii desu.

You may write (it) in *hiragana*.

In responding to someone asking for permission, the following expressions can be used.

ええ、いいですよ。

Ee, ii desu yo.

Yes, it's fine. (= Yes, certainly.)

Denying permission

うん、いいよ。

Un, ii yo.

Yes, it's fine. (= Yeah, sure.)

どうぞ。(どうぞ。)

Doozo. (Doozo.)

Please, (go ahead). (Certainly.)

どうぞV- てください。

Doozo V-te kudasai.

Please do. . . .

どうぞおV(stem)ください。

Doozo o-V(stem) kudasai.

Please do. . . .

ええ、かまいませんよ。

Ee, kamaimasen yo.

Yes, it's all right.

ええ、もちろん、どうぞ。

Ee, mochiron, doozo.

Yes, of course. Please (certainly).

The following are some sample ways of responding to specific requests.

- (1) この部屋を使ってもよろしいでしょうか。(VF)

Kono heya o tsukatte mo yoroshii deshoo ka.

May I use this room?

ええ、どうぞ、お使いください。/ええ、どうぞ。どうぞ。

Ee, doozo, o-tsukai kudasai.

Ee, doozo. Doozo.

Yes, please go ahead and use it.

Yes, please, please. (Yes, sure, sure.)

- (2) ペン借りてもいい？(I)

Pen karite mo ii?

May I borrow your pen?

うん、いいよ。

Un, ii yo.

Yes, it's OK. (Yeah, sure.)

- (3) 写真をとらせてもらいたいんですが、いいですか。

Shashin o torasete moraitai n desu ga, ii desu ka.

I would like you to let me take pictures. Is it all right?

ええ、どうぞ、どうぞ。

Ee, doozo, doozo.

Yes, please, please. (= Yes, certainly.)

78.3

Denying permission

To withhold permission, you can use expressions such as **sumimasen ga chotto** 'I am sorry, but,' **warui kedo** 'I feel bad, but,' **mooshiwake arimasen ga** 'I am very sorry, but,' and **dame** 'no good.'

この部屋を使ってもよろしいでしょうか。

Kono heya o tsukatte mo yoroshii deshoo ka.

May I use this room?

- (i) 申し訳ありませんが、先約がありますので。
Mooshiwake arimasen ga, sen'yaku ga arimasu node.
 I am very sorry, but others have already reserved it.
- (ii) すみませんが、今ほかの人が使っていますので。
Sumimasen ga, ima hoka no hito ga tsukatte imasu node.
 I am sorry, but someone else is using it right now.

写真をとらせてもらいたいんですが、いいですか。
Shashin o torasete morai-tai n desu ga, ii desu ka.
 I would like you to let me take pictures. Is it all right?

- (i) あのう、ちょっと今都合が悪いんですが。
Anoo, chotto ima tsugoo ga warui n desu ga.
 Well, it's a little inconvenient right now.
- (ii) 悪いけど、今ちょっと忙しいので...。
Warui kedo, ima chotto isogashii node ...
 I am sorry, but I am a little busy right now, so ...

ペン借りてもいい？

Pen karite mo ii?
 May I borrow your pen?

- (i) 悪いけど、今使ってるんだ。
Warui kedo, ima tsukatte ru n da.
 I am sorry, but I am using it right now.
- (ii) だめだよ。今使ってるんだから。
Dame da yo. Ima tsukatte ru n da kara.
 No way. I am using it right now.

In responding to a request such as **V-te mo ii desu ka**, one can answer with **V-te wa ikemasen**, which means 'you may not/you must not.' However, this sounds very authoritative, and should be used only by superiors or people who have authority.

▶ 79