

Level 1 Unit 3

Basic Structure and Particles

Sentences form a complete thought. They are usually composed of a set of (more than one) words. Although, one-word answers such as “Yes” and “No” are also sentences. Requests (commands) such as “Look” and “Don’t drink it” are also sentences.

Sentences usually include:

Subject/topic + Verb (action words) + Object → **S + V + O**

E.g., I (subject) + drink (verb) + water (object).

Uniqueness of Japanese Sentences

The ordering of S+V+O in English changes to **(S)+O+V** in Japanese!

- In Japanese, we show the subject/topic and the object by **attaching appropriate particles** such as は(pronounced as wa) ・ が(ga) and を(wo).
- When the subject is clear and not needed to be emphasized, we may **leave the subject out** in Japanese sentences. (“I” is often not included in sentences when it’s obvious.)
- There are many different structured sentences, but the golden rule with the Japanese sentences is “**Verb comes at the end**”.
- Sentences are either **Positive**, **Negative** or **Questions**.
- Sentences have different **tenses** such as past, present or future. More complex sentences are still based on these fundamental concepts.

Examples of the words order in a sentence S+V+O→(S)+O+V

English		Japanese
Subject + Verb + Object	→	(Subject) + Object + Verb
I + am + (your name)		(I) + (your name) + am
I am (your name).		^{watashi wa} (私は) your name ^{desu} です。

English		Japanese
Subject + Verb + Object	→	(Subject) + Object + Verb
This + is + delicious.		(This) + delicious + is
This is delicious.		^{kore wa o i shi i desu} (これは) おいしいです。

English		Japanese
Subject + Verb + Object	→	(Subject) + Object + Verb
I + like + Japanese food.		(I) + Japanese food + like
I like Japanese food.		^{watashi wa wasyoku ga suki desu} (私は)和食が好きです。

English		Japanese
Subject + Verb + Object	→	(Subject) + Object + Verb
I + will drink + Japanese tea.		(I) + Japanese tea + will drink
I will drink Japanese tea.		^{watashi wa ocha wo nomi masu} (私は)お茶を飲みます。

English		Japanese
Subject + Verb + Object	→	(Subject) + Object + Verb
Will you + drink + Japanese tea?		(You)+ Japanese tea + will drink?
Will you drink Japanese tea?		^{ochi wa nomi masu ka} (あなたは)お茶を飲みますか。

The following are the most commonly used **particles** which attaches to words to indicate meanings.

は (wa) follows the topic/subject

Although normally pronounced as **HA**, it turns into **WA** when it is used **as a particle**. Therefore, you may need to type HA to create this in sentences!

が (ga) follows the topic/subject

が indicates that the topic/subject is specific. In other words, it puts more emphasis on the subject compared to は, but grammatically they have the same functionality. **Usually, は and が are interchangeable.**

Here are some examples to show you how there is a slight difference in the tone by using these particles.

watashi wa wasyoku ga suki des

私は和食が好きです。I like **Japanese food**. (For sentences talking about “like,” we **normally use が** before “like” as we are talking about a specific thing/place that you like.)

watashi ga wasyoku ga suki des

私が和食が好きです。I like **Japanese food**. (As が is used after “I,” we can tell that out of multiple people “I” specifically like Japanese food.)

watashi wa wasyoku wa suki des

私は和食は好きです。I like **Japanese food**. (Since there is no が attached to the item, we can tell that there is a possibility that I may not like other types of food but I like Japanese food.)

It takes a lot of practice to get used to these particles, but the most important thing to remember is that the **tone of your voice** and intention behind **how you talk** makes the most **impact on your communication!**



も (mo) (= also, too) follows the topic/subject

Replace は・が^{wa} with も to say “also” or “too”

Example:

watashi mo wasyoku ga suki des
私も和食が好きです。I like Japanese food, too.

watashi mo
私も! Me too!

anata mo
あなたも? You too?

kore mo onegaishimasu
これも、おねがいします。This one too, please.

watashi wa wasyoku mo yousyoku mo sukidesu
私は和食も洋食も好きです。I like Japanese food as well as Western food.

Subject / topic
(item/location/person/etc.)



= too / also

を (wo) follows the object

を is often pronounced as ‘oh’ and indicates what is being acted upon. Therefore, を shows the object of the sentence. In other words, the word in front of を is the object which is being acted on. So, the direct object is connected to the verb in the sentence.

Examples:

watashi wa ko - hi - wo nomi masu
(私は) + コーヒーを + のみます。I will drink coffee.

watashi wo ko-hi- wa nomi masu

If we change to 私をコーヒーはのみます。

It would mean coffee will drink me.

watashi wa nihon syoku wo tabe masu

(私は) + 日本食を + 食べます。 I eat Japanese food.

watashi wo nihon syoku wa tabemasu

If we change to 私を日本食は食べます。

It would mean Japanese food eats me.

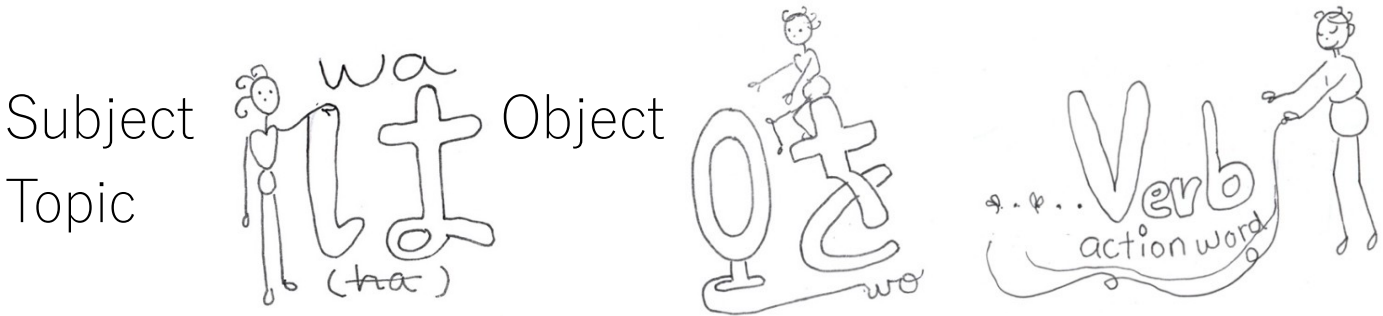
watashi wa anime wo mi masu

(私は) + アニメを + 見ます。 I watch Anime.

watashi wo anime wa mimasu

If we change to 私をアニメは見ます。

It would mean Anime watches me.



に (ni) follows the destination

に (ni) and へ (e) meaning “to” is used with verbs. For example, go to, come to, return to, to whom etc. These particles have the same functionality and the same tone. へ ‘he’ in the Hiragana chart’s pronunciation changes to ‘e’ when it is used as a particle.

Example:

eki ni or e itte kudasai 駅+に or へ+行ってください。 Please go to the station.
(destination + to + verb)

ano hito ni kiki te kudasai
あの人+に+聞いてください。 Please ask that person.
(whom + to + verb)

で(de) follows the location / context (by using)

1. で is used when an **action is taking place at a location**. で is used similarly to at, in or on.

Example:

e ki de a i ma syo u
駅+で+会いましょう。 Let's meet at the station.
(location + at + verb)

ni hon de sakura wo mi tai desu
日本+で+桜を+見たいです。 (I) want to see cheery blossoms in Japan.
(location + object + verb)

2. で is also used to **show the context or the means**, and can be translated to “by way of” or “by using” in some situations. (e.g., transportations, tools, languages etc.)

Example:

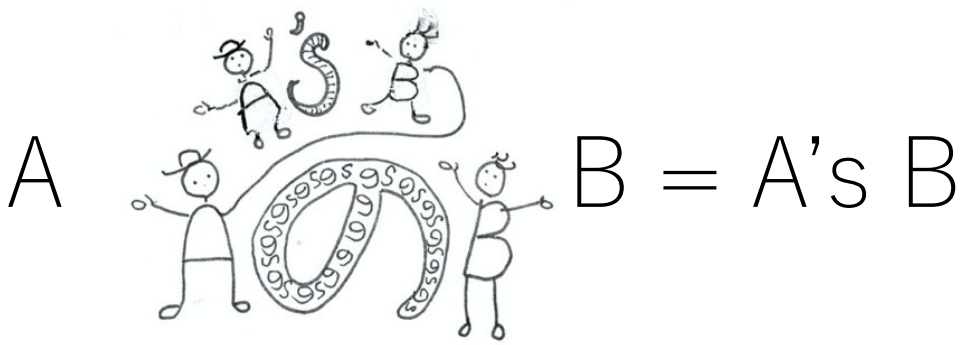
den sya de i ki masu
電車+で+行きます。 (We) will go by train.
(means + by using + verb)

ni hon go de hanashi masu
日本語+で+話します。 (We) speak in Japanese.
(means + by using + verb)

zu - mu de re ssun wo shi masu
ズーム+で+レッスンを+します。 (We) do lessons via Zoom.
(means + by using + object + verb)



の(no) makes something/someone possessive



I = ^{wa ta shi}わたし

My / mine = (as a concept it is equivalent to "My") = ^{wa ta shi no}わたしの

You = ^{a na ta}あなた

You / yours = (as a concept it is equivalent to "Your") = ^{a na ta no}あなたの

Teacher's = ^{se n sei no}せんせいの

Japanese food = ^{nihon no tabe mono}日本のたべもの

My friend's younger sister = ^{watashi no tomodachi no imouto}私の友達の妹

と(to) = and / with

A + B + C = A と B と C

Use と in between each nouns



^{o mu ra si su to o re n ji jyu - su wo ku da sai}
オムライス+と+オレンジジュースをください。

Please give me omelet rice and orange juice.

^{tomodachi to ikimasu}
友達と行きます。I will go with my friend.

^{to u kyo u to kyo u to to o o saka to no za wa o n sen ni iki masu}
東京と京都と大阪と野沢温泉に行きます。(I) will go to Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka and Nozawa-Onsen.

Have fun learning Japanese

Learning a new language **activates a new field of brain function!** There is just so much stimulation that come with it, and so it is a perfect brain exercise!

Firstly, the facial muscle movements when speaking Japanese is very different to speaking in English. Try to **exaggerate the vowel sound** when practicing pronouncing Japanese until your facial muscle memory adopts the natural movements. 'Sore muscle around your face' means you've done a good exercise and your **pronunciation will improve**.

Secondly, unlike speaking in your native language, you'll **have to become clearly aware** of what you want to say. Is it future tense, present tense or past tense? Is it positive, negative or a question? Is the verb placed at the end, and so on.

It is often said that Japanese is one of the most difficult languages to learn for English speaking people. One of the main reasons is that many words and phrases as well as sentence structures are **back to front**.

Therefore, translation is not easy. A key point to remember is, 'after identifying the subject, we often **translate from the end of the sentence**'.

English → Subject + Verb + details and Object

Japanese → (Subject) + details and Object + Verb

Although sometimes challenging, as you study and speak Japanese, this "difference" will get you to **learn more about your own language and culture**. Furthermore, the effort you make will **improve your mental fitness** while you get to **enjoy expanding your world!**

Questions (open & closed questions)

There are two kinds of questions.

Open questions = W/H questions (what, where, when, how, why)

→ lead to answers that give information

Closed questions → lead to Yes / No answers

Different tenses are combined with these two kinds of questions.

Go through the terms used to describe tenses and then make sentences in English.

Different tense + positive/negative/question	Example
Positive Present	I drink water every day.
Negative Present	I don't drink green tea every day.
Question Present (closed)	Do you drink coffee?
Question Present (open)	What do you drink?
Positive Future	I will go home soon.
Negative Future	I won't come home until 7.
Question Future (closed)	Will you eat at home?
Question Future (open)	Where will you eat?
Positive Past	I went home after that.
Negative Past	I didn't see it.
Question Past (closed)	Did you look?
Question Past (open)	What did you do?
Positive Present continuous	I am studying Japanese.
Negative Present continuous	You weren't studying Japanese.
Q Present continuous (closed)	Were you studying Japanese?
Q Present continuous (open)	What are you studying?
Positive Past continuous	I was talking to my friend.
Negative Past continuous	I wasn't listening.
Question Past continuous (closed)	Were you listening?
Question Past continuous (open)	Who were you talking to?

Different tense + affirmative/negative/question	Hints
Positive Present	Am/is/are, do verb
Negative Present	Am not, isn't, aren't, don't verb
Question Present	Are you? Am I? Is it? Do you?
Positive Future	Will, is, am, are going to verb
Negative Future	Won't, is, am, are not going to verb
Question Future	Will you? Are you going to?
Positive Past	Was/were, did verb
Negative Past	Wasn't/weren't, didn't verb
Question Past	Was it? Were you? Did it? Do you?
Positive Present continuous	Am doing, is doing, are doing
Negative Present continuous	Am not doing, is doing, are doing
Question Present continuous	Are you doing? Is it doing?
Positive Past continuous	Was doing, were doing
Negative Past continuous	Wasn't doing, weren't doing
Question Past continuous	Were you doing? Was it doing?

Open questions key words

What = なに ^{na ni}

When = いつ ^{i tsu}

Where = どこ ^{do ko}

Which (out of 2) = どっち、どちら ^{do cchi do chi ra}

Which (more than 2) = どれ ^{do re}

How = どう ^{do u}

How much = いくら ^{i ku ra}

How many = いくつ ^{i ku tsu}

What kind of + noun = どんな + noun ^{do n na}

Who = だれ ^{da re}

Why = どうして、なぜ、なんで ^{do u shi te na ze na n de}

Answer examples

what? → water

when? → now

where? → station

which? → this one

How? → slowly

How much? → 5 dollars

How many? → two

What kind of + noun? → Japanese

who? → my friend

Why? → because it's good