

JAPANESE ○ COMPLETE

P R E S E N T S

ESSENTIAL

JAPANESE

THE MENTAL MODEL

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[JapaneseComplete.com](http://JapaneseComplete.com)



あいうえお  
a i u e o  
かきくけこ  
ka ki ku ke ko  
がぎぐげご  
ga gi gu ge go  
さしすせそ  
sa sh/shi s/su se so  
ざじずぜぞ  
za ji zu ze zo

たちつてと  
ta chi tsu te to  
だぢづでど  
da ji dzu de do

なにぬねの  
na ni nu ne no  
まみむめも  
ma mi mu me mo  
はひふへほ  
ha hi fu he ho  
ばびぶべぼ  
ba bi bu be bo

らりるれろ  
ra ri ru re ro  
ぱぴぷぺぽ  
pa pi pu pe po  
わゐ ゑを  
wa wi we wo  
ん

きや きゆ きよ  
kya kyu kyo  
ぎゃ ぎゅ ぎょ  
gya gyu gyo  
しゃ しゅ しょ  
sha shu sho  
じゃ じゅ じょ  
ja ju jo

ちゃ ちゅ ちょ  
cha chu cho

にゃ にゅ にょ  
nya nyu nyo

みゃ みゅ みょ  
mya myu myo

ひゃ ひゅ ひょ  
hya hyu hyo

びゃ びゅ びょ  
bya byu byo

ぴゃ ぴゅ ぴょ  
pya pyu pyo

りゃ りゅ りょ  
rya ryu ryo

や ゆ よ  
ya yu yo

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# JAPANESE COMPLETE で JAPANESE を MASTER!

Created by polylingual language learners and teachers to provide the most swift and thorough learning process, Japanese Complete is the first program to break Japanese into logical pieces so <sup>that</sup> learners can quickly acquire a mental model of the Japanese language to subsequently build upon this strong foundation.

You can learn more at [JapaneseComplete.com](http://JapaneseComplete.com)

## ESSENTIAL JAPANESE

This guide is for establishing a mental model of the Japanese language. This guide is designed to teach you the basics of Japanese grammar and equip you to know the fundamental composition of every Japanese sentence.

**The Japanese language** is a language describing **ongoing states** and **process**. There are two tenses: present/future and past. There are three kinds of word: verbs, nouns, and particles. Verbs describe an ongoing state, nouns describe a concrescence of process and require the affirming helper verb "da." Particles are flags or helpful dancers that latch on to nouns to indicate their role in the sentence, in contrast with English which strongly relies on word sequence, Japanese word order is flexible as long as the particles stay with their dancing partners. There are three connected writing systems, one is called Hiragana that is a phonetic syllabary of consonant+vowel pairs. Hiragana has a foreign word and loanword catalogue analog called Katakana that is 1:1 with Hiragana symbols. Kanji are ideographic forms imported lock-stock-and-barrel from mainland Asia and are used to mask certain native Japanese words fully or partially. There are no

spaces in written Japanese and the ideograms actually make reading comprehension fast once there is familiarity; the most frequent 777 kanji will give you 90% familiarity for kanji “in the wild.”

To reiterate, the post-position functional words in the Japanese language are called “particles,” they are used to **mark the role** a word plays in a sentence. Similar postpositional words occur in Turkish and Korean. These words typically indicate who is the subject, or another postposition word might indicate the target of an action, or the target destination when speaking of travel or motion. Particles are ubiquitous [everywhere] in Japanese and must be mastered as a fundamental element, making up the very cellular composition of the Japanese language organism.

This guide will show you how Japanese sentence structure is flexible and its arrangement is fluid, whereas in English the sequence of words often determines the role of each word. Japanese is a logical language that has but a handful of basic components from which the rest of the language is built. By understanding the material in this guide you will have a clear mental model of the Japanese language, to help you in your studies and with your mastery.

Inspired by decades of language research and experience in teaching Japanese, the materials gathered here would be considered by some formal linguists as loose and irreverent with regards to the established vocabulary and nomenclature surrounding language learning with Japanese. However, the creators of the guide sincerely feel that the language used here makes cloak more suitable to the bone structure of Japanese. If you are going to walk the Japanese mental model, walk with awareness and style.

# ENGLISH SENTENCE STRUCTURE

To refresh us before we delve into Japanese sentences, let us identify the main parts of a standard English Sentence.

The Quick Brown Fox Jumps Over the Lazy Dog.

Quick Brown Fox = Subject

Lazy dog = Direct-Object

Jumps = Verb

Typical English sentence structure reflects this basic sequence: Subject Verb Direct-Object. This sequence is also called SVO for short.

## SUBJECT, DIRECT-OBJECT, VERB.

In English we anticipate the various parts of speech by knowing the sequence of English thoroughly, like a well-used address-book, or the hallway-like labyrinthine of a library shelf system. The sequence can actually make contemporary English temporarily sound like olde English.

The quick brown fox, over the lazy dog, jumps.

In the fashion above, we have punctuated our English terms such that a listener can mentally denote what each portion represents. English is incredibly reliant on sentence structure for role-marking disposition. To understand what each word signifies, whether it is the subject, direct-object, or verb, requires a context that is sequence-defined.

# JAPANESE SENTENCE STRUCTURE

Japanese sentence structure is based not on sequence, but on role-marking Japanese letters\* known as “particles.”

あ	い	う	え	お	な	に	ぬ	ね	の
a	i	u	e	o	na	ni	nu	ne	no
か	き	く	け	こ	ま	み	む	め	も
ka	ki	ku	ke	ko	ma	mi	mu	me	mo
が	ぎ	ぐ	げ	ご	は	ひ	ふ	へ	ほ
ga	gi	gu	ge	go	ha	hi	fu	he	ho
さ	し	す	せ	そ	ば	び	ぶ	べ	ぼ
sa	sh/shi	s/su	se	so	ba	bi	bu	be	bo
ざ	じ	ず	ぜ	ぞ	や				ゆ
za	ji	zu	ze	zo	ya				yu
た	ち	つ	て	と	わ	ゐ	ゑ	を	
ta	chi	tsu	te	to	wa	wi	we	wo	

Single-mora particles are in green in the chart.

\*Letters in Japanese in this case refers to all of the Hiragana mora, a collection of consonant+vowel pairs such as KA and SA that make up the Japanese syllabary.



# FOREWORD TO PARTICLES

Rather than relying on word sequence, Japanese relies on particles to partner with words in order to indicate the role of the word in the sentence. Think of particles as dancing partners wearing brightly colored clothing who let you know the current occupation of their partner. A subject dances with a pink scarf wearing dancer. A topic dances with a blue scarf wearing dancer. A destination of travel dances with a green scarf wearing dancer. When we look at the dancers, we can see clearly who they are dancing with, and this is much like how a Japanese sentence operates.

Topics are indicated by the topic-marking particle “wa,” and the subject of a sentence is indicated by subject-marking particle “ga.”

**Note on Topic v Subject:** There is no direct equivalent to “topics” in English, think of it as shorthand for “as for blank” or “with general regards to blank” or “to put the spotlight on blank for a second...”

We simplify discussion on grammar by reducing the main categories of language theory to Particles, Nouns, and Verbs.

We also introduce **Sentence-Final Fitters:** *verbs* in their nakedness or *nouns* combined with the helper-verb copula “da”

and **Modifiers:** *verbs* in their nakedness before a noun, or *nouns* with their corresponding noun letter “na” or “no” preceding a noun.

# PARTICLES

## ROLE-MARKERS OF THE JAPANESE LANGUAGE

The Japanese language is powered by particles: parts of speech added on to the end of nouns to identify the role of each word in the sentence.

「\_\_ か」 Ka indicates a question and comes at the end of a phrase. Effectively a question mark “?” Written Japanese uses Ka instead of question marks. Although more contemporary use will employ the symbol “?”, historically Japanese questions and queries are indicated by Ka 「か」

「\_\_ け」 Ke: dschool self-interrogative particle similar to “what was that...”

「\_\_ に」 Ni: destination of travel, or precise time, or target of action, or indirect object, or hopping aboard/onto a vehicle such as a train or horse.

「\_\_ の」 No: The marushka nesting doll particle. Indicates subcategories. Or possession just like an apostrophe S. Also turns verbs into nouns.

「\_\_ も」 Mo: Elaborative Particle that can be combined with other particles. Means “also” and can mean “this far” or “so far that...” indicating extremes.

「\_\_ は」 Wa: Elaborative Particle that can be combined with other particles. Topic indicator, usually masking the everpresent “GA.” Phonetically “ha” in words or names.

「\_\_ へ」 "Eh" is the "Vague destination" of travel particle. Indicates a general direction of travel such as "The West" or "Japan" without precision. Phonetically as part of a word, this letter represents "he" as in "hex"

「\_\_ が」 The primary subject indication particle. Consider this particle present in every sentence, either with a Zero content (Zero-Ga) and therefore "unstated subject," or being masked by Wa [phonetic "ha"].

Consider Wa-Ga structure as a separate entity:

「\_\_ は」 + 「\_\_ が」 [wa-ga structure]

Wa indicates the general universe and Ga indicates the solar system. Or Wa indicates the solar system and Ga indicates a single planet. Or Wa indicates a planet and Ga indicates a single continent. Wa-ga structure uses a larger body and focuses on a smaller, universal trait that can be specified and detailed via Ga.

「\_\_ ね」 The particle "ne" comes at the end of a phrase and indicates "isn't that so?" or some sort of concord/agreement-seeking intention. It asserts that the listener would likely (85%+) agree to the phrase being said.

「\_\_ で」 "Deh" indicates a setting, a locality where actions or events take place. Also indicates the instrument, tool, or road that helps one accomplish something. Roughly, but not exactly "Via."

# QUERY PARTICLES

## PARTICLES INDICATING WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE

「が」

GA indicates Subject

「に」

NI indicates      Precise Time or  
Exact Place of Happening or Existing,  
Destination.

「を」

WO indicates Direct-Object

「で」

DE indicates      Setting (location)  
By-means-of-some-Tool or Instrument,  
By some road or way

「に」

NI can also indicate Indirect-Object

「の」

NO indicates conceptual nesting-dolls,  
ownership,  
subcategories, and  
noun-ification of verbs. [usu. "nominalization"]

「と」

TO indicates "and" for exhaustive (complete) lists. TO is  
also the quotation particle.

「や」

YA is used for inexhaustive lists to paint a scene.

# ELABORATIVE PARTICLES

## PARTICLES PROVIDING ADDITIONAL INFO

CAN **MASK** OR **COMBINE** W/ QUERY PARTICLES

「は」 WA indicates Topic. “Topic” in Japanese is one level

zoomed-out of “GA” (subject). WA is often rendered into English as “With regards to blank” and is patently ambiguous and nebulous in its style. Wa is used to move the spotlight into a new universe, but how you complete the sentence is up to you. Example:

At the restaurant: I’ll have the salad.

わたしは サラダ だ。 Watashi WA sarada DA.

Not “I am a salad” because は WA simply means “With regards to me” in this sentence. It is simply bringing the spotlight to “me” and then completing the relevant question mark. In this case, it's clear by the context that we are in a restaurant, so saying “is salad.” is perfectly legitimate Japanese when paired with “With regards to myself.” This sort of speech is very natural, because WA is simply an indication of current conceptual axis. English would require a lot more words to convey each meaning, where WA stands singly:

I am going to the movie. わたしは Movieに Go。

I want to go to the store. わたしは Storeに Want-to-Go。

I’ll have the salad. わたしは Salad だ。 I’ll have the salad.



「も」 MO indicates "Also." MO can mask other particles or

be combined with them. MO is used to explain "to this extent" or "all the way, this far! this much!" and is used to add emphasis, exaggeration, or include additional people, places, or things in some happening.

わたしも Go. I also will go / I too will go.

そこにも Go. (We will) go there also. We will also go there.

## ELABORATIVE PARTICLES は、も

### 1) Can **mask** Query Particles.

が→は [ga → wa]

に→は [ni → wa]

で→は [de → wa]

が→も [ga → mo]

### 2) Can be **combined** with Query Particles.

に→にも [ni → ni mo]

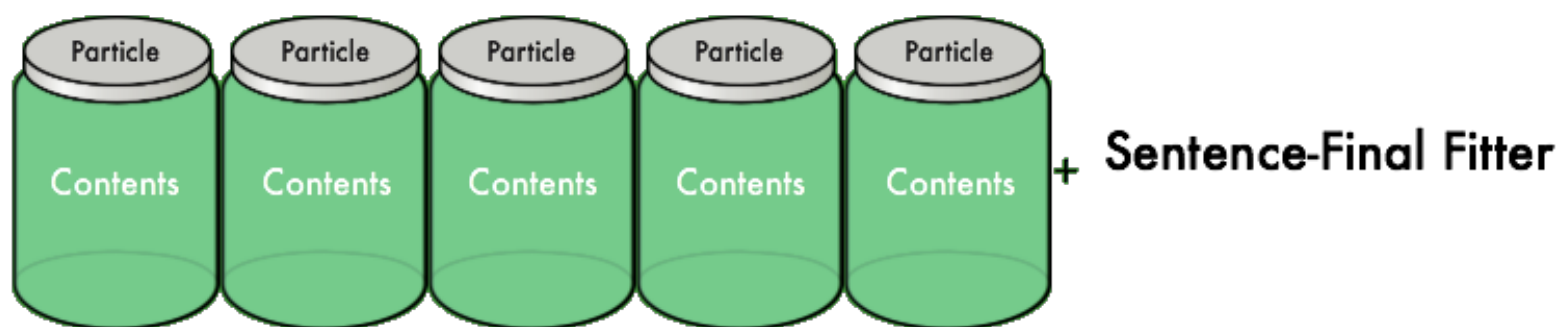
と→とも [to → to mo]

に→には [ni → ni wa]

# BUNSETSU JARS

## INTRODUCTION

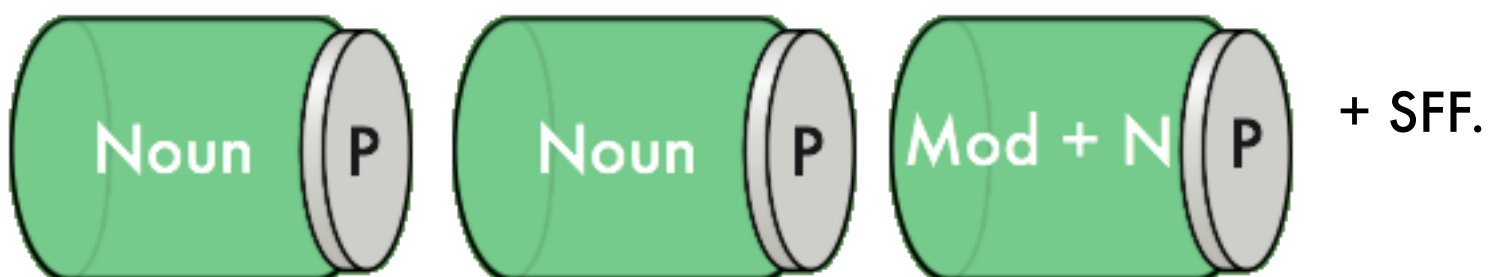
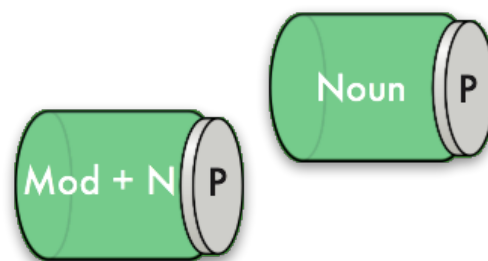
The arrangement of every Japanese sentence follows the sentence structure as shown, a variable number of jars and then a sentence-final fitter:



## JAR STRUCTURE

Every jar shares a similar structure:

1. Noun + Particle, or
2. Modifier + Noun + Particle.



Noun: Person, Place, or Thing

Modifier: Verb-u, Verb-i, Noun+na, Noun+no.

# SENTENCE-FINAL FITTER

Sentence-Final Fitters take the form of Verb-u, Verb-i, or either of the two kinds of Noun plus “da,” the copula (helper verb) indicating “is” for nouns.

1. Verb-う (Verb-u)

2. Verb-い (Verb-i)

3. Noun + da. 【Nouns with の drop the の and take だ。】

【Nouns with な drop the な and take だ。】

Sentence-Final  
Fitters occur at the end  
of a sequence of Bunsetsu  
Jars. A sentence-final fitter  
is a complete sentence  
by itself, as well.



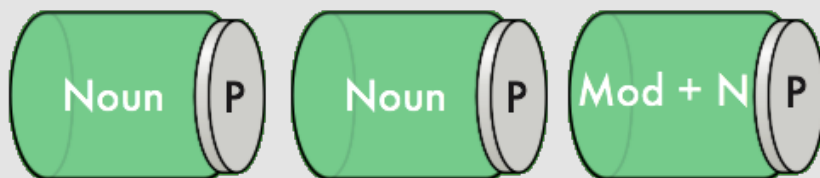
# ARRANGEMENT

Fundamentally, a complete sentence needs just a Sentence-Final Fitter.

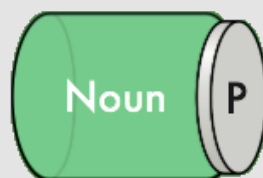


Sentence-Final-Fitter。

Or, a sentence can have **one or more** Bunsetsu Jars before the SFF.



Sentence-Final-Fitter。



Sentence-Final-Fitter。



Sentence-Final-Fitter。

All the above arrangements of bunsetsu jars and the sentence-final fitter are valid Japanese!

# TWO KINDS OF NOUN

In Japanese there are two kinds of noun, nouns that use “na” and nouns that use “no.” When they occur as a modifier of another noun, they must be attached to their corresponding mora (either な or の)

あいうえお  
a i u e o  
かきくけこ  
ka ki ku ke ko  
がぎぐげご  
ga gi gu ge go  
さしすせそ  
sa sh/shi s/su se so  
ざじずぜぞ  
za ji zu ze zo

きゃ きゅ きょ  
kya kyu kyo  
ぎゃ ぎゅ ぎょ  
gya gyu gyo  
しゃ しゅ しょ  
sha shu sho  
じゃ じゅ じょ  
ja ju jo

ちゃ ちゅ ちょ  
cha chu cho

たちつてと  
ta chi tsu te to  
だぢづでど  
da chi dzu de do

にゃ にゅ にょ  
nya nyu nyo  
みゃ みゅ みょ  
mya myu myo  
ひゃ ひゅ ひょ  
hya hyu hyo  
びゃ びゅ びょ  
bya byu byo

な にぬねの  
na ni nu ne no

まみむめも  
ma mi mu me mo  
はひふへほ  
ha hi fu he ho  
ばびぶべぼ  
ba bi bu be bo

ぴゃ ぴゅ ぴょ  
pya pyu pyo

らりるれろ  
ra ri ru re ro  
ぱぴぷぺぽ  
pa pi pu pe po  
わ ゐ ゑ を  
wa wi we wo  
ん

りゃ りゅ りょ  
rya ryu ryo  
や ゆ よ  
ya yu yo



# NOUNS WITH 「の」

Thing	こと	事
Time	とき	時
Person	ひと	人
Now	いま	今
Place	ところ	所
Oneself	じぶん	自分
Inside, in; into	なか	中
After, Later	あと、ご	後
Side, Direction	ほう	方
Reason	わけ	訳
For real, Truly	ほんとう	本当
For	ため	ため
Situation/Case	ばあい	場合
Story, Talk	はなし	話
Japan	にほん	日本
Ahead of, Early	まえ	前
One	ひとつ	一つ
Child	こども	子供

## EXAMPLES: NOUNS WITH 「の」

English	Japanese
Japan	にほんだ。
Of Japan/ Japanese	にほんの__
Now	いまだ。
Of Now / Current	いまの__
Place	ところだ。
Of this/that Place	ところの__
Oneself	じぶんだ。
Of Oneself, self's ...	じぶんの__

Current Japan, Japan at Current = いまのにほんだ。

[My] current self = いまのじぶんだ。

It's a Japanese spot/place = にほんのところだ。

[My] Japanese self = にほんのじぶんだ。

It's my own spot = じぶんのところだ。

It is the now of me (It's my time to shine) = じぶんのいまだ。

The real me = ほんとうのじぶんだ。

When used as a modifier to describe another noun, at those times modifier nouns must be paired with their respective mora. In this case all these nouns must pair with の in Modifier Mode to describe the base noun (immediately preceding だ)。

# NOUNS WITH 「な」

Style, Way	ふう	風
Extremely	ひじょう	非常
Like, Similar	みたい	見たい
Various	いろいろ	色々
Necessary	ひつよう	必要
Quite	けっこう	結構
Favored	このみ	好み
Challenging	たいへん	大変
Normal	ふつう	普通
Separate	べつ	別
(classically) Beautiful	きれい	綺麗 (not usually kanji)
Certain	たしか	確か
Important, Serious	だいじ	大事
Easy	かんたん	簡単
Nature, Natural	しぜん	自然
Of great importance	たいせつ	大切
Opposite, Vice-Versa	ぎゃく	逆
Famous, well-known	ゆうめい	有名

## EXAMPLES: NOUNS WITH 「な」

English	Japanese
It is a famous style.	ゆうめいなふうだ。
It is a challenging spot.	たいへんなところだ。
They are a beautiful person.	きれいなひとだ。
It's an important story.	だいじなはなしだ。

When used as a modifier to describe another noun, at those times modifier nouns must be paired with their respective mora. In this case all these nouns must pair with な in Modifier Mode to describe the base noun (immediately preceding だ)。

Modifier-Noun な Base-Noun だ。

→ “Is Modified Base-noun.”

# TWO KINDS OF VERB

In Japanese, there are two kinds of verb: verbs that end with the letter “eeh” い and verbs that end with the letter “ooh” う。

あ	い	う	え	お
a	i	u	e	o
か	き	く	け	こ
ka	ki	ku	ke	ko
が	ぎ	ぐ	げ	ご
ga	gi	gu	ge	go
さ	し	す	せ	そ
sa	sh/shi	s/su	se	so
ざ	じ	ず	ぜ	ぞ
za	ji	zu	ze	zo

き	ゃ	き	ゅ	き	ょ
	kya		kyu		kyo
ぎ	ゃ	ぎ	ゅ	ぎ	ょ
	gya		gyu		gyo
し	ゃ	し	ゅ	し	ょ
	sha		shu		sho
じ	ゃ	じ	ゅ	じ	ょ
	ja		ju		jo

ち	ゃ	ち	ゅ	ち	ょ
	cha		chu		cho

た	ち	つ	て	と
ta	chi	tsu	te	to
だ	ぢ	づ	で	ど
da	chi	dzu	de	do

に	ゃ	に	ゅ	に	ょ
	nya		nyu		nyo
み	ゃ	み	ゅ	み	ょ
	mya		myu		myo
ひ	ゃ	ひ	ゅ	ひ	ょ
	hya		hyu		hyo
び	ゃ	び	ゅ	び	ょ
	bya		byu		byo

な	に	ぬ	ね	の
na	ni	nu	ne	no
ま	み	む	め	も
ma	mi	mu	me	mo
は	ひ	ふ	へ	ほ
ha	hi	fu	he	ho
ば	び	ぶ	べ	ぼ
ba	bi	bu	be	bo

ぴ	ゃ	ぴ	ゅ	ぴ	ょ
	pya		pyu		pyo

ら	り	る	れ	ろ
ra	ri	ru	re	ro
ぱ	ぴ	ぷ	ぺ	ぽ
pa	pi	pu	pe	po
わ	ゐ	ゑ	を	
wa	wi	we	wo	
ん				

り	ゃ	り	ゅ	り	ょ
	rya		ryu		ryo
や		ゆ		よ	
	ya		yu		yo



# VERBS WITH 「い」

There is no...	ない	無い
Good	いい、よい	良い
Brilliant	すごい	凄い
Many	おおい	多い
Big	おおきい	大きい
High-up	たかい	高い
Bad	わるい	悪い
Fun	たのしい	楽しい
Strong	つよい	強い
New	あたらしい	新しい
Early, soon	はやい	早い
Small	ちいさい	小さい
Long	ながい	長い
Delicious	おいしい	美味しい
Interesting, funny	おもしろい	面白い
Glad, joyful	うれしい	嬉しい
Young	わかい	若い
Difficult	むずかしい	難しい

## EXAMPLES: VERBS WITH 「い」

English	Japanese
It is a fun story.	たのしいはなしだ。
They are a strong person.	つよいひとだ。
It is a new situation.	あたらしいばあいだ。
It is a difficult spot.	むずかしいところだ。

When used as a modifier to describe a noun, verbs retain their normal shape. They can be past or future-present tense. This guide only shows future-present tense currently.

Some other ways that may be helpful in thinking about Modifier Modes:

V + Base-Noun だ。 → Is a Verbing Base-noun.

V + Base-Noun だ。 → Is a Verbful Base-noun.

V + Base-Noun だ。 → Is a Verbish Base-noun.

**The -ish, -ful, -ing, -ese, endings that English adds are implied when a Japanese word is in Modifier Mode.**

# VERBS WITH 「う」

Say, speak	いう	言う
Do	する	為る
To exist, to have, to occur	ある	有る
Become	なる	成る
Think, believe	おもう	思う
Go	いく	行く
Arrive	くる	来る
See	みる	見る
Do, give	やる	
To exist (animate)	いる	居る
Be ready, achieve	できる	出来る
Have/hold, carry	もつ	持つ
Go out	でる	出る
Contemplate	かんがえる	考える
To Understand	わかる	分かる
To enter	はいる	入る
To make/create	つくる	作る
To hear, to listen	きく	聞く、聴く

## EXAMPLES: VERBS WITH 「う」

English	Japanese
Is a will-go person.	いくひとだ。
Is a will-be-created reason.	つくるわけだ。
Is an existing style.	あるふうだ。
Is a capable self.	できるひとだ。

When used as a modifier to describe a noun, verbs retain their normal shape. They can be past or future-present tense. This guide only shows the tense we call “future-present.” Is-go(ing) and Will-go are not different.

# TWO MODES

WORDS CAN DESCRIBE, AND WORDS CAN DEFINE.

The two kinds of words in Japanese, Nouns and Verbs, have two modes:

1. **Modifier Mode** when they occur mid-sentence or at the beginning of a sentence, and
2. **Sentence-Final Fitter Mode**, where the noun or verb is placed at the end of the sentence.

## MODIFIER MODE

Nouns with “no” or “na” must include their “no” or “na” when used as a modifier:

べつなわけが ほんとうの わけだ。

A separate reason is the real reason.

Verbs as a modifier simply come in front of a noun:

かんがえるひとが すごいひとに なる。

The contemplating person becomes the brilliant person.



## S F F M O D E

Nouns\* as a Sentence-Final Fitter require the helper-verb "is." In Japanese the copula is "da" 「だ。」

ふつうだ。

Is normal.

はなしだ。

Is a story.

にほんだ。

Is Japan.

Verbs as a Sentence-Final Fitter may remain as they are:

おいしい。

Is delicious / is delicious' ing.

たのしい。

Is fun / is fun' ing.

わかい。

Is young / is young' ing.

\*Both nouns with no and nouns with na take da instead of their noun letter when SFF.

# ADDRESSING PEOPLE

Japanese uses suffixes after “upper names” (last names / surnames) to show respect. Varying levels of respectful language pervade and permeate the Japanese language. The standard way of addressing someone, like Mr. Blank or Ms. Blank in the Anglosphere, would be to say Blank-San. (San rhymes with Khan)

さん

The suffix “san” roughly translates to Mister or Misses and is attached to the family name of the person. Bill Yamaguchi is summoned by saying “Hey, Yamaguchiさん!”

くん

The suffix “kun” (sounds like coon) is used inside a company to talk to your [male/strong animus] colleagues. Jon Slaybow is summoned by saying “Hey, Slaybowくん!”

ちゃん

The suffix “chan” (roughly rhymes with “fawn”) roughly translates to “baby!” from the Japanese word for newborn: あかちゃん [red babe]

Miles Lovingsworth is summoned by saying “Milesちゃん!” somewhat literally “Miles, baby!” It's a cute ending not to be used with your boss, teacher, or superiors; just with friends and people younger than you.

# THE FOUR KINDS OF KANJI

Kanji are mainland Asian ideograms imported over the centuries. While the etymological origins of many glyphs are murky, knowing the etymological history can help in learning and remembering the meanings and readings of the kanji.

Japanese culture has been perfumed with kanji since around the 5th century and the ideograms and glyphs have been incorporated smoothly into the Japanese language. In fact, the Hiragana and Katakana syllabaries were created by simplifying phonetic-use kanji. These original variants of the Hiragana and Katakana were called the Man'yo-gana.

## Four Main Types of Kanji

象形・指事・会意・形声

1. Pictographs 象形

2. Indicators 指事

3. Combographs 会意

4. Meaning-and-Sound Borrowers 形声.

## PICTOGRAPHS 象形

The first type is **pictographs** which stand in for the actual thing they represent. Some researchers claim fewer than 4% are actually pictographs.

人 biped (human)

女 woman

手 hand

田 rice field

子 child

日 sun

月 moon

門 gate

山 mountain

川 river

# INDICATORS 指事

Indicators. Visual stand-in or pointer for a concept.

上	Up/above
下	Down/below
中	Middle/between
一	One
二	Two
三	Three
天	Heaven
立	Stand up
引	Pull
公	Public
共	Together
仲	Relationship
末	Top end, tip
片	one of a pair

# COMBOGRAPHS 会意文字

Combographs, kanji composed of two or more kanji to create a third meaning. "A meeting of meanings" to forge a new alloy with different properties.

武 is composed of 戈 and 止  
Military arts = Spear + Stop

「信」は「人」と「言」  
Trust (person + speak)  
Word is bond.

「相」は「木」と「目」  
Physiognomy (tree + eye)

「休」は「人」と「木」  
Take a Break = Person + Tree

「男」は「田」と「力」  
Man = Field + Power

「即」は「皀」と「卩」  
Namely = Fragrant + Seal

「赤」は「大」と「火」  
Red (Big + Fire)

「香」は「黍」と「甘」  
Fragrance (Millet + Sweet)

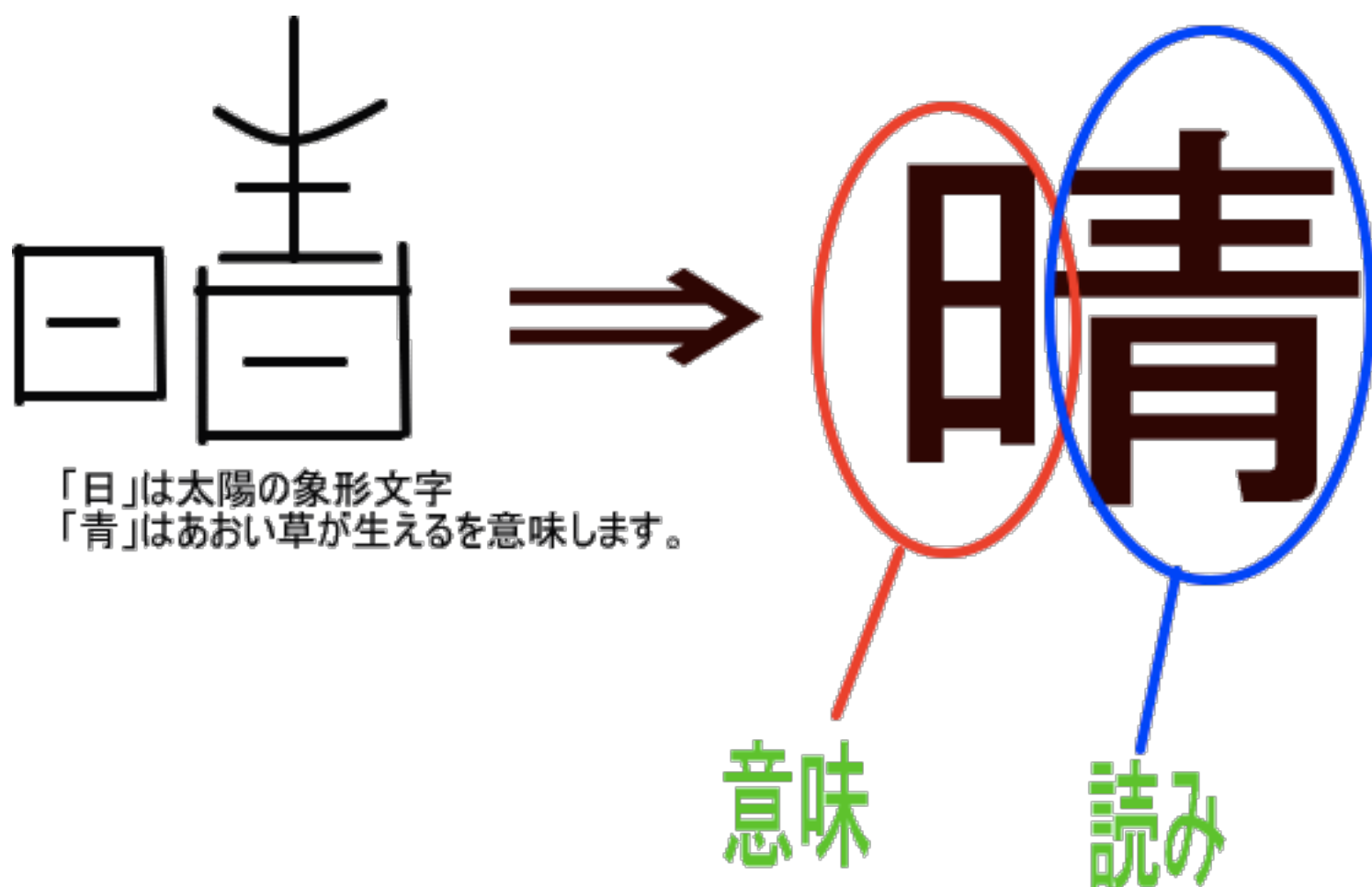
「髟」は「長」と「彡」  
Hair hanging long (Long + hair)



# MEANING-SOUND-SMASH 形声文字

Semantics and Sound Borrowers, meaning and sound borrowers, soundalikes inherit a phonetic value (pronunciation / reading) from one of their subkanji, and inherit meaning from another. We can call them “sound-alike” or “mean-alike” kanji.

Meaning and Sound Borrowers make up **90%** of Japanese Kanji.



Meaning inherited on the left, reading inherited from the right.

「形声文字は、音を表わす文字（音符）と、意味を表わす部分（意符）で構成されています。」

“Sound and Meaning Borrower Kanji have a phonetic helper subkanji and a meaning helper subkanji.”

# HANDWRITTEN VS. TYPESET

Handwritten Japanese looks like

いろはにほへとちりぬるを  
わかよだれぞつねならむ  
うゐのおくやまけふこえて  
あさきゆめみしゑひもせず

Typeset Japanese looks like

いろはにほへとちりぬるを  
わかよだれぞつねならむ  
うゐのおくやまけふこえて  
あさきゆめみしゑひもせず

HANDWRITTEN VS. TYPESET  
INTERLEAVED

いろはにほへとちりぬるを

いろはにほへとちりぬるを

わかよだれぞつねならむ

わかよだれぞつねならむ

うゐのおくやまけふこえて

うゐのおくやまけふこえて

あさきゆめみしゑひもせず

あさきゆめみしゑひもせず

# THE LANGUAGE OF SOUND EFFECTS

In Japanese, sound effects are instrumental to the language and are ubiquitous. Sound effects can indicate the sound an animal makes, much like “buzz buzz” or “bark bark” in English, Japanese has gi-sei-go (you can remember because “sei” sounds like “say”) that emulates animal speech, or human behaviors.

Sound effects can also imitate situations or properties. Things like slipperiness of an ice rink, or the moistness/dampness of a towel can also be described using sound effect language. This sort of Sound Effect Language is called Gi-tai-go (“tai” means “situation”). More general sound effect language, for rain and weather, uses the name Gi-on-go (“on” means “sound”).

Sound Effect Language is a fundamental component of Japanese and native speakers can have complete conversations using only Sound Effect Language. All are rendered here in Hiragana for beginner convenience.

## GISEIGO (HUMAN)

Sneeze くしゅ

Stare at intently じろじろ

Secret Whispering こそこそ

Smiling にこにこ

Chug a drink がぶがぶ

## GISEIGO (ANIMAL)

Bark Bark わんわん

Meow Meow にゃ あにゃ あ

Neigh/Winnie ひひいん

Ribbit Ribbit けろけろ

Buzz Buzz ぶうん

Fox's Cry こんこん

Cow Says Moe もおもお

## GITAIGO

Spicy and Hot ぴりぴり

Sticky, Moist べとべと

Sticky with Sweat ペとペと

Sparkling きらきら

Steamy ほかほか

Silence after a Joke falls flat しいん

# GIONGO

Heavy, Continuous Rain	ざあざあ
Crashing Sound	がしゃ
Thunder Rumbling	ごろごろ
Soaking Wet	びしょびしょ
Slippery, Slick	つるつる

# FUTURE WORK

## KANJI MASKING PRINCIPLE

Kanji and Japanese words work together in a unique way, where the kanji masks some hiragana partially or completely, so one must know the reading of the kanji to utter it. For tough kanji, rare kanji, and school-age kids there is Furi-gana (hiragana or katakana on top of the kanji to assist in reading it aloud). We hope to investigate this in more detail in a future version of this guide.

## KANJI CATEGORIES

There are roughly 15 categories of kanji where one kanji indicates a specific type, such as: names for raw materials, communication terms, nature, society, medicine, bugs, and so forth. By learning the categories you can often short-cut the meaning or the reading of the kanji.

## LENSING SOUNDS THROUGH KANA

Sounds from English and other languages are filtered through the Hiragana and Katakana which is why Japanese accents tend to have a lot of extra vowels, they are learning English by filtering the sounds through Hiragana and Katakana letters. Knowing this can speed up comprehension and make your Katakana abilities ninja-like fast.

## PITCH ACCENT

To speak fluidly and fluently one needs to master the pitch accent of Japanese, the sing-songiness of delivering a sentence. Certain words have predetermined pitch accents, news anchors must study them.