

LESSON NOTES

All About #5

Top 5 Must Know Japanese Phrases

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GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson is the Top Five Must-Know Japanese Phrases

Here we'll introduce five phrases in Japanese that will take you a long way and help you out in a variety of situations!

Sumimasen (すみません) "Excuse me" / "I'm sorry" / "Thanks"

Sumimasen is a versatile phrase with a few different meanings depending on the situation, the closest of which is "excuse me." Whether you are trying to get someone's attention to ask them a question, making your way through a crowded area, or apologizing for running into someone or stepping on their foot, *sumimasen* is the phrase you want to use. If someone gets something for you or kindly does something for you, you can use *sumimasen* to thank them as well as apologize for the trouble they have gone through to help you. The correct spelling and pronunciation of this phrase is *sumimasen*, but quite a few people pronounce it as *suimasen*, omitting the first "m" sound.

Dōmo (どうも) "Thanks" / "Hi"

Dōmo is a simple and easy way to say "thank you" as well as greet someone. This phrase is more casual than using *kon'nichi wa* ("hello") or *arigatō* ("thank you"), and you can use it when these two phrases might be a little too formal for what the situation calls for. Some people use this to thank shop clerks because they think that using the formal *arigatō gozaimasu* ("thank you very much") might be a little too polite and out of place.

Dōzo (どうぞ) "Please go ahead" / "Please"

If you're offering something to someone or would like someone to go ahead of you or do something before you, *dōzo* is the phrase you are looking for. Offering your seat to someone on the train? *Dōzo*. Holding the door for someone and would like them to go right ahead? *Dōzo*. At a restaurant and someone else's food came before yours and you would like them to start eating? *Dōzo*. Try your hand at making some delicious *o-nigiri* ("rice balls") and would like to offer them to someone? *Dōzo!*

O-negai shimasu (お願いします) "Please"

You can use this handy phrase when you would like to ask for a favor or make a request of some kind. By using this phrase, you can show your appreciation in advance for the favor or request you have asked. In a business situation, it means something like "please take care of this for me." In addition to requests or favors, you can also use it to ask for tangible objects.

Hai (はい) "Right" / "Yes" / "Here you go"

And now for the most compact phrase of the top five: the phrase *hai*. The most common translation for this word is "yes" or "right," but depending on the situation, it can also mean "here you go" if someone says it as they hand something to you. Something important to note, though, is that Japanese people often use this phrase as they are listening to show they are following what the speaker is saying - it doesn't necessarily mean they agree with or are affirming anything the speaker is saying. Just something to keep in mind to hopefully avoid any confusion!

You can also use this word when you aren't able to catch what someone is saying and you

would like them to repeat what they have said. When said with rising intonation, like a question (*hai?*), it is the equivalent of saying, "Excuse me?" or "I'm sorry?"