

## Part I Lesson 4 Age

Greetings 4	おさきに しつれいします。 <i>O-saki ni shitsuree-shimasu.</i>	Excuse my leaving now (before you leave).
	おさきに。 <i>O-saki ni.</i>	I'm leaving now (before you leave).
Classroom Expressions 4	きょうは ここまで。 <i>Kyoo wa koko made.</i>	So much for today.

## Dialogues 1 えと・せいき・げんごう (Animal Year/Western Era/Emperor Era)

- Dialogue 1-1**
- A: Bさんは なにどうしうまれ ですか。  
 B: とりどうしうまれ です。  
 A: ほんとうですか。  
     わたしも とりどうしうまれ です。  
 B: ほんとうですか。じゃあ、おないどし ですね。
- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>A: <i>B-san wa nani-doshi-umare desu ka.</i><br/>         B: <i>Tori-doshi-umare desu.</i><br/>         A: <i>Hontoo desu ka. Watashi mo tori-doshi-umare desu.</i><br/>         B: <i>Hontoo desu ka. Jaa, onai-doshi desu ne.</i></p> | <p>A: B, which animal-year-born are you?<br/>         B: I am a rooster-year-born.<br/>         A: Really? I am also a rooster-year-born.<br/>         B: Really? Then, we are of the same age, aren't we!</p> |
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### Vocabulary

なにどし {animal} どし	<i>nani-doshi</i> <i>{animal}-doshi</i>	what/which animal year [names of the twelve animal years]
{time} うまれ おないどし	<i>{time}-umare</i> <i>onai-doshi</i>	{time}-born, a person born in {time} of the same age
えと	<i>eto</i>	animal years according to the Chinese calendar
せいき げんごう	<i>seereki</i> <i>gengoo</i>	Western era (A.D. and B.C.) names of emperor era

**Animal Years: -DOSHI**

えと	<i>eto</i>	animal years
ねどし	<i>ne-doshi</i>	rat year
うしどし	<i>ushi-doshi</i>	bull year
とらどし	<i>tora-doshi</i>	tiger year
うどし	<i>u-doshi</i>	rabbit year
たつどし	<i>tatsu-doshi</i>	dragon year
みどし	<i>mi-doshi</i>	snake year
うまどし	<i>uma-doshi</i>	horse year
ひつじどし	<i>hitsuji-doshi</i>	sheep year
さるどし	<i>saru-doshi</i>	monkey year
とりどし	<i>tori-doshi</i>	rooster year
いぬどし	<i>inu-doshi</i>	dog year
いどし	<i>i-doshi</i>	boar year
なにどし	<i>nani-doshi</i>	which animal year?

**Suffix for the Year: -NEN**

1ねん	<i>1-nen (ichi-nen)</i>	the 1st year
2ねん	<i>2-nen (ni-nen)</i>	the 2nd year
3ねん	<i>3-nen (san-nen)</i>	the 3rd year
4ねん	<i>4-nen (yo-nen)</i>	the 4th year
5ねん	<i>5-nen (go-nen)</i>	the 5th year
6ねん	<i>6-nen (roku-nen)</i>	the 6th year
7ねん	<i>7-nen (nana-nen) [shichi-nen]</i>	the 7th year
8ねん	<i>8-nen (hachi-nen)</i>	the 8th year
9ねん	<i>9-nen (kyuu-nen) [ku-nen]</i>	the 9th year
10ねん	<i>10-nen (juu-nen)</i>	the 10th year
なんねん	<i>nan-nen</i>	which year?

Note: Readings in square brackets [ ] are of limited use.

Animal Year			Approximate Calendar Year (A.D.)					
ね	<i>ne</i>	rat	1948	1960	1972	1984	1996	2008
うし	<i>ushi</i>	bull	1949	1961	1973	1985	1997	2009
とら	<i>tora</i>	tiger	1950	1962	1974	1986	1998	2010
う	<i>u</i>	rabbit	1951	1963	1975	1987	1999	2011
たつ	<i>tatsu</i>	dragon	1952	1964	1976	1988	2000	2012
み	<i>mi</i>	snake	1953	1965	1977	1989	2001	2013
うま	<i>uma</i>	horse	1954	1966	1978	1990	2002	2014
ひつじ	<i>hitsuji</i>	sheep	1955	1967	1979	1991	2003	2015
さる	<i>saru</i>	monkey	1956	1968	1980	1992	2004	2016
とり	<i>tori</i>	rooster	1957	1969	1981	1993	2005	2017
いぬ	<i>inu</i>	dog	1958	1970	1982	1994	2006	2018
い	<i>i</i>	boar	1959	1971	1983	1995	2007	2019
なにどし which animal year?			なんねん which year?					

Note 1: Some of the animal names above are antiquated forms and used only for the animal years. In modern Japanese, “rat”, “rabbit”, “snake”, and “boar” are called **NEZUMI**, **USAGI**, **HEBI**, and **INOSHISHI**, respectively. The word **TORI** in modern use has two meanings: one is generally “bird” and the other, specifically “chicken/rooster.” The word **NIWA-TORI**, which literally means “garden bird” only refers to “chicken/rooster.”

Note 2: The **Kanji** used for the animal years are:

子 (ね), 丑 (うし), 寅 (とら), 卯 (う), 辰 (たつ), 巳 (み),  
午 (うま), 未 (ひつじ), 申 (さる), 酉 (とり), 戌 (いぬ), and 亥 (い).

Note 3: The **Kanji** used for the same kinds of animals for the uses other than animal years are:

鼠 (ねずみ), 牛 (うし), 虎 (とら), 兎 (うさぎ), 竜 (たつ), 蛇 (へび),  
馬 (うま), 羊 (ひつじ), 猿 (さる), 鶏 (とり), 犬 (いぬ), and 猪 (いのしし).

**Application 1-1** (Dialogue 1-1)

A: Ask your practice partner which animal-year-born he/she is, using the expression **nani-doshi-umare**.

B: If you do not want to give the true answer, say: **Himitsu desu** or you may give a false answer.

A: If you were born in the same animal year as your partner, say:  
**Hontoo desu ka. Watashi mo \_\_\_\_-doshi-umare desu.**  
 using the particle **mo**.

If not, say:

**Aa, soo desu ka. Watashi wa \_\_\_\_-doshi-umare desu.**  
 using the particle **wa**.

B: If appropriate, say: **Hontoo desu ka. Jaa, onai-doshi desu ne.**

**Vocabulary**

ひみつ

*himitsu*

secret

\_\_\_\_と

\_\_\_\_ *to*

with \_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_と おないどし

\_\_\_\_ *to onai-doshi*

the same age as \_\_\_\_

<b>namae</b>	<b>____-doshi-umare</b>	<b>onai-doshi</b> ○ for true X for not true
Jennifer	ne-doshi-umare	X

**Dialogue 1-2**

A: Bさんは なにどうしうまれ ですか。

B: とらどうしうまれ です。

A: 「とらどし」と いうと、1986ねん ですか。

B: ええ、そうです。

A: *B-san wa nani-doshi-umare desu ka.*

B: *Tora-doshi-umare desu.*

A: *"Tora-doshi" to yuu to, 1986-nen desu ka.*

B: *Ee, soo desu.*

A: Which animal-year-born are you, B?

B: I am a tiger-year-born.

A: When you say "the tiger year", is it 1986?

B: Yes, it is.

**Dialogue 1-3**

A: Bさんは なにどし ですか。

B: さるどし です。

A: 「さるどし」と いうと、1968ねん ですか。

B: いいえ、ちがいます。

A: えっ、じゃあ、1956ねん ですか。

B: ええ、そうですよ。

A: ほんとうですか。

A: *B-san wa nani-doshi desu ka.*

B: *Saru-doshi desu.*

A: *"Saru-doshi" to yuu to, 1968-nen desu ka.*

B: *lie, chigaimasu.*

A: *E', jaa, 1956-nen desu ka.*

B: *Ee, soo desu yo.*

A: *Hontoo desu ka.*

A: Which animal sign are you, B?

B: I am a monkey-year(-born).

A: When you say "the monkey year", is it 1968?.

B: No, it isn't.

A: It isn't? Then, is it 1956?

B: Yes, it is!

A: Really!

**Vocabulary**

なんねん  
{number} ねん

*nan-nen*  
*{number}-nen*

what/which year  
{number} year(s)

\_\_\_\_\_と いうと

\_\_\_\_\_ *to yuu to*

when you say \_\_\_\_\_

**Application 1-2** (Dialogues 1-2 and 1-3)

A: Ask your practice partner for his/her animal sign. Then, guess which year (A.D.) it is.

B: When your practice partner guesses which year, you may pretend that you were born twelve years earlier or later.

If your partner gets surprised at your answer or does not believe it, say: ***Uso desu*** (a lie) or ***Joodan desu*** (a joke).

Write your partners' responses in the table (***hyoo***) below. When you have filled in the whole table, say that you are finished: ***Dekimashita***.

**Vocabulary**

うそ  
じょうだん  
できました  
ひょう

*uso*  
*joodan*  
*dekimashita*  
*hyoo*

a lie  
a joke  
be done/finished  
table

<i>namae</i>	<i>__-doshi-umare</i>	<i>__-nen</i>	<i>hontoo / uso</i>
Kenneth	ushi-doshi-umare	1985-nen	hontoo

**Dialogue 1-4**

A : Bさんは なんねんうまれ ですか。

B : 1984ねんうまれ です。

A : 1984ねんと いうと、しょうわなんねん ですか。

B : しょうわ59ねん です。

A: *B-san wa nan-nen-umare  
desu ka.*

B: *1984-nen-umare desu.*

A: *1984-nen to yuu to,  
Shoowa nan-nen desu ka.*

B: *Shoowa 59-nen desu.*

A: Which year-born are you, B?

B: I am a 1984-year-born.

A: When you say "1984,"  
which Showa year is it?

B: It is Showa 59.

**Vocabulary**

しょうわ

Shoowa

Showa Era

**Application 1-3** (Dialogue 1-4)

A: Ask your practice partner which year-born he/she is. Then, ask which Showa year it is, using the expression **Shoowa nan-nen**.

If you are talking to an elderly person, you may need to use Taisho or Meiji Era: **Taishoo nan-nen** or **Meeji nan-nen**

If you are talking to a younger person born before 1989, use Heisei:  
**Heesee nan-nen**

B: Answer referring to the table on the next page.



## Emperor Eras

めいじ	<i>Meeji</i>	Meiji (1868 - 1912)
たいしょう	<i>Taishoo</i>	Taisho (1912 - 1926)
しょうわ	<i>Shoowa</i>	Showa (1926 - 1989)
へいせい	<i>Heesee</i>	Heisei (1989 - )
がんねん	<i>gan-nen</i>	the first year (of an era)

Years	Emperor Eras (since Meiji Restoration in 1867)			
	<i>Meeji</i> めいじ	<i>Taishoo</i> たいしょう	<i>Shoowa</i> しょうわ	<i>Heesee</i> へいせい
1868-nen	めいじがんねん			
1870-nen	めいじ3ねん			
/	/			
1910-nen	めいじ43ねん			
1912-nen	めいじ45ねん	たいしょうがんねん		
1920-nen		たいしょう9ねん		
1926-nen		たいしょう15ねん	しょうわがんねん	
1930-nen			しょうわ5ねん	
/			/	
1980-nen			しょうわ55ねん	
1989-nen			しょうわ64ねん	へいせいがんねん
1990-nen				へいせい2ねん
2000-nen				へいせい12ねん
2010-nen				へいせい22ねん

Note 1: When an emperor era change takes place, the year up to that day belongs to the previous era and the rest of the year belongs to the new era.

Note 2: The first year of each era is customarily called **GAN-NEN** rather than **1-NEN**.

## Dialogues 2 とし (Age)

### Dialogue 2-1

A : しつれいですが、Bさんは なんさい ですか。

B : 25さい です。

A : 25さい ですか。じゃあ、わたしのほうが うえ ですね。

B : Aさんは なんさい ですか。

A : わたしは 28さい です。

B : ああ、そうですか。Aさんのほうが うえ ですね。

A: *Shitsuree desu ga, B-san wa nan-sai desu ka.*

B: *25-sai desu.*

A: *25-sai desu ka. Jaa, watashi no hoo ga ue desu ne.*

B: *A-san wa nan-sai desu ka.*

A: *Watashi wa 28-sai desu.*

B: *Aa, soo desu ka. A-san no hoo ga ue desu ne.*

A: How old are you, B, if I may ask?

B: I'm 25 years old.

A: 25 years old? Then, I am older (than you are).

B: How old are you, A?

A: I'm 28 years old.

B: Oh, is that so! You are older (than I am).

### Vocabulary

とし

なんさい

{number} さい

\_\_\_\_の ほう

うえ

しつれいですが、

*toshi*

*nan-sai*

*{number}-sai*

*\_\_\_\_ no hoo*

*ue*

*Shitsuree desu ga,*

age

how (many years) old

{number} years old

\_\_\_\_ (of the two)

higher in rank

If I may ask,

## Counter for Age: **-SAI** (Irregular form marked with ♡)

0 さい	<i>0-sai (ree-sai)</i>	zero year old (younger than one year old)
1 さい	<i>1-sai (is-sai)</i>	one year old
2 さい	<i>2-sai (ni-sai)</i>	two years old
3 さい	<i>3-sai (san-sai)</i>	three years old
4 さい	<i>4-sai (yon-sai)</i>	four years old
5 さい	<i>5-sai (go-sai)</i>	five years old
6 さい	<i>6-sai (roku-sai)</i>	six years old
7 さい	<i>7-sai (nana-sai)</i>	seven years old
8 さい	<i>8-sai (has-sai)</i>	eight years old
9 さい	<i>9-sai (kyuu-sai)</i>	nine years old
10 さい	<i>10-sai (jus-sai)</i>	ten years old
20 さい	<i>20-sai (nijus-sai/nijis-sai)</i>	twenty years old
♡ はたち	<i>hatachi</i>	twenty years old
なん さい	<i>nan-sai</i>	how (many years) old?

Note: A slash [ / ] indicates that there are two commonly-used forms.

### **Application 2-1** (Dialogue 2-1)

Ask your practice partner how old he/she is, using the expression ***nan-sai***.

To your partner's answer, respond with one of the followings:

***Watashi no hoo ga ue desu ne.*** I am older (than you are).

***\_\_\_\_\_-san no hoo ga ue desu ne.*** You are older (than I am).

***Watashi to onai-doshi desu ne.*** You are of the same age as me.

**Dialogue 2-2**

A : Bさんは おとしは おいくつ ですか。

B : 74 です。

A : えっ、74 ですか。

おわかく みえますねえ。

B : そうですか。

もう としより ですよ。

Aさんは おいくつ ですか。

A : わたしは はたち です。

B : わかい ですねえ。

A : まだ こども です。

A: *B-san wa o-toshi wa  
o-ikutsu desu ka.*

B: *74 desu.*

A: *E', 74 desu ka.*

*O-wakaku miemasu nee.*

B: *Soo desu ka.*

*Moo toshi-yori desu yo.*

*A-san wa o-ikutsu desu ka.*

A: *Watashi wa hatachi desu.*

B: *Wakai desu nee.*

A: *Mada kodomo desu.*

A: How old are you, B?

B: I'm 74.

A: Wow, you are 74?

You look young!

B: Is that so?

I'm already an old person.

How old are you, A?

A: I'm 20 years old.

B: You are young!

A: I am still a child.

(= I'm just a baby!)

## Vocabulary

とし	<i>toshi</i>	age
いくつ	<i>ikutsu</i>	how many (years old)
わかい	<i>wakai</i>	young, youthful
わかく みえます	<i>wakaku miemasu</i>	look young/look youthful
としより	<i>toshi-yori</i>	old person
こども	<i>kodomo</i>	child, inexperienced person
もう [+affirmative]	<i>moo</i>	already
まだ [+affirmative]	<i>mada</i>	still

## Application 2-2 (Review)

A: Ask your partner how old he/she is, using the expression  
***o-toshi wa o-ikutsu*** or simply ***o-ikutsu***.

B: For your practice, answer with ***-sai***.

A: Ask your practice partner how old his/her parents are.

B: If your father or mother is deceased, say:

***Chichi wa nakunarimashita.***

My father is deceased.

***Haha wa nakunarimashita.***

My mother is deceased.

## Vocabulary

なくなりました	<i>nakunarimashita</i>	have passed away, be deceased
にしました	<i>shinimashita</i>	has died, be dead

## Vocabulary Exercises

### Vocabulary Exercise 1

Practice the following questions and answers **orally** with your practice partner by filling in the blanks with animal year names.

① Q: \_\_\_\_\_-doshi no tsugi wa nani-doshi desu ka.

A: \_\_\_\_\_-doshi desu.

② Q: \_\_\_\_\_-doshi no mae wa nani-doshi desu ka.

A: \_\_\_\_\_-doshi desu.

### Vocabulary

つぎ  
まえ

tsugi  
mae

the next one  
the previous one

### Vocabulary Exercise 2

Practice in the same way as in the above exercise.

① Q: *Kotoshi wa* \_\_\_\_\_-doshi desu.  
*Rainen wa nani-doshi desu ka.*

A: \_\_\_\_\_-doshi desu.

② Q: *Kotoshi wa* \_\_\_\_\_-doshi desu.  
*Kyonen wa nani-doshi deshita ka.*

A: \_\_\_\_\_-doshi deshita.

**Vocabulary**

きょねん	<i>kyonen</i>	last year
ことし	<i>kotoshi</i>	this year
らいねん	<i>rainen</i>	next year

**Vocabulary Exercise 3**

Practice the following questions and answers **orally** with your partner as exemplified below.

① Q: **19**\_\_\_\_-*nen wa nani-doshi desu ka.*

A: \_\_\_\_\_-*doshi desu.*

Example Q: **1998**-*nen wa nani-doshi desu ka.*

A: **Tora**-*doshi desu.*

② Q: **20**\_\_\_\_-*nen wa nani-doshi desu ka.*

A: \_\_\_\_\_-*doshi desu.*

Example Q: **2002**-*nen wa nani-doshi desu ka.*

A: **Uma**-*doshi desu.*

### Vocabulary Exercise 4

Practice the following questions and answers **orally** with your partner, filling in the blanks with numbers.

① Q: 20\_\_\_\_-nen wa Heesee nan-nen desu ka.

A: Heesee \_\_\_\_-nen desu.

Example Q: 2002-nen wa Heesee nan-ne desu ka.

A: Heesee 14-nen desu.

② Q: 18\_\_\_\_-nen wa Meeji nan-nen desu ka.

A: Meeji \_\_\_\_-nen desu.

Example Q: 1889-nen wa Meeji nan-ne desu ka.

A: Meeji 22-nen desu.

### Vocabulary Exercise 5

Practice the following questions and answers **orally** with your partner, filling in the underscored blanks with numbers and choosing the appropriate Emperor Era names in the blank boxes.

① Q: 19\_\_\_\_-nen wa  nan-nen desu ka.

A:  \_\_\_\_-nen desu .

Example Q: 1983-nen wa Shoowa nan-ne desu ka.

A: Shoowa 58-nen desu.



## Grammar & Usage Notes I-4

### 1. Conjunctive Particle GA

The conjunctive particle **GA** (but, although) conjoins two clauses into one compound sentence. Structurally, it is attached to the end of the first clause. A comma is usually placed after this particle.

E.g., (1) しつれいです。

*Shitsuree desu.*

(It is rude [of me to do something].)

(2) おとしは おいくつ ですか。

*O-toshi wa o-ikutsu desu ka.*

(How old are you?)

(3) しつれいですが、おとしは おいくつ ですか。 [(1) + (2)]

*Shitsuree desu ga, o-toshi wa o-ikutsu desu ka.*

(I may be rude [to ask you this], but how old are you?)

The conjunctive particle **GA** is often pronounced as **NGA**. If it is difficult to pronounce this nasalized **NGA**, simply use the sound **GA**.

### 2. Particle GA

One of the functions of the particle **GA** is to indicate the subject of the sentence. The particle **GA** (subject marker) and the conjunction particle **GA** (but, although) are two different particles, the former to be used with a noun phrase and the latter with two clauses. Like the conjunction particle **GA**, the particle **GA** is also often nasalized as **NGA**.

E.g., (1) Bさんのほうが うえ です。

*B-san no hoo ga ue desu.*

(B is in a higher rank.)

### 3. NO HOO

The phrase **NO HOO** literally means “the direction of \_\_\_\_\_” and is used to mean “{one} of the two (choices).” This phrase typically appears in comparative sentences.

E.g., (1) Bさんの ほうが うえ です。

*B-san no hoo ga ue desu.*

(B is in a higher rank.)

#### 4. Double-Topic Sentence

Some Japanese sentences have two topics, both of which are indicated by the particle **WA**. The first topic is usually the general topic and the second is the sub-topic under that general topic. The particle **WA** indicating the general topic can often (but not always) be changed to the particle **NO** without affecting the logical relationship between the general topic and the sub-topic.

- E.g., (1) あなたは おとしは おいくつ ですか。  
*Anata wa o-toshi wa o-ikutsu desu ka.*  
 [anata : the general topic, o-toshi : the sub-topic]  
 (How old are you?)  
 [Literally: In your case, regarding your age, how many years is it?]
- (2) あなたの おとしは おいくつ ですか。  
*Anata no o-toshi wa o-ikutsu desu ka.*  
 [Anata no o-toshi : the topic]  
 (How old are you?)  
 [Literally: How many years old is your age?]

#### 5. NANI- & NAN-

**NANI-** and **NAN-** are used with different kinds of words but are a single word with different forms and uses. **NANI** usually means “what kind” and **NAN**, “what number” or “how many.”

##### NANI meaning “what kind”

E.g., なにざ	<b>NANI-ZA</b>	which horoscopic sign
なにどし	<b>NANI-DOSHI</b>	which animal year

##### NAN meaning “what number”

E.g., なんねん	<b>NAN-NEN</b>	which year
なんがつ	<b>NAN-GATSU</b>	which month
なんにち	<b>NAN-NICHI</b>	which day of the month
なんようび	<b>NAN-YOUBI</b>	which day of the week

##### NAN meaning “how many”

E.g., なんさい	<b>NAN-SAI</b>	how (many years) old
なんねん	<b>NAN-NEN</b>	how many years
なんにち	<b>NAN-NICHI</b>	how many days

## 6. Counter -SAI

The counter **-SAI** (years old) is used for human and animal age. It may be omitted for the ages eleven and older. **HATACHI**, without the counter **-SAI**, is a special word for the age of twenty. Some people may use the form **20-SAI** (**NIJUS-SAI/NIJIS-SAI**).

## 7. NAN-SAI & O-IKUTSU

Both **NAN-SAI** and **O-IKUTSU** ask someone's age. **O-IKUTSU**, which literally means "how many", is the abbreviated form of the expression **O-TOSHI WA O-IKUTSU** (concerning the age, how many years old). This full form is a more polite expression than either the abbreviated form **O-IKUTSU** or **NAN-SAI**. Answers to these questions can be made either with or without the counter **-SAI** for ages eleven and older. Do not omit the counter for ages ten and younger.

## 8. NANI-DOSHI-UMARE

The expression **NANI-DOSHI-UMARE** (which animal-year-born) is often abbreviated to **NANI-DOSHI** (which animal year) for asking the same thing. **UMARE** (born) can be omitted in this way because the animal years are routinely related to birth years in Japan.

**UMARE** (born) can not be omitted from similar expressions such as **NAN-NEN-UMARE** (which year-born) and **NAN-GATSU-UMARE** (which month-born).

E.g., (1) あなたは なにどし うまれ ですか。

*Anata wa nani-doshi-umare desu ka.*

(Which animal-year-born are you? / What is your animal sign?)

(2) あなたは なにどし ですか。

*Anata wa nani-doshi desu ka. [umare : omitted]*

(Which animal-year[-born] are you? / What is your animal sign?)

(3) あなたは なんねん うまれ ですか。

*Anata wa nan-nen-umare desu ka.*

(Which year-born are you? / In which year were you born?)

(4) あなたは なんがつ うまれ ですか。

*Anata wa nan-gatsu-umare desu ka.*

(Which month-born are you? / What is your birth month?)

## 9. SHITSUREE DESU GA

**SHITSUREE DESU GA**, which literally means “I am rude to you, but” is a good opening phrase when you want to ask a question on a private matter. It can be translated as “if I may ask.” Distinguish this expression and **SHITSUREE-SHIMASU**, the latter of which is used to excuse oneself.

E.g., (1) しつれいですが、あなたは おいくつ ですか。  
*Shitsuree desu ga, anata wa o-ikutsu desu ka.*  
 (How old are you, if I may ask?)

## 10. TO YUU TO

The expression **TO YUU TO** (when you say **TO YUU TO**) is used to ask back when a conversation participant did not fully understand what another has just said.

First, quote what you did not understand (a word, a phrase, a sentence, etc.) using this expression. Then, there are two ways to end your question.

- (1) End the question with a lingering intonation to solicit your conversation partner's explanation, or
- (2) Present your interpretation or understanding as a normal question in order to ask if it was indeed what your conversation partner meant or implied.

E.g., (1) 「たつどし」というと、・・・。  
*“Tatsu-doshi” to yuu to, . . . .*  
 ([You said] “saru-doshi” [ . . . but what does it mean]?)

(2) 「たつどし」というと、1988ねん ですか。  
*“Tatsu-doshi” to yuu to, 1988-nen desu ka.*  
 (“When you say “the monkey year”, is it 1988?)

## Culture Notes I-4

### 1. Age

Age is one of the most commonly asked questions when Japanese people meet each other. Although the question may not be overtly asked or not on the first meeting, they will try to find out the newly-acquainted's age by asking age-related questions at the earliest opportunity.

This tendency, or near compulsion, is due to the Japanese social structure itself, which requires people to behave according to their position in the social hierarchy (**UE** or **SHITA**) as determined mainly by age and social status. In using the language, this translates into employing certain ways of speaking according to seniority in private situations and social status in public situations.

In many Japanese speakers's minds, the older a person is, the more respectable (if not better or desirable) he/she is. To ask one's age is, therefore, not a taboo as in many Western societies. **SHITSUREE DESU GA** (I may be rude to ask you this) sometimes precedes an age question only because it is a question on a private matter. Japanese language learners should be prepared to deal with age-related questions whether by revealing their real age, by fibbing, or by not giving any answer.

### 2. ONAI-DOSHI

Though the expression **ONAI-DOSHI** means "(of) the same age", it in practice means "of the same age in the school system." In Japan, the school year starts in April and ends in March. Children born between the beginning of April (precisely speaking, April 2nd) of one year and the end of March (precisely speaking, April 1st) of the next year go to the same grade. The same graders naturally have more association with each other than those who happen to have been born in the same calendar year but who are in a different grade. An expression "born in the same calendar year but older/younger in the school year" exists because of this discrepancy between the school year and the calendar year.

### 3. HATACHI

In Japan, people come of age at twenty. **HATACHI** is the special word for "twenty years old" although the "regular" (in the sense of "not irregular") form **20-SAI (NIJUS-SAI/ NIJIS-SAI)** has been sometimes used among people in the younger generations. The second Monday of January is the Coming-of-Age Day (a national holiday), when coming-of age ceremonies are held by local governments everywhere in Japan for those who become twenty years old in that calendar year. As of their twentieth birthday (not from the Coming-of-Age Day), they are allowed to drink, smoke and, most importantly, to vote.

#### 4. Animal Years: ETO

Counting years with twelve different animals (rat, bull, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, rooster, dog, and boar) in combination with five different elements (wood, fire, earth, metal, and water) is called **ETO**. The idea was originally imported from China along with the Chinese calendar. This system, especially the animal year part, is still widely in use in Japan. People routinely refer to the current year as the year of one of the twelve animals. Instead of asking directly how old someone is, the person's birth animal year is commonly asked (**NANI-DOSHI-UMARE**). Celebrating the sixtieth year in one's life is based on the complete cycle of the twelve animals and the five elements ( $12 \times 5 = 60$ ).

The twelve-animal-five-element system starts at the Chinese New Year, sometime between January 21st and February 20th in the Christian Gregorian calendar. When Japan officially adopted the presently-used Gregorian calendar in 1872 (Meiji 5: Refer to Item 5 below), the animal year became considered as beginning on the Gregorian calendar's New Year for convenience. In other words, the animal year in Japan starts earlier than it does in the Chinese lunar calendar. This is one example of Japanese people's long-standing ability to amalgamate and adapt imported cultures.

When it comes to fortune-telling, however, those who are serious still follow the original Chinese calendar. This complication affects only those people born between the Gregorian calendar's New Year and the Chinese calendar's New Year.

#### 5. Emperor Era: GENGOO

In modern Japan, each emperor's reigning period is given a special name called **GENGOO**. The Meiji (**MEEJI**) (1868-1912), the Taisho (**TAISHOO**) (1912-1926), the Showa (**SHOOWA**) (1926-1989), and the present Heisei (**HEESEE**) (1989-) Eras are the four most recent emperor eras since the Meiji Restoration (**MEEJI-ISHIN**) in 1867. The following year, 1868, was the first year of the Meiji Era. The first year of each era is customarily called **GAN-NEN** (the beginning year), not **1-NEN**. Before the Meiji Restoration, many emperors changed era names more than once in their reigning periods. Since the beginning of the Meiji Era, era names have been chosen by a group of scholars specifically appointed for the task. Era names are usually taken from Chinese classics.

Emperors are referred to by their era names after their deaths. During their reign, they are called simply **TENNOO** (Emperor) or **TENNOO HEEKA** (His Majesty the Emperor). When it is necessary to distinguish the present emperor from past emperors, he is called **KINJOO TENNOO** (the Present Emperor) or **KINJOO HEEKA** (His Majesty the Present Emperor). The emperors' given names such as Hirohito (the Showa Emperor) and Akihito (the present Emperor) are not mentioned in Japan because mentioning "august" or "noble" people's names is traditionally considered to be disrespectful. Japanese people with traditional ways of thinking still feel awkward or even stunned when they hear foreign media call their emperors by their names.

## 6. Western Era: SEEREKI

The Western era system (**SEEREKI**) based on the purported birth year of Christ was introduced into Japan together with the Gregorian calendar in 1872 (Meiji 5). Since then, both the emperor era system and the Western era system have been coexisting, one of them being preferred over the other at different times and in different sub-cultures, although the emperor era system is what the Japanese government officially follows.

In writing, years are often described by both systems, one followed by the other in parentheses as in **1872 (MEEJI 5)** or **MEEJI 5 (1872)**. Since around the time of the arrival of the 21st century, omitting the first two digits of the 19xx and 20xx has become very common, especially in writing.

## 7. Compliments

In most cases, Japanese people do not expect people to accept compliments. When given a compliment, they try to gently deny it.

# Writing System I-4

## 1. The R Line

The Ninth Line of the Kana Chart is **the R Line**. Although the Line is called **the R Line** and the letters in the Line ら, り, る, れ, and ろ, are Romanized as **RA, RI, RU, RE, and RO**, using the Roman alphabet **R**, the Japanese **R** sound is considerably different from the English **R** sound. The Spanish **R** sound as in “pero” (not the doubled one as in “perro”) is somewhat similar to the Japanese **R** sound. To produce this sound, curl up the tip of the tongue slightly and flip it out lightly against the roof of your mouth.

## 2. The Y Line

The Eighth Line of the Kana Chart, which is **the Y Line**, has only three Hiragana や (**YA**), ゆ (**YU**), and よ (**YO**). **The Y Line** is sometimes presented as や (**YA**), い (**I**), ゆ (**YU**), え (**E**), and よ (**YO**), borrowing い (**I**) and え (**E**) from **the Vowel Line**. The borrowed letters are usually placed in parentheses. In Japanese, the sound combinations **YI** and **YE** are not used except in loan words.

Three letters only	や		ゆ		よ
With the two borrowed letters	や	(い)	ゆ	(え)	よ

## 3. The W Line

The Tenth Line, which is the last line, of the Kana Chart is **the W Line**. It has only two Hiragana わ (**WA**) and を (**O**). Like **the Y Line**, **the W Line** is sometimes presented as わ (**WA**), い (**I**), う (**U**), え (**E**), and を (**O**), borrowing い (**I**), う (**U**), and え (**E**) from **the Vowel Line**. The borrowed letters are usually placed in parentheses.

Two letters only	わ				を
With the three borrowed letters	わ	(い)	(う)	(え)	を

The fifth letter in **the W Line** を is normally pronounced as **O**, not **WO**. In Japanese, the sound combinations **WI**, **WU**, **WE**, and **WO** are not used except in loan words.

## 4. Particle O

The direct object marker, particle **O** (to be introduced in Lesson 8), is customarily written with the Hiragana を (**O**). The Hiragana を in **the W Line** is nicknamed “the difficult **O**” in contrast to the Hiragana お in **the Vowel Line**, which is nicknamed “the easy **O**.”

E.g., (1) わたしは ことし にほんごを べんきょうしています。  
*Watashi wa kotoshi nihon-go o benkyoo-shite-imasu.*  
 (I am studying Japanese this year.)

(2) おきを つけて。  
*O-ki o tukete.*  
 (Take care.)



## Classification of Hiragana by Stroke Number

### One Stroke

く し そ っ て の ひ へ る  
ろ ん

### Two Strokes

い う え こ す ち と ぬ ね  
み め ゆ よ ら り れ わ

### Three Strokes

あ お か け さ せ に は ま  
む も や を

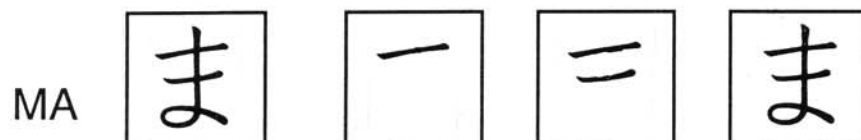
### Four Strokes

き た な ふ ほ

Note: Refer to the Note on Page 123 in Lesson 3.

## Hiragana Introduction I-4

1. Practice writing the five Hiragana **MA**, **MI**, **MU**, **ME**, and **MO** in the **M Line** on grid paper, following the stroke orders show below.



1st stroke - slightly longer than the 2nd stroke

3rd stroke - upright / flattened loop / ends with a stop without flipping up



The loop on the 1st stroke - makes a rounded triangle

The final "horizontal" part of the 1st stroke - curves downward slightly

1st stroke - ends with a stop without flipping up



The loop on the 2nd stroke - placed approximately two-thirds of the way down

2nd stroke - flips up at the end with a fade ending

3rd stroke - ends with a stop



1st stroke - angled

2nd stroke - starts higher than the 1st stroke / ends with a fade



1st stroke - smooth and round bend / ends with a fade

2. Practice writing the three Hiragana **YA**, **YU**, and **YO** in the **Y Line** and the two Hiragana **WA** and **O** in the **W Line** on grid paper, following the stroke orders show below.



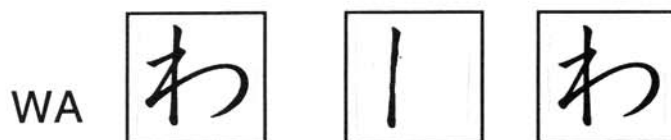
1st stroke - goes up slightly / rounded curl / ends with a fade  
 2nd stroke - short and angled / ends with a hook  
 3rd stroke - angled inward / ends with a stop



1st stroke - slightly curved but upright / a sharp bend / almost a full circle / ends with a fade  
 2nd stroke - slightly curved but upright / ends with a fade



2nd stroke - upright / flattened loop / ends with a stop without flipping up

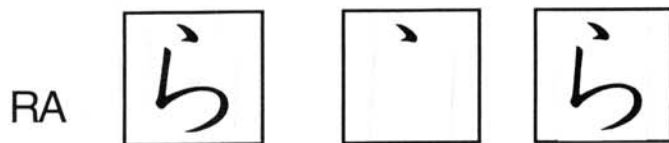


1st stroke - upright and almost straight / placed on the left side of the box  
 2nd stroke - crosses the 1st stroke three times / very round "corner" / ends with a fade



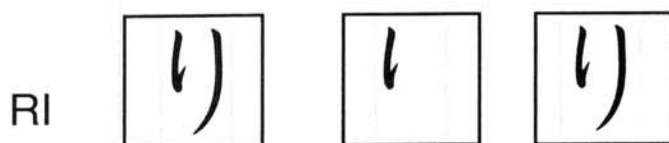
2nd stroke - angled / a sharp bend / ends with a stop, which points down  
 3rd stroke - crosses the 2nd stroke once / ends with a stop, which point to the right

3. Practice writing the five Hiragana **RA**, **RI**, **RU**, **RE**, and **RO** in the **R Line** on grid paper, following the stroke orders show below.



1st stroke - angled / ends with a hook.

2nd stroke - starts as an "extension" of the 1st stroke's hook



1st stroke - slightly curved but upright / ends with a hook

2nd stroke - upright / curved only at the end / ends with a fade

1st & 2nd strokes - basically parallel



1st stroke - two sharp bends / a flattened loop



1st stroke - upright and almost straight / placed on the left side of the box

2nd stroke - crosses the 1st stroke three times / sharp "corner" /  
flips up at the end / ends with a fade



1st stroke - two sharp bends / ends with a fade

## Hiragana Writing Practice I-4

1. Write the following words in Hiragana.

yoru	<div></div> <div></div>	(night)	hiru	<div></div> <div></div>	(daytime)
ame	<div></div> <div></div>	(rain)	yuki	<div></div> <div></div>	(snow)
kumo	<div></div> <div></div>	(cloud)	sora	<div></div> <div></div>	(sky)
yama	<div></div> <div></div>	(mountain)	shima	<div></div> <div></div>	(island)
umi	<div></div> <div></div>	(sea, ocean)	kawa	<div></div> <div></div>	(river)
hune	<div></div> <div></div>	(boat, ship)	maru	<div></div> <div></div>	(circle)
machi	<div></div> <div></div>	(town, city)	michi	<div></div> <div></div>	(street)
chikara	<div></div> <div></div> <div></div>	(power)	atama	<div></div> <div></div> <div></div>	(head)
haru	<div></div> <div></div>	(spring)	natsu	<div></div> <div></div>	(summer)
aki	<div></div> <div></div>	(autumn)	huyu	<div></div> <div></div>	(winter)
saru	<div></div> <div></div>	(monkey)	tori	<div></div> <div></div>	(bird)
uma	<div></div> <div></div>	(horse)	yume	<div></div> <div></div>	(dream)
kami	<div></div> <div></div>	(paper)	hasami	<div></div> <div></div> <div></div>	(scissors)
nori	<div></div> <div></div>	(glue)	wara	<div></div> <div></div>	(straw, hay)

## Hiragana Reading Practice I-4

1. Read the following words written in Hiragana.

よる	ひる	あめ	ゆき
くも	そら	やま	しま
うみ	かわ	ふね	まる
まち	みち	ちから	あたま
はる	なつ	あき	ふゆ
さる	とり	うま	ゆめ
かみ	はさみ	のり	わら

2. Read the following adjectives written in Hiragana.

ひろい (spacious, wide)	せまい (not spacious, narrow)
おもい (heavy)	かるい (light)
はやい (quick, fast, early)	おそい (slow, late)
あかるい (bright)	くらい (dark)
あたらしい (new)	ふるい (old)
たかい (high, tall, expensive)	ひくい (low, short)
うれしい (Glad, pleased)	やすい (inexpensive)
さむい (cold)	つめたい (cold to the touch)

## Exercises I-4

Answer the following questions with one of the two responses below:

Yes: ***Hai, soo desu.***

No: ***lie, chigaimasu.***

- ① *Anata wa inu-doshi-umare desu ka.*
- ② *Anata wa 1982-nen-umare desu ka.*
- ③ *Anata wa Shoowa 49-nen-umare desu ka.*
- ④ *Anata wa hatachi desu ka.*
- ⑤ *Anata wa 25-sai desu ka.*
- ⑥ *Anata wa o-toshi-yori desu ka.*
- ⑦ *Anata wa nihon-go no sensee desu ka.*

## Review Questions I-4

Answer the following questions. Write your answers using **Rooma-ji** and **Arabia-suuji**.

- (1) ① あなたは なにどし うまれ ですか。  
*Anata wa nani-doshi-umare desu ka.*
- ② あなたは なんねん うまれ ですか。  
*Anata wa nan-nen-umare desu ka.*
- ③ あなたは なんさい ですか。  
*Anata wa nan-sai desu ka.*
- (2) ① あなたの おとうさんは なにどし うまれ ですか。  
*Anata no o-too-san wa nani-doshi-umare desu ka.*
- ② あなたの おとうさんは なんねん うまれ ですか。  
*Anata no o-too-san wa nan-nen-umare desu ka.*
- ③ あなたの おとうさんは おとしは おいくつ ですか。  
*Anata no o-too-san wa o-toshi wa o-ikutsu desu ka.*
- (3) ① あなたの おかあさんは なにどし うまれ ですか。  
*Anata no o-kaa-san wa nani-doshi-umare desu ka.*
- ② あなたの おかあさんは なんねん うまれ ですか。  
*Anata no o-kaa-san wa nan-nen-umare desu ka.*
- ③ あなたの おかあさんは おとしは おいくつ ですか。  
*Anata no o-kaa-san wa o-toshi wa o-ikutsu desu ka.*



## Composition Project

- If you don't know your family members' birthdays, age, etc., ask them. Then you will have more things to write about.

## My Lesson 4 Vocabulary List

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**My Lesson 4 Sentences**

① \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

② \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

③ \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

④ \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

⑤ \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

⑥ \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

⑦ \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Use additional paper as necessary