



Design: Masako Ban

What is honorific language (keigo)?



I don't really feel comfortable the way one of my colleague talks to me. One day at work, I suggested her for lunch, saying, "lunch ni ikō!" (Let's go for lunch together!) But she said, "mōshiwake-gozaimasen mada shigoto ga arimasu" (I'm afraid I haven't finished my work yet). Then, she casually asked another colleague, "coffee nomu?" (How about some coffee?). I am not her boss, but for some reason, she always uses polite Japanese every time she talks to me. Is it because I'm a foreigner? Or is it because I don't speak good Japanese?

■■■ Oh, it's nothing to do with your Japanese! The reason why she uses honorific forms (**keigo**) is to maintain a certain distance in your relationship. By using **keigo**, she subtly expressed her inner feelings, although you didn't realize it. Using **keigo** in such a way is completely different from the old-fashioned, conservative usage. I will explain **keigo** in a number of lessons. After this, you will feel like a psychologist!

----- Basically **keigo** is polite but...-----

The usage of **keigo** must be adapted according to a hierarchical relationship based on the status and rank of the speaker and listener. Therefore, many Japanese are unwilling to use **keigo** as they feel it is extremely troublesome to use in conversation. But modern **keigo** has become a mere facade. The reality is that it does not always function in a time-honored conservative way.

1. Present-day **keigo** is used for the speaker's benefit!

Other people might conclude that a speaker is poorly educated or has been raised in an improper way if he/she is not able to use **keigo** according to the time, the place and occasion, not just the hierarchical relationship.

Let's try !

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Shall we be going? | 2. Is it raining? |
| 3. I forgot. | 4. Do you have time? |
| 5. I don't drink alcohol at all. | 6. I couldn't do it. |
| 7. It is not convenient. | 8. I think so. |
| 9. What do you like? | 10. I can't remember. |
| 11. I hope so. | 12. It's a small world. |
| 13. What for example? | 14. It's too bad. |

Answers	
1. soro-soro ikimasu ka?	2. ame desu ka?
3. wasuremashita	4. ojikan arimasu ka?
5. osake wa zen-zen nomimasen	6. dame deshita
7. benri dewa arimasen	8. sō omoimasu
9. nani ga osuki desu ka?	10. omoidasemasen
11. sō dato ii desu ne	12. yononaka semai desu
13. tatoeba nan desu ka?	14. zannen desu

Level 2. keigo with [Vocabulary]
 ★ If you use this type of **keigo** in business, your way of talking starts to sound more "intellectual."
 Written language is frequently used in TV news, speeches and conferences. It sounds very polite when written Japanese is added to spoken Japanese. That is why literary expressions are commonly used in polite Japanese.

Some frequently used words are listed below. Try to determine the keigo

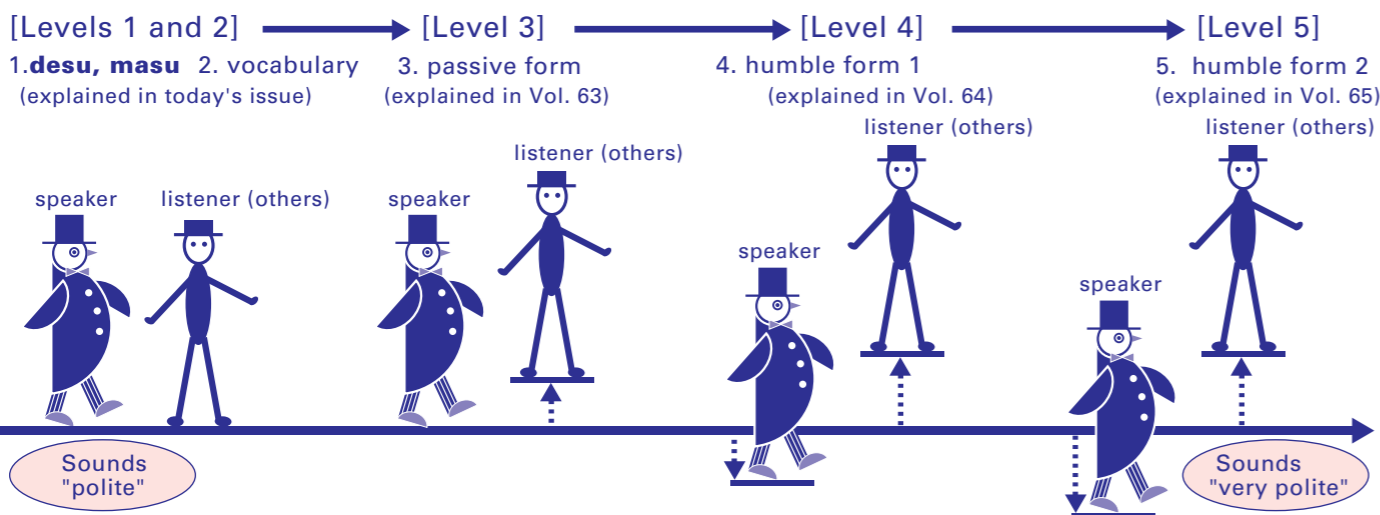
1. But..... demo →	2. a little while ago..... sakki →
3. the other day..... konoaida →	4. today..... kyō →
5. yesterday..... kinō →	6. tomorrow..... ashita →
7. this morning..... kyō no asa →	8. last night..... yūbe →
9. the day before..... mae no hi →	10. who..... dare →
11. I'm surprised..... bikkurishita →	12. about 2kg..... daitai 2kg gurai →
13. as I expected..... yappari →	14. I'm sorry..... suimasen →
15. here..... koko →	16. there..... soko →
17. over there..... asoko →	18. where..... doko →
19. this person..... kono hito →	20. not at all..... chittomo →
21. every one..... minna →	22. many, a lot ippai →
23. Do you know?..... shitemasu ka? →	24. Why ?..... dōshite →
25. very..... sugoku →	26. therefore..... dakara →
27. various, varied..... ironna →	28. later..... ato de →
29. good/ fine..... ii →	30. because, so..... kara →

Use keigo in the following sentences.

1. There was an earthquake last night. ゆうべ地震があった。 yūbe jishin ga atta	2. I knew I was right! やっぱりそうだった! yappari so datta !
3. I canceled because I was busy. 忙しいからキャンセルした。 isogashii kara cancel shita	4. Thanks for the other day. この間はどうぞ。 kono aida wa dōmo
5. I'm terribly sorry, but I will be about 20 minutes late. ごめん、だいたい20分ぐらい遅れる。 gomen daitai 20-pun gurai okureru	6. May I interrupt you? ちょっといい？ chotto ii ?
7. Do you know that? 知ってる？ shitteru?	8. (in a speech) <Thank you very much for attending> even though you are all busy. 皆さん今日は忙しいところ..... minasan kyō wa isogashii tokoro.....
9. I will contact you later. あとで連絡するね。 ato de renraku suru ne	10. Who is that? あの人は誰？ ano hito wa dare?

A. In public areas..... e.g. At work, or talking with customers, etc. Level 1 ~ Level 5

The higher the implied status of the listener (others), the politer it sounds, even if the respect shown is only perfunctory!



2. Present-day **keigo** is used to imply one's thoughts and feelings!

Using **keigo** in this way can be advantageous to the speaker. If you learn to recognize this usage, you will be better placed to read the thoughts and feelings of others. (It will be explained in Vol. 66)

- B. Obtaining an advantage when you are in a disadvantageous position.**
e.g. Having others accept an apology or grant permission or an "unreasonable" request, etc.
- C. Establishing a distance in human relations..... e.g. Ending a relationship with a listener.**

Level 1. keigo with [desu, masu, and o/go + noun, i-adj., na-adj.]
 ★With this type of **keigo**, your Japanese starts to sound more polite, and your reputation improves.
 Even if you are not familiar with the polite form of speech, you may find these easy to use. Using **desu, masu** and **o/go** in your Japanese is enough to start speaking politely, polite enough to talk with the prime minister. Vol. 38 explains "o/go" in detail, so take a look at the past issues.

noun, na-adj.	desu / deshita / dewa arimasen / dewa arimasen deshita
i-adj.	desu / katta desu / kunai desu / kunakatta desu
verb →	masu / mashita / masen / masen deshita

Answers	
1. shikashi	2. sakihodo
3. senjitsu	4. honjitsu
5. sakujitsu	6. asu
7. kesa	8. sakuya
9. zenjitsu	10. donata
11. odorokimashita	12. yaku ___hodo
13. yahari	
14. sumimasen / mōshiwake arimasen	
15. kochira	16. sochira
17. achira	18. dochira
19. kono kata / kochira no kata	
20. sukoshimo	21. minasama
22. takusan	23. gozonji desu ka?
24. naze	25. totemo
26. desukara	27. samazama na
28. nochihodo	29. yoroshii
30. ___node	

Answers	
1. sakuya jishin ga arimashita	
2. yahari sōdeshita!	
3. isogashii node cancel shimashita	
4. senjitsu wa arigatō gozaimashita	
5. mōshiwake arimasen, yaku 20-pun hodo okuremasu	
6. sumimasen yoroshii desu ka?	
7. gozonji desu ka?	
8. minasama honjitsu wa oisogashii tokoro.....	
9. nochihodo renraku o shimasu	
10. achira no kata wa donata desu ka?	



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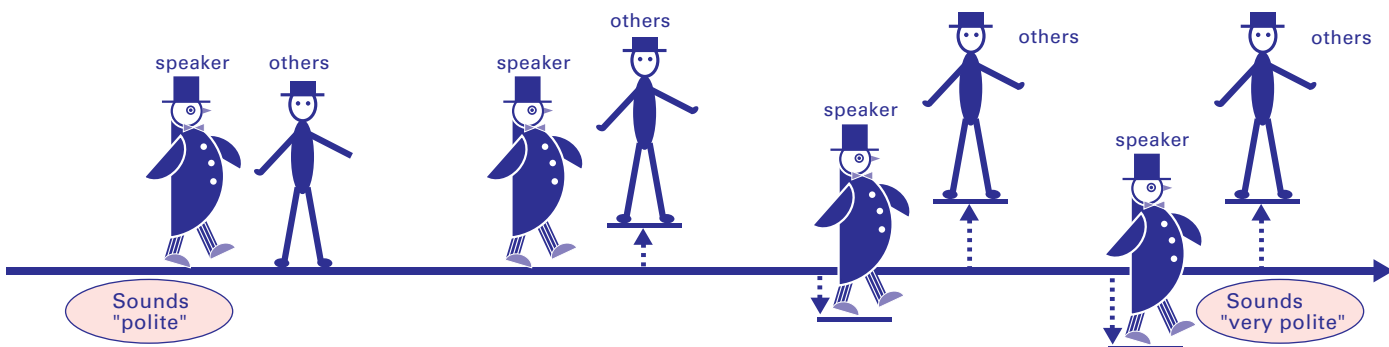
itsu ikaremasu ka? (When will you go?)

keigo....Level 3

I thought it was easy to understand the usage of Level 1 (**desu, masu** and **o/go**) and Level 2 (vocabulary) in Vol. 62, and I tried to use it as often as I could. The Japanese I talked with said, "**Pole-san no Nihongo kirē desu ne**" (Your Japanese sounds very beautiful), and they began to treat me very politely. It made me feel good. I can't wait to learn other honorific forms—I'm so excited!

■■■ I'm so glad to hear that! If you learn more **keigo**, your reputation will improve even more. It is true that even Japanese have difficulty using it to its fullest extent, but if you study hard you can make **keigo** your own! In this lesson, you will learn the passive form of **keigo**. You may run into trouble if you are not familiar with the conjugations of passive forms. But, since a fairly small number of verbs are commonly used in daily conversation, you will find it worthwhile to memorize them.

- [Levels 1 and 2] → [Level 3] → [Level 4] → [Level 5]
- 1. **desu, masu** 2. vocabulary (explained in Vol. 62)
- 3. passive form (explained below)
- 4. **keigo** and humble form 1 (explained in next column)
- 5. humble form 2 (explained in future column)



Conjugation of passive form

Classifications of verbs may vary according to textbooks and schools. In this lesson, verbs are categorized into three groups: 1. "**i-masu**" group, 2. "**e-masu**" group (and Ninja form), 3. "**o shimasu**" group and "irregular." If you know the "**masu** form," you can categorize verbs. In order to classify verbs, note the syllable before the "**masu** form." Check whether the syllable before "**masu**" is "**i**" or "**e**."

1. i-masu group e.g., **nomimasu, kakimasu, hanashimasu, tachimasu, kaerimasu, isogimasu**

List of hiragana										wa	← Passive form [a vowel + remasu] e.g., to choose... erabimasu to meet... aimasu
ra	ma	(ba)ha	na	ta	sa	(ga)ka	ka	ka	ka	ka	
ri	mi	(bi)hi	ni	chi	shi	(gi)ki	ki	ki	ki	ki	
ru	mu	(bu)fu	nu	tsu	su	(gu)ku	ku	ku	ku	ku	
re	me	(be)he	ne	te	se	(ge)ke	ke	ke	ke	ke	
ro	mo	(bo)ho	no	to	so	(go)ko	ko	ko	ko	ko	

2. e-masu group

Since it conjugates in the same way as the "potential form" and can be confusing, Level 4 or Level 5 is frequently used, instead of using the "e-masu group."

e.g., kangaemasu	e masu	e.g., to eat... tabemasu	to decide... kimemasu
shirabemasu	e raremasu	tabe masu	kime masu
machigaemasu		taberaremasu	kimeraremasu
hajimemasu			

● Ninja form

Even though a verb is categorized in the "**i-masu**" group, it conjugates as a verb in "**e-masu**" group. Frequently used verbs for **keigo** are selected here.

i masu	e.g., to get up... okimasu	to be tired of... akimasu	Ninja form
i raremasu	oki masu	aki masu	
	okiraremasu	akiraremasu	

--- This story should make it easier to memorize verbs in **Ninja**. ---
(Let's memorize this story in English.)
I get up at 5 o'clock in the morning. I put on a pink shirt. I get off at the subway station. My secretary is in the office. She is tired of her work. Then, she looks at my face. And, she borrows some money from me. Can you believe it?
to get up (**okimasu**), to put on (**kimasu**), to get off (**orimasu**), to be (**imasu**), to be tired of (**akimasu**), to see, look, watch (**mimasu**), to borrow (**karimasu**), to believe (**shinjimasu**)

Level 3 Keigo with [verb passive form]

★ If you use this type of **keigo**, it will improve your reputation because you will sound well educated. The listeners (others) will start treating you politely.

This **keigo** is commonly used in daily life, but is not as formal as Level 4 or Level 5.

The only difficulty is that you have to conjugate verbs to use it.

Note: it is used to express the action of the person to whom you are talking.

Make your speech much more polite by changing the underlined parts.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Did you prepare yourself for the trip?
旅行の準備をしましたか?
ryokō no junbi o shimashita ka? | 2. Did you write down your name and address?
住所と名前を書きましたか?
jūsho to namae o kakimashita ka? |
| 3. Did you take a day off yesterday?
きのう仕事を休みましたか?
kinō kaisha o yasumimashita ka? | 4. Are you over your cold?
もう風邪は治りましたか?
mō kaze wa naorimashita ka? |
| 5. What do you want to drink?
何を飲みますか?
nani o nomimasu ka? | 6. What time did you come here?
何時に来ましたか?
nan-ji ni kimashita ka? |
| 7. What do you usually do when you have a day off?
休みはいつも何をしますか?
yasumi wa itsumo nani o shimasu ka? | 8. How long did you wait?
どのくらい待ちましたか?
donogurai machimashita ka? |

Answers

- junbi o saremashita
- gojūsho, onamae, kakaremashita
- yasumaremashita
- naoraremashita
- nomaremasu
- koraremashita
- saremasu
- mataremashita

Conversation

(Pole-san phoned Mr. Ueki, one of his clients. But the person who received the call said that Mr. Ueki was out of the office.)

Pole-san: Oh, I see. When will he return?

そうですか...いつ頃戻りますか?

sō desu ka... itsugoro modorimasu ka?

Pole-san: Do you know what time he usually go home?

植木さんはいつも何時頃帰りますか?

Ueki-san wa itsumo nan-ji goro kaerimasu ka?

Pole-san: I see, what time will he arrive at work tomorrow?

そうですか、明日は何時頃会社に来ますか?

sō desu ka, ashita wa nan-ji goro kaisha ni kimasu ka?

Secretary: He probably will return in the evening.

たぶん夕方だと思えます。

tabun yūgata dato omoimasu

Secretary: Well... I'm not really sure...

すいません、ちょっとわかりませんが...

suimasen chotto wakarimasen ga...

Answers

- modoraremasu kaeraremasu koraremasu**

3. noun, popular foreign loanword **o shimasu** group

e.g., to call... denwa o shimasu	to cancel... cancel o shimasu
o shimasu	denwa o shimasu
o saremasu	denwa o saremasu
	cancel o shimasu
	cancel o saremasu

Irregular

to come **kimasu** → **koraremasu**

to go and get **tottekimasu** → **tottekoraremasu**



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itsu irasshaimasu ka?

(When will you go?)

I'm still unsure about using the passive form of keigo that we learned in the previous lesson. I'm OK if I use it slowly, but I still have trouble conjugating the verbs. Since I started learning keigo, I understand more of what the Japanese are saying when they use it. I realize that I must use different forms of keigo depending on the person I'm talking to, but I still get confused. Trying to figure this out is really exhausting for me. Are there any shortcut to learning keigo?



Pera Pera Penguin's

5-minute Japanese Class by Hitomi Hirayama

Vol. 64



■■■ Are you really that exhausted, Mr. Pole? If I compare your comment to climbing Mt. Fuji, you are about 80 percent to the top. Your goal is very close, so hang in there. You're right about **keigo**, though. It is true you have to use different types of **keigo** according to the person you are speaking to. Don't worry about making mistakes, the Japanese around you will be impressed by the great effort you are making. In this lesson, our slogan is, "Don't be afraid to make a mistake!"

Keigo that you are going to learn in this lesson does not have regular rules, so you may have to memorize them. But don't worry! There aren't too many. If you memorize this list, it will help you a lot. Anyone who wants to learn Japanese cannot avoid this. So, hang in there!

Keigo: Used when talking to people who are not members of your group, and is never applied to yourself.

Humble form: Used when talking about the members of your group, and is applied for yourself.

English	Friendly form Used when talking to friends.	Keigo Used for action taken by the listener (others).	Humble form Used for actions of the speaker.
1 to be / to exist	います imasu	いらっしゃいます irasshaimasu	おります orimasu
2 to be doing	te-form + います imasu	te-form+いらっしゃいます irasshaimasu	te-form + おります orimasu
3 to do / ____ to do	します shimasu	なさいます nasaimasu	いたします itashimasu
4 to go	行きます ikimasu	いらっしゃいます irasshaimasu	参ります mairimasu
5 to visit	行きます ikimasu	いらっしゃいます irasshaimasu	伺います ukagaimasu
6 to come	来ます kimasu	いらっしゃいます irasshaimasu	参ります mairimasu
7 to say	言います iimasu	おっしゃいます osshaimasu	申します mōshimasu
8 to eat	食べます tabemasu	召し上がります meshiagarimasu	いただきます itadakimasu
9 to know	知っています shitteimasu	ご存じです gozonji desu	存じております zonjite orimasu
10 to see / look / watch	見ます mimasu	to be explained in Vol. 66	(object) 拝見します haiken shimasu
11 to meet / see	会います aimasu	to be explained in Vol. 66	お目にかかります ome ni kakarimasu
12 to listen to ask	聞きます kikimasu	to be explained in Vol. 66	伺います ukagaimasu
13 to think	思います omoimasu	to be explained in Vol. 66	存じます zonjimasu
14 to give (something) to give (action)	あげます agemasu te-form + あげます agemasu	to be explained in Vol. 66	差し上げます sashiagemasu te-form+差し上げます sashiagemasu
15 to receive (something) to receive (action)	もらいます moraimasu te-form+もらいます moraimasu	to be explained in Vol. 66	いただきます / 下さいます itadakimasu kudasaimasu te-form+いただきます itadakimasu te-form+下さいます kudasaimasu

Now, use **keigo** for the underlined words.

- Client: Until what time are you going to stay in the office tomorrow?
明日何時までオフィスにいますか?
ashita nan-ji made office ni imasu ka?
You: I'm sorry, but I will be out all day.
ごめんなさい明日は一日出ています。
gomennasai ashita wa ichinichi dete imasu
- Client: I'd like to come over there at 7 o'clock Monday morning.
月曜日の朝7時に行きたいのですが。
getsuyōbi no asa shichi-ji ni ikitai no desu ga...
You: We're sorry, no one will be in the office at 7 in the morning.
すいません、7時はオフィスに誰もいません。
suimasen shichi-ji wa office ni daremo imasen
- Client: Do you play golf?
ゴルフをしますか?
golf o shimasu ka?
You: No, I don't.
いえ、しません。
ie, shimasen
- (station announcement) A train is arriving at Track 1.
一番線に電車が来ます。
ichi-bansen ni densha ga kimasu

- Client: Please do the things we talked about the other day.
この間の件よろしくお願ひします。
kono aida no ken yoroshiku onegaishimasu.
- Client: May I see it?
見てもいいですか?
mitemo ii desu ka?
You: Yes, you may.
どうぞ
dōzo
- I hope it won't disturb you, but...
迷惑とは思いますが・・・
mēwaku towa omoimasu ga...
- I'm here as representative of the president.
社長の代理で来ました。
shachō no dairi de kimashita
- President: Ms. Kobayashi!
小林さん!
Kobayashi-san!
Secretary: Yes, I'm coming!
はい、今行きます!
hai, ima ikimasu!

Answers 1. asu, irasshaimasu / mōshiwake gozaimasen, asu, dete orimasu 2. ukagaitai / mōshiwake gozaimasen, orimasen 3. nasaimasu / itashimasen 4. mairimasu 5. senjitsu, onegai itashimasu 6. haiken shitemo, yoroshi desu 7. gomēwaku, zonzimasu 8. mairimashita 9. tadaima, mairimasu

Mr. Pole will be making his first phone call to a company, after an introduction by his friend, Mr. Kawasaki.

Pole-san: Hello, may I speak to Mr. Yamamoto? My name is Pole.

もしもしポールと言いますが、山本さんいますか?
moshi moshi Pole to iimasu ga Yamamoto-san imasu ka?

Yamamoto: This is Yamamoto.

はい、山本ですが
hai Yamamoto desu ga

Pole-san: Oh, hello, I believe my friend, Mr. Kawasaki, told you about me.

あ、あの私川崎さんに紹介してもらったポールと言います。
a ano watashi Kawasaki-san ni shōkai-shitemoratta Pole to iimasu

Kawai-san: Ah, yes, Mr. Pole, he did.

あ、ポールさんですね。川崎さんから聞いてます。
a Pole-san desu ne Kawasaki-san kara kitemasu

Pole-san: I know you must be busy, but I would like to meet you next week.

忙しいとは思いますが、来週ぜひそっちに行きたいのですが。
isogashi towa omoimasu ga raishū zehi socchini ikitai no desu ga

Kawai-san: Unfortunately, I won't be in Japan next week, but I have time this week.

あいにく、来週は出張で日本にいませんが、今週でしたらいます。
ainiku raishū wa shutcho de imasen ga konshū deshitora imasu

Pole-san: Oh, then may I visit to see you this week?

じゃあ、今週行ってもいいですか?
jaa konshū ittemo ii desu ka?

Answers

- mōshimasu
- irasshaimasu
- de gozaimasu
- shōkai-shite itadaita
- mōshimasu
- ukagatte orimasu
- oisogashi
- zonjimasu
- sochira ni
- ukagaitai
- orimasen
- orimasu
- dewa
- ukagattemo
- yoroshi desu