



# The Handbook of Japanese Adjectives and Adverbs (A Kodansha Dictionary)

By Taeko Kamiya

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For any beginner of Japanese, adjectives and adverbs are bound to present a challenge. Unlike English adjectives, Japanese ones conjugate, meaning that you must memorize their various forms before being able to build sentences of any complexity. Adverbs do not conjugate, but make use of particles to show their grammatical relationship to other words, and some have very subtle shades of meaning that are difficult to grasp. Moreover, many do not translate into adverbs in English.

The role these parts of speech play in adding flavor to the Japanese language is invaluable. This handy reference manual introduces the basic (and basics of) adjectives and adverbs in a clear and sensible way, enabling students not only to speak Japanese but to do it with pizzazz.

The book is divided roughly in half, the first half dealing with adjectives, the second with adverbs. Each is prefaced by a short introduction that serves as an overview of the material introduced. The section on adjectives is divided into two parts: Part 1 covers the conjugations of i- and na-adjectives and some basic auxiliary adjectives, and Part 2 presents common sentence patterns in which adjectives appear.

The adverb section is arranged by topic. Among the types of adverbs explained here are those used to express time, quantity, degree, circumstance, and natural sounds or actions (the ubiquitous onomatopoeic adverbs).

Each entry in this book is given a simple, concise English explanation and two or more example sentences to illustrate its usage. Exercises every few pages enable students to measure their understanding. Finally, a number of quick-reference lists in the appendixes provide a convenient means of recalling and building vocabulary.

Together with its sister publication, *The Handbook of Japanese Verbs*, this unique manual is certain to provide years of friendly guidance.

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### Editorial Review

#### From the Publisher

[The first pages of the opening chapter; without the bold type setting relevant words and with Japanese script represented by X's.]

### ADJECTIVES

#### Introduction

This section deals with some of the main features of Japanese adjectives as well as their similarities to and differences from English adjectives. You are advised to read it carefully before moving on to the main text.

#### Types of Adjectives

Japanese adjectives may be divided into two types: (a) i-adjectives, which end with i, and (b) na-adjectives, which end with na. I-adjectives are Japanese in origin while na-adjectives are mostly Chinese-origin words.

atarashii XXX new  
isogashii XXX busy  
omoshiroi XXX interesting  
shizukana XXX quiet  
sukina XXX favorite  
benrina XXX convenient

#### Noun Modifiers

When used as noun modifiers, Japanese adjectives, like their English counterparts, precede the nouns they modify. Foreign words used as adjectives in Japanese become na-adjectives.

(a) okii ie

XXXXXX

a big house

kuroi kuruma

XXXXXX

a black car

(b) kireina hana

XXXXXX

a pretty flower

genkina hito

XXXXXX

a healthy person

modanna biru

XXXXXX

a modern building

yuniikuna aidia

XXXXXX

a unique idea

#### Adjectival Predicates

I-adjectives, when used as predicates, behave like verbs. For example, when okii XXX (big) or kuroi XXX (black) is used as a predicate, it means "is big" or "is black," not just "big" or "black."

Tanaka-san no ie wa okii.

XXXXXXX

Mr. Tanaka's house is big.

Watashi no kuruma wa kuroi.

XXXXXXX

My car is black.

Na-adjectives, when used as predicates, behave like nouns. That is, the stem form (the form without na) must be followed by the copula (be-verb) da, as must an ordinary noun. For this reason, na-adjectives are sometimes called "nominal (nounlike) adjectives" or "adjectival nouns."

Kono hana wa kirei da.

XXXXXXX

This flower is pretty.

Yamada-san wa genki da.

XXXXXXX

Miss Yamada is healthy.

Some na-adjectives can be used as nouns when functioning as the subject or object of a sentence.

anzenna asobiba

XXXXXXX

a safe playground

Kodomo ni totte anzen ga taisetsu da.

XXXXXXX

Safety is important for children.

zeitakuna kurashi

XXXXXXX

luxurious living

Sonna zeitaku wa dekinai.

XXXXXXX

I can't afford such a luxury.

Exceptions: The i-adjectives okii XXX (big), chiisai XXX (small) and okashii XXX (funny) may be used as na-adjectives when modifying certain nouns such as those given in the examples below.

okina koen XXX a big park

chiisana ike XXX a small pond

okashina hanashi XXX a funny story

### Auxiliary Adjectives

Auxiliary adjectives are adjectives that are attached to other adjectives or verbs. Some are i-adjectives (Examples 1, 2, 3, 4), while others are na-adjectives (Examples 5, 6).

1. Ano resutoran wa takai rashii.

XXXXXXX

That restaurant seems to be expensive.

2. Kono mondai wa judai kamoshirenai.

XXXXXXX

This problem might be serious.

3. Fuji-san ni noboritai.

XXXXXXX

I want to climb Mt. Fuji.

4. Kono kigu wa tsukaiyasui.

XXXXXXX

This utensil is easy to use.

5. Kono pai wa oishiso da.

XXXXXXX

This pie looks delicious.

6. Sumisu-san wa sumo ga sukina yo da.

XXXXXXX

Mr. Smith appears to like sumo.

In addition to auxiliary adjectives, there are also auxiliary verbs. These, too, can attach to adjectives.

(a) Kono heywa semasugiru.

XXXXXXX

This room is too small.

(b) Kare wa majime sugiru.

XXXXXXX

He is too serious.

Tenses of Adjectives Japanese adjectives conjugate and have two tenses: present and past. The same adjectival form is used to express both present and future tenses.

(a) Shiken wa yasashii.

XXXXXXX

The exam is/will be easy.

Shiken wa yasashikatta.

XXXXXXX

The exam was easy.

(b) Tetsuzuki wa kantan da.

XXXXXXX

The procedure is/will be simple.

Tetsuzuki wa kantan datta.

XXXXXXX

The procedure was simple.

### Levels of Speech

Japanese adjectives have plain, polite and superpolite forms or levels of speech. The plain form is used among family and friends, as well as in publications. The polite form is used among adults who are not close friends. The super-polite form is seldom used by younger speakers except in such greetings as o-hayo gozaimasu XXXXXXX (Good morning) or o-medeto gozaimasu XXXXXXX (Congratulations).

"It is interesting."

#### (a) Plain for i-adjectives

Omoshiroi.

XXX

Polite form for i-adjectives

Omoshiroi desu.

XXX

Superpolite form for i-adjectives

Omoshiro gozaimasu.

XXX

#### (b) Plain form for na-adjectives

Kantan da.

XXX

Polite form for na-adjectives

Kantan desu.

XXX

Superpolite form for na-adjectives

Kantan de gozaimasu.

XXX

From the Author

Preface[minus the original macrons and with Japanese represented by X's]

The Japanese language is said to be rich in modifiers -- adjectives and adverbs. If you pick up a book or magazine and read a page or two, you will see how adjectives go with nouns, and adverbs with verbs, to convey accurate, vivid descriptions. In fact, these modifiers add indispensable nuance and flavor to the language.

The purpose of this book is to help students obtain a basic knowledge of Japanese adjectives and adverbs so that they may use them effectively in sentences.

Adjectives are presented in two parts. Part I deals with the conjugations of the two types of adjectives -- i-adjectives and na-adjectives -- and of some of the basic auxiliary adjectives. A conjugation practice follows the description of each adjective or group of adjectives. Part II deals with the usage of various adjetival forms. Each usage is illustrated with example sentences, and practices are provided every few lessons to allow you to test your understanding. Adverbs are presented by grouping them according to what they express -- time, quantity, degree, circumstance and so forth. Each adverb is illustrated with examples sentences, and practices are provided every few lessons.

It is my wish that this book will prove useful, that you will come to better understand the meanings of Japanese adjectives and adverbs and be able to express yourself in "true Japanese."

I thank my editors, Shigeyoshi Suzuki and Michael Staley at Kodansha International, for making the publication of this book possible.

#### About the Author

TAEKO KAMIYA received her BA from Doshisha Women's College (Kyoto) and MAs from the University of San Francisco in education and from the Monterey Institute of International Studies in linguistics. She taught Japanese for twenty-five years at the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California. Among her publications are *Speak Japanese Today* (1989), *Japanese for Fun* (1990), *Tuttle New Dictionary of Loanwords in Japanese* (1994), *Subject-Grouped 1016 Kanji in Context* (1997), *Japanese Particle Workbook* (1998) and *The Handbook of Japanese Verbs* (2001).

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