

# Everyday particles

Japanese marks the job of each word with a small word that follows it. Get these right and word order stops mattering; get them wrong and a correct sentence still sounds off.

## The ten you need first

| Particle | What it marks                                               | Example            | English                                    |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| は        | the topic — “as for ...”<br><i>written は, said wa</i>       | 私は学生です             | As for me, I’m a student                   |
| が        | the subject, when it is new or being picked out             | 雨が降っています           | It’s raining                               |
| を        | the thing the action is done to<br><i>written を, said o</i> | 水を飲みます             | I drink water                              |
| に        | a point: a time, a destination, a person receiving          | 七時に起きます<br>友達に貸します | I get up at seven<br>I lend it to a friend |
| で        | where an action happens, or what you do it with             | 家で作ります<br>電車でいきます  | I make it at home<br>I go by train         |
| へ        | direction you head in<br><i>written へ, said e</i>           | 東京へ行きます            | I’m heading to Tokyo                       |
| と        | with someone; and, listing everything                       | 友達と遊びます            | I hang out with a friend                   |
| も        | too, also — it replaces は, が or を                           | 私も行きます             | I’m going too                              |
| の        | of, ’s — joins two nouns                                    | 私の本                | my book                                    |
| から<br>まで | from ... until ...                                          | 九時から五時まで           | from nine to five                          |

## The two choices that trip everyone up

| Choice | Use the first when...                                                                             | Use the second when...                                                                                          |
|--------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| は or が | you are saying something <b>about</b> a known thing. この本は高いです — as for this book, it’s expensive. | the word itself is the <b>news</b> , or answers “which one?”. この本が高いです — <i>this</i> book is the expensive one. |
| に or で | に marks a point you arrive at or something sits at. 家にいます — I’m at home.                          | で marks where something <b>happens</b> . 家で飲みます — I drink at home.                                              |

## Fixed pairs worth memorising whole

|                                |                                |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ～が好きです like — 音楽が好きです          | ～が分かります understand — 日本語が分かります |
| ～をください please give me — 水をください | ～に会います meet someone — 友達に会います  |
| ～で行きます go by — 電車で行きます         | ～は～が topic + detail — 象は鼻が長い   |

### Watch out

Three particles are not read as written. は = wa, へ = e, を = o — but only when they are doing a particle’s job.

Leaving through a place takes を. バスを降ります *get off the bus*, 家を出ます *leave home*.

### Two things you get free

**Word order relaxes.** Because the particle carries the job, 水を家で飲みます and 家で水を飲みます both work. Only the verb must stay last.

**Ending particles set the tone.** ～ね checks you agree; ～よ tells someone something new.



### Make Japanese words stick.

Save any Japanese word with its reading, meaning, example sentences and audio — then let it come back to you on your home screen while you get on with your day.

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