Polite verbs: ます

Oboeru 覚える

The first form you learn and the one that is safe with anyone — a stranger, a shop assistant, your boss. Build it once and five more patterns come with it.

The rule, by verb group

Group 2 · る-verbs (ichidan) — drop る, add ます. 開け**る** → 開け**ます** *akeru → akemasu*

Group 3 · irregular — just two verbs: する → **します** *shimasu*, 来る → **来ます** *kimasu*

Group 1 · う-verbs (godan) — change the last kana to the one in the same row with an **i** sound, then add ます:

Group 1: swap the last kana for its i sound

Dictionary form ends in	う	く	ぐ	す	つ	ぬ	ぶ	む	る
Polite form uses	い	き	ぎ	し	ち	に	び	み	り

Every group, in one table — *endings not shown here swap the same way*

Group	Dictionary form		Polite form	Meaning
Group 1 godan	使う *tsukau*	→	使**います** *tsukaimasu*	use
	聞く *kiku*	→	聞**きます** *kikimasu*	listen, ask
	持つ *motsu*	→	持**ちます** *mochimasu*	hold
	泳ぐ *oyogu*	→	泳**ぎます** *oyogimasu*	swim
	飲む *nomu*	→	飲**みます** *nomimasu*	drink
	作る *tsukuru*	→	作**ります** *tsukurimasu*	make
Group 2 ichidan	開ける *akeru*	→	開け**ます** *akemasu*	open
	起きる *okiru*	→	起き**ます** *okimasu*	get up
Group 3 irregular	する *suru*	→	**します** *shimasu*	do
	来る *kuru*	→	**来ます** *kimasu*	come *(reading changes)*

The four endings — all you need for past and negative

	Positive	Negative
Now / future	飲み**ます** *nomimasu* — drinks, will drink	飲み**ません** *nomimasen* — does not drink
Past	飲み**ました** *nomimashita* — drank	飲み**ませんでした** *nomimasen deshita* — did not drink

Use it

〜ましょう let's — 飲みましょう

〜たいです I want to — 聞きたいです

〜に行きます go and do — 泳ぎに行きます

〜ませんか shall we? — 泳ぎませんか

〜ながら while doing — 聞きながら

〜方 how to — 使い方

Watch out

"Did not" takes two words. 飲みませんでした, never 飲みませんかった.

来る changes its sound. 来ます is *kimasu*, but 来る is *kuru*. Same kanji, two readings.

Two things you get free

The part before ます is a building block. 飲み・聞き・使い — every pattern in "Use it" attaches right there.

Politeness is only the ending. The meaning does not change, so you can say the same thing plainly later by swapping the ending.

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