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JAPANESE LESSON

Basic Conversation 1 · Chapter 5 · Talking About Your Family

Japanese Basic Conversation 1

Chapter 5 · Talking About Your Family



Talking About Your Family — かぞく

Talking about family is one of the most common topics for beginners, and it introduces one of the most important ideas in Japanese: **different words for your family and for someone else's**. You'll also learn to count people. Romaji is shown under every line of Japanese.

① How Many in Your Family? — かぞくはなんにん？

A:

ごかぞくは なんにんですか。

Gokazoku wa nannin desu ka.

How many people are in your family?

B:

ごにんです。ちちと ははと あにと
いもうと、それから わたしです。

*Gonin desu. Chichi to haha to ani to imōto,
sorekara watashi desu.*

Five. My father, mother, older brother,
younger sister, and me.

② Brothers and Sisters — きょうだい

A:

きょうだいが いますか。

Kyōdai ga imasu ka.

Do you have brothers or sisters?

B:

はい、あにが ひとり います。

Hai, ani ga hitori imasu.

Yes, I have one older brother.

A:

おにいさんは おいくつですか。

Oniisan wa oikutsu desu ka.

How old is your brother?

B:

さんじゅっさいです。

Sanjussai desu.

He's thirty.

③ An Only Child — ひとりっこ

A:

きょうだいが いますか。

Kyōdai ga imasu ka.

Do you have brothers or sisters?

④ Asking After Someone's Parents — ごりょうしん

A:

たなかさんの おかあさんは おげん
きですか。

B:

いいえ、ひとりっこです。

Iie, hitorikko desu.

No, I'm an only child.

A:

そうですか。

Sō desu ka.

I see.

Tanaka-san no okāsan wa ogenki desu ka.

Tanaka-san, is your mother well?

B:

はい、ははも ちちも げんきです。

Hai, haha mo chichi mo genki desu.

Yes, my mother and father are both well.

A:

それは よかったです。

Sore wa yokatta desu.

That's good to hear.

⑤ Showing a Photo — しゃしん

A:

これはわたしの かぞくです。

Kore wa watashi no kazoku desu.

This is my family.

B:

かわいい いもうとさんですね。

Kawaii imōtosan desu ne.

What a cute younger sister.

A:

ありがとうございます。いもうとは

じゅうごさいです。

Arigatō gozaïmasu. Imōto wa jūgosai desu.

Thank you. My sister is fifteen.

⑥ Pets — ペット

A:

ペットが いますか。

Petto ga imasu ka.

Do you have a pet?

B:

はい、ねこが います。

Hai, neko ga imasu.

Yes, I have a cat.

A:

かわいいですね。

Kawaii desu ne.

How cute.



Your Family and Other People's — うちと そと

Japanese has **two sets of family words**. For your own family you use plain, humble words (は/は、ちち). For someone else's family you use respectful words (おかあさん, おとうさん). Mixing them up is a very common beginner mistake.

MEANING	MY OWN FAMILY (HUMBLE)	SOMEONE ELSE'S (HONORIFIC)
mother	はは <i>haha</i>	おかあさん <i>okāsan</i>
father	ちち <i>chichi</i>	おとうさん <i>otōsan</i>
parents	りょうしん <i>ryōshin</i>	ごりょうしん <i>goryōshin</i>
older brother	あに <i>ani</i>	おにいさん <i>oniisan</i>
older sister	あね <i>ane</i>	おねえさん <i>onēsan</i>
younger brother	おとうと <i>otōto</i>	おとうとさん <i>otōtosan</i>
younger sister	いもうと <i>imōto</i>	いもうとさん <i>imōtosan</i>
siblings	きょうだい <i>kyōdai</i>	ごきょうだい <i>gokyōdai</i>
grandmother	そば <i>sobo</i>	おばあさん <i>obāsan</i>
grandfather	そふ <i>sofu</i>	おじいさん <i>ojiisan</i>
child	こども <i>kodomo</i>	おこさん <i>okosan</i>
husband	おっと <i>otto</i>	ごしゅじん <i>goshujin</i>
wife	つま <i>tsuma</i>	おくさん <i>okusan</i>

MEANING	MY OWN FAMILY (HUMBLE)	SOMEONE ELSE'S (HONORIFIC)
family	かぞく <i>kazoku</i>	ごかぞく <i>gokazoku</i>

The Rule

Speaking to *other people* about **your own** mother: はは. Asking about **their** mother: おかあさん. When you speak **directly to your own mother** at home, you can call her おかあさん, since you are addressing her. The humble words are for describing your family to an outsider.

1234 Counting People — ~にん

People are counted with にん, except for one and two, which have their own words.

PEOPLE	JAPANESE	NOTES
1	ひとり <i>hitori</i>	special word
2	ふたり <i>futari</i>	special word
3	さんにん <i>sannin</i>	number + にん
4	よにん <i>yonin</i>	よ, not よん
5	ごにん <i>gonin</i>	
6	ろくにん <i>rokunin</i>	
7	ななにん / しちにん <i>nananin / shichinin</i>	

PEOPLE	JAPANESE	NOTES
8	はちにん <i>hachinin</i>	
9	きゅうにん <i>kyūnin</i>	
10	じゅうにん <i>jūnin</i>	
how many?	なんにん <i>nannin</i>	used to ask: なんにんですか

Key Patterns — ぶんけい

SAY THIS	JAPANESE	MEANING
かぞくは ～にんです <i>kazoku wa ... nin desu</i>	かぞくは ごにんです。 <i>Kazoku wa gonin desu.</i>	My family is five people.
～が います <i>... ga imasu</i>	あにが います。 <i>Ani ga imasu.</i>	I have an older brother.
～が いません <i>... ga imasen</i>	いもうとは いません。 <i>Imōto wa imasen.</i>	I don't have a younger sister.
ひとりっこです <i>hitorikko desu</i>	ひとりっこです。 <i>Hitorikko desu.</i>	I'm an only child.

Three More Verbs — どうし

VERB	PRESENT (POLITE)	NEGATIVE	PAST
to be; to have (people, animals)	います <i>imasu</i>	いません <i>imasen</i>	いました <i>imashita</i>

VERB	PRESENT (POLITE)	NEGATIVE	PAST
to be; to have (things)	あります <i>arimasu</i>	ありません <i>arimasen</i>	ありました <i>arimashita</i>
to get married (けっこんする)	けっこんしま す <i>kekkon shimasu</i>	けっこんしませ ん <i>kekkon shimasen</i>	けっこんしまし た <i>kekkon shimashita</i>

います and あります

Japanese has two verbs for "there is / I have". **います** is for people and animals (things that move), and **あります** is for things. So **きょうだいが います** (siblings, people) but **ペンが あります** (a pen, a thing). The particle **が** marks what exists.

Vocabulary — ごい

20 key words. Read the Japanese first, then check the romaji.

#	JAPANESE	ROMAJI	ENGLISH	TYPE
1	かぞく	<i>kazoku</i>	family	noun
2	ごかぞく	<i>gokazoku</i>	your family (polite)	noun
3	りょうしん	<i>ryōshin</i>	parents	noun
4	はは	<i>haha</i>	my mother	noun
5	ちち	<i>chichi</i>	my father	noun
6	おかあさん	<i>okāsan</i>	mother (yours; someone's)	noun
7	おとうさん	<i>otōsan</i>	father (yours; someone's)	noun
8	あに	<i>ani</i>	my older brother	noun
9	あね	<i>ane</i>	my older sister	noun

#	JAPANESE	ROMAJI	ENGLISH	TYPE
10	おとうと	<i>otōto</i>	my younger brother	noun
11	いもうと	<i>imōto</i>	my younger sister	noun
12	きょうだい	<i>kyōdai</i>	brothers and sisters	noun
13	ひとりっこ	<i>hitorikko</i>	only child	noun
14	こども	<i>kodomo</i>	child; children	noun
15	ひとり	<i>hitori</i>	one person	noun
16	ふたり	<i>futari</i>	two people	noun
17	にん	<i>-nin</i>	people (counter)	noun
18	います	<i>imasu</i>	there is; to have (people)	verb
19	ペット	<i>petto</i>	pet	noun
20	かわいい	<i>kawaii</i>	cute	adj

Real Japanese Tip — Inside and Outside (うち と そと)

The two family-word sets reflect an idea that runs through Japanese: the **inside group** (うち: you, your family, your company) and the **outside group** (そと: everyone else). You lower your own side and raise the other person's. It's why you say ははは げんきです about your own mother but おかあさんは おげんきですか about theirs.

おにいさん and おねえさん for Strangers

おにいさん and おねえさん aren't only for siblings: shop and restaurant staff use them to address a young man or woman politely ("Excuse me, sir / miss"), and customers often call a young waiter おにいさん to get his attention. Likewise おじさん and おばさん are used for middle-aged strangers, though with care.

Counting 4 Is Irregular

For people, 4 is よにん, not よんにん. If you can only remember two special cases, remember ひとり and ふたり: you'll use them constantly, for example when you reserve a table: ふたりです, "two people".

Kanji Spotlight — 父 母 子

父 (chichi, fu) is father, 母 (haha, bo) is mother and 子 (ko, shi) is child: the three kanji of the family. In the word おかあさん they appear as お母さん. Have a look at them: [父](#) · [母](#) · [子](#)

Try It Yourself — れんしゅう

Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.

1. Say "My mother is well."

▼ Show answer

はははげんきです。

2. Ask politely whether someone's father is well.

▼ Show answer

おとうさんはおげんきですか。

3. Say "I have an older brother" and "I'm an only child".

▼ Show answer

あにがいます。・ひとりっこです。

4. How do you ask "How many people are in your family?"

▼ Show answer

ご家族はなんにんですか。

5. Say "My family is four people" (careful with 4).

▼ Show answer

かぞくは よにんです。 (yonin, not yonnin)

6. Which verb do you use for "I have a cat", います or あります? Why?

▼ Show answer

います, because a cat is an animal (something that moves).

Coming Up in Chapter 6

Talking about your job: しごと, かいしゃ, 〜ではたっています and the katakana job words (エンジニア, サポート ...). Plus the little particle の, meaning "of".