

Japanese 101

Particles

は (wa)

The particle wa marks what the topic of a sentence is. Wa comes after the topic. Sometimes translated as 'is' or 'am'.

Examples:

Miss. Kimura is a student.

I am Matt. (my name is Matt)

Kimura-san wa gakusei desu.

Watashi wa matto desu.

きむらさんはがくせいです.

わたしはマツトです.

も (mo)

The particle mo indicates that something is the same or shares something in common with a topic already mentioned. Mo comes after the topic it is marking. Mo can replace particles wa, ga, or o.

Usually mo is translated as 'too' or 'also'.

Examples:

Mrs. Saka is a student too.

I am Matt also. (my name is also Matt)

Saka-san mo gakusei desu.

Watashi mo matto desu.

さかさんもがくせいです.

わたしもマツトです.

が (ga)

The particle ga is similar to wa. Ga marks the subject of a sentence. The subject and topic are usually the same thing in English so it can be confusing to decide whether to use wa or ga. Ga usually puts emphasis on the topic. Basically saying "Out of all these things *this* is the one I'm talking about."

Examples:

The letter came. (Out of all the mail *the* letter came)

Robert likes Kyoto.

(out of all cities Robert likes *Kyoto*)

Tegami ga kimashita.

Robaato-san wa Kyoto ga sukidesu.

てがみがきました.

ロバートさんはきよとがすきです.

を (wo/o)

The particle (wo)o is used with direct objects, usually verbs. Direct verbs are verbs that are used with tangible objects, I.E you *eat* food, *drink* water, and *do* laundry. Wo(o) is placed before the object/verb. Wo is pronounced as o, you can't use お (o) in place of を(wo).

*Note that the 'l' in these sentences is dropped in their Japanese counterparts.

Examples:

(i) Drink coffee.

Koohii o nomimasu.

コ-ヒ-をのみます。

(i) Watch Television.

Terebi o mimasu

テレビをみます。

で (de)

The particle de indicates where something takes place. De comes after the place it is marking. De is usually translated as 'at' or 'in'.

Examples:

I study in the library.

I watch TV at home.

Watashi wa toshokan de benkyoshimasu.

Watashi wa uchi de terebi o mimasu.

わたしはとしょかんでべんきよします。

わたしはうちでテレビをみます。

に (ni)

The particle ni is used to show movement or time (or day). For the movement it means, you are moving towards or away from something and ni is placed before the movement verb. For time, ni is placed after the time (or day).

*Note that the 'I' in the English sentence is dropped in the Japanese ones.

Examples:

I have school on Monday.

I will return home.

At 3 o'clock I eat sushi.

Getsuyoubi ni gakkou ga arimasu.

Uchi ni kaerimasu.

Sanji ni sushi o tabemasu.

げつようびにがっこうがあります。

うちにかえります。

さんじにすしをたべます

へ (he)

The particle he is used for movement exactly the same way as ni. He is sometimes used instead of ni to emphasize the movement. He cannot be used for time.

Example:

I will return home.

Watashi wa uchi he kaerimasu.

わたしはうちかへえります。