

■ Meaning of auxiliary

The **auxiliary** or **auxiliary verb** is translated in Japanese as 助動詞 **Jodōshi**; the term is formed by:

- the first Kanji 助 means help, rescue, assist
- the word 動詞 indicates the verb of which 動 refers to the movement and 詞 the grammatical particle

These are elements that, combined with the verbs, give a particular meaning to the verbal form.

Example:

見る → 見^みる → 見^み → 見^みたい

見る **miru** see, watch dictionary form; 見 **mi** verbal base, 見たい **mi tai**: I want to see

I consider it useful before analysing auxiliaries to review the forms and types of **verbal base** in Japanese.

■ Verbal Bases

The verbal base is a morphological element to which the various auxiliaries are added to determine the various verb forms.

□ Ichidan verbal base

We find verbs in Japanese ending in **いる** and in **える** that have a single base for all forms and are called **一段動詞 Ichidan Dōshi** literally meaning Verbs of Class 1 or Monograde Verbs.

Examples of Ichidan verbs:

- 決める ^きkimeru decide
- 降りる ^おoriru get off

For these verbs, the verbal base is obtained by removing the final syllable **る**.

決める → 決め~~る~~ → 決め

降りる → 降り~~る~~ → 降り

Once the base is obtained, the various auxiliaries are added to get the various forms of the verb.

Ichidan verbs are limited in number; most verbs in Japanese grammar are of the **Godan** type.

□ 5 Bases for Godan Verbs

The 五段動詞 Godan Dōshi, literally Verbs of Class 5 or Pentagrade Verbs, have 5 different bases that follow the Hiragana lines to which they belong.

^か書く kaku write ends in く so it belongs to the かきくけこ line and we have in order:

- ^か書か **kaka** Base 1, B1 or Base in あ
- ^か書き **kaki** Base 2, B2 or Base in い
- ^か書く **kaku** Base 3, B3 or Base in う which represents the **dictionary form**
- ^か書け **kake** Base 4, B4 or Base in え
- ^か書こ **kako** Base 5, B5 or Base in お

Another example of Godan Verb: ^ま待つ **matsu** wait of the たちつてと line.

- 待た **mata** Base 1, B1 or Base in あ
- 待ち **machi** Base 2, B2 or Base in い
- 待つ **matsu** Base 3, B3 or Base in う, **dictionary form**
- 待て **mate** Base 4, B4 or Base in え
- 待と **mato** Base 5, B5 or Base in お

□ Irregular Verbs

They do not follow the rule and the most frequently used irregular verbs are:

- する **suru** do which has 2 bases し and せ
- 来る **kuru** come, arrive with the 2 bases き and こ

Plain Form and Polite Form

The **plain form** is also known as ^{じしょけい}辞書形 **jishokei**, the form (形) we find in the dictionary (辞書).

It is the form that is used informally and colloquially, among friends and family, with people in confidence.

The **polite form** or **masu form**, ^{けい}ます形, on the other hand, is used in formal situations where one maintains a certain distance from the interlocutor, it may be in a business context or even towards people one does not know.

There are **various levels of politeness** and consequently different forms that are developed in the Keigo 敬語, the honorific language.

■ List of the main auxiliaries

For each auxiliary you will find the short **description**; the **form** of an **Ichidan** verb, of a **Godan** verb, of the two **irregular verbs** する and くる and useful **example sentences**.

□ ます

Polite affirmative form in the present tense; used with the Base ending in い.

た 食べる → た 食べ~~る~~ → た 食べ → た 食べ~~る~~ **ます**

の 飲む → の 飲~~む~~ → の 飲み → の 飲み~~む~~ **ます**

する → し → し~~る~~ **ます**

く 来る → き 来 → き~~る~~ **ます**

この や た お好み焼きを食べます。

okonomiyakiotabemasu.

I eat okonomiyaki.

の コーヒーを飲みます。

koohiionomimasu.

I drink coffee.