

■あいさつの言葉 Greetings

■おはようございます

This expression literally means 'it's early', but you may hear it up to about noon. It is used both formally and with family and friends, when it is often shortened to 「おはよう」。Another variation is 「おっす」, used by men and boys.

■こんにちは、こんばんは

These expressions are quite formal, and their usage is limited. They are not used with family. 「こんにちは」 is rarely heard in a school. In the morning students greet teachers with 「おはようございます」, and later in the day they just give a slight bow or nod of the head, and the same applies to teacher colleagues.

■いってきます、いってらっしゃい

These expressions mean literally 'I'll go and come back' and 'Please go and come back'. They are used when someone is leaving the house, going out on an errand or going on a journey. ただいま、おかえりなさい 「ただいま」 stands for 「ただいまかえりました」 and literally means 'I've just come back'. The person at home or in the workplace responds with 「おかえりなさい」, 'Welcome back'.

■さようなら、じゃあね、バイバイ

Japanese students use「じゃあね」 and 「バイバイ」 with friends, but to teachers they say 「さようなら」. 「さようなら」 may be said to friends who won't be seeing each other for a while, but family members never use it among themselves unless the person is leaving for good!

■ことわざ Proverbs

Here are some proverbs to guide you through your daily life!

「早起きは三文の得」Literally 'If you get up early you earn an extra 3 mon. (old monetary unit)' equivalent to 'The early bird catches the worm.'

「寝た子を起こすな」Literally 'Don't wake a sleeping child.', equivalent to 'Let sleeping dogs lie.' or 'Leave well enough alone.'

■ じかん 時間について Talking about time

Did you know that the oriental zodiac, じゅうにし 十二支, as well as referring to particular years, was formerly also used for indicating compass points and the hours of the day? One day was divided into 12 periods - 12 o'clock midnight was the hour of the rat, ねずみ, and 12 o'clock noon was the hour of the horse, うま. So what time is it now? If you can't remember the order of the animals of the zodiac, see below!

As befits such an important concept, the word じかん 時間, time, is used in many expressions - here are just a few.

じかん
「時間です！」

'Time's up!' (e.g. when doing a test)

ね じかん
「寝る時間ですよ。」

'It's time to go to bed!'

じかん
バスは時間どおりにきた。

'The bus arrived on time.'

じかん まも
時間を守る

Literally 'to keep time', hence 'to be punctual'

じかん
時間をつぶす

Literally 'to crush' hence 'to kill time'.

■ かんじ 漢字 Kanji

You all know that 日, which comes from a picture of the sun, means 'day'. It also appears as a radical in many kanji including 時, time. The right side of 時 originated from pictures of a hand and a foot, which you move when going forward, so combined, it expresses the idea of the day moving forward, hence time!