

## 1 Te-form

The main topic of this lesson is a new conjugation of verbs called the “*te*-form.” *Te*-forms are a *very* important part of Japanese grammar. In this lesson, we will learn, among their various uses, to use them in:

- making requests (“. . . , please.”)
- giving and asking for permission (“You may . . ./May I . . .”)
- stating that something is forbidden (“You must not . . .”)
- forming a sentence that describes two events or activities. (“I did this and did that.”)

The conjugation paradigm of *te*-forms is fairly complex, as we need to learn separate rules for *ru*-, *u*-, and irregular verbs. Furthermore, the rule for *u*-verbs is divided into five subrules.

First, with *ru*-verbs, the rule is very simple: Take る off and add て.

<i>ru</i> -verbs			
<table style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">食べる <small>た</small></td> <td style="text-align: center;">→</td> <td style="text-align: center;">食べて <small>た</small></td> </tr> </table>	食べる <small>た</small>	→	食べて <small>た</small>
食べる <small>た</small>	→	食べて <small>た</small>	

*U*-verbs come in several groups, based on the final syllable of their dictionary forms.

<i>u</i> -verbs with final う, つ, and る <sup>1</sup>						
<table style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">会う <small>あ</small></td> <td style="text-align: center;">→</td> <td style="text-align: center;">会って <small>あ</small></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">待つ <small>ま</small></td> <td style="text-align: center;">→</td> <td style="text-align: center;">待って <small>ま</small></td> </tr> </table>	会う <small>あ</small>	→	会って <small>あ</small>	待つ <small>ま</small>	→	待って <small>ま</small>
会う <small>あ</small>	→	会って <small>あ</small>				
待つ <small>ま</small>	→	待って <small>ま</small>				

<sup>1</sup>As we discussed in Lesson 3, some verbs that end with the *hiragana* る are *ru*-verbs and some others are *u*-verbs. The rule of thumb for determining which verb is which is to examine the vowel before the final る syllable. If the vowel is *a*, *o*, or *u*, the verb, without any exceptions, is an *u*-verb. If the vowel is either *i* or *e*, the verb can be either an *u*-verb or a *ru*-verb. Statistically speaking, there are many more *ru*-verbs, than *u*-verbs in the *iru* and *eru* camp, but there are many important verbs in the minority, such as 入る (to enter), and 帰る (to return).

$$\left. \begin{array}{l} \dots aru \\ \dots oru \\ \dots uru \end{array} \right\} = \text{always } u\text{-verbs} \qquad \left. \begin{array}{l} \dots iru \\ \dots eru \end{array} \right\} = \text{often, but not always, } ru\text{-verbs}$$

As far as *te*-forms are concerned, we observe that *u*-verbs that end with る will have a small つ, *ru*-verbs that end with る do not.

とる	→	とって
u-verbs with final む, ぶ, and ぬ		
読む	→	読んで
遊ぶ	→	遊んで
死ぬ	→	死んで
u-verbs with final く		
書く	→	書いて
There is an important exception in this class:		
行く	→	行って
u-verbs with final ぐ		
泳ぐ	→	泳いで
u-verbs with final す		
話す	→	話して

The irregular verbs する and くる, and compound verbs built with them, conjugate as follows.

irregular verbs		
する	→	して
くる	→	きて

Note that *te*-forms and stems (the forms you find before ます) are totally different constructs in the *u*-verb camp. A common mistake is to assume that the simple paradigm provided by the *ru*-verbs (食べて and 食べます) covers the *u*-verbs also, thus coming up with unwarranted forms such as ×会いて (see 会います) and ×読みて (see 読みます). It is probably easier, at this stage of learning, to memorize each verb as a set, as in 書く一書きます一書いて, than to apply the conjugation rules on the spot. Refer to the verb conjugation table at the end of this volume.

## 2 ~てください

Use a verbal *te*-form together with ください to make a polite request to another person "please do . . . for me."

教科書のテープを聞いてください。

*Please listen to the tape that goes with the textbook.*

すみません。ちょっと教えてください。

*Excuse me. Please teach me a little. (= Tell me, I need your advice.)*