



Lesson 1: Thank You!

ありがとう!

LESSON NOTES

As in other languages, there are more casual and more formal ways of saying "Thank you." Let's start with the casual form. "Thanks" is "Dōmo" or "Arigato." This is the shortest, simplest way of saying "Thank you." So there is no excuse for you not to know this. This phrase is used among friends, or in other casual situations. However, until you get the hang of it, it might be better to keep things formal.

Now in Japanese, politeness level is very important. "Arigato" is okay, but to be more polite we say, "Arigato gozaimasu." The addition of "gozaimasu" increases the politeness level of the phrase. It is highly probable that you will come into contact with this phrase when you are visiting places of business. When you purchase something you will surely hear this phrase, or a derivative of this.

For very special occasions when someone goes above and beyond the call of being kind, when someone is extremely generous, or for any other time you're extremely grateful, we have the following phrase to express extreme gratitude: "Dōmo arigato-gozaimasu." Thank you very much." The first word "dōmo" raises the politeness level. This is followed by "arigato," which is "thank you." And finally there is "gozaimasu," which also is used to increase the politeness level. When these three components are used together in the same sentence, they form an extremely polite phrase for expressing ones gratitude.

PHRASES

| Kanji | Kana | Romaji | English |
|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| どうもありがとうご ざいます。 | どうもありがとうご ざいます。 | Dōmo arigato gozaimasu. | Thank you very much. (very formal) |

VOCABULARY

| Kanji | Kana | Romaji | English |
|-------|-------|---------|---|
| どうも | どうも | dōmo | (A phrase used to elevate the politeness level of words following it.) |
| ありがとう | ありがとう | arigato | Thank you. |

| Kanji | Kana | Romaji | English |
|-------|-------|-----------|-----------------------------------|
| すみません | すみません | sumimasen | Excuse me. I'm sorry. (formal) |
| ごめん | ごめん | gomen | Sorry. (casual) |

QUICK TIP

Today's Sachiko's Secret has to do with culture. In Japan, sometimes we say "sorry" when we actually want to thank someone for doing something. We say sorry to mean, "I appreciate your efforts, and I'm sorry for the inconvenience I may have caused." For example, if someone gets out of the way so you can move, or someone offers their seat to you on a train, the one receiving the favor may say, "Sumimasen," which means "Excuse me" or "I'm sorry" instead of saying, "Thank you." Amongst friends, we may use the casual form of "sumimasen," which is "gomen," or "gomen ne." In Japan, we are taught that the biggest sin is to inconvenience other people or disrupt harmony in society. So whenever we feel that we inconvenienced someone, we apologize. And many times, that apology is taken also as expressing gratitude. It may sound strange and difficult to understand now, but when you come to Japan and see it often enough with your own eyes, you will start to understand how the culture works.

QUICK TIP 2

In Japanese, we like to use English words in our day-to-day lives. But we inevitably pronounce them the Japanese way. The term "Thank you" is no different. Because we don't have the sound for "th" in Japanese, we substitute it with the "s" sound. We don't have the thick "a" sound as in "apple" or "thank" either, so we substitute it with the light sound heard in "sun." So when a Japanese person tries to say "Thank you," it sounds more like "Sun kyu." You might hear this a lot because people assume all foreigners speak English. So keep your ears open! When they say "Sun kyu," they mean "Thank you." Another random tid bit: "Sun kyu" phonetically sounds like the Japanese words for three and nine, as well as maternity leave, depending on the intonation you use!