



Lesson 2: You're Welcome

どういたしまして

LESSON NOTES

The most common way of saying “You’re welcome,” is “Doutashimashite.” This is a polite form that can be used with friends, colleagues, senior colleagues, supervisors and those significantly older than you. And you would use it in situations where you feel comfortable being thanked. In other words, if you thought your actions deserved an expression of appreciation and a mention. If someone thanks you for giving her a gift, or answering her question, you could say “Doutashimashite,” because it’s pretty natural for you to be thanked for gestures like that.

But if you think your actions did not deserve to be thanked or mentioned, you might want to say a phrase that means “Don’t mention it.” In Japanese, we have casual and formal ways of saying this. In a casual situation, you would use “lie, iie” which is literally translated as “No, no” to mean “It’s no big deal.” For example, when someone thanks you for giving up your seat in the train or picking up something that they dropped, saying “lie iie” conveys the feeling that you thought it was only natural for you to give up your seat (or pick up the object) and so you deserve no credit for it. But again, this would be used in response to casual gestures and situations. Most likely in such situations, they’ll thank you in a casual form as well, like “Domo arigato.”

For more formal situations, we use “Tondemo naidesu.” Like “lie iie”, “Tondemo naidesu” means “What I did is really no big deal.” But this should be used in situations where the deeds were a bit more serious and for situations in which both parties benefited from. For example, if you went to a job interview and the interviewer thanks you for coming, you should say, “Tondemo naidesu” to mean “Oh, no. Thank YOU for taking the time out of your busy schedule to interview me.” Another example would be if you went to visit a friend in the intensive care unit, the sick person’s family would probably go to great lengths to thank you politely. For reference, they would probably say, “Domo arigato gozaimasu.” And since they’re being so polite and the situation is so serious, you should respond with the same degree of politeness and seriousness. In this situation, “Tondemo naidesu” is the most appropriate response to convey that feeling of “Of course I came. She was such a close friend of mine.”

PHRASES

Kanji	Kana	Romaji	English
どういたしまして。	どういたしまして。	Doutashimashite.	You're welcome.
いいえ、いいえ。	いいえ、いいえ。	lie, iie.	It's no big deal. Don't mention it.

Kanji	Kana	Romaji	English
とんでもないです。	とんでもないです。	Tondemo naidesu.	Oh, no. Thank YOU! (polite form)
こちらこそ。	こちらこそ。	Kochira koso.	The pleasure is mine. (polite form)

QUICK TIP

And now for Sachiko's Secret. I'll introduce a phrase I like to use in conjunction with the phrases we learned today. After saying, "Don't mention it" I often add "Kochira koso" which literally means "Me, too" in a polite way. But it would be translated as "No, no, I should be thanking you" or "The pleasure was mine." That way I feel like we can share the appreciation we have for each other and connect on a deeper level! And they won't feel obligated to return the favor. Speaking of obligations, Japan has a strict custom of gift-giving. People give each other gifts for every opportunity possible. For example, if you have children, you'll get gifts for your children's birthday, enrollment into a new school, graduation, Christmas and New Year. And – strictly speaking – each time you get a gift you're supposed to give back a gift that is roughly half the price of the gift you received. Yes, each and every time!! It can get really busy sometimes! Especially if you just got married or had children, you'll be showered with gifts – greats! – but you'll have a huge to-do list waiting for you!! To avoid this mess, I usually ask my friends to come to my birthday parties empty-handed.

QUICK TIP 2

A word on gestures to go with "You're welcome." In a casual setting, when we say, "Iie, iie" (No, no, don't mention it) we typically wave our hand back and forth as we talk. When you say, "Doitashimashite," we typically nod our heads a bit, as if to offer a slight bow. When using the most polite form "Tondemo naidesu" we typically do both -- wave our hand and bow. But the bow here would be a bit more formal, meaning that we would bow our heads lower than we would in a casual setting.