

Design: Masako Ban



# gomennasai ..... I'm sorry

I heard that my friend's grandfather died last month, so I said to him, "gomennasai." (I'm sorry.) But he was confused and said, "Why? What do you mean?" Did I say something wrong? I ended up asking him the same thing, "Well, what do YOU mean!?" Ms. Hirayama, did I say something weird again?

# Pera Pera Penguin's

5-minute Japanese Class by Hitomi Hirayama Vol. 23

■ ■ ■ I understand you meant to say, "I'm sorry" by saying, "gomennasai" in Japanese. But this expression is used when you want to apologize for making a mistake or causing a disturbance. When you wish to express your sympathy for the bereaved, it is better to use a fixed expression, such as "goshūshōsama desu/deshita." (You have my deepest sympathy.) In addition, you need to mumble the words, to imply that you can't finish saying it because of your sadness. Traditionally, Japanese women wear mofuku (mourning kimono) for a funeral, and, as a sign of their grief, they try not to wear it too neatly.

Apology: These expressions are used when you want to apologize for your mistakes.

(friendly form) **ごめんなさい**  
gomennasai

**すみません** or **すいません**  
sumimasen or suimasen

**失礼しました。**  
shitsurē-shimashita

(polite form) **申し訳ございませんでした。**  
mōshiwake-gozaimasendeshita

Sympathy: These expressions are used when you want to convey your grief over someone's death and to indicate your sympathy concerning someone's problems.

**残念です。**  
zannen desu (That's a shame.)

**元気を出して下さい。**  
genki o dashite-kudasai (Try to keep your spirits up.)

**頑張ってください。**  
gambatte-kudasai (Don't be discouraged.)

e.g., Hayashi-san : My company went bankrupt the other day...  
Kobayashi-san : I'm sorry. ▶ **頑張ってください。**  
gambatte-kudasai (Don't be discouraged.)

Encouragement: These expressions are used when you want to give emotional support to the depressed.

**大変ですね。**  
taihen desu ne (That must be hard for you.)

**大変でしたね。もう大丈夫ですか。**  
taihen deshita ne mō daijōbu desu ka  
(It was really hard for you. Are you OK?)

**頑張ってください。**  
gambatte-kudasai (Hang in there!/Don't give up!)

e.g., Kobayashi-san : I have been looking for a new job for six months.  
Tanaka-san : That must be really hard. ▶ **大変ですね。**  
taihen desu ne (That must be really hard.)

**Hang in there!** ▶ **頑張ってください。**  
gambatte-kudasai (Hang in there !)

Hasebe-san : ① You don't look so good. **ね。** ne ② Are you OK?

Pole-san : Late last night, all of a sudden, Ryōta passed away.  
**ゆうべ 遅く... 急に...** yūbe osoku kyū ni **良太 が 亡くなって...** Ryōta ga nakunatte

Hasebe-san : ③ (I'm sorry) You have my deepest sympathy.

④ How old was he ?

Pole-san : ...If he was human...  
**...人間 でしたら...** ningen deshitora  
he would have been about 95 years old.  
**95 歳** kyū-jū go sai ⑤ about **です。** desu

Hasebe-san : What ? You mean, Ryōta was not human?  
**えっ 良太さん は 人間じゃないのですか。** ee Ryōta-san wa ningen janai no desu ka

Pole-san : Right, he was a fish.  
**はい** ⑥ fish **です けど...** desu kedo

Hasebe-san : ...

(to die / to pass away): nakunaru is used only for the humans, whereas shinu is used for all living creatures.



He is dying./He is about to pass away.  
**死にます / 亡くなります** shinimasu nakunarimasu



He died./He passed away.  
**死にました / 亡くなりました** shinimashita nakunarimashita



He is dead.  
**死んでいます** shindeimasu

- He died just a moment ago.
- The time of his death can be given in figures.
- The corpse is still there or it can be seen.

Answers  
① genki ga nai desu ② daijōbu desu ka ③ goshūshō sama desu ④ oikutsu deshita ka  
⑤ kurai/gurai ⑥ sakana



A) to pass away <b>亡くなる</b> な nakunaru to pass away (polite form used for humans)	B) to die <b>死ぬ</b> し shinu to die (used for humans, animals)	C) desperately <b>必死に</b> ひっし hisshi ni
D) a matter of life and death <b>死活問題</b> し かつ もん だい shi katsu mon dai	E) with all one's might <b>死に物狂い</b> し もの ぐる shi ni mono gurui	

• Oh, my goodness! A new restaurant has opened just around the corner!  
**たいへん、新しい店 が すぐ近くに できました。** taihen atarashi mise ga sugu chikaku ni dekimashita  
Oh dear new restaurant right near has opened

I'm in trouble..It's a matter of life and death to me.  
**困ったな... これは** ① a matter of life and death **です。** komatta nā ... kore wa desu  
I'm in trouble this is

• The famous novelist was killed in a traffic accident three years ago.  
**3年前に 有名な 小説家 が 車の 事故 で** san-nen mae ni yūme na shōsetsuka ga kuruma no jiko de ② passed away  
tree years ago famous novelist car accident

• I worked as hard as I could and was able to pay off my debts at last!  
③ with all one's might **で 働いて 借金を やっと 返しました。** de hataraitte yatto shakkin o kaeshimashita  
by working at last debt pay back

• Although I ran desperately, I didn't make it on time.  
④ desperately **走りましたが、間に合いませんでした。** hashirimashita ga maniaimasendeshita  
run but not be on time

• There are many dead fish in the pond. They may have been killed by agricultural chemicals.  
**魚 が 池で たくさん** ⑤ dead (can be seen) sakana ga ike de takusan  
fish pond many

**多分 農薬 が 原因 でしょう。** tabun nōyaku ga genin deshō  
maybe agricultural chemicals cause I guess

Answers ① D) ② A) nakunarimashita ③ E) ④ C) ⑤ B) shindeimasu