

JP

JAPANESE LESSON

Family Members

Family Members — 家族 (かぞく)

Japanese has **two sets** of family words: *humble/plain* forms used when talking about your *own* family to others, and *polite/honorific* forms used when referring to *someone else's* family. Using the wrong set is one of the most common errors made by learners. The dialogues below show both in natural context.

PLAIN (OWN FAMILY) VS POLITE (SOMEONE ELSE'S FAMILY)

父 (ちち)	お父さん	father	母 (はは)	お母さん	mother
兄 (あに)	お兄さん	older brother	弟 (おとうと)	弟さん	younger brother
姉 (あね)	お姉さん	older sister	妹 (いもうと)	妹さん	younger sister
祖父 (そふ)	お爺さん	grandfather	祖母 (そぼ)	お婆さん	grandmother
息子 (むすこ)	息子さん	son	娘 (むすめ)	お嬢さん	daughter
夫 (おっと)	ご主人	husband	妻 (つま)	奥さん	wife

Dialogues — 会話 (かいわ)

1 · DO YOU HAVE SIBLINGS?

YAMADA

兄弟はいますか？

Kyōdai wa imasu ka?

Do you have any siblings?

KEIKO

はい、弟が一人います。

Hai, otōto ga hitori imasu.

Yes, I have one younger brother.

YAMADA

そうですか。弟さんは何歳ですか？

Sō desu ka. Otōto-san wa nansai desu ka?

Is that so? How old is your younger brother?

KEIKO

十五歳です。中学生です。

Jūgosai desu. Chūgakusei desu.

2 · ONLY CHILD

TANAKA

お姉さんやお兄さんはいますか？

Onēsan ya oniisan wa imasu ka?

Do you have any older sisters or brothers?

SARAH

いいえ、私は一人っ子です。

Iie, watashi wa hitorikko desu.

No, I'm an only child.

TANAKA

そうなんですね。寂しくないですか？

Sō nan desu ne. Sabishiku nai desu ka?

Is that so. Aren't you lonely?

SARAH

大丈夫です。友達がたくさんいますから。

He's fifteen. He's a middle school student.

Daijōbu desu. Tomodachi ga takusan imasu kara.

I'm fine. Because I have lots of friends.

3 · WHAT DOES YOUR FATHER DO?

KIMURA

お父さんはお仕事は何ですか？

Otōsan wa oshigoto wa nan desu ka?

What does your father do for work?

HIRO

父は先生です。高校で英語を教えています。

Chichi wa sensei desu. Kōkō de Eigo o oshiete imasu.

My father is a teacher. He teaches English at a high school.

KIMURA

すごいですね。お母さんは？

Sugoi desu ne. Okāsan wa?

That's impressive. And your mother?

HIRO

母は看護師です。病院で働いています。

Haha wa kangoshi desu. Byōin de hataraitte imasu.

My mother is a nurse. She works at a hospital.

4 · YOU LOOK LIKE YOUR MOTHER!

SATO

この写真はお母さんですか？とても似ていますね！

Kono shashin wa okāsan desu ka? Totemo nite imasu ne!

Is this your mother in the photo? You look very alike!

EMMA

そうですか？よく言われます。

Sō desu ka? Yoku iwaremasu.

Really? I'm often told that.

SATO

お父さんには似ていないですか？

Otōsan ni wa nite inai desu ka?

Don't you look like your father?

EMMA

性格は父に似ていると思います。

Seikaku wa chichi ni nite iru to omoimasu.

I think my personality takes after my father.

5 · HOW MANY IN YOUR FAMILY?

YUKI

家族は何人ですか？

Kazoku wa nannin desu ka?

How many people are in your family?

TOM

五人です。父、母、兄、姉、そして私です。

Gonin desu. Chichi, haha, ani, ane, soshite watashi desu.

Five people. My father, mother, older brother, older sister, and me.

YUKI

大家族ですね！にぎやかそう。

6 · GRANDPARENTS

ITO

お爺さんやお婆さんと一緒に住んでいますか？

Ojiisan ya obāsan to issho ni sunde imasu ka?

Do you live together with your grandparents?

LISA

祖父だけ一緒に住んでいます。祖母はもう亡くなりました。

Sofu dake issho ni sunde imasu. Sobo wa mō nakunarimashita.

Only my grandfather lives with us. My grandmother has already passed away.

ITO

Daikazoku desu ne! Nigiyaka sō.

You have a big family! Sounds lively.

TOM

はい、毎日うるさいですよ（笑）。

Hai, mainichi urusai desu yo (warau).

Yes, it's noisy every day (laughs).

そうですか。それは寂しいですね。

Sō desu ka. Sore wa sabishii desu ne.

I see. That must be lonely.

LISA

祖父はとても元気ですよ。七十八歳ですが、毎日散歩します。

Sofu wa totemo genki desu yo. Nanajūhassai desu ga, mainichi sanpo shimasu.

My grandfather is very healthy. He's 78 but walks every day.

7 · IS YOUR OLDER SISTER MARRIED?

NAKAMURA

お姉さんは結婚していますか？

Onēsan wa kekkon shite imasu ka?

Is your older sister married?

KEN

はい、去年結婚しました。子供も一人います。

Hai, kyonen kekkon shimashita. Kodomo mo hitori imasu.

Yes, she got married last year. She also has one child.

NAKAMURA

かわいいでしょうね。男の子ですか、女の子ですか？

Kawaii deshō ne. Otokonoko desu ka, onnanoko desu ka?

They must be adorable. Is it a boy or a girl?

KEN

女の子です。もうすぐ二歳になります。

Onnanoko desu. Mōsugu nisai ni narimasu.

A girl. She's turning two years old soon.

8 · OLDER OR YOUNGER?

HAYASHI

お兄さんがいると言っていましたね。年上ですか？

Oniisan ga iru to itte imashita ne. Toshiue desu ka?

You mentioned you have a brother. He's older than you?

ANNA

はい、兄は私より三歳年上です。

Hai, ani wa watashi yori sansai toshiue desu.

Yes, my older brother is three years older than me.

HAYASHI

妹さんや弟さんもいますか？

Imōto-san ya otōto-san mo imasu ka?

Do you also have a younger sister or brother?

ANNA

妹が一人います。私より五歳年下です。

Imōto ga hitori imasu. Watashi yori gosai toshishita desu.

I have one younger sister. She's five years younger than me.

9 · DOES YOUR WIFE WORK?

OGAWA

奥さんはお仕事をされていますか？

Okusan wa oshigoto o sarete imasu ka?

10 · ARE YOU THE OLDEST?

KOBAYASHI

三人兄弟の中で一番上ですか？

Sannin kyōdai no naka de ichiban ue desu ka?

Is your wife working?

MIKE

はい、妻は会社員です。IT企業に勤めています。

Hai, tsuma wa kaishain desu. IT kigyō ni tsutomete imasu.

Yes, my wife is a company employee. She works at an IT firm.

OGAWA

お子さんはいらっしゃいますか？

Okosan wa irasshaimasu ka?

Do you have children?

MIKE

まだいません。でも将来は子供が欲しいです。

Mada imasen. Demo shōrai wa kodomo ga hoshii desu.

Not yet. But I'd like children in the future.

Are you the oldest among three siblings?

MIA

いいえ、私は真ん中です。姉が一人、弟が一人います。

lie, watashi wa mannaka desu. Ane ga hitori, otōto ga hitori imasu.

No, I'm in the middle. I have one older sister and one younger brother.

KOBAYASHI

お姉さんはいくつ年上ですか？

Onēsan wa ikutsu toshiue desu ka?

How many years older is your older sister?

MIA

二歳上です。とても仲がいいですよ。

Futasai ue desu. Totemo naka ga ii desu yo.

She's two years older. We get along very well.

11 · WHERE DO YOUR PARENTS LIVE?

WATANABE

ご両親はどこに住んでいますか？

Goryōshin wa doko ni sunde imasu ka?

Where do your parents live?

DAN

父と母は大阪に住んでいます。私は東京で一人暮らしです。

Chichi to haha wa Ōsaka ni sunde imasu. Watashi wa Tōkyō de hitoriguarashi desu.

My father and mother live in Osaka. I live alone in Tokyo.

WATANABE

よく会いに帰りますか？

Yoku ai ni kaerimasu ka?

Do you go back to see them often?

DAN

お盆とお正月には帰ります。それ以外はあまり帰れません。

12 · DO YOU HAVE CHILDREN?

SUZUKI

お子さんはいますか？

Okosan wa imasu ka?

Do you have children?

AMY

はい、娘が一人います。今年、小学校に入りました。

Hai, musume ga hitori imasu. Kotoshi, shōgakkō ni hairimashita.

Yes, I have one daughter. She started elementary school this year.

SUZUKI

もう一人欲しいですか？

Mō hitori hoshii desu ka?

Would you like another child?

AMY

できれば息子も欲しいですね。

Dekireba musuko mo hoshii desu ne.

If possible, I'd love a son too.

Obon to Oshōgatsu ni wa kaerimasu. Sore igai wa amari kaeremasen.

I go back for Obon and New Year. Other than that, I can't go back much.

13 · STRICT OR KIND PARENTS?

MATSUMOTO

ご両親は厳しいですか？

Goryōshin wa kibishii desu ka?

Are your parents strict?

JUN

父は厳しいですが、母はとても優しいです。

Chichi wa kibishii desu ga, haha wa totemo yasashii desu.

My father is strict, but my mother is very kind.

MATSUMOTO

どちらが好きですか？（冗談です）

Dochira ga suki desu ka? (Jōdan desu)

Which do you prefer? (Just kidding)

JUN

両方好きですよ！でも、やっぱり母の料理が一番です。

Ryōhō suki desu yo! Demo, yappari haha no ryōri ga ichiban desu.

I like both! But honestly, my mother's cooking is the best.

14 · HOW OLD IS YOUR FATHER?

INOUE

お父さんはいくつですか？

Otōsan wa oikutsu desu ka?

How old is your father?

KATE

父は今年で五十二歳になります。

Chichi wa kotoshi de gojūnisai ni narimasu.

My father turns 52 this year.

INOUE

お母さんは？

Okāsan wa?

And your mother?

KATE

母は四十九歳です。父より三歳年下です。

Haha wa yonjūkyūsai desu. Chichi yori sansai toshishita desu.

My mother is 49. She's three years younger than my father.

15 · GRANDMOTHER'S COOKING

FUJII

祖母の手料理がとても好きです。

Sobo no teryōri ga totemo suki desu.

I really love my grandmother's home cooking.

REN

何が得意ですか、お婆さんは？

Nani ga tokui desu ka, obāsan wa?

What is she good at making?

FUJII

16 · MEETING AT THE STATION

TAKEUCHI

あの方はどなたですか？

Ano kata wa donata desu ka?

Who is that person over there?

AOI

私の父です。今日、駅まで迎えに来てくれました。

Watashi no chichi desu. Kyō, eki made mukae ni kite kuremashita.

肉じゃがとみそ汁が最高です。

Nikujaga to misoshiru ga saikō desu.

Her nikujaga and miso soup are the best.

REN

いいですね。私の祖母も料理上手ですよ。

ii desu ne. Watashi no sobo mo ryōri jōzu desu yo.

That's great. My grandmother is also a good cook.

That's my father. He came to pick me up at the station today.

TAKEUCHI

優しいお父さんですね。ご紹介していただけますか？

Yasashii otōsan desu ne. Goshōkai shite itadakemasu ka?

What a kind father. Could you introduce me?

AOI

もちろんです。父、こちらは私の友達の竹内さんです。

Mochiron desu. Chichi, kochira wa watashi no tomodachi no Takeuchi-san desu.

Of course. Dad, this is my friend Takeuchi-san.

17 · DOES YOUR SON LIKE ANIME?

SAITO

息子さんはアニメが好きですか？

Musukosan wa anime ga suki desu ka?

Does your son like anime?

NICK

大好きです！毎日見えています。

Daisuki desu! Mainichi mite imasu.

He loves it! He watches it every day.

SAITO

何歳ですか？

Nansai desu ka?

How old is he?

NICK

八歳です。子供の頃から日本文化が大好きで、私もびっくりしています。

Hassai desu. Kodomo no koro kara Nihon bunka ga daisuki de, watashi mo bikkuri shite imasu.

He's eight. He's loved Japanese culture since he was little — I'm surprised myself.

18 · ARE YOUR PARENTS STRICT?

KATO

親は門限がありますか？

Oya wa mongen ga arimasu ka?

Do your parents have a curfew for you?

YUNA

母だけ厳しいです。夜十時までに帰らないといけません。

Haha dake kibishii desu. Yoru jūji made ni kaeranaito ikemasen.

Only my mother is strict. I have to be home by 10pm.

KATO

お父さんは？

Otōsan wa?

And your father?

YUNA

父はあまり気にしません。「楽しんでこい」と言います。

Chichi wa amari ki ni shimasen. "Tanoshinde koi" to iimasu.

My father doesn't mind much. He says "go and enjoy yourself".

19 · TWINS

YAMAMOTO

あの二人はとても似ていますね。双子ですか？

Ano futari wa totemo nite imasu ne. Futago desu ka?

Those two look very alike. Are they twins?

BEN

はい、私の弟と妹です。二人とも双子です。

Hai, watashi no otōto to imōto desu. Futari tomo futago desu.

Yes, those are my younger brother and sister.

They are twins.

YAMAMOTO

すごい！あなたは何番目ですか？

Sugoi! Anata wa nanbanme desu ka?

Amazing! Which number are you?

BEN

私が一番上の兄です。双子は私より五歳年下です。

Watashi ga ichiban ue no ani desu. Futago wa watashi yori gosai toshishita desu.

I'm the oldest. The twins are five years younger than me.

20 · OLDER BROTHER IN TOKYO

NAKATA

ご家族はみんな同じ町に住んでいますか？

Gokazoku wa minna onaji machi ni sunde imasu ka?

Does your whole family live in the same town?

SARA

いいえ、兄だけ東京に住んでいます。仕事のためです。

lie, ani dake Tōkyō ni sunde imasu. Shigoto no tame desu.

No, only my older brother lives in Tokyo. For work reasons.

NAKATA

会いに行くことはありますか？

Ai ni iku koto wa arimasu ka?

Do you ever go to visit him?

SARA

年に一、二回行きます。兄のマンションに泊まります。

Nen ni ichi, nikai ikimasu. Ani no manshon ni tomarimasu.

I go once or twice a year. I stay at my brother's apartment.

21 · FAMILY PHOTO

ENDO

これは家族写真ですか？素敵ですね。

Kore wa kazoku shashin desu ka? Suteki desu ne.

Is this a family photo? How lovely.

HANA

はい。左から父、母、私、姉、弟の順です。

Hai. Hidari kara chichi, haha, watashi, ane, otōto no jun desu.

Yes. From the left it's father, mother, me, older sister, younger brother in that order.

ENDO

お姉さんはあなたに似ていますね。

22 · CHILDREN AT SCHOOL

SHIMIZU

お子さんたちは今何年生ですか？

Okosantachi wa ima nannensei desu ka?

What school year are your children in now?

LEO

息子は小学校三年生で、娘は一年生です。

Musuko wa shōgakkō sannensei de, musume wa ichinensei desu.

My son is in third grade of elementary school, and my daughter is in first grade.

SHIMIZU

二人とも同じ学校ですか？

Onēsan wa anata ni nite imasu ne.

Your older sister looks like you.

HANA

よく言われます！でも性格は全然違います（笑）。

Yoku iwaremasu! Demo seikaku wa zenzen chigaimasu (warau).

We're often told that! But our personalities are completely different (laughs).

Futari tomo onaji gakkō desu ka?

Are they both at the same school?

LEO

はい、家から歩いて十分の小学校に通っています。

Hai, ie kara aruite juppun no shōgakkō ni kayotte imasu.

Yes, they attend an elementary school ten minutes' walk from home.

23 · WHO DO YOU TAKE AFTER?

MORI

家族の中で誰に一番似ていると思いますか？

Kazoku no naka de dare ni ichiban nite iru to omoimasu ka?

Who in your family do you think you resemble the most?

CHLOE

顔は母に似ていますが、性格は父に似ています。

Kao wa haha ni nite imasu ga, seikaku wa chichi ni nite imasu.

My face takes after my mother, but my personality takes after my father.

MORI

お父さんはどんな性格ですか？

Otōsan wa donna seikaku desu ka?

What kind of personality does your father have?

CHLOE

明るくて、おっちょこちょいです。私も同じです（笑）。

Akarukute, occhokochoi desu. Watashi mo onaji desu (warau).

Cheerful and a bit scatterbrained. Same as me (laughs).

24 · INTRODUCING FAMILY AT A PARTY

FUKUDA

皆さん、こちらは私の家族です。父の福田一郎、母の福田花子です。

Minasan, kochira wa watashi no kazoku desu. Chichi no Fukuda Ichirō, haha no Fukuda Hanako desu.

Everyone, this is my family. This is my father Fukuda Ichirō and my mother Fukuda Hanako.

GUEST

はじめまして。娘さんによく似ていらっしゃいますね。

Hajimemashite. Musumesan ni yoku nite irasshaimasu ne.

Pleased to meet you. You look just like your daughter.

FATHER

ありがとうございます。娘が大変お世話になっております。

Arigatō gozaimasu. Musume ga taihen osewa ni natte orimasu.

Thank you. My daughter has been in your care — we're very grateful.

RIN

父も母も、今日来られてとても嬉しかったです。

Chichi mo haha mo, kyō korarete totemo ureshisō deshita.

Both my father and mother seemed really happy they could come today.

Vocabulary — 語彙 (ごい)

#	JAPANESE	READING	ROMAJI	ENGLISH	TYPE
OWN FAMILY — PLAIN/HUMBLE FORMS (USE WHEN TALKING ABOUT YOUR OWN FAMILY)					
1	父	ちち	chichi	My father	NOUN
2	母	はは	haha	My mother	NOUN
3	兄	あに	ani	My older brother	NOUN
4	弟	おとうと	otōto	My younger brother	NOUN
5	姉	あね	ane	My older sister	NOUN
6	妹	いもうと	imōto	My younger sister	NOUN
7	息子	むすこ	musuko	My son	NOUN
8	娘	むすめ	musume	My daughter	NOUN
9	祖父	そふ	sofu	My grandfather	NOUN
10	祖母	そぼ	sobo	My grandmother	NOUN
11	夫	おっと	otto	My husband	NOUN
12	妻	つま	tsuma	My wife	NOUN
OTHERS' FAMILY — POLITE/HONORIFIC FORMS (USE WHEN TALKING ABOUT SOMEONE ELSE'S FAMILY)					
13	お父さん	おとうさん	otōsan	Father (polite — others')	NOUN
14	お母さん	おかあさん	okāsan	Mother (polite — others')	NOUN
15	お兄さん	おにいさん	oniisan	Older brother (polite)	NOUN
16	弟さん	おとうとさん	otōto-san	Younger brother (polite)	NOUN
17	お姉さん	おねえさん	onēsan	Older sister (polite)	NOUN
18	妹さん	いもうとさん	imōto-san	Younger sister (polite)	NOUN

#	JAPANESE	READING	ROMAJI	ENGLISH	TYPE
19	息子さん	むすこさん	<i>musuko-san</i>	Son (polite — others')	NOUN
20	お嬢さん	おじょうさん	<i>ojōsan</i>	Daughter (polite — others')	NOUN
21	お爺さん	おじいさん	<i>ojiisan</i>	Grandfather (polite)	NOUN
22	お婆さん	おばあさん	<i>obāsan</i>	Grandmother (polite)	NOUN
23	ご主人	ごしゅじん	<i>goshujin</i>	Husband (polite — others')	NOUN
24	奥さん	おくさん	<i>okusan</i>	Wife (polite — others')	NOUN
GENERAL FAMILY WORDS					
25	家族	かぞく	<i>kazoku</i>	Family	NOUN
26	兄弟	きょうだい	<i>kyōdai</i>	Siblings (brothers and sisters)	NOUN
27	子供	こども	<i>kodomo</i>	Child / children	NOUN
28	両親	りょうしん	<i>ryōshin</i>	Parents (both together)	NOUN
29	一人っ子	ひとりっこ	<i>hitorikko</i>	Only child	NOUN
30	双子	ふたご	<i>futago</i>	Twins	NOUN
31	年上	としうえ	<i>toshiue</i>	Older (in age)	ADJ
32	年下	としした	<i>toshishita</i>	Younger (in age)	ADJ
USEFUL VERBS & EXPRESSIONS					
33	います	います	<i>imasu</i>	To exist / to have (people, animals)	VERB
34	似ています	にています	<i>nite imasu</i>	To resemble / to look alike	VERB
35	住んでいます	すんでいます	<i>sunde imasu</i>	To be living / to reside	VERB

#	JAPANESE	READING	ROMAJI	ENGLISH	TYPE
36	紹介します	しょうかいしま す	shōkai shimasu	To introduce	VERB
37	結婚してい ます	けっこんしてい ます	kekkon shite imasu	To be married	VERB
38	何人家族	なんにんかぞく	nannin kazoku	How many people in the family	EXPR
39	～より～歳 上		~ yori ~ sai ue	~ years older than ~	EXPR
40	～より～歳 下		~ yori ~ sai shita	~ years younger than ~	EXPR

REAL JAPANESE TIP — THE REGISTER TRAP

The single biggest mistake learners make with family vocabulary is mixing up the two registers. **Never refer to your own family using the polite forms** when speaking to someone outside the family. Saying 「お父さんは先生です」 about your own father sounds as odd in Japanese as saying "my honoured father is a teacher" in English. Use 「父は先生です」 — plain form for your own family, always.

Equally, **never refer to someone else's family with the plain forms**. Asking 「弟は何歳ですか？」 about someone else's younger brother is blunt to the point of rudeness. Use 「弟さんは何歳ですか？」 — the *-san* on the plain form is your signal you're talking about *their* family member.

The older/younger distinction is non-negotiable. Japanese has no single word for "sibling" that carries age — 兄弟 (きょうだい) covers siblings collectively, but the moment you name a specific sibling you must specify older (兄／姉) or younger (弟／妹). Getting this wrong is noticeably strange to native speakers. When in doubt, ask 「年上ですか、年下ですか？」 — are they older or younger?

Kanji from today's pages used in this lesson: 父 (ちち／おとうさん), 母 (はは／おかあさん), 子供 (こども), 子 (こ) — you have now seen these in real conversational context. Each time you read 父 in dialogue 3, 11, 16 or 24, you're reinforcing the same character you learned stroke-by-stroke.