Basic Grammatical Terms and Concepts

1.1 Subject and Predicate

Each sentence in classical Japanese is a relationship between the subject and the predicate, in which the predicate (述語) makes a statement about the subject (主語). The subject usually is a nominal (such as a noun or pronoun), and the predicate usually is a verb, an adjective, an adjectival verb, or a copula. The following are three basic subject + predicate relationships:

1. **Subject + verb.** The verb indicates the action of the subject.

   ほととじす鳴く. *Hototogisu naku.*

   The cuckoo (*hototogisu*) sings (*naku*). *(Makura, sec. 99, NKBT 19:149)*

2. **Subject + adjective.** The adjective describes the state of the subject.

   峯高し. *Mine takashi.*

   The peak (*mine*) is high (*takashi*). *(Kaidōki, SNKBT 51:108)*

3. **Subject + copula.** The copula, which directly follows a noun, usually identifies the subject.

   我れは 龍王なり. *Ware wa ryūō nari.*

   I (*ware*) am (*nari*) the dragon king (*ryūō*). *(Konjaku, vol. 5, NKBT 22:371)* *(Here the copula is the declarative verb nari, “to be,” which equates “I” with the “dragon king.”)*

   In classical Japanese, the subject is often implied rather than stated.

1.2 Sentence Structure

1. **Simple sentence.** The subject and predicate appear only once.

   潮満ちぬ. *Shio michi-nu.*

   The tide (*shio*) has come in (*michi-nu*). *(Tosa, NKBT 20:30)*
2. Parallel and complex sentences. The subject and predicate appear more than once, in a parallel or subordinate relationship.

父はなほびとて。母なむ藤原なりける。Chichi wa naobito ni-te, haha namu Fujiwara nari-keru.

The father (chichi) was an ordinary person (naobito), and the mother (haha) was a Fujiwara. (Ise, sec. 10, NKBT 9:118)

雨など降るもをかし。AME NADO FUURI mo okashi.

The falling (furu) of the rain (ame) is wonderful (okashi). (Makura, sec. 1, NKBT 19:43)

人の心すなばならぬ。偽りなきにしもあらず。HITO NO KOKORO SUNAO NARA-NE-BA, itsuwarî naki ni shi mo ara-zu.

Since (ba) the heart (kokoro) of a person is not frank (sunao), there is no (ara-zu) absence (naki) of falseness (itsuwarî). (Tsurezure, sec. 85, NKBT 30:158)

1.3 Autonomous Words and Dependent Forms

All words in classical Japanese belong to one of two broad categories: autonomous words (自立語) and dependent forms (付属語). Autonomous words can stand alone as independent words, but dependent forms cannot.

雪も降らず。Yuki mo fura-zu.

The snow (yuki) also (mo) does not fall (fura-zu). (Sarashina, NKBT 20:515)

In this sentence, the subject, yuki (snow), and the verb, furu (to fall), are autonomous words. But because the particle, mo (too), and the auxiliary verb, zu (which follows the stem of the verb furu and negates it), do not make sense by themselves, they are called dependent forms.

The function of these dependent forms (such as particles and auxiliary verbs) is to connect autonomous words, to modify them, and to reveal the judgment of the speaker.
1.4 Inflected and Noninflected Forms

Two general grammatical categories are inflected forms (用言) and noninflected forms. Inflected forms inflect, or conjugate, thereby altering the meaning of the word.

書かず。Kaka-zu.

"S/he does not write." (The mizenkei, or imperfective form, of the verb kaku, “to write,” followed by the negative auxiliary verb zu.)

書きで...Kaki-te...

“Writing...” (The ren’yōkei, or continuative form, of the verb kaku, “to write,” followed by the conjunctive particle te.)

書き Kake!

“Write!” (The verb kaku, “to write,” in the meireikei, or imperative form.)

Verbs (動詞), adjectives (形容詞), adjectival verbs (形容動詞), and auxiliary verbs (助動詞) are inflected forms. Of these inflected forms, verbs, adjectives, and adjectival verbs are autonomous words, but auxiliary verbs are dependent forms because they cannot stand alone.

Nouns (名詞), pronouns (代名詞), adverbs (副詞), conjunctions (接続詞), attributive words (連体詞), interjections (感動詞), and particles (助詞) are noninflected forms. Of these noninflected forms, nouns, pronouns, adverbs, conjunctions, attributive words, and interjections are autonomous words, but particles are dependent forms. Non-inflected forms that can function as the subject of a sentence (nouns and pronouns) are referred to as nominals (名詞).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inflected forms</th>
<th>Autonomous words</th>
<th>Verbs</th>
<th>高 (high)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adjectives</td>
<td>聞く (to write)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adjectival verbs</td>
<td>静か (quiet)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent forms</td>
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<td>ず (negation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## 1.5 Basic Grammatical Terms and Concepts

### Noninflected forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Autonomous words</th>
<th>Nouns</th>
<th>はる (mountain)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pronouns</td>
<td>そこ (there)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverbs</td>
<td>いと (very)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conjunctions</td>
<td>しかれど (but)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interjections</td>
<td>ああ (my!)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attributive words</td>
<td>いわゆる (so-called)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Dependent forms  | Particles      | に (at)         |

### 1.5 Inflected Autonomous Words

1. **Verbs** (動詞) are inflected autonomous words that describe an action or a process. (Except for **rahen** irregular verbs such as **ari**, “to be,” all verbs in the **しゅうしゅうけい**, or final form, end with the vowel **u**.) For example, 行く **yuku** (to go), 放つ **hanatsu** (to let go).

2. **Adjectives** (形容詞) are inflected autonomous words that describe a condition, emotion, or character. (All adjectives in the **しゅうしゅうけい**, or final form, end with **shi**.) For example, 高し **takashi** (tall), 美し **utsukushi** (adorable).

3. **Adjectival verbs** (形容動詞) are inflected autonomous words that also describe a condition, emotion, or character. (The **しゅうしゅうけい**, or final form, ends with one of the copular auxiliary verbs **tari** or **nari**. Adjectival verbs often appear in the **れんやついけい**, or continuative form, in which they function like adverbs and modify a verb.) For example, 静かに **shizuka-nari** (quiet), 虫々に **dōō-tari** (dignified).

### 1.6 Inflected Dependent Forms

1. **Auxiliary verbs** (助動詞) are inflected dependent forms that mainly follow verbs, adjectives, and adjectival verbs, whose meaning they modify. (Some auxiliary verbs, such as the copular **nari**, also follow nominals.) Examples of auxiliary verbs are **ki** (recollective), **mu** (intentional/speculative), and **zu** (negative).

   はらざ. **Ame fura-ZU.**
The rain (ame) does not fall (fura-zu). (Tosa, NKBT 20:38) (Fura is the mizenkei, or imperfect form, of the verb furu, “to fall,” and zu is a negative auxiliary verb indicating that the “rain does not fall.”)

1.7 Noninflected Dependent Forms

1. **Particles** (助詞) such as mo, ga, ni, and te are noninflected dependent forms indicating the relationship between autonomous words.

吉野の山 Yoshino NO yama

“the mountain of Yoshino”

1.8 Noninflected Autonomous Words

1. **Nouns** (名詞) and pronouns (代名詞) are nominals, or noninflected autonomous words, which can function as the subject of a sentence. They can also be the object of a transitive verb. For example, 山 (mountain), 月 (moon).

かきつばたいとおもしろく咲きたり. Kakitsubata ITO omoshiroku saki-tari.

The irises (kakitsubata) were blooming (saki-tari) very (ito) beautifully (omoshiroku). (Ise, sec. 9, NKBT 9:116) (Here the adverb ito [very] modifies the adjective omoshiroshi [beautiful].)

2. **Adverbs** (副詞) are noninflected autonomous words that modify a verb, adjective, or adjectival verb. For example, いと (very), やや (gradually), しばらく (for a while).

3. **Conjunctions** (接続詞) are noninflected autonomous words connecting one clause to another. In contrast to conjunctive particles (such as te or do), which are dependent forms and cannot stand alone, conjunctions are autonomous words. For example, しかも (furthermore), それほど (but).

ゆく河の流れは絶えずして, しかもとの水にあらず. Yuku kawa no nagare wa tae-zu-shite, SHIKAMO moto no mizu ni ara-zu.

The flow (nagare) of the passing river (yuku kawa) is unending (tae-zu) and at the same time (shite; furthermore (shikamo), it is not the original water (moto no mizu). (Hōjōki, NKBT 30:23)
4. Interjections are noninflected autonomous words that express emotion, draw the attention of the listener, or respond to a question. For example, ああ (ah), あなた (my!).

あなた, うらやまし. ANA urayamashi.

My! (Ana) How enviable. (Tsurezure, sec. 167, NKBT 30:225)

5. Attributive words are noninflected autonomous words that modify nominals. They differ from adjectives and verbs in that they are not conjugated. For example, ある (a certain), あらゆる (every), いわゆる (so-called).

いはゆる折り琴, 継縦琴これなり. IWAYURI origoto, tsugi-biwa kore nari.

This was the so-called folding koto (iwayuru origoto) and portable lute (tsugi-biwa). (Hōjōki, sec. 3, NKBT 30:37)

1.9 Modifying Words

A modifying word directly modifies or describes the following word or phrase. Some modifying words (verbs, adjectives, and adjectival verbs) are inflected, and some (attributive words and adverbs) are not inflected. An attributive word modifies a nominal, and an adverb modifies an inflected form.

Modifying words are divided into two general categories: continuative modifying words and attributive modifying words. Attributive (rentaikei) modifying words modify nominals. In the following example, the adjective fukashi (deep), in the rentaikei, or attributive form, modifies the noun mizu, “water.”

繊き水は涼しきなし. FUKAKI mizu wa suzushige nashi.

Deep (fukaki) water (mizu) has no (nashi) sense of coolness (suzushige). (Tsurezure, sec. 55, NKBT 30:135)

Continuative (ren'yōkei) modifying words modify inflected forms. In the following example, the adverb ito (very) modifies the adjectival verb aware-nari (moving).

寺のさまも, いとあはれなり. Tera no sama mo, ITO aware nari.
The appearance (*sama*) of the temple (*tera*) is very (*ito*) moving (*aware nari*).  (*Genji,* Wakamurasaki, NKBT 14: 178)

Nonmodifying words (interjections and conjunctions) cannot modify nominals or inflected forms.

1.10 Parts of Speech

The eleven parts of speech (*DA* 产地相) just described belong to one of three fundamental categories: (1) autonomous words / dependent forms, (2) inflected forms / noninflected forms, or (3) modifying words / nonmodifying words. These categories are related as follows:
Orthography and Pronunciation

The writing system for classical Japanese, now called the historical kana system (歴史的仮名遣い), differs from the modern kana system (現代仮名遣い), which is used in contemporary Japanese. The historical kana system was used until the writing reform initiated by the Japanese government in 1946, shortly after World War II.

2.1 Table of Fifty Sounds

The historical kana system is summarized in the table of fifty sounds (五 十 音図), which was established in the Heian period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE OF FIFTY SOUNDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-row</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k-row</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s-row</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t-row</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n-row</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h-row</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m-row</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y-row</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r-row</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w-row</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table of fifty sounds consists of ten “rows” (行)—a-row, k-row, s-row, and so on—with five vowels each: a, i, u, e, and o. With the exception of the first row, each row starts with a different consonant: k, s, t, n, h, m, y, r, and w. The i and the e vowels in the y-row are the same as the i and e vowel grades in the a-row, and the u-vowel grade in the w-row is the same as the u-vowel grade in the a-row. Accordingly, there actually are forty-seven different sounds in the fifty-sounds table. Today, two of those kana, the わ
(wi or i) and the る (we or e) in the w-row, are no longer in use, leaving forty-five different sounds in modern Japanese.

2.2 Voiced Sounds

In modern Japanese the surname 山崎 can be read at least two different ways, as Yamazaki or as Yamasaki. The sa is referred to as seion (清音), or “clear sound,” as opposed to za, which is referred to as dakuon (濁音), or “voiced sound.” This distinction between clear and voiced sounds, which existed from as early as the Nara period, is not made in the table of fifty sounds. Therefore, the following “voiced” kana are needed to supplement the fifty-sounds table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>g-row</th>
<th>が</th>
<th>ぎ</th>
<th>ぐ</th>
<th>げ</th>
<th>ご</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>z-row</td>
<td>ざ</td>
<td>じ</td>
<td>ず</td>
<td>ぜ</td>
<td>ぞ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d-row</td>
<td>だ</td>
<td>ぢ</td>
<td>づ</td>
<td>で</td>
<td>ど</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b-row</td>
<td>ば</td>
<td>び</td>
<td>ぶ</td>
<td>べ</td>
<td>ぼ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that n-row, m-row, y-row, r-row, and w-row kana never have voiced sounds.

In addition to the voiced sound, there is a “half-voiced sound,” or han-dakuon (半濁音), found in the h-row. The half-voiced sound is marked by a small circle in the upper right-hand corner.

| p-row | ぱ | ぴ | ぷ | ぺ | ぽ |

The voiced s-row じ and the voiced t-row ぢ originally were pronounced differently, but by the Muromachi period they overlapped, as did the voiced s-row ず and the voiced t-row づ. Today, therefore, the historical kana ぢ and づ are read the same way as じ and ず are, respectively. For example, the classical Japanese adverb いづく (izuku, where) becomes いづく (izuku, where) in modern Japanese.

2.3 Sound Changes

A new sound that emerged in the Heian period and that does not appear in the fifty-sounds table is the n (ん), or “nasalized sound,” hatsuon (樎音). The n is used, for
example, when a medial or final \textit{mu} is shortened to \textit{n}. For example, \textit{yomi-te} \textit{(よみて)} became \textit{yon-de} \textit{(よんで)}. For more on sound changes \textit{(onbin)}, see appendix 2.

2.4 Pronouncing Historical \textit{kana}
For modern readers, the main adjustments in the pronunciation of historical \textit{kana} are in \textit{w}-row and \textit{h}-row \textit{kana}.

2.4.1 \textit{w}-Row Pronunciation

1. In modern Japanese, \textit{o} (or \textit{wo, を}) is used only for writing the case particle を, but in classical Japanese it also appears as an interjectory particle and a conjunctive particle and is widely used in multisyllabic words. This を is now pronounced the same as the modern Japanese お \textit{(o)}.

   をとこ (男, otoko, man), をんな (女, onna, woman), をがむ (押む, ogamu, to pray), をすす (申しす, mōsu, to speak)

2. In modern Japanese, the \textit{kana} ろ (\textit{ro}) and ろ (\textit{re}) are pronounced い \textit{(i)} and え \textit{(e)}.

   額 (inaka, country), 進る (mairu, to go), 声 (koe, voice), 笑う (emu, to smile)

2.4.2 \textit{h}-Row Pronunciation

\textit{H}-row は, ひ, ふ, へ, へ are pronounced either \textit{ha}, \textit{hi}, \textit{hu} (\textit{fu}), \textit{he}, \textit{ho}, or \textit{wa}, \textit{i}, \textit{u}, \textit{e}, \textit{o}, depending on their position in a word.

1. When an \textit{h}-row \textit{kana} appears at the beginning of a word, it is pronounced the same as in modern Japanese.

   はな (鼻, nose) is pronounced \textit{kana}; ふみ (文, letter) is pronounced \textit{fumi}.

2. When an \textit{h}-row \textit{kana} appears in the middle or at the end of a word, it is pronounced \textit{wa}, \textit{i}, \textit{u}, \textit{e}, or \textit{o}.

   川 (river) is pronounced かわ (kawa); 夕 (evening) is pronounced よい (yoi);
   言へば (when one says) is pronounced 言えば (ieba); 棚 (hut) is pronounced
2.5 Pronouncing Long Sounds

A “long sound” (長音) is a vowel lengthened by adding う (u) or ふ (hu). Long sounds probably did not exist in the ancient period and probably are the result of the influence of Chinese graphs or compounds. The following are the basic rules for the pronunciation of these long sounds in historical kana:

2.5.1 a-Vowels

When an a-vowel (as in ta, ha, ma, wa, etc.) is followed by either u or hu, it is read as おう (ō).

- 尊し (honorable) is pronounced とうとし (tōtoshi).
- 更衣 (imperial consort) is pronounced こうい (kōi).

2.5.2 i-Vowels

When an i-vowel (as in hi, ri, shi, etc.) is followed by u or hu, it is pronounced ゆう (yū).

- 冬 (a province in Kyūshū) is pronounced ひゅうが (Hyūga).
- 急なり (sudden) is pronounced きゅうなり (kyū-nari).
- 言ふ (to say) is pronounced ゆう (yū).

2.5.3 u-Vowels

When a u-vowel (as in ku, yu, etc.) is followed by u or hu, it is pronounced うう (ū).

- 食ふ (to eat) is pronounced くう (kū).
- 結ふ (to tie) is pronounced ゆう (yū).
2.5.4 e-Vowels

When an e-vowel (as in ke, te, he, etc.) is followed by u or hu, it is pronounced よう (yō).

今日は (today) is pronounced きょう (kyō).

要 (important part) is pronounced よう (yō).

蝶 (butterfly) is pronounced ちょう (chō).

2.5.5 o-Vowels

When an o-vowel (as in o, ko, etc.) is followed by either u or hu, it is pronounced おう (ō).

追い (to pursue) is pronounced おう (ō).

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Advanced Study and Reference

2.5.5A The Iroha Poem

Sometime between the middle and the late Heian period, someone composed the iroha-uta (伊吕波歌), iroha poem, which later became one of the models for the forty-seven-kana system. The poem has traditionally been attributed to Kūkai (774–835), the founder of Japanese Shingon Buddhism. The iroha poem uses forty-seven kana in a seven-five pattern without repeating any of them.

いろはにほへと ちりぬるを わかよたれそ つねならむ うゐのおくやま けふこえて あさきゆめみし りもせます.

If the kana are voiced (using dakuten) and characters are added, we get a five-seven syllabic imayō (popular) song.

色は句へど 散りぬるを 我が世話せ常ならむ 有為の奥山 今日越えて 浅き夢見に 言ひもせ

Iro wa nioe-do chiri-nuru o, waga yo tare zo tsune nara-mu. Ue no okuyama kyō koe-te, asaki yume mi-ji ei mo sezu.

Even if the colors (iro) (of the world) are brilliant (nioe-do), they end up fading (chiri-nuru)! In our world (wa ga yo), who is immortal (tsune-nara-mu)? (No
one.) Today, crossing over (koe-te) the distant mountain (okuyama) of illusion (ui), I do not intend to see (mi-ji) shallow (asaki) dreams (yume) or to be intoxicated (ei mo se-zu). (Nioe-do is the izenkei of the yodan verb niou, “to be brilliant,” and the conjunctive particle do. Chiri-nuru o is the ren'yōkei of the yodan verb chiru, “to scatter;” the rentaikei of the perfective auxiliary verb mu, and the interjectory particle o. Tsune nara-mu is the noun tsune, “permanence,” the mizenkei of the copular nari, and the rentaikei of the speculative auxiliary verb mu. Mi-ji is the mizenkei of the kami-ichidan verb miru, “to see;” and the shūshikei of the negative intentional auxiliary verb ji. Ei mo sezu is the ren'yōkei of the yodan verb eu, “to be intoxicated,” the bound particle mo, the mizenkei of the sahen verb su, and the shūshikei of the negative auxiliary verb zu.) Note that in the voiced version the iroha poem uses the w-row kana い (i), え (e), and お (o) for the same sounds as a-row kana い, え, and お.
3

Verbs

3.1 The Six Inflected Forms

Verbs, adjectives, adjectival verbs, and auxiliary verbs have six inflected forms: the mizenkei (imperfective form), ren'yōkei (continuative form), shūshikei (final form), rentaikei (attributive form), izenkei (perfective form), and meireikei (imperative form).

3.1.1 The Mizenkei (未然形), or Imperfective Form

The mizenkei (literally, "not-yet-realized") form generally indicates action that has not yet taken place. It is followed by an auxiliary verb of intention (ji, mu, muzu), conjecture (mashi), desire (mahoshi, namu), or negation (zu); by the conjunctive particle of hypothesis (ba); or by the final particles of desire (baya, namu). Because the negative zu often follows the mizenkei, it is sometimes called the negative form.

月なく、雪も降らず。Tsuki naku, yuki mo FURA-zu.

There is no (naku) moon (tsuki), and the snow (yuki) does not fall (fura-zu). (Sarasinha, NKBT 20:515) (Fura-zu is the mizenkei of the verb furu, "to fall," and the shūshikei of the negative auxiliary verb zu.)

3.1.2 The Ren'yōkei (連用形), or Continuative Form

The ren'yōkei (continuative) form indicates that the action or process expressed by the verb is either taking place or has already taken place. The ren'yōkei is often followed by an auxiliary verb (ki, keri, kemu, tsu, nu, and tari) that indicates that the action has already occurred or been carried out. The ren'yōkei also is followed by a conjunctive particle (te, tsutsu, nagara) indicating simultaneous or continuative action. For this reason it is sometimes called the conjunctive form.

雨まことに降りぬ。Ame makoto ni FURI-nu.

The rain truly (makoto ni) fell (furi-nu). (Makura, sec. 99, NKBT 19:151) (Furi-nu is the ren'yōkei of furu, "to fall," and the shūshikei of the auxiliary verb nu, which indicates the completion of action.)
3.1.3 The Shūshikei (終止形), or Final Form

The shūshikei (final) form marks the end of the sentence and indicates that the action is taking place in the present (except when marked by a temporal marker like mukashi, “long ago”) The shūshikei can also be followed by an auxiliary verb (beshi, meri, ramu, rashī, hearsay/suppositional nari) expressing speculation about the present.

いささかに雨降る. Isasaki-ni ame FURU.

The rain (ame) falls (furu) little by little (isasaki-ni). (Tosa, NKBT 20:38)

3.1.4 The Rentaikei (連体形), or Attributive Form

The rentaikei (attributive) form directly modifies a nominal (noun, pronoun) or an implied nominal.

雨まじへ雪降る夜. Ame majie yuki FURU yo.

An evening (yo) in which snow (yuki) falls (furu), mixed (majie) with rain (ame). (MYS, vol. 5, no. 892, NKBT 5:99)

3.1.5 The Izenkei (已然形), or Perfective Form

The izenkei (literally, “already-realized”) form generally indicates that an action has already taken place. It is often followed by the conjunctive particle ba (because, when) or the concessive particle do/domo.

あかつきより雨降れば... Akatsuki yori ame FURE-ba ...

Because rain (ame) had been falling (fure-ba) since (yori) early morning (akatsuki) ...
(Tosa, NKBT 20:38)

3.1.6 The Meireikei (命令形), or Imperative Form

The meireikei (imperative) form indicates a command. With some verbs it is customary to add the emphatic final particle yo.

降れ降れ, こ雪. FURE, FURE, koyuki.

Fall (fure)! Fall! Powdered snow (koyuki). (Tsurezure, sec. 181, NKBT 30:238)
3.2 Regular Verbs

Verbs (動詞) usually describe or explain an action. With the exception of the irregular rahen verb conjugation, all shūshikei (final) forms of the verb end with the vowel u. Of the nine verb conjugations in classical Japanese, five are regular and four (kahren, sahen, rahen, nahren) are irregular. The nine verb conjugations are

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regular conjugations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yodan 四段</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kami-ichidan 上一段</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shimo-ichidan 下一段</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kami-nidan 上二段</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shimo-nidan 下二段</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Irregular conjugations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kahren カ行</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sahen サ行</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rahen ラ行</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nahren ナ行</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The vowel grades are divided into upper grade (a, i) and lower grade (e, o), with u considered to be a middle or neutral grade. The verb conjugations are identified by the number of vowel grades (dan) and by whether the vowels appear in the lower grade or the upper grade.

The yodan (四段), the four-grade conjugation, has four different vowel grades (a, i, u, e).

The kami-ichidan (上一段), the upper one-grade conjugation, has one vowel grade (i) in the upper grade.

The kami-nidan (上二段), the upper two-grade conjugation, has two vowel grades (i and u), one of which is in the upper grade.

The shimo-ichidan (下一段), the lower one-grade conjugation, has one vowel grade (e) in the lower grade.
The shimo-nidan (下二段), the lower two-grade conjugation, has two vowel grades (u and e), one of which is in the lower grade.

3.2.1 Yodan Verbs

Yodan (四段) verbs, the four-grade conjugation, have four different vowel grades (a, i, u, e) in the stem.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yodan</th>
<th>MZ</th>
<th>RY</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>RT</th>
<th>IZ</th>
<th>MR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>摂ふ</td>
<td>a-grade</td>
<td>は</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>i-grade</td>
<td>ひ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>u-grade</td>
<td>ふ ふ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>e-grade</td>
<td>へ へ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An example is kiku (聞く, to listen).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stem</th>
<th>Stem</th>
<th>Frequently followed by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mizenkei</td>
<td>kika</td>
<td>きか</td>
<td>ず, む, ば</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ren'yōkei</td>
<td>kiki</td>
<td>きき</td>
<td>たり, て</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shūshikei</td>
<td>kiku</td>
<td>きく</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rentaikei</td>
<td>kiku</td>
<td>きく</td>
<td>こと, とき</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>izenkei</td>
<td>kike</td>
<td>きけ</td>
<td>ど, ども</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meireikei</td>
<td>kike</td>
<td>きけ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mizenkei: 聞かでなんありける. KIKA-de nan arikeru.

She would not listen (kika-de). (Ise, sec. 23, NKB 9:126) (Kika-de is the mizenkei of the yodan verb kiku, “to listen,” and the compound particle de, which combines the negative auxiliary verb zu and the conjunctive particle te. Nan is a sound change of namu, an emphatic bound particle.)

Ren'yōkei: この歌どもを, すこしよろしと, 聞きて ... Ko-no uta-domo o, sukoshi yoroshi to, KIKI-te ...
3.2 Verbs

I listened (kiki-te), thinking (to), "These (ko-no) songs (uta-domo) have some (sukoshi) merit (yoroshi)." (Tosa, NKBT 20:41) (Kiki-te is the ren’yōkei of kiku and the conjunctive particle te.)

**Shūshikei:** Natsu wa hototogisu o KIKU.

In the summer (natsu), I listen (kiku) to the cuckoo (hototogisu). (Hōjōki, NKBT 30:37) (Kiku is the shūshikei of kiku.)

**Rentaikei:** Naku shika no koe KIKU toki zo aki wa kanashiki.

When (toki) I hear (kiku) the voice (koe) of the crying deer (naku shika), autumn (aki) is sad (kanashiki). (KKS, Autumn, no. 215, NKBT 8:144) (Kiku toki is the rentaikei of kiku, modifying the nominal toki, “time.”)

**Izenkei:** Hototogisu naku koe KIKE-ba toki sugi-ni-keri.

When I heard (kike-ba) the call (koe) of the cuckoo (hototogisu) singing (naku), I felt that time (toki) had passed (sugi-ni-keri). (MYS, vol. 14, no. 3352, NKBT 6:409) (Kike-ba is the izenkei of kiku and the conjunctive particle ba, indicating time.)

**Meireikei:** Nanji, yoku KIKE.

Hey you (nanji), listen closely (yoku kike)! (Konjaku, vol. 2, NKBT 22:165) (Kike is the meireikei of kiku.)

Of all the conjugations, the yodan has by far the largest number of verbs.

3.2.2 Kami-ichidan Verbs

Kami-ichidan (上一段) verbs, the upper one-grade conjugation, have, in the stem, one vowel (i) in the upper grade.
Kami-ichidan

見る | MZ | RY | SS | RT | IZ | MR
--- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | ---
*Upper* | *a-grade* | み | みる | みる | みれ | みよ
*i-grade* | み | みる | みる | みれ | みよ
*Middle* | *u-grade*
*Lower* | *e-grade* | み | みる | みる | みれ | みよ
*e-grade*

An example is *miru* (見る, to see).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stem</th>
<th>Stem</th>
<th>Frequently followed by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MZ</td>
<td><em>mi</em></td>
<td>見ず, む, ば</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RY</td>
<td><em>mi</em></td>
<td>見たり, て</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td><em>miru</em></td>
<td>見る</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT</td>
<td><em>miru</em></td>
<td>見る こと, ときに</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IZ</td>
<td><em>mire</em></td>
<td>見れ ど, ども</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MR</td>
<td><em>miyo</em></td>
<td>見よ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Mizenkei*: 我等を見ること… Ware-ra o MI-n koto…

As for trying to look (mi-n) at us (warera) … (Tsurezure, sec. 194, NKBt 30:251) (Mizenkei is the *mizenkei* of miru, “to see,” and the rentaikei of the intentional auxiliary verb *mu*, which has undergone a sound change to *n*.)

*Ren'yōkei*: 月の見給ひそ. Tsuki na MI-tamai so.

Don't look (na mi-tamai so) at the moon (tsuki)! (Taketori, NKBt 9:59) (Na mi-tamai so is the negative adverb *na*, the *ren'yōkei* of miru, the honorific supplementary verb *tamai*, and the negative imperative final particle *so.*)

*Shūshikei*: 春は藤波を見る. Haru wa fuji-nami o MIRU.

In the spring (haru wa), we look at (miru) the waves (nami) of wisteria (fuji). (Hōjōki, NKBt 30:37) (Miru is in the shūshikei.)
Rentaikei: Ware asa-goto yū-goto ni MIRU take no naka ni...

The inside (naka) of the bamboo (take) that I look at (miru) every morning (asa-goto) and every evening (yū-goto) ... (Takatori, NKBT 9:29) (MIRU take is the rentaikei of miru, modifying take, "bamboo."

izenkei: Himegimi no kao o MIRE-ba...

When they (her parents) looked (mire-ba) at the face (kao) of the noble's daughter (himegimi) ... (Tsutsumi, Haizumi, NKBT 13:425) (MIRE-ba is the izenkei of miru and the conjunctive particle ba, together indicating temporal causality.)

Meireikei: Io to tori to no arisama o MIYO.

Look at (miyo) the appearance (arisama) of fish (io) and birds (tori) (Hōjōki, NKBT 30:43) (MIYO is the meireikei of miru.)

There are about ten verbs in the kami-ichidan category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>miru</th>
<th>みる</th>
<th>To see</th>
<th>iru</th>
<th>いる</th>
<th>To cast</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>niru</td>
<td>にる</td>
<td>To resemble</td>
<td>iru</td>
<td>いる</td>
<td>To sit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>niru</td>
<td>にる</td>
<td>To boil</td>
<td>mochiru</td>
<td>まちる</td>
<td>To use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hiru</td>
<td>ひる</td>
<td>To dry up</td>
<td>iru</td>
<td>いる</td>
<td>To lead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iru</td>
<td>いる</td>
<td>To shoot</td>
<td>kiru</td>
<td>きる</td>
<td>To wear</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These kami-ichidan verbs are used to create compound verbs like hiki-iru (to lead), kokoro-miru (to try), and kaeri-miru (to look back on).

3.2.3 Shimo-ichidan Verb

The one shimo-ichidan (下一段) verb, the lower one-grade conjugation, has one lower-grade vowel (e) in the stem.
This shimo-ichidan verb is 踢る (keru, to kick).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stem</th>
<th>Stem</th>
<th>Frequently followed by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MZ</td>
<td>ke</td>
<td>ず,む,ば</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RY</td>
<td>ke</td>
<td>たり,て</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td>keru</td>
<td>きる</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT</td>
<td>keru</td>
<td>こと,とき</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IZ</td>
<td>kere</td>
<td>えれ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MR</td>
<td>keyo</td>
<td>よ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_Mizenkei:_ かの典薬の助は擊られたりしを病にて死にけり。_Ka-no tenyaku no suke wa KE-rare-tari-shi o, yamai nite shi-ni-keri._

That (ka-no) assistant director (suke) of the Medical Ministry (tenyaku) was kicked (ke-rare-tari-shi), and he ended up dying (shi-ni-keri) of illness (yamai). (Ochikubo, vol. 4, NKBT 13:247) (Ke-rare-tari-shi is the mizenkei of the verb keru, “to kick,” the ren’yōkei of the passive auxiliary verb raru, the ren’yōkei of the durative auxiliary verb tari, and the rentaisei of the recollective auxiliary verb ki.)

_Ren’yōkei:_ 五郎さられ、腰踏みおられて、おめぎ叫ぶ物おはかりけり。_Kashira KE-wara-re, koshir fumi-ora-re-te, omeki-sakebu mono ōkari-keri._

There were many (ōkari-keri) who had their heads (kashira) kicked and split open (ke-wara-re-te), whose hips (koshi) were stomped on and broken (fumi-ora-re-te), and who screamed (omeki-sakebu). (Heike, vol. 5, Fujikawa, NKBT 32:374) (Ke-wara-re is
the ren'yōkei of keru, the mizenkei of waru, “to split open,” creating a compound verb, and the ren'yōkei of the passive auxiliary verb ru.)

Shūshikei: さと寄りて 一足ずつ蹴る. Sato yori-te issoku-zutsu KERU.

He quickly (sato) approached (yori-te) and kicked (keru) with each foot (issoku-zutsu). (Ochikubo, vol. 3, NKBT 13:164) (Keru is the shūshikei.)

Rentaikei: 『蹴を蹴る事か』 Mari o KERU koto ka.

"Do you mean (koto ka) to kick (keru) the football (mari)?" (Ukiyo, vol. 4, NKBT 90:334) (Keru is the rentaikei.)

Meireikei: この下を 蹴るよ. Ko-no shiri KEYO.

Kick (keyo) these buttocks (shiri)! (Ujishii, no. 31, NKBT 27:114) (Keyo is the meireikei of keru.)

3.2.4 Kami-nidan Verbs

Kami-nidan (上二段) verbs, the upper two-grade conjugation, have, in the stem, two vowels (i and u), one of which (i) is in the upper grade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kami-nidan</th>
<th>MZ</th>
<th>RY</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>RT</th>
<th>IZ</th>
<th>MR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>過ぐ</td>
<td>a-grade</td>
<td>ぎ</td>
<td>ぎ</td>
<td>ぎよ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>i-grade</td>
<td>ぐ</td>
<td>ぐる</td>
<td>ぐれ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>u-grade</td>
<td>ぐ</td>
<td>ぐる</td>
<td>ぐれ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>e-grade</td>
<td>ぐ</td>
<td>ぐる</td>
<td>ぐれ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o-grade</td>
<td>ぐ</td>
<td>ぐる</td>
<td>ぐれ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An example is sugu (過ぐ, to pass).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stem</th>
<th>Stem</th>
<th>Frequently followed by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MZ</td>
<td>sugi</td>
<td>過ぎ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RY</td>
<td>sugi</td>
<td>過ぎ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td>sugi</td>
<td>過ぐ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT</td>
<td>suguru</td>
<td>過ぐる</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IZ</td>
<td>sugure</td>
<td>過ぐれ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MR</td>
<td>sugiyō</td>
<td>過ぎよ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mizenkei: このほど過ぎば… Ko no hodo SUGI-ba…

If one passes (sugi-ba) this period (ko no hodo)… (Genji, Wakana ge, NKBT 16:377–78) (Sugi-ba is the mizenkei of sugu plus the conjunctive particle ba, indicating a hypothetical.)

Ren'yōkei: 昼の朝さにも過ぎて… Hiru no akasa ni mo SUGI-te…

Surpassing (sugi-te) even the brightness (akasa) of noon (hiru)… (Taketori, NKBT 9:63) (Sugi-te is the ren'yōkei of sugu and the conjunctive particle te.)

Shūshikei: 晴見が関を過ぎ. Kiyomi-ga-seki o SUGU.

We pass (sugu) the barrier (seki) at Kiyomi. (Izayoi, SNKBT 51:193) (Sugu is the shūshikei.)

Rentaikei: むなく過ぎる事を想しむべし. Munashiku SUGURU koto o oshimu-beshi.

You should (oshimu-beshi) regret passing your life (suguru koto) in vain (munashiku). (Tsurezure, sec. 108, NKBT 30:177) (Suguru is the rentaikei of sugu.)

Izenkei: 家の前を過ぎれば… le no mae o SUGURE-ba…

When we passed (sugure-ba) the front (mae) of the house (le)… (Sarashina, NKBT 20:522) (Sugure-ba is the izenkei of sugu and the conjunctive particle ba, together indicating temporal causality.)
Metreikei: はやく過ぎよ. Hayaku SUGIYO.

Quickly (hayaku), pass by it (sugiyō) (Makura, sec. 99, NKBT 19:149) (Sugiyō is the meireikei of sugu.)

There are many kami-nidan verbs, including 起く (oku, to wake up), 落つ (otsu, to fall down), and 耻ず (hazu, to be embarrassed).

### Advanced Study and Reference

Kami-nidan verbs include three ｙ-row verbs, which can be confusing.

老ゆ (oyu, to age): 老い, 老い, 老ゆ, 老ゆる, 老ゆれ, 老いよ

悔ゆ (kuyu, to regret): 悔い, 悔い, 悔ゆ, 悔ゆる, 悔ゆれ, 悔いよ

報ゆ (mukuyu, to return a favor): 報い, 報い, 報ゆ, 報ゆる, 報ゆれ, 報いよ

### 3.2.5 Shimo-nidan Verbs

Shimo-nidan (下二段) verbs, the lower two-grade conjugation, have, in the stem, two vowels (u and e), one of which (e) is in the lower grade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shimo-nidan</th>
<th>MZ</th>
<th>RY</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>RT</th>
<th>IZ</th>
<th>MR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>捨つ</td>
<td>a-grade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>i-grade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>u-grade</td>
<td>つ</td>
<td>つる</td>
<td>つれ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>e-grade</td>
<td>て</td>
<td>て</td>
<td>てよ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An example is kuru (暮る, to grow dark).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stem</th>
<th>Stem</th>
<th>Frequently followed by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MZ</td>
<td>kure</td>
<td>くれ ず,む,ば</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RY</td>
<td>kure</td>
<td>くれ たり,て</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td>kuru</td>
<td>くる</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT</td>
<td>kururu</td>
<td>くるる こと,とき</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IZ</td>
<td>kurure</td>
<td>くれれ ど,ども</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MR</td>
<td>kureyo</td>
<td>くれよ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Thus (kakute) today (kyō) came to an end (kure-nu). (Tosa, NKBT 20:49) (Kure-nu is the ren’yōkei of kuru and the shūshikei of the auxiliary verb nu, which is perfective.)

Shūshikei: 雨降り日暮る. Ame furu, hi KURU.

The rain (ame) fell (furu), and the sun (hi) went down (kuru). (Oku, Nasu, NKBT 46:73) (Kuru is the shūshikei.)

Rentaikei: 暮るるほどには…KURURU hodo ni wa…

While (hodo ni) the day was coming to an end (kururu) … (Tsurezure, sec. 137, NKBT 30:204) (Kururu is the rentaikei.)

Izenkei: 暮るればもろともに来あひぬ. KURURE-ba morotomo ni ki-ai-nu.

Since the day came to an end (kurure-ba), they both (morotomo) came and met. (Yamato, sec. 147, NKBT 9:312) (Kurure-ba is the izenkei of kuru plus the conjunctive particle ba, indicating cause.)

Meireikei: でも早く暮れよかし. Hi mo toku KUREYO kashi.

May the sun set (kureyo kashi) soon (toku)! (Konjaku, vol. 16, NKBT 24:435) (Kureyo is the meireikei.)

There are many shimo-nidan verbs, which is the second most common conjugation after the yodan: つく (uku, to receive), 捨つ (sutsu, to abandon), 比ぶ (kurabu, to compare), and 求む (motomu, to seek out).
Advanced Study and Reference

The *shimo-nidan* conjugation includes verbs such as 得 (u, to be able) (え, え, う, うる, うれ, えよ) and 経 (fu, to pass time) (へ, へ, ふ, ふる, ふれ, へよ) in which the stem and the inflected ending overlap.

*Shimo-nidan* verbs also include w-row verbs like 植う (wu, to plant) (植え, 植え, 植う, 植うる, 植うれ, 植えよ) and 飢う (wu, to starve) (飢え, 飢え, 飢う, 飢うる, 飢うれ, 飢えよ).
Irregular Verbs

4.1 Irregular Verbs

Irregular (変格) verb conjugations do not conform to the rules followed by the five regular verb conjugations. The irregular verb conjugations are nahan, rahen, kahen, and sahen.

4.1.1 Nahan Irregular Verbs

Nahan (ナ変) verbs have an n-row irregular conjugation (ナ行変格). The primary example is shinu, “to die.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stem</th>
<th>Stem</th>
<th>Frequently followed by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MZ</td>
<td>shina</td>
<td>死な ず, む, ぼ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RY</td>
<td>shini</td>
<td>死に たり, て</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td>shinu</td>
<td>死ぬ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT</td>
<td>shinuru</td>
<td>死ぬる こと, とき</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IZ</td>
<td>shinure</td>
<td>死ぬれ ど, ども</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MR</td>
<td>shine</td>
<td>死ね</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The only two verbs that belong to this category are shinu (死ぬ, to die) and inu (往ぬ, to go, to leave). (The perfective auxiliary verb nu also has a nahan conjugation.)

*Mizenkei:* 死ならば一所で死なん。SHINA-ba issho de SHINA-n.

If we are going to die (shina-ba), let us die (shina-n) in one place (ishso). (Heike, Hōjūji kassen, vol. 8, NKBT 33:158) (Shina-ba is the mizenkei of shinu, “to die,” and the conjunctive particle ba, indicating a hypothetical condition. Shina-n is the mizenkei of shinu and the shūshikei of the auxiliary verb mu, indicating intention. N is a nasalized sound change from mu.)

*Ren'yōkei:* 朝に死に, 夕に生きるならば . . . Ashita ni SHINI, yûbe ni umaruru narai . . .
A way of life (naraf) in which people die (shini) in the morning (ashita ni) and are born (umaruru) in the evening (yube ni) ... (Hojoki, NKBT 30:23) (Shini is the ren’yokai of shinu.)

**Shushikei:** 焰にまぐれてたちまちに死ぬ. Honō ni magure-te tachimachi ni SHINU.

They are engulfed in (magure-te) the flames (honō) and immediately (tachimachi-ni) die (shinu). (Hojoki, NKBT 30:25) (Shinu is the shushikei of shinu.)

**Rentakei:** 生まれ死ぬる人...Umare-SHINURU hito...

A person who is born (umare) and then dies (shinuru)... (Hojoki, NKBT 30:23) (Shinuru is the rentakei of shinu.)

**Izenkei:** 又かく死ぬれば...Mata kaku SHINURE-ba...

Furthermore (mata), since I am going to die (shinure-ba) like this (kaku)... (Ochikubo, book 4, NKBT 13:208) (Shinure-ba is the izenkei of shinu plus the conjunctive particle ba.)

**Meireikei:** 北の方, 懺し, とく死ねかしと思ふ. Kita-no-kata, nikushi, toku SHINE kashi to omou.

The principal wife (kita no kata) thought (to omou), "Despicable (nikushi). Die quickly (toku shine kashi)!" (Ochikubo, vol. 4, NKBT 13:210) (Shine is the meireikei.)

**Helpful Tips**

The nahen conjugation is identical to the yodan conjugation (in having four vowels, a, i, u, and e in the stem) except for the rentakei (nuru) and the izenkei (nure), which are irregular.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nahen</th>
<th>MZ</th>
<th>RY</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>RT</th>
<th>IZ</th>
<th>MR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>死ぬ</td>
<td>a-grade な</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>i-grade に</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>u-grade ぬ ぬる ぬれ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>e-grade ね</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>o-grade</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Historical Note

Beginning in the mid-Edo period, the *nahan* verb 往ぬ (*INU*, to leave) became a *yodan* conjugation. At about the same time, 死ぬ (*SHINU*, to die) became a *yodan* verb, marking an end to the *nahan* verb.

Both the *nahan* verb, *shinu* (to die), and *INU* (to leave) are similar in that they have to do with disappearing. The same can be said of the perfective auxiliary verb *nu*, which marks the end of an action and also has a *nahan* conjugation.

4.1.2 Rahen Irregular Verbs

*Rahen* て行く verbs have an *n*-row irregular conjugation て行く. The primary example is *ari* (to be).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stem</th>
<th>Stem</th>
<th>Frequently followed by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MZ</td>
<td><em>ara</em></td>
<td>ず, む, ば</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RY</td>
<td><em>ari</em></td>
<td>て</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td><em>ari</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT</td>
<td><em>aru</em></td>
<td>こと, とき</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IZ</td>
<td><em>are</em></td>
<td>ど, ども</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MR</td>
<td><em>are</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Mizenkei*: 深き故あるらん. *Fukaki yue ARA-n.*

There is probably (*ara-n*) a profound reason (*fukaki yue*). (*Tsurezure*, sec. 236, NKBT 30:279) (*Ara-n* is the *mizenkei* of *ari*, “to be,” and the *shūshikei* of the auxiliary verb *nu*, which here is speculative and has undergone a nasalized sound change to *n*.)

*Ren'yōkei*: 昔男ありけり. *Mukashi otoko ARI-keri.*

It is said (*keri*) that long ago there was (*ari*) a man (*otoko*). (*Ise*, sec. 2, NKBT 9:111) (*Ari-keri* is the *ren'yōkei* of *ari* and the *shūshikei* of the auxiliary verb *keri*, meaning hearsay past.)
Shūshikei: 月の都の人にして。父母あり。Tsuki no miyako no hito ni-te chichi haha ARI.

“I am (ni-te) a person (hito) of the capital (miyako) of the moon (tsuki), and I have (ari) a father (chichi) and mother (haha).” (Taketori, NKBT 9:60) (Ari is the shūshikei of ari.)

Rentaikei: この国にある物。 Ko-no kuni ni ARU mono.

Something (mono) that exists (ni aru) in this (ko-no) country (kuni). (Taketori, NKBT 9:33) (Ni aru is the locative case particle ni and the rentaikei of ari.)

Izenkei: さすがに住む人のあればなるべし。 Sasuga ni sumu hito no ARE-ba naru-beshi.

As I had expected (sasuga-ni), it is no doubt (naru-beshi) because there are (are-ba) people (hito) who live there (sumu). (Tsurezure, sec. 11, NKBT 30:98–99) (Are-ba is the izenkei of ari and the conjunctive particle ba, which indicates cause.)

Meireikei: いづくにもあれ、しばし旅だちたるこそ … Izuku ni mo ARE, shibashi tabi-datchi-taru koso …

Wherever (izuku) it may be (are), when you travel (tabi-dachi-taru) for a while (shibashi) … (Tsurezure, sec. 15, NKBT 30:102) (Are is the meireikei of ari.)

Helpful Tips

The rahren conjugation is identical to yodan conjugation (with four vowels, a, i, u, and e in the stem) except for the shūshikei form (ri), which is irregular. In modern Japanese, the rahren became the godan, a variation of the yodan. All verb conjugations end in u except for that of the rahren, which ends in ri.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rahren</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>あり</td>
<td>MZ</td>
<td>RY</td>
<td>SS</td>
<td>RT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>a-grade</td>
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<td>Middle</td>
<td>u-grade</td>
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<td>Lower</td>
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<td>o-grade</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Advanced Study and Reference

There are only four rahren verbs: ari (あり, to be), ori (在り, to be still, to sit), haberi (待り, to serve a superior), and imasogari (いまそう, to be). *Imasogari* (mod. *Jpse:* いらっしゃる) is the honorific form of ari and ori. *Ari, ori, imasogari,* and *haberi* also function as supplementary verbs, following the ren’yōkei of the main verb. All four of these verbs pertain to existence or a continuing state.

...立てれども皆れども.... *tate-re-domo ORE-domo.*

... whether standing (*tate-re-domo*) or sitting (*ore-domo*). (MYS, vol. 5, no. 904, NKBT 5:119) (*Ore-domo* is the izenkei of the verb *ori,* “to sit,” and the concessive conjunctive particle *domo.*)

義景は、切戸の脇にかしこまりて待ける。*Yoshikage wa kirido no waki ni kashikomari-te zo HABERI-keru.*

Yoshikage waited (*kashikomari-te*) by the side (*waki*) of the side door (*kirido*), ready to be of service (*haberi-keru*). (*Masukagami, Mikamiyama,* NKBT 87:295) (*Haberi-keru* is the ren’yōkei of *haberi,* “to serve a superior,” and the rentaikei of the recollective *keri,* “tied” to the emphatic bound particle *zo.*)

その帝のみたかとい子と申すいまそがりけり。*So-no mikado no miko Takaiko to mōsu-IMASOGARI-keri.*

There was (*imasogariki*eri) a child (*miko*) of that emperor (*mikado*) called (*to mōsu*) Takaiko. (*Jse,* sec. 39, NKBT 9:133) (*Mōsu* is the rentaikei of the verb *mōsu,* “to call,” modifying an implied “person.” *Imasogariki*eri is the ren’yōkei of *imasogari,* “to be,” and the auxiliary verb *keri.*)

### Historical Note

Ori, haberi, and imasogari all emerged from the verb ari, “to exist, to be;” which might be called the “master” rahren verb. *I-ari* (在あり) (ren’yōkei of *iru,* “to sit;” plus *ari*) became *ori* (在り, to be still, to sit). *Hai-ari* (はあり) (ren’yōkei of *hau,* “to
crawl,” plus \textit{ari}) became \textit{haberi} (はべり, to serve a superior). \textit{Imasu-ka-ari} (座す処あり) (literally, “to have a place to sit”) became \textit{imasogari} (いまそがり) (honorific “to be”).

The \textit{i} at the end of the \textit{shūshikai} of a \textit{rahen} verb indicates existence or a continuing state. In this regard, the \textit{rahen} verbs are very similar to adjectives, which also end in \textit{i} and also describe a continuing state. For example, the adjective \textit{takashi} can be interpreted to mean “to be tall.”

From the end of the Heian period through the beginning of the Kamakura period, the \textit{rentaikei} of the \textit{rahen} verb began to be used as the \textit{shūshikai}, turning the \textit{rahen} verb into a \textit{yodan} verb. The \textit{shūshikai} of \textit{ari}, “to be,” became \textit{aru}, which is what it is today in modern Japanese. The \textit{rahen} conjugation does not exist in modern Japanese.

4.1.3 \textit{Kaihen} Irregular Verb

The one \textit{kaihen} (力変) verb has a \textit{k}-row irregular conjugation (力行変格). This verb is \textit{ku} 来, which means (1) to come, (2) to go, and (3) to visit, arrive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stem</th>
<th>Stem</th>
<th>Frequently followed by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| MZ   | ko   | こ
|       |       | す, む, は
| RY   | ki   | き
|       |       | た, て
| SS   | ku   | く
| RT   | kuru | くる
|       |       | くと, とき
| IZ   | kure | くれ
|       |       | ど, ども
| MR   | ko(yo) | こ(よ)

In the Heian period, the \textit{meirekei} was normally \textit{ko}.

\textit{Mizenkei}: 秋風吹かむをりそ来むとする. \textit{Aki-kaze fuka-mu ori zo KO-mu to suru}.

I will \textit{come} (\textit{ko-mu to suru}) when (\textit{ori}) the autumn wind (\textit{aki-kaze}) blows (\textit{fuka-mu}). (\textit{Makura}, sec. 43, NKBT 19:92) \textit{(Ko-mu to suru} is the \textit{mizenkei} of \textit{ku}, the intentional auxiliary verb \textit{mu}, the case particle \textit{to}, and the \textit{rentaikei} of the verb \textit{su}, “to do.”)
Irregular Verbs 4.1

Ren'yōkei: かの唐船来けり. Ka no morokoshi-bune KI-keri.

That Chinese boat (morokoshi-bune) came (ki-keri). (Taketori, NKBT 9:42) (Ki-keri is the ren'yōkei of ku and the recollective auxiliary verb keri.)

Shūshikei: ひとびとたえずとぶらひにく. Hitobito taezu toburai ni KU.

People (hitobito) ceaselessly (taezu) came (ku) to visit (toburai). (Tosa, NKBT 20:32) (Ku is the shūshikei of the verb ku.)

Rentaikei: 山の方より人あまた来る音す. Yama no kata yori hito amata KURIU oto-su.

There was the sound (oto-su) of many people (hito amata) coming (kuru) from the direction (kata yori) of the mountain (yama). (Sarashina, NKBT 20:501) (Kuru is the rentaikei of ku.)

Izenkei: 春来れば雁かへるなり. Haru KURE-ba kari kaeru nari.

Since spring has come (haru kure-ba), I hear (naru) the wild geese (kari) returning (kaeru). (KKS, Spring 1, no. 30, NKBT 8:110) (Kure-ba is the izenkei of ku and the conjunctive particle ba, indicating causality. Kaeru-nari is the shūshikei of the verb kaeru, "to return," and the auditory/hearsay auxiliary verb nari.)

Meireikei: 「その児こち率て来.」So-no ko kochi i-te KO.

"Bring (i-te-ko) that (so-no) child (ko) here (kochi)!" (Yamato, sec. 169, NKBT 9:341) (I-te-ko is the ren'yōkei of the kami-ichidan verb iru, "to lead," the conjunctive particle te, and the meireikei of ku.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kaken</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>来来</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>き</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u-grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>く くる くれ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-grade</td>
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<tr>
<td>こ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o-grade</td>
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<tr>
<td>こ(よ)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
4.1.4 Sohen Irregular Verbs

Sahen (サ行) verbs have an s-row irregular conjugation (サ行変格). The primary verb is *su* (to do).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stem</th>
<th>Stem</th>
<th>Frequently followed by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MZ</td>
<td>se</td>
<td>ず, む, ば</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RY</td>
<td>shi</td>
<td>たり, て</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td>su</td>
<td>す</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT</td>
<td>suru</td>
<td>すること, とき</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IZ</td>
<td>sure</td>
<td>すれ, ども</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MR</td>
<td>seyo</td>
<td>セよ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As an intransitive verb, *su* means that a certain situation “exists” or “occurs.” As a transitive verb, *su* can mean (1) “to do” or (2) “to place” (in a particular situation).

**Mizenkei:** 死なぬ薬も何にかはせむ. Shina-nu kusuri mo nani ka wa SE-mu.

What would I do (nani ka wa se-mu) with medicine that prevents death (shina-nu kusuri)? (It would be of no use.) (Taketori, NKBT 9:66) (Se-mu is the mizenkei of *su* and the intentional auxiliary verb *mu.*

**Ren’yōkei:** 長雨, 例の年よりもいたくして. Naga-ame rei no toshi yori mo itaku SHI-te.

The long rains (naga-ame) were more intense (itaku shi-te) than in usual (rei) years (toshi). (Genji, Hotaru, NKBT 15:430) (Itaku shite is the ren’yōkei of the ku adjective itashi, “intense,” the ren’yōkei of the sahen verb *su*, “to occur,” and the conjunctive particle *te*.)

**Shūshikei:** 男もすなる日記… Otoko mo SU-naru niki…

A diary (niki) that I hear that men keep (su nari) … (Tosa, NKBT 20:27) (Su naru is the shūshikei of the sahen verb *su*, “to do,” and the rentaikei of the hearsay auxiliary verb *nari.*

**Rentaikei:** 昔人の袖の香ぞする. Mukashi no hito no sode no ka zo SURU.

It had the scent (ka zo suru) of the sleeve (sode) of a person (hito) of the past (mukashi) (whom I knew intimately). (KKS, Summer, no. 139, NKBT 8:130) (Zo suru is the emphatic bound particle *zo* and the rentaikei of *su*, “to make.”)
Izenkei: 十一日の月もかくれなむとすれば... Jūichi-nichi no tsuki mo kakure-na-mu to SURE-ba...

When the moon (tsuki) of the eleventh day was about to disappear (kakure-na-mu to sure-ba)... (Ise, sec. 82, NKBT 9:160) (Kakure-na-mu to sure-ba is the ren'yōkei of the shimo-nidan verb kakuru, “to disappear,” the mizenkei of the perfective auxiliary verb nu, the shūshikei of the speculative auxiliary verb mu, the case particle to, the izenkei of su, and the conjunctive particle ba, indicating temporal causality.)

Meireikei: 京にのぼりて宮仕へをせよ. Kyō ni nobo-ri-te miya-zukae o SEYO.

Go up (noborite) to the capital (kyō) and serve at the imperial court (miya-zukae wo seyo)! (Yamato, sec. 148, NKBT 9:316) (Seyo is the meireikei.)

Helpful Tips

The sahen verb su is frequently combined with Sino-Japanese nouns to create verbs like 具す (to accompany), 愛す (to love), and 拝す (to bow, show respect). There are also words with a sound-change to n-zu, as in ご覧す (honorific “to see”), 信じす (to believe), and 重んず (to value).

Aside from such compound verbs, there are only two sahen verbs: su (to do) and the honorific verb owasu おはす (honorific “to be”).

Sahen verbs are similar to shimo-nidan verbs except that the ren'yōkei form (shi instead of se) is irregular.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sahen</th>
<th>MZ</th>
<th>RY</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>RT</th>
<th>IZ</th>
<th>MR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>す</td>
<td>a-grade</td>
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<tr>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>i-grade</td>
<td>し</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>u-grade</td>
<td>す</td>
<td>する</td>
<td>すれ</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>e-grade</td>
<td>せ</td>
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<td>せよ</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Historical Note

Originally, the only sahen verb was su (す), but su combined with other words to form new verbs that ended in su.

From the end of the Heian period and after, the retaikai form suru (to do) of the sahen verb began to be used as the shūshikei form (in Heike monogatari and other texts), which is the way it is today in modern Japanese.

### Points of Interest

By far the most widely used verb conjugation is the yodan conjugation. The next most common is the shimo-nidan, followed by the kami-nidan, a very distant third. The other six conjugations are limited to a small number of verbs. Aside from compounds and nasalized variants, the four irregular conjugations (kahen, sahen, nahen, and rahen) add up to only nine different verbs (see appendix 8).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>kahen</th>
<th>来</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sahen</td>
<td>す, おはす</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nahen</td>
<td>死ぬ, 往ぬ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rahen</td>
<td>なり, をり, はべり, いませがり</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.2 Transitive and Intransitive Verbs

Intransitive verbs (自動詞) describe action that takes place on its own accord, whereas transitive verbs (他動詞) describe action that is imposed on someone or something else. Transitive verbs always have an object, which is generally marked by the case particle o or wo (を). Also note the following possibilities:

1. Intransitive and transitive verbs may have the same conjugation.

   雨注ぐ The rain pours down. (yodan intransitive verb sosogu)

   水を注ぐ Pour the water. (yodan transitive verb sosogu)

2. Intransitive and transitive verbs may have different conjugations.

   京に育つ To grow up in the capital. (yodan intransitive verb sodatsu)
子を育つ To raise (the child). (*shimo-nidan* transitive verb *sodatsu*)
水を流す To let the water flow. (*yodan* transitive verb *nagasu*)

4.3 Supplementary Verbs

Supplementary verbs function like auxiliary verbs, augmenting the main verb that they follow. Supplementary verbs follow the *ren'yōkei* of the main verb.

In the following examples, the same verb is used first as an independent verb and then as a supplementary verb.

男ありけり. *Otoko ARI-keri.*

There was (ari) a man (otoko).

われはさる者にあらず. *Ware wa saru mono ni-ARA-zu.*

I (ware) am not (ni ara-zu) that kind (saru) of person. (*Ni ara-zu* is the *ren'yōkei* of the copular *nari*, "to be," the *mizenkei* of the supplementary verb *ari*, and the negative *zu.*)

*Ari* is an independent *rahen* verb meaning "to exist," "to live," or "to possess," but it also functions as a supplementary verb that follows the *ren'yōkei* of adjectives, adjectival verbs, and copular auxiliary verbs (*nari*) and indicates the existence of that particular condition.

白き御衣を給ふ. *Shiroki onzo o TAMAU.*

He gave (tamau) a white robe (on-zo). (*Tamau* is a *yodan* honorific verb meaning "to bestow.")

白き御衣を着給ふ. *Shiroki onzo o ki-TAMAU.*

She wore (ki-tamau) a white robe. (*Ki-tamau* is the *ren'yōkei* of the *kami-ichidan* verb *kiru*, "to wear," and the *shūshikei* of the *yodan* honorific supplementary verb *tamau.*)

*Tamau* is an honorific verb meaning "to bestow," but it came to be used primarily as an honorific supplementary verb that turned the verb it followed into an honorific verb. For more information about honorific supplementary verbs, see chapter 18.
4.4 Sound Changes in Verbs

Sound changes (音便), which make words easier to pronounce, began in the Heian period and included four fundamental sound changes in verbs.

4.4.1 $i$-Sound Change ($イ音便$)

$Ki$, $gi$, and $shi$ in $yodan$ verbs became $i$. The consonants $k$, $g$, and $s$ dropped out, leaving only the vowel, and sometimes the consonant was followed by a voiced conjunctive particle, as in $de$ for $te$.

書きて (ren'yōkei of kaku, “to write,” + conjunctive particle $te$) → 書いて

つなぎて (ren'yōkei of tsunagu, “to connect,” + conjunctive particle $te$) → つないで

4.4.2 $u$-Sound Change ($う音便$)

$Hi$, $bi$, and $mi$ in $yodan$ verbs became $u$.

争ひて (ren'yōkei of arasou, “to fight,” + conjunctive particle $te$) → 争うて

よびて (ren'yōkei of yorokobu, “to delight in,” + conjunctive particle $te$) → 喜うて

4.4.3 Nasalized Sound Change ($鼻音便$)

$Bi$ and $mi$ in $yodan$ verbs and $ni$ in $nahen$ verbs became a nasalized $n$ followed by a voiced conjunctive particle (as in $de$ for $te$) or a voiced auxiliary verb (as in $dari$ for $tari$).

飛びて (ren'yōkei of tobu, “to fly,” + conjunctive particle $te$) → 飛んで

読みた (ren'yōkei of tsumu, “to pick,” + auxiliary verb $tari$) → 摘んだり

読みて (ren'yōkei of yomu, “to read,” + conjunctive particle $te$) → 閲んで

死にて (ren'yōkei of shinu, “to die,” + conjunctive particle $te$) → 死んで
4.4.4 Compressed Sound Change (促音便)

*Chi, hi, and ri in yodan verbs and ri in rahen verbs became tsu. Although the small tsu appears in the Heike monogatari (14th c.), tsu did not consistently become a small tsu until the Edo period.*

勝ちで (ren'yōkei of katsu, “to win,” + te) → 勝つて → 勝って

懸けたり (ren'yōkei of omou, “to think,” + te) → 懸けたり → 懸けたり

ありて (ren'yōkei of ari, “to be,” + te) → あつて → あって