

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?



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■ ■ ■ 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,
ゆうべ 遅く... 急に...
yūbe osoku kyū ni

Ryōta passed away.
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 ⑤ about です。
kyū-jū go sai about 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...。
hai fish 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 just a moment ago.
- The time of his death can be given in figures.



He died./He passed away.

死にました / 亡くなりました
shinimashita nakunarimashita

- The corpse is still there or it can be seen.



He is dead.

死んでいます
shindeimasu

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 亡くなる な nakunaru to pass away (polite form used for humans)	B) to die 死ぬ し shinu to die (used for humans, animals)	C) desperately 必死に ひっし hisshi ni
D) a matter of life and death 死活問題 し かつ もん だい shi katsu mon dai	E) with all one's might 死に物狂い 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 this is desu
I'm in trouble

• 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 ② passed away
san-nen mae ni yūmē na shōsetsuka ga kuruma no jiko de
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