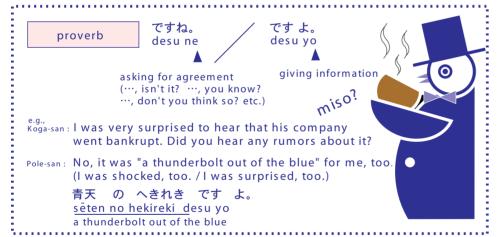


# Pero Pero Penguin's 5-minute Japanese Class by Little

I was recently invited to a friend's house, where his wife cooked a lot of Japanese food for me. She spent the entire time in the kitchen cooking dinner, while I was eating it with her husband. When she served us some sushi, her husband told me, "Temae-miso desu ga, oishii desu vo!" I thought it was the miso used for miso soup. As it was my first experience to eat miso sushi, I said, "Miso no sushi wa haiimete desu (I've never had miso sushi before)." But it did not taste like miso at all when I ate it. Ms. Hirayama, have vou ever had miso sushi?

Japanese people like to use proverbs. They are usually very short expressions, but they carry a lot of meaning. In some cases, you may be able to express your thoughts with one proverb, instead of using difficult vocabulary and grammar to make the same point. Most proverbial sayings are easy to learn and use and are a quick way to express complex ideas. But be careful. Since proverbs are fixed expressions, Japanese people will not understand what you mean unless you say the whole phrase. We have described the meanings of the proverbs as well as the meanings of each kanji so that you can remember them more easily.

You could use a Japanese proverb in the middle of a conversation in English.



If you criticize or reprove someone too directly, he or she may be offended or even become defensive. However, if you offer your criticism in a subtle way by using kotowaza, you might soften the person up enough to accept your opinions, even though such a proverb might have a strong meaning.

### A) To each his own

When 10 people get together in one place, each one will have a different hobby or likes and dislikes.

Ten people with 10 colors. (10) (people) (10) (colors)

nin to

### B) You reap what you sow

Whether what you do is good or bad, you will have to deal with the consequences—generally used as a warning.

Retribution is the result of the cause. (cause) (result) (retribution)

ga

(weak) (meat) (strong) (eat)

強 肉 jaku niku kyō shoku

in the sushi you ate. What your friend said was a proverb. "Temae-miso desu ga, oishii desu yo!" means, "I don't mean to sing my own praises, but this is delicious!" Japanese people frequently use proverbs in daily life, because being able to use "kotowaza" (proverbs) is considered to be a sign of intelligence. You should try to use some, too! It is a good opportunity to increase your Japanese vocabulary, and your Japanese friends will think that you are smart! Learning proverbs is useful even for busy people who do not have enough time to study Japanese as they can use proverbs for communication. By the way, you should try delicious "miso pan" (bread with miso inside), which is sold at a miso store in Kameido, Tokyo!.

■ ■ No. Mr. Pole! I've never had miso sushi before. But there was no miso

### C) Stop beating around the bush

This means "speak directly," "get to the point," even if the subject is difficult to discuss. Japanese people use this phrase when they want to clear things up, since they are generally reluctant to speak directly right away.

Direct stab with one sword (single) (sword)(direct)(put in)

直 tan to choku nyū

### E) Unable to know what to do nor how to solve problems

You are unable to find any clues to help solve your problems. You have no idea what to do.

A search in darkness

(dark) (in∼) (grope for)

chū mo saku

# G) A person who pays no attention

This proverb originally means "a horse just moves its ears when a spring wind blows." A person who pays no attention, or someone who hears the words, but let them go in one ear and out of the other.

Ears of horse in the east wind. (horse) (ear) (east) (wind)

ji tō fū

### I) Survival of the fittest (Big fish eat small fish)

This phrase literally means the weak is prey to the strong, and it is hard to survive. It is used when a small company is purchased by

The weak becomes food for the strong.

# D) Being inconsistent

It is used to criticize someone who says something different from what they have said before or whose actions do not match their

No support causes disruption (fork)(scattered)(disruption)

支 shi ri metsu retsu

### F) The right person for the right job

A person gets right job according to his or her skills and knowledge.

Right person in right place (right) (material) (right) (place)

teki zai teki sho

### H) Stay on your toes

Although everything is going well, an enemy may sneak up and overcome you if you are not careful. It teaches us to be on quard at all times.

Carelessness is the greatest enemy. (carelessness) (powerful enemy)

大 敵 dan tai teki

# J) Blowing one's own trumpet (horn) (If I may say so myself...)

Miso was a traditional food that people made when they wanted to show off their culinary skills. Since Japanese people do not like to sing their own praises, they use this phase to show their humble attitude when they want to boast in a subtle way.

Homemade miso (my own) (miso)

mae mi so



1. friend: It is really hard to succeed in this company because people on the top have absolute authority.

ですね。 Survival of the fittest Pole-san desu ne

2. friend: The personnel department did an excellent iob of reorganizing!

The right person for the ですね。 right job desu ne

3. friend: I baked this cake myself. I don't mean to blow my own trumpet, but it's delicious!

> If I may say so myself, ですが おいしい ですよ。 "It's delicious!"

desu ga "oishi desu yo"

4. friend: Let's be careful.

ですね。 Stay on your toes. desu ne

5. friend: I think we have had good weather lately, and I hope it's going to be...

Stop beating around Pole-san the bush.

に お願いします。 ni onegaishimasu

ですね。

desu ne

**6.** friend: It seems like we are still searching in the dark, and we have no idea what to do...

No idea what to do ですね。 to solve a problem desu ne

7. friend: Nothing I say makes any difference to him. It's like I'm talking to a brick wall!

A person who pays no attention

**8.** friend: He doesn't know what he's talking about. What he says is confusing.

ですね。 Being inconsistent desu ne

9. friend: He was always difficult to deal with, and last week, he got fired!

Reaping what you sow

desu yo

ですよ。

friend: In the last meeting, we couldn't reach a consensus.

です から... To each his own Pole-san desu kara ...

2. F) 3. J) 4. H) 5. C) 6. E) 7. G) 8. D) 9. B) 10. A)

With cooperation from Yasuhiro Koga