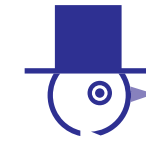


Design : Masako Ban

imikotoba 忌み言葉



Pera Pera Penguin's
5-minute Japanese Class by Hitomi Hirayama
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A friend of mine is getting married next month and I have to give a speech at the wedding. I wrote a speech and asked my friend to check the Japanese. He told me not to use "imikotoba." I have never heard of "imikotoba" before. What does it mean, Hirayama-san?

■■■ "imikotoba" means "taboo words." These are words or phrases that are thought to bring about bad luck. You should avoid them on formal occasions, such as weddings or funerals, out of consideration for the feelings of the listeners. For example, you should not use such words as "wakareru," which people fear may cause divorce, in your wedding speech. However, keep in mind that it would be OK to use them in everyday life. Many "imikotoba" exist, so please be cautious.

Some common examples of "imikotoba"

1) If you are preparing a speech for a wedding, do not use any words that infer divorce or separation. For example, words that repeat the same sound (e.g., **tabitabi**) infer remarriage.

たびたび tabitabi frequently	いろいろ iroiro many kinds	ますます masumasu more and more	帰る kaeru go back	去る saru leave	終わる owaru finish
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離れる hanareru separate	別れる wakareru split	切る kiru cut
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2) When the speech is for funerals, do not use any words that infer "something sad will happen again," or "you cannot die in peace," or repeating sounds (e.g. **tsugitsugi**).

次々 tsugitsugi one by one	返す返す kaesugaesu repeatedly	続く tsuzuku continue	追う ou follow	迷う mayou get lost
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重なる kasanaru duplicate	浮かばれない ukabarenai your soul cannot rest
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3) During the school entrance exam season avoid any words that make examinees and family members imagine "failure" in daily conversation.

落ちる ochiru fall	転ぶ korobu fall over	滑る suberu slip over	散る chiru disperse
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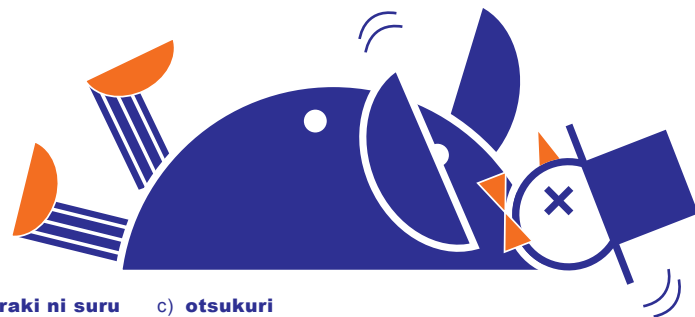
4) Do not use any words related to miscarriage or disease when you congratulate a person for becoming pregnant or give birth to a child.

流れる nagareru wash away (miscarry)	消える kieru disappear	弱い yowai weak	おろす orosu drop (have an abortion)
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Quiz :
The words below may offend people at a wedding.
Use more appropriate words.

- a) **kaeru** (leave, go home)
- b) **owaru** (finish)
- c) **sashimi**

Answers: a) **shitsurē suru** b) **ohiraki ni suru** c) **otsukuri**



Below is Mr. Pole's speech at his friend's wedding. Make the appropriate changes to the "imikotoba" in the boxes below.

ご結婚おめでとうございます。
gokekkon omedetō gozaimasu
Congratulations on your wedding.

私は新郎の大輔さんの同僚のポールと申します。
watakushi wa shinrō no Daisuke-san no dōryō no Pole to mōshimasu
My name is Pole. I work with the groom, Daisuke-san.

私は日本に来た頃、日本のことが何も分からず、そんな私に大輔さんは
watakushi wa Nihon ni kita koro, Nihon no koto ga nanimo wakarazu sonna watakushi ni Daisuke-san wa
When I came to Japan, I did not know anything about Japan.

日本の文化や仕事など **色々なことを** 教えてくださいました。
Nihon no bunka ya shigoto nado iroiro na koto o oshiete kudasaimashita
Daisuke-san taught me about Japanese culture and work in Japan.

そして **苦しいときは** **いつもいつも** 励ましてくださいました。
soshite kurushī toki wa itsumoitsumo hagemashite kudasaimashita
He always cheered me up when I was having a hard time.

大輔さんは大変親切で **頭の切れる** 方です。
Daisuke-san wa taihen shinsetsu de atama no kireru kata desu
He is very kind and very smart.

これからの人生において、順子さん **が悲しむようなことは決してしない** と思います。
korekara no jinsē ni oite Junko-san ga kanashimu yōna koto wa kesshite shinai to omoimasu
He will never make Junko-san sad as long as he lives.

順子さんは、**ますます** おきれいになり、大輔さんは本当にお幸せですね。
Junko-san wa masumasu okirē ni nari Daisuke-san wa hontō ni oshiwase desu ne
Junko-san looks more beautiful every day. Daisuke-san is a lucky guy to have such a beautiful wife.

今日からお二人で新しい **スタートを切る** のですね。
kyō kara ofutari de atarashī start o kiru no desu ne
You are starting a new life today.

最後になりましたが、どうぞ末永くお幸せに！
saigo ni narimashita ga dōzo suenagaku oshiwase ni!
Finally, I wish you much love and happiness.

これで、私のあいさつ **を終わりに** させていただきます。
kore de watakushi no aisatsu o owari ni sasete itadakimasu
I've reached the end of my speech.

本日は、おめでとうございます。
honjitsu wa omedetō gozaimasu
Congratulations to the happy couple.

Answers:

- 1) **takusan** (many, a lot)
- 2) omit
- 3) **itsumo** (always)
- 4) **yūshū na** (excellent)
- 5) **o taisetsu ni sareru** (take good care of)
- 6) **totemo** (very)
- 7) **start line ni tatareru** (stand at the start line)
- 8) omit
- 9) **to**