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I'm a penguin! watashi wa penguin

I had dinner with friends after the New Year holiday, and they started talking about their age. One of them said, "I'm a dog. What are you, Mr. Pole?" I didn't know what she meant, so I just said, "I'm a penguin." They told me Japanese people are classified as different animals according to their year of birth. Is that true?

Mr. Pole

jūnishi (The 12 signs of Chinese zodiac)

This 12-year-cycle zodiac originated in China. The following list shows all the signs in the correct order. Try working out what your sign is:

- | | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| 子...ne (rat) | 丑...ushi (ox) | 寅...tora (tiger) | 卯...u (rabbit) |
| 辰...tatsu (dragon) | 巳...mi (snake) | 午...uma (horse) | 未...hitsuji (sheep) |
| 申...saru (monkey) | 酉...tori (chicken) | 戌...inu (dog) | 亥...i (boar) |

Year 2000 is tatsu. The next 12 years will therefore be:

- 2001 (mi) 2002 (uma) 2003 (hitsuji) 2004 (saru) 2005 (tori) 2006 (inu) 2007 (i) 2008 (ne) 2009 (ushi) 2010 (tora) 2011 (u) 2012 (tatsu)...

e.g., My zodiac sign is dragon. tatsu doshi desu

Grammar note

- Asking someone's thoughts on their recent experiences:

How was your trip ?	旅行 ryokō	はいかがでしたか。 (polite form) wa ikaga deshita ka
		はどうでしたか。 (friendly form) wa dō deshita ka
		はどうだった。 (casual form) wa dō datta
- 2 & 3. Citing more than one item:

-tari can be used when expressing your impression of several things.

e.g., I visited a shrine, went to the movies and so on—it was fun.

神社に行ったり 映画を見たり 楽しかったです。
jinja ni ittari ega o mitari tanoshikatta desu
- Have (has) done/happened already: This expression is used to show regret for what has happened or something you have done against your will.

e.g., (It is a shame that) it is over.

終わってしまいました。
owatteshimaimashita
- Asking how a situation was: Use the friendly form of 1. Note that it shows your concern or sympathy for the person you are talking to.

How (bad) was **the Y2K problem?** **2000年問題 nisennen mondai** は どうでしたか。 wa dō deshita ka
- Expressing an action that has gone too far:

ます masu-form	+ すぎです or すぎます	e.g., I ate too much. 食べ過ぎました。 tabesugimashita
をします masu-form	+ のしすぎです	e.g., I worried about it too much. 心配のしすぎでした shimpai no shisugi deshita



Pera Pera Penguin's

5-minute Japanese Class by Hitomi Hirayama

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■■■ Did you receive any nengajō (New Year cards)? Did you notice the pictures of a dragon on them? This is the year of the dragon in the jūnishi Chinese zodiac, and nengajō designs often include the zodiac sign of the year. Japanese people sometimes try to determine your age by asking, nani doshi desu ka (What's your sign of the zodiac?), instead of directly asking, "How old are you?" It is a tactful question used particularly by middle-aged or older people.

Mr. Pole and Ms. Hirayama are talking about New Year holidays.

Mr. Pole: How was your New Year holiday?

お正月は **1. How was...? (asking the impression)**
oshōgatsu wa New Year

Hirayama: Well, I went to the shrine, watched movies (and so on).

神社に **2. visited** テレビを **3. watched**
jinja ni terebi o

It was really good to relax with my family for once.

久しぶりに 家族と のんびりしました。
hisashiburi ni kazoku to nonbirishimashita
after a long time with family felt at ease

It's a shame the holidays ended so quickly.

あっという間に休みが **4. have finished (expressed with regret)**
atto yūmani yasumi ga
in a moment holiday

By the way, how was the Y2K problem?

そういえば 2000年問題 は **5. How was...? (asking about the situation)**
by the way Y2K problem

Mr. Pole: There was almost no trouble at all.

トラブルはほとんどなかったですね。
trouble wa hotondo nakatta desu ne
hardly did not exist

We worried about it too much!

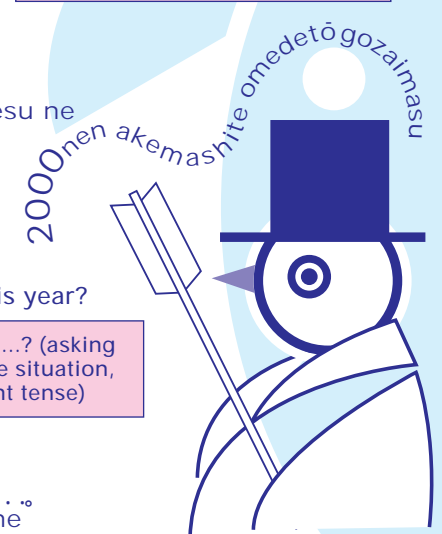
6. too much worry about

Hirayama: How is the economy going to be this year?

今年の景気は **5. How bad...? (asking about the situation, in present tense)**
kotoshi no kēki wa this year

Mr. Pole: Well, I guess it will level off.

うん...たぶん 横ばいです...ね...。
uunnn tabun yokobai desu ne
leveling off



十二支

じゅうにし
jūnishi
12 signs of the Chinese zodiac

The jūnishi signs are believed to reflect the personalities of their holders. At one time they represented 12 directions on a compass and every two hours of the day starting at midnight with ne. For example, ushi no koku is 2 a.m. You may have seen the old time system referred to in samurai films.

子 ne	rat (nezumi)	sociable 社交的 shakō teki	flexible 臨機応変 rinki ōhen
丑 ushi	ox (ushi)	sympathetic 思いやりがある omoiyari ga aru	cautious 慎重 shinchō
寅 tora	tiger (tora)	strong-willed 意志が強い ishi ga tsuyoi	accommodating 世話好き sewazuki
卯 u	rabbit (usagi)	gentle 温和 onwa	progressive 進歩的 shimpo teki
辰 tatsu	dragon (tatsu)	generous おおらか ōraka	studious 勉強家 benkyō-ka
巳 mi	snake (hebi)	ambitious 前向き maemuki	passionate 情熱的 jōnetsu teki
午 uma	horse (uma)	open-minded 開放的 kaihō teki	active 行動的 kōdō teki
未 hitsuji	sheep (hitsuji)	patient 忍耐強い nintaizuyoi	serious 真面目 majime
申 saru	monkey (saru)	positive 積極的 sekkyoku teki	cheerful 明るい akarui
酉 tori	chicken (tori)	organized 几帳面 kichōmen	gentle 温厚 onkō
戌 inu	dog (inu)	thoughtful 思慮深い shiryobukai	honest 正直 shōjiki
亥 i	boar (inoshishi)	strong-willed 意志が強い ishi ga tsuyoi	kind 親切 shinsetsu