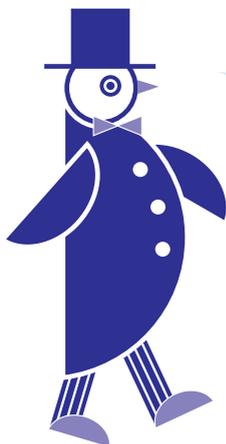


Design: Masako Ban



まあまあ

mā mā



# Pera Pera Penguin's

5-minute Japanese Class by Hitomi Hirayama

Vol. **45**

The other day, I went fishing with a Japanese friend. At noon, he took out the lunch his wife had prepared for him, and he offered me some. When I said to him, "**oku-san no obentō, totemo oishi desu ne**" (This is very tasty. Your wife prepares a great lunch.), he said, "**mā mā desu yo**" (It's so-so). But he ate everything in his lunch box with a genuine smile. I wonder if his wife gets mad with him if he leaves something. After that, he showed me a photo of his wife. When I said, "**oku-san kirē desu ne**" (Your wife is pretty), he said, "**mā mā desu yo**" (She's so-so). But he looked very happy to hear the compliment. Hmm...I wonder whether he really liked his lunch...I wonder if he thought his wife was pretty or not...I have no idea what he was thinking!

■■■ I frequently hear that people overseas imagine that Japanese people are ambiguous and do not give definite answers, that they have no facial expressions, and that their thoughts are obscure. So, I understand your frustration. "**mā mā desu ne**" is translated as "so-so" in English, but it's not exactly the same. Japanese people frequently say, "**mā mā desu ne**," and I hope my explanation below will help you understand what they mean.

★ Describing yourself (first person)

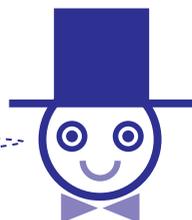
"**Mā mā**" has a wide range of meanings when Japanese people use it to describe themselves. It can be positive or negative depending on their facial expressions, and it does not simply mean "so-so" in English. Saying "**mā mā**" is especially appropriate way to say, "It's good," because the Japanese culture admires the humble and modest spirit of the speaker.

Excellent (100%)	It's good !	まあまあですね。 <b>mā mā desu ne</b>
positive feeling	It's OK !	
negative feeling	It's so-so.	
Terrible		

e.g., Imai-san: How is your business?  
Pole-san: **So-so.** (He is smiling.)

(sounds positive)

まあまあです。  
**mā mā desu**  
(It's good.)



Imai-san: How was your new project meeting?  
Pole-san: **So-so.** (His tone depressed.)

(sounds negative)

まあまあでした。  
**mā mā deshita**  
(It was no good.)



★ Describing someone (third person)

On the other hand, when they use the expression to describe someone else, it implies that they have somewhat negative feelings, which corresponds to "so-so" in English.

QUESTION

How was  ?  
How did  go?

nouns



nouns

いかがでしたか。 (polite form)  
**ikaga deshita ka**  
どうだった。 (friendly form)  
**dō datta**

The nouns in 1) to 7) can be put in the square above. Needless to say, some other nouns can be added, too.

- |   |                                     |  |
|---|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1) meeting/conference<br>会議<br><b>kaigi</b> | 2) contract<br>契約<br><b>keiyaku</b> | 3) consultation/discussion<br>話し合い<br><b>hanashiai</b> |
| 4) problem/issue<br>問題<br><b>mondai</b>     | 5) party<br>パーティー<br><b>party</b>   | 6) date<br>デート<br><b>date</b>                          |
|   |                                     | 7) concert<br>コンサート<br><b>concert</b>                  |

REPLYING

Some other answers.

Yes, somehow...  
ええ どうか...  
**ē dōnika**

It was terrible./It was no good.  
ダメでした。  
**dame deshita**

It is hard to say.../I'm afraid not...  
難しいですね...  
**muzukashi desu ne...**

I'm sorry to have troubled you so much.  
ご心配をお掛け致しました。  
**goshimpai o okake-itashimashita**

No problem./It's OK.  
大丈夫です。  
**daijōbu desu**

It was really good.  
良かったです。  
**yokatta desu**

It went well.  
うまくいきました。  
**umaku ikimashita**



## 会話

**kaiwa**  
Conversation  
(continued from November)

Mr. Pole is having a conversation with his client, Ms. Chida, the general manager. Please fill in the blanks by using hints given in English.

Ms. Chida : Pole-san, it seems like your business keeps you busy.

ポールさん  ですね。  
**Pole-san**  **desu ne**

Pole : Yes, I want to thank you for that...

はい お陰さまで  thank you for that...  
**hai okagesama de**

Ms. Chida : So, how did that matter last month go?

先日の件  how did ~?  
**senjitsu no ken**

I explained it to my bosses, just in case...

一応 上には  が...  
**ichiō ue niwa**  **ga...**

Pole : I'm sorry to have bothered you so much.

いろいろと  have bothered you  
**iroiro to**

But, it went well, thanks to you.

お陰さまで  it went well  
**okage-sama de**

I do appreciate all your kindness.

本当にありがとうございました。  
**hontō ni arigatō gozaimashita**

Ms. Chida : Oh, good! That's nice to hear!

そう  nice to hear  
**sō**

Pole : In fact, the reason I am here today is to express my gratitude.

In fact, 今日はその件のお礼に伺ったんです。  
**kyō wa sono ken no orei ni ukagattan desu**

..... Concluding the discussion .....

Pole : I hope that we can maintain a good business relationship.

今後とも  keep the good business relationship  
**kongo-tomo**

Answers		
① お忙しそう <b>oisogashi-sō</b>	② どうか... <b>dōnika</b>	③ どうなりましたか。 <b>dōnarimashita ka</b>
④ 話しておきました <b>hanashite-okimashita</b>	⑤ お手数をお掛け致しました。 <b>otesū o okake-itashimashita</b>	⑥ 上手く行きました。 <b>umaku-ikimashita</b>
⑦ それは良かった。 <b>sore wa yokatta</b>	⑧ 実は <b>jitsu wa</b>	⑨ どうぞよろしく願い致します。 <b>dōzo yoroshiku onegai-itashimasu</b>

With cooperation from Yasuhiro Koga