



Learn Japanese Pod with Ami and Alex

Podcast 18: How to say must in Japanese

In this lesson you will learn the following:

- ✓ How to say you must do something in Japanese
- ✓ Learn useful verbs for daily life for expressing something has to be done

LEVEL: Upper Beginner

SITUATION: You are telling your friend that you have to do some things.



Introduction

In this lesson you are going to learn how to say "must" in Japanese. Here's the problem. There are a confusing number of ways to say it. Just look at this list of phrases which all mean the same thing:

How to say I must do something in Japanese.

| | |
|------------|-----------------------|
| しなければなりません | Shinakereba narimasen |
| しなければいけません | Shinakereba ikemasen |
| しなくてはいけません | Shinakute wa ikemasen |
| しなくちゃいけません | Shinakucha ikemasen |
| しなきゃいけません | Shinakya ikemasen |
| しないといけません | Shinai to ikemasen |
| しなくちゃ | Shinakucha |
| しなきゃ | Shinakya |
| しないと | Shinai to |

Not only that but each way of saying "must" in Japanese has a different level of politeness associated with it for different social situations. It's also quite common for Japanese schools and textbooks to only teach the formal way of saying of "must". However, in daily life in Japan, you will notice that most of the time, people tend to use the casual form.

But fear not dear student of Japanese, Learn Japanese Pod will help you to navigate this linguistic confusion. We are all about teaching you the most useful and natural Japanese for daily life in Japan. Therefore, this lesson will exclusively focus on the casual form which in my experience is the most useful form to know.

But before we do, let's briefly study the grammar and a little of the culture behind this.

Grammar: How to say "must" in Japanese

One of the most formal and common ways you will be taught "must" in Japanese is:

| | |
|-------------------|------------------------------|
| しなければなりません | Shinakereba narimasen |
|-------------------|------------------------------|



This is made from two parts "Shinakereba" which means "If I do not" and "Narimasen" which means "It is not allowed". So this literally means, "it is not allowed if I do not do it" or "It will be bad if I don't do it".

This two part form is used for most levels of politeness

| <i>If I don't do it</i> | <i>It will not be allowed</i> |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Shinakereba | Narimasen |
| Shinakereba | Ikemasen |
| Shinakya | Ikemasen |

There is no direct way of saying must in Japanese so this indirect double negative form is used. This roundabout way of saying "must" in Japanese perhaps reflects the way Japanese shy away from direct language and confrontational statements.

The most common way to say "must" in Japanese

As you will discover when you come to Japan, most people in daily conversation use the common form. Instead of using the tongue twisting "*Shinakereba narimasen*" you can drop the *-nakereba narimasen* and simply add *-kya* to give you *shinakya* - I must do something.

The formal way of saying I have to clean the house is:

掃除しなければなりません - Sōji shinakereba narimasen - I have to clean (the house)

However, the more common and easy way to say that is

掃除しなきゃ - Sōji shinakya - I have to clean



How to construct the casual form of "must" in Japanese

To say you must do something using other verbs using the casual form, simply follow these steps:

Step 1) Take the negative casual form of a verb, for example:

| | | |
|------|----------------|-----------|
| しない | <i>Shinai</i> | Don't do |
| 行かない | <i>Ikanai</i> | Don't go |
| 食べない | <i>Tabenai</i> | Don't eat |
| 買わない | <i>Kawanai</i> | Don't buy |

Step 2) Replace the *-i* at the end of the verb with *-kya*

| | | |
|-------|------------------|------------------------|
| しなきゃ | <i>Shinakya</i> | I must do (something) |
| 行かなきゃ | <i>Ikanakya</i> | I must go (somewhere) |
| 食べなきゃ | <i>Tabenakya</i> | I must eat (something) |
| 買わなきゃ | <i>Kawanakya</i> | I must buy (something) |

Finally, there are three common casual forms:

- 1) しなきゃ *Shinakya*
- 2) しなくちゃ *Shinakucha*
- 3) しないと *Shinai to*

Sometimes people will add *いけない* to the end of these forms to make:

- しなきゃいけない
- しなくちゃいけない
- しないといけない

You can use any of these forms in a casual setting to say you must do something. This lesson will focus on using just *shinakya*.



Main Dialog

| | | | |
|----|---|--|---|
| A: | ごめん、もう行かなきゃ。 | <i>Gomen mō ikanakya.</i> | Sorry, I have to go. |
| B: | え？なんで？ | <i>E? Nande?</i> | Eh? Why? |
| A: | 明日早く起きなきゃ。 | <i>Ashita hayaku ikinakya.</i> | Tomorrow I have to wake up early. |
| B: | 何かあるの？ | <i>Nani ka aru?</i> | Do you have something? |
| A: | 明日色々しなきゃいけないんだよね。 | <i>Ashita iroiro shinakya ikenain da yo ne.</i> | Tomorrow I have to do various things. |
| B: | 何を？ | <i>Nani o?</i> | What? |
| A: | まず部屋が汚いから掃除しなきゃ。後、彼女が来るから料理作らなきゃ。じゃあ... | <i>Mazu, heya ga kitanai kara sōji shinakya. Ato, kanojo ga kuru kara ryōri o tsukuranakya. Jaa...</i> | First, as my room is dirty I have to clean. Then because my girlfriend is coming I have to make some food. Right... |
| B: | ちょっと待て、お会計は？ | <i>Chotto matte, okaikei wa?</i> | Wait, what about the bill? |
| A: | そうだった、お金払わなきゃね。 | <i>Sō datta, okane harawanakya.</i> | Oh right. I have to pay! |



Other examples

Here are some more examples of how you can say you must do something:

- 1) 明日5時に起きなきゃ、めどくさい。
Ashita goji ni okinakya, mendokusai
Tomorrow I have to wake up at 5am, what a hassle.
- 2) まずいけど薬飲まなきゃ。
Mazui kedo kusuri nomanakya
It doesn't taste good but I have take (drink) this medicine
- 3) あ、買い物忘れちゃった、買わなきゃ！
A, kaimono wasurechatta, kawanakya!
Ah, I forgot the shopping. I have to buy something!
- 4) もう時間だ。行かなきゃ！
Mo jikan da. Ikanakya!
It's time. I have to go.
- 5) この部屋超汚い、掃除しなきゃ！
Kono heya chō kitanai, sōji shinakya.
This room is super dirty, I have to clean it.
- 6) 明日テストがあるから勉強しなきゃ。
Ashita tesuto ga aru kara benkō shinakya.
Tomorrow I have a test so I have to study.
- 7) 東京がゴジラに攻められてるから逃げなきゃ。
Tōkyō ga gojira ni semerareteru kara nigenakya.
Godzilla is attacking Tokyo so we have to run!



Random Phrase of the Week

飯テロ Meshi Tero

This is used to make fun of people post pictures what they are eating on social media. It also refers to the way your friends are “terrorised” by the these pictures especially when they are hungry.



Hi, this is Alex, the creator of Learn Japanese Pod. Thanks for downloading these show notes, I hope you find them useful. If you need any help with your Japanese or have any questions or comments please drop me a line at info@learnjapanesepod.com

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Enjoy!

Alex