

The Magic Triplet

Remember all verbs in these three common forms: (1) dictionary (plain nonpast) form; (2) - (conjunctive) form; (3) - (negative plain past) form. For example, "go" is:

/ /

All other conjugations are built from one of these three.

Nonpast

Plain	Polite	English
(dictionary form)	replace -[w]anai with -imasu, or -nai with -masu.	
	ikanai → ikimasu	go
	iwanaï → iimasu	say
	minai → mimasu	see

Nonpast Negative

Plain	Polite	English
(form)	replace -[w]anai with -imasen, or -nai with -masen.	
	ikanai → ikimasen	don't go
	iwanaï → iimasen	don't say
	minai → mimasen	don't see

Volitional (Let's/Shall)

Plain	Polite	English
replace -[w]anai with -ou, or -nai with -you	replace -[w]anai with -imashou, or -nai with -mashou	
ikanai → ikou	ikanai → ikimashou	let's go
iwanaï → iou	iwanaï → iimashou	let's say
minai → miyou	minai → mimashou	let's see

Past

Plain	Polite	English
replace - with -	replace -[w]anai with -imashita, or -nai with -mashita	
→	ikanai → ikimashita	went
→	iwanaï →	said
→	minai → mimashita	saw



Masu Stem (and its many uses)

Form the "masu stem" by simply removing `u` from the polite nonpast form (or from the `masu` form, remove `mai` and change `-[w]a` to `i`). The result is called the **masu stem** (*renyoukei*), and has many uses.

Stem...	Usage/Meaning	Example	English
+	want to ~		want to eat want to go
+ (wa)	no way I will ~		no way I'll eat no way I'll go
+	easy to ~		easy to understand
+	hard to ~		hard to understand
+	~ too much		eat too much drink too much
+	while ~		while walking while working
+	in order to ~		in order to eat in order to see

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