

もう (Mou) and まだ (Mada) in Japanese

How to Say “Already” and “Not Yet” in Japanese starts with two essential words: もう (mou) and まだ (mada). At first, the basic contrast seems simple. もう often means “already,” while まだ often means “not yet.” However, both words change meaning depending on the sentence structure around them.

For example:

もう食べました。
Mou tabemashita.
I already ate.

まだ食べていません。
Mada tabete imasen.
I have not eaten yet.

The first sentence tells us that the action is complete. The second tells us that the action has not happened so far.

This difference is the foundation of how もう and まだ are used in Japanese. However, もう can also mean “anymore” or “again,” while まだ can mean “still.” The verb form that follows these words often determines the meaning.

Consider these examples:

まだ雨が降っています。
Mada ame ga futte imasu.
It is still raining.

もう食べません。
Mou tabemasen.
I will not eat anymore.

Because of these changes in meaning, it is important to learn もう (mou) and まだ (mada) as part of complete sentence patterns rather than as simple one-word translations.

For learners building a strong foundation in beginner Japanese grammar, Mastering Japanese Grammar for JLPT N5 provides structured explanations and examples of essential patterns used in everyday Japanese.

How Do You Say “Already” in Japanese?

The most common way to say “already” in Japanese is もう (**mou**). It is usually placed before the verb and often indicates that an action has happened or been completed before the expected time.

A common sentence pattern is:

もう + past tense verb

For example:

もう食べました。

Mou tabemashita.

I already ate.

もう終わりました。

Mou owarimashita.

I already finished.

もう宿題をしました。

Mou shukudai o shimashita.

I already did my homework.

もう日本に着きました。

Mou Nihon ni tsukimashita.

I already arrived in Japan.

In each example, the action is presented as complete. The speaker is telling the listener that it has happened before now.

もう can also appear with the ている form when something has already happened and its result is still relevant.

もう結婚しています。

Mou kekkon shite imasu.

I am already married.

もう知っています。

Mou shitte imasu.

I already know.

The exact English translation can change depending on the verb and context, but the basic idea remains the same: something has already reached a particular state or point.

Questions with もう are also very common in everyday Japanese:

もう食べましたか。

Mou tabemashita ka.

Have you already eaten?

もう終わりましたか。

Mou owarimashita ka.

Have you finished already?

もう行きましたか。
Mou ikimashita ka.
Have you already gone?

In these questions, もう asks whether the expected action has happened by now. The word is especially useful when the speaker thinks there is a possibility that the action is already complete.

How Do You Use もう (Mou) with Japanese Verbs?

もう is most commonly used with verbs to show that an action has already happened or reached a particular stage. In these sentences, it often appears before the verb.

もう + Past Tense

The past tense is one of the most common patterns with もう. It shows that an action is already complete.

もう食べました。
Mou tabemashita.
I already ate.

もう宿題を終えました。
Mou shukudai o oemashita.
I already finished my homework.

もうその映画を見ました。
Mou sono eiga o mimashita.
I already watched that movie.

もう日本に行きました。
Mou Nihon ni ikimashita.
I already went to Japan.

In everyday conversation, もう often gives the sentence a sense of completion. The action happened, so it does not need to be done now.

もう + ています

もう can also be used with verbs that describe a current state or an action whose result continues into the present.

もう知っています。
Mou shitte imasu.
I already know.

もう結婚しています。
Mou kekkon shite imasu.
I am already married.

もう準備できています。
Mou junbi dekite imasu.
I am already prepared.

In these examples, もう does not simply tell us that something happened in the past. It shows that a state has already been reached.

Can もう Be Used with a Negative Verb?

Yes. When もう is used with a negative verb, its meaning often changes from “already” to “not anymore” or “no longer.”

For example:

もう食べません。
Mou tabemasen.
I will not eat anymore.

もう行きません。
Mou ikimasen.
I will not go anymore.

もうありません。
Mou arimasen.
There is no more left.

The exact meaning depends on context. In もう食べません, the speaker may mean that they have finished eating and do not want any more food. In もうありません, the sentence can mean that something has run out or is no longer available.

This pattern is important because the same word, もう, can mean “already” in a positive sentence and “not anymore” or “no longer” in a negative sentence. The verb form helps determine which meaning is intended.

How Do You Say “Not Yet” in Japanese?

The most common way to say “not yet” in Japanese is まだ (**mada**). When まだ is used to mean “not yet,” it usually appears with a negative verb.

A common pattern is:

まだ + negative verb

For actions that are expected to happen or be completed, Japanese often uses the following structure:

まだ + て-form + いません

For example:

まだ食べていません。
Mada tabete imasen.
I have not eaten yet.

まだ終わっていません。
Mada owatte imasen.
I have not finished yet.

まだ宿題をしていません。
Mada shukudai o shite imasen.
I have not done my homework yet.

まだ日本に行っていないです。
Mada Nihon ni itte imasen.
I have not been to Japan yet.

In each sentence, まだ tells us that the action has not happened up to the present moment, although there is an expectation that it may happen later.

Why Is the Negative Verb Important?

The negative form is an important part of expressing “not yet” with まだ. Compare these two sentences:

まだ食べていません。
Mada tabete imasen.
I have not eaten yet.

まだ食べています。
Mada tabete imasu.
I am still eating.

The first sentence uses a negative form and means “not yet.” The second uses a positive form and means “still.”

This difference is one of the most important rules for understanding まだ:

→ まだ + negative verb often means “not yet”

→ まだ + positive verb often means “still”

Another common example is:

まだ来ていません。
Mada kite imasen.
They have not come yet.

The speaker expects the person to arrive, but the action has not happened so far.

In casual Japanese, you may also hear shorter negative forms:

まだ食べてない。
Mada tabetenai.
I have not eaten yet.

まだ終わってない。
Mada owattenai.
I have not finished yet.

These are casual versions of まだ食べていません and まだ終わっていません. The basic meaning remains the same, but the level of politeness changes.

What Is the Difference Between もう (Mou) and まだ (Mada)?

The main difference between もう and まだ is the way they describe the progress of an action or situation.

もう often focuses on something that has already happened, changed, or been completed. まだ often focuses on something that has not happened yet or is still continuing.

Compare these two sentences:

もう食べました。
Mou tabemashita.
I already ate.

まだ食べていません。
Mada tabete imasen.
I have not eaten yet.

The first sentence tells us that the action of eating is complete. The second tells us that the action has not happened up to this point.

Japanese	Main Meaning	Common Pattern
もう (mou)	already	もう + completed action
まだ (mada)	not yet	まだ + negative verb

Another example makes the contrast clear:

もう終わりました。
Mou owarimashita.
I have already finished.

まだ終わっていません。
Mada owatte imasen.
I have not finished yet.

The speaker can choose もう when the action is complete and まだ when it is still incomplete.

How Do もう and まだ Change the Meaning of a Sentence?

The difference becomes even clearer when the same verb is used with both words.

もう日本に行きました。

Mou Nihon ni ikimashita.

I have already gone to Japan.

まだ日本に行っていません。

Mada Nihon ni itte imasen.

I have not been to Japan yet.

もう宿題をしました。

Mou shukudai o shimashita.

I already did my homework.

まだ宿題をしていません。

Mada shukudai o shite imasen.

I have not done my homework yet.

In these examples, もう presents the action as complete, while まだ presents it as not yet complete.

However, the comparison is not simply もう equals “already” and まだ equals “not yet” in every sentence. The verb form is also important.

For example:

まだ雨が降っています。

Mada ame ga futte imasu.

It is still raining.

Here, まだ is followed by a positive verb, so it means “still,” not “not yet.”

Similarly:

もう食べません。

Mou tabemasen.

I will not eat anymore.

Here, もう is followed by a negative verb, so it means “not anymore” rather than “already.”

For the basic contrast, remember these patterns:

→ もう + completed action = already

→ まだ + negative verb = not yet

This is the most useful starting point for understanding もう and まだ in everyday Japanese.

How Do You Ask Questions with もう and まだ?

Both もう and まだ can be used in questions, but they ask about different stages of an action. A question with もう usually asks whether something has already happened. A question with まだ can ask whether something is still continuing or whether a situation has not changed.

How Do You Ask “Have You Already...?” with もう?

The common pattern is:

もう + past tense verb + か

For example:

もう食べましたか。

Mou tabemashita ka.

Have you already eaten?

もう終わりましたか。

Mou owarimashita ka.

Have you already finished?

もう宿題をしましたか。

Mou shukudai o shimashita ka.

Have you already done your homework?

もう日本に行きましたか。

Mou Nihon ni ikimashita ka.

Have you already gone to Japan?

In these questions, the speaker asks whether the action has happened by now.

The answer can use もう:

はい、もう食べました。

Hai, mou tabemashita.

Yes, I already ate.

Or it can use まだ:

いいえ、まだ食べていません。

Iie, mada tabete imasen.

No, I have not eaten yet.

This is a natural contrast in Japanese conversation. The question asks whether something is already complete, and the answer can confirm completion with もう or state that it has not happened yet with まだ.

How Do You Use まだ in Questions?

まだ can also appear in questions, especially when the speaker wants to know whether a situation is still continuing or whether something has not changed.

For example:

まだ雨が降っていますか。

Mada ame ga futte imasu ka.

Is it still raining?

まだ日本に住んでいますか。

Mada Nihon ni sunde imasu ka.

Do you still live in Japan?

These questions use a positive verb, so まだ means “still.”

In casual conversation, まだですか can also be used to ask whether something is still not complete or whether the listener is not ready yet.

まだですか。

Mada desu ka.

Not yet?

The exact translation depends on the situation. For example, if someone asks whether you have finished your work, you might simply answer:

まだです。

Mada desu.

Not yet.

You can also hear もうですか in some contexts:

もうですか。

Mou desu ka.

Already?

This often expresses surprise that something has happened or been completed sooner than expected.

For example, if a movie ends quickly, you might say:

もうですか。

Mou desu ka.

Already?

In everyday Japanese, もう and まだ are especially useful in questions and answers because they let speakers quickly express whether something has happened, has not happened yet, or is still continuing.

How Do You Say “I Have Not Finished Yet” in Japanese?

A natural way to say “I have not finished yet” in Japanese is:

まだ終わっていません。
Mada owatte imasen.
I have not finished yet.

This sentence uses one of the most common patterns for expressing an action that has not been completed:

まだ + て-form + いません

The verb is 終わる (owaru), which means “to finish” or “to end.” Its て-form is 終わって (owatte), so the full expression is 終わっていません.

The same pattern can be used with many other actions.

まだ食べていません。
Mada tabete imasen.
I have not eaten yet.

まだ宿題をしていません。
Mada shukudai o shite imasen.
I have not done my homework yet.

まだ来ていません。
Mada kite imasen.
They have not come yet.

まだ見ていません。
Mada mite imasen.
I have not seen it yet.

In each sentence, まだ means that the action has not happened or has not been completed up to the present moment.

Why Is the ている Form Used?

Japanese often uses the ている form to express the current result or status of an action. When it is made negative, the sentence can express that the expected action has not yet happened.

For example:

終わっています。
Owatte imasu.
It is finished.

終わっていません。
Owatte imasen.
It is not finished.

Adding まだ gives us:

まだ終わっていません。
Mada owatte imasen.
It has not finished yet.

This structure is especially useful when talking about work, homework, meals, travel, messages, and other actions that are expected to be completed.

How Do You Say It Casually?

In casual Japanese, the polite いません often changes to いない.

まだ終わっていない。
Mada owatte inai.
I have not finished yet.

まだ食べていない。
Mada tabete inai.
I have not eaten yet.

A more casual spoken form is also common:

まだ終わってない。
Mada owattenai.
I have not finished yet.

The meaning remains the same, but the level of politeness changes. Use まだ + ていません in polite situations and まだ + ていない or まだ + てない in casual conversation.

Does まだ (Mada) Always Mean “Not Yet”?

No. While まだ is commonly used to mean “not yet,” its meaning changes depending on the form of the verb that follows it.

When まだ is used with a negative verb, it usually means “not yet.”

まだ食べていません。
Mada tabete imasen.
I have not eaten yet.

まだ終わっていません。
Mada owatte imasen.
I have not finished yet.

まだ来ていません。
Mada kite imasen.
They have not come yet.

In these sentences, the expected action has not happened up to the present moment.

まだ **Can Also Mean “Still”**

When まだ is used with a positive verb, it often means “still.” In this case, the action or situation is continuing.

For example:

まだ雨が降っています。
Mada ame ga futte imasu.
It is still raining.

まだ日本に住んでいます。
Mada Nihon ni sunde imasu.
I still live in Japan.

まだ勉強しています。
Mada benkyou shite imasu.
I am still studying.

まだ寝ています。
Mada nete imasu.
They are still sleeping.

The difference is clear when we compare two sentences:

まだ食べています。
Mada tabete imasu.
I am still eating.

まだ食べていません。
Mada tabete imasen.
I have not eaten yet.

The first sentence uses a positive verb, so まだ means “still.” The second uses a negative verb, so まだ means “not yet.”

This is one of the most important points to remember about まだ:

→ まだ + positive verb often means “still”

→ まだ + negative verb often means “not yet”

The same basic contrast appears in casual Japanese:

まだ雨が降ってる。
Mada ame ga futteru.
It is still raining.

まだ食べてない。
Mada tabetenai.
I have not eaten yet.

Understanding the verb form is therefore essential. If you only memorize まだ as “not yet,” you may misunderstand many natural Japanese sentences.

Does もう (Mou) Always Mean “Already”?

No. Although もう commonly means “already,” it can also mean “anymore,” “no longer,” or “again,” depending on the expression and verb form that follows it.

もう Can Mean “Already”

With an action that has already happened or been completed, もう usually means “already.”

もう食べました。
Mou tabemashita.
I already ate.

もう終わりました。
Mou owarimashita.
I have already finished.

もう帰りました。
Mou kaerimashita.
I already went home.

In these sentences, the action has happened before the present moment.

もう Can Mean “Anymore” or “No Longer”

When もう is used with a negative verb, it often means “anymore” or “no longer.”

もう食べません。
Mou tabemasen.
I will not eat anymore.

もう行きません。
Mou ikimasen.
I will not go anymore.

もう待ちません。
Mou machimasen.
I will not wait anymore.

もうありません。
Mou arimasen.
There is no more left.

The negative verb changes the meaning. Instead of saying that something has already happened, もう indicates that something will no longer happen or is no longer available.

What Does もう一度 (Mou Ichido) Mean?

もう can also mean “again” in the expression もう一度 (mou ichido).

もう一度 means “one more time” or “again.”

もう一度言ってください。
Mou ichido itte kudasai.
Please say it again.

もう一度説明してください。
Mou ichido setsumei shite kudasai.
Please explain it again.

もう一度見たいです。
Mou ichido mitai desu.
I want to see it again.

Here, もう does not mean “already.” The full expression もう一度 means that the speaker wants something to happen one more time.

The most important patterns are:

→ もう + completed action = already

→ もう + negative verb = not anymore or no longer

→ もう一度 = again or one more time

This is why もう should not be treated as a simple one-word translation of “already.” Its meaning depends on the sentence and the words around it.

What Is the Difference Between まだ and まだまだ?

まだ and まだまだ are related expressions, but they are not interchangeable. まだ can mean “still” or “not yet,” while まだまだ usually adds emphasis and suggests that something is far from complete, sufficient, or finished.

For example:

まだ勉強しています。

Mada benkyou shite imasu.

I am still studying.

This simply tells us that the action is continuing.

Now compare:

まだまだ勉強しなければなりません。

Madamada benkyou shinakereba narimasen.

I still have a lot more studying to do.

Here, まだまだ emphasizes that there is considerably more work remaining.

How Is まだまだ Used?

One common use of まだまだ is to show that someone or something is not yet at the expected level or that there is still a long way to go.

For example:

まだまだです。

Madamada desu.

I still have a long way to go.

This expression is often used as a modest response when someone praises your skills or ability.

Another example is:

日本語はまだまだです。

Nihongo wa madamada desu.

My Japanese still needs a lot of work.

The speaker means that their Japanese is far from the level they want to reach.

Can まだまだ Mean “Still More”?

Yes. まだまだ can also mean that a large amount or considerable degree remains.

For example:

まだまだ時間があります。

Madamada jikan ga arimasu.

We still have plenty of time.

まだまだ若いです。
Madamada wakai desu.
I am still very young.

In these examples, まだまだ strengthens the meaning of まだ.

A useful distinction is:

→ まだ means “still” or “not yet,” depending on the sentence.

→ まだまだ adds emphasis and often means “still a lot more,” “far from finished,” or “not nearly enough.”

For example:

まだ食べていません。
Mada tabete imasen.
I have not eaten yet.

This does not normally require まだまだ. However, when the idea involves a significant amount of time, work, progress, or something remaining, まだまだ can express a stronger meaning.

Common Mistakes with もう and まだ

The meanings of もう and まだ are closely connected to time, progress, and completion. Because both words can change meaning depending on the verb form, learners often make mistakes when they translate directly from English.

Mistake 1: Using まだ with a Positive Verb to Mean “Not Yet”

When まだ is followed by a positive verb, it usually means “still,” not “not yet.”

Incorrect:

まだ食べています。
Mada tabete imasu.
I have not eaten yet.

The Japanese sentence actually means:

まだ食べています。
Mada tabete imasu.
I am still eating.

To say “I have not eaten yet,” use a negative verb:

まだ食べていません。
Mada tabete imasen.
I have not eaten yet.

This is one of the most important patterns to remember:

まだ + positive verb = still

まだ + negative verb = not yet

Mistake 2: Using もう for an Action That Has Not Happened

もう often means that something has already happened, changed, or reached a particular stage.

For example:

もう宿題をしました。

Mou shukudai o shimashita.

I already did my homework.

If the homework has not been done yet, もう is not the correct choice.

Use:

まだ宿題をしていません。

Mada shukudai o shite imasen.

I have not done my homework yet.

The choice depends on the status of the action. If it is complete, もう may be appropriate. If it has not happened yet, まだ with a negative verb is usually the natural pattern.

Mistake 3: Translating “Not Yet” as まだ Without Changing the Verb

Learners sometimes remember that まだ means “not yet” and add it to a positive sentence.

For example:

Incorrect:

まだ終わります。

Mada owarimasu.

I have not finished yet.

This sentence does not naturally express the intended meaning. To say that something has not finished yet, use a negative form:

まだ終わっていません。

Mada owatte imasen.

I have not finished yet.

The word まだ works together with the negative verb to create the meaning “not yet.”

Mistake 4: Confusing もう with もう一度

もう by itself and もう一度 have different uses.

Compare:

もう食べました。

Mou tabemashita.

I already ate.

もう一度食べます。

Mou ichido tabemasu.

I will eat again.

The first sentence means that the action is complete. The second means that the speaker will repeat the action.

もう一度 is a fixed expression meaning “one more time” or “again.” It should be understood as a complete expression rather than simply as もう plus an unrelated word.

Mistake 5: Thinking もう Always Means “Already”

The meaning of もう changes when it is used with a negative verb.

Compare:

もう食べました。

Mou tabemashita.

I already ate.

もう食べません。

Mou tabemasen.

I will not eat anymore.

The positive sentence refers to an action that is already complete. The negative sentence means that the action will not continue or happen anymore.

Mistake 6: Confusing まだ with まだまだ

まだ and まだまだ are related, but まだまだ adds emphasis.

For example:

まだ勉強しています。

Mada benkyou shite imasu.

I am still studying.

This simply means that the action continues.

Now compare:

まだまだ勉強しなければなりません。
Madamada benkyou shinakereba narimasen.
I still have a lot more studying to do.

The second sentence emphasizes that a considerable amount of studying remains.

Mistake 7: Translating Every Sentence Word for Word

Japanese and English do not always express time and completion through the same grammatical structure. The English word “yet,” for example, can be translated naturally with まだ only when the Japanese sentence uses the appropriate negative pattern.

A useful approach is to learn complete sentence patterns:

もう食べました。
Mou tabemashita.
I already ate.

まだ食べていません。
Mada tabete imasen.
I have not eaten yet.

まだ食べています。
Mada tabete imasu.
I am still eating.

Once these basic patterns become familiar, choosing between もう and まだ becomes much easier in everyday Japanese.

How Do You Choose Between もう and まだ?

Choosing between もう and まだ becomes easier when you first decide whether the action has already happened, has not happened yet, or is still continuing. The verb form then helps you choose the correct word and sentence pattern.

Use もう When Something Has Already Happened

Use もう when an action is already complete or a change has already taken place.

もう食べました。
Mou tabemashita.
I already ate.

もう終わりました。
Mou owarimashita.
I have already finished.

もう着きました。
Mou tsukimashita.
I have already arrived.

This is the most common use of もう when saying “already” in Japanese.

Use まだ When Something Has Not Happened Yet

Use まだ with a negative verb when an expected action has not happened or been completed.

まだ食べていません。
Mada tabete imasen.
I have not eaten yet.

まだ終わっていません。
Mada owatte imasen.
I have not finished yet.

まだ来ていません。
Mada kite imasen.
They have not come yet.

The basic pattern is:

まだ + negative verb = not yet

Use まだ When Something Is Still Continuing

Use まだ with a positive verb when an action or state continues.

まだ食べています。
Mada tabete imasu.
I am still eating.

まだ雨が降っています。
Mada ame ga futte imasu.
It is still raining.

まだ東京に住んでいます。
Mada Tokyo ni sunde imasu.
I still live in Tokyo.

The basic pattern is:

まだ + positive verb = still

Use もう with a Negative Verb for “Anymore”

When もう is used with a negative verb, it can mean “not anymore” or “no longer.”

もう待ちません。
Mou machimasen.
I will not wait anymore.

もう行きません。
Mou ikimasen.
I will not go anymore.

もうありません。
Mou arimasen.
There is no more left.

A simple decision guide is:

- Has the action already happened or finished? Use もう.
- Has the action not happened yet? Use まだ with a negative verb.
- Is the action or situation still continuing? Use まだ with a positive verb.
- Has something stopped or become unavailable? Use もう with a negative form.

The following pair shows the main difference clearly:

もう終わりました。
Mou owarimashita.
I have already finished.

まだ終わっていません。
Mada owatte imasen.
I have not finished yet.

For learners who want to practice these patterns alongside other essential beginner grammar, **Mastering Japanese Grammar for JLPT N5** provides structured explanations and examples of the grammar used in everyday Japanese.

Key Takeaway

- もう (**mou**) is the main Japanese word for “already” when an action has happened or been completed.
- まだ (**mada**) commonly means “not yet” when it is used with a negative verb.
- もう食べました means “I already ate.”
- まだ食べていません means “I have not eaten yet.”
- まだ with a positive verb usually means “still.”
- まだ食べています means “I am still eating.”

- もう with a negative verb can mean “not anymore” or “no longer.”
- もう食べません means “I will not eat anymore.”
- もう一度 (**mou ichido**) means “again” or “one more time.”
- まだまだ (**madamada**) adds emphasis and can mean “still a lot more” or suggest that something is far from complete.
- The verb form is essential when choosing between もう and まだ.
- The basic patterns are もう + **completed action** = **already**, まだ + **negative verb** = **not yet**, and まだ + **positive verb** = **still**.
- Learning complete sentence patterns makes it easier to use もう and まだ naturally in everyday Japanese.

Conclusion

How to Say “Already” and “Not Yet” in Japanese becomes much easier when you understand the sentence patterns used with もう (**mou**) and まだ (**mada**). The two words are closely connected to time, completion, and whether an action has happened.

もう commonly means “already” when something has happened or been completed. With a negative verb, it can mean “not anymore” or “no longer,” while もう一度 means “again” or “one more time.”

まだ commonly means “not yet” when used with a negative verb. With a positive verb, it usually means “still,” showing that an action or situation continues.

The key is to look at the entire sentence rather than translating もう and まだ as single English words. A completed action often uses もう, an action that has not happened yet commonly uses まだ with a negative verb, and an action that continues often uses まだ with a positive verb.

Once these patterns become familiar, learners can use もう and まだ more naturally in everyday Japanese. For further practice with essential JLPT N5 grammar and sentence structures, **Mastering Japanese Grammar for JLPT N5** provides structured lessons and practical examples for beginner learners.