

List of interrogative words and phrases(wh- in Japanese)

All of the words and phrases listed cannot be used with 「は」. Especially, those used as subjects are always marked with 「が」.

B Interrogative Words and Phrases requesting answers with numerals

All of them function as nouns so that those can be used with のN/の.

B1 Those not including なん (except なんさい)

	Example and Typical Answer	Day	Note
いくら	いくらですか。-500えんです。	3	
いくつ	パンをいくつかいましたか。-いくつか (or 5こ) きました。/いくつか (or 5こ) です。 おとうさんは、いくつ/なんさい/おいくつですか。		「いくつ」 is not a cover word for asking how many. So it is less often 「いくつ」 and 「なん+counter」 are exchangeable. See below 「いくつ」 and 「なんさい」 are neutral in politeness
なんさい	-27さいです。	7	
おいくつ		7	polite expression, only for age
どのくらい/どのぐらい	しんじゅくえきまでどのくらいかかりますか。 15ふんくらいです。/480えんです。 1じかんはんくらいかかります。/2500円くらいかかります。	17	「どのくらいかかりますか」 is used for asking duration of time or cost. In answering, rather neutral answer is with 「です」 as seen in first examples. If you answer with 「かかります」, it sounds like "it costs/takes as much as"

B2 Expressions of なん+N/counter(always なん, not なに)

「なん+counter」 "how many Ns" なんこ(D46)/なんにん(D10)/なんまい(D14)/なんだい(D14)/なんぼん(D21)/なんさつ(D24)/なんかこく(D47)
Expressions when you ask point of time more specifically (D5~D7) . Please be careful to letters in red. Those are confusing ones. なんねん/なんが つ /なんにち/なん ようび /なんじ/なん ぶん (「なんねんなんが つ 」, 「なんが つ なんにち」, 「なんじなん ぶん 」 etc. are also possible)
Similarly, when you ask duration of time, the following expressions are used(D17). 「かん」 is obligatory in 「なんしゅうかん」 and 「なんじかん」, otherwise optional. There is no cover expression for asking duration. But See 「どのぐらい」 above. なんねん(かん) /なん かげつ (かん) /なんにち(かん) /なん しゅうかん /なん じかん /なん ぶん (かん)

Remarks for further study

1) Politeness is a very important aspect of Japanese language. Whether polite expressions are necessary or not depends on both superior/inferior relation and familiarity. In this example, 「おとうと」 is the hearer's adult younger brother. In this case, the most important factor is the familiarity between the speaker and the hearer. When these two persons are familiar, then 「いくつ/なんさい」 are preferred, while when those are in unfamiliar relation, 「おいくつ」 is preferred. Which one between the speaker and the brother is actually older does not matter. The same principle applies to the case of asking the age of the hearer's parents or grandparents.
2) 「どのくらい/ぐらい」 is used for asking approximate number rather than the exact number. But the exact number can be used for the answer without 「くらい/ぐらい」. Sometimes 「ちょうど」 is added like 「ちょうど3000えんです」. Since 「ちょうど」 is roughly equivalent to English "just", 「ちょうど2318えんです」 is odd in most cases.
3) 「くらい/ぐらい」 can be added to almost all expressions in this section(section B), while in table A only 「どれ」 is applicable. 「どれくらい/どのくらい」 are very similar.

C non-nominal interrogative words

	Example and typical answer	Day	note
どうして	どうしてにほんへりゅうがくしましたか -にほんぶんがくをけんきゅうしたかったからです。	12	used for asking cause or purpose We study 「からです」 in Day34
どうですか	とうきょうのてんきはとうですか。-あめです。	8	

D Other Expressions with Interrogative Words and Phrases

1) Interrogatives with 「も」

A) As you can see in 「なにもたべません」 "I eat nothing / I do not eat anything", this expression is used for the total negation. (D4/D6)

Only interrogatives listed in A (except 「いつ」), and 「どうして」 in C have this usage.

Some other examples: 「どちらもすきじゃありません」 「どこもいきませんでした」

Case particles should be placed before 「も」 like 「どこにもコンビニがありません」

B) When 「も」 is added to the interrogatives asking quantity, 「いくつ」 in B1, 「なん+counter」 and ones asking duration of time such as 「なんかげつ」 in B2, many/much is implied, such as 「なんじかんもゲームをしました」 "I played a game (on the PC or cell phone) for many hours." (D30) This expression is used in positive sentences. (Case particles are placed before 「も」 as well.)

2) Interrogatives with 「でも」

「いつも」 is "always" or "usually", while 「いつでも」 (D24) is "at any time" like 「みんなきました。いつでもパーティをはじめることができます。」. This expression can be used with all the interrogatives, but can be used only in positive sentences. 「このみせのジェラート (gelato) はなにあじ (flavour) でもとてもおいしいです。」 (Case particles are placed before 「でも」, if necessary.)

2) Interrogatives with 「か」

This expression is used for indicating indefinite situation like English "someone" or "somewhere". (D20)

「なにかたべませんか」 "Would you like something to eat?"

Almost all interrogatives have this usage. The only exception at this stage of study is 「いつか」.

「いつか」 refers to sometime in future like 「いつかロンドンにいきたいです」 and cannot refer to the time of past.

「か」 should be placed immediately after the interrogative word such as 「だれかのほん」 "a book of someone"