Sentence endings 終助詞（しゅうじょし） shūjoshi · after adjectives, the next step · the feeling at the end

They don't change the meaning. They add feeling. A small sound at the very end of a line tells you how the speaker feels: sure or unsure, telling or checking, gentle or rough. English subtitles rarely show it, so it's the part learners miss.

よ yo · telling you

Something new for the listener: news, a warning, your opinion. You know it, they don't yet.

明日（あした）はテストだよ。
ashita wa tesuto da yo. · There's a test tomorrow, you know.

危（あぶ）ないよ!
abunai yo! · Watch out, it's dangerous!

Everyone. Said a lot, it can sound pushy.

ね ne · sharing, checking

Something you both see or feel. It invites the other person to agree.

いい天気（てんき）だね。
ii tenki da ne. · Nice weather, isn't it?

かわいいね。
kawaii ne. · Cute, huh?

Everyone, all the time. Long ねえ is warmer.

よね yo ne · right?

You're fairly sure, and you want the other person to confirm it.

明日（あした）だよね?
ashita da yo ne? · It's tomorrow, right?

これ、おいしいよね。
kore, oishii yo ne. · This is good, right?

Everyone. Always in this order: よ, then ね.

One line, different feelings

you hear	it means	the feeling it adds
おいしい oishii	**It's tasty.**	just a fact, or said to yourself
おいしいよ oishii yo	**It's tasty, try it!**	you haven't tried it, I'm telling you
おいしいね oishii ne	**Tasty, isn't it?**	we're both eating, I share the feeling
おいしいよね oishii yo ne	**It's tasty, right?**	I think you agree, I check
行（い）く iku	**I'm going.**	plain fact
行（い）くよ iku yo	**I'm going. / Come on, let's go.**	a heads-up, or hurrying someone
行（い）くね iku ne	**I'm off, OK?**	softly letting you know
行（い）くよね? iku yo ne?	**You're going, right?**	checking a plan

With strangers too: endings sit after です and ます as well. そうですね, that's right. いいですよ, sure, go ahead. よ, ね and よね are fine with anyone. Most endings on the next pages are casual.

Anime turns it up. Endings are a quick way to show who a character is, so shows exaggerate them: tough guys, posh ladies, cute mascots. Real people mix them far more gently. The notes tell you who really says what.

Meet a word you don't know? In Kitsumi, hover any word in Japanese subtitles to see its reading and meaning. Then come back here and work out the feeling the ending adds.

Rough and strong

ぞ · ぜ · な · さ · the sound of a fight scene

Strong endings push. They make a line louder and more sure of itself. In anime they mark the tough, the brave and the cocky. Use them with close friends, never with a teacher or a boss.

ぞ zo · strong, fired up

Pushes a statement hard. A shout to rally, a warning, or a promise to yourself.

行(い)くぞ!
iku zo! · Here we go! / Let's go!

負(ま)けないぞ。
makenai zo. · I won't lose.

来(く)るぞ!
kuru zo! · Here it comes!

Mostly male, and rough. In self-talk like よし、やるぞ, you hear it from almost anyone.

ぜ ze · cool, buddy-like

Like ぞ, but friendlier: let's do it together. It sounds tough and a bit showy.

行(い)こうぜ!
ikō ze! · Let's go!

いいぜ。
ii ze. · Sure, fine by me.

らくしょうだぜ。
rakushō da ze. · That's easy.

Male, casual. Rarer in real life than in anime, where heroes and rivals say it a lot.

な na · casual, or to yourself

A rougher ね, or a thought said out loud. Stretched to なあ, it sounds wistful.

いいな。
ii na. · Nice. / Lucky you.

遅(おそ)いな。
osoi na. · They're late, huh.

そうだな。
sō da na. · Yeah, I guess so.

Mostly men with friends. Anyone talking to themselves.

さ sa · filler, casual

A breath in the middle of a sentence, like you know or like. At the end, it sounds breezy.

あのさ、
ano sa, · Hey, listen,

それでさ、
sorede sa, · And so, like,

大丈夫(だいじょうぶ)さ。
daijōbu sa. · It'll be fine.

Casual, all genders mid-sentence. At the end, more often guys.

な after the dictionary form means don't

行(い)くな!	見(み)るな!	忘(わす)れるな。	触(さわ)るな!
iku na! · Don't go!	miru na! · Don't look!	wasureru na. · Don't forget.	sawaru na! · Don't touch it!

Two different な: after the dictionary form, a short, sharp な is a blunt order: いくな, don't go. After a statement, a soft な is just a feeling: いいな, nice. The voice tells them apart: the order is short and hard.

Same words, three moods

やるよ。
yaru yo. · I'll do it.
plain, telling you

やるぞ!
yaru zo! · I'm doing this!
fired up

やるぜ!
yaru ze! · Let's do this!
cool, showing off a bit

Rough is a costume. Real men use ぞ and ぜ much less than anime heroes, and many never say ぜ at all. If you copy a fight scene in real life, it sounds like you're quoting a show. Which is fine, if that's the joke.

Soft and wondering

わ · の · かな · かしら · っけ · か

Soft endings pull back. They make a line gentler, less sure, or more personal: a reason, a question you half ask yourself, a memory you're reaching for. Most are casual.

わ wa · soft, or just stating

Rising, it softens a statement. Falling and flat, in western Japan, it simply states a fact.

違(ちが)うわ。
chigau wa. · That's not it. (soft)

きれいだわ。
kirei da wa. · How pretty.

もう帰(かえ)るわ。
mō kaeru wa. · I'm heading home. (Kansai)

In fiction, a feminine, often grown-up or posh voice. Young women in Tokyo rarely say it that way now. In Kansai, men and women both say a flat わ.

の no · explaining, asking softly

Falling, it gives a reason. Rising, it asks gently and wants the story. After a noun, add な: なの.

頭(あたま)が痛(いた)いの。
atama ga itai no. · My head hurts, that's why.

どうしたの?
dō shita no? · What's wrong?

本当(ほんとう)なの?
hontō na no? · Is that true?

Questions with の: everyone. The explaining の on its own sounds soft; men more often say んだ (page 4).

かな · かしら ka na · kashira · I wonder

You're thinking out loud. Nobody has to answer, but someone might.

大丈夫(だいじょうぶ)かな。
daijōbu ka na. · I wonder if it's OK.

誰(だれ)かな?
dare ka na? · Who could it be?

来(く)るかしら。
kuru kashira. · I wonder if they'll come.

かな: everyone. かしら: feminine and a bit old-fashioned, like a mother or a refined lady in a show.

っけ kke · was it...?

You knew this once and it slipped. Use it when you're trying to remember.

何(なん)だっけ?
nan da kke? · What was it again?

そうだっけ?
sō da kke? · Was it? / Is that right?

言(い)ったっけ?
itta kke? · Did I tell you?

Everyone, casual. Polite: でしたっけ.

か: the question mark you can say

行(い)きますか。
ikimasu ka. · Are you going?
polite: the normal way to ask

行(い)く?
iku? · You going?
casual: no か, just a rising voice

分(わ)かったか?
wakatta ka? · Got it?
plain + か: blunt, like a coach or a boss

そうか。
sō ka. · I see. / Oh, right.
falling: something just clicked

Friends don't need か. With friends, a rising voice is enough: 行(い)く?, 食(た)べた?. Plain か at the end of a question sounds rough and bossy, so a hero shouts 分(わ)かったか and a kind friend says 分(わ)かった?. With です and ます, か is normal and polite.

You hear these every episode

じゃん · でしょ · だよ · んだ · っす

じゃん

jan · isn't it, casual

Points at something obvious, often with surprise or a little push.

いい**じゃん**!
ii jan! · That's great! / Come on, it's fine!

言(い)った**じゃん**。
itta jan. · I told you!

Young and casual, all genders. It started around Yokohama.

でしょ · だろ

desho · daro · right? I bet

You expect a yes. Also: no way!

嘘(うそ)**でしょ**!
uso desho! · No way! / You're kidding!

好(す)き**でしょ**?
suki desho? · You like it, right?

分(わ)かる**だろ**?
wakaru daro? · You get it, don't you?

でしょ: everyone. だろ: rough, mostly men. Full でしょう and だろう also mean probably.

だよ · だね

da yo · da ne · after nouns

だ (is) goes after a noun or na-adjective, then よ or ね.

そう**だよ**。
sō da yo. · That's right.

そう**だね**。
sō da ne. · Yeah, true.

Everyone. Women in anime often drop the だ: そうよ, そうね.

んだ · のだ

n da · no da · explaining

The の from page 3 plus だ. It gives the reason, or the real story.

行(い)く**んだ**。
iku n da. · I'm going. (that's how it is)

どこに行(い)く**んだ**?
doko ni iku n da? · Where are you going?

好(す)きな**んだ**。
suki na n da. · I really like it, you see.

んだ: casual, everyone. のだ: stiff or written. Polite: んです.

っす

ssu · polite-casual

です, squashed. Respectful, but relaxed.

そう**っす**!
sō ssu! · Yes! / That's right!

了解(りょうかい)**っす**。
ryōkai ssu. · Got it.

すごい**っす**!
sugoi ssu! · That's amazing!

Younger guys to seniors: sports teams, part-time jobs. Too casual for a boss or a stranger.

Stack them

Endings combine, in a fixed order. Learn the common stacks as one piece:

そう**なんだよね**。
sō na n da yo ne. · Yeah, that's the thing.

本当(ほんとう)**なのかな**?
hontō na no ka na? · I wonder if it's true.

知(し)らない**んだよ**。
shiranai n da yo. · I just don't know, OK?

Everyone, casual.

Character speech: one ending tells you who they are

でござる — **a samurai or ninja**
拙者(せっしゃ)は侍(さむらい)**でござる**。
sessha wa samurai de gozaru. · I am a samurai.

なのだ — **a quirky kid or a mascot**
ぼくの勝(か)ち**なのだ**!
boku no kachi na no da! · I win!

ですわ — **a rich young lady**
わたくしの勝(か)ち**ですわ**。
watakushi no kachi desu wa. · The win is mine.

じゃ — **an old man or a wise master**
わしは知(し)らん**のじゃ**。
washi wa shiran no ja. · I know nothing of it.

Real people don't talk like this. These are costumes. Writers use them so you know a character from one line. Nobody today says でござる or ですわ for real. じゃ is the one exception: in western Japan, around Hiroshima, people really do use it in place of だ.

Practice

twelve lines straight from anime · cover the right side

How: cover the right side with a strip of paper. Read the line out loud with the feeling, say what it means and what the ending adds, then slide the strip down to check.

1	行(い)くぞ!	**Here we go! / Let's go!**
	iku zo!	ぞ: fired up, rough
2	いいね!	**Nice! / I like it!**
	ii ne!	ね: sharing the feeling
3	知(し)らないよ。	**I don't know, OK?**
	shiranai yo.	よ: telling you, a bit firm
4	そうだっけ?	**Was it? / Is that right?**
	sō da kke?	っけ: trying to remember
5	大丈夫(だいじょうぶ)かな。	**I wonder if it's OK.**
	daijōbu ka na.	かな: worried, wondering
6	嘘(うそ)でしょ!	**No way!**
	uso desho!	でしょ: shock, can't believe it
7	行(い)くな!	**Don't go!**
	iku na!	な after the dictionary form: don't
8	本当(ほんとう)なの?	**Is that true?**
	hontō na no?	の: a soft question, wants the story
9	違(ちが)うわ。	**That's not it.**
	chigau wa.	わ: soft, feminine in fiction
10	すごいじゃん!	**Hey, that's awesome!**
	sugoi jan!	じゃん: casual, surprised praise
11	やるぜ!	**Let's do this!**
	yaru ze!	ぜ: cool and tough, mostly guys
12	分(わ)かったか?	**Got it?**
	wakatta ka?	plain か: blunt, like a boss

Your turn: which ending fits?

1	きれいだ____。 You watch a sunset with a friend.	きれいだね。 kirei da ne.
2	バス来(き)た____! Your friend hasn't seen the bus arrive.	バス来(き)たよ! basu kita yo!
3	名前(なまえ)、何(なん)だ____? You forgot the name.	名前(なまえ)、何(なん)だっけ? namae, nan da kke?
4	触(さわ)る____! Someone reaches for your cake.	触(さわ)るな! sawaru na!
5	雨(あめ)、降(ふ)る____。 You look up at grey clouds.	雨(あめ)、降(ふ)るかな。 ame, furu ka na.
6	行(い)く____! You step into the ring.	行(い)くぞ! iku zo!

Next: listen for the last sound of each line in a show you like. Once you catch よ, ね and でしょ, you start hearing how characters feel, not just what they say.