# The て-form

Oboeru 覚える

The form behind most everyday sentences — asking, "is doing", permission, joining actions. Groups 2 and 3 take one step; for Group 1 the last kana decides, in five patterns.

## The rule, by verb group

**Group 2 · る-verbs (ichidan)** — drop る, add て. 開ける → 開けて *akeru → akete*

**Group 3 · irregular** — just two verbs: する → して *shite*, 来る → 来て *kite*

**Group 1 · う-verbs (godan)** — the last kana of the dictionary form tells you which of five endings to use:

## Group 1: the last kana decides — *む・ぶ・ぬ・ぐ take で, the rest take て*

| Ends in | Becomes | Example | Meaning |
|---|---|---|---|
| う・つ・る | って | 使う → 使って *tsukau → tsukatte* | to use |
| | | 持つ → 持って *motsu → motte* | to hold |
| | | 作る → 作って *tsukuru → tsukutte* | to make |
| む・ぶ・ぬ | んで | 飲む → 飲んで *nomu → nonde* | to drink |
| | | 遊ぶ → 遊んで *asobu → asonde* | to play |
| | | 死ぬ → 死んで *shinu → shinde* | to die *(the only everyday ぬ verb)* |
| く | いて | 聞く → 聞いて *kiku → kiite* | to listen, to ask |
| ぐ | いで | 泳ぐ → 泳いで *oyogu → oyoide* | to swim |
| す | して | 貸す → 貸して *kasu → kashite* | to lend |

## Groups 2 and 3 — plus the one exception

| Group | Dictionary form | | て-form | Meaning |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Group 1 godan | 行く *iku* | → | 行って *itte* | go ← the exception |
| Group 2 ichidan | 開ける *akeru* | → | 開けて *akete* | open |
| | 起きる *okiru* | → | 起きて *okite* | get up |
| Group 3 irregular | する *suru* | → | して *shite* | do |
| | 来る *kuru* | → | 来て *kite* | come *(reading changes)* |

## Use it

**～てください** please do — 聞いてください

**～てもいいです** may I ...? — 開けてもいいですか

**～てから** after doing — 起きてから

**～ています** is doing — 飲んでいます

**～てはいけません** must not — 使ってはいけません

**～てみます** try doing — 泳いでみます

### Watch out

**Only one verb breaks the rule:** 行く → 行って *itte*, never 行いて.

**Ending in る does not mean Group 2.** These six change like Group 1: 帰る・入る・走る・知る・切る・要る *return, enter, run, know, cut, need* — so 帰って, not 帰て.

### Two things you get free

**The past tense is free.** Same change, last kana swapped: て → た, で → だ. 飲んで → 飲んだ *nonda, drank.*

**Joining actions.** Put actions in a row; only the last verb shows the tense. 起きて、飲んで、出かけました *got up, had a drink, went out*


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