

1. Case describes the relation between a noun and (most importantly) a verb. Compare:

- 田中さんが ハンバーガーを 食べた。 [Tanaka ate a hamburger] Tanaka is 'subject' of verb
 田中さんを ハンバーガーが 食べた。 [A hamburger ate Tanaka] Tanaka is 'object' of verb
 Note that case relations are marked by *case particles* (が、に、を、で、 \emptyset), *not* by sentential order.

2. More examples of particles that mark 'case' in conjunction with a verb:

- a. 田中さんが食べた。 [Tanaka ate] → 'Tanaka' is *subject*
- b. ハンバーガーを食べた。 [He ate a hamburger] → 'hamburger' is *object*
- c. レストランで食べた。 [He ate at a restaurant] → 'restaurant' is place of action
- d. お箸で食べた。 [He ate with chopsticks] → 'chopsticks' are tool/vehicle
- e. 水曜日に食べた。 [He ate on Wednesday] → 'Wednesday' is non-relative time
- f. 今日食べた。 [He ate today] → 'Today' is relative time: note 'null' particle
- g. 三つ食べた。 [He ate three {units worth}] → quantity: note 'null' particle
- h. きれいに食べた。 [He ate them cleanly] → adverbial = 'に' manner noun
- i. 堂々と食べた。 [He ate them boldly/majestically] → adverbial = 'と' manner noun
- j. 早く食べた。 [He ate them quickly] → adverbial = adjective with 'く'
- k. 急いで食べた。 [He ate them hurriedly] → adverbial = verb with 'て'

3. Sentences that end with nouns or adjectives can also have case.

- a. 田中さんが先生である。 [Tanaka is the teacher] → 'Tanaka' is the subject
- b. 田中さんが優しい。 [Tanaka is considerate] → 'Tanaka' is the subject
- c. 田中さんに無理だ。 [It is impossible 'for' Tanaka] → (indirect object ???)
- d. 田中さんに大きい。 [It is too big 'for' Tanaka] → (indirect object ???)
- e. 田中さんでいいだろう。 [Tanaka should do {for the job}] → (???)

Note that 'case' can refer to very specific types of relations that sometimes do not categorize easily.

4. A basic list of case-marking particles and their uses:

- I. が
 - a. Marks the subject (as above): 田中さんができる。 [Tanaka can do it]
 - b. Marks second subject of some verbs (できる、分かる、ある、要る):
 (田中さんに) 英語ができる。
- II. を
 - a. Marks verb *objects* (as above): ハンバーガーを食べた。 [I ate a hamburger]
 - b. With motion verbs, marks the *path* of the movement:
 道に行く [go along the road]
 橋を渡る [cross over a bridge]
 窓を出る [exit via the window]
 - c. With some causative forms, marks what is called the *patient*:
 (トレーナーが) 馬を走らせた [The trainer let the horse run.]
 (先生が) 学生を (学校に) 行かせた。 [The teacher had the students go to school.]
- III. に
 - a. With motion verbs, marks destination:
 東京に行く [go to Tokyo]
 店に入る [enter the store]
 - b. Marks verb recipient:
 田中さんに上げる [give it to Tanaka]
 田中さんに話す [speak to Tanaka]
 田中さんに (手紙を) 書く [write a letter to Tanaka.]
 - c. With some causative forms, marks 'patient':
 (先生が) 学生に (本を) 読ませた。 [Prof. made the students read the book.]

- d. With 'existence' verbs, に marks location of existence:
 (田中さんが) 東京にいる [T. is in Tokyo]
 (本が) 図書室にある [The book is in the library room]
- e. Marks non-relative time:
 2007年1月18日に行く [I will go on 2007.01.18]
 木曜日に行く [I will go on Thursday]
- f. Marks some nouns of manner:
 きれいに書いた。 [I wrote it neatly]
- g. With 'change of state' verbs, marks final state:
 赤に変わった [It (e.g., a traffic light) changed to red]
 ピンクになった [It became pink]
- h. With 'decision' verbs, marks final decision/state:
 コーヒーにした。 [I made {my order} into coffee]
 コーヒーに決めた。 [I decided on coffee]
- i. Miscellaneous:
 私にできない。 [It is impossible for me.]
- j. With passive forms, marks the 'patient':
 先生にほめられました。 [He was praised by the teacher.]

- IV. で
 - a. Marks the location of an *activity*:
 レストランで食べた [I ate at a restaurant]
 (パーティーは) 東京であります [The party will happen at Tokyo]
 - b. Means/tool/vehicle of accomplishment:
 お箸で食べる [eat with chopsticks]
 車で行く [I will go by car]
 - c. Condition (= "being xxx") of accomplishment or being:
 三人で行く [We will go as a threesome]
 これで終わる [I will finish with it being this]
 これでいいです [This is fine as it is]
 - e. Condition {related to 'c' above}:
 彼は学生で、今アメリカへ留学に行っている。
 Note that technically this isn't even a case particle, but a gerund-like form of だ.

- V. 〇
 - a. Marks numbered quantifiers:
 (ハンバーガーを) 三つ 食べた [I ate three hamburgers]
 (お金が) 10円 足りない [I am ten yen short]
 (手紙を) 二通 書いた [I wrote two letters]
 - b. Marks non-numbered expressions of extent:
 ちょっと 分かった。 [I understood a small amount.]
 大分 飲んだ。 [I had a considerable amount to drink.]
 - c. Marks 'relative-time' words:
 今日 勉強する。 [I will study today.]
 先週 見た。 [I saw it last week.]
 来年 行く。 [I will go next year.]

- VI. と
 - a. Marks quotations (direct and indirect):
 「すみません」と言った。 [He said 'sorry.']
 不可能と思われる。 [It is thought to be impossible.]
 弾性安定と名づける。 [We call this 'elastic stability.']
 実際的といえる。 [It can be called realistic.]
 - b. Marks some expressions of manner:
 すらすらと分かる。 [He understands effortlessly.]
 堂々と歩く。 [He walks grandly.]
 Note 堂々= どうどう is listed in dictionaries with 'たり'= another category of nouns, now vestigial:
 examples: 整然と、洋々たる、惨憺たる、厳たる

(VI: 'と' continued)

c. Miscellaneous uses 'with':

- 妻と行った。 [I went with my wife.]
- 妻と話した。 [I spoke with my wife.]
- これと同じ。 [It is the same as this.]
- これと違う。 [It is different from this.]

d. More uses 'with' (note shift in usage, from marking case to marking relation with other nouns)

- 本と雑誌を読む。 [I read books and magazines (no more, no less)]
- Compare this with: や、とか、か、etc.
- 本や雑誌を読む＝本とか雑誌を読む。 [I read things such as books and magazines.]
- 本か雑誌を読む。 [I'll read either a book or a magazine.]

e. Designating and becoming:

- (これを) Y軸とする。 [We designate this the Y-axis.]
- (自動車部が) 母体となった。 [The auto division became the core body {of the enterprise}.]

There are also some 'loose case' particles, which are less contingent on the specificity of the verb:

VII. へ a. With verbs of motion, marks direction towards something (as compare to the 'goal' using に):

東京へ行く。 [I will go towards Tokyo.]

b. Often without a verb, marks direction:

読者へ ["To the reader:" e.g., in a book introduction.]

VIII. から a. Marks starting point of motion, time, etc.:

- 京都から来た。 [I came from Kyoto.]
- 9時から寝る。 [I go to sleep starting at 9:00.]
- 「B」から始めよう。 [Let's start from 'B']

IX. まで a. Marks ending point of motion, time, etc.:

- 横浜まで行く。 [I will go as far as Yokohama.]
- 8時まで寝た。 [I slept until 8:00.]

X. より a. Explicit comparison:

自転車より車の方が速い。

b. Implicit comparison (note shift from case particle to pre-adjective):

最近の車はより速くなってきている。

c. Equivalent of から for both time and spatial uses (slightly archaic):

- 宴会は五時より行われます。
- 東京より出発せり。

d. Odd stuff:

断るより仕方がない。 [There is nothing else we can do but refuse.]

XI. ほど a. Explicit comparison:

- 自転車は自動車ほど速くない。
- お婆ちゃんのケーキはそれほどおいしいとは思わない。