

Japanese Proverbs

20 words - 2026-07-08

Expression	Reading	Meaning	Example	Translation
猿も木から落ちる	さるもきからおちる	Even experts make mistakes.	猿も木から落ちる。	Even monkeys fall from trees.
花より団子	はなよりだんご	Prefer practical value over appearance or decoration.	花より団子だね。	Practical things matter more than looks.
石の上にも三年	いしのうえにもさんねん	Perseverance pays off over time.	石の上にも三年だから、もう少し頑張ろう。	Perseverance pays off, so let's keep going a little longer.
郷に入っては郷に従え	こうにいってはこうにしたがえ	When in another place or culture, follow local customs.	郷に入っては郷に従えと言うし、ここではそのやり方に合わせよう。	As they say, when in Rome, do as the Romans do, so let's follow the way things are done here.
塵も積もれば山となる	ちりもつもればやまとなる	Small efforts add up to big results.	塵も積もれば山となる。	Even dust, when piled up, becomes a mountain.
出る杭は打たれる	でるくいはいうたれる	People who stand out are often criticized or pressured to conform.	出る杭は打たれるから、目立ちすぎないようにした。	Because the nail that sticks out gets hammered down, I tried not to stand out too much.
七転び八起き	ななころびやおき	Keep trying despite repeated failures.	七転び八起きの気持ちで、何度失敗しても挑戦した。	With the spirit of falling seven times and standing up eight, I kept trying no matter how many times I failed.
二兎を追う者は一兎をも得ず	にとをおうものはいっとをもえず	Trying to pursue two goals at once often means failing at both.	二兎を追う者は一兎をも得ずと言うから、まず一つに集中しよう。	They say if you chase two rabbits, you catch neither, so let's focus on one thing first.
猫に小判	ねこにこばん	Something valuable is wasted on someone who cannot appreciate it.	高級なカメラを使わない人に渡すのは猫に小判だ。	Giving a high-end camera to someone who won't use it is like gold coins to a cat.
井の中の蛙大海を知らず	いのなかのかわずたいかいをしらず	A person with a narrow view does not understand the wider world.	井の中の蛙大海を知らずにならないよう、もっと外の世界を見たい。	I want to see more of the outside world so I don't become a frog in a well that knows nothing of the sea.
覆水盆に返らず	ふくすいぼんにかえらず	What is done cannot be undone.	もう別れてしまったなら、覆水盆に返らずだ。	If you've already broken up, what's done cannot be undone.
蛙の子は蛙	かえるのこはかえる	Children often resemble their parents in character or ability.	息子も野球が得意で、蛙の子は蛙だね。	My son is good at baseball too; like father, like son.
継続は力なり	keizoku wa chikara nari	Steady continuation is a source of strength.	毎日の練習を続けることが大切だ。継続は力なり。	It's important to keep practicing every day. Continuity is strength.
急がば回れ	isogaba maware	The safest or smartest route is often the quickest in the end.	急がば回れだから、近道より安全な道を選ぼう。	More haste, less speed, so let's choose the safe route instead of the shortcut.
案ずるより産むが易し	anzuru yori umu ga yasushi	Worrying is often worse than the actual result.	案ずるより産むが易しで、やってみたら意外と簡単だった。	It was easier than I expected; as they say, worrying is harder than doing.

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知らぬが仏	shiranu ga hotoke	Sometimes not knowing is better than knowing unpleasant facts.	本当の事情を聞かないほうが楽なこともある。知らぬが仏だ。	Sometimes it's easier not to hear the real circumstances. Ignorance is bliss.
笑う門には福来る	warau kado ni wa fuku kitaru	A cheerful home or person attracts good fortune.	笑う門には福来ると言うから、いつも笑顔でいよう。	They say fortune comes to a cheerful home, so let's always keep smiling.
十人十色	jūnin toiro	Everyone has different tastes or personalities.	十人十色だから、意見が違って当然だ。	Since everyone is different, it's natural for opinions to differ.
三人寄れば文殊の知恵	sannin yoreba monju no chie	Three people together can come up with wise ideas.	三人寄れば文殊の知恵だ。	When three people get together, they have the wisdom of Monju.
能ある鷹は爪を隠す	nō aru taka wa tsume wo kakusu	Truly capable people do not show off their abilities.	彼は能ある鷹は爪を隠すタイプだ。	He is the type who hides his abilities.