

Tsumaranai mono desu ga, dōzo.

つまらないものですが、どうぞ。

This expression is often used in presenting a gift to someone. *Tsumaranai mono* basically means "a boring, trivial, worthless thing." However, such a gift is, in fact, usually quite valuable. This idiomatic expression shows the giver's humility, and means "This may be worthless, but please accept it." In response, the recipient usually refers to the gift as *kekkōna mono* or "nice thing" before opening it.

A formal conversation in a lobby

A: *Senjitsu wa taihen osewa ni narimashita.*Kore wa *tsumaranai mono desu ga, dōzo oosame kudasai.*

先日は大変お世話になりました。

これはつまらないものですが、どうぞお納めください。

B: *Kore wa gotenji ni arigatō gozaimasu.*

これはごていねいありがとうございます。

A: *Kyō wa oaisetsu no magairashi o odozake de shitsurei-shimasu.*

今日のごあいさつに伺いましたので、これで失礼します。

B: *Sō desu ka. Dōmo wazawaza irasshate itadaite, kekkōna mono o arigatō gozaimashita.*

そうですか。どうもわざわざいらしゃっていただいて、結構なものをありがとうございました。

Translation

A: I'm much obliged to you for your help the other day.

This is a trivial thing, but please accept it.

B: It's very polite of you. Thank you very much.

A: I just came today to express our thanks and I must be going now.

B: I see. It's kind of you to have come all this way and given us such a nice thing.

Expressions to use when offering a gift — 贈り物をする時の表現

(1) *Kokoro-bakari no shina desu. Oosame kudasai.*

心ばかりの品です。お納めください。

This is a small present for you. Please accept this.

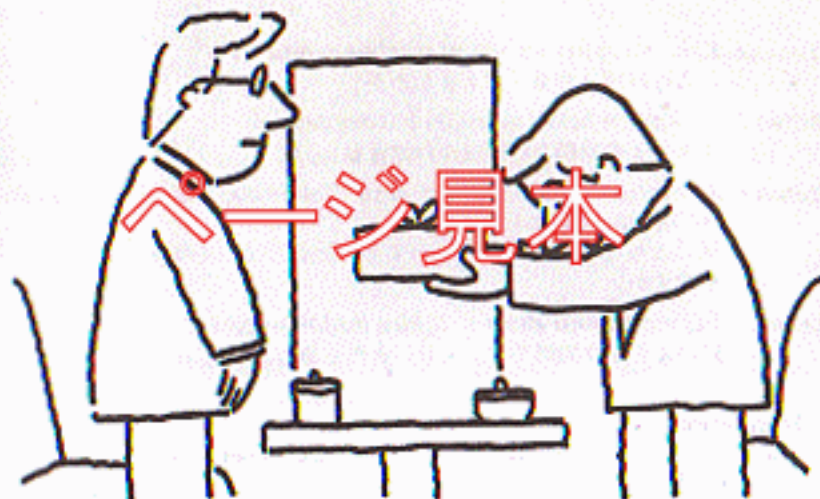
This *kokoro-bakari no shina* literally means nothing more than a small present symbolizing my feeling of gratitude.

(2) *Shirushi-bakari no orei desu. Dōzo.*

印ばかりのお礼です。どうぞ。

This is a present as a token of my gratitude. Please (take this).

This *shirushi-bakari* literally means nothing more than a token.

*Tsumaranai mono* — つまらないもの

In Japan, humility and modesty are very important, as are politeness and respect. In business they are particularly important, both in documents and spoken language. *Soshina* (物品) is the written equivalent of *tsumaranai mono* and is used on cards that accompany presents. It means "I chose this for you, though it may not be worth anything to you."

When giving a dinner, the host or hostess will say *Nani mo gozaimasen ga, dōzo* before serving up fine dishes. This is another typically humble expression and means "There is nothing here especially worth mentioning, but please eat it anyway." After the meal, the guest says *Gochisō-sama deshita*, "Thank you for all these delicacies."

Mimiyorina hanashi ga arimasu.

耳寄りな話があります。

In Japanese, there are many idiomatic expressions using *mimi* "ear", which involve the function of hearing. Among them, *mimiyori na hanashi* is used to refer to welcome or good news or "important information that one should strain to hear." The key expression is often used to convey information that poses new business opportunities.

□ A conversation between a manager and a staff member □

Staff: *Kachō, chotto mimiyorina hanashi ga arimasu.*

課長、ちょっと耳寄りな話があります。

Manager: *Nan desu ka?*

何ですか。

Staff: *Torihikisaki no Sakura-Kōgyō ga kōjō o Chiba-ken e itensuru koto ni shita sō desu.*

取引先のサクラ工業が工場を千葉県に移したそうです。

Manager: *To tō anako mo risutora o mimashō. Jaa, sassoku tantōsha ni renraku o toji, kugasha no kōsaku-kikai o urikomimashō.*

どうどうあそこもリストラをやりますか。じゃあ、早速担当者に連絡をとって、わが社の工作機械を売り込みましょう。

Staff: *Jaa, ima kara Sakura-Kōgyō e itte kimasu.*

じゃあ、今からサクラ工業へ行ってきます。

▶ Translation

Staff: Manager, there is some good news.

Manager: What is it?

Staff: Apparently one of our customers, Sakura Industries, has decided to move its operations to Chiba-ken.

Manager: So they finally decided to restructure their production system? Well, we should immediately contact the person in charge and sell them some of our machine tools.

Staff: OK, I'll go to Sakura Industries right now.

Mimi — 耳

Other idioms featuring *mimi*:

- (1) *mimi ni ireru* (耳に入れる) "to tell" [lit. go in one's ear]

Kono koto o shachō no mimi ni irete kudasai.

このことを社長の耳に入れてください。

Please tell the president about this matter.

- (2) *mimi ga hayai* (耳が早い) "to be quick of hearing" [lit. have fast ear]

Sasuga ni anata wa mimi ga hayai desu nee.

さすがにあなたは耳が早いですねえ。

You really pick up information quickly, don't you?

- (3) *mimi o kasu* (耳を貸す) "to listen to" [lit. lent an ear]

Chotto, mimi o kashite kudasai.

ちょっと耳を貸してください。

Could you lend me an ear?

- (4) *mimi ga itai* (耳が痛い) "to be ashamed of" [lit. one's ears hurt]

Anata no chūkoku wa mimi ga itai desu.

あなたの忠告は耳が痛いです。

Your advice really hits a sore spot.

One of the most critical factors in business is information, so please pick up your ears and pick up some *mimiyori na hanashi*.



Risutora — リストラ

Risutora (リストラ) is an abbreviation of the English word "restructuring" and is frequently used in reference to a company trying to rationalize its operations, in particular, its production or administrative system. It is a key word among companies amid the Heisei Depression (*Heisei fukyō* 平成不況).