Mr. Oda invited me to a restaurant last week. After we arrived there, he asked me how a new employee was working out. I answered, "Suki desu." (I like him.) But Mr. Oda sniggered as if I had said something funny or strange. Was my answer inappropriate?

Most Japanese textbooks and dictionaries translate "like" as "suki." But "suki" is actually an emotional expression that implies "love." "Ii desu" is the common way of saying "nice" or "good." Be careful—you could imply that you love someone in a romantic sense. ("Like" is not treated as verb in Japanese unless the word "desu" is added.)

**Like**

has two meanings: 1 and 2

1 When praising or admiring something.
   - e.g., I like this coffee cup.

   このコーヒーカップ
   いいですね。

2 When referring to something you like very much.
   - e.g., I like classical music.

   クラシック
   が好きですね。

   "I love you = aishite imasu" as in the movies. Japanese people rarely use this phrase in real life.

**Dislike**

In order to say "dislike," there are two styles: direct "kirai" and indirect "chotto...", "amari suki-janai desu"

As "kirai" is a direct way of expressing dislike, this style is often avoided. (Being too direct is considered arrogant.) Instead, the indirect expressions below are common.

e.g., Do you like your work?
   "Well... I’m not that crazy about my work ..."

   仕事
   はちょっと ]]
   wa chotto ....

   By leaving a sentence vague and incomplete, "dislike" is expressed very indirectly. This is a thoughtful expression used when trying not to hurt someone’s feelings.

   e.g., "I don’t really care for my work."

   仕事
   はあまり好きじゃないです。
   wa amari suki-janai desu.

   By avoiding the direct expression "kirai," this sentence still shows "dislike," but leaves a softer impression.

---

Mr. Pole: I like this restaurant. (This restaurant is nice.)

Kono restaurant
(ристоран)
like
(praising)
Suki desu.
(а
не)

Mr. Oda: What are your "likes and dislikes"?

Nani ka suki/kirai arimasu ka.
(something)    (dislike)
(See kanji at right)

Mr. Pole: I like sashimi,

Sashimi ga
like
(praising)
Suki desu.

and I especially love tuna.

Toku ni maguro ga
like
(preference)
Suki desu.

But I don’t like cuttlefish that much...

Demon, wa chotto...
(but)
(See "Dislike")

Mr. Pole: Wow! I like this plate. (This plate is nice.)

Wa! Kono utsuwa
(Wow)
like
(praising)
Suki desu.
(а
не)

I recently began collecting Japanese pottery.

Ima, Nihon no yakimono o atsumete imasu.
(now, recently)
(pottery)
(collecting)

Mr. Oda: Really? Oh, by the way, how is your new employee?

Sodesu ka.
(How is your new employee?)

Mr. Pole: I like him. (He is a nice person.)

Hito
like
(praising)
Suki desu.
(person)
**Proverb**

In Japan, to boast or to brag about something is not appreciated. Therefore, even though one is skillful at a task, and is praised for it, it is best to be humble. This phrase is used to show enthusiasm about a hobby, etc., even though one lacks the skill.

**Like and Dislike**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>好き嫌い</th>
<th>su ki kira i</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have no particular likes or dislikes.</td>
<td>好き嫌いは特にありません。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suki/kirai wa toku ni arimasen.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>好きずき</th>
<th>su ki zu ki</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All people have their own preferences.</td>
<td>好きずきですから。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sukizuki desu kara.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>好み</th>
<th>kono mi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My taste and even my preferences differ from my wife’s.</td>
<td>婦とは趣味も好みも違います。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsuma to wa shumi mo konomi mo chigaimasu.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>好評</th>
<th>kō hyō</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>That new product has a good reputation, doesn’t it?</td>
<td>あの新製品は好評ですね。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ano shinseehin wa kōhyōdesu ne.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>絶好の</th>
<th>zekkō no</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Today is a perfect (ideal) day for golf, isn’t it?</td>
<td>今日は絶好のゴルフ日和ですね。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyō wa zekkō no golf-biyori desu ne.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You can change golf to tennis, hiking, etc.

**Example**

Mr. Tada: You are good (at it).

下手の横好き

heta no yoko-zuki

Crazy about something although not very good at it. Unskillful but enthusiastic.

Mr. Pole: Oh, no. I just enjoy it, even though I’m not good at it.

いいえ下手の横好きですよ。

lie, heta no yoko-zuki desu yo.

Mr. Tada: No, really. You are very good.

いいえ下手ですよ。

lie, jōzu desu yo.