

～ばかり

nothing but / only

Romaji: **bakari**

～ばかり means “nothing but” — one thing crowds out everything else, usually with a hint of disapproval. お菓子ばかり食べている is “He does nothing but eat sweets.” Attach it to a noun, or use ～てばかりいる for a repeated action. The contrast with だけ is worth learning early: だけ counts (“only two”), while ばかり complains (“always this, never anything else”).

構文 CONSTRUCTION

Noun + ばかり

マンガばかり読んでいる。 — He reads nothing but comics.

Verb (て-form) + ばかりいる — a repeated action

弟は寝てばかりいる。 — My brother does nothing but sleep.

Quantity + ばかり = “about” (no criticism)

一時間ばかり待ちました。 — I waited for about an hour.

A different pattern: plain past + ばかり = “just did”

今、着いたばかりです。 — I've only just arrived.

例文 EXAMPLES

1 おとうと 弟はゲームばかりしている。

My little brother does nothing but play games.

2 もんく い 文句を言ってばかりいないで、てっだ 手伝ってください。

Instead of just complaining, give me a hand.

3 いちじかん ま 一時間ばかり待ちました。

I waited for about an hour.

注意点 NUANCES

- ばかり usually carries mild criticism. 野菜ばかり食べている sounds like a complaint even though the diet is healthy — for a neutral “only”, use だけ.
- For repeated actions the て-form version is the standard one: 遊んでばかりいる, 文句を言ってばかりいる.
- After a number, ばかり loses its edge entirely and simply means “about”, doing the same job as ぐらい: 三日ばかり, 十人ばかり.
- Watch the form in front of it. 食べてばかり is “does nothing but eat”; 食べたばかり is “has just eaten”. One て, one た, two unrelated meanings.

やってみよう YOUR TURN

Grumble about three people — or about yourself — doing one thing to excess, using ～ばかり and ～てばかりいる. Then use ばかり with a number to say roughly how long something took.