During my semester-long homestay, I probably heard the word あかん from my host mom more than other single word. This was usually within the context of her chastising her eight and ten-year-old sons; however, the word あかん has a variety of meanings and grammatical uses. あかん is essentially the Kansai-ben version of standard Japanese’s “駄目” and as such it can mean “bad,” “no good,” “hopeless,” among other things. It is a very flexible and useful word. The past tense of あかん conjugates in the same way as the past tense of ～へん：just add ～かった at the end.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Past Tense Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>駄目</td>
<td>駄目だった</td>
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<tr>
<td>あかん</td>
<td>あかんかった</td>
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Examples:

1) トネミ：なあ、授業サボろう？
   トミエ：  あかんよ！そなないつもサボってたら成績落ちるやろ?
   Tsunemi: Hey, wanna skip class?
   Tomie: That’s no good! If you always skip class, don’t you think you’re gonna fail?

2) トミエ：今日の試験どうやった？
   トネミ： あかんかったね1。
   Tomie: How was today’s test?
   Tsunemi: Horrible (it was no good).

It is important to note that as an adjective, the conjugation of あかん is irregular – as explained in Chapter 2, adjectives (along with nouns) are typically conjugated with や in
関西弁.

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1 Here we see the usage of the sentence-final particle わ for the first time, the usage of which will be explained in Chapter 14. It also appears in the following example conversation after びっくりした
In addition to its use as an adjective, あかん can be used as a negative imperative. It can be used much in the same way as the て-form of a verb＋はいけない, or the conditional たら-form of a verb＋騒目, meaning “don’t do X,” “shouldn’t do X” or “cannot do X.”

<table>
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<tr>
<td>食べてはいけない</td>
<td>食べたらあかん</td>
<td>Must not eat</td>
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<td>食べたらあかん</td>
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<tr>
<td>食べるのは騒目</td>
<td>食べたらあかん</td>
<td>Shouldn’t eat; can’t eat</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Example conversation:

ザック：キョウヘイ、焼肉食べに行こうか？

キョウヘイ：俺、肉食べたらあかんで。

ザック：え、なんで2？

キョウヘイ：ベジタリアンだから。

ザック：まじで？！？

キョウヘイ：嘘やで。

ザック：びっくりしたわ。日本人って、ベジタリアンあんまいないやろ3？

キョウヘイ：うん、全然。

Zach: Kyohei, wanna go eat some Korean barbeque?

Kyohei: I can’t eat meat.

Zach: What, why?

Kyohei: Because I’m a vegetarian…

Zach: Really?!?

Kyohei: No, I’m just messing with you.

2 As briefly noted in Chapter 2, なんで is essentially the same meaning as どうして (“why;” “what for?”), however in Kansai it is generally always used over どうして.

3 In this line we see あんま, which is the contracted Kansai-ben version of あまり.
Zach: You surprised me! There aren’t really any Japanese people who are vegetarians, are there?

Kyohei: Nope, there’s not really any.

In daily conversation, when the context of the situation is clear, あかん can also be used by itself as a negative imperative. I often heard this usage during my homestay, especially at the dinner table:

Situation 1: Kazuya, my host mom, is in the middle of setting the table for dinner, and upon seeing the delicious-looking gyoza she sets down, Yamato, the 10-year-old son, eyes them hungrily and says he wants to eat them.

ヤマト：美味しそう、これ！食べたい！
カズヤ：あかんで！待ってよ。

Yamato: These look delicious! I wanna eat them!
Kazuya: No way! Wait [until I finish setting the table…].
(Comparison: The sentence “食べたらあかんで！待ってよ！” Would pretty much retain the same meaning.)

Situation 2: During dinner, Kaito, the 8-year-old son, finds the Gyoza hard to eat with his chopsticks, so he reverts to eating with his hands, which Kazuya immediately reprimands him for:

カズヤ：何してんの？
カイト：食べにくい、この餃子。。。。
カズヤ：それ、あかんで。ちゃんと箸使いなさい。

Kazuya: What are you doing?
Kaito: These gyoza are hard to eat…
Kazuya: Don’t do that [eat with your hands]. Use your chopsticks properly.

(Comparison: Alternatively, Kazuya could also have said “手で食べたらあかんで。ちゃんと箸使いなさい。And the general message – don’t eat with your hands, use chopsticks – would be the same.)

4 何してんの is one of the Kansai-ben versions of standard Japanese’s “何しているの？” a very common greeting asking “What’s up?” or “What are you doing?”