

Language

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Japanese is the language spoken across all of Japan. While the standard language, or *hyōjungo*, is understood by almost all Japanese, regardless of their level of education, many Japanese speak strong local dialects (known as *ben*, as in the famous dialect of Kansai, *Kansai-ben*). These dialects, particularly in rural areas, can be quite difficult to understand, even for Japanese from other parts of the country. Luckily, you can always get your point across in *hyōjungo*.

In this language guide you'll find a selection of useful Japanese words and phrases. For information on food and dining, including words and phrases that will help in deciphering menus and ordering food in Japanese, see p85. For information on language courses available in Japan, see p792.

GRAMMAR

To English speakers, Japanese language patterns often seem to be back to front and lacking in essential information. For example, where an English speaker would say 'I'm going to the shop' a Japanese speaker would say 'shop to going', omitting the subject pronoun (I) altogether and putting the verb at the end of the sentence. To make

TRYING ENGLISH IN JAPAN

Visitors to Japan should be warned that many Japanese do not speak or understand much English. Although English is a required subject in both junior high school and high school, and many students go on to study more of it in university, several factors conspire to prevent many Japanese from acquiring usable English. These include the nature of the English educational system, which uses outdated methods like translation; the extreme difference between English and Japanese pronunciation and grammar; and the typical reticence of the Japanese, who may be shy to speak a language that they haven't mastered.

There are several ways to facilitate communication with Japanese who may not have a mastery of spoken English:

- Always start with a smile to create a sense of ease.
- Speak very slowly and clearly.
- When asking for information, choose people of university age or thereabouts, as these people are most likely to speak some English. Also, Japanese women tend to speak and understand English much better than Japanese men.
- If necessary, write down your question; Japanese are often able to understand written English even when they can't understand spoken English.
- Use the sample phrases in this chapter and, if necessary, point to the Japanese phrase in question.

matters worse, many moods which are indicated at the beginning of a sentence in English occur at the end of a sentence in Japanese, as in the Japanese sentence 'Japan to going if' – 'if you're going to Japan'.

Fortunately for visitors to Japan, it's not all bad news. In fact, with a little effort, getting together a repertoire of travellers' phrases should be no trouble – the only problem will be understanding the replies you get.

WRITTEN JAPANESE

Japanese has one of the most complex writing systems in the world, which uses three different scripts – four if you include the increasingly used Roman script, romaji. The most difficult of the three, for foreigners and Japanese alike, is kanji, the ideographic script developed by the Chinese. Not only do you have to learn a couple of thousand of them, but unlike Chinese many Japanese kanji have wildly variant pronunciations depending on context.

Due to the differences between Chinese and Japanese grammar, kanji had to be supplemented with a 'syllabary' (an alphabet of syllables), known as hiragana. And there is yet another syllabary that is used largely for representing foreign loan words such as *terebi* (TV) and *biiru* (beer); this script is known as katakana. If you're serious about learning to read Japanese you'll have to set aside several years.

If you're thinking of tackling the Japanese writing system before you go or while you're in Japan, your best bet would be to start with hiragana or katakana. Both these syllabaries have 48 characters each, and can be learned within a week, although it'll take at least a month to consolidate them. Once in the country, you can practise your katakana on restaurant menus, where such things as *kōhii* (coffee) and *kēiki* (cake) are frequently found. Practise your hiragana on train journeys, as station names are usually indicated in hiragana (in addition to English and kanji). If you fancy continuing on to learn the kanji, be warned that it'll take quite a few years.

ROMANISATION

The romaji used in this book follows the Hepburn system of romanisation. In addition, common Japanese nouns like *ji* or *tera* (temple) and *jinja* or *jingū* (shrine) are written without an English translation.

Silent Letters

Hepburn romaji is a direct system of Romanisation that doesn't fully reflect all elements of spoken Japanese. The most obvious of these is the tendency in everyday speech to omit the vowel 'u' in many instances. In this language guide, and in Useful Words & Phrases on p102, these silent

letters have been retained to provide accuracy in the written Romanisations, but they have been enclosed in square brackets to aid accurate pronunciation.

LANGUAGE BOOKS

Lonely Planet's *Japanese Phrasebook* gives you a comprehensive mix of practical and social words and phrases that should cover almost any situation confronting the traveller to Japan.

If you'd like to delve deeper into the intricacies of the language, we recommend *Japanese for Busy People* for beginners, *Introduction to Intermediate Japanese* (Mizutani Nobuko) for intermediate students, and *Kanji in Context* (Nishiguchi Koichi and Kono Tamaki) for more advanced students. One of the best guides to the written language, for both study and reference, is *Kanji & Kana* (Wolfgang Hadamizky and Mark Spahn).

PRONUNCIATION

Unlike other languages in the region with complicated tonal systems, such as Chinese, Vietnamese and Thai, Japanese pronunciation is fairly easy to master.

The following examples reflect British pronunciation:

a	as in 'father'
e	as in 'get'
i	as in 'macaroni'
o	as in 'bone'
u	as in 'flu'

Vowels appearing in this book with a macron (or bar) over them (*ā, ē, ō, ū*) are pronounced in the same way as standard vowels except that the sound is held twice as long. You need to take care with this as vowel length can change the meaning of a word, eg *yuki* means 'snow', while *yūki* means 'bravery'.

Consonants are generally pronounced as in English, with the exception of the few listed below:

f	this sound is produced by pursing the lips and blowing lightly
g	as in 'get' at the start of word; and nasalised as the 'ng' in 'sing' in the middle of a word
r	more like an 'l' than an 'r'

ACCOMMODATION

I'm looking for a ...

... o sagashite imasu

...を探しています。

camping ground

kyampu-jō キャンプ場

family-style inn

minshiku 民宿

guesthouse

gesuto hausu ゲストハウス

hotel

hoteru ホテル

inn

ryokan 旅館

Japanese-style inn

ryokan 旅館

youth hostel

yūsu hosuteru ユースホステル

Do you have any vacancies?

aki-beya wa arimasu ka?

空き部屋はありますか?

I don't have a reservation.

yoyaku wa shiteimasen

予約はしていません。

single room

shinguru rūmu シングルルーム

double room

daburu rūmu ダブルルーム

twin room

tsuin rūmu ツインルーム

Japanese-style room

washitsu 和室

Western-style room

yōshitsu 洋室

Japanese-style bath

o-furo お風呂

room with a (Western-style) bath

basu tsuki no heya バス付きの部屋

How much is it (per night/per person)?

(ippaku/hitori) ikura desu ka?

(一泊/一人)いくらですか?

Does it include breakfast/a meal?

chōshoku/shokujī wa tsuite imasu ka?

(朝食/食事)は付いていますか?

I'm going to stay for one night/two nights.

hito-ban/futa-ban tomarimasu

(一晩/二晩)泊まります。

Can I leave my luggage here?

nimotsu o azukatte itadakemasen ka?

荷物を預かっていただけませんか?

CONVERSATION & ESSENTIALS

The all-purpose title *san* is used after a name as an honorific and is the equivalent of Mr, Miss, Mrs and Ms.

Good morning.

ohayō gozaimasu

おはようございます。

Good afternoon.

konnichiwa

こんにちは。

Good evening.

kombanwa

こんばんは。

Goodbye.

sayōnara

さようなら。

See you later.

dewa mata

ではまた。

Please/Go ahead. (when offering)

dōzo

どうぞ。

Please. (when asking)

onegai shimasu

お願いします。

Thanks. (informal)

dōmo

どうも。

Thank you.

dōmo arigatō

どうもありがとうございます。

Thank you very much.

dōmo arigatō gozaimasu

どうもありがとうございます。

Thanks for having me. (when leaving)

o-sewa ni narimashita

お世話になりました。

You're welcome.

dō itashimashite

どういたしまして。

No, thank you.

ie, kekkō desu

いいえ、けっこうです。

Excuse me/Pardon.

sumimasen

すみません。

Excuse me. (when entering a room)

o-jama shimasu/shitsurei shimasu

おじゃまします。/失礼します。

I'm sorry.

gomen nasai

ごめんなさい。

What's your name?

o-namae wa nan desu ka?

お名前は何ですか?

My name is ...

watashi wa ... desu

私は...です。

This is Mr/Mrs/Ms (Smith).

kochira wa (Sumisu) san desu

こちらは(スミス)さんです。

Pleased to meet you.

dōzo yoroshiku

どうぞよろしく。

Where are you from?

dochira no kata desu ka?

どちらのかたですか?

How are you?

o-genki desu ka?

お元気ですか?

Fine.

genki desu

元気です。

Is it OK to take a photo?

shashin o totte mo ii desu ka?

写真を撮ってもいいですか?

Cheers!

kampai!

乾杯!

Yes.

hai

はい。

No.

ie

いいえ。

No. (for indicating disagreement)

chigaimasu

違います。

No. (for indicating disagreement; less emphatic)

chotto chigaimasu

ちょっと違います。

OK.

daijōbu (desu)/ōke

だいじょうぶ(です)。/オーケー。

Requests

Please give me this/that.

kore/sore o kudasai

(これ/それ)をください。

Please give me a (cup of tea).

(o-cha) o kudasai

(お茶)をください。

Please wait (a while).

(shōshō) o-machi kudasai

(少々)お待ちください。

SIGNS

Information

annaijo 案内所

Open eigyōchū 営業中

Closed junbichū 準備中

Entrance iriguchi 入口

Exit deguchi 出口

Toilets o-tearai/toire お手洗い/トイレ

Male otoko 男

Female onna 女

Please show me the (ticket).

(kippu) o misete kudasai

(切符)を見せてください。

DIRECTIONS

Where is the ...?

... wa doko desu ka?

...はどこですか?

How far is it to walk?

aruite dono kurai kakarimasu ka?

歩いてどのくらいかかりますか?

How do I get to ...?

... e wa dono yō ni ikeba ii desu ka?

...へはどのように行けばいいですか?

Where is this address please?

kono jūsho wa doko desu ka?

この住所はどこですか?

Could you write down the address for me?

jūsho o kaite itadakemasen ka?

住所を書いていただけませんか?

Go straight ahead.

massugu itte

まっすぐ行って。

Turn left/right.

hidari/migi e magatte

(左/右)へ曲がって。

near/far

chikai/tōi

近い/遠い

HEALTH

I need a doctor.

isha ga hitsuyō desu

医者が必要です。