

1 Introduction to Japanese

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1.1 Alphabets

The Japanese language uses 3 different alphabets:

- Hiragana
- Katakana
- Kanji

Hiragana has 46 characters and is similar to the English alphabet. It's used to construct sentences, along with connecting words. Katakana follows the same pattern and is used for English origin words, along with words that you want to put emphasis on. Both are phonetic alphabets. Kanji are characters which come from the Chinese alphabet and are used for words of Chinese origin. There are over 10,000 kanjis but you only need to learn about 2,000 for fluency.

1.1.1 Hiragana

あ	い	う	え	お	は	ひ	ふ	へ	ほ
a	i	u	e	o	ha	hi	fu	he	ho
か	き	く	け	こ	ば	び	ぶ	べ	ぼ
ka	ki	ku	ke	ko	ba	bi	bu	be	bo
が	ぎ	ぐ	げ	ご	ぱ	ぴ	ぷ	ぺ	ぽ
ga	gi	gu	ge	go	pa	pi	pu	pe	po
さ	し	す	せ	そ	ま	み	む	め	も
sa	shi	su	se	so	ma	mi	mu	me	mo
ざ	じ	ず	ぜ	ぞ	ら	り	る	れ	ろ
za	ji	zu	ze	zo	ra	ri	ru	re	ro
た	ち	つ	て	と	や		ゆ		よ
ta	chi	tsu	te	to	ya		yu		yo
だ	ぢ	づ	で	ど	わ				を
da	ji	zu	de	do	wa				wo
な	に	ぬ	ね	の					ん
na	ni	nu	ne	no					n

On top of the regular symbols, you can also make additional sounds with a smaller version of certain symbols. For example, きよ is *kiyo* while きょ is *kyo*. The っ symbol can also be used to double a consonant. For example, やっぱり (as I thought) is spelled *yappari*. Another important phonetic note is that the *u* vowel is often omitted. For example, です (is) can be spoken as *desu* or *des*, while こうこう (high school) can be written *koukou* but sounds like *koko*.

1.1.2 Katakana

ア	イ	ウ	エ	オ	ハ	ヒ	フ	ヘ	ホ
a	i	u	e	o	ha	hi	fu	he	ho
カ	キ	ク	ケ	コ	バ	ビ	ブ	ベ	ボ
ka	ki	ku	ke	ko	ba	bi	bu	be	bo
ガ	ギ	グ	ゲ	ゴ	パ	ピ	プ	ペ	ポ
ga	gi	gu	ge	go	pa	pi	pu	pe	po
サ	シ	ス	セ	ソ	マ	ミ	ム	メ	モ
sa	shi	su	se	so	ma	mi	mu	me	mo
ザ	ジ	ズ	ゼ	ゾ	ラ	リ	ル	レ	ロ
za	ji	zu	ze	zo	ra	ri	ru	re	ro
タ	チ	ツ	テ	ト	ヤ		ユ		ヨ
ta	chi	tsu	te	to	ya		yu		yo
ダ	ヂ	ヅ	デ	ド	ワ				ヲ
da	ji	zu	de	do	wa				wo
ナ	ニ	ヌ	ネ	ノ					ン
na	ni	nu	ne	no					n

The sounds are just like the Hiragana version, only with different symbols. On top of the notes above, the ー symbol can be used to double a vowel. For example, ケーキ (cake) sounds like *keeki*.

1.1.3 Kanji

There are many kanjis and they all have several sounds. Some are simple like 日 (day, sun) or 木 (tree). Some are made up of several simpler kanjis like 森 (forest) being composed of 3 trees. Some look like objects like 車 (car) which looks like two wheels on the side of a vehicle, while others don't really look like much of anything, such as 雲 (cloud).

The way they sound depends on whether the kanji is paired with other kanjis, such as 日本 (Japan) being spelled as にほん, or whether they are paired with hiragana or katakana characters, such as この日 (this day) which is spelled このひ. A single kanji can have

many spellings, and only context determines which spelling to use. It's also possible to determine what a compound word means based on its components, such as 休日 [くうじつ] (holiday) being composed of 休 (rest) and 日 (day).

1.2 Numbers

The basic number system in Japanese employs the following digits:

- 〇 [れい] - zero
- 一 [いち] - one
- 二 [に] - two
- 三 [さん] - three
- 四 [し, よん] - four
- 五 [ご] - five
- 六 [ろく] - six
- 七 [しち, なな] - seven
- 八 [はち] - eight
- 九 [く, きゅう] - nine
- 十 [じゅう] - ten
- 百 [ひゃく] - hundred
- 千 [せん] - thousand
- 万 [いちまん] - ten thousand

To create any number, you can use a combination of these symbols. For example, the number 73 is 七十三 [しちじゅうさん] while the number 21,318 is 二万三千三百十八 [にせんさんひゃくじゅうはち]. Note that some numbers are spoken in a slightly different way, such as 300 is 三百 is spelled さんびゃく instead of さんひゃく. Another important thing to note is that Japanese uses counters. This typically starts with the number, followed by another symbol, depending on what you're trying to count. For example, counting people you would add 人 [じん] to give you: 一人 [ひとり] (one person), 二人 [ふたり] (two people), 三人 [さんにん] (three people), 四人 [よにん] (four people). In this case, one person and two people have their own spellings, but after that you just add 。。。にん. For objects, the counter is つ which gives you: 一つ [ひ

とつ (one object), 二つ [ふたつ] (two objects), 三つ [みっつ] (three objects), 四つ [よっつ] (four objects) and so on.

1.3 Sentence composition

To create sentences once you know the alphabets, you also need to know about a few basic components of the Japanese language. These include the politeness level and honorifics, particles, copula and word order.

1.3.1 Honorifics and politeness

Japanese people are a very polite species, and as such the language has several levels of politeness. Depending on who you ask, there can be up to 4 or 5 levels, although usually it's enough to understand the difference between casual and polite speak. Typically, speaking casually will be quicker, words will be shorter, and many words can be omitted. Slang is also considered casual, and honorifics will change as well.

When talking to someone or about somebody, the *あなた* (you) word is rarely used. Instead, you're expected to use the person's name or title with the proper honorific. Here are the most common ones:

- 。。。さん - Common honorific for people of your status.
- 。。。さま - Very polite, used for elders or God.
- 。。。くん - Casual, used for guys.
- 。。。ちゃん - Casual, used for girls.
- 。。。たん - Casual, used for little kids.

Always use the name or title, followed by the proper honorific. For example, when talking to a girl named Sakura in a casual way, you can say さくらちゃん. When talking to a stranger named Hiroshi, you would use ひろしさん. You can also switch them based on how polite you want to be, like おねえさん (older sister, polite) and おねえちゃん (older sister, casual).

On top of different honorifics and sentence composition, words (especially verbs) will also change based on whether you're being casual or polite. For example, 食べる (eat) is the casual version, while 食べます (eat) is the polite version, also called the

masu form. Here is the verb conjugated both ways:

食べる [たべる] (to eat)			
I eat	I don't eat	I ate	Eat!
食べる	食べない	食べた	食べて
食べます	食べません	食べました	

Verbs have a past and non-past tense. There is no future tense, instead the context is used.

Finally, you will see the suffixes なさい and ございます added to certain words. For example, おはよう (good morning) can be made more polite by saying おはようございます.

1.3.2 Particles

In English, the word order is always fixed. Also, we use spaces in order to clearly separate words. In Japanese, word order is flexible, and there are no spaces in Japanese books. This means words have to be identified by particles in order to see the context. These are the most used particles:

- は (spelled 'wa') - Topic marker, follows the subject of the sentence.
- を (spelled 'o') - Object marker, follows the object of the sentence.
- が - Object marker for action verbs.
- に - Location marker, follows a static location where something is.
- で - Location marker, follows a location where an action occurs.
- の - Possessive marker, basically the same as 's.

For example, if you have the name Sakura and the sentence has this person being the subject, the は particle would follow. Similarly, if 私 [わたし] (I, myself) is in the sentence, but the subject is an object I own, you would use the の particle. Two additional particles of interest that can usually only be found at the end of sentences are ね (isn't it?) and よ (yo) which are ways to be more expressive. For example, そうですね (it is so, isn't it?).

1.3.3 Word order

The word order in English is SVO (subject verb object). However in Japanese it's SOV (subject object verb). So when you would normally say *Sakura eats cake*, the Japanese version would be さくらはケーキ

を食べます (Sakura cake eats). The sentence can be divided in the following parts:

- さくら - Topic
- は - Topic marker
- ケーキ - Object
- を - Object marker
- 食べます - Verb

1.3.4 Copula

A copula is a way to link subjects to predicates. Basically, the word でございます (is) which is used to end sentences when the verb of the sentence is *to be*. In common usage, it's shortened to です for polite conversations, and だ for casual ones. For example: 私は日本人です (I am Japanese) contains the subject 私 [わたし] (I), the は topic marker, the object 日本人 [にほんじん] (Japanese) and the copula です (is).

Note that the subject is often dropped when it's obvious from the context. So in this case you would just say 日本人です. It's also commonly used when talking about yourself. For example, if someone asks お元気[げんき]ですか (how are you?) you can answer 元気です (I am feeling well). Similarly, when introducing yourself you should say your name followed by です. In a casual setting, you can use だ instead, or skip the copula completely.

1.3.5 Common expressions

There are a lot of common expressions that you will hear countless times in a typical conversation without any real relation with the topic of discussion. These are ways to agree with someone, think additional points of conversation, or exclaim excitement. Here are some of the most common expressions:

- そうですね - It is, isn't it?
- そうですか - I guess it is.
- やっぱり - I knew it!
- そっか, なるほど - I see...
- やった - I did it!
- あの。。。 - Uhm...
- よかった - That was good!
- いいですね, いいから - That's good.

- ちょっと待[ま]って - Wait a moment!
- どうぞ - Go ahead.
- かしら, かな - I wonder.
- いただきます - Let's eat!
- しょうがない - It can't be helped.
- 大丈夫 [だいじょうぶ] - I'm alright.
- こちらこそ - Same here, likewise
- だめよ - It's no good!
- がんばって - Good luck!

The word いい (good) is an adjective used in a lot of sentences to describe something that is OK or good. そう (so) means the same in English, while 大丈夫 [だいじょうぶ] (I'm alright) starts with the word 大 [おお] (big), used in many sentences to imply a strong sense of something. For example, 好[す]きです (I like you) versus 大[だい]好[す]きです (I love you).

こちら means *over here*, while ちょっと in ちょっと待って means *a little bit*.

待つ [まつ] (to wait)			
I wait	I don't wait	I waited	Wait!
待つ 待ちます	待たない 待ちません	待った 待ちました	待って

1.3.6 Pronouns

The words *I* and *you* aren't used much in Japanese for two reasons. First, the subject is often omitted when the context makes it clear. Also, you're expected to use the person's name when you know it, even if you're talking directly to them. Still, there are several pronouns that can be useful to know in certain situations:

- 私 [わたし] - I, myself
- ぼく, おれ - I, myself (only guys)
- あなた - You
- きみ - You (casual)
- 私達 [わたしたち] - We

For example, you can say 私達は東京に行きました [わたしたちはとうきょうにいきました] (We went to Tokyo). Since the verb doesn't change in the plural form (in this case 行く is in

the past, polite form) then the subject is required.

行く [いく] (to go)			
I go	I don't go	I went	Go!
行く 行きます	行かない 行きません	行った 行きました	行って

1.4 Greetings

Greetings are among the first thing you may want to do in Japanese, and what typically begins a conversation.

- はじめまして - Nice to meet you.
- お元気[げんき]ですか - How are you feeling?
- よろしくお願[ねがい]いします - Let's do our best.
- おはよう - Good morning.
- こんにちは - Good day.
- こんばんは - Good evening.
- 行[い]って来[き]ます - I'll be back later!
- じゃまたね - See you later!
- ただいま - I'm back!
- お帰[かえ]り - Welcome back!
- おやすみ - Good night.

The expression 行って来ます (I'll be back later) uses two common verbs, to go and to come. They are often used alongside other verbs to indicate an action you're about to do.

来る [くる] (to come)			
I come	I don't come	I came	Come!
来る 来ます	来ない 来ません	来た 来ました	来て

1.5 Asking questions

Any sentence can be changed into a question by adding か at the end. For example, あなたはアメリカ人です (You are American) can be changed to a question with あなたはアメリカ人ですか (Are you American?). Note that アメリカ is in katakana since it's a foreign word.

While adding か at the end of a sentence will automatically make it into a question, there are specific words that you need to know in order to ask some of

the most basic questions from other people. Here are the most common ones:

- 何 [なに, なん] - What?
- どこ - Where?
- どう - How?
- 誰 [だれ] - Who?
- どれ - Which?
- いつ - When?
- 何で, なぜ, どうして - Why?
- いくら - How much?

The most common of these is 何 [なん] (what) which can be paired with other words to ask questions. For example, 歳 [さい] (years old) can be used to ask someone's age like this: 何歳ですか. The word 時 [じ] (o'clock) can be used to ask the time like this: 何時ですか. To ask someone to repeat an answer, say もう一度 [もういちど] (once more).

When talking about doing something, the verb する (to do) comes up often, usually paired with other verbs. It can also be used in simple sentences like: 私はします (I will do it).

する (to do)			
I do	I don't do	I did	Do!
する します	しない しません	した しました	して

For simple questions, you may be able to answer with はい (yes) or いいえ (no). For more complex ones, you may need the verb *to be* to say that someone or something is in some state, or that something exists. This is actually divided in two verbs in Japanese: いる is for living beings (humans, pets) while ある is for objects. It's not rare to use あります (is) or ありません (is not) as positive and negative affirmations.

ある (to be)			
It is	It's not	It was	Be!
ある あります	ない ありません	あった ありました	あって

いる (to be)			
I am	I am not	I was	Be!
いる います	いない いません	いた いました	いて

2 Basic concepts

After covering the basics of constructing words and sentences, there are still plenty more basic abstract concepts such as telling time and referring to groups of people.

2.1 Time and dates

時 [とき] (time) can be told using 時間 [じかん] (hours) and 分間 [ぶんかん] (minutes). To say a specific time during the day, you would use the number of hours, followed with 時 [じ] (o'clock), and then the number of minutes with 分 [ぶん, ふん]. For example, 3:17 would be 三時十七分. To say *and a half* you can use 半 [はん]. So 2:30 would be 二時半. You can also add seconds with 秒 [びょう]. The act of looking at a clock would be 時計を見る [とけいをみる].

見る [みる] (to look)			
I look	I don't look	I looked	Look!
見る	見ない	見た	見て
見ます	見ません	見ました	

For dates, here are the important words to know:

- 日 [ひ, にち] - Day
- 週 [しゅう] - Week
- 月 [つき, がつ, げつ] - Month
- 年 [とし, ねん] - Year

So to tell a specific date you would use: 2019年6月15日 [二千十九ねん六がつ十五にち].

2.1.1 Days of the week

These are Monday through Friday, along with the work week and weekend:

- 月曜日 [げつようび] - Monday
- 火曜日 [かようび] - Tuesday
- 水曜日 [すいようび] - Wednesday
- 木曜日 [もくようび] - Thursday
- 金曜日 [きにようび] - Friday
- 土曜日 [どようび] - Saturday
- 日曜日 [にちようび] - Sunday
- 週間 [しゅうかん] - Work week
- 週末 [しゅうまつ] - Weekend

2.1.2 Months of the year

Months are the number 1 to 12 followed by 月 [がつ]. So January is 一月 [いちがつ], February is 二月 [にがつ], March is 三月 [さんがつ], April is 四月 [よんがつ] and December is 一十月 [にじゅうがつ]. They are also often written with numbers, such as 6月.

2.1.3 Specific times of day

Here are a few more useful terms for narrowing down a period of time:

- 今 [いま] - Right now
- 今日 [きょう] - Today
- 朝 [あさ] - Morning
- 午前 [ごぜん] - AM
- 午後 [ごご] - PM
- 夜 [よる] - Night
- 誕生日 [たんじょうび] - Birthday
- 休日 [きゅうじつ] - Holiday

6 AM would be translated as 午前6時. You can ask *what time is it right now?* with 今何時ですか [いまなんじですか]. To say you're *looking forward* to a specific time or event, you would say 楽しみに [たのしみ].

2.1.4 Relative dates

You can use 次 [つぎ] (next) to speak about an upcoming event or time. For example, to say *in the next 5 minutes* you can use 次の5分間. But when speaking about specific dates, you would use these specific terms:

- 明日 [あした] - Tomorrow
- 昨日 [きのう] - Yesterday
- 毎日 [まいにち] - Every day
- 来週 [らいしゅう] - Next week
- 先週 [せんしゅう] - Last week
- 毎週 [まいしゅう] - Every week
- 来月 [らいげつ] - Next month
- 先月 [せんげつ] - Last month
- 毎月 [まいつき] - Every month

- 数日後 [すうじつご] - A few days later

To say a specific date in the next week, for example *next Tuesday*, you would use 来週の火曜日 which literally means *next week's Tuesday*. To say *tomorrow's morning* you would use 明日の朝. You can also specify a time period with から (from) and まで (to) with the following structure: 6時から8時まで (from 6h to 8h).

2.2 Groups

Grouping people, objects or locations can be very useful when referring to things. There are common words and symbols used throughout this section to refer to people, places and things.

2.2.1 This, that, that over there

These are 3 useful words to refer to things:

- これ - This
- それ - That
- あれ - That over there

For example you can refer to an object in the sentence これを読む [これをよむ] (I read this) or それを読む [それをよむ] (I read that). To refer to a specific item, replace れ with の, like this: この本を読む [このほんをよむ] (I read this book). You can also use ここ to mean *here*.

読む [よむ] (to read)			
I read	I don't read	I read (past)	Read!
読む	読まない	読んだ	読んで
読みます	読みません	読みました	

2.2.2 Crowds

The following terms refer to crowds, specific people in the crowd, specific objects or specific locations:

- 日本人 [にほんじん] - Japanese
- 外人 [がいじん] - Foreigner
- 皆 [みんな] - Everyone
- すべて - All
- いっぱい - Lots
- 誰か [だれか] - Someone
- 誰でも [だれでも] - Anyone

- 誰も [だれも] - No one
- どこか - Somewhere
- どこでも - Anywhere
- どこにも - Nowhere
- 何か [なにか] - Something
- 何でも [なんでも] - Anything
- 何も [なにも] - Nothing

Note that in some cases 皆 can also mean *someone* as in 皆が英語を話すか [みんながえいごをはなすか] (does someone speak English?)

話す [はなす] (to speak)			
I speak	I don't speak	I spoke	Speak!
話す	話さない	話した	話して
話します	話しません	話しました	

2.2.3 Me too, also, however

A few more sentence structures are needed when dealing with multiple people, objects or events. First, you may want to say *me too* with the phrase 私も [わたしも]. This can also apply to other people, for example さくらさんも. To specify multiple people, you can use the と character between subjects: 私とさくらは食べる (me and Sakura eat). The same can be used for multiple objects: ケーキとパイが好きです (I like cake and pie). In the case of past-tense events, you would instead use とき or たら. To say *something such as* you can use とか such as: ごはんとかケーキが好きです (I like things such as cake and rice).

In order to say *but* you can use でも at the start of a sentence or けど at the end of a sentence. けど is also used when the second sentence is implied, to soften the first. You can also link two sentences together with しかし (however) or それでも (despite that).

If you're answering a question or commenting on a statement, you can start the sentence with 確かに [たしかに] (surely) in order to agree with the statement, or 別に [べつに] (separately) to disagree with the statement. For example, someone tells you 本当に可愛い! [ほんとおにかわいい!] (really cute!) but you disagree, you can say 別に! To follow a thought with another, use だから (therefore) or じゃ (then).

2.2.4 Family members

A number of words can be used to describe family members, or family related things.

- 家族 [かぞく] - Family
- 結婚 [けっこん] - Wedding
- 夫 [おとと] - Husband
- 妻 [つま] - Wife
- お父さん [おとうさん, ちち] - Father
- お母さん [おかあさん, はは] - Mother
- お爺さん [おじいさん] - Grand father
- お婆さん [おばあさん] - Grand mother
- お兄さん [おにいさん] - Older brother
- お姉さん [おねえさん] - Older sister
- 伯叔 [はくしゅく] - Brothers
- 姉妹 [しまい] - Sisters

Note that honorifics can also vary here. お姉さん (older sister, polite), お姉さま (older sister, very polite) and お姉ちゃん (older sister, casual) are all valid, depending on how close the two family members are to each other.

2.3 Feelings and emotions

Here are some of the most common adjectives used to convey 気持ち [きもち] (feelings) and 思い [おもい] (thoughts) in a casual conversation:

- 可愛い [かわいい] - Cute
- 綺麗 [きれい] - Beautiful, clean
- 面白い [おもしろい] - Interesting, funny
- 楽しい [たのしい] - Fun
- 大きい [おおきい] - Big
- 少し [すこし] - Small
- 嬉しい [うれしい] - Happy, glad
- 格好いい [かっこういい] - Cool
- 失礼 [しつれい], ひどい - Rude
- 忙しい [いそがしい] - Busy
- 怪しい [あやしい] - Suspicious
- おいしい - Delicious

- 我侭 [わがまま] - Selfish
- 優しい [やさしい] - Friendly
- 疲れてる [つかれてる] - Tired
- 痛い [いたい] - Hurt
- 賢い [かしこい] - Smart
- 怖い [こわい] - Scared
- 嫌い [きらい] - Hate
- 好き [すき] - Like
- 広い [ひろい] - Vast
- いい, よい - Good
- 悪い [わるい] - Bad
- 墮落 [だらく] - Corrupted, depraved
- すごい, 素晴らしい [すばらしい] - Amazing
- 難しい [むずかしい] - Difficult
- 簡単 [かんたん] - Easy
- 恥ずかしい [はずかしい] - Embarrassing
- 早い [はやい] - Fast, early
- 遅い [おそい] - Slow, late
- 心配 [しんぱい] - Worried

Most of those adjectives can be used to describe the state of someone or something. For example: 大好きです (I love it), 嫌いです (I hate it), 可愛いです (it's cute). They can also be changed to the past tense by replacing the last い with かった like so: 寒かったです (it was cold). They can be inverted by adding じゃない or くない like so: いいじゃない (not good), 可愛くない (not cute). Finally, you can add ぜんぜん (totally) in front to put emphasis on the adjective.

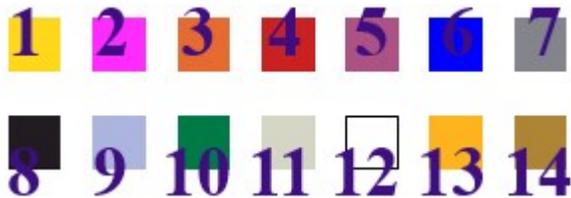
Some of the adjectives come from similar verbs, and others can be used to convey something else. For example, 疲れてる [つかれてる] (tired) can be changed to お疲れさま [おつかれさま] (good job), because it's assumed that if you are tired, then you probably worked a lot. Similarly, Japan society typically keeps emotions much more private than in the west, leading to the concept of 本音 [ほんえ] (real feelings) and 建前 [たてまえ] (public face).

2.4 Mimetic words

The Japanese language has a large number of mimetic words. These are words that sound close to an actual sound, to describe the event which produces the sound. Here are some of the most popular ones:

- ときどき - Heart beathing
- ふわふわ - Fluffy
- ほきほき - Warm
- じろじろ, じじじ - Stare
- たまたま - Luck
- やれやれ - Phew
- ニコニコ - Grin
- あらあら - Oh dear

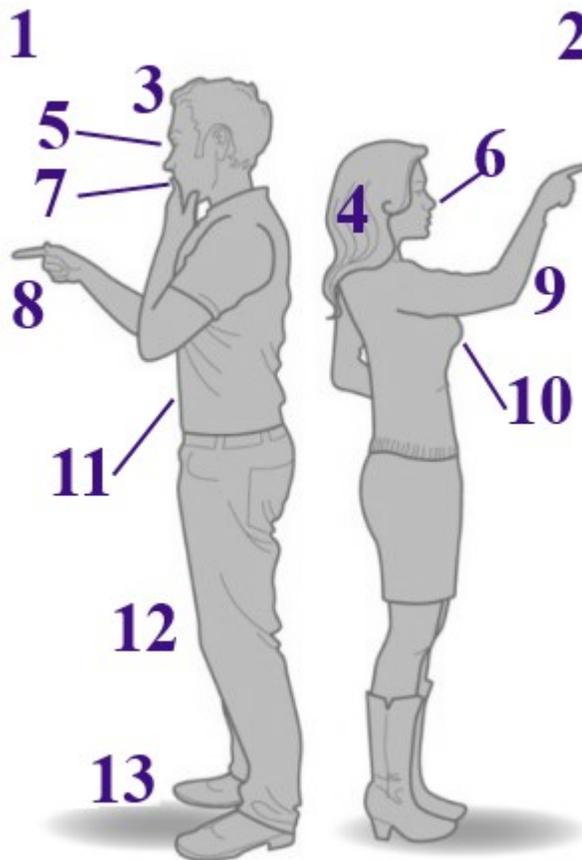
2.5 Colors



1. 黄 [き] - Yellow
2. ピンク - Pink
3. オレンジ - Orange
4. 赤 [あか] - Red
5. 紫 [むらさき] - Purple
6. 青 [あお] - Blue
7. グレー - Grey
8. 黒 [くろ] - Black
9. シアン - Cyan
10. 緑 [みどり] - Green
11. 銀 [ぎん] - Silver
12. 白 [しろ] - White
13. 金 [きん] - Gold
14. 銅 [どう] - Copper

One thing to note is that many things that should be green in Japanese are actually called blue. For example, a green street light is 青 (blue) even if the physical light is green. The same applies to 青芝 [あおしば] (blue lawns) and 青林檎 [あおりんご] (blue apples).

2.6 Body parts



1. 男 [おとこ], 男の子 - Man, guy
2. 女 [おんな], 女の子 - Woman, girl
3. 頭 [あたま] - Head
4. 髪 [かみ] - Hair
5. 目 [め] - Eyes
6. 鼻 [はな] - Nose
7. 口 [くち] - Mouth
8. 手 [て] - Hand
9. 腕 [うで] - Arm

10. おっぱい - Breasts
11. 腹 [はら] - Belly
12. 脚 [あし], ひざ - Legs, lap
13. 足 [あし] - Feet

2.7 Requesting help

Sometimes things go wrong. Here are words related to asking for help, danger and other annoyances:

- すみません - Excuse me
- 危ない [あぶない] - Danger
- 邪魔 [じゃま], めんどくさい - Nuisance
- 気をつけて [きをつけて] - Be careful
- ごめんなさい - Sorry
- ありがとう - Thanks
- 問題ない [もんだいない] - No problem

When requesting something, it's usually best to say *please*. There are two words for it: ください and お願いします [おねがいします]. The first is used when asking for an item or an action, while the second is used when requesting a service or wanting to sound more polite. For example: 助けてください [たすけてください] (help please).

助ける [たすける] (to help)			
I help	I don't help	I helped	Help me!
助ける	助けない	助けた	助けて
助けます	助けません	助けました	

2.8 Directions

You can ask where a specific location is in two different ways: 東京はどこですか (Where is Tokyo?) or 東京に行きたいのです (I want to go to Tokyo). Note that any verb can be changed into a desire form by adding たい at the end. So 行く (I go) becomes 行きたい (I want to go).

The following are useful to know when trying to find the way somewhere:

- 右 [みぎ] - Right
- 左 [ひだり] - Left
- 真っ直ぐ [まっすぐ] - Straight ahead

For example: 駅は左です [えきはひだりです] (the station is to the left).

3 Education

This section deals with the concepts of 教育 [きょういく] (education) and 学ぶ [まなぶ] (to study).

学ぶ [まなぶ] (to study)			
I study	I don't study	I studied	Study!
学 び ま す	学 ば な い 学 び ま せ ん	学 ん だ 学 び ま し た	学 ん で

Here are a few basic school related terms:

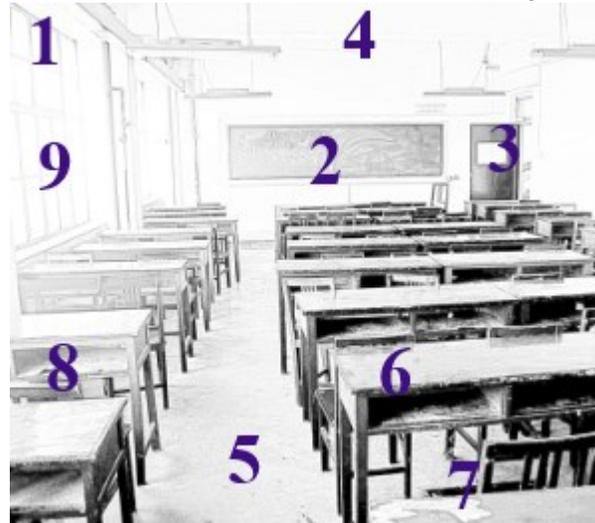
- 学校 [がっこう] - School
- 高校 [こうこう] - High school
- 中学校 [ちゅうがっこう] - Middle school
- 大学校 [だいがっこう] - College
- 先生 [せんせい] - Teacher
- 学生 [がくせい] - Student
- 留学生 [りゅうがくせい] - Foreign exchange student
- 学校長 [がっこうちょう] - School principal
- 後輩 [こうはい] - Junior
- 先輩 [せんぱい] - Senior
- 試験 [しけん] - Exam
- 制服 [せいふく] - School uniform
- 生徒 [せいと] - Student council
- 生徒会著 [せいとかいちょ] - Student council president

Note that 先生 (teacher) can be used for anyone more knowledgeable than you, while 主人 [しゅじん] or マスター (master) is used for people in position of authority. Levels in a school are also referred to as 年生 [ねんせい] and used as a counter: 一年生 (first grade), 二年生 (second grade), 三年生 (third grade).

3.1 Classroom

Japan schools are all built along very similar plans and concepts. The morning starts with ホームルーム (homeroom) which is when the 先生 (teacher) describes the events of the day. Afterward, a 学生 (student) will spend the remainder of the day in the same classroom, except

for specialized labs, with teachers swapping rooms.



1. 教室 [きょうしつ] - Classroom
2. 黒板 [こくばん] - Blackboard
3. ドア, 障子 [しょうじ] - Door
4. 天井 [てんじょう] - Ceiling
5. 階 [かい] - Floor (counter)
6. 机 [つくえ] - Desk
7. 椅子 [いす] - Chair
8. 教科書 [きょうかしょ] - Textbook
9. 窓 [まど] - Window

Most doors are 障子 (sliding door) as opposed to the western style ドア. Time spent in class typically involve 教科書を分かる [きょうかしょをわかる] (understanding the textbook) through repetition and memorization.

分かる [わかる] (to understand)			
I underst..	I don't und..	Understood	Under..!
分 か る	分 か ら な い	分 か っ た	分 か っ て
分 か り ま す	分 か り ま せ ん	分 か り ま し た	

The verb 分かる (to understand) can also mean to know in certain cases, like when you're expected to know something and you remember it. Otherwise, the verb to use is 知る (to know).

知る [しる] (to know)			
I know	I don't know	I knew	Know!
知 る	知 ら な い	知 っ た	知 っ て
知 り ま す	知 り ま せ ん	知 り ま し た	

3.2 Library



1. 図書館 [としょかん] - Library
2. 本棚 [ほんだな] - Bookshelf
3. 本 [ほん] - Book
4. 司書 [ししょ] - Librarian
5. ペン, 鉛筆 [えんぴつ] - Pen, pencil

3.3 Lunch

For lunch, most schools in Japan have either the 給食 [きゅうしょく] (school lunch) which is a school provided lunch at a the カフェテリア (cafeteria), or students bring their own 弁当 [べんとう] (boxed lunch) which they eat in the classroom.

3.4 Clubs

After class, most schools have mandatory 部活 [ぶかつ] (club activities). Some popular clubs include 野球 [やきゅう] (baseball), 蹴球 [しゅうきゅう] (soccer), 柔道 [じゅうどう] (judo), 剣道 [けんどう] (kendo), テニス (tennis), 水泳 [すいえい] (swimming) and 書道 [しどう] (calligraphy). These clubs often participate in 文化祭 [ぶんかさい] (culture festivals). Some expressions of victory include やった (yay), よかった (that was good) and 了解 [りょうかい] (roger).

4 Outdoors

4.1 Weather

Telling the 天気 [てんき] (weather) in Japanese is fairly easy. Temperatures are in Celcius and you can describe the overall weather using the following words:

- 雨 [あめ] - Rain
- 雪 [ゆき] - Snow
- 晴 [はれ] - Sunny
- 雲 [くも] - Cloud
- 風 [かぜ] - Wind
- 厚い [あつい] - Hot
- 寒い [さむい] - Cold
- 暖かい [あたたかい] - Warm
- 落雷 [らくらい] - Lightning
- 台風 [たいふう] - Typhoon
- 地震 [じしん] - Earthquake
- 緊急 [きんきゅう] - Emergency
- 情報 [じょうほう] - Information

You can ask for the weather with 今日の天気予報は何ですか [きょうのてんきよほうはなんですか] (What is the weather forecast today?) The answer could be 曇りです (It is cloudy) or いい天気になります (The weather will become good).

You can also describe the weather in relation to the various seasons:

- 春 [はる] - Spring
- 夏 [なつ] - Summer
- 秋 [あき] - Autumn
- 冬 [ふゆ] - Winter

4.2 Animals

Here are a few common animals you can find outside:

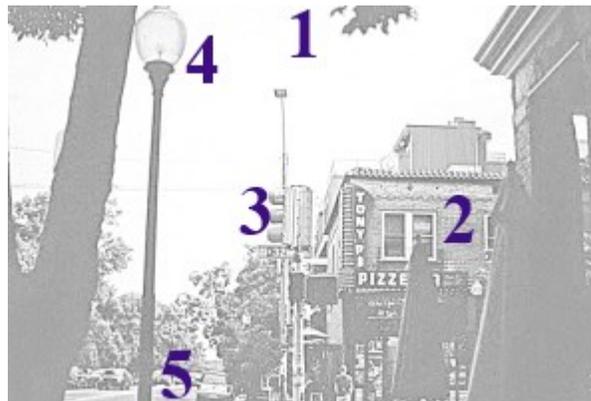
- 猫 [ねこ], 子猫 [こねこ] - Cat, kitten
- 犬 [いぬ] - Dog
- 牛 [うし] - Cow
- 鴨 [かも] - Duck
- 熊 [くま] - Bear
- 兎 [うさぎ] - Rabbit

4.3 Natural landscape



1. 山 [やま] - Mountain
2. 谷 [たに] - Valley
3. 川 [かわ] - River
4. 滝 [たき] - Waterfall
5. 海 [うみ] - Ocean
6. 木 [き] - Tree
7. 岩 [いわ] - Rock

4.4 City life



1. 市 [いち], 都 [みやこ] - City

2. 棟 [むね] - Building
3. 止まれ [とまれ] - Stop
4. 光 [ひかり] - Light
5. 道 [みち] - Road

Note that the verb 止まる [とまる] (to stop) means to stop as in a vehicle on the street, but 止める [やめる] (to stop) is more commonly used for giving up or resigning.

止める [やめる] (to stop)			
I stop	I don't stop	I stopped	Stop!
止める	止めない	止めた	止めて
止めます	止めません	止めました	

4.5 Methods of transport



1. 踏み [ふみ] - Steps
2. 車 [くるま] - Car
3. タクシー - Taxi
4. 飛行機 [きこうき] - Airplane
5. 電車 [でんしゃ] - Electric train, subway
6. 列車 [れっしゃ] - Train
7. 船 [ふね] - Boat
8. 自転車 [じてんしゃ] - Bicycle
9. バス - Bus

Japan travel is typically done by train. Other useful train-related terms include 駅 [えき] (train station), 線 [せん] (line) and 切符 [きっぷ], チケット (ticket). To say you will walk somewhere, use the verb 歩く [あるく].

歩く [あるく] (to walk)			
I walk	I don't walk	I walked	Walk!
歩く	歩かない	歩いた	歩いて
歩きます	歩きません	歩きました	

4.6 At the store



1. 店 [みせ] - Store
2. 符号 [ふごう] - Sign
3. 歩道 [ほどう] - Sidewalk
4. 鞆 [かばん] - Bag
5. 棚 [たな] - Shelf

There are many popular stores in Japan including コンビニ (convenience store), コーヒーショップ (coffee shop), 乾物屋 [かんぶつや] (grocery store), 魚屋 [さかなや] (fish market), 酒屋 [さかや] (liquor store), 本屋 [ほんや] (book store) and スーパー (supermarket).

The act of *shopping* is 買い物する [かいものする], while the verbs are 買う [かう] (to buy) and 売る [うる] (to sell).

買う [かう] (to buy)			
I buy	I don't buy	I bought	Buy!
買う	買わない	買った	買って
買います	買いません	買いました	

売る [うる] (to sell)			
I sell	I don't sell	I sold	Sell!
売る	売らない	売った	売って
売ります	売りません	売りました	

4.7 At the shrine

Japanese people follow very traditional values. The two main religions are 仏教 [ぶっきょう] (Buddhism) and 神道 [しんとう] (Shinto). Unsurprisingly, 神社 [じんじゃ] (shrines) can be found in most locations. These are places of safe-keeping for sacred relics and where people pray to 神 [かみ] (God) and wish for good fortune. Many ceremonies are performed at shrines, such as 厄払い [やくばらい] (cleansing of bad luck).

祈る [いのる] (to wish)			
I wish	I don't wish	I wished	Wish!
祈る	祈らない	祈った	祈って
祈ります	祈りません	祈りました	

Here is some more vocabulary related to traditions and secrets:

- 秘密 [ひみつ] - Secret
- 約束 [やくそく] - Promise
- 化け物 [ばけもの] - Ghost, monster
- 天使 [てんし] - Angel

4.8 At the restaurant

Meals are typically served as a series of bowls containing various types of food. These are eaten with 端 [はし] (chopsticks) and shared among the people sitting at the table. A popular 朝ごはん [あさごはん] (breakfast) meal may look like this:



1. 卵焼き [たまごやき] - Egg omelette
2. 焼き魚 [やきざかな] - Grilled fish
3. ナット - Fermented soybeans
4. 漬物 [つけもの] - Pickled vegetables
5. ご飯 [ごはん] - Rice
6. 味噌汁 [みそじる] - Miso soup

This can be served with 水 [みず] (water), 酒 [さけ] (liquor) or お茶 [おちゃ] (tea).

飲む [のむ] (to drink)			
I drink	I don't drink	I drank	Drink!
飲む	飲まない	飲んだ	飲んで
飲みます	飲みません	飲みました	

Some more popular meals, mostly used for snack and 午餐 [ごさん] (dinner), may include:

- おにぎり - Rice balls
- すし - Sushi
- おでん - Oden
- カレー - Curry

4.9 At the office

Here are a few common words useful at the office:

- 会社 [かいしゃ] - Company
- 会社員 [かいしゃいん] - Office worker
- 仕事 [しごと] - Work
- コンピューター - Computer
- プリンター - Printer
- メール - Email
- 名刺 [めいし] - Business card
- 電話 [でんわ] - Phone
- はんこ/印鑑 [はんこいんかん] - Personal stamp

働く [はたらく] (to work)			
I work	I don't work	I worked	Work!
働く	働かない	働いた	働いて
働きます	働きません	働きました	

5 Inside the home

A traditional Japanese 家 [いえ] (home) typically starts with a 玄関 [げんかん] (entrance) area where visitors are expected to remove their shoes, followed by one or more rooms for daily life. This often includes at least one 畳 [たたみ] (tatami) room, which is a traditional Japanese straw floor covering. The entrance is also where プレゼント (presents) are typically given by guests as a sign of appreciation.

5.1 Living room



1. リビングルーム - Living room
2. 幟幕 [まんまく] - Curtain
3. テレビ - Television
4. コーヒーテーブル - Coffee table
5. ソファー - Sofa
6. スピーカー - Speakers
7. ゲームコンソール - Games console
8. クッション - Cushion

Some common expressions are modified slightly in Japanese. For example, *turn on the light* is 電気をつけて [でんきをつけて] (use the electricity) while *turn off the light* is 電気を消して [でんきをけして] (erase the electricity). Also, the concept of a living room with western style sofas is a new idea. Typically, people

would sit on the floor around a 炬燵 [コタツ], which would often be the only source of heat in the room.

立つ [たつ] (to stand)			
I stand	I don't stand	I stood	Stand!
立つ 立ちます	立たない 立ちません	立った 立ちました	立って
座る [すわる] (to sit)			
I sit	I don't sit	I sat	Sit!
座る 座ります	座らない 座りません	座った 座りました	座って

5.2 Bedroom



1. 寝室 [しんしつ] - Bedroom
2. 障子 [しょうじ] - Sliding door
3. 布団 [ふとん] - Futon
4. 畳 [たたみ] - Tatami carpet
5. 壁 [かべ] - Wall

Most traditional Japanese houses have a 畳 covered floor, however in modern homes this may be found only in the bedroom. Beds are also fairly rare, with people preferring to sleep on 布団 in the middle of the room, and storing them away in a closet during the day, which gives more space for day time activities.

寝る [ねる] (to sleep)			
I sleep	I don't sleep	I slept	Sleep!
寝る 寝ます	寝ない 寝ません	寝た 寝ました	寝て
起きる [おきる] (to wake up)			
I awake	I don't awake	I awoke	Wake up!
起きる 起きます	起きない 起きません	起きた 起きました	起きて

5.3 Bathroom

Most Japanese bathrooms are divided in several rooms for increased convenience. The トイレ (toilet) typically has its own room, then you have a room with one or more シンク (sink), and finally a wet room with the シャワー (shower) and 浴 [よく] (bath). The bath water is often reused between family members. Note that bathing is very important to Japanese society, and you can find a lot of 銭湯 [せんとう] (public bath) and 温泉 [おんせん] (hot spring) throughout Japan. While many homes have a 洗濯機 [せんたくき] (washing machine), most people use a drying line to dry their clothes on the balcony.

5.4 Kitchen



1. キッチン - Kitchen
2. 食器棚 [しょっきだな] - Cupboard
3. 冷蔵庫 [れいぞうこ] - Fridge
4. オーブン - Oven
5. 電子レンジ [でんしれんじ] - Microwave

焼く [やく] (to bake, grill)			
I bake	I don't bake	I baked	Bake!
焼く 焼きます	焼かない 焼きません	焼いた 焼きました	焼いて

6 Activities

6.1 Health

The most common word related to health is 元気 [げんき] (healthy, energetic) which can be used in the following ways:

- お元気ですか - How are you?
- 元気だね - I am well (casual)
- 元気です - I am well (polite)
- 元気がない - I am not well (casual)
- 元気がありません - I am not well (polite)

There's no direct way to know whether these sentences refer to someone being sick or simply being out of energy, other than context. To refer specifically to health, use the words 健康 [けんこう] (health), 健康的 [けんこうてき] (healthy) and 体 [からだ] (body) like this:

- 健康の人 - This person is healthy
- ひろしさんは健康的です - Hiroshi is healthy
- うんどうは健康にいいです - Exercise is good for the health
- アップルは体にいいです - An apple is good for the body
- ケーキは体によくない - Cake is not good for the body

Other words to describe more serious conditions include 病気 [びよき] (illness), 体調 [たいちょう] (wellness) 病院 [びょういん] (hospital). They can be used like this:

- 病気です - I'm ill
- 体調が悪いです - I'm feeling bad
- 病院にいった - I went to the hospital

死ぬ [しぬ] (to die)			
I die	I don't die	I died	Die!
死ぬ	死なない	死んだ	死んで
死にます	死にません	死にました	

6.2 Communications

Most people have a cellphone and can text using SMS, although the most common way to chat is using LINE

or Twitter. The easiest way to ask for contact information is with the sentence 電話番号教えて [でんわばんごうおしえて] (can you tell me your phone number). To ask someone to repeat, you can use もっとゆっくり話してください (speak more slowly please). If you know that you'll be using a specific application such as LINE, you can ask for their 交換 [こうかん] (contact) information with: LINE交換しよう (let's swap LINE contact information). To take a break, you can say: やすみましょうか (let's rest)

Here are common sentences used while chatting with friends:

- おはよう - Morning!
- 元気? - Are you well?
- 今日いい天気だね - Nice weather today isn't it?
- そうだね - Yeah it is.
- 今何してる? - What are you up to now?
- テレビ見てる - I'm watching TV
- ご飯食べてる - I'm eating
- 今家に帰るところ - I'm about to head home now
- 今家に出るところ - I'm about to leave home now
- 映画に行く - I'm going to the cinema
- 映画に行った - I went to the cinema
- 今忙しいよ - I'm busy right now
- 働いてる - I'm working
- 明日あいてる? - Are you free tomorrow?
- 明日仕事に行かなきゃ - Tomorrow I have to go to work
- 土曜日あいてる? - Are you free Saturday?
- どこ行きたい? - Where do you want to go?
- コンビニ行かない? - Do you want to go to the convenience store?
- 笑 / w w w - lol

Note that 行かない (not go) usually implies a negation, however when used in a question it is a way to suggest doing something. It's a softer way to say コンビニ行こ (let's go to the convenience store). The same applies for any verb.

Also, adding なきゃ or ないと at the end of a verb implies that you have to do something. For example: 5時までに帰らなきゃ [5じまでにかえらなきゃ] (I have to go home by 5 o'clock) or 宿題しなきゃ [しゅくだいしなきゃ] (I have to do homework).

6.3 Traveling

Whether this is your first time in Japan or you're trying to navigate some immigration paper work, here are some useful sentences to know when arriving at the airport:

- パスポートお願いします - Passport, please
- どうぞ - Here you go
- ホテルはどこですか - Where is your hotel?
- しごとですか - Are you here for business?
- かんこうですか - Are you here for sightseeing?

You may also need to know various words that you can find on signs, usually indicating specific locations or actions:

- 出国審査 [しゅっこくしんさ] - Immigration
- 税関 [ぜいかん] - Customs
- 手荷物受取所 [てにもつうけとりじょ] - Baggage claims
- 第1ターミナル - Terminal 1
- 出発 [しゅっぱつ] - Departures
- 到着 [とうちゃく] - Arrivals
- 乗り継ぎ案内 [のりつぎあんあい] - Connecting flight
- 出口 [でぐち] - Exit
- 門口, 入口 [かどぐち] - Entrance
- のぼり - Going up
- くだり - Going down

Once on the ground, it's good to know that Japan is divided into 地方 [ちほう] (regions) such as 関西地方 (Kansai region) and 県, 府 [けん, ふ] (prefectures) such as 東京都 (Tokyo prefecture). Train travel is the most common form of transportation on the ground, operated by various regional companies, and large towns are connected by the 新幹線 [しんかんせん] (bullet train).

6.4 Shopping

Japan is a very cash focused society, so 現金 [げんきん] (cash) is still the standard when going shopping. However, credit cards are becoming more popular, especially in larger cities. To find out if the place you're at takes credit cards, you can ask クレジットカードは使えますか (do you take credit cards). You can also get PASMO cash cards at any 駅 [えき] (train station) which can be used to pay for train tickets, subways, but also at some vending machines and stores.

When you're out shopping, you may want to ask どれはいくらですか (how much is this) while pointing to an item. For clothes, sizes are referred to as Mサイズ (size medium). So if you want a specific item in another size you can say Mサイズがありますか (do you have it in size M). To purchase a specific quantity use the object counter つ like 二つ [ふたつ] (two objects). For example, これを二つお願いします (I will take two of these).

Vending machines are also typical of Japan society and contain not only sandwiches and drinks, but also clothing, electronics and hot meals.

Here is a typical dialog between a restaurant owner and client when placing an ご注文 [ごちゅうもん] (order) for 食べ物 [たべもの] (food) and 飲み物 [のみのもの] (drinks):

- いらっしゃいませ - Welcome
- 何名様ですか - How many people?
- 二人です - Two people
- すみません - Excuse me
- ご注文は - What are you ordering?
- おすすめ - Your recommendation
- 見せてあげるは - Let me show you
- 掛け違えてる [かけちがえてる] - I made a mistake
- これください - This, please
- おかわりください - Seconds, please
- まかせて - Leave it to me

あげる (to give)			
I give	I don't give	I gave	Give!
あげる	あげない	あげた	あげて
あげます	あげません	あげました	

Note that あげる can also be used along with another verb like this: 見せてあげる [みせてあげる] (I will show you) or 教えてあげる [おしえてあげる] (I will teach you).

Reading prices can also be useful. This sentence: 1個1500円+税、1ボックス (6個入り) 8000円+税 says that a single 個 (piece) costs 1500 円 (yen) plus 税 (taxes), while a ボックス (box) which contains 6 pieces costs 8000 yen plus taxes.

6.5 Manga and anime

While it's hard to classify マンガ (manga) or アニメ (anime) into a specific category, we'll focus more on the "cutesy" type that is typical of this style of entertainment.

Here are some words you can hear in this context:

- 萌え [もえ] - Precious
- きゅん - Heart melting
- 心 [こころ] - Heart
- 思い出 [おもいで] - Memories
- 彼女 [かのじょ] - Girlfriend
- 彼氏 [かれし] - Boyfriend
- 正義 [せいぎ] - Justice
- ツンデレ - Tsundere
- ヤンデレ - Yandere
- バカ - Idiot
- 変体 [へんたい] - Perverted
- なっちゃった - Transformed into

A popular saying in a maid coffee would be 萌え, 萌え, きゅん! (moe, moe, kyun!) which basically means something is cute and heart warming. In a more action setting, an anime character could say 私は正義です (I am justice).

なる (to become)			
I become	I don't become	I became	Become!
なる	ならない	なった	なって
なります	なりません	なりました	

6.6 Quantities

When talking about measurements, Japan uses the same metric system as the rest of the world, so it's easy

to translate such numbers. On top of precise quantities, the following words can be useful when speaking of one or more objects:

- すべて - All
- すべた - Sliced, diced
- もっと - More
- すぎる - Too much
- 混ぜ [ませ] - Mixed

6.7 Control panels

One interesting part of Japanese home life is dealing with control panels to operate common devices such as the bath, shower, toilet and A/C. Most of those use buttons covered by kanji. Here are some common symbols found on these controls:

- 運転 [うんてん] - Turn on/off
- 切換 [きりかえ] - Switch mode
- タイマー - Set timer
- 温く [ぬくく] - Warm water
- 高温 [こうおん] - Hot water
- 追炊き [おいだき] - Reheat
- 冷房 [れいぼう] - Cool air
- 暖房 [だんぼう] - Hot air
- 温度 [おんど] - Set temperature
- おしり - Bidet
- 大 [だい] - Large amount
- 小 [こ] - Small amount