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Japanese (日本語 *nihongo*) is spoken in [Japan](#), and essentially nowhere else other than [South Korea](#) and [China](#), where some use it as a second language. The language is strongly influenced by [Chinese](#) though the two are unrelated; Japanese may be distantly related to [Korean](#), although the written form uses a combination of Katakana, Hiragana and Kanji characters which were all derived from Chinese characters.

Pronunciation guide

Japanese is not a tonal language like Chinese or Thai, and is comparatively easy to pronounce. The vowels are pronounced virtually identical to the "Italian way" and there are very few consonants that do not exist in English. All syllables are to be pronounced equal in length. Long vowels take the length of two syllables. Combinations like *kya* are treated like one syllable and are the only occurrence of sliding vowels, all other syllables are to be pronounced rather separately.

Also avoid placing too much emphasis on particular words or syllables. Although Japanese does have a form of stress and intonation, it is significantly flatter than English. Word stress is much more subtle and neglecting it at this point should not interfere with meaning. Trying to keep your intonation flat will make your attempts to speak Japanese more comprehensible to local listeners. When asking questions, you can raise the tone at the end, as in English.

Vowels

Japanese has only five basic vowels, but the distinction between short and long vowels is often important. The sounds below are first given in romanized Japanese, then hiragana and finally katakana.

The **short vowels** are:

a, あ, ア	like 'a' in "palm"
i, い, イ	like 'i' in "marine"
u, う, ウ	like 'oo' in "hoop", but short (best described as the sound said without rounded lips)
e, え, エ	like 'e' in "set"
o, お, オ	like 'o' in "rope", but less round

Note that "u" is often weak at the end of syllables. In particular, the common endings *desu* and *masu* are usually pronounced as *des* and *mas* respectively. Also, the kana "do" and "to" are sometimes pronounced with a weak "o".

The **long vowels** are generally the same sound as the short vowels, only held approximate 60% longer. The long vowels, marked with a macron in this phrasebook, are:

ā, ああ, アー	like 'a' in "father"
ii, いい, イー	like 'ee' in "cheese"
u, うう, ウー	like 'oo' in "hoop"
ei, えい, エー	like the 'ay' in "pay"
ō, おう, オー	stretch out the 'o' in "soap"

All descriptions above are approximations, it's best to practice with a native speaker.

Consonants

With the solitary exception of "n" (ん・ン), consonants in Japanese are always followed by a vowel to form a syllable. Consonants and vowels are not freely combinable as in English, see table on the right for all possible syllables and note irregularities like し *shi* or ふ *fu*. Certain syllables can be marked with diacritics, which alters the pronunciation of the consonant part. The list below first gives the consonant part of the syllable in romanized

uppercase or italic letters in English. In addition, some words were not derived from English but from other languages such as German, French or Dutch.

Grammar

Japanese sentence structure is very similar to that of [Korean](#), so speakers of Korean will find many aspects of Japanese grammar familiar.

At its core, Japanese grammar is pretty simple, though sentence structures differ greatly from English. For instance, Japanese uses postpositions instead of prepositions (*Japan in* and *notin Japan*). It has no gender, declensions or plurals. Nouns never conjugate while adjectives follow a generally standardised conjugation pattern. However, verbs have extensive conjugation patterns and much of Japanese lessons for foreign language learners is about getting these conjugations right. Verbs and adjectives also conjugate by politeness level though, and in a rather peculiar way.

Japanese is a so called agglutinative language, meaning several morphemes which have purely grammatical functions are glued to the end of a word stem to express the grammatical function. The more the intended meaning differs from the basic form of the word, the more morphemes are glued together.

Japanese verb and adjective conjugation				
stem 見 <i>m</i> <i>i</i>	basic form 見 る <i>miru</i> , "to see"	polite basic form 見ま す <i>mimasu</i> , "to see" (pol.)	negative form 見ない <i>minai</i> , "to not see"	pol. neg. form 見ませ ん <i>mimasen</i> , "to not see" (pol.)
	past tense 見 た <i>mita</i> , "seen"	pol. past tense 見まし た <i>mimashita</i> , "seen" (pol.)	neg. past tense 見なかつ た <i>minakatta</i> , "not seen"	pol. neg. past tense 見ませんでし た <i>mimasende shita</i> , "not seen" (pol.)
	possibility 見え る <i>mieru</i> , "can see"	pol. possibility 見えま す <i>miemasu</i> , "can see" (pol.)	neg. possibility 見えな い <i>mienai</i> , "can not see"	
stem 赤 <i>a</i> <i>ka</i>	adjective 赤 い <i>akai</i> , "red"	negative form 赤くな い <i>akakunai</i> , "not red"	neg. past tense 赤くなかつ た <i>akakunakatta</i> , "was not red"	

Forming sentences

Particle pronunciation

The hiragana syllables は *ha*, へ *he* and を *wo* are pronounced as *wa*, *e* and *o* respectively when used as a particle.

Japanese grammar generally employs a subject-object-verb order, but is very modular and flexible since the grammatical meaning of a word is expressed by the morphemes glued to its end and special marker particles. The two most important particles are the topic marker は *wa* and the object marker を *o*.

I saw the movie.
私は映画を見ました。
Watashi-wa eiga-o mimashita.
I-[topic] movie-[obj] seen.

It becomes a little more complicated if both objects and subjects are mixed within a sentence and the subject marker が *ga* is thrown in.

I discovered that she likes tea.
私は彼女がお茶を好きな事が分かった。
Watashi-wa kanojo-ga ocha-o sukinakoto-ga wakatta.
I-[topic] she-[subj.] tea-[obj.] like-[subj.] understood.

Students of the language can spend years wrapping their heads around the difference between the *topic* of a sentence (marked by は *wa*) and the *subject* of a sentence (marked by が *ga*). However, as a beginner, you can fairly safely always use は *wa* to mark the person doing the action and get your message across.

Some other useful particles are:

の *no*
possessive marker
The mother's child
母の子
haha no ko

で *de*, に *ni*
indicating places and times
in Tokyo
東京で
Tōkyō-de
at 2 o'clock
2時に
niji-ni

から *kara*, へ *e*, まで *made*
from, towards, until
From here towards Osaka until Nara.
ここから大阪へ奈良まで
koko kara Ōsaka-e Nara-made

と *to*, か *ka*
and, or
This and that.
これとそれ
kore to sore
This or that.
これかそれ
kore ka sore

か? *ka?*
question forming particle
Are you going to Tokyo?
東京に行きますか?
Tōkyō ni ikimasu ka?

The verb "to be"

Japanese does not have an exact equivalent to the English verb "to be". Instead, the easiest way to form "A equals B" type expressions like "I am ..." or "This is ..." is the pattern A *wa*, B *desu*.

私は、山田です。 *Watashi wa, Yamada desu* ("I [am] Yamada.")
これは、りんごです。 *Kore wa, ringo desu* ("This [is] apple.")
それは、赤いです。 *Sore wa, akai desu* ("That [is] red.")

The word です *desu* here is *not* a verb, it's a polite copula (linking word), which can be omitted in colloquial speech or replaced with other copulas including でした *deshita* (polite past), でしょう *deshō* (polite suggestion) or だ *da* (plain). The topic indicated by は *wa* is also optional and is often implied by context:

あなたはだれですか？ *Anata wa dare desu ka?* ("Who [are] you?")
 山田です。 *Yamada desu.* ("I am] Yamada.")
 これは何ですか？ *Kore wa nan desu ka?* ("What [is] this?")
 りんごです。 *Ringo desu.* ("[This is] an apple.")
 それは何色ですか？ *Sore wa nani-iro desu ka?* ("What color [is] that?")
 赤いです。 *Akai desu.* ("[That is] red.")

The two verbs いる *iru* > *imasu* and ある *aru* > *arimasu* express the **physical presence** of a person or an object respectively. To say "A is located in B", use the pattern **A ga B ni imasu/arimasu**:

山田さんがここにいます。 *Yamada-san ga koko ni imasu.* ("Mr. Yamada is [physically located] here.")
 本が棚にありますか？ *Hon ga tana ni arimasu ka?* ("Is there a book on the shelf?")
 はい、あります。 *Hai, arimasu.* ("Yes, [the book] is [on the shelf].")

Addressing others

Me, myself and I

As long as you're not 100% sure what you're doing you should always refer to yourself as 私 *watashi* and address others by their last name + さん (*san*). If you feel adventurous, here are a number of ways to address people.

I

私 *watashi, watakushi*
 the most common polite form for "I", lit. "private"
 あたし *atashi*
 informal feminine version of *watashi*
 うち *uchi*
 dialect form of *watashi*, lit "(my) house", usually used to refer to one's family or home
 僕 *boku*
 boyish and more informal
 俺 *ore*
 male speak (rude)

you

あなた *anata*
 most common form for "you", not too direct
 あんた *anta*
 more direct, used only by females, tends to be insulting
 君 *kimi*
 more direct, mostly from a man to a woman
 お前 *omae*
 very direct and informal, used only by males
 てめえ *temē*
 very rude, used only by males

Note that in Japan, it is generally rude to address people by first name, and last names are almost always used instead. The exception to this rule are young children, and friends you are very close to. When names are written in Japanese, they always follow the Eastern name order (like Chinese and Korean names), with the last name always written before the first name, which is contrary to common practice in English-speaking countries. This means that someone known as Taro Yamada in English will have his name written as 山田太郎 (*yamada tarō*) in Japanese.

さん *-san*

The most basic honorific, about equivalent to Mister or Miss (no distinction between the two in Japanese). 山田さん *Yamada-san*: Mister Yamada

様 *-sama*

Politer than *-san*, used to address people ranking higher on the social ladder. It is also used by shop assistants to address customers.

ちゃん *-chan*

Usually used to address young children. Also used to address (usually female) close friends.

君 *-kun*

Used to address male close friends.

お客様 *okyaku-sama*

"Mister customer", used by hotel or shop owners to address you.

店長さん *tenchō-san*

The way to address the owner of a shop, though not the part-time workers.

お兄さん *onī-san*, お姉さん *onē-san*

Literally brother and sister respectively, is used to address young people who you're having a hard time finding a better honorific for.

お爺さん *ojī-san*, お婆さん *obā-san*

"Gramps" and "granny", very popular to address old people. Cuter when used with *-chan*.

社長 *shachō*

The boss of the company.

そちら *sochira*

Means something like "on your side" and is used when absolutely no better honorific can be found.

There are also several different words for "I", with 私 *watashi* being the most commonly used. Grammatically it's often unnecessary to use the words "you" or "I" as the intended meaning is obvious from context, so they should generally be avoided. Sometimes people will also call themselves by their own name. When doing so they must not add any additional honorifics though; one only does this when addressing others.

There's no specific form for "we" or the plural "you". To address groups of people you add the plural particle たち *-tachi* to somebody within the group or the group designator.

私たち *watashi-tachi*

lit. "the group around myself", meaning "we"

我々 *ware-ware*

a less formal way of saying "we"

あなたたち *anata-tachi*

"the group around you", plural "you"

子供たち *kodomo-tachi*

"a group of children", meaning "the children"

山田さんたち *Yamada-san-tachi*

"the group around Yamada-san", everybody you'd associate with Mr. Yamada, based on context

Reading and writing

Reading and writing Japanese are advanced skills which take years of work to gain much real proficiency. Japanese themselves use three different writing systems of various complexity, two of which (*hiragana* and *katakana*) are syllabic and relatively easy to learn with 50 characters each.

More a cultural than a grammatical problem is the problem of addressing somebody. Even though there exist a multitude of words with the meaning "you", it is generally avoided to address somebody directly. The closest equivalent to "you" is あなた *anata*, but it's only used among friends or equals. It is usually preferred to address somebody by name, title or status, applying appropriate honorifics.

The clincher is the set of Chinese characters known as *kanji*, roughly 2,000 of which are in daily use while many more exist. Kanji originated as pictures, where each character originally represented a meaning, idea or concept, not a sound as in English. Even though kanji have since evolved dramatically and many have long since jettisoned any connection to the original concept, the meaning of some simple kanji can still be easily guessed at (see below).

One difficulty in reading Japanese lies often in the fact that a kanji can have several different pronunciations. The kanji 人 for example has the meaning of a person, and by itself it may be pronounced *hito*. The kanji 大 means big (imagine a person with outstretched arms) and can be pronounced as *dai* or *ō*. Together they form the word 大人 *otona*, "adult" (lit. *big person*). In the word 外国人 *gaikokujin* ("foreigner", lit. *outside country person*) the same kanji 人 is pronounced *jin*. These pronunciations exist because a single kanji may be used to write one or more different words, or parts of words. These "readings" are normally categorized as either Sino-Japanese (音読み *onyomi*); a Japanese approximation of the Chinese pronunciation of the character at the time it was introduced to Japanese, or native Japanese (訓読み *kunyomi*); based on the pronunciation of a native Japanese word. Generally, *kanji* are read with their native Japanese reading when on their own (eg. 話, **hanashi**) and with Sino-Japanese readings when part of compound words (eg. 電話, **denwa**), though there are many exceptions.

While knowing Chinese will give one a huge advantage in tackling kanji, and someone who knows Chinese would generally be able to guess the meanings of new kanji with about 70% accuracy, one should still be careful. While most characters have similar meanings in both Japanese and Chinese, there are a few which have drastically different meanings. For example, the word 手紙 "hand paper" means "toilet paper" (*shouzhi*) in China, but "letter" (*tegami*) in Japan.

Kanji are mixed with hiragana and katakana in everyday writing for historical reasons. Japan adopted the Chinese *hanzi* system, but found it difficult to impossible to express sound-based Japanese grammatical inflections with the meaning-based Chinese characters. Hence the sound-based hiragana characters have been invented and tacked onto the end of hanzi/kanji characters. The katakana system was invented to express foreign and loan words. There are also several competing systems for rendering Japanese in the Latin alphabet, although the [Hepburn romanization](#) system is the most common and is used on Wikitravel as well. Do not be surprised if you see these words romanized differently elsewhere.

Also note that there are many homophones in Japanese, i.e. words with different meanings that have the same pronunciation (like "there", "they're" and "their"). This can be confusing even to native speakers, to the extent that words have to be explained with an alternative reading or need to be drawn. These words may also employ a pitch-accent system to distinguish them, which speakers of non-tonal languages may have difficulty learning to understand.

<i>hashi</i>	橋 "bridge"	端 "edge"	箸 "chopsticks"
<i>noboru</i>	登る "to climb"	昇る "to ascend"	上る "to go up"

Phrase list

Common signs		
営業中	Open	引 Pull
準備中	Closed	お手洗い, トイレ, 化粧室 Toilet
入口	Entrance	男 Men
出口	Exit	女 Women
大・中・小	Big / Middle / Small	禁止 Forbidden
押	Push	円 Yen (ja: en)

Basics

Good afternoon.

こんにちは。 *Konnichiwa.* (*kon-nee-chee-wah*)

How are you?

お元気ですか? *O-genki desu ka?* (*Oh-GEN-kee dess-ka?*)

Fine, thank you.

はい、元気です。 *Hai, genki desu.* (*Ha-ee, gen-kee dess*)

How about you?

あなたは? *Anata wa?* (*Ah-nah-tah wa*)

What's your name? (lit. "Your name is...")

お名前は? *O-namae wa?* (*Oh-nah-mah-eh wah?*)

My name is ...

...です。 *... desu.* (*... dess.*)

Nice to meet you. (formal)

始めまして。どうぞ宜しくお願いします。 *Hajimemashite.*

Dōzo yoroshiku onegaishimasu. (*Hah-jee-meh-mash-teh dohh-zoh yoh-roh-sh-ku oh-neh-gah-ee shee-mah-ss*)

Please. (request)

お願いします。 *Onegai shimasu.* (*oh-neh-gah-ee shee-mahs*)

Please. (offer)

どうぞ。 *Dōzo.* (*Dohh-zoh*)

This person is ... (when introducing somebody)

こちらは... *Kochira wa ...* (*ko-chi-rah wah...*)

Thank you very much. (formal)

どうもありがとうございます。 *Dōmo arigatō gozaimasu.* (*doh-moh ah-ree-GAH-toh go-ZAh-ee-mah-ss*)

Thank you. (less formal)

ありがとうございます。 *Arigatō gozaimasu.* (*ah-ree-GAH-toh go-ZAh-ee-mahs*)

Thank you. (normal)

ありがとう。 *Arigatō.* (*ah-ree-GAH-toh*)

Thanks. (informal)

どうも。 *Dōmo.* (*doh-moh*)

You're welcome.

どういたしまして。 *Dō itashimashite.* (*doh EE-tah-shee mah-shteh*)

yes

はい *hai* (*High*)

no

いいえ *ie* (*EE-eh*)

Excuse me.

すみません。 *Sumimasen.* (*soo-mee-mah-sen*)

I'm sorry.

ごめんなさい。 *Gomen nasai.* (*goh-men-nah-sah-ee*)

I'm sorry. (informal)

ごめん *Gomen.* (*goh-men*)

Goodbye. (long-term)

さようなら。 *Sayōnara.* (*sa-YOHH-nah-rah*)

Goodbye. (informal)

じゃね。 *Ja ne.* (*Jah-neh*)

I can't speak Japanese (very well).

日本語が（よく）話せません。 *Nihongo ga (yoku) hanasemasen.* (nee-hohn-goh gah (yo-koo) hah-nah-seh-mah-sen)

Do you speak Japanese?

日本語が話せますか？ *Nihongo ga hanasemasu ka?* (ni-HON-go gah hah-nah-se-mahs-KAH?)

Yes, a little.

はい、少し。 *Hai, sukoshi.* (HIGH sko-shee)

Do you speak English?

英語が話せますか？ *Eigo ga hanasemasu ka?* (EHH-goh gah hah-nah-seh-mahs-KAH?)

Is there someone here who speaks English?

誰か英語が話せますか？ *Dareka eigo ga hanasemasu ka?* (dah-reh-kah EHH-goh gah hah-nah-seh-moss-KAH?)

Please speak slowly.

ゆっくり話してください。 *Yukkuri hanashite kudasai.* (YOO-kuree hanash-teh koo-dah-sah-ee)

Please say it again.

もう一度言ってください。 *Mō ichido itte kudasai.* (mo EE-chee-doh ee-te koo-dah-sah-ee)

Please help!

助けて！ *Tasukete!* (tahs-keh-teh!)

Look out!

危ない！ *Abunai!* (ah-boo-NIGH!)

Good morning.

お早うございます。 *Ohayō gozaimasu.* (oh-hah-YOH go-zah-ee-mahs)

Good morning. (informal)

おはよう。 *Ohayō.*

Good evening.

こんばんは。 *Kombanwa.* (kohn-bahn-wah)

Good night (to sleep)

お休みなさい。 *Oyasuminasai.* (oh-yah-soo-mee-nah-sigh)

Good night (to sleep) (informal)

お休み。 *Oyasumi.*

I don't understand.

分かりません。 *Wakarimasen.* (wah-kah-ree-mah-sen)

I am not Japanese.

日本人ではありません。 *Nihonjin dewa arimasen.* (nee-hon-jin deh-wah a-ree-ma-sehn)

Where is the toilet?

お手洗い・トイレはどこですか？ *Otearai/toire wa doko desu ka?* (Oh-teh-ah-rah-ee/toh-ee-reh wah DOH-koh dess kah?)

What?

何？ *Nani?* (nah-nee)

Where?

どこ？ *Doko?* (doh-koh)

Who?

誰？ *Dare?* (dah-reh)

When?

いつ？ *Itsu?* (it-soo)

Which?

どれ？ *Dore?* (doh-reh)

Why?

どうして *Dōshite* (doh-sh'teh)

Why? (informal)

なんで？ *Nande* (nahn-deh)

How?

どうやって？ *Dōyatte* (dohh-yah-teh)

How much?

いくら？ *Ikura?* (ee-koo-rah)

What type of?

どんな？ *Donna?* (dohn-nah)

Problems

What part of "no" don't you understand?

The Japanese are famously reluctant to say the word "no", and in fact the language's closest equivalent, いいえ *iie*, is largely limited to denying compliments you have received. ("Your Japanese is excellent! " *Iie*, it is very bad!"). But there are numerous other ways of expressing "no", so here are a few to watch out for.

いいです。結構です。

Ii desu. Kekkō desu.

"It's good/excellent." Used when you don't want more beer, don't want your *bentō* lunch microwaved, and generally are happy to keep things as they are. Accompany with teeth-sucking and handwaving to be sure to get your point across - both of these expressions may be interpreted as *positiveresponses* if you don't include enough nonverbal indications to the contrary.

ちょっと難しいです・・・

Chotto muzukashii desu...

Literally "it's a little difficult", but in practice "it's completely impossible." Often just abbreviated to sucking in air through teeth, saying "chotto" and looking pained. Take the hint.

申し訳ないですが・・・

Mōshiwakenai desuga...

"This is inexcusable but..." But no. Used by sales clerks and such to tell you that you cannot do or have something.

ダメです。

Dame desu.

"It's no good." Used by equals and superiors to tell you that you cannot do or have something. The [Kansai](#) equivalent is *akan*.

違います。

Chigaimasu.

"It is different." What they really mean is "you're wrong". The casual form *chigau* and the [Kansai](#) contraction *chau* are also much used.

Leave me alone.

ほっといてくれ。 *Hottoitekure.*

Don't touch me!

さわらないで！ *Sawaranaide!*

I'll call the police.

警察をよぶよ！。 *Keisatsu o yobu yo!*

Police!

警察！ *Keisatsu!*

Stop! Thief!

動くな！泥棒！ *Ugokuna! Dorobō!*

I need your help.

手伝ってください。 *Tetsudatte kudasai.*

It's an emergency.

緊急です。 *Kinkyū desu.*

I'm lost.

道を迷っています。 *Michi o mayotte imasu.*

I lost my bag.

鞆をなくしました。 *Kaban o nakushimashita.*

I dropped my wallet.

財布をおとしました。 *Saifu o otoshimashita.*

I'm sick.

病気です。 *Byōki desu.*

I don't feel well.

具合がわるいです。 *Guai ga warui desu.*

I've been injured.

けがをしました。 *Kega o shimashita.*

Please call a doctor.

医者を呼んでください。 *Isha o yonde kudasai.*

Can I use your phone?

電話を使わせていただけますか？ *Denwa o tsukawasete itadakemasu ka?*

Medical emergencies

I need a doctor.

医者に見てもらいたいです。 *Isha ni mite moraitai desu.*

Is there a doctor who can speak English?

英語の出来る医者はいますか？ *Eigo no dekiru isha wa imasu ka?*

Please take me to a doctor.

医者に連れて行って下さい。 *Isha ni tsurete itte kudasai.*

My wife/husband/child is sick.

妻・旦那・子供が病気です。 *Tsuma/danna/kodomo ga byōki desu.*

Please call an ambulance.

救急車を呼んで下さい。 *Kyūkyūsha o yonde kudasai.*

I need first aid.

応急手当を下さい。 *Ōkyū teate o kudasai.*

I need to go to the emergency room.

救急室にいかなければなりません。 *Kyūkyūshitsu ni ikanakereba narimasen.*

shorter: 救急室に行かないと。 *Kyūkyūshitsu ni ikanai to.*

How long will it take to get better?

治るのはどの位かかりますか？ *Naoru no wa dono kurai kakarimasu ka?*

Where is a pharmacy?

薬局はどこですか？ *Yakkyoku wa doko desu ka?*

Allergies

I'm allergic to ...

私は... アレルギーです。 (*Watashi wa ... arerugii desu.*)

... antibiotics

抗生物質 (*kōsei busshitsu*)

... aspirin

アスピリン (*asupirin*)

... codeine

コデイン (*kodein*)

... dairy products

乳製品 (*nyūseihin*)

... food coloring

人工着色料 (*jinkō chakushokuryō*)

... fungus

菌類 (*kinrui*)

... MSG

味の素 (*ajinomoto*)

... mushrooms

キノコ (*kinoko*)

... peanuts

ピーナッツ (*pīnattsu*)

... penicillin

ペニシリン (*penishirin*)

... pollen

花粉 (*kafun*)

... seafood

魚介類 (*gyokairui*)

... sesame

ゴマ (*goma*)

... shellfish

貝類 (*kairui*)

... tree nuts, fruits or berries

木の実 (*kinomi*)

... wheat

小麦 (*komugi*)

Explaining symptoms

Body parts	
	胸 <i>mune</i>
head	腰 <i>koshi</i>
face	腕 <i>ude</i>
eyes	手首 <i>tekubi</i>
ears	指 <i>yubi</i>
nose	手 <i>te</i>
throat	肘 <i>hiji</i>
chin	臀部 (<i>お尻</i>) <i>(o)shiri</i>
neck	腿 <i>momo</i>
shoulders	膝 <i>hiza</i>
chest	腿、脚 <i>ashi</i>

My ... hurts.

... が痛い。... *ga itai.*

Feeling unwell.

気分が悪い *Kibun ga warui.*

Having a fever.

熱があります。 *Netsu ga arimasu.*

Coughing a lot.

咳がでます。 *Seki ga demasu.*

Feeling listless.

体がだるい。 *Karada ga darui.*

Feeling nauseated.

吐き気がします。 *Hakike ga shimasu.*

Feeling dizzy.

めまいがします。 *Memai ga shimasu.*

Having the chills.

寒気がします。 *Samuke ga shimasu.*

Swallowed something.

何かを吞んでしまいました。 *Nanika o nonde shimaimashita.*

Bleeding.

出血です。 *Shukketsu desu.*

Broken bone.

骨折です。 *Kossetsu desu.*

He/she is unconscious.

意識不明です。 *Ishiki fumei desu.*

Burned.

火傷です。 *Yakedo desu.*

Trouble breathing.

呼吸困難です。 *Kokyū konnan desu.*

Heart attack.

心臓発作です。 *Shinzō hossa desu.*

Vision worsened.

視力が落ちました。 *Shiryoku ga ochimashita.*

Cannot hear well.

耳が良く聴こえません。 *Mimi ga yoku kikoemasen.*

Nose bleeds a lot.

鼻血が良くでます。 *Hanaji ga yoku demasu.*

Extreme weather

Japan has more than its fair share of natural disasters.

Blizzard

吹雪 (*fubuki*)

Earthquake

地震 (*jishin*)

Flood 洪水 (*kōzui*)
 Landslide 地滑り (*jisuberi*)
 Tsunami 津波 (*tsunami*)
 Typhoon 台風 (*taifū*)
 Volcano eruption 噴火 (*funka*)

Numbers

While Arabic (Western) numerals are employed for most uses in Japan, you will occasionally still spot Japanese numerals at eg. markets and the menus of fancy restaurants. The characters used are nearly identical to Chinese numerals, and like [Chinese](#), Japanese uses groups of 4 digits, not 3. "One million" is thus 百万 (*hyaku-man*), literally "hundred ten-thousands".

There are both Japanese and Chinese readings for most numbers, but presented below are the more commonly used Chinese readings. Note that, due to superstition (*shi* also means "death"), 4 and 7 typically use the Japanese readings *yon* and *nana* instead.

Down for the count

When counting objects, Japanese uses special **counter** words. For example, "two bottles of beer" is ビール 2本 *biiru nihon*, where *niis* "two" and *-hon* means "bottles". Unlike in English, where counter words are often optional or non-existent, in Japanese they're mandatory whenever you count something (e.g. 車 2台 *kuruma ni-dai*, two cars; 台 *dai* counts machines). Alas, the list of possible counters is vast, but some useful ones include:

small roundish objects (apples, sweets)
 個 *-ko*
 people
 人 *-nin*, 名様 *-meisama* (polite)
 animals
 匹 *-hiki, -biki, -piki*
 flat objects (papers, tickets)
 枚 *-mai*
 long objects (bottles, pens)
 本 *-hon, -bon, -pon*
 cups, glasses
 杯 *-hai, -bai, -pai*
 nights of a stay
 泊 *-haku, -paku*
 years (age)
 歳 *-sai*

Note how many counters change form depending on the previous number: one, two, three glasses are *ippai, nihai, sanbai* respectively. There are also a few exceptions: one person and two people are *ahitori* and *futari*. 20 years old is usually pronounced *hatachi*. You'll still be understood if you get these wrong though.

For numbers from one to nine, an old counting system is often used which applies to virtually any object you may want to count, without the need to attach a specific counter:

1 一つ *hitotsu*
 2 二つ *futatsu*
 3

3 三つ *mittsu*
 4 四つ *yottsu*
 5 五つ *itsutsu*
 6 六つ *muttsu*
 7 七つ *nanatsu*
 8 八つ *yattsu*
 9 九つ *kokonotsu*

It is always a good idea to use a specific counter whenever possible, but using the generic numbers above is often equally acceptable. This system is rarely used anymore for numbers greater than nine.

0 〇 (*zero or maru*) / 零 (*rei*) in finance
 1 一 (*ichi*)
 2 二 (*ni*)
 3 三 (*san*)
 4 四 (*yon or shi*)
 5 五 (*go*)
 6 六 (*roku*)
 7 七 (*nana or shichi*)
 8 八 (*hachi*)
 9 九 (*kyū*)
 10 十 (*jū*)
 11 十一 (*jū-ichi*)
 12 十二 (*jū-ni*)
 13 十三 (*jū-san*)
 14 十四 (*jū-yon*)
 15 十五 (*jū-go*)
 16 十六 (*jū-roku*)
 17 十七 (*jū-nana*)
 18 十八 (*jū-hachi*)
 19 十九 (*jū-kyū/jū-ku*)
 20 二十 (*ni-jū*)
 21 二十一 (*ni-jū-ichi*)
 22 二十二 (*ni-jū-ni*)
 23 二十三 (*ni-jū-san*)
 30 三十 (*san-jū*)
 40

	四十(<i>yon-jū</i>)
50	五十 (<i>go-jū</i>)
60	六十 (<i>roku-jū</i>)
70	七十(<i>nana-jū</i>)
80	八十 (<i>hachi-jū</i>)
90	九十 (<i>kyū-jū</i>)
100	百 (<i>hyaku</i>)
200	二百 (<i>nihyaku</i>)
300	三百 (<i>sambyaku</i>)
600	六百 (<i>roppyaku</i>)
800	八百 (<i>happyaku</i>)
1000	千 (<i>sen</i>)
2000	二千 (<i>ni-sen</i>)
3000	三千 (<i>san-zen</i>)
10,000	一万 (<i>ichi-man</i>)
1,000,000	百万 (<i>hyaku-man</i>)
100,000,000	一億 (<i>ichi-oku</i>)
1,000,000,000,000	一兆 (<i>itchō</i>)
0.5	〇・五 (<i>rei ten go</i>)
0.56	〇・五六 (<i>rei ten go-roku</i>)
number	_____ (<i>train, bus, etc.</i>)
	_____番 (_____ <i>ban</i>)
half	半分 (<i>hambun</i>)
less (few)	少ない (<i>sukunai</i>)
more (many)	多い (<i>ōi</i>)

Time

now	今 (<i>ima</i>)
later	後で (<i>atode</i>)
before	前に (<i>mae ni</i>)
before	_____の前に (_____ <i>no mae ni</i>)
morning	朝 (<i>asa</i>)
afternoon	午後 (<i>gogo</i>)
evening	夕方 (<i>yūgata</i>)
night	夜 (<i>yoru</i>)

Clock time

Clock times are formed as Chinese numeral plus 時 *ji*, for example, *goji* 5時 for five o'clock. The exception is four o'clock which is pronounced *yoji* (四時) instead of *shiji*. You will be understood if you simply substitute *gozen* 午前 for "AM" and *gogo* 午後 for PM, although other time qualifiers like 朝 *asa* for morning and 夜 *yoru* for night may be more natural. The 24-hour clock is also commonly used in official contexts such as train schedules. TV schedules occasionally use a modified 24-hour clock, with late night showtimes counted from the previous day, e.g. Monday at 26:00 indicates **Tuesday** at 2:00 AM.

six o'clock in the morning	朝6時 (<i>asa rokuji</i>)
nine o'clock AM	午前9時 (<i>gozen kuji</i>)
noon	正午 (<i>shōgo</i>)
one o'clock PM	午後1時 (<i>gogo ichiji</i> .)
two o'clock PM	午後2時 (<i>gogo ni</i>)
midnight	夜12時 (<i>yoru jūniji</i>), 零時 (<i>rēji</i>)

Duration

Confusingly, the Japanese words for "N days" (long) and "Nth day" are the same, so eg. 二日 *futsuka* means both "two days" and "the second day of the month". (See [#Days of the Month](#) for the full list.) You can tag on -間 *kan* at the end, eg. *futsukakan* 2日間, to clarify that you mean "two days long". The exception is 一日, which is read *ichinichi* to mean "one day/all day", but *tsuitachi* to mean "first day".

_____ minute(s)	_____分 (<i>fun</i> or <i>pun</i>)
_____ hour(s)	_____時間 (<i>jikan</i>)
_____ day(s)	_____日間 (<i>nichikan</i> or (<i>k</i>) <i>kakan</i> , see note above)
_____ week(s)	_____週間 (<i>shūkan</i>)
_____ month(s)	_____ヶ月 (<i>kagetsu</i>)
_____ year(s)	_____年 (<i>nen</i>)

Days

today	今日 (<i>kyō</i>)
yesterday	昨日 (<i>kinō</i>)
tomorrow	明日 (<i>ashita</i>)
tomorrow (formal)	明日 (<i>asu</i>)
this week	今週 (<i>konshū</i>)
last week	先週 (<i>senshū</i>)
next week	来週 (<i>raishū</i>)

Days of the week

The days of the week are named after the sun, the moon and the five elements of Chinese philosophy.

Sunday	日曜日 (<i>nichiyōbi</i>)
Monday	月曜日 (<i>getsuyōbi</i>)
Tuesday	火曜日 (<i>kayōbi</i>)
Wednesday	水曜日 (<i>suiyōbi</i>)
Thursday	木曜日 (<i>mokuyōbi</i>)
Friday	金曜日 (<i>kin'yōbi</i>)
Saturday	土曜日 (<i>doyōbi</i>)

Days of the month

The 1st through the 10th of the month have special names:

First day of the month	1日 (<i>tsuitachi</i>)
Second day of the month	2日 (<i>futsuka</i>)
Third day of the month	3日 (<i>mikka</i>)
Fourth day of the month	4日 (<i>yokka</i>)
Fifth day of the month	5日 (<i>itsuka</i>)
Sixth day of the month	6日 (<i>muika</i>)
Seventh day of the month	7日 (<i>nanoka</i>)
Eighth day of the month	8日 (<i>yōka</i>)
Ninth day of the month	9日 (<i>kokonoka</i>)
Tenth day of the month	10日 (<i>tōka</i>)

The other days of the month are more orderly, just add the suffix *-nichi* to the ordinal number. Note that 14, 20, and 24 deviate from this pattern.

Eleventh day of the month	11日 (<i>jūichinichi</i>)
Fourteenth day of the month	14日 (<i>jūyokka</i>)
Twentieth day of the month	20日 (<i>hatsuka</i>)
Twenty-fourth day of the month	24日 (<i>nijūyokka</i>)

Months

Months are very orderly in Japanese, just add the suffix *-gatsu* to the ordinal number.

January	1月 (<i>ichigatsu</i>)
February	2月 (<i>nigatsu</i>)
March	3月 (<i>sangatsu</i>)
April	4月 (<i>shigatsu</i>)
May	5月 (<i>gogatsu</i>)
June	

July	6月 (<i>rokugatsu</i>)
August	7月 (<i>shichigatsu</i>)
September	8月 (<i>hachigatsu</i>)
October	9月 (<i>kugatsu</i>)
November	10月 (<i>jūgatsu</i>)
December	11月 (<i>jūichigatsu</i>)
	12月 (<i>jūnigatsu</i>)

Seasons

Spring	春 (<i>haru</i>)
Summer	夏 (<i>natsu</i>)
Rainy season	梅雨 (<i>tsuyu, baiu</i>)
Autumn	秋 (<i>aki</i>)
Winter	冬 (<i>fuyu</i>)

Writing time and date

Dates are written in year/month/day (day of week) format, with markers:

2007年3月21日(火)

Note that **Imperial era years**, based on the name and duration of the current Emperor's reign, are also frequently used. 2010 in the Gregorian calendar corresponds to **Heisei 22** (平成22年), which may be abbreviated as "H22". Dates like "22/03/24" (March 24, Heisei 22) are also occasionally seen.

Colors

Many of the English words for colors are widely used and understood by almost all Japanese. These are indicated after the slash.

Note that some Japanese colors are normally suffixed with *-iro* (色) to distinguish between the color and the object. For example, 茶 *cha* means "tea", but 茶色 *chairo* means "tea-color" → "brown".

black	黒 / ブラック (<i>kuro / burakku</i>)
white	白 / ホワイト (<i>shiro / howaito</i>)
gray	灰(色) / グレー (<i>hai(iro) / gurē</i>)
red	赤 / レッド (<i>aka / reddo</i>)
blue	青 / ブルー (<i>ao / burū</i>)
yellow	黄(色) / イエロー (<i>ki(iro) / ierō</i>)
green	緑 / グリーン (<i>midori / guriin</i>)
orange	橙 / オレンジ (<i>daidai / orenji</i>)
purple	紫 / パープル (<i>murasaki / pāpuru</i>)
brown	茶(色) / ブラウン (<i>cha(iro) / buraun</i>)

Transportation

Bus and train

How much is a ticket to _____?

_____までいくらですか? (_____ *made ikura desu ka?*)

One ticket to _____, please.

_____まで一枚お願いします。(_____ *made ichimai onegaishimasu.*)

Where does this train/bus go?

この電車・バスはどこ行きですか? (*Kono densha/basu wa doko yuki desu ka?*)

Where is the train/bus to _____?

_____行きの電車・バスはどこですか? (_____ *yuki no densha/basu wa doko desu ka?*)

Does this train/bus stop in _____?

この電車・バスは_____に止まりますか? (*Kono densha/basu wa _____ ni tomarimasu ka?*)

When does the train/bus for _____ leave?

_____行きの電車・バスは何時に出発しますか? (_____ *yuki no densha/basu wa nanji ni shuppatsu shimasu ka?*)

When will this train/bus arrive in _____?

この電車・バスは何時に_____に着きますか? (*Kono densha/basu wa nanji ni _____ ni tsukimasu ka?*)

Directions

How do I get to ...?

...はどちらですか? (_____ *wa dochira desu ka?*)

...the train station?

駅...? (*eki...*)

...the bus station?

バス停...? (*basu tei...*)

...the airport?

空港...? (*kūkō...*)

...downtown?

街の中心...? (*machi no chūshin...*)

...the youth hostel?

ユースホステル...? (*yūsu hosuteru...*)

...the _____ hotel?

_____ホテル...? (*hoteru...*)

...the _____ embassy/consulate?

_____大使館/領事館...? (_____ *taishikan/ryōjikan...*)

Where are there a lot of ...

...が多い所はどこですか? (_____ *ga ooi tokoro wa doko desu ka?*)

...lodgings?

宿...? (*yado...*)

...restaurants?

レストラン...? (*resutoran...*)

...bars?

バー...? (*baa...*)

...sites to see?

見物...? (*mimono...*)

Where is _____?

_____はどこですか? (_____ *wa doko desu ka?*)

Is it far from here?

ここから遠いですか? (*Koko kara tooi desu ka?*)

Please show me on the map.

地図で指して下さい。(Chizu de sashite kudasai.)

street

道 (*michi*)

Turn left.

左へ曲がってください。(Hidari e magatte kudasai.)

Turn right.

右へ曲がってください。(Migi e magatte kudasai.)

left

左 (*hidari*)

right

右 (*migi*)

straight ahead

まっすぐ (*massugu*)

towards the _____

_____へ向かって (*e mukatte*)

past the _____

_____の先 (*no saki*)

before the _____

_____の前 (*no mae*)

Watch for the _____.

_____が目印です。(ga mejirushi desu.)

intersection

交差点 (*kōsaten*)

traffic light

信号 (*shingou*)

north

北 (*kita*)

south

南 (*minami*)

east

東 (*higashi*)

west

西 (*nishi*)

uphill

上り (*nobori*), also used for trains heading towards Tokyo

downhill

下り (*kudari*), also used for trains coming from Tokyo

Taxi

Taxi!

タクシー! (*Takushii! (Taxi!)*)

Take me to _____, please.

_____までお願いします。(_____ *made onegaishimasu.*)

How much does it cost to get to _____?

_____までいくらですか? (_____ *made ikura desu ka*)

Take me there, please.

_____までお願いします。(_____ *soko made onegaishimasu.*)

Lodging

Do you have any rooms available?

空いてる部屋ありますか? (*Aiteru heya arimasu ka?*)

How much is a room for one person/two people?

一人・二人用の部屋はいくらですか? (*Hitori/futari-yō no heya wa ikura desu ka?*)

Is the room Japanese/Western style?

和室/洋室ですか? (*Washitsu/yōshitsu desu ka?*)

Does the room come with...

部屋は...付きですか? (*Heya wa ___ tsuki desu ka?*)

...bedsheets?

床の枚...? (*yuka no mai...*)

...a bathroom?

風呂場...? (*furoba...*)

...a telephone?

電話...? (*denwa...*)

...a TV?

テレビ? (*terebi...*)

May I see the room first?

部屋を見てもいいですか? (*Heya o mite mo ii desu ka?*)

Do you have a room that is ...?

もっと...部屋ありますか? (*Motto ... heya arimasu ka?*)

...quieter?

静かな...? (*shizuka na...*)

...bigger?

広い...? (*hiro...*)

...cleaner?

きれいな...? (*kirei na...*)

...cheaper?

安い...? (*yasui...*)

OK, I'll take it.

はい、これで良いです。 (*Hai, kore de ii desu.*)

I will stay for _____ night(s).

_____ 晩泊まります。 (*ban tomarimasu.*)

Do you know another place to stay?

他の宿はご存知ですか? (*Hoka no yado wa gozonji desu ka?*)

Do you have ... ?

... ありますか? (... *arimasu ka?*)

...a safe?

金庫...? (*kinko...*)

...lockers?

戸棚...? (*todana...*)

Is breakfast/supper included?

朝食・夕食は付きますか? (*Chōshoku/yūshoku wa tsukimasu ka?*)

What time is breakfast/supper?

朝食・夕食は何時ですか? (*Chōshoku/yūshoku wa nanji desu ka?*)

Please clean my room.

部屋を掃除してください。 (*Heya o sōji shite kudasai.*)

Please wake me at _____.

_____ に起こしてください。 (*ni okoshite kudasai.*)

I want to check out.

チェックアウトです。 (*Chekku auto (check out) desu.*)

Money

Do you accept American/Australian/Canadian dollars?

アメリカ/オーストラリア/カナダドルは使えますか? (*Amerika/ōsutoraria/kanada doru wa tsukaemasu ka?*)

Do you accept British pounds?

イギリスポンドは使えますか? (*Igirisu pondo wa tsukaemasu ka?*)

Do you accept credit cards?

クレジットカードは使えますか? (*Kurejitto kaado (credit card) wa tsukaemasu ka?*)

Can you change money for me?

お金両替できますか? (*Okane ryōgae dekimasu ka?*)

Where can I get money changed?

お金はどこで両替できますか? (*Okane wa doko de ryōgae dekimasu ka?*)

Can you change a traveler's check for me?

トラベラーズチェックを両替できますか? (*Torabarāsu chekku (traveler's check) wo ryōgae dekimasu ka?*)

Where can I get a traveler's check changed?

トラベラーズチェックはどこで両替できますか? (*Torabarāzu chekku (traveler's check) wa doko de ryōgae dekimasu ka?*)

What is the exchange rate?

為替レートはいくらですか? (*Kawase rēto wa ikura desu ka?*)

Where is an automatic teller machine (ATM)?

ATMはどこにありますか? (*ATM wa doko ni arimasuka?*)

Eating

What are they yelling at me?

Most Japanese restaurants show their appreciation for customers by loudly greeting them in unison. Expect to hear the following:

Irasshai! or Irasshaimase!

"Come on in!", said when a customer walks in. You're not expected to respond in any way, just take a seat.

Arigatō gozaimashita!

"Thank you very much!", said when a customer leaves.

If your meal was good, thank the chef or staff with *Gochisōsama deshita* when leaving, and you'll get an extra-hearty thank you in return!

I'm hungry.

お腹がすきました。 (*Onaka ga sukimashita.*)

A table for one person/two people, please.

一人・二人です。 (*Hitori/futari desu.*)

Please bring a menu.

メニューを下さい。 (*Menu wo kudasai.*)

Can I look in the kitchen?

調理場を見てもいいですか? (*Chōriba wo mite mo ii desu ka?*)

Is there a house specialty?

お勧めはありますか? (*O-susume wa arimasu ka?*)

Is there a local specialty?

この辺の名物はありますか? (*Kono hen no mēbutsu wa arimasu ka?*)

Please choose for me.

お任せします。 (*O-makase shimasu.*)

I'm a vegetarian.

ベジタリアンです。 (*Bejitarian desu.*)

I don't eat pork.

豚肉はだめです。 (*Butaniku wa dame desu.*)

I don't eat beef.

牛肉はだめです。 (*Gyūniku wa dame desu.*)

I don't eat raw fish.

生の魚はだめです。 (*Nama no sakana wa dame desu.*)

Please do not use too much oil.

油を控えて下さい。 (*Abura wo hikaete kudasai.*)

fixed-price meal

定食 (*teishoku*)

à la carte

一品料理 (*ippinryōri*)

breakfast

朝食 (*chōshoku*) / 朝ご飯 (*asagohan*)

lunch

昼食 (*chūshoku*) / 昼ご飯 (*hirugohan*)

light meal/snack

軽食 (*keishoku*)

supper

夕食 (*yūshoku*) / 晩ご飯 (*bangohan*)

Please bring _____.

_____ を下さい。 (*_____ wo kudasai.*)

I want a dish containing _____.

_____ が入ってるものを下さい。 (*_____ ga haitteru mono wo kudasai.*)

chicken

鶏肉 (*toriniku*)

beef

牛肉 (*gyūniku*)

pork

豚肉 (*butaniku*)

mutton

羊肉 (*yōniku*)

fish

魚 (*sakana*)

ham

ハム (*hamu*)

sausage

ソーセージ (*sōsēji*)

cheese

チーズ (*chīzu*)

eggs

卵 (*tamago*)
 salad サラダ (*sarada*)
 (fresh) vegetables (生)野菜 ((*nama*) *yasai*)
 (fresh) fruit (生)果物 ((*nama*) *kudamono*)
 bread パン (*pan*)
 toast トースト (*tōsuto*)
 noodles 麺類 (*menrui*)
 pasta パスタ (*pasuta*)
 rice ご飯 (*gohan*)
 soup スープ : (*sūpu*)
 beans 豆 (*mame*)
 May I have a glass/cup of _____?
 _____ を一杯下さい。 (_____ *wo ippai kudasai.*)
 May I have a bottle of _____?
 _____ を一本下さい。 (_____ *wo ippun kudasai.*)
 coffee コーヒー (*kōhī*)
 green tea お茶 (*ocha*)
 black tea 紅茶 (*kōcha*)
 juice 果汁 (*kajū*)
 water 水 (*mizu*)
 beer ビール (*bīru*)
 red/white wine 赤/白ワイン (*aka/shiro wain*)
 Do you have _____?
 _____ ありますか? (_____ *wa arimasu ka?*)
 chopsticks お箸 (*o-hashī*)
 fork フォーク (*fōku*)
 spoon スプーン (*supūn*)
 salt 塩 (*shio*)
 black pepper 胡椒 (*koshō*)
 soy sauce 醤油 (*shōyu*)
 ashtray 灰皿 (*haizara*)
 Excuse me, waiter? (*getting attention of server*)
 済みません (*sumimasen*)
 (when starting a meal)
 いただきます。 (*itadakimasu*)
 It was delicious. (when finishing a meal)
 ご馳走さまでした。 (*Gochisōsama deshita.*)
 Please clear the plates.
 お皿を下げてください。 (*Osara o sagete kudasai.*)
 The check, please.
 お勘定お願いします。 (*O-kanjo onegaishimasu.*)

On the phone

Telephone

電話 *denwa*
 Mobile phone 携帯(電話) *kētai(denwa)*
 Telephone number 電話番号 *denwa bangō*
 Phone book 電話帳 *denwa chō*
 Answering machine 留守番電話 *rusuban denwa*
 Hello (only on the phone) もしもし *moshi moshi*
 May I speak to ...
 ...をお願いします。... *wo onegaishimasu.*
 Is ... there?
 ... はいらっしゃいますか? ... *wa irasshaimasu ka?*
 Who is calling?
 どなたですか? *Donata desu ka?*
 One moment, please.
 ちょっとお待ちください。 *Chotto omachi kudasai.*
 ... is not here right now.
 ... は今いません。... *wa ima imasen.*
 I will call you again later.
 後でまた電話します。 *Ato de mata denwa shimasu.*
 I got the wrong number.
 間違えました。 *Machigaemashita.*
 The line is busy.
 話し中です。 *Hanashichū desu.*
 What is your phone number?
 電話番号は何番ですか? *Denwa bangō wa nanban desu ka?*

Bars

Sake talk

Sake, known in Japanese as 日本酒 *nihonshu*, has a vocabulary all its own. Here is a brief introduction.

<i>atsukan</i>	熱燗 Heated sake. Recommended only in winter with cheap sake.
<i>hiyashi, reishu</i>	冷やし, 冷酒 Chilled sake. The way to drink better sake.
<i>issshōbin</i>	一升瓶 The standard sake bottle, containing 10 <i>gō</i> , ie. 1.8 liters.
<i>ichigō</i>	一合 The standard measure for servings of sake, around 180 milliliters.
<i>tokkuri</i>	徳利 A small ceramic jug used to pour sake, contains around one <i>gō</i>
<i>masu</i>	升 A square wooden box traditionally used to drink chilled sake, also contains one <i>gō</i> . Drink from the corner.
<i>choko</i>	ちょこ A tiny gulp-sized ceramic cup for sake.

Do you serve alcohol?
 お酒ありますか? (*O-sake arimasu ka?*)
 Is there table service?
 テーブルサービスありますか? (*Tēburu sābisu arimasu ka?*)
 A beer/two beers, please.
 ビール一杯・二杯下さい。 (*Biiru ippai/nihai kudasai.*)
 A glass of red/white wine, please.
 赤・白ワイン一杯下さい。 (*Aka/shiro wain ippai kudasai.*)
 A mug (of beer), please.
 (ビールの)ジョッキ下さい。 (*Bīru no) jokki kudasai.*)
 A bottle, please.

_____ (hard liquor) and _____ (mixer), please.
 _____ と _____ 下さい。(_____ to _____ kudasai.)

sake
 日本酒 (*nihonshu*)

Japanese liquor
 焼酎 (*shōchū*)

whiskey
 ウイスキー (*uisukii*)

vodka
 ウオッカ (*wokka*)

rum
 ラム (*ramu*)

water
 水 (*mizu*)

club soda
 ソーダ (*sōda*)

tonic water
 トニックウォーター (*tonikku wōtā*)

orange juice
 オレンジジュース (*orenji jūsu*)

cola (soda)
 コーラ (*kōra*)

with ice
 オンザロック (*onzarokku (on the rocks)*)

Do you have any bar snacks?
 おつまみありますか? (*O-tsumami arimasu ka?*)

One more, please.
 もう一つください。(*Mō hitotsu kudasai.*)

Another round, please.
 みんなに同じものを一杯ずつください。(*Minna ni onaji mono o ippai zutsu kudasai.*)

When is closing time?
 閉店は何時ですか? (*Heiten wa nanji desuka?*)

Shopping

O, honorable prefix!

Nearly any Japanese word can be prefixed with the respectful tags *o-* (お) or *go-* (ご or 御), often translated with the unwieldy four-syllable word "honorable". A few you might expect — *o-tōsan* (お父さん) is "honorable father", and a few you might not — *o-shiri* (お尻) is "honorable buttocks". Most of the time, they're used to emphasize that the speaker is referring to the listener, so if someone enquires if after your honorable health (お元気 *o-genki*) it's proper to strip off the honorific and reply that you are merely *genki*. However, for some words like *gohan* (ご飯) "rice" and *ocha* (お茶) "tea", the prefix is inseparable and should always be used. In this phrasebook, the prefix is separated with a hyphen if it's optional (*o-kane*), and joined to the word if it's mandatory (*oisha*).

Do you have this in my size?
 私のサイズでありますか? (*Watashi no saizu de arimasu ka?*)

How much is this?
 いくらですか? (*Ikura desu ka?*)

That's too expensive.
 高過ぎます。(*Takasugimasu.*)

Would you take _____?
 _____円はどうですか? (_____ *yen wa dō desu ka?*)

expensive
 高い (*takai*)

cheap
 安い (*yasui*)

I can't afford it.
 そんなにお金を持っていません。(*Sonna ni okane wo motteimasen.*)

I don't want it.

やりません。(*Irimasen.*)

You're cheating me.
 騙してるんだ。(*Damashiterun da.*) **Use with caution!**

I'm not interested.
 興味ありません。(*Kyōmi arimasen.*)

OK, I'll take it.
 はい、それにします。(*Hai, sore ni shimasu.*)

Can I have a bag?
 袋を貰えますか? (*Fukuro moraemasu ka?*)

Do you ship (overseas)?
 海外へ発送出来ますか? (*Kaigai e hassō dekimasu ka?*)

I need...
 ...が欲しいです。(... *ga hoshii desu.*)

...spectacles.
 眼鏡 (*megane*)

...toothpaste.
 歯磨き (*hamigaki*)

...a toothbrush.
 歯ブラシ (*ha-burashi*)

...tampons.
 タンポン (*tampon*)

...soap.
 石鹸 (*sekken*)

...shampoo.
 シャンプー (*shampū*)

...pain reliever. (e.g., aspirin or ibuprofen)
 鎮痛剤 (*chintsūzai*)

...cold medicine.
 風邪薬 (*kazegusuri*)

...stomach medicine.
 胃腸薬 (*ichōyaku*)

...a razor.
 剃刀 (*kamisori*)

...an umbrella.
 傘 (*kasa*)

...sunblock lotion.
 日焼け止め (*hiyakedome*)

...a postcard.
 葉書 (*hagaki*)

...postage stamps.
 切手 (*kitte*)

...batteries.
 電池 (*denchi*)

...writing paper.
 紙 (*kami*)

...a pen.
 ペン (*pen*)

...a pencil.
 鉛筆 (*empitsu*)

...English-language books.
 英語の本 (*eigo no hon*)

...English-language magazines.
 英語の雑誌 (*eigo no zasshi*)

...an English-language newspaper.
 英字新聞 (*ēji shinbun*)

...a Japanese-English dictionary.
 和英辞典 (*waē jiten*)

...an English-Japanese dictionary.
 英和辞典 (*ēwa jiten*)

Family

Are you married?
 結婚していますか? (*Kekkon shiteimasu ka?*)

I am married.
 結婚しています。(*Kekkon shiteimasu.*)

I am single.
 独身です。(*Dokushin desu*)

Do you have brothers and sisters?

兄弟はいますか? (*Kyōdai wa imasu ka?*)

Do you have children?

子供はいますか? (*Kodomo wa imasu ka?*)

Talking about your own family

Family ties

In Japanese, it's always important to use less respectful terms for your own family and more respectful terms for another's family. Note also that the words for older/younger brother/sister are different.

Father	父 (<i>chichi</i>)
Mother	母 (<i>haha</i>)
Older Brother	兄 (<i>ani</i>)
Older Sister	姉 (<i>ane</i>)
Younger Brother	弟 (<i>otōto</i>)
Younger Sister	妹 (<i>imōto</i>)
Grandfather	祖父 (<i>sofu</i>)
Grandmother	祖母 (<i>sobo</i>)
Uncle	叔父/伯父 (<i>oji</i>)
Aunt	叔母/伯母 (<i>oba</i>)
Husband	夫 (<i>otto</i>) / 主人 (<i>shujin</i>)
Wife	妻 (<i>tsuma</i>) / 家内 (<i>kanai</i>)
Son	息子 (<i>musuko</i>)
Daughter	娘 (<i>musume</i>)
Grandchild	孫 (<i>mago</i>)

Talking about another's family

Father	お父さん (<i>otōsan</i>)
Mother	お母さん (<i>okāsan</i>)
Older Brother	お兄さん (<i>onīsan</i>)
Older Sister	お姉さん (<i>onēsan</i>)
Younger Brother	弟さん (<i>otōtosan</i>)
Younger Sister	妹さん (<i>imōtosan</i>)
Grandfather	おじいさん (<i>ojīsan</i>)
Grandmother	おばあさん (<i>obāsan</i>)
Uncle	おじさん (<i>ojisan</i>)
Aunt	おばさん (<i>obasan</i>)
Husband	ご主人 (<i>goshujin</i>)

Wife	奥さん (<i>okusan</i>)
Son	息子さん (<i>musukosan</i>)
Daughter	お嬢さん (<i>ojōsan</i>)
Grandchild	お孫さん (<i>omagosan</i>)

Driving

I want to rent a car.	レンタカーをお願いします。 (<i>Rentakā (rent-a-car) onegaishimasu.</i>)
Can I get insurance?	保険入れますか? (<i>Hoken hairemasu ka?</i>)
Do you have a driver's license?	免許証を持っていますか? (<i>Menkyoshō wo motteimasu ka?</i>)
stop (<i>on a street sign</i>)	止まれ/とまれ (<i>tomare</i>)
one way	一方通行 (<i>ippō tsūkō</i>)
caution	徐行 (<i>jokō</i>)
no parking	駐車禁止 (<i>chūsha kinshi</i>)
speed limit	制限速度 (<i>seigen sokudo</i>)
gas (<i>petrol</i>) station	ガソリンスタンド (<i>gasorin sutando</i>)
petrol	ガソリン (<i>gasorin</i>)
diesel	軽油/ディーゼル (<i>keiyu / diizeru</i>)

Authority

In Japan, you can legally be incarcerated for twenty-three (23) days before you are charged, but you do have the right to see a lawyer after the first 48 hours of detention. Note that if you sign a confession, you *will* be convicted.

I haven't done anything (wrong).	何も(悪いこと)していません。 (<i>Nani mo (warui koto) shiteimasen.</i>)
It was a misunderstanding.	誤解でした。 (<i>Gokai deshita.</i>)
Where are you taking me?	どこへ連れて行くのですか? (<i>Doko e tsurete yukuno desu ka?</i>)
Am I under arrest?	私は逮捕されてるのですか? (<i>Watashi wa taiho sareteruno desu ka?</i>)
I am a citizen of ____.	____ の国民です。 (<i>____ no kokumin desu.</i>)
I want to meet with the ____ embassy.	____ 大使館と会わせて下さい。 (<i>____ taishikan to awasete kudasai.</i>)
I want to meet with a lawyer.	弁護士と会わせて下さい。 (<i>Bengoshi to awasete kudasai.</i>)
Can it be settled with a fine?	罰金で済みますか? (<i>Bakkin de sumimasu ka?</i>)
Note: You can say this to a traffic cop, but bribery is highly unlikely to work in Japan.	

Typical Japanese expressions

Four syllable words

If words can be shortened, Japanese will inevitably shorten them. Two by two syllables is often the sweet spot, and sometimes it's hard to guess where those came from.

デジカメ *deji kame*

デジタルカメラ *dejitaru kamera*, a digital camera.

パソコン *pasokon*

パーソナルコンピューター *pāsonaru konpyūtā*, a personal computer. ノート *nōto* stands for notebooks.

プリクラ *purikura*

プリントクラブ *purinto kurabu* or "print club". A sort of extremely flashy photo booth and a favourite pastime for many.

パチスロ *pachi suro*

パチンコ&スロット *pachinko & surotto*, locations everywhere offering the number one Japanese gambling game *pachinko* and traditional slot machines.

リモコン *rimokon*

リモートコントロール *rimōto kontorōru*, remote control

KY *kei wai*

空気読めない *kūki yomenai*, "can't read the air", meaning an unperceptive person who can't read between the lines/can't keep up with a conversation.

そうですね。 *Sō desu ne.*

"That's how it is, isn't it?"

General agreement. Especially old people can be heard going *sō desu ne* back and forth quite a few times.

(大変) お待たせしました。 (*Taihen*) *omataseshimashita.*

"I have made you wait (terribly) long."

Used as an excuse after any amount of downtime, even just seconds. Often also used as a starter to get things going again.

お疲れさまでした。 *Otsukaresama deshita.*

"It's been honorably tiresome."

To colleagues in the sense of "you gave it all, good work", but more generally at the end of almost any activity.

頑張っ！ *Ganbatte!*

"Give it your best!"

Meant to be encouraging and motivating.

いただきます。 *Itadakimasu.*

"I will receive."

To yourself before starting to eat or when accepting something offered to you.

失礼します。 *Shitsurei shimasu.*

"I will trouble you." or "I will be impolite."

When entering your superiors room or an unfamiliar house, when trying to get someone's attention or generally when interrupting someone.

失礼しました。 *Shitsurei shimashita.*

"I have troubled you." or "Excuse my impoliteness."

When leaving your superiors room or an unfamiliar house or generally as "Sorry to have bothered you, carry on."

大丈夫。 *Daijōbu.*

"It is alright."

For general reassurance. Used with *desu ka?* to inquire if something or somebody is alright.

凄い！ *Sugoi!*

"Great!", "Incredible!"

Very popular amongst girls and greatly overused.

可愛い！ *Kawaii!*

"How cute!"

See *sugoi*.

えええ～ *Eee~*

"Reallyyyyyyy~?"

Almost a standard reaction to any kind of news. Can be lengthened indefinitely and is hence useful to stall for time when thinking about a real answer.

ウソ！ *Uso!*

"Lie!"

Doesn't necessarily accuse one of lying, usually used in the sense of "Seriously?!"

Honourifics

Japanese makes extensive use of honorific language (敬語 *keigo*) when talking to people of higher status. Keigo is famously difficult to master and even Japanese salespeople often need to take special courses to learn to speak correctly, but it is very commonly used in situations like salespeople talking to customers and train announcements, so even passive familiarity with the most common *keigo* verbs and constructs can be very handy.

Respectful form

When talking to someone of higher status than yourself, it is important to use a respectful form (尊敬語 *sonkeigo*) when talking about the other person. Generally, this follows the pattern お～になる (*o~ni naru*), where ~ represents the stem of the basic polite form: eg. to read, 読む (*yomu*), basic polite form 読みます (*yomimasu*) becomes お読みになる (*o-yomi-ni-naru*). The *naru* at the end follows the normal conjugation patterns for *naru*, most commonly becoming *narimasu* (present) or *narimashita* (past). The main exceptions are listed below:

- To see: 見る becomes ご覧になる (*goran-ni-naru*).
- To eat/drink: 食べる/飲む becomes 召し上がる (*meshi-agaru*).
- To come/go/be at a place: 来る/行く/いる becomes いらっしゃる (*irassharu*). (basic polite form いらっしゃいます *irasshaimasu* and **not** いらっしゃります)
- To know: 知る becomes ご存知だ (*gozonji-da*).
- To give (to yourself): くれる becomes 下さる (*kudasaru*). (basic polite form 下さいます *kudasaimasu* and **not** 下さります)
- To do: する becomes なさる (*nasaru*). (basic polite form なさいます *nasaimasu* and **not** なさります)
- To say: 言う becomes おっしゃる (*ossharu*) (basic polite form おっしゃいます *osshaimasu* and **not** おっしゃります)

Humble form

When talking about yourself to someone of higher status than you, it is important to put yourself down by using a humble form (謙遜語 *kensongo*). Generally this follows the pattern お～する (*o~suru*), where ~ represents the stem of the basic polite form: eg. to borrow, 借りる (*kariru*), basic polite form 借ります (*karimasu*) becomes お借りする (*o-kari-suru*). The *suru* at the end follows the usual conjugation pattern of *suru*, most commonly becoming *shimasu* (present) or *shimashita* (past); for an extra helping of humility, the verb 致す *itasu* > 致します *itashimasu* can be substituted. The main exceptions are listed below:

- To see: 見る becomes 拝見する (*haiken-suru*).
- To come/go: 来る/行く becomes 参る (*mairu*).
- To eat/drink/receive: 食べる/飲む/もらう becomes いただく (*itadaku*)
- To give: あげる becomes さし上げる (*sashi-ageru*).
- To do: する becomes 致す (*itasu*)
- To know: 知る becomes 存じる (*zonjiru*)
- To say: 言う becomes 申し上げる (*mōshi-ageru*)
- My name is: いう becomes 申す (*mōsu*)

Polite form

The third type of keigo is called simply "polite language", or *teineigo* (丁寧語). Whereas respectful and humble language refer to the *subject* (you and I), *teineigo* is used to simply imply respect to the *listener*. An example:

りんごをご覧になりますか? *Ringo wo goran ni narimasuka?*

Can **you see** the apple? (*respectful*)

りんごを拜見します。 *Ringo wo haiken shimasu.*

I see the apple. (*humble*)

彼もりんごを見ます。 *Kare mo ringo wo mimasu.*

He also sees the apple. (*polite*)

In fact, the *desu* copula and the *-masu* form taught to beginning students of Japanese are both examples of *teineigo*. A few verbs and adjectives have special *teineigo* forms:

to be
aru (ある) → *gozaru* (ござる、御座る) (basic polite form ございます (*gozaimasu*) and **not** ござります)

to die
shinu (死ぬ) → *nakunaru* (亡くなる)

good
ii/yoii (いい/良い) → *yoroshii* (よろしい)

Country and territory names

Country and territory names in Japanese are generally borrowed from their English names and written in katakana. The names of languages are generally formed by adding 語 (*go*) to the end of the country name. Some of the main exceptions are as follows:

日本 *Nihon/Nippon* , 日本国 *Nihon-koku*

Japan

中国 *Chūgoku*, 中華人民共和国 *Chūka jinmin Kyouwa koku*

China (or, confusingly, [Western Honshu](#))

台湾 *Taiwan*

Taiwan

香港 *Honkon*

Hong Kong

韓国 *Kankoku*

South Korea

北朝鮮 *Kitachōsen*

North Korea

ドイツ *Doitsu*

Germany

イギリス *Igirisu*, 英国 *Eikoku* (written)

United Kingdom

インド *Indo*

India

タイ *Tai*

Thailand

フランス *Furansu*

France

イタリア *Itaria*

Italy

イスラエル *Isuraeru*

Israel

アメリカ *Amerika*, 米国 *Beikoku* (written)

United States of America (not the whole American continent)

南アフリカ *Minami-afurika*

South Africa

オランダ *Oranda*

The Netherlands

ベルギー *Berugī*

Belgium

ハンガリー *Hangarī*

Hungary

エチオピア *Echiopia*

Ethiopia

アラブ首長国連邦 *Arabu-shuchōkoku-rempō*

United Arab Emirates

豪州 *Gōshū* , オーストラリア *Ōsutoraria*

Australia

Offensive Language

Fool or idiot (Kanto)

バカ (*baka*)

Fool or idiot (Kansai)

アホ (*aho*)

Doing something untimely

まぬけ (*manuke*)

A slow person

のろま (*noroma*)

Being bad at something

下手 (*heta*)

Being very bad at something

下手糞 (*hetakuso*)

A stingy person

ケチ (*kechi*)

An old man

ジジイ (*jijii*)

An old woman

ババア (*babaa*)

Not being cool

ダサイ (*dasai*)*

Fussy or depressing

ウザイ (*uzai*)*

Creepy

キモイ (*kimoi*)*

Drop dead!

くたばれ (*kutabare*)

Get out of the way!

どけ (*doke*)

Noisy!

うるさい (*urusai*)

Shit

糞 (*kuso*)

Pervert

スケベ (*sukebe*)

- These words are mostly used by young people