

Japanese is Possible!

Lesson 1

Welcome!

Chances are that if you're looking at this page right now, you've thought at one point in your life, "y'know, it would probably be fun to know Japanese, but how?" Undoubtedly, it sure looks like a formidable task, what with all of its confusing-looking writing and its reputation for having a most unusual sentence structure. Well have no fear. If you really want to learn Japanese, these lessons can give you a push in the right direction. If you're not already convinced that it's a good idea, here are:

Nine great reasons to study Japanese!

Reason #1

Spoken by over 130 million people, Japanese is the among the top 10 languages on Earth.

Reason #2

In the world of console video games/anime, it rises to 1st place. Most console games (Playstation, Nintendo, Game Boy) are released nearly a year earlier than they are in the USA, if they are released here at all.

Reason #3

Even today, Japanese voice actors tend to put more soul and realism into their Anime roles than their American counterparts (not to anger any dub fans out there). Wouldn't it be nice to have the best of both worlds? Good (Japanese) voice acting without having to read your Anime!

Reason #4

There are a LOT of anime series (and video games) out there in Japanese only. Some good titles too! It would be nice to be able to understand them.

Reason #5

Many of your family, friends, classmates and/or co-workers believe Japanese is hard. Show them what you can do! They'll think you have special talent.

Actually, anyone can learn it if they want to, but people have a way of being really impressed about somebody approaching the Japanese language. I say this from experience.

Reason #6 "Speaks Japanese" looks great on a resume, no matter what your line of work. Knowing any second language helps, but Japanese will have a greater effect on an employer, since not many Americans know it. (which can't be said for Spanish, for example)

Reason #7

Japan has the second largest economy in the world, so their language is very relevant.

Reason #8

Japan has a fascinating culture, much of which is reflected in its language.

Reason #9

Japan controls both the video game and Anime industries. This allows you to learn a language while enjoying an Anime or playing a video game! What other language gives you such opportunities?

Reason #10

Japan has a lot great music. It's very enjoyable to listen to it, but to hear it and actually know what's being said is an even better experience.

Ok, there was a bit of a trend in most of those reasons, but learning Japanese is a great idea even if you're not a hardcore anime fan (as I personally am not).

How will you teach me Japanese?

This is the first in a long line of lessons that you will find here on Maktos. A number of them were written years ago and are currently being revised, so you will see those arriving bit by bit in the coming weeks. In the long term, I plan to extend the lessons in this site beyond what has currently been written. So visit often, updates are popping up all the time.

I will start at the very beginning, assuming that you know nothing about Japanese right now. All you need is the desire to learn it, and I'll help with the rest!

Here are some of the many areas I will cover:

- Getting started
- Getting and staying motivated
- Getting the books you need
- Learning the spoken language
- Learning the written language (when the time comes)
- Learning Japanese on a tight budget
- Finding Japanese language resources on the vast Internet
- Getting free Japanese word processor software
- Getting a really good computer dictionary - for free
- Using many different resources, to make learning Japanese fun
- Finding things you can do - easily - to speed up the process
- Finding the best way for you learn

4 MYTHS about Japanese:

1. "Japanese is hard"

After much study and talking to several people, I must say that Japanese is not "hard" or "complex", but "different". It's true that it is very different from English or Spanish. However, the grammar, spelling, etc. is very straightforward. Making sentences in the language, conversing, etc. can occur very early on. The pronunciation is very close to Spanish, although the accent is different.

2. "You need to learn all those difficult symbols"

Those "difficult symbols" are the Kanji, borrowed from the Chinese. There are 1900 Kanji in daily use in Japan. While it is true that the Kanji are probably the most difficult part of Japanese, you can ignore them for quite a while and still enjoy the rest of the language. I will teach many of the beginning lessons in roman characters, so you will have nothing new to learn as far as reading the lessons. I will slowly make the transition to phonetic characters and perhaps in the distant future, I will teach you some Kanji.

To be able to write any word in Japanese, all you need to know are the 2 phonetic systems, "Hiragana" and "Katakana". They only have 46 letters each, and can be learned very easily in a matter of weeks. Plus, once you know how something is pronounced in one word, you know it for any word. It's completely phonetic. Don't you wish English was that way!

3. **"I don't have time to learn it!"**

This is a common reason why many people aren't bilingual in Japanese right now. If you don't have a goal in mind, or guidance, you won't notice how much time is spent doing nothing.

If you take a look at your average day from an objective standpoint, you'll find many wasted hours and minutes. Look how much time is spent waiting. Waiting in line, waiting for someone to show up, waiting for the commercials to end, waiting for the movie to start, etc. That wasted time can be used constructively to inch you toward your goal of learning Japanese!

4. **"You have to learn Japanese in a formal classroom environment"**

That is pretty easily shot down. I learned Japanese for three years before ever setting foot in a classroom (to learn Japanese, that is). When I finally had the opportunity to take Japanese classes, I placed into a Second-Year Japanese course in an Ivy League school. I've met people who took French and Spanish for three or four years in high school and couldn't place into their respective Second-Year courses. In other words, you don't need a classroom to learn Japanese, you just need to utilize your resources.

Taking a class works for many people. I know it has helped me. I certainly recommend taking a class if you have the opportunity in addition to following this column. You DON'T have to take a class to keep up with this column, though.

What is a classroom? A place of opportunity where you can learn. There are people who go to class and don't learn, and some that seize the opportunity. There are also people that master whole fields of knowledge without going to a classroom. A classroom is just one of the many ways to learn.

Join us in the next lesson, where we give you some useful resources for your study of the Japanese language.

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Japanese is Possible!

Lesson 2

Some helpful tips

Your brain is a very powerful tool, even more than you realize. You can learn new things, and unlearn things that were in error. Unlearning in particular tends to require a lot of repetition. You must beat the corrected information into your head, just as the falsehood was beat into your head over a period of years. Eventually, you'll prevail.

In learning Japanese (and this goes for almost any goal you set), the sooner you can unlearn that "it's hard" the sooner you'll be able to make rapid progress. If you've already taken my word for it and believe it, good for you.

At first, Japanese may sound very foreign to you, and your confidence may falter at times. As you begin to listen to it and learn more about it, you will become more comfortable with it. I speak from experience on this.

I strongly suggest that you "make friends" with the Japanese language. Don't treat it as a monster you wish to tame, but rather approach it like a friend and an ally, something you want to do, a fun hobby that you only approach when you want to. Try to rekindle the love of learning that children have. Some of you still have that love of learning, and that's great.

If you treat Japanese like a chore, it will be much harder to learn. Let's think of Japanese study as something fun you will do alongside your favorite hobby - anime, video games, music, or talking for that matter. You will get more enjoyment out of any one of these.

There are many "resources" you can use in the study of Japanese, each giving you practice in one or two particular areas. For example, listening to Japanese music helps you in the following areas:

- Getting rid of the "foreign" feel
- Learning new words (and remembering them well)
- Learning pronunciation

As this column progresses, I will point out the best ways to improve yourself in each area.

Don't worry about what you don't know, but rather focus on what you do know. Take it one step at a time. "Rome wasn't built in a day", as the saying goes. On the other hand, it's very fun to look back at how far you've come in a week, month, or year!

If you're not used to learning things on your own, don't worry. I'll help you out as much as any teacher or professor. Also, the people in this site's forum are always eager to help people with any questions they have. Remember that even in a classroom environment, it's still up to you to learn. If you don't apply yourself in a class, you fail to learn anything. Conversely, if you study outside of class, and do your homework, you will end up with an A. Why not just study on your own

to begin with? As long as you have the materials and the guidance, you should be able to make impressive progress.

There will be more specific tips as the lessons progress. For instance, when studying word lists, early morning is the best time. That is because your brain, like wet cement, is VERY receptive to new information at that time. Have you ever awakened to a horrible song on your alarm clock radio, and then tried to get it out of your head? It's almost impossible. This works to your advantage when you are trying to memorize something. If you set aside at least 5 or 10 minutes in the morning, you will notice the difference. Studies have found that school kids do better in their 1st hour classes for the same reason.

First steps in learning Japanese

Getting the Right Mindset

Unless you watch a lot of subtitled anime, you probably aren't very familiar with Japanese, and it probably sounds foreign to you. When you hear it, your instinct is to ignore it as a "foreign" language. You must try to think of Japanese dialog as simply, "words I don't know yet". In other words, you must believe that "Japanese is Possible".

Realize How Much Time You Have to Learn

You may think you have very little time, but you might be surprised how much time you can scrape together. Important parts of learning Japanese, such as "Word Lists" can be done anytime, anywhere. You only need 10 seconds in a row to look at a list and study some words! Other things can be done at the same time as other things. You can listen to Japanese music or Anime while surfing the Web, for example.

Start thinking about how you could manage your time better, to give yourself some time each day to study. Not much time is required - just enough to look at a word list a few times, read part of a "Learn Japanese" book, or watch a subtitled Anime. (That part won't take too much discipline!)

The idea is to do a little bit every day. We've all heard the fable of "The Tortoise and the Hare". Indeed, when learning a language, "Slow and steady wins the race".

Here's an interesting analogy I found on the Internet on managing your time:

(by James R. Beach)

A professor walks into the room carrying an empty 10-gallon water jug and dragging an obviously heavy bag. He places them on the teacher's desk. Without a word, he begins placing white rocks, just big enough to fit through the mouth of the jug, into the jug until they reach the very top. "Is it full?" he asks. The class nods.

"Maybe not," he says. He then stuffs tiny pebbles into the jug and the pebbles find their way through the cracks in the rock. "Full now?" he asks. The whole class nods.

He then shovels sand into the jug, occasionally shaking the jug, and the tiny grains sift through the rocks and pebbles. "OK," he says, "now is it full?" The class nods in unison.

He smiles. He then slowly pours water into the jug until a water glass is finally empty.

"The lesson here," he says, "is that there is always more room in our lives than we think there is. When you think you're out of time, there is still more available if you look for it."

Here's the time-saving payoff:

The ROCKS are the important things we have to accomplish regularly to be successful. They go into our "time jug" first, because they are most important. The PEBBLES represent those things we may not like to do, but we must do. They go in next. The SAND represents things that we should do, we may even like to do, but they're not as important. The WATER represents the few remaining things that make a difference. If you reverse the order, putting in the water, then the sand, then the pebbles, there will not be enough room for the rocks. So prioritize your activities and make sure the rocks go on your schedule first.

So the moral is, whether Japanese is a rock or the water, there's always space for even a little bit of it in your day, as long as you're ready to do it when the opportunity comes.

Rent some anime DVDs.

Whether you are an anime fan or not, it can be a serious help for your study of Japanese, especially if you don't have any other resource for listening to Japanese dialogue. Anime DVDs are great because they almost always have the Japanese speech available. If you don't have a DVD player, you might be able to rent subtitled anime on tape and you can definitely buy it. Chances are slim that you won't find anything that you don't enjoy at least a little bit, so give it a try, it's a very useful method.

For instance, you can pause the tape or DVD and look up a word you don't know in a Japanese dictionary. You can then write the word on a list so you can learn it! If it was used in an Anime, it's probably a good word to learn. On the other hand, writing down random words from a Japanese dictionary is a horribly inefficient way of building a vocabulary. (Don't laugh...many people have tried it!) I will focus on vocabulary building again in lesson four

If you don't know where to start with anime buying, here are some tips. You can get Anime at Best Buy, Media Play, and other like stores. Also check small hobby shops. If you happen to live in the vicinity of a Yaohan (Japanese mall-like place) you should definitely stop by and see what they have there! If you don't have a store that sells Anime in your vicinity, you can always turn to the Internet. We don't have any links right now, but we may soon.

Remember, it's up to you to work on learning Japanese. I can guide you, but I can't force you to learn.

Next week - Japanese pronunciation

Other areas will be discussed as well, so don't miss it!



Japanese is Possible!
Lesson 3

Information you will need

- Pronunciation
- Using the Internet
- Plain vs. Polite
- Japanese Music

Vowel Sounds

The vowel sounds in Japanese are as follows:

A as in "father"
E as in "seven eleven"
I as in "Easter treat"
O as in "open, Pope"
U as in "fruity moogle"

You'll notice that the vowels are pronounced the similarly to Spanish, Italian, and Latin (and several other European languages)

Pronunciation of these vowels is very consistant. There are no silent vowels (although sometimes the Japanese choose not to voice a vowel). Each vowel sound is pronounced distinctly.

For example, the word

kaeru

would be pronounced "KAH eh roo". In English, you might want to pronounce it "KAY roo" or "KAY ruh".

The vowels 'i' and 'u' are weak vowels. That means that many times they are not pronounced. The most important example is:

desu (the u is silent - pronounced DESS)

However, don't just go around dropping u's and i's. People will have no idea what you're saying.

Consonant sounds are generally pronounced the same way as in English, but there are a few differences:

R - Pronounced like a combination of 'L' and 'D', with a bit of 'R' mixed in. It's pretty close to how the R is pronounced in Spanish. (It isn't "trilled", however) In Spanish, an R sounds a lot like a 'D'. Consider this: Say "lu." Notice how you

drag the tip of your tongue along the roof of your mouth. To say a Japanese R, just briefly touch the tip to that spot at the moment you say the consonant, and use a little more "punch" in your voice.

F - You can pronounce it like an F, but often it sounds more like an 'H'.

There is no accent in Japanese, meaning there is no emphasis on a particular part of a word. English and Spanish have accents, Japanese does not.

Japanese does have pitch inflections, and this is their substitute for accents. For example, in English, we put stress on a certain part of a word to make it sound right and this is marked by an apostrophe-like symbol in the dictionary. In Japanese, they do not put stress on their words but raise the pitch of their voices instead. In Chinese, there are patterns to move between five different pitches to distinguish a word's meaning. In Japanese, there are only two pitches, but the only real way to grasp where to raise the pitch of your voice is from listening to Japanese speech and repeating it.

For practice in this area:

- Listen to Japanese music
- Watch subtitled (or Japanese language) Anime

Listening to Japanese music is enjoyable, and helps you out tremendously in many areas. You can download MP3s from many websites, and purchase import CD's from many other websites. If you don't know what's good, try downloading MP3's of different songs. When you find out what artists you like, support them by purchasing their CDs.

Some songs I would recommend to anyone are the Xenogears Creid songs. Inspired by the famous Xenogears game for Playstation, these songs are eclectic and beautiful! The lyrics are easy to understand in many of the songs, and the songs are very unique. Some of the songs don't even have lyrics, but they're still wonderful!

For links to great Japanese and Anime related MP3 sites, scroll to the end of this column.

Grammar Terms - part 1

You'll need to know a few basics about grammar to be able to make sentences. I'll go over the basics, to be fair to those of you that slept through English class. ^_^

Subject

The person or thing that performs the action of the sentence's verb.

Example:

The man jumped through the frog.

"man" would be the subject of the sentence, since he is the one who jumped.

Adjective

A word used to describe a person, place, or thing

Example:

The man jumped through the holographic frog.

"holographic" is an adjective, since it DESCRIBES the frog. Since frog is a noun,

any word describing the frog would be an adjective.

Adverb

A word used to modify a verb

Example:

The man quickly jumped through the frog.

"quickly" is the adverb, since it describes how he jumped. Jump is the verb, so any word describing how he jumped would be an adverb.

Direct Object

Is the entity on which the verb is performed

Example:

The woman ate the apple.

Now figuring out the direct object is straightforward - simply ask the question, "She ate WHAT?"

The question would be answered, "the apple". So "apple" would be the direct object.

For practice in this area:

- Purchase a good Japanese grammar book
- Find websites that cover grammar
- Review an English grammar textbook

Plain vs. Polite form

Unlike English, Japanese has distinct levels of formality in speech and writing, four main ones to be precise. One speaks differently among friends than to one's boss. In America, that difference would mainly be reflected in tone of voice, and use of slang words, contractions and so on. In Japanese however, there are actually different words and verb endings for this purpose.

If you've watched Anime, you may have noticed that royalty (princesses, kings) speak differently than most other characters. There are hundreds of examples, including "Ayeka" from Tenchi Muyo.

In most Japanese language courses, the polite form is taught first. The instructors reason that you can use the polite form anywhere (including with friends). The plain form is only acceptable with friends and close family members.

However, the plain form is by far more common in songs, books, manga, anime and on television. Since this website is somewhat focused around anime, and for other good reasons, we will begin by teaching the plain form. Here are a number of reasons.

1. Anime and video games tend to use the plain form, and that is where most people will use their Japanese skills unless they go to Japan. Even if you make Japanese friends in America, they will speak to you with the plain form and will definitely not feel insulted if you do the same. I personally have had conversations with Japanese teenagers, and they have told me that I sound funny because I speak so politely (I learned Japanese starting with the polite form and I consider myself a polite person anyway, so that's why I use it.)

2. Once you've learned a lot of Japanese, and are making progress, it's no problem to learn the polite form later.
3. For motivation, you need to hear what you're learning. It makes it more "real" - it makes you realize you can actually understand some Anime if you learn this word or phrase.
It's a big source of motivation to hear an Anime character say a phrase you're trying to learn. If you focus on the polite form, you won't hear it used much. It's been my experience that I learn "popular Anime" words about 10 X faster than other more obscure words. Besides, to remember a word 4 months later you have to use it (or hear it used).
4. Japanese people cut Americans some slack when it comes to speaking Japanese. When a Japanese speaking American is encountered, the last thing on their mind is "What form is he using?" They are often glad to hear that you are learning Japanese, and you will often be complimented if your vocabulary exceeds 10 words. Times have changed since feudal Japan, where speaking rudely to a Samurai would cost you your life.
5. In the present tense, the plain form of verbs is the form that is printed in dictionaries. This means that you can just pluck a word out of the dictionary and throw it into a sentence with no conjugation.

The Internet

The independent Japanese student's best resource!

There are many webpages on the Internet devoted to the Japanese language, and you can find help on just about every topic. Some examples of things I have seen on webpages:

- Popular words
- Verb endings
- Pronunciation
- Java-based games and software
- Info on Kansai Ben dialect (and others)
- Making your Windows PC "Japanese friendly"
- Software to help you learn Katakana/Hiragana
- Software to help you learn Kanji
- Web-based Japanese-English dictionaries

If you want to find resources such as these, go to any search engine. Type a few words like "Japanese study learn" followed by specific things you're looking for.

For example, if you're looking for software to drill you on the hiragana alphabet, try:

Japanese study learn hiragana program

Also remember to try more than one search engine. They all use different databases. Try one of the "comprehensive" search engines that search all of them, such as [The Mother of All Search Engines](#).

Once you find a good site with a links page, follow the links and see what's out there. You'll find some pages with even better links pages - follow those as well. Search engines are a good start, but there is no substitute for links pages.

Here's something you can start playing with - a free Japanese word processor. It's very small (about 4 MB) and is very advanced yet easy to use. It's called "NJStar Japanese Word Processor 4.2" You can download it from [NJStar's Website](#).

Once you download it, the next step is to download the latest version of the EDICT Japanese-English dictionary (optional). You can find it at various FTP

sites, but it's rather hard to find. You can download the latest dictionary files [right here](#).

To install it, unzip it to "C:\Program Files\NJStar Japanese WP" or wherever you installed it. You also need to go into that directory and click on 2 programs - "E2jdic" and "J2edic". They both take about a minute to run, and you should be all set. You will now have MANY more words in your E-J and J-E dictionaries than you had two minutes earlier.

Another good word processor (the one I use), is JWPCE, available at this link: [JWPCE](#)

To the JIP forum participants - "Thank you!"

I would like to thank those of you that have contributed to the "Japanese is POSSIBLE" forum. Teaching a broad subject such as Japanese is a major undertaking, and any help is greatly appreciated. The Internet is the #1 source of information for someone learning Japanese on their own. The URLs posted so far will prove VERY helpful to any student, regardless of their experience.

I would also like to say something to the many students that visit the JIP forum in search of information. Although much of the information is helpful, some of it may confuse and overwhelm beginners. There are many parts to learning a language, and this column can only address them one at a time. In the meantime, many people are offering their assistance, posting information to the forums. Since there is no central organization or lesson plan among the various posters, there are bound to be some things posted that are "too advanced" for some students. When you see a post that you don't understand or feel you're not ready for, don't worry. The subjects will all be covered in detail in future "Japanese is POSSIBLE" columns. They will be explained so that everyone can understand them.

To those who post in the forums, please understand that the posts ARE appreciated. Since there are JIP readers far beyond the beginner stage, there needs to be information for them as well. Also, the posts help me to design the course.

Internet Links!

I have one link right now. Hopefully, I'll add more later:

Next week - Your first step into real Japanese grammar.

We'll have sentence structure, particles, and a whole lot more. You don't want to miss it.

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Japanese is Possible!

Lesson 4

Time to start learning

- Introduction to Japanese Grammar
- Learning new vocabulary!

Introduction to Japanese Grammar

Japanese sentences are very different from familiar languages like English and Spanish. Incidentally, Spanish is very similar to English grammar-wise. Japanese, on the other hand, uses short words called "particles" to mark a word's purpose in a Japanese sentence. More on particles later.

However, no worries! Japanese grammar isn't as difficult as most people think, and in many ways, it is more logical than most other languages and has few exceptions.

I will start by giving a literal translation to the example sentences that may look a little strange. In order to avoid this as much as possible, I will incorporate already taught concepts into translations, so they for the most part will not be 100% literal. In any case, a completely natural translation will always be provided.

Japanese Sentence Structure

Here's a typical Japanese sentence:

Kore wa mizu desu.
This (topic marker) water is.

If you've seen Star Wars (and who hasn't), think back to the way Yoda spoke. Japanese would sound a lot like that if you translated it literally.

"Your father is."
"An abode of evil it is."
"In you must go."

Japanese is also a bit vague, or can seem that way. Japanese speakers tend to have a bit of an aversion to redundancy, and if they see the opportunity to leave something out of a sentence (say, a subject or a direct object), they will most likely take it. In fact, Japanese pronouns actually have roots in meanings that are unrelated to "I, you, he..." For example, two of their words for 'I' (there are many) literally mean "personal" and "slave." As a result, Japanese will usually avoid pronouns like the plague, and most often refer to other people by name, even when talking directly to that person. Back to redundancy: I know I'm getting a little ahead of myself, but I'll take you by the hand and guide you as you look at this example:

Person A: Mise e iku ka.

Person B: Hai, iku.

Person A: Are you going to the store?

Person B: Yes, I am going there.

"mise e iku" literally translates, "to the store, [I] go"

mise - store

e - particle meaning "toward" or "to"

iku - to go

ka - particle signifying that the sentence is a question

hai - yes

Notice that there is no mention of 'you, I or there' because they aren't really needed. To a Japanese person, it is perfectly natural to say (literally), "Yes, I go."

Particles

Note: these are by far not the only meanings for these particles, they are only the most common usages. Other uses for these particles will be discussed at a later time.

- **wa** marks the topic of a sentence. Very often this topic is the subject of the sentence, but not always. It most closely resembles the phrase "as for"
- **ga** marks the subject of a sentence and puts emphasis on it. It is very confusing at first to distinguish between the uses of wa and ga since both can label a subject, but they are very different sometimes and I will strengthen this distinction as we go along
- **no** signifies that the item before it possesses the item after it. This meaning can be broadened to the sense of attaching attributes to nouns.
- **o** marks the direct object of a sentence. It tells what or who receives the action of the verb.
- **e** shows the direction or destination of a motion.
- **ka** shows that a sentence is a question. In English, questions can often be very different from their corresponding statements, for example, "Does he go to the store?" has a rather different word order from "He goes to the store." In Japanese, this is usually not the case and a statement can be changed to a question simply by tacking a ka onto the end.

To put it simply, after many of the words in a sentence, you have a particle telling what the word "was" to that sentence.

Nakamura san wa sensei desu.

[Matt (as for) teacher is./As for Matt, he is a teacher.]

Matt is a teacher.

After the word "Matt", the "wa" tells us that Matt is the topic of the sentence - the sentence will be about Matt.

Let's add something to the sentence. Let's modify what kind of teacher he is:

Matt wa anata no sensei desu.

[As for Matt, he is you(s) teacher.]

Matt is your teacher.

We can turn it into a question by adding ka:

Matt wa anata no sensei desu ka.

[Matt is your teacher?]

Is Matt your teacher?

Desu is the most often used word for "to be". In English, we have to conjugate that verb to the following forms:

is, are, was, were, will be

Japanese verbs are not conjugated for first, second or third person subjects or for plural subjects. There is only one "person" as far as Japanese verbs are concerned. Also, Japanese verbs do not distinguish between present and future and as a result, the present-tense is often called the "non-past" form. Luckily for us learners wading in "context," they do have a past tense:

Present tense - Desu

Past tense - Deshita (pronounced DESH ta)

Note: Desu is not actually a plain verb. This will be the one exception to my policy of using plain verbs, because I think that even in plain speech, one should use desu, not its plain form. However, since you will encounter the plain version *da* in various reading and visual material, I will teach its forms, but I do not recommend using it.

Desu doesn't conjugate like most other verbs, but luckily, there are very few irregular verbs in Japanese, somewhere on the order of 3 to 20, depending on how you look at it. The other hundreds of verbs follow a strict, logical pattern that is easy to follow!

English - Japanese

is - desu

are - desu

was - deshita

were - deshita

will be - desu

Learning new vocabulary!

You will begin learning many Japanese words. Just like in English, some words are more common than others. We will start with the more common words and progress toward the less frequently used ones.

Interrogatives:

doko - where

nani - what

dare - who

ikutsu - how many

Nouns:

ai - love

heya - room

hon - book

hito - person

inu - dog

kami - god

neko - cat

Verbs:

aruku - to walk

hanasu - to speak

hashiru - to run
korosu - to kill
miru - to see, to watch
taberu - to eat

Pronouns:

watashi - I
anata - you
kare - he
kanojo - she
watashitachi - we
anatatachi/anatagata - you (plural)
karetachi/karera - them (when referring to a group that includes males)
kanojotachi/kanojora - them (for an all-female group)

Note: As I stated earlier, Japanese pronouns are far less common in polite speech than their English counterparts. Also note that these pronouns can be made plural by adding -tachi, but where others exist (above), the other ones are more common.

Adjectives:

akai - red
aoi - blue
kuroi - black
shiroi - white
osoi - slow
hayai - fast

Effective methods to learn new words

Making Lists

You take a piece of paper, and write the Japanese word on one side, and its English meaning on the other. You write from 5 - 25 words on a page. Look at your list as often as possible. The more you look at it, the sooner you will learn the words.

Flashcards

Take some index cards (cut in half if you like) and write the Japanese word on one side, and the English meaning on the other. Look at the flashcards when you get time. You can practice in two different ways -

- Look at the Japanese word and try to guess the English meaning
- Look at the English meaning and try to guess the Japanese word

A combination of the two would be best.

Lists and flashcards are an effective method of learning words for most people. Some people learn visually, others have to hear something in order to learn it. You can adapt a technique (like flashcards, for example) to fit your personal learning style.

If you're a visual learner, you have to see something to learn it. If you fall into this category, no use wasting time with oral vocabulary drills. Learning things by sound isn't your strong suit, so you should take advantage of your visual strengths. LOOK at your flashcards. Picture the words in your head.

If you have to hear something before you learn it, read the flashcards aloud. (or have someone else read them, if you have a study partner)

Tips to get the most out of your study time!

(These apply to flash cards as well as word lists - however for the sake of simplicity I am going to use word lists as an example)

Don't let lists go stale

Make sure you have a new list every few days. When you have the same list for more than a week, you start getting sick of it. You won't want to look at it, and so it does you no good.

You won't find yourself using the words right away

The lists are used to make you familiar with a given word. The word becomes an acquaintance. You won't become friends with the word (where you use it all the time and remember it perfectly) until you use it in sentences and/or hear it used in songs, Anime, and video games. Just memorize a word until you can get it right on a "quiz". Learning it for keeps comes later - when you review your old lists. That's when you start to make the words permanent residents of your brain.

Keep old lists for review

They say you have to forget something 7 times before it enters your long-term memory. That seems to be true in my experience. Most words make several "word list" appearances before I know them like the back of my hand.

Don't make the lists too big

Everyone is different, but I'm sure many people get overwhelmed if they perceive too much work ahead of them. If you have a list with 25 words, you might not look at it if you only have a minute, thinking "I need at least 10 minutes to study this properly". That's a waste of the minute you had to study. It would be better to break that list down into 5 mini-lists with 5 words each - on an index card perhaps. After a lot of experimentation, I discovered that a list of around 15-20 words works best. Try to make a new one every day or every other day.

Many words have more than one English meaning - pick ONE!

Don't write down too many meanings at once. The more meanings you have written down on your list, the more memorizing work you have, and you don't need that right now. Try to pick one or two English meanings per word. If there are many synonyms, get rid of all but one.

Example:

BAD:

sugoi - awful, incredible, amazing, cool, unbelievable

GOOD:

sugoi - amazing, cool

If there are other meanings associated with the word, add the word to your list again later (with one of the other meanings).

Slow and steady is the best way to go

If you have a choice of studying 10 minutes a day, or 2 hours on the weekend, choose the 10 minutes a day. Your brain is always working (even when you're sleeping) so it's best to make use of your brain's power. I heard that your brain files things away while you sleep - so it's a good idea to look at your word list right before bed. I have done that for a month or so, and I've noticed results. I take a brand new list and by the next day I already know most of the words. I make sure I look over the list for about 3 or 4 minutes before bed.

Study in the morning

Your brain is very receptive to information first thing in the morning. Studies have proven that kids do better in their 1st hour classes. If you wake up and look over your list, you've just set yourself off on the right foot. Now the rest of the day you can't be scared of Japanese, because your list (what Japanese is to you) is already familiar to you. A few months of this and you won't be afraid of Japanese at all.

Study often

You don't have to spend more than a few minutes, but look at your list around 10 times a day. You should be able to make a big dent in a 20 word list in a 24-hour period. If you're still in high school, you should have plenty of time, either between classes or even during class if the teacher gives you some free time or there's a lull in the action. Of course, in college, there are long periods of "downtime" so you should have no trouble finding a moment to glance at a list, but more and more colleges are offering Japanese as a foreign language, so if you have the chance, take it.

Put old lists somewhere AWAY FROM your current list!

You don't want to feel like you have to study all 10 or 20 pieces of paper! That will scare you away from your list (which you DO need to use). I keep my old lists in a binder. When I'm going on a trip or I have to wait in line somewhere, I grab around 10 lists and look them over.

Reviewing is important

Don't be concerned if you can't remember half of the words after a week or two. You may be thinking, "but I knew them a week ago!". That is because they were only in your short-term memory. However, when you learn them a second time, it will be easier. The third time will be even easier yet. Keep learning the word, and your brain will get the message. Eventually, your brain says, "Ok Ok...have some storage space in long term memory if the word is so important to you!".

Study with siblings or friends if at all possible

When you can make sentences and practice with others, the words become cemented in your brain. When I first started, I practiced a lot with my younger sister and brother, and that really helped me learn the words I was using at the time.

NEVER try to learn two words at the same time that sound or look alike!

That is, if they look or sound alike to YOU. It's way too challenging to learn 2 similar words at the same time. You will only be confused about the two words, and will remain that way for months. You are better off picking one of the words for now, and totally forgetting about the other at least for a couple weeks. Then you should go back and put both of them on the same list at a later time, to make sure that you know the difference. There are plenty of words to learn!

Get your words from the right sources

Good sources for words include: Anime, songs, manga, video games, video game manuals, internet sites and lesson books that use the words in example sentences (provided you read the sentences.) It's not all that wise to just grab a word out of the dictionary because you'll never be able to connect it to anything. The best thing is to have a context sentence that will connect it to a spot in your brain. You need to remember where you heard the word as you studied it. That makes it more real to you, and you will have an easier time learning it.

Below each word, write the sentence you heard it in

This isn't critical, but it will help you get a feel for what Japanese sentences sound like, and you will also learn the word MUCH more easily. This isn't required, but it allows you to "learn the word" fewer times.

Next Week

- More popular words
- Japanese Grammar
- Study tips

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Japanese is Possible!
Lesson 5

Here come the verbs

- Verb use
- Past tense
- Useful Words
- Study Tips

Using verbs

In the present tense, it's very easy to make simple sentences with Japanese verbs. Why? Because in plain speech, they require no conjugation. In Japanese, the predicate verb (the main verb of a sentence), will always be at the end of a sentence, with the exception of particles that may follow it. Let's look at an example (from now on, any vocabulary that you don't recognize and that has not been explained in a previous lesson will be at the bottom of the lesson):

Tanaka san wa mizu o nomu.
[Tanaka *tpc* water *oj* drink.]
Tanaka drinks water.

Note: I have used the arbitrary abbreviations *tpc* to show that *wa* marks a topic and *oj* to show that *o* marks an object. I will also use *sj* to show that *ga* marks a subject.

Ame ga furu.
[Rain *sj* precipitate.]
It's raining.

Kore o kau ka.
[This *oj* buy?]
Will you buy this?

Itsu gohan o taberu?
[When meal *oj* eat?]
When will you eat?

See? It's pretty simple at this point. You can see that I put "you" in a number of the translations. The speaker could just have easily been referring anyone else, depending on the context, but if you ask something like the above and you are not talking about anybody in particular, the listener will assume that you are referring to him or her.

Now that you know how to place a verb into a sentence, let's take it up a notch with:

Conjugation

Conjugation wise, there are three types of Japanese verbs: *ichidan* verbs, *godan*

verbs, and irregular verbs. Ichidan means "one step" and verbs are put into this category because they are conjugated rather easily. Other teaching methods refer to them as ru verbs or vowel verbs. The title godan, meaning "five step" will be explained later. Godan verbs are also known as "u" verbs or consonant verbs.

Let's start with ichidan verbs first, since they are the simplest.

Ichidan verbs

All ichidan end with either -eru or -iru. So if you see a verb with any ending other than this, it's not an ichidan verb.

Like I said, ichidans are relatively easy to conjugate and all you have to do to change a plain ichidan verb into the past tense, all you have to do is take the -ru off the end and replace it with -ta.

taberu --> tabeta
oshieru--> oshieta
iru --> ita

Godan verbs

Godan verbs are not so easy, so I have them herded into some groups that conjugate similarly.

-U, -TSU, -RU
-MU, -NU, -BU
-KU
-GU
-SU

You can see that godan verbs may also end in -ru. This means that you have to learn whether any particular verb with -iru or -eru at the end is ichidan or godan. I would say that there are more ichidan verbs ending in -eru than godan verbs, and more godan verbs ending in -iru than ichidan. But there are a lot of both in both groups.

To conjugate verbs that end in -u preceded by a vowel, -tsu or -ru, remove the final syllable (the ending) and replace it with -tta:

matsu --> matta
hashiru --> hashitta
toru --> totta
kau --> katta

Verbs with -mu, -nu or bu conjugate by removing the ending and adding -nda:
yomu --> yonda (there aren't very many -mu verbs)
shinu --> shinda (this is the only -nu verb)
yobu --> yonda (this is the same as for yomu, gotta look at context for these)
tobu --> tonda

For verbs with -ku, change it to -ita
tataku --> tataita

-gu changes to -ida
isogu --> isoida

and finally,

Verbs with -su change it to -shita
hanasu --> hanashita
desu --> deshita

There are four verbs that conjugate irregularly in the past tense:

suru --> shita

iku --> itta (this is its only irregular conjugation)

kuru --> kita

da --> datta

You can use the past tense just as you would use the present tense. Simply put it at the end of the sentence.

Uta o utatta.

[Song *oj* sang.]

[I] sang a song.

Nihongo o hanashita.

[Japanese *oj* spoke.]

[I] spoke Japanese.

Michio san ga tabeta.

[Michio *sj* ate.]

Michio ate./Michio has eaten.

Kuruma o oshita.

[Car *oj* pushed.]

[She] pushed the car.

Useful words to add to your list

Miscellaneous words:

san - this word is added to the end of a person's name to show simple respect for that person. Many people equate it with "Mr." or "Mrs." but it's a little different. It can be used with first names as well as surnames, and should not be forgotten. You should use it any time you refer to another person, but never when referring to yourself.

itsu - when

Michio - a female given name

Tanaka - a surname

Pronouns:

kore - this

sore - that

are - that over there

ame - rain

gohan - a meal, boiled rice

kuruma - car

mizu - water

nihongo - the Japanese language

okane - money

sora - sky

terebi - T.V.

uta - song

Adjectives:

atsui - hot

ii - good

samui - cold

warui - bad

Verbs:

erabu - to choose
furu - to precipitate, to fall (for rain, snow, etc.)
hashiru - to run (godan)
iku - to go
iru - to exist (for animate objects: people, large animals, etc.) (ichi)
isogu - to hurry
kau - to buy
kiku - to listen
kuru - to come
matsu - to wait
motsu - to have
nomu - to drink
oshieru - to teach (ichidan)
osu - to push
shinu - to die
suru - to do
tataku - to hit
tobu - to jump, to fly
toru - to take
utau - to sing
yobu - to call
yomu - to read

Study Tips

To get ready for your study of Japanese, I suggest getting a good book. You can find some on my book recommendation page here: [Book Recommendations](#).

A review of study tips:

- Study with siblings/friends
- Talk to Japanese people in various chat rooms, including www.wbs.net
- Don't worry about what you don't know
- Practice often
- Review lists/flashcards often
- Study often (but not as often as you review lists)
- Use words in sentences
- Listen in Anime/songs/video games for words you just learned
- Learn the lyrics to songs you enjoy
- Pull out cool phrases from Anime, and look them up in a dictionary

Next Time

- Some more use with verbs
- How to use a few particles
- And, like always, more useful words



Japanese is Possible!
Lesson 6

Particles Galore

- Particles
- "Koto"
- New Words
- ko-so-a-do words

Particles

Japanese uses several particles to give most of the words in a sentence a purpose. Usually, many of the words in a sentence will be followed by a particle. Most are one syllable, a few are two syllables, and a precious few are more than that.

The particle WA

This particle tells that the preceding word is the topic of the sentence. A good way to translate it is *as for*.

kono mise no ryouri wa oishii desu.
[This store's food *as for* delicious is.]
The food here is delicious.

kore wa boku no mono desu.
[this (as for) I ('s) thing is.]
This is mine.

Hiroshi wa tsuyoi desu.
[Hiroshi (as for) strong is.]
Hiroshi is strong.

Difference between WA and GA

People often confuse *wa* and *ga*, since usually *ga* marks the subject of a sentence, but *wa* often does as well. One way to think about *ga* is that it emphasizes the subject as in "this and not something else did..." *Wa* often emphasizes the action or verb of the sentence. Take the following examples:

Dare *ga* mise e itta ka. (Emphasis on dare)
Jon san *ga* itta. (Emphasis on Jon)
[Who *sj* store to went? John *sj* went.]
Who went to the store? John did.

Jon san *wa* doko e iku ka. (Emphasis on where Jon went)
Jon san *wa* mise e iku.
[John *as for* where to go? John *as for* store to go.]
Where will John go? John will go to the store.

The examples above illustrate an important point. When a question word is the subject of a sentence, it must be followed with *ga* not *wa*. Also, the subject of the response to the question must have *ga* after it as well.

If you're interested in all the nuances, I'm sure there are several websites that have in-depth info. Also, try searching Deja.com for newsgroup posts from about 1 or 2 years ago. There was a big discussion on sci.lang.japan about this very topic. I would also strongly recommend *Making Sense of Japanese* by Jay Rubin, listed on the [book recommendation](#) page.

Example:

kore ga hayai desu.

This is fast. (as opposed to **that** or **the other thing**)

kore wa hayai desu.

[this (as for) fast is.] (You wanted to know about this? It's fast.)

The particle NO

No is often best translated as 'S (the 's in Bob's). It is known as the *possessive* particle. You could also think of it as the preposition *of* in English, *de* in Spanish or *di* in Italian.

kare wa boku no tomodachi desu.

[he *as for* I 's friend is./He is friend of I]

He is my friend.

are wa haha no kami desu.

[that over there *as for* my mother 's hair is./that over there is hair of my mother]

That is my mother's hair.

kono shounen no mise wa chikai desu.

[this boy 's store *as for* near is.]

This boy's store is nearby.

You can see in the above example that a boy probably does not own the store. Boy is just a characteristic of the store, i.e. it caters to young boys. Often, you can express an attribute this way by using *no* after a common noun (such as boy, book, tree, etc.).

sono konpyuutaa no mise wa tooi desu.

[that computer *attribute* store *as for* far is.]

That computer store is far away.

The particle DE

De often follows the location where an action takes place. It could translate to **at**, **in**, **on**, and probably another bunch of words in English, but the important thing to remember is that it's an action that *happens*, it's not a state, as you'll see below.

Examples:

Nihon de sake o nonda.

[Japan *loc* sake *oj* drank.]

I drank sake in Japan.

Densha de bangohan o tabeta.

[Train *loc* supper *oj* ate.]

I ate supper on the train.

but:

Nihon de sumu. <---Bad!

[Japan *loc* reside.]

I live in Japan.

It looks ok, right? But it isn't. Living isn't an *active* sort of action; it's just a state of being that goes on for some span of time. Be wary of this.

A useful word - "koto"

Koto literally means "thing" in an abstract sense, as in "what kind of things to you do at those meetings." It's not the kind of thing you can touch, hold or spit on. In many cases, you can change a verb into a noun phrase by adding koto to it. We'll just look at one use of it in this lesson.

Take a typical short sentence:

Sushi o taberu.

Eat sushi.

If we add "koto", it allows us to use the phrase as the subject of a larger sentence.

Sushi o taberu koto

The act of eating sushi

If we place a *koto* noun phrase before *ga dekiru*, we get a nifty way of saying "can do..."

Watashi wa sushi o taberu koto ga dekiru.

I can eat sushi.

Sushi o taberu koto ga dekiru ka.

Can you/he/... eat sushi?

Now, if you're really observant, you might be saying, "hey! that first sentence has two subjects," or "why would 'sushi eating' be performing the action in the second sentence?" Here's your answer. *Dekiru* literally is closer to "is doable" than to "can do..." So the *wa* in the first sentence doesn't mark the subject at all; it just shows which topic we're discussing ("I" in this case).

Watashi wa sushi o taberu koto ga dekiru.

[As for me, sushi eating is doable.]

Useful words to add to your list!

Adjectives:

akai - red

chikai - near

mijikai - short (hair, etc)

nagai - long

oishii - tasty, delicious

takai - expensive

tooi - far

tsumetai - cold

yasui - inexpensive

Adverbs:

itsumo - always

yukkuri - slowly, leisurely

Interrogatives:

itsu - when

Nouns:

bangohan- supper, dinner

boushi - hat

densha - train

kami - hair (the same as the word for god)

konpyuutaa - computer

koto - thing (abstract)

kumo - cloud

mise - store

mono - thing (concrete)

otoko - man

onna - woman

okaasan - mother

otousan - father

shoujo - young girl

shounen - young boy

tomodachi - friend

tabemono - food

ude - arm

kuchi - mouth

mono - thing

Verbs:

sumu - to reside (don't try using this word yet)

dekiru - to be doable

ko-so-a-do words

In Japanese, things are often quite organized. One example of this is the ko-so-a-do concept. Japanese has a few sets of words with the same or similar endings, and these four syllables switched in at the beginning. Note this pattern.

kore - this

sore - that

are - that over there

dore - which?

Just as a reminder, remember that for now you should pronounce all the vowels in Japanese. There is no such thing as a silent 'E' in Japanese. So you would pronounce 'kore' as KO RAY, but of course with a Japanese R, not an English one.

Back to the topic, you can see from that set that **ko-** denotes something within the grasp of the speaker, **so-** is for things a small distance from the speaker, **a-** is for something far from the speaker, and **do-** makes interrogative words.

kore wa watashi no mono desu.

[this *as for* I 's thing is.]

This is mine.

are wa kuruma desu.

[that *as for* car is.]

That is a car.

dore ga yasui ka.

Which is inexpensive?

These four words are known as *demonstrative pronouns*, and must precede either a particle or *desu*. Another useful set of *ko-so-a-do* words are also demonstrative pronouns, and end with **no**. Nouns can follow this set, which makes them rather useful:

kono - this

sono - that

ano - that over there

dono - which

Ano tabemono ga takai.

That food is expensive.

Dono hon ga ii ka. (notice that you must use *ga* here)

Which book is good?

As a side note: technically, *dono* and *dore* are for asking questions for which there are at least **three** possible responses, or in other words, there are at least three items. There is a special way of asking when there are only two choices, and though you'll probably get the point across using *dono* and *dore*, try to avoid them in this case. And now for some advice:

Get a feel for Japanese sentences!

I would recommend writing several of these sentences on index cards (or on regular paper), carrying them around with you, and looking at them often. Just reading Japanese sentences helps give you a feel for how they work, and helps you to make your own sentences. Since the grammar is so "different", you need to expose yourself to it a lot, and get a feel for it, so you can become more comfortable with it. After you use Japanese sentences for a while, you will start to get an idea of how they should sound, and how to create your own.

What is the best way to practice in this area?

- **Grammar books** - This will help you learn the particles, and how to make sentences. The books usually have several example sentences, as well as a fair bit of vocabulary for you to can. I highly suggest checking out one of the textbooks on the [book recommendation](#) page.
- **Anime**- You will encounter countless real-world sentences which help you immensely. The only obstacle here is trying to pull words and sentences out of the sometimes speedy speech. Many people find anime to be very interesting, so you will probably have an easier time remembering the sentences. The same goes for Manga, if you can get your hands on some that's transliterated into Roman letters (as opposed to Japanese writing). If not, don't worry. I will address Japanese writing in an upcoming lesson..

Next Time

- A step back for a moment

You won't want to miss it.

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Japanese is Possible!
Lesson 7

Wait a minute

- Basic expressions
- Nationality
- Two more particles: yo and ne
- Kara
- Some more useful words
- How are you doing so far?

Basic expressions

All of this time, you've been going along learning Japanese vocabulary and grammar, but there's a chance that you don't even know simple Japanese greetings yet (through no fault of your own). So here they are, learn them well:

ohayou (gozaimasu) - good morning

konnichi wa - hello

konban wa - good evening (said when meeting someone)

oyasumi (nasai) - good night (said when departing)

hajimemashite - I'm pleased to meet you, how do you do?

sayounara - good bye

dewa mata - good bye, later (more informal than sayounara)

jaa mata - see you later (more informal than dewa mata)

(doumo) arigatou (gozaimasu) - thank you (add the words in () to increase politeness)

dou itashimashite - you're welcome, don't mention it

(o)genki(desu ka)? - how are you? (lit. are you well?)

Not the shortest list in the world, but an important one. Learn those expressions well as soon as you can.

Nationality

Another important topic you should know before we go any further is the way to express nationality. In English, we use suffixes like -ish, -ese, -an and sometimes it's completely irregular (Holland<->Dutch?) In Japanese, you simply add the suffix -jin to the name of a country:

Amerika + jin = **Amerikajin** American person

Nihon + jin = **Nihonjin**

Japanese person

these words are always *nouns* (in English they're sometimes used as adjectives), and they *only apply to people* (not cars, etc.)

Supeinjin desu ka. (Are you Spanish?)

lie, Itariajin desu. (No, I'm Italian.)

More on Particles

The particle NE

The particle *ne* is a sentence particle, that means that it's used at the end of a sentence in the manner that *ka* is. It means "eh?" or "right?" As a way of looking for agreement, sometimes rhetorically.

Examples:

Ano tatemono wa takai desu ne.

[That building *as for* tall is huh?]

That building is tall, isn't it?

Nihongo no hon o yonda ne.

[Japanese language *attribute* book *of* read right?]

You read the Japanese book, didn't you?

The particle YO

The particle *yo* is also a sentence particle, and it is used to assert (usually strongly) some information that the speaker believes that the listener does not already know, perhaps to explain something that the listener is questioning. It is similar to the English expression "you know."

Example:

Biifu o tsuku ka. Kyou sakana o katta yo.

[Beef *of* make? Today fish *of* bought you know.]

You're going to make beef? I bought fish today, you know.

Kara

Kara is a very important particle that literally means "from," but in Japanese it can idiomatically mean "because." To use it this way, just put it after a verb or adjective expressing the reason, and express the consequence afterward. *Kara* is called a clause particle because it follows a chunk of words that would otherwise be a complete sentence. Note that the subject of the clause must be followed with *ga*, not *wa*.

Examples:

Kono heya ga hiroi kara, ii desu ne.
[This room *is wide from*, good is right?]
Since this room is large, it's nice, isn't it?

Koko e hashitta kara, tsukareta.
[Here *to ran from*, tired.]
I'm tired because I ran here.

More Useful Words

These words should be added to everyone's list if you don't know them. They are the most popular words in Anime and video games - they are well worth learning!

Pronouns

kisama - you (what you would say to a baby -- or an enemy)
temee - you (one step above kisama - still extremely rude!)

Nouns

bakemono - monster
obake - ghost
sakana - fish
chi - blood
ningen - human

Adjectives

amai - sweet, naive
atarashii - new
furui - old
hidoi - terrible, awful
hontou - true
muzukashii - hard
yasashii - easy

Verbs

hashiru - to run (godan verb)
mitsukeru - to find (use it with the particle o)
nomu - to drink
sagasu - to search (for)
tsukareru - to become tired
tsukiaiu - to hang around, to date
tsuzuku - to continue

Miscellaneous

kyou - today

How are you doing so far?

At the very beginning of this column (Part 1), I told you that learning Japanese isn't hard, but it is different from other languages you may have encountered. I will clarify what I said, so you won't get the wrong idea.

I would compare Japanese to a musical instrument. They are not "hard" per se. Calculus - that can be hard. Some people just can't seem to grasp its concepts, while some don't find it all that difficult. With that definition of hard in mind, I can truly say that Japanese isn't hard. You have to slowly beat it into your head over a period of years, just like when you learn an instrument. At first, you can't do much - but you know that you can eventually be a virtuoso. As long as you stick to it, you'll slowly and surely get better. It's the same way with Japanese (or any language). Practice makes perfect. If you don't see instant results, that's perfectly natural and is not bad news at all.

I believe that some people out there consider Japanese to be "hard" the way that calculus is hard - and they think, "I can't learn it!". In fact, I personally know many people who believe that!

The learning curve is pretty steep at first - you learn tons of stuff every day and every week. However, there are also periods where you feel like you're not learning anything. Don't worry - you'll get through those dry periods if you stick with it.

When you're learning words, don't worry about the thousands of words you don't know - instead concentrate on the 10's or 100's that you do know. Think of each word you learn as ONE LESS WORD you'll need to look up when you're reading something. Just learn 5 or 10 words at a time. My experience tells me that is the best way.

Each time you learn a new word or piece of grammar, there are infinitely more sentences you can make (or understand!). Your Japanese skills can increase every day, and become more powerful by the week and by the month. As long as you keep trying, you will become very proficient in several months' time. You will be surprised what you can do if you only BELIEVE that you can. Whenever you're learning something, the most important thing is your mindset. If you believe you can do it, you can. If you believe you can't, you probably won't.

Tune in next time, when you'll see:

- More particles
- Common phrases
- More popular words (surprised?)
- Intro to Japanese writing



Japanese is Possible!

Lesson 8

A man said to the universe, "I exist!"

- Review of JIP Objectives
 - Existing in Japanese
 - A Note on GA
 - Example Sentences
 - More Popular Words
 - Important Points to Remember
-

Review of JIP Objectives

I just want to take a few minutes to review the objectives of "Japanese is Possible!" Unlike your average college course, this column will not focus on "formal" Japanese and learning the Chinese characters (Kanji) before teaching anything else. On the contrary, those things will be saved for last since they are the least useful. Learning things with no immediate relevance harms your motivation. Once you're watching Anime without subtitles, then you can learn those nice extras!

How to exist

In English and other languages, one uses a form of the verb "to be" to indicate his or her present location. ("I *am* at the store.") Anyone who has studied Spanish knows that the verb used to indicate location (*estar* literally "to stay") is not the same as the verb used to indicate a personal characteristic (*ser*). Japanese is like this. (To tell you the truth, you *can* use *desu* to indicate location in Japanese and not be wrong, but the method that I am about to teach you is, I believe, a bit more grammatically correct.)

In Japanese, when something is in a particular place, it *exists* there. You use the verbs *iru* and *aru* (both meaning "to exist") to express this. Use *iru* to show the location of animate objects (people, animals), and *aru* for inanimate objects (books, tables, sewing machines). The simple sentence pattern is like this:

Something *wa/ga* somewhere *ni aru/iru*.

And you can expand from there. Notice that you need to use the particle *ni* (at/in/on) after the location and before the verb.

Takashi san wa mise ni iru.
[Takashi *topic* store *at/in* exists.]
Takashi is at the store.

Pasokon ga tsukue ni aru.
[Computer *sj* desk *on* exists.]
A computer is on the desk.

A Note on GA

There is a lot of similarity between WA and GA, in that they both have to do with the subject of the sentence. However, here is a way to keep them straight.

GA - "This, as opposed to something else"

ranma ga koko ni iru
[Ranma *sj* here *at* exists.]
Ranma is here.

ranma wa koko ni iru.
[Ranma *topic* here *at* exists.]
Ranma is here. (this may or may not indicate emphasis on *here*)

Similar? Yes. However, they would answer different questions. If someone said, "Where is Ranma?" you would respond "Ranma is here." On the other hand, if someone said, "Who is in here?" someone might respond "RANMA is here".

Example Sentences

As you learn the various parts of Japanese grammar, you need to reinforce the new things you learn by using them in sentences. You should read many Japanese sentences that use the words and grammar you learned. That way, you get a feel for what Japanese sentences look like, and exactly how the different grammar "items" come together.

kono heya wa hiroi desu ne
[This room *topic* wide is *right?*]
This room is spacious, isn't it?

Jibun no atama o taberu nante muri desu yo!
[one's own head *oj* to eat (such a thing such as) impossible is!]
It's impossible to eat your own head!

omae o korosu

[you *oj* kill]
I will kill you.

minna no chikara ga hitsuyou desu.
[everyone's power *sj* necessary is.]
We need everyone's power.

More Popular Words

Nouns

asa - morning
chikara - power
jibun - yourself/oneself
kage - shadow
ki - energy, spirit

kokoro - heart
kotae - answer
minna - everyone
makoto - truth
pasokon - computer
tsukue - desk

Adjectives

hitsuyou - necessary
muri - hopeless, impossible
saigo - last, the end
ookii - big
chiisai - small

Verbs

noru - to ride
tekagen suru - to hold back
tasukeru - to rescue
tamesu - to test
mukau - to face, to head for
tomaru - to stop
kikoeru - to be heard
korosu - to kill **tsukeru** - to attach

Extra words

arigatou - thank you
jibun no - one's own
kanarazu - without a doubt
kesshite - never
omae - you (disrespectful/casual)
~ **nante** - such a thing such as ~ (Don't use *wa* or *ga* after *nante*)

Common Phrases

omae no saigo da!
you ('s) end is!
It's the end of you!

kono mama
as it is now

sou desu yo
That's the way it is!

There are many words and phrases involving the word **KI**.
Some examples include:

ki ga suru - to decide

ki o tsukeru - to be careful ("attach some thought/energy to it")

tenki - weather (literally, "heaven's spirit/mood")

Writing in Japanese

It's come to that point in time. It's time for you to start learning the eerie and mysterious Japanese writing systems. But the truth is, there's really nothing mysterious (or eerie) about them, and I will help you to understand them.

First, some background. There are three writing systems in the Japanese language, and all three are used in nearly every Japanese publication in the world since the beginning of the century. Two of the systems are called kana. They are the Japanese equivalent of our alphabet, since each character has a sound associated with it, but no meaning. The third system, Kanji is a collection of "picture characters," each of which has a meaning of its own. We will start by learning one of the kana systems known as "hiragana."

Hiragana is called a syllabary, because it is a system that consists of syllables. There are forty-six hiragana characters currently in use, and forty-five of them are syllables ending in vowels. The last one is the syllable 'n.' I will first teach you the syllables that are lone vowels, and today, we will just go over the first vowel 'a.'



To write it, first draw the horizontal stroke across the top. Then, draw the vertical stroke through that. Finally, draw the third curved stroke, starting at the higher end and finishing in the bottom right corner of the character.

That's all there is to it. Next week, I will try to display the characters on your screen using Japanese encoding, but I will continue with these .gif images for the rest of the lone vowels. If a dialog pops up on your screen on the next lesson, asking

whether you want to install Japanese language support, tell it that you do want to.

Important Points to Remember

- How to become proficient in Japanese -

As you learn more Japanese grammar, you'll be able to understand an increasing amount of the dialogue in a typical Anime episode. I recommend watching subtitled Anime for quite a while before you go do "raw Japanese". It's nice to have subtitles for a while, because then you get a feel for what the different words and phrases mean. You also get a feel for what a typical Japanese sentence looks and sounds like. You learn the words and phrases from a website or book, but you learn how they're used by watching Anime, listening to songs, playing Japanese video games, and reading manga. It's a step you can't leave out. Only through sheer repetition can an American get a Japanese native's ear for Japanese!

I don't believe you can leave out either part. Unless you're under the age of 5, you can't learn Japanese just by watching Anime. However, I don't think a teenager or adult can learn Japanese well without immersing him/herself to a certain degree.

The keys to learning Japanese are:

- Believe you can do it - make friends with the language
- Slow and steady - learn at least 1 word every day
- Listen to it and use it as often as possible
- Study ONLY when you are in the mood and have time
- Look at word lists and review EVEN when you're busy (at work, etc)
- Stop worrying about what the words sound like to an American

Next Time

- Adjectives as modifiers
- Example Sentences
- Review
- More Popular Words
- Two more vowels

That's all for now. See you soon!



Japanese is Possible!

Lesson 9

A look back

Review
Japanese is Logical
Adjectives
Da
Example Sentences
Popular Words
Hiragana: i and u

Review

It's been 8 weeks since the first JIP column. What have you learned since then? I hope you've learned a lot about Japanese in the last 2 months. Now would be an excellent time to go back and review the previous 8 lessons. You may catch something that you overlooked the first time through.

Since an actual review column would be about as long as the last 8 episodes put together, I see no reason to put all that material here! That's what the archives are for. I recommend you at least read through the last 8 episodes. It shouldn't take too long. There are a lot of important points in them, and I want to make sure everyone has absorbed that information!

Japanese is Logical

Learning Japanese, like most sports or activities, involves repetition. You start out able to do almost nothing. You are very unskilled at first, but you make yourself practice every day. After working at it for a while, you discover that you are becoming more and more capable.

I believe that most people can acquire a decent proficiency of Japanese, especially if they like Japanese music, video games, and/or Anime. The only catch is they have to believe they can do it. You can't make excuses. You have to tell yourself that everyone else is wrong - it's not hard. They just don't know how easy the grammar and spelling is.

To give you an idea of what awaits you in Japanese:

tekubi - wrist
(te = hand, kubi = neck)

koinu - puppy
(ko = child or small, inu = dog)

tatsumaki - tornado
(tatsu = dragon, maki = wind [as in "roll up," not the weather type of wind])

You know how English has about 100 different words for a group of animals? (herd, flock, ostentation, murder, gaggle, etc) In Japanese there is just one - "mure".

There are a great many words that are made from 2 "kanji", or Chinese characters. Over time, you get used to how the different kanji are read, and what their meanings are.

For example:

FU - un, not
AN - rest, ease, comfortable
SHIN - heart, feelings

ANSHIN - peace of mind
FUAN - anxiety, worry

The kanji are like building blocks, which are used to build different words. It does help to learn some of the more popular kanji. I don't recommend learning them right away, but after a while you may want to start learning them.

It doesn't take much effort to learn "tasumaki" when you know that "tatsu" is dragon and "maki" is wind up.

Regarding adjectives

It's about time you started learning the details of adjectives. Up to now, I haven't said much about them and it's already lesson 9. So let's start from the beginning. There are two types of adjectives, and learners of Japanese commonly call them na-adjectives and i-adjectives, and you will soon see why. I adjectives always end in the vowels -ai, -ii, -ui or -oi, never -ei or a consonant followed by -i. There is no real rule about what a na-adjective looks like, so they are everything else. Sometimes na-adjectives, such as *kirai*, can look just like i-adjectives. From now on, if there is a na-adjective that looks like an i-adjective, I will explicitly mark it in the word list at the end of a lesson. There aren't very many.

If you've been following the lessons well, chances are that you

already know pretty well how to use them as predicate adjectives in the form:

Something wa/ga adjective desu.

Unsurprisingly, you can also use adjectives to directly modify nouns, (i.e. "The black cat *did something*," instead of "The cat is black.") To modify a noun with an i-adjective, just place the adjective before the noun.

kuroi neko - black cat
atsui ocha - hot tea

This enables to to use a verb other than "to be" to say what the subject *did* or *does* rather than what it *is*. To modify a noun with a na-adjective, you must insert the word *na* between the adjective and the noun.

taisetsu na mono - important thing
kirei na onna no ko - pretty girl

Da the other copula

Up to now, you have used the word *desu* as the verb meaning "to be," but there is another word with the same meaning: *da*. *Da* is a little less polite than *desu*, but you will frequently hear it in anime and read it in manga, and once you begin to learn more complex sentences, you will need to use it no matter what (just not as the predicate verb). As a predicate verb, *da* works just like *desu*:

Boku ga gakusei da.
I am a student.

Sore wa taisetsu da.
That's important.

There is one important difference. When an i-adjective is the predicate of a sentence (such as, *noun is adjective*), there is no *da* after it. Do this if the rest of your sentences have *da*. Compare:

Ano neko wa kuroi desu. (*desu* level politeness)

Ano neko wa kuroi. (*da* level politeness) That cat is black.

Example Sentences

tsumetai mizu wa ichiban desu.
cold water is the best.

ore wa omae no otousan da.
I'm your father.

kono jigoku kara no pasokon wa atsui desu yo!
[This hell *from modifier* computer (subject) hot is!]
This computer from hell is hot!

yukina no koori wa samui.
Yukina's ice is cold.

rekka no honoo wa atsui.
Rekka's fire was hot.

omae o korosu.
I'm going to kill you.

ano furui neko wa akai desu.
That old cat is red.

kanarazu lina no okane wa taisetsu da.
Without a doubt, Lina's money is precious.

ano hidoi bakemono wa chi o nonda.
That awful monster drank blood.

Popular Words

New words for this week:

[Noun] honoo - fire

[Noun] koori - ice

[Noun] mizu - water

[Noun] ocha - tea

[Noun] onna no ko - girl

[Noun] ushi - cow

[Adj] ii - good

[Adj] kirai - unlikable (na-adjective)

[Adj] kirei - pretty

[Adj] taisetsu - precious, important

[Verb] tobu - to fly

[Verb] da - is (a less polite version of desu)

[Verb] datta - was (the past tense of da)

Here are more 129 VERY popular words. Each word you learn from this list will be extremely useful. Most of these appeared in previous lessons.

[Adj] akai - red

[Adj] amai - sweet, naive

[Adj] aoi - blue

[Adj] are - that over there

[Adj] atarashii - new

[Adj] atsui - hot

[Adj] chiisai - small

[Adj] chikai - near
[Adj] furui - old
[Adj] hayai - fast
[Adj] hidoi - terrible, awful
[Adj] hitsuyou - necessary
[Adj] hontou - true
[Adj] ichiban - number 1
[Adj] kore - this
[Adj] kuroi - black
[Adj] midori - green
[Adj] mijikai - short (hair, etc)
[Adj] muri - hopeless, impossible
[Adj] muzukashii - hard
[Adj] nagai - long
[Adj] ooki - big
[Adj] osoi - slow
[Adj] saigo - last, the end
[Adj] samui - cold
[Adj] shiroi - white
[Adj] sore - that
[Adj] tooi - far
[Adj] tsumetai - cold
[Adj] warui - bad

[Adv] itsumo - always
[Adv] yukkuri - slowly, leisurely

[Int] dare - who
[Int] doko - where
[Int] ikutsu - how many
[Int] itsu - when
[Int] nani - what

[Misc] arigatou - thank you
[Misc] kanarazu - without a doubt
[Misc] kesshite - never
[Misc] kudasai - please
[Misc] kure - please (informal)
[Misc] nante - a thing such as

[Noun] ai - love
[Noun] ame - rain
[Noun] asa - morning
[Noun] atama - head
[Noun] bakemono - monster
[Noun] boushi - hat
[Noun] chi - blood
[Noun] chikara - power
[Noun] densha - train
[Noun] heya - room
[Noun] hito - person
[Noun] hon - book
[Noun] inu - dog
[Noun] jibun - yourself
[Noun] jigoku - hell
[Noun] kage - shadow

[Noun] kami - god
[Noun] kami - hair
[Noun] ki - energy, spirit
[Noun] kokoro - heart
[Noun] kotae - answer
[Noun] kuchi - mouth
[Noun] kumo - cloud
[Noun] kuruma - car
[Noun] makoto - truth
[Noun] minna - everyone
[Noun] mise - store
[Noun] mono - thing
[Noun] neko - cat
[Noun] ningen - human
[Noun] obake - ghost
[Noun] okaasan - mother
[Noun] okane - money
[Noun] onna - woman
[Noun] otoko - man
[Noun] otousan - father
[Noun] pasokon - computer
[Noun] shoujo - girl
[Noun] shounen - boy
[Noun] sora - sky
[Noun] tabemono - food
[Noun] tatakai - (a) fight
[Noun] terebi - T.V.
[Noun] tomodachi - friend
[Noun] ude - arm
[Noun] uta - song

[Pron] aitsu - that guy
[Pron] aitsu - he, she (informal)
[Pron] anata - you (always appropriate)
[Pron] are - that over there
[Pron] atashi - I (said by females)
[Pron] boku - I (said by males)
[Pron] kanojo - she
[Pron] kare - he
[Pron] kisama - you (what you would say to a baby -- or an enemy)
[Pron] koitsu - same as aitsu
[Pron] kore - this
[Pron] omae - you (said to inferiors)
[Pron] ore - I (speaker thinks he is superior)
[Pron] sore - that
[Pron] temee - you (one step above kisama - still extremely rude!)

[Verb] aruku - to walk
[Verb] bakuhatsu suru - to explode
[Verb] erabu - to choose
[Verb] hanasu - to speak
[Verb] hashiru - to run
[Verb] iru - to be somewhere (for a person)
[Verb] iku - to go [Verb] kaesu - return something, give back
[Verb] kasegu - to earn (money)

[Verb] kikoeru - to be heard
[Verb] kiku - to listen
[Verb] kuru - to come[br] [Verb] korosu - to kill
[Verb] miru - to see
[Verb] miru - to see, watch
[Verb] mitsukeru - to find
[Verb] motsu - to have
[Verb] mukau - to face, to head for
[Verb] naru - to become
[Verb] nomu - to drink
[Verb] noru - to ride
[Verb] omou - to think
[Verb] osu - to push
[Verb] ou - to follow
[Verb] sagasu - to search (for)
[Verb] taberu - to eat
[Verb] tamesu - to test
[Verb] tasukeru - to rescue
[Verb] tatakau - to hit
[Verb] tekagen suru - to hold back
[Verb] tomaru - to stop
[Verb] toru - to take
[Verb] tsukeru - to attach
[Verb] tsukiau - to hang around, to date
[Verb] tsuzukeru - to continue
[Verb] unten suru - to drive
[Verb] utau - to sing

Hiragana

If you see garbled letters in the brackets [] below, you need to set up your computer to read Japanese text. The [Japanese encoding page](#) should be able to solve your problem. If it doesn't, somebody in the [JIP forum](#) will surely help you out.

In this lesson, you will learn the hiragana characters for the vowels *i* and *u*. In English the order of the vowels is "a, e, i, o, u," their order in the alphabet. In Japanese, it's "a, i, u, e, o," and this is a little more significant than it is in English, as you will see much later. Right now, here's what *i* and *u* look like:

い [い] and う [う]

Writing them is pretty simple. For *i* just draw the left stroke from top to bottom, then the right stroke from top to bottom. For *u*, first draw the top stroke from left to right, then the bottom stroke, starting to the left and finishing below. I'm sure you've gathered a pattern by now. For the most part, each stroke is drawn from top to bottom, left to right, and in a character, the top-leftmost strokes are drawn first, proceeding down to the bottom-right ones. When a stroke slants down and to the left or curls around, you usually start drawing from the higher tip and finish at the lower tip of the stroke.

With these new characters, you can already write a few simple words:

いい [いい] (ii-good) あう [あう] (au-to meet) あい [あい] (ai-love)

Be here for the next lesson where you'll learn:

More Grammar
Common Phrases
Two more hiragana
More Popular Words

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Japanese is Possible!

Lesson 10

Part 10

The Role JIP Plays
Be Creative
Four Important Points
The -te form
Kana: e and o

The Role JIP Plays

Because everyone is different, each person requires a different method to learn the same exact thing. That's why there are so many different Japanese books out there right now. Some books are "survival guides" teaching you only a few common phrases, such as how to order food and ask where the restroom is. Other books insist you learn the written language (Hiragana/Katakana) right away. Many books stress the polite form, and never touch on the plain, everyday form of the language.

JIP, on the other hand, wishes to guide you to a practical understanding of the language. After studying for several months, you should be able to understand many phrases commonly spoken in Anime and video games. You should also be able to make Japanese sentences of your own, and converse with Japanese people and other learners by e-mail, letters, and eventually, through speech.

JIP will gain new lessons at a moderate speed. However, it doesn't matter where you are progress-wise. If you just discovered the column recently, you can read the past lessons. They will be here as long as any of the lessons. If you want to learn more than I'm teaching here, you're welcome to go off on your own and find books and other materials to study. A good place to start for this is the [book recommendation](#) page. You can use JIP for additional study material, and also as a source of advice.

Be Creative!

What's your subject of expertise? I'm sure you have some

interest or hobby where you really know your stuff. How did you become that knowledgeable? Did you get a lot of hands-on experience? Did you learn about it because you were involved in your hobby almost every day?

Since everyone IS different, I have to rely a bit on YOU to come up with the best way to make YOU fluent in Japanese. I can think up some good ways to help ME learn, but only YOU know what kind of techniques worked for you in the past. Some people like to take it easy, others like to push themselves harder and harder. Some people have to make it "fun" somehow or they lose interest. Others have to have a friend or sibling to work with.

A good way to go over what you've learned is to try to construct your own Japanese sentences. I used to have a teacher who would make us create a sentence completely from scratch for every grammatical construction we learned. Do this yourself. Make sentences. Be creative. They can be something that you think would be useful to know off the top of your head or they can be something silly. The sillier it is, the more likely you are to remember it. If you want to be sure that you're doing it right, post your sentences up on the JIP forum. There are plenty of people who would be glad to help you out.

Four Important Points

I will give several tips here that apply to most people. Try to brainstorm how you can apply these to your particular learning style. When it comes to things like learning, review, practice, etc. I'd say the possibilities are limited only by your imagination - which is endless.

Tip 1 - Set Goals

Everyone has to have goals, otherwise we are just drifting through life waiting to die! It's no different in Japanese. Unless you have well crafted short- and long-range goals, you won't get very far in anything.

A good long-range goal would be "To be able to speak and understand Japanese". You can take as long as 5 to 7 years to reach your long-range goal. It is your ultimate objective. You aren't supposed to worry about it on a day-to-day basis -- it is there for motivation. Whenever you're having any kind of trouble, just keep your goal in mind. You can work through obstacles when you have a goal. That's because you see obstacles for what they are - something to overcome! If you don't have a goal, you meet your first obstacle and take it as an excuse to quit. Everyone runs into obstacles. The road to success is littered with obstacles.

Sometimes the long-term goal seems unreachable. That's where short-term goals come in. These are the small "milestones" on the way to your long-term goal. Some good short-term goals

include:

- Learning the hiragana alphabet
- Memorizing my latest word list
- Learning 10 new kanji

You will set a large number of short-term goals. When you go on a vacation, you have a destination in mind. However, you can't just get in the car and say "Let's go to Vegas" and start driving. Even if you think about your destination constantly, you won't make it there. You need to get out some maps and plan out how far you will travel each day. You decide which highways you will take, and how often you'll have to stop for fuel and food.

The short-term goals help encourage you. You look behind you, and see a series of goals you have reached. You feel like you're making forward progress, and it encourages you toward your ultimate goal. It gives you the feeling of momentum. Remember, momentum is important indeed when you run into an obstacle!

Tip 2 - Use It (or Lose It)

I've talked with many people about the topic of learning a second language. Many people reached a decent level of proficiency at Spanish or French in high school, only to become seriously "rusty" years later. My own Spanish teacher once recounted an anecdote about a boy to whom he had taught English. Years later, he saw the boy in a store and said "¡Jorge como est • " But the boy could no longer speak Spanish, *his own native language* because he hadn't used it. People always seem to give the same reason - "I never used it after high school". Now, if you're in the United States, there are really only 2 major languages widely spoken - English and Spanish. The other languages are tossed into the "other" category. Don't misunderstand me, I understand that many other languages are spoken. However, it is challenging to find places where other languages are spoken.

How do you practice Japanese in a country with very few native speakers? It turns out there are several places you can hear Japanese in action, and there are even ways to practice speaking it.

Where to listen to Japanese

- J-pop and Anime music
- Anime
- Movies/"Doramas" (dramas)
- CD dramas
- Video games

All of the above sources give you an idea of how Japanese is ACTUALLY spoken - and you'll notice they use the "plain" form 8 times out of 10.

How can I practice speaking Japanese?

I recommend convincing one (or more) siblings and/or friends to join you on your Japanese adventure. It will be of great benefit to both of you. See "JIP Part 1" for a list of reasons why learning Japanese is a good idea. Print it out and give it to them! If you have a younger sibling (under the age of 7) you'll have an easy time convincing them.

Don't be afraid to mess up. You need to practice, and you must use your skills often if you want to make them a part of you. That's why kids learn so quickly - they just dive in and don't worry about how hard it's supposed to be. They don't worry about what it sounds like to a native English speaker, or anything like that. They don't set limits on how much they can learn each day.

If all else fails, try chatting with Japanese people on the Internet. There are several places you can go:

Wbs.net

MSN chat rooms support Japanese text and there are hundreds of Japanese rooms

You might want to check out the Japanese newsgroups, which all begin with "japan" or "fj". There are hundreds of them. I'm sure you'll find several Japanese people to chat with. Many will want to practice their English with you! Often you will talk in Japanese to them, and they'll talk English to you. Other times, you both talk Japanese. It depends on the person! Japanese people are very forgiving when it comes to Americans speaking their language. In America, we make fun of people that can't speak English perfectly. However, Japanese people are not that rude. On the contrary, they consider English to be "exotic" and "cool". They all have taken it in high school, but few become proficient enough to speak it.

Tip 3 - Practice Speaking It

Try to practice throughout the day. I like to speak Japanese all the time, if only to myself. When I'm looking for my shoes, it's too boring to say "Where are my shoes?". I'll say it in Japanese instead, "kutsu wa doko ni aru?" It makes Japanese seem more like a familiar language. Even though I know the words in that sentence like the back of my hand, it still helps to be using "Japanese" that often. After several months, Japanese seems very "friendly", even though there are still words and sentences I don't understand.

Without going too deep into the topic of how kids learn, (a very fascinating topic that I could talk about all day) I will just say one thing. You want to TRY to be as childlike as possible when learning a language. Yes, your brain isn't as "absorbent" as it was at the age of 5, but look at the bright side! You would have a much harder time if you waited until age 60 to start! Try to

rekindle the love of learning that all kids have.

I started learning Japanese when I was 15. I was decent in Spanish back in high school, but I don't come from a bilingual family or anything. I've worked hard to learn Japanese for about 4 years, and I've almost reached my long-term goal of understanding Japanese. When I first started, I was totally on my own; I didn't know how to teach myself a language. I made a lot of mistakes. Sometimes I picked random words out of a dictionary to learn, etc. I probably wasted a lot of time.

I've concluded it's possible to become proficient at Japanese, even if you don't start when you're 3. However, you really need to "beat it" into your head. You have to use it OFTEN, even if only for a couple minutes. A day shouldn't pass where you don't study Japanese for at least 5 minutes. Some days you need to spend more than that.

Tip 4 - It's All in your Mind

The concepts of "hard" and "easy" are all in your mind. For example, just look at the home PC. Modern computers are pretty easy to learn how to use nowadays. However, many older people believe they're "hard". If they could somehow convince themselves that computers are no big deal, they could learn them with no problem. Sure enough, the older folks you see on PCs have overcome that mental block. I know people as young as 45 that are afraid of PCs! The interesting thing is, it's the same PC that 8 year olds use with ease. It has nothing to do with age though - it has to do with frame of mind. Little kids no reason to fear a PC. No one told them computers were "hard" before they first used one.

Some of you may have heard of a famous music teacher from Japan by the name of Suzuki. He has groups of 5 and 6 year olds playing Mozart and other "difficult" works on the violin. Here is how he does it: While giving the mother violin lessons, he places a small violin in the child's playpen. The child watches his mom play her violin, and as soon as he's able, he tries to play his as well. He develops an ear for music, and before long he's able to play music without using a sheet (playing by ear). The lessons only last about an hour, but over a period of years the child develops quite a skill in playing the violin. The idea is to teach a child something before they can learn the conventional "wisdom" that certain things are hard to do.

The -te form

Right now, I am going to teach you a very simple verb form called the -te form. It's sort of like the gerund in English (the -ing form), but it's very often quite different. The easiest way to form the -te form is to remove the final a from the past tense of a verb and replace it with an e. Eventually, you should get so used to forming the -te form that you can forget about the past tense as

an intermediary. Don't bother trying to use this verb form yet. I'm sure you won't get it right, but we'll start to introduce ways to use it in the next lesson.

Let's look at some examples of forming the -te form:

Dictionary form -> Past -> -te form

kau -> katta -> katte (to buy)

kaku -> kaita -> kaite (to write)

isogu -> isoida -> isoide (to hurry)

kasu -> kashita -> kashite (to lend)

utsu -> utta -> utte (to strike)

shinu -> shinda -> shinde (to die)

asobu -> asonda -> asonde (to play)

yomu -> yonda -> yonde (to read)

kiru -> kitta -> kitte (to cut)

taberu -> tabeta -> tabete (to eat)

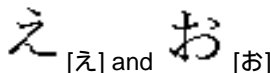
Irregular:

iku -> itta -> itte(to go) kuru -> kita -> kite

Notice that these irregular verbs are irregular with respect to the dictionary form, but changing them from the past to the -te form is completely regular.

Kana

Today, we'll finish up with the lone vowels and learn the last two, **e** and **o**. Remember, this is the last time that I will be providing .gif images of the kana, so get the Japanese viewing on your browsers straightened out. Here's e and o:

 [え] and [お]

For e, first draw the stroke at the top, going from left to right, then draw the next stroke, which looks almost like a seven. Finally, the curved third stroke goes from the right of the second stroke to the bottom right.

For o, start with the short horizontal stroke from left to right. Follow with the long vertical stroke that crosses through the first. Next draw the long curved stroke starting at the left, curving around and finishing at the bottom. In the diagram you can see a small diagonal line connecting the second and third strokes. You can write this and use it to combine the second and third strokes or leave it out and draw them separately, depending on your preference. Finish with the short curved stroke from left to right.

That's all folks. Be here next time for:

Particles
Commonly Heard Phrases
More Useful Words

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Japanese is Possible!
Week 11

Part 11

- Particle List
- The Conditional "-ba"
- A Note on Adjectives
- Useful Words
- Example Sentences
- Commonly Heard Phrases

Particle List

Here is a more or less complete list of particles used in Japanese. Needless to say, it's ok if you don't know how to use some of these. As you listen to Japanese, and read hundreds of sentences, you'll get a feel for how they are used.

I put some "Conjunctions" in this list as well, because they are almost as popular as actual "Particles".

- **wa** - Subject marker - means "this is the subject"
- **ga** - Subject marker - means "instead of something/someone else"
- **no** - Possessive - works like 's
- **na** - Use with a certain category of adjectives
- **o** - The preceding word answers WHAT or WHO (direct object)
- **e** - Towards, to
- **ka** - A spoken question mark.
- **ne** - Used at the end of sentences, kind of like "huh?" or "right?"
- **yo** - A spoken exclamation point
- **de** - Limits the sentence - means "Restricting ourselves to"
- **ni** - Used to tell "by who", and location (indirect objects)
- **mo** - "also"
- **to** - "and" - used for listing several items
- **ya** - Like the particle "to", but suggests an incomplete list.
- **da** - "is" (short for DESU, so it isn't a particle at all)

- **tte** - "...and that's what he said"
- **shi** - "and what's more", "not only", "but also"

- **kara** - from / because
- **made** - until
- **node** - because
- **demo** - but
- **kedo** - but
- **yori** - from
- **toka** - for example, things like
- **nado** - for example, things like

The Conditional "-eba"

This is a very powerful ending. Actually, all of the grammar (verb endings, etc) you learn will be well worth the effort! The grammar is used more frequently than any word, so it's very important that you learn it! It only makes sense.

-eba is used to say "if" something were to happen. You would use it in sentences like:

If you eat that, you will die!
If you look for him, you'll find him!
If you become human, it's good.

How to use the **-eba** ending

First, remove the last "u" from the verb.

Examples -

taberu - taber
nusumu - nusum
korosu - koros

Next, add **-eba** and you're done!

Now let's translate those 3 example sentences!
(about 15 lines up)

sore o tabereba, shinu yo.
aitsu o sagaseba, mitsukeru yo.
ningen ni nareba, ii no desu.

A Note on Adjectives

Just for quick review, an adjective modifies a noun (person, place, or thing). It gives a sentence more flavor.

Which sentence paints a more vivid picture?

- The crimson red car exploded into a searing ball of flame.
- The car exploded.

In Japanese there are 2 types of adjectives - "Normal" and "Quasi". Technically, there's no way to "know" what group an adjective is from just by looking at it. However, it isn't really hard to distinguish between the two after you become more accustomed to Japanese sentences.

Normal Adjectives

In Japanese, most adjectives end in **-i**. This makes it easy to recognize a word as an adjective. You can do some really cool things with these "normal" adjectives. For instance, by adding different endings to "shiroi", you can say something WAS white, WASN'T white, IS BECOMING white, etc.

Some Normal Adjectives:

kawaii - cute
kuroi - black

nagai - long
osoi - slow
samui - cold
shiroi - white
yasashii - gentle

To use these adjectives, you just plop down the adjective, then plop down a noun after it.

yasashii hito - gentle person
osoi kame - slow turtle
kuroi kame - black turtle
kawaii onna no ko - cute girl

Quasi Adjectives

This type of adjective MAY or MAY NOT end in **-i**. Some books name this group "Quasi Adjectives". Even if it happens to end in **-i**, You can't do the "cool things" that you can do with normal adjectives.

Some "Quasi" Adjectives:

benri - convenient
genki - energetic, healthy
kirai - disliked, hated
suki - liked

When using a Quasi adjective, you have to use the particle NA.

suki na hito - someone (you) like
kirai na yatsu - a person (you) dislike
benri na megami - a convenient goddess
genki na ko - a healthy child

After studying Japanese for a while, you'll find it's pretty easy to tell which "type" an adjective is. To give you an example, let's take the **-ku** ending. Without getting into too much detail, let's just say you add it to "normal" adjectives (after dropping the final 'i').

Note:

I'll teach this ending some time in the next month. I just want to use it here to illustrate a point.

You hear people say "shiroku", "kuroku", etc. all the time. However, when you hear "kireku" it doesn't sound right, because you never heard it before. You basically get a sense for whether it "sounds" right or not.

Useful Words

Nouns

kachi - (a) victory
onna no ko - girl
otoko no ko - boy
ko - child
tsumori - intention
kou - like this

kurai - about, around

nante - thing such as

Adjectives

kawaii - cute

yasashii - gentle

benri (na) - convenient

genki (na) - energetic, healthy

kirai (na) - disliked, hated

Verbs

michi ni mayou - to get lost (lit. "lose the road")

owaru - to end

Misc

sae - only

hodo - as much as

shikashi - however

Example Sentences

kore kurai ii desu yo

this (thereabouts) good is !

This much is good.

kore sae areba, ore no kachi desu.

this only (if exists), I 's win is.

If I only have this, it will be my win.

Or, to rephrase it, "Thanks to this, I'll be able to win".

omae wa genki na no da.

you (subject) energetic is.

You are very energetic.

omae wa shiroi da.

you (subject) white is.

You are white.

omae wa shiroi no da.

you are white.

nani o suru tsumori ka?

what (who or what) to do plan?

What do you plan to do?

hito o korosu nante, hidoi desu yo!

person (who) killing (thing such as) horrible is !

Killing a person - how horrible!

kou shite.

do it like this.

Commonly Heard Phrases

sore yori - "moving from that", "let's forget about that, and..."

kore de owari da - "With this, it's the end"

todome da! - "The final blow!"

machigai nai - make no mistake, "definitely"

...And that's all for this week!

Good luck with your studying -- hang in there! If you have any questions, please post them in the "Japanese Is POSSIBLE!" Forum. See you next week!

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Japanese is Possible!
Week 12

Part 12

- Types of Verbs
- Verb Endings
- Useful Words
- Example Sentences
- Anime Videos and Music

Types of Verbs

There are three groups of verbs in Japanese - Irregular, Ichidan, and Yodan. Ichidan and Yodan verbs (all but TWO verbs) use the same verb endings, and you conjugate them the same way. However, there is a subtle difference between the two groups.

Irregular Verbs

I bet I scared you by telling you there was a whole GROUP of irregular verbs! Actually, there are only two.

suru - to do (used with 100's of verbs)

kuru - to come

Ichidan Verbs

Verbs in this group end with **-eru** or **-iru**. Verbs from this group include:

deru - to go out

taberu - to eat

miru - to look, watch

ochiru - to fall

Yodan Verbs

This group contains every verb except for those that belong to the Irregular and Ichidan groups. Here you find your familiar **-RU**, **-TSU**, **-U**, **KU**, **-GU**, **-SU**, **-BU**, and **-MU** verbs.

au - to meet

fatsu - to stand

suwaru - to sit

hairu - to enter

There are some Yodan verbs that look a lot like Ichidan verbs. Be forewarned.

^_^ I would suggest copying this list down and putting it in a safe place. That way, when there's a verb that you aren't sure about, you can refer to this list! Some of these verbs don't belong in the "must learn" category, by the way.

I will now list them. Remember, these are **Yodan** verbs!

chiru - to fall, scatter
hairu - to enter
kiru - to cut
hashiru - to run
iru - to need
kaeru - to return
kagiru - to limit
keru - to kick
mairu - to come/go
nigiru - to grasp
shiru - to know

As you listen to Japanese more and become more familiar with it, you'll develop an ear for what "sounds" right.

Verb Endings

The basic verb endings (**-ITA**, **-SHITA**, **-TTA**, etc) have already been discussed. However, I thought I'd share with you the way I memorized them.

You simply memorize these 4 sentences - they are quite mesmerizing after a while! Then when you conjugate a verb, you just recite these sentences to yourself. It's a lot like the "ABC" song, because people often use that to remember the alphabet.

U TSU RU tta
MU NU BU nda
KU GU ita da
SU SHITA

By the way, have you noticed what all the verb endings have in common? "**A**" seems to mean past tense, and "**E**" is the here and now.

Useful Words

Nouns

mokuteki - intention, purpose
shitsumon - question
michi - road, path
kokoro - heart, spirit
isu - chair
soto - outside
uchuu - outer space
hate - end

Verbs

au - to meet
tatsu - to stand
suwaru - to sit

hairu - to enter
niau - to suit, look good on
deru - to go out
taberu - to eat
miru - to look, watch
ochiru - to fall
hajimaru - to begin

Misc

zutto - the whole time

Example Sentences

oneesan wa boku wo mite iru.
big sister (subject) I (who) looking
My big sister is watching me.

zutto matte ita no desu yo!
I've been waiting the whole time!

Note:
matte iru - is waiting

You can conjugate IRU like any other verb. **-TA** is the normal past ending for **-RU** verbs. Conjugating IRU in this way changes the meaning from "is waiting" to "was waiting". Isn't that going to come in handy!

kono isu ni suwatte ita.
this chair (location) was sitting
(He) was sitting in this chair.

soto e dereba ii desu.
outside (toward) if you go out, good is
It's ok to go outside.

ano mise ni haireba shinu zo.
that store (into) if you enter, die (rough ending)
If you enter that store, you'll die!

koko ni tatte kudasai.
here (location) stand please
Please stand here.

boku to au made, deru na.
I (with) meet until, go out (don't)
Don't leave until I can meet you.

Note:
deru na - don't go out
The "na" ending can be added to any verb to mean **don't** ____.
It's very abrupt, and only a male would ever use it.

Anime Videos and Music

The first episode of Hime-chan no Ribbon has been converted to RealPlayer format for you to download! Now you can hear Japanese in action, even if you

don't own any Anime.

[Part 1 \(6.9 MB\)](#)

[Part 2 \(6.7 MB\)](#)

[Part 3 \(6.8 MB\)](#)

If you want tons of other Anime videos like this, you can stop by:

[Anime in RealPlayer format](#)

If you want MP3's, here is an important link:

[ESP Japanese MP3s](#)

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Japanese is Possible!
Week 13

Part 13

- Negative Form - NAI
- Double Negatives
- Ja Nai
- Contractions
- Example Sentences
- Very Popular Words

Negative Form - NAI

The form of the verb listed in the "Useful words" section is referred to as the "dictionary form" of the verb. This form is indeed used in sentences, but more often than not you have to drop a couple letters at the end of the verb, and add any one of a large number of useful endings to the verb "stem". This is called conjugating a verb.

-nai is one of those endings.

When you want to say:

I don't kill people.

He doesn't eat.

She can't find the treasure.

You would use the negative verb ending, **-nai**. Before you can add the **-nai**, you have to get the right verb "stem" to add it to.

In the last lesson, you learned that there are 2 main categories of verbs -- **Ichidan** and **Yodan**.

Ichidan Verbs

Verbs in the Ichidan category (which end with **-eru** or **-iru**) are conjugated this way:

Take the "dictionary" form of the verb:

taberu

Take off the **-ru**:

tabe

Now, add **-nai** to complete the conjugation:

tabenai

You can use it in a sentence now:

aitsu wa nanimo tabenai desu.
he (subject) nothing **doesn't eat**

ore wa daremo tabenai ze.
I don't eat anybody!

Yodan Verbs

Remember that most verbs are in this category. Yodan verbs are conjugated this way:

Take the "dictionary" form of the verb:

korosu

Take off the -u, and replace it with an 'a'.

korosa

Now, add **-nai** to complete the conjugation:

korosanaï

You can use it in a sentence now:

daremo korosanaï yo!
no one don't kill
I won't kill anyone!

mamono wo korosanaï no?
monster (what) don't kill?
You **won't kill** the monster? (said by a girl)

Double Negatives

In Japanese, double negatives are ok (just like in Spanish). Not only they are OK, but you're *expected* to use them.

Incorrect:

aitsu wa nanika tabenai desu.
he (subject) something doesn't eat

That wouldn't make any sense to a Japanese speaker. In English, the negatives seem to cancel each other out.

He didn't not go to the store.
You think to yourself, "If he didn't NOT go, then he must have GONE to the store, right?"

However, in Japanese and Spanish, the double negatives reinforce each other.

JA NAI - The opposite of DESU

When you want to say something ISN'T, you use *ja nai*.

Actually, it would be used in sentences such as:

Shouldn't you go with?

Wouldn't it be a good idea to forget about him?

Don't I look just like her?

Doesn't it look good on me?

niau ja nai?

to suit isn't it?

Doesn't it suit (look good on) me?

omae wa tsuyoi ja nai ze

you (subject) strong isn't (male ending)

You **are NOT** strong.

kisama wa ore no kashira ja nai yo!

You (subject) I ('s) leader isn't !

You **are not** my leader!

Contractions

Just like in English, there are cases where you can cut out a vowel to make a word easier to say. Of course, doing so makes the word less formal, but in casual speech you hear people doing it all the time. In this respect, Japanese has something in common with English.

NDA, NDESU

NDA - NO DA

NDESU - NO DESU

You'll often hear someone use one of the above contractions. The four words above (nda, no da, ndesu, no desu) have about the same meaning. Both **nda** and **ndesu** are contractions - words with a letter intentionally left out so you can more quickly say the word. We have several in English: *Can't*, *Don't*, and so on.

What does **no da** mean? It's about the same thing as **da** or **desu**, really. Sometimes you can translate it '**it is that**'. Chichiri from Fushigi Yuugi uses **no da** at the end of all of his sentences (they did that to make Chichiri even more unique). However, you can ignore the **no** and just treat it as a regular **da**.

Why say the **no** at all? It softens the sentence a bit. "How can a sentence be soft?", you ask? Well, it makes it more gentle. That's why girls often end sentences with **no**.

kore wa neko no da

This **is** a cat.

omae wa baka no da.

You **are** silly.

JAN

Pronounced JAHN, it is short for *ja nai* which means 'is not'. You use *ja nai* at the end of a sentence, just like *desu*.

It's used all the time in Japanese, and often it's used with the conditional, **-eba**.

aitsu o koroseba ii jan.

him (who) (if you were to kill) good isn't?

Wouldn't it be good if you killed him?

Or, "Why **don't** you kill him?"

hayaku shitara ii jan.

quickly if you did it good isn't?

If you did it quickly, wouldn't it be good?

Example Sentences

ittai doko e iku tsumori?

in the world where (toward) to go intention?

Where in the world do you plan on going?

doushitemo hitsuyou na no desu.

no matter what necessary is.

It is necessary no matter what.

dareka wo nagete ita ndesu.

someone (answers who) was throwing.

(He) was throwing someone.

shinji wa nanika wo tabete ita nda.

Shinji (subject) something (what) was eating.

Shinji was eating something.

Very Popular Words

nanika - something

nanimo - nothing

dareka - someone

daremo - no one

ittai - (what, where) in the world

doushite mo - absolutely

sokkuri - exactly like

nageru - to throw

tobu - to fly

tonde iku - to go flying

jishin - self-confidence

yappari - sure enough, after all

hen - strange

okama - gay person

hikari - light

kurayami - darkness

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Japanese is Possible!
Week 14

Part 14

- How to Keep it Interesting
- Negative Adjectives
- Example Sentences
- Very Popular Words

How to Keep it Interesting

When you're studying or practicing something, it's always a good idea to inject some variety. If you do the same exact thing every day, you'll no doubt become bored in a short time. When learning Japanese, there are many things you can do to increase your ability:

- Learn vocabulary
- Learn grammar
- Practice making sentences
- Listen to Japanese music
- Read Japanese manga

You can also watch subtitled Anime, and try to pull out words and phrases that you understand. The trick is to make sure you don't try to do the same thing several days in a row. After a while, everything gets old. If you cycle through several different activities however, *none* of them will get old.

For instance, if you only listened to 1 song for a week, you'd quickly grow tired of it. If you had 3 songs, it would take considerably longer. The more songs you have, the longer each song "lasts". Eventually, you reach a point where they never really get old, because you have so many to listen to.

My advice:

Some days, focus on learning vocabulary. On other days, worry about grammar. When possible, try to spend time finding good Japanese MP3s (or CDs) on the net and listen to them. Sometimes when you're not in the mood to study, just watch an Anime. It all helps, and adds up very slowly (but surely) to mastery of Japanese.

If you're into Video Games, try looking up phrases you hear in the import games you own. Many fighting games have a "victory phrase" which is usually a commonly heard phrase.

Remember, Japanese is something you have to slowly beat into your head. It will take a few years, but it CAN happen if you want it to.

Negative Adjectives

A couple lessons ago, we discussed the two different types of Adjectives. To refresh your memory, they were called "normal" and "Quasi". It was mentioned that the "normal" adjectives could have various endings tacked on to them, doing some amazing things.

One of those powerful endings is **-ku nai**.

All you have to do is remove the **-i** from the adjective, and add **-ku nai**.

Examples:

yoi - good
yoku nai - not good

akai - red
akaku nai - not red

See what the **-ku nai** ending does for an adjective? It gives the adjective exactly the opposite meaning it normally has.

This is a very important ending to know, as you might have guessed. Think about how many times you need to say that something ISN'T necessary, ISN'T hot, etc.

Refer to the section below, "Example Sentences", for use of this ending.

Example Sentences

kanojo wa amari tsuyoku nai.
she (subject) too much strong not.
She isn't too strong.

bakemono wa zenzen kowaku nai yo!
monster (subject) completely scary not !
The monster isn't scary at all!

kore wa zenzen chigau!
this (subject) completely different!
This is completely different!

boku wa zenzen tsuyoku nai kedo.
I (subject) completely strong not but.
But I'm not strong at all.

ore wa juubun ja nai wake?
I (subject) enough not (it is that)?
Is it that I'm not enough?

taisetsu na mono o nakushita wake?
precious thing (what) lost it is that?
Did you lose something precious?

Very Popular Words

Misc

juubun - enough
wake - it is that
sorekara - and then
amari - too much
zenzen - completely

Nouns

netsu - fever
bouken - adventure
kenshi - swordsman
madoushi - wizard

Adjectives

taisetsu (na) - precious
kuwashii - knowledgable
bukimi (na) - eerie
kowai - scary

Verbs

nakusu - to lose
kirameku - to sparkle, glisten

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Japanese is Possible!
Week 15

Part 15

- The *Let's* Form
- What are you *Let's Do ing*?
- Example Sentences
- Very Popular Words

The *Let's* Form

I would rather give a form an easy to remember name instead of a textbook one. In this case, I'm calling this form the *Let's* form, because it would be used in sentences like:

Let's go.

Let's do it!

Let's eat.

Let's go back now.

The ending for this form is **-ou**. All the verbs will end with those two letters. (Sometimes you will see it spelled **-oo**, but it's the same thing when you write it in the Japanese alphabet)

We will now demonstrate how to add the *Let's* ending to all three types of verbs.

Irregular Verbs

We'll start with the two irregular verbs:

kuru - *koyou* (let's come)

suru - *shiyou* (let's do)

These are irregular, and have no pattern. Luckily, there are only 2 of them in Japanese! You'll just have to memorize these two. Luckily, they're both used a lot -- it shouldn't take you long.

Ichidan Verbs

Then we'll move to the second most popular category, the Ichidan verbs. These are the verbs that end in **-eru** or **-iru**. Remember, there are some Yodan verbs that try to masquerade as Ichidan verbs. Since they end in **-eru** or **-iru**, you can be fooled. A list of these verbs was given in Lesson 12.

Example:

miru - (to see)

First, remove the **-ru** from the dictionary form of the verb.

mi

Now, add **-you** to finish the job. (that was quick!)

miyou (let's see)

Yodan Verbs

The rest of the verbs fit in this category.

Example:

asobu - (to play)

Remove the **-u** from the dictionary form of the verb.

asob

Now, add **-ou** and you're done!

asobou - (let's play)

How to use the "Let's" Form

Here are some example sentences that use the new ending:

kore o tabeyou!

this (what) let's eat!

Let's eat this!

mou yameyou!

already let's quit!

Let's stop it already!

uchi ni kaette, benkyou shiyou yo!

home (location) return (and), study let's do !

Let's go home and study!

mamono o korosou!

monster (who) let's kill!

Let's kill the monster!

umi ni oyogou!

ocean (location) let's swim!

Let's swim in the ocean!

There isn't a lot to it. However, you can do more interesting things with this form. For instance, if you combine it with the particle *to*, you can make some very neat sentences.

What are you *Let's Do* ing?

This is actually one of my favorite bits of grammar. In other words, shown below is my favorite kind of sentence in Japanese. Everyone's different, so you may find a DIFFERENT bit of grammar more fun. ^_^

dare o korosou to shite iru?

who (answers 'who') let's kill and you're doing?

Who are you trying to kill?

I like to translate it, "who are you let's killing?"

I get a kick out of translating it that way, I don't know why! It is a valid translation, although it isn't proper English.

Another popular sentence is:

nani o shiyou to shite iru?

what (answers 'what') let's do and you're doing?

What are you "let's do" ing?

Although we don't say "what are you let's eating", that IS an example of a normal Japanese sentence. When you're making your own sentences, remember that you can't just take an English sentence and replace the English words with Japanese words.

Example Sentences

mou osoi kara, kaerou yo!

already late because, let's return !

It's late already, so let's return!

chotto nihongo ga dekiru yo!

little bit japanese (subject) can do !

I can speak a little Japanese.

ryo-ohki wa ninjin o tabeyou to shite iru.

ryo-ohki (subject) carrots (what) let's eat and is doing.

Ryo-ohki wants to eat the carrots.

ranma wa akane to kekkon shiyou to shite ita.

ranma (subject) akane (with) let's marry (and) was doing.

Ranma had a mind to marry Akane.

ryu wa ken o nageyoo to shite ita.

ryu (subject) ken (who) let's throw and he was doing.

Ryu wanted to throw Ken.

Very Popular Words

Misc

ippai - full of

mou - already

takusan - many

massugu - straight (ahead)

Nouns

ninjin - carrot
soba - nearby area
kazoku - family
hana - nose
kuchi - mouth
naka - center, inside

Adjectives

nigai - bitter
migi (no) - right
hidari (no) - left

Verbs

nageru - to throw
kekkon suru - to marry

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Japanese is Possible!
Week 16

Part 16

- Sentences are Important
- Example Sentences
- Words to Learn

Sentences are Important

A lot of you have been waiting for this one! You've learned quite a few words, and quite a few articles of grammar. Now you're wondering how to use them in your own sentences.

When learning Japanese (or any language), it is very important to read 100's of example sentences. This is so that you can get a feel for exactly how the words and bits of grammar are put together. You then get a feel for how to make your own sentences. Believe it or not, it IS possible for an English speaker to get a "feel" for whether or not a Japanese sentence sounds right. Just like English speakers have an "ear" for good English, you will also acquire an "ear" for Japanese. It will take a while, but it will happen for sure if you keep moving toward that goal.

When you begin learning all the grammar, there are always a ton of questions in the back (or front) of your mind:

"Would I use this word for this sentence?"

"What if I want to say..."

"...does that sound right?"

You won't be able to answer those questions yourself until you become familiar with Japanese. A lot of this type of knowledge can be acquired by reading tons of actual Japanese sentences. Seeing the various words and grammar pieces used together gives you an idea of how they are used. Many sentences have a lot in common, which you come to realize.

Examples

X wa Y desu.

X is Y.

X wa Y ni iru.

X is in the Y.

X no Y ni wa Z ga aru.

There is a Z in X's Y.

If you replace the X's and Y's with actual nouns (or even names), the sentences

will become MUCH more interesting, and easy to remember:

ore wa baka desu.

I'm an idiot.

ore wa honou ni iru.

I'm in the fire.

boku no boushi ni wa mikan ga aru.

Inside my hat, there is an orange.

Do you notice a similarity between these sentences?

boku no tomodachi wa hashitte iru.

omae no niisan wa nagutte iru.

kanojo no kareshi wa unten shite iru.

They all have a 'NO' at the beginning, and they all have a verb in its -ing form. This is what I mean by sentences being similar. Even though the sentences have totally different topics, the structure of the sentence is identical. Some of you may remember "diagramming" sentences in English class. That's basically what I'm referring to here.

Incidentally, the 3 sentences above translate to:

My friend is running.

Your big brother is hitting.

Her boyfriend is driving.

Example Sentences

kore wa ichiban daiji na mono da.

this (subject) number one important thing is.

This is the most important thing.

If 2 fighters met in a ring, and one of them pulled out a rubber duck and squeezed it...the other fighter might say:

nan no mane da?

what 's imitation is?

What lunacy is this?

or

What are you trying to do?

ittai nani o shiteiru ndesu ka?

in the world what (answers what) are doing ?

What in the world are you doing?

koko made ka?

here up to ?

Is this the end?

kanojo wa boku no airashii ryoko chan desu.

she (subject) I ('s) lovely ryoko (term of affection) is.

She's my lovely little Ryoko.

Darou is the *let's* form of DESU. It is used where something isn't set in stone. If

someone is guessing something to be true, or something is probably true, use this.

mamono o korosu to katsu darou.

monster (who, what) kill and win probably.

If the monster is killed, you'd probably win.

boku no kachi da!

I (s) win is!

It's my win!

juu o tsukaeba ii nda.

gun (what) if use good is.

You can use the gun if you want.

omae no saigo da!

you (s) end is!

It's the end of you!

In the next sentence, remember that "shika" is pronounced "SHKA".

tako shika tabenai yo!

octopus besides don't eat !

You can only eat octopus!

sore wa atarimae da.

that (subject) natural is

That's only to be expected.

Words to Learn

juu - gun

atarimae - natural, to be expected

shika - besides

ittai - "What in the world"

airashii - lovely

mane - imitation, farce

katsu - to win

saigo - end, last

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Japanese is Possible!
Week 17

Part 17

- Example Sentences
- New Words
- Words by Category

Example Sentences

ano imomushi wa chou ni naritai.
that caterpillar (subject) butterfly (into) wants to become
That caterpillar wants to become a butterfly.

tori wa doukutsu ni haitta.
bird (subject) cave (into) entered.
The bird entered the cave.

ushi wa ika o tabeta.
cow (subject) squid (who or what) ate.
The cow ate the squid.

john wa ushi o tabeyou to shite ita.
john (subject) cow (who or what) let's eat and was doing.
John wanted to eat the cow.

ano shiroku nai tori wa akai ni natta.
that white not bird (subject) red (into) became.
That non-white bird became red.

okaasan wa niwatori o tabetai yo!
mother (subject) chicken (who or what) wants to eat !
Mom wants to eat the (live) chicken!

doushite ikite iru niwatori o tabetai no ka?
how come living chicken (what) want to eat ?
How come you want to eat a living chicken?

aya chan wa uma ni notta.
aya chan (subject) horse (onto) got on.
Aya chan got on a horse.

mamono wa kaeru ni henshin shite yokatta.
monster (subject) frog (into) transformed thank goodness.
Thank goodness the monster transformed into a frog.

sassato henshin shite!
hurry up and transform

Hurry up and transform!

taisetsu na nezumi o koroshita to wa zannen desu ne.

precious rat (who or what) killed and (subject) shame is right?

Isn't it a shame that I killed my precious rat?

tsuki ni wa usagi ga aru tte shite iru?

moon on (subject) rabbit (subject) exists (end quote) are knowing?

Did you know that there is a rabbit on the moon?

okaasan wa "hayaku dete!" tte

mother (subject) "quickly leave!" said.

Mother said "hurry up and leave!"

aitsu wa "ryoko ga suki" tte.

that guy (subject) "ryoko (subject) like" said.

That guy said "I like Ryoko".

totsuzen ringo o tabete kieta.

all the sudden apple (who or what) eat (and) disappeared.

All the sudden, he ate the apple, and disappeared.

mushi ni henshin shite ringo o tabeta.

insect (into) transformed (and) apple (what) ate.

He turned into an insect, and ate the apple.

ushi o notte machi ni itta.

cow (what) got on, town (to) went.

He got on the cow, and went to the town.

New Words

ikiru - to live

yokatta - thank goodness

henshin suru - to transform

zannen - shame

tte - "...so he said", used to quote a person

totsuzen - all the sudden

Words by Category

I strongly recommend learning all of the words that you have seen in the "Popular Words" section of JJP. If there are some that you haven't learned, I suggest that you visit the archives, and add the "Popular Words" to your word list. These words are used in just about every Anime and video game.

However, below you will find "categories" of words that are not HALF as important. You can learn some of them if you want, but it's not critical that you do. I suggest that you learn the words that you might need. I DON'T suggest learning all of these words instead of more useful words.

It is sometimes convenient to have word lists by category. If you were going to the Zoo, you might want to print out the list below, so you can talk about what you find there. This is merely provided as a convenience, not a suggestion as to what words you should learn next.

Animals

doubutsu - animal
tori - bird
niwatori - chicken
uma - horse
buta - pig
ushi - cow
hitsuji - sheep
inu - dog
neko - cat
nezumi - mouse, rat
hari nezumi - hedgehog (needle rat)
shishi - lion
tora - tiger
hebi - snake
kaeru - frog
ahiru - duck
kuma - bear
risu - squirrel
usagi - rabbit
tokage - lizard
zou - elephant
taka - hawk
washi - eagle
shika - deer
yagi - goat
dachou - ostrich
rakuda - camel
karasu - crow, raven
itachi - skunk
gachou - goose
hakuchou - swan
kitsune - fox
saru - monkey
mujina - badger
wani - alligator

Aquatic Animals

kame - turtle
iruka - dolphin
kingyou - goldfish
sakana - fish
same - shark
azarashi - seal
tako - octopus
kujira - whale
kurage - jellyfish
unagi - eel
hamaguri - clam
ika - squid
kani - crab
seiuchi - walrus

Insects

mushi - insect
hachi - bee
ka - mosquito

mimizu - earthworm
inomushi - caterpillar
chou - butterfly
kumo - spider
gokiburi - cockroach
hae - fly
ari - ant
inago - grasshopper
sasori - scorpion
namekuji - slug
hiru - leech

Note: A group of ANY animal is a *mure* (pronounced **mo** **RAY**). In English, we have a school of fish, a herd of cattle, a flock of geese, a murder of crows, etc. In Japanese, it's *much easier!*

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Japanese is Possible!
Week 18

Part 18

- Adjectives - Past Tense
- Example Sentences
- Words by Category

Adjectives - Past Tense

In Japanese, you simply add an ending to an adjective to make it apply to the past. In English, on the other hand, we say something *was white*.

If you wanted to say "**The cat was white**", you could say:

neko wa shiroi datta.

and you could get your point across. However, there is a better way to do it. It also happens to be the form that Japanese speakers would use.

-katta : The Past Tense Ending

Several weeks ago, we learned how to take (normal) adjectives and add the **-ku** ending:

shiroi - shiroku

osoi - osoku

Remember, this only applies to normal adjectives (that end in **-i**) and not Quasi adjectives. For a review on adjectives, please take a look at [Week 11](#).

Example:

neko wa shirokatta.

cat (subject) was white

The cat was white.

How to use the **-katta** ending:

1) Take the adjective

osoi

2) Remove the final **-i**

OSO

3) Add -katta, and you're done!

osokatta

There's another place you can use this ending! Any time you have **-nai**, you can change it to **-nakatta** to make it past tense.

shiroku nai - shiroku nakatta

isn't white - wasn't white

hayaku nai - hayaku nakatta

isn't fast - wasn't fast

dekinai - dekinakatta

can't do - couldn't do

Example Sentences

kimi wa osokatta zo!

you (subject) were slow !

You're late!

keiko no kao wa shirokatta.

Keiko ('s) face (subject) was white.

Keiko's face was white.

hayakatta yo!

(it) was fast !

That was quick!

neko wa kurokatta kara, nanimo dekinakatta.

cat (subject) was black because, nothing couldn't do.

Because it was a black cat, I couldn't do anything.

ano tokage no hara wa akakatta.

that lizard ('s) stomach (subject) was red.

That lizard had a red stomach.

Words by Category

I strongly recommend learning all of the words that you have seen in the "Popular Words" section of JIP. If there are some that you haven't learned, I suggest that you visit the archives, and add the "Popular Words" to your word list. These words are used in just about every Anime and video game.

However, below you will find "categories" of words that are not HALF as important. You can learn some of them if you want, but it's not critical that you do. I suggest that you learn the words that you might need. I DON'T suggest learning all of these words instead of more useful words.

It is sometimes convenient to have word lists by category. This is merely provided as a convenience, not a suggestion as to what words you should learn next.

Parts of the Body

Above the Neck

hana - nose
me - eye
medama - eyeball
kuchi - mouth
mimi - ear
kuchibiru - lips
kubi - neck
atama - head
ke - hair
hidai - forehead
hou - cheek
kao - face
ha - tooth

In the Middle

hiji - elbow
ude - arm
te - hand
tekubi - wrist (kubi = neck)
yubi - finger
oyayubi - thumb (oya = parent)
naizou - internal organs
shinzou - heart
mune - chest
hara - stomach
kinniku - muscle
hone - bone

Below the Waist

ashi - leg, foot
momo - thigh
sune - shin
hiza - knee
ashikubi - ankle
kotsuban - pelvis
ketsu - butt
ashi no yubi - toe
daichou - large intestine

Colors

kuroi - black
kasshoku - brown
akai - red
enshoku - orange
kiiro - yellow
midori - green
aoi - blue
murasaki - purple
haiiro - grey
shiroi - white
momoiro - pink
makka - deep red

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Japanese is Possible!
Week 19

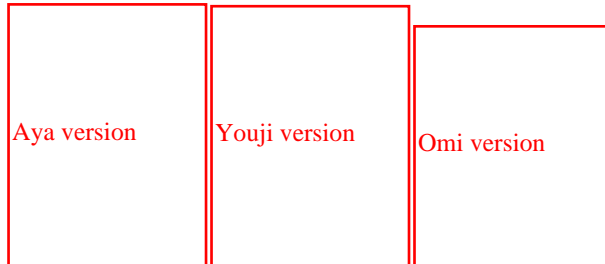
Lyrics - *Epitaph*

This week we'll take a field trip to see Japanese in action. I will walk you through an actual Japanese song, giving you a rough translation of what each sentence means. I won't translate it into perfect English, since that wouldn't help you understand the Japanese.

What song will we be using? We'll start with a song from the popular Anime series "Weiss Kreuz". The song is called 'Epitaph', and there are 3 different versions of the song. They aren't simple remixes like you might think! They all have the exact same music. For each song, a different character from Weiss Kreuz sings the lyrics.

To download full episodes of Weiss Kreuz, visit Maktos.com. They are found in the Media section.

Click on each picture to download that character's version of *Epitaph*:
(Full Song, MP3, CD-Quality)



aozameta yoake no naka de
furusogou kanashii yuushi
hito wa minna
akumu ni yotte
gensou mo yogen mo nai
shizuka ni nemutta
anata no kizuato
inori no kotoba de iyasou
sekihi ni kizanda
kotoba wo nando mo
kurikaesu uta ga
hoshi ni nari
asa hi ni kiete yuku

unmei no tobira wo mamori
kanashimi no tane o katte mo
konran ni jidai wa michite
dare hitori hokorenai yo
futatabi deatte
waraiaeru hi wo

torimodoseru sa to tsubuyaku
keredomo naze darou
namida ga afurete
tomerarenai mama
hoshi ni nari
sorezore wakare yuku

Epitaph Words

Most of these words are used in Anime, so you should learn most of them. I'll admit that not ALL of them are popular, but it should be easy to learn them if you learn the song.

aozameru - to become pale
yoake - dawn
furisosogu - to downpour
kanashii - sad
yuushi - grieving
akumu - nightmare
you - to get drunk
gensou - illusion
yogen - prediction
shizuka - quiet
nemuru - to sleep
kizuato - scar
inori - prayer
iyasu - to heal
hoshi - star
kotoba - word
kizamu - to carve into
sekihi - epitaph
nando mo - many times, often
kurikaesu - to repeat
uta - song
naru - to become
asa - morning
hi - day, light
kieru - to disappear
yuku - to go
unmei - destiny
tobira - door
mamoru - to protect
kanashimi - sadness
tane - seed
karu - to mow
konran - confusion
jidai - era
michiru - to be filled
hokoru - to be proud of
deau - to meet
futatabi - again
warau - to smile, laugh
aeru - to meet
torimodosu - to take back
tsubuyaku - to mutter, murmur
keredomo - however
naze - why
namida - tears
afureru - to flow
tomeru - to stop
mama - as (as it is)

sorezore - each one
wakaru - to part

Lyrics Walkthrough

aozameta yoake no naka de
paled dawn 's inside (restricting ourselves to)

furisosogu kanashii yuushi
downpours sad grief

hito wa minna
people (subject) all

akumu ni yotte
intoxicated by nightmares

gensou mo yogen mo nai
illusions (also) predictions (also) not there

shizuka ni nemutta
quietly slept

anata no kizuato
you 's scar

inori no kotoba de iyasou
prayer (of) word (by means of) let's heal

sekihi ni kizanda
epitaph (into) inscribed

kotoba wo nando mo
words (who or what) often

kurikaesu uta ga
repeats song (subject)

hoshi ni nari
star (into) becoming

asa hi ni kiete yuku
morning light (in, into) disappear-goes

unmei no tobira wo mamori
destiny 's door (who, what) protecting

kanashimi no tane o katte mo
sadness's seed (what) even if you mow

konran ni jidai wa michite
confusion (with) this era (subject) is filled

dare hitori hokorenai yo
a single person is not proud of (it)!

futatabi deatte

again meets

waraiaeru hi wo

smile-meet day (answers who, what)

torimodoseru sa to tsubuyaku

force to take back (emphasis) (and) murmurs

keredomo naze darou

however why I wonder

namida ga afurete

tears (subject) flow

tomerarenai mama

won't be stopped as it is

hoshi ni nari

star (into) becoming

sorezore wakare yuku

each one part-goes

What you see above is the "first stage" of translation. If you only see the final translation, you won't learn as much about what the song really means. You have to learn to understand Japanese at this level. They don't use our grammar, so why translate every sentence into proper English? If you get the meaning of what they're saying, that's all that matters.

You won't understand how I arrived at some of the lines in the translation. That is ok, because there are some endings that you don't know yet. Don't worry, they will all be covered in the coming weeks.

Feel free to clean up the English lyrics however you wish. You'll see what it's like to be a translator. They have to decide what words to use. They have to maintain a balance between making it sound good in English, and staying faithful to the original meaning.

Here are some examples of how the following line could be translated:

aozameta yoake no naka de

paled dawn 's inside (restricting ourselves to)

Inside the pale dawn,
Only in the pale dawn,
Within the pale dawn,
Within the faded dawn,
Inside, dawn has faded,

You can get as creative (and/or inaccurate) as you want. Some translations really take liberties (and end up with a different meaning than the original). An example of this would be translations by Viz Video. (Especially the Ranma songs)

Understanding Japanese and being able to translate Japanese into English are two completely different skills. If you doubt it, remember that most native Japanese speakers understand Japanese perfectly, but couldn't translate Japanese into another language.

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Japanese is Possible!
Week 20

Part 20

- Romanization
 - The Particle E
 - The Particle SHI
 - -ku naru (to become something)
 - Example Sentences
 - Useful Words
-

Romanization

Romanization is turning Japanese characters into our alphabet, so an average American can read them. Our alphabet is called the *Roman* alphabet. In Japan, they call our alphabet *Roumaji*.

Without romanization, you'd have to use the Japanese alphabet(s) to write everything in Japanese.

For various reasons, there are at least 2 styles of *Romanizing* Japanese.

Here are some examples of how the same couple of letters could be written in several different ways:

ji = zi
e = he
o = wo
shi = si
ou = oo
ou = ô (o with a line over it)

So *Jishin* (self confidence) could technically be written:

zisin

Personally, I don't like that romanization, because it doesn't look like it sounds. However, some books use that romanization exclusively. I find it rather annoying.

Often times, a line will be drawn over a vowel to show that there are actually 2 of that vowel. I prefer to actually write 2 of the vowel. My reasoning is as follows: If you're romanizing something, it should look pretty normal to an average reader. Notice that we don't use the "bar over a letter" symbol at all in English! I think a romanization should be pretty easy to read.

yasashi

yasashii

The above 2 words are the same, but the second one suggests how to pronounce it. The first one looks like something out of a pronunciation dictionary.

That's also why I prefer **ou** to **oo**. If you have a double 'o' in English, you want it to rhyme with *crude*. However, it's supposed to be pronounced **oooh**. I think spelling it **ou** helps you to pronounce it the right way.

The Particle E

This particle basically means, "to" or "toward".

Examples

mise e itta.
store (to) went.
(he, she) went to the store.

sairaag e iku ka?
sairaag (toward) go ?
Are you going to Sairaag?

Notice that it is usually used with some form of **iku** (to go), or a similar verb.

The Particle SHI

This particle is used to connect several mini-sentences. It's not all that different from the English word **AND**. The best way to explain it is to demonstrate its use!

Examples

koko wa kowai shi,
here (subject) scary (and)

bakemono ga iru shi, ikou ze!
monsters (in particular) are here (and) let's go!

It's scary here, and there are monsters, so let's go!

kimi wa kawaii shi
you (subject) cute (and),

ai shite iru shi
[I'm] loving you (and)

kekkon sureba ii to omou yo!
if [I] were to marry [you] good (and) think !

You're cute, and I'm in love with you, so I'm thinking marriage would be a good idea!

-ku naru (to become something)

Remember the -ku form?

You can use the **-ku** form of a *normal* adjective with the verb **naru** (to become), and make some very nice sentences. This form is used a lot. If you watch just about any Anime, you'll hear it at least once.

Examples

shiroi - white

shiroku natta - became white

osoi - slow

osoku natta - became slow

hayai - fast

hayaku natte iru - is becoming fast

nai - not there (opposite of aru, to exist)

naku natta - became nothing

Example Sentences

Akane wa Dracula o taoshita kedo,

Akane (subject) Dracula (who or what) killed but,

inochi ga naku natta n'da.

life (subject) not there became (is).

Akane defeated Dracula, but at the price of her own life.

ranma o taoshita ato de, genma to tatakatte ita.

ranma (who) defeated after, genma (with) was fighting.

After he defeated Ranma, he was fighting with Genma.

tabako mou naku natta nda!

cigarettes already nothing became !

We're already out of cigarettes!

kono rousoku o naku naru made,

this candle (what) nothing becomes until,

koko de matte kudasai!

here (location) wait please!

Please wait here until this candle completely burns up.

doushite konna tokoro ni kuru nante?

why this kinda place (to) come (a thing such as)

Why did you come to a place like this?

ame ga futte iru shi,

rain (subject) is falling (and)

okaasan ga okotte iru shi,

mother (subject) is being angry (and)

nanimo dekinai n dakara.
nothing can't do (*filler*) therefore.

It's raining, and mom's mad, so I can't do anything.

Useful Words

inochi - life
nakusu - to lose
rousoku - candle
tabako - cigarettes
ame - rain

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Japanese is Possible!
Week 21

Part 21

- **Bakari**
 - **Ato**
 - **Example Sentences**
 - **Useful Words**
-

Bakari

Bakari, like a lot of other Japanese grammar, is best described by using it in a sentence. If you wanted to say "I just finished drinking" you would use **bakari**. You simply add **bakari** to the end of any simple sentence that says "what you did". The verb will be in the **-ta** form (past tense) in every case.

Some sentences that would be eligible for bakari:

ima biiru o nonda.

Now I drank beer.

gakkou kara kaetta

(you) returned from school

Examples:

ima biiru o nonda bakari desu.

now beer (what) drank (just did) is.

Just now I drank beer.

gakkou kara kaetta bakari ja nai no?

school from returned (just did) didn't?

Didn't you just return from school?

ranma o koroshita bakari da to omou

ranma (who) killed (just did) and thinks

I think (he) just killed Ranma.

Ato

If you ever want to say **after**, you will probably need to use this word. **Ato** is very similar to the English word **after**. **Ato**, like **bakari**, is used with the **-ta** form. You can add it to just about any "past

tense" sentence.

Example 1:

Akunin o koroshita
Scoundrel (who) killed.
Killed the scoundrel

Next, we'll enhance the sentence:

Akunin o koroshita ato, hayaku nigeta.
Scoundrel (who) killed **after**, quickly escaped.
After (he) killed the scoundrel, he quickly escaped.

Example 2:

hikaru o taoshita
Hikaru (who) defeated.
Hikaru was defeated.

hikaru o taoshita ato, waratte ita.
Hikaru (who) defeated **after**, was laughing
He was laughing after (he) defeated Hikaru.

Example Sentences

uwasa touri, aitsu wa hontou ni tsuyoi n da!
rumor (as), he (subject) really strong is!
He is as strong as the rumor said he was!

jitsu wa, mukashi na hanashi desu.
truth (subject) long ago story is.
Actually, it's an old story.

hottoite kudasai!
leave alone please!
Please leave me alone!

mane sureba dame da yo!
imitate if you do (no good) is !
You shouldn't imitate (something)!

ano yama ni sunde iru yatsu wa osoroshii desu!
that mountain (in) living guy (subject) dreadful is!
The guy that lives in that mountain is dreadful!

mamono wa osoroshiku nai kara, zenzen kowaku nai yo!
monster (subject) not dreadful because, (completely) scary not !
That monster isn't so dreadful, so I'm not scared at all!

naze konna tokoro ni kakurete iru?
why this kind of place (in) are hiding?
Why are you hiding in a place like this?

demo, kanojo no koto mane shitai desu!
but, her 's (situation) imitate I want to do !
But I want to imitate her!

boku no ie wa dondon ookiku natte iru!
I ('s) house (subject) steadily big is becoming!
My house is steadily becoming bigger!

Useful Words

Verbs

sumu - to live

kakureru - to conceal oneself

hottoku - to leave someone alone

dekakeru - to go out

mane suru - to imitate

kangaeru - to think

Adjectives

mukashi (na) - long ago

osoroshii - dreadful

Nouns

hanashi - talk, story

uwasa - rumor

omoide - memory

henji - answer

Misc

fouri - as

dondon - steadily

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Japanese is Possible!
Week 1

Part 22

- **-Chatta**
- **Kagiri**
- **Example Sentences**
- **Useful Words**

-Chatta

This is probably one of the most popular endings you'll encounter. It means "irrevocably", "can't be undone", "went and did without thinking". It's a relatively cute ending. Most of the time a person using this ending would have to be pretty cute, usually a girl. Guys can use this ending, but it doesn't happen as often. You probably wouldn't see Kenshin using it!

You have to do something to the verb before you can just add this ending. It varies, depending on what group the verb is in. For instance, with **-U -TSU -RU** verbs, you remove the ending from the verb (**-u, -tsu, -ru**) and add **-chatta**.

taberu (to eat) - **tabechatta**
omou (to think) - **omochatta**
katsu (to win) - **kachatta**

With **-SU** verbs, you change the **-SU** to **SHI** first.

korosu (to kill) - **koroshichatta**
iyasu (to heal) - **iyashichatta**
osu (to push) - **oshichatta**

With **-MU -NU -BU** verbs, you conjugate it into its **-NDE** form, and remove the last **-DE**. Also, you use **-jatta** instead of **-chatta**.

shinu (to die) - **shinjatta**
korobu (to fall) - **koronjatta**
ochikomu (to be depressed) - **ochikonjatta**

okaasan no ringo datta no ni, mo tabechatta!
mother ('s) apple was even though, already ate it (and it can't be un-ate)
Even though it was mother's apple, I went and ate it!

taisetsu na tomodachi wa shinjatta node, kanashinde iru.
important friend (subject) died because, am being sad.
Because an important friend is dead, (I'm) sad.

Kagiri

This word basically means "to the extent that", or "as far as". As always, we'll use it in a sentence so you can see exactly what function it performs!

boku ga shitte iru kagiri, aitsu wa shinda yo!

I (subject) am knowing as far as, he (subject) died !

As far as I know, he died!

dekiru kagiri, yatte miyou!

to be able (as far as), do let's try!

As far as we're able, let's try to do it!

Example Sentences

miru koto mo dekinai yo!

to see (situation) also can't !

I can't see (anything) either!

ranma wo taoshita koto aru no ka?

ranma (who) defeated situation exists?

Have you ever beaten Ranma before?

kaoru wa kenshin wo kekkon shiyou to shite ita.

kaoru (subject) kenshin (who) let's marry and was doing.

Kaoru had a mind to marry Kenshin.

hikaru wa mokona wo dakishimeyou to shite iru.

hikaru (subject) mokona (who) let's hug and is doing.

Hikaru wants to give Mokona a hug.

aya wa imouto no aya chan wo mamoritai n da!

aya (subject) little sister of aya chan (who) want to protect is!

Aya wants to protect his little sister Aya!

ken tachi wa taketori wo doushitemo koroshitai n desu!

ken (lots of) (subject) taketori (who) no matter what want to kill is!

Ken (and the others) want to kill Taketori no matter what else!

Useful Words

Verbs

yaru - to do

miru - to try (also **to see, watch**)

dakishimeru - to embrace

yattsukeru - to defeat

kanashimu - to be sad

Adjectives

kimyou (na) - strange

taisetsu (na) - important

Misc

doushitemo - no matter what

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Japanese is Possible!
Week 23

Part 23

- **-Rareru : the Passive Form**
- **Example Sentences**
- **Useful Words**

-Rareru : the Passive Form

Did you ever want to say something like "The monster was eaten by Ranma."? Of course I doubt you ever wanted to say a strange sentence like that! Besides being strange, the sentence is also in the *passive form*.

Grammar Review: Passive vs. Active

What does *passive* mean when you're talking about sentences? I'll give you a couple of very clear examples!

Examples:

Active - The man hit the apple.

Passive - The apple was hit by the man.

Active - Jack killed the snake.

Passive - The snake was killed by Jack.

As you can see by the examples, you are making the sentence sound more "formal" or "intellectual". Experts say that the brain has to go through an extra step to process a *passive* sentence. Your brain converts it to an *active* sentence first! So basically, you want to avoid those kind of sentences when writing. You don't need to use them, really.

What if there was a monster approaching in the distance, and you didn't want to be eaten by the aforementioned monster? You could express your desire to continue living in two different ways:

1. I don't want the monster to eat me!
2. I don't want to be eaten by the monster!

You might be able to guess which one is *passive* -- It's the second one.

In Japanese, the first sentence would look like this:

ano bakemono ga boku wo taberu nante iya da!

that monster (subject) me (who) eat (a thing such as) disliked is!

I would like for that monster to eat me!

I will tell you this-- a Japanese person would never say it this way. They would use sentence #2.

The second sentence (in the *passive* tense) would look like this:

*ano bakemono ni tabe**rare**taku nai yo!*

that monster (by) don't want to be eaten !

I don't want to be eaten by that monster!

Remember that *tabetaku nai* means "doesn't want to eat". If you throw the **rare** in there, it changes the meaning to "doesn't want to be eaten". This form is very important to learn (which of them aren't important?). I can promise you that any Anime you watch will use this form several times!

How exactly do you use *-Rareru*?

I will give an example for each of the different verb endings. (Except for *-TSU*, which is one of the rarest endings for verbs.)

ubau (to steal) - uba**wareru** (to be stolen)

miru (to look) - mi**rareru** (to be seen)

korosu (to kill) - koro**sareru**

hakken suru (to discover) - hakken **sareru** - (to be discovered)

kakomu - (to surround) - kako**mareru** (to be surrounded)

erabu - (to choose) - era**bareru** (to be chosen)

mitsukeru - (to find) - mitsuke**rareru** (to be found)

Basically, you remove the **-u** from the dictionary form of the verb, and add **-areru**. Just remember that you add a **W** in the case of **-u** verbs. An easy way to remember it: You can't have *ubaareru*! To make it easy to pronounce, they throw in a **W**.

Pay special attention to the verb **hakken suru**. There are tons of **suru** verbs (where the second part of the verb is **suru**). If you ever want to make up your own verbs, you'll need to know how to conjugate a **suru** verb.

What am I talking about? I'll give you an example:

matt suru - to "matt" someone.

matt sareru - to have "matt" done to you, to be "matt"-ed.

sonna ni matt saretaku nai!

that kind of matt don't want done to me

I don't want to be "matt"-ed that much!

This "matt" character is no doubt famous for doing something or other! It would be like saying "He's pulling a Matt" in English.

Example Sentences

kare wa erabareta senshi desu.

he (subject) chosen warrior is.

He is the chosen warrior.

doushite minna ni mushi sarete iru no ka?

why everyone by ignore (is being done to me) ?
Why am I being ignored by everyone?

kuruma ga ubawareta node, unten dekinai yo!
car (subject) was stolen because, drive can't do !
Because my car was stolen, I can't drive!

shikashi, Fei no imouto ga mitsukerarenakatta.
however, Fei's little sister (subject) wasn't found.
However, Fei's little sister could not be found.

korosareta otouto no tame ni, kanarazu omae o korosu!
was killed little brother for the sake of, absolutely you (answers 'who') kill!
For the sake of my little brother you killed, I will destroy you!

dareka ni miraretara, dou shiyou? hazukashii wa!
someone (by) if was seen, what let's do? embarrassed (female ending)!
What would I do if someone saw me? How embarrassing!

norowareta shima LODOSS to iu n da.
was cursed island Lodoss called is.
The cursed island was called Lodoss.

ima made no shima wa zenbu norowareta n da.
up till now 's island(s) (subject) all were cursed.
Up till now, all the islands have been cursed.

Useful Words

Nouns

shima - island
bouzu - monk
sanpatsu - haircut
koukou - high school
kyoushi - teacher

Verbs

norou - to curse
mamoru - to protect
hakken suru - to discover
kakomu - to surround
ubau - to steal
ai suru - to love
kanchigai suru - to misunderstand

Adjectives

omote (no)- front
ura (no) - behind, rear
ue (no) - above
shita (no) - below

Misc

mizukara - on purpose
saisho kara - from the beginning
ima made - up till now

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Japanese is Possible!
Week 24

Part 24

- **-TTARA : another Conditional form**
- **Example Sentences**
- **Useful Words**

-Ttara : another Conditional form

A while ago, we learned the **-EBA** conditional form.

Here is a short review of the -EBA form:

-eba is used to say "if" something were to happen. You would use it in sentences like:

If you eat that, you will die!
If you look for him, you'll find him!
If you become human, it's good.

How to use the **-eba** ending

First, remove the last "u" from the verb.
Examples -

taberu - taber
nusumu - nusum
korosu - koros

Next, add **-eba** and you're done!

Now let's translate those 3 example sentences!
(about 15 lines up)

sore o tabereba, shinu yo.
aitsu o sagaseba, mitsukeru yo.
ningen ni nareba, ii no desu.

-TTARA: another Conditional ending

Like the **-EBA** form, this form is called *conditional* because it says "if a certain condition occurs". Don't ever let fancy grammar terms scare you off...you can call the form whatever you want. It could be called the "if" ending. This ending is often used with verbs, but it can be used with some kinds of adjectives as well.

What kind of adjectives? The ones that end in **-i** that you can change to a **-ku**. To review different kinds of adjectives, see [Lesson 11](#) and [Lesson 14](#).

Here are some examples of how **-TTARA** is used in a sentence.

hayaku ittara ii n deshou. (iu = to say)

fast if you say good probably is.

(I think) You should say it quickly.

shinitaku nakattara, kaereba ii ja nai ka?

want to die if not, if you return good isn't it?

If you don't want to die, why don't you go back?

I'll explain that last sentence a bit. *shinitai* is the "want to" form of *shinu*, "to die". *shinitaku nai* is simply the **-ku nai** form. If you recall from our previous study of adjectives, adding **-ku nai** reverses the meaning.

shinitai = "(I) want to die"

shinitaku nai = "(I) don't want to die"

How to use -TTARA

Here comes the fun part -- telling you how you can use it in your own sentences! It's not all that difficult, which you can say about most Japanese grammar!

Step 1 - Find a Verb or Adjective

Any verb in the **-tai** or **-taku nai** form will do. For adjectives, you can only use "normal" adjectives that end in **-i**.

Examples of **-TTARA** capable verbs and adjectives:

tabetai

tabetaku nai

shiroi

osoi

Step 2 - Remove the last **-i**, and add **-KA**

tabetaka

tabetaku naka

shiroka

osoka

Step 3 - Add **-TTARA**

tabetakattara

tabetaku nakattara

shirokattara

osokattara

And you're done! Here are the meanings of the phrases that you just built:

tabetakattara = "if you want to eat"

tabetaku nakattara = "if you don't want to eat"

shirokattara = "if it is white"

osokattara = "if it is slow"

Here are a few exceptions, that are used ALL the time!

X suru = X shitara (if X is done)
X ga kuru = X ga kitara (if X comes)
X ga aru = X ga attara (if X is there)
X desu = X dattara (if it is X)
X ni naru = X ni nattara (if it becomes X)

Example Sentences

Since you need to see **-TTARA** in action, this week's Example Sentences will feature **-TTARA**.

aitsu ga kitara, minna ga taberareru n desu!
he (subject) if comes, everyone (subject) be eaten !
If he shows up, we'll all be eaten!

omae no saigo dattara, ore mo shinu tokoro da.
you 's end if it is, I also death point is.
If it is the end of you, then I will die too.

mou sukoshi benkyou shitara, anta no kachi deshou.
more little if you were to study, you 's win probably is
If you studied a little more, you'd probably win.

mamono wo koroshitara, machi wa heiwa ni naru n deshou.
monster (who, what) if you were to kill, city (subject) peace (into) become probably.
If you were to kill the monster, the city would probably become peaceful.

okane ga attara, kanarazu kau zo!
money (subject) if there is, without fail buy (male ending)!
If I have the money, I'll definitely buy it!

boku wa onna ni nattara, saitei desu!
I (subject) woman (into) if became, the worst is!
If I became a woman, it would be the pits!

pikachu wa ningen ni nattara, omoshiroi da to omou yo!
pikachu (subject) human into if became, interesting is (and) think !
I think it would be interesting if Pikachu became a human.

pikachu ga kattara, ureshii desu!
pikachu (subject) if wins, happy is!
If Pikachu wins, I'll be happy!

Schuldich wa omi wo karakattara, Persia ga okoru n deshou!
Schuldich (subject) Omi (answers who or what) if teases, Persia (subject) mad probably!
If Schuldich teases Omi, Persia will probably be mad!

Ash wa jigglypuff ni nattara, taihen da to omowanai?
Ash (subject) Jigglypuff into if became, awful is (and) don't think?
Don't you think it would be awful if Ash became a Jigglypuff?

Useful Words

Nouns

heiwa - peace
saitei - the worst, the pits

Verbs

karakau - to tease

kau - to win

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Japanese is Possible!
Week 25

Part 25

- **-ZU : without doing (intro)**
 - **Example Sentences**
 - **Useful Words**
 - **Japanese Resource Links**
-

-ZU: without doing (intro)

If you wanted to say "He didn't eat, but went right to the store." you wouldn't be able to right now. You need one more grammar item to be able to say it properly. As you can tell by the heading, that grammar item is **-ZU**. It roughly means "without doing".

Very frequently, you will conjugate **suru** (to do) into this form. As **suru** is one of two irregular verbs, you will need to be told what **suru** turns into. (Being irregular, it doesn't follow the normal pattern)

suru (to do) becomes **sezu** (without doing)

benkyou sezu ni, sugu dekaketa.

study without doing, right away went out.

(He) went out right away, without studying.

nanimo tabezu, mise e itchatta.

nothing without eating, store (toward) up and went.

Without eating anything, he went off to the store.

You'll notice that sometimes the particle **ni** is added after the verb in **-zu** form. It doesn't change the meaning, but it's nice to know why it's there. In the first sentence, it's telling *in what way* he "went out right away". That's why the particle **ni** is used.

Here are some examples:

taberu - **tabezu**

korosu - **korosazu**

sorasu - **sorasazu**

This form isn't among the most popular, but it's nice to know it. That's why we're only touching on it right now. If you hear someone say a word that ends in **-zu**, you'll at least know it's a verb form. You then remove the **-zu** and see if you can recognize the verb stem. Usually that isn't too difficult, if you know enough verbs.

Example Sentences

pikachu wo korosezu, uchi ni kaetta.

pikachu (answers who) without killing, home (to) returned.

Without killing Pikachu, he returned home.

poppo wo koroshita ato de, waratta.

poppo (answers who) killed after, (he) smiled.

He smiled after he killed the Poppo.

katapii wo mitsukeru mae ni, mise ni ikeba ii to omou.

katapii (answers who) find before, store (to) if you go is good, I think.

I think you should go to the store before you find the Katapii.

brock wo taosezu, zen pokemon ga taorechatta.

brock (answers who) without defeating, all pokemon (subject) went and fell over.

Unable to defeat Brock, all the pokemon fainted.

sefirosu wa sando no inochi wo ubatte, shiro ni kaetta.

sefirosu (subject) sando 's life (what) took, castle (to) returned.

Sephiroth robbed the Sando of his life, and returned to his castle.

satoshi-kun wa pikachu ga dai suki.

satoshi kun (subject) pikachu (not someone else) much likes.

Satoshi kun (Ash in the USA) likes Pikachu very much.

koratta wo eranda toki kara, taihen na meiwaku desu.

koratta (who) chose time since, horrible annoyance is.

Ever since he chose the Koratta, it's been nothing but trouble.

shoubu no tsuzuki desu ka?

challenge 's continuation is it?

A continuation of our challenge?

51 keikenchi wo moratta

51 experience points (what) received.

Received 51 experience points.

Useful Words

Nouns

meiwaku - pain in the butt, burden

tsuzuki - continuance

toki - time, occasion

shoubu - challenge

keikenchi - experience points

saisho - beginning

kougeki - attack

Verbs

tsuzuku - to continue

morau - to receive

sorasu - to turn away, avert (your eyes)

Japanese Resource Links

I found some great websites that students of Japanese might want to use to further their studies. Don't forget about Maktos' "Japanese is Possible!" column, because there's a LOT more great information on the way! Besides, many more great links will be given out in the future ^_^ Remember too, that not all online Japanese courses help the **Otaku** to learn Japanese. **JIP**'s mission is to help Anime and Video Game fans to learn the language, to get more enjoyment and satisfaction out of their hobby. Any information helps though, which is why these links are being provided!

[Nafai's Japanese Language Course](#) - Another site helping people to learn Japanese.

[Japanese Dialects](#) - I wouldn't worry about dialects YET. The only one I would mess with is Kansai-ben.

[Edict Japanese Dictionary](#) - Edict is an electronic Japanese dictionary (used in NJWP, and other software)

[Learning Japanese](#) - A guy's personal page, with various Japanese language-related info.

[Bible in Japanese](#) - Several books of the New Testament, in Japanese! Great practice!

[JDrill Homepage](#) - A Java-based program to help you learn Kanji

[OSU Japanese Dept](#) - A college's online Japanese tutorial!

[Learn Japanese Free!](#) - Another JIP-like online Learn Japanese column.

[Japanese Online's Links page](#) - All kinds of Anime and Japanese language resources.

[Japanese Online](#) - A very professional site, dedicated to teaching Japanese language and culture.

[Japanese Tutor.com](#) - Another site that might be useful to a Japanese student.

[Resources for Teachers/Students](#) - The title says it all!

[HUGE list of Japan links](#) - This site has hundreds of links.

[Kanji a Day](#) - Each business day, 2 new Kanji are added!

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