



Japanese

PHRASEBOOK & DICTIONARY

Look out for the following icons throughout the book:



'Shortcut' Phrase

Easy to remember alternative to the full phrase



Q&A Pair

Question-and-answer pair – we suggest a response to the question asked



Look For

Phrases you may see on signs, menus etc



Listen For

Phrases you may hear from officials, locals etc

LANGUAGE TIP

Language Tip

An insight into the foreign language

CULTURE TIP

Culture Tip

An insight into the local culture

How to read the phrases:

- Coloured words and phrases throughout the book are phonetic guides to help you pronounce the foreign language.
- Lists of phrases with tinted background are options you can choose to complete the phrase above them.

These abbreviations will help you choose the right words and phrases in this book:

a adjective
inf informal
lit literal

n noun
pl plural
pol polite

sg singular
v verb

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Learn about Japanese, build your own sentences and pronounce words correctly.

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Travel Phrases

Ready-made phrases for every situation – buy a ticket, book a hotel and much more.



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Quick reference vocabulary guide – 3500 words to help you communicate.

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INTRO

Japanese

日本語 ni·hon·go

Who speaks Japanese?

Standard Language

TOKYO
DIALECT
WHOLE
COUNTRY

Regional Dialects

WESTERN
SHIKOKU; HONSHŪ WEST
OF THE JAPAN ALPS

EASTERN
HOKKAIDŌ; HONSHŪ EAST
OF THE JAPAN ALPS

RYŪKYŪAN DIALECTS
RYŪKYŪ ISLANDS

KYŪSHŪ DIALECTS
KYŪSHŪ

Why Bother

Japanese people are often too shy or worried about making mistakes to speak to visitors using what English they may know. Even the smallest effort to speak to locals in Japanese will be very warmly received.

Distinctive Sounds

Note the reduced, almost silent **u** (especially when it appears at the end of a word); and the **r**, which is pronounced halfway between an 'l' and an 'r'. Japanese has fewer sounds than most other major languages.

126 MILLION

speak Japanese as their first language

1 MILLION

speak Japanese as their second language

Japanese Script

Written Japanese is a combination of three different scripts. Kanji are ideographs (symbols that represent a concept as well as pronunciation), borrowed from Chinese. Hiragana and katakana are both indigenous, syllabic scripts (each character represents a syllable).

Japanese Lexicon

Japanese has many onomatopoeic expressions (describing something by its sound). For example, pouring rain can be described with *zā zā* ざあざあ, and a rumbling stomach might go *go-ro go-ro* ごろごろ.

Borrowings from English

Japanese has borrowed many words from English,

often shortening and adapting them, eg *pa·so·kon* パソコン for 'personal computer' and *kom·bi·ni* コンビニ for 'convenience store'.

Language Family

It bears some resemblance to Altaic languages such as Mongolian and Turkish, and shows strong grammatical similarities to Korean, but linguists have not been able to prove the origins of Japanese.

Must-Know Grammar

Japanese has various levels of formality, shown with particular words or verb forms. The standard polite ending *·mas* ます (given in this book) is the safe middle ground and will be suitable for most situations you'll encounter.

Donations to English

There are several – you may recognise *futon*, *karaoke*, *tsunami*, *bento box* and *manga*, to name a few.

5 Phrases to Learn Before You Go

- 1** > **Is there a Western-/Japanese-style room?**
洋室/和室はありますか?
yō-shi-tsu/wa-shi-tsu wa a-ri-mas ka

Some lodgings have only Japanese-style rooms, or a mix of Western and Japanese – ask if you have a preference.

- 2** > **Please bring a (spoon/knife/fork).**
(スプーン/ナイフ/フォーク)をください。
(spūn/nai-fu/fō-ku) o ku-da-sai

If you haven't quite mastered the art of eating with chopsticks, don't be afraid to ask for cutlery at a restaurant.

- 3** > **How do I get to ...?**
…へはどう行けばいいですか?
... e wa dō i-ke-ba ī des ka

Finding a place from its address can be difficult in Japan. Addresses usually give an area (not a street) and numbers aren't always consecutive. Practise asking for directions.

- 4** > **I'd like a nonsmoking seat, please.**
禁煙席をお願いします。
kin-en-se-ki o o-ne-gai shi-mas

There are smoking seats in many restaurants and on bullet trains so be sure to specify if you want to be smoke-free.

- 5** > **What's the local speciality?**
地元料理は何がありますか?
ji-mo-to-ryō-ri wa na-ni ga a-ri-mas ka

Throughout Japan most areas have a speciality dish and locals usually love to talk food.

10 Phrases to Sound Like a Local

Great! すごい! su·goy

Sure. もちろん。 mo·chi·ron

Hey! ちょっと、ちょっと! chot·to chot·to

Just a minute. ちょっと待って。 chot·to mat·te

It's OK. いいよ。 i·yo

No problem. 大丈夫。 dai·jō·bu

Good luck. 頑張っ。 gam·bat·te

No kidding? マジ? ma·ji

Really? ほんと? hon·to

Fat chance! ありえない! a·ri·e·nai



ABOUT JAPANESE

Pronunciation

Japanese pronunciation is not considered difficult for English speakers. Unlike some other Asian languages, it has no tones and most of its sounds are also found in English.

Vowel Sounds

Vowels in Japanese can be either short or long. The long ones should be held twice as long as the short ones and are represented in our pronunciation guides with a horizontal line on top of them.

~ SYMBOL ~	~ ENGLISH ~	~ JAPANESE EXAMPLE ~
a	run	na·ka
ā	father	sak·k ^ā
e	red	sa·ke
ē	reign	p ^ē ·ji
i	bit	ni·ji
ī	bee	shī·tsu
o	pot	mot·to
ō	paw	pas·p ^ō ·to
u	put	mu·ra
ū	moon	kū·ki

It's important to make the distinction between short and long vowels as vowel length can change the meaning of a word, as in these examples:

Understanding

KEY PHRASES

Do you speak English?

英語が
話せますか?

ē-go ga
ha-na-se-mas ka

I don't understand.

わかりません。

wa-ka-ri-ma-sen

What does ... mean?

…はどういう意味
ですか?

...wa dō yū i-mi
des ka

1a Q Do you speak (English)?

英語が話せますか?
(ē-go) ga ha-na-se-mas ka

A I speak (English).

(英語)が話せます。
(ē-go) ga ha-na-se-mas

A I don't speak (Japanese).

(日本語)が話せません。
(ni-hon-go) ga ha-na-se-ma-sen

Does anyone speak English?

どなたか英語が
話せますか?
do-na-ta ka ē-go ga
ha-na-se-mas ka

1b Q Do you understand?

わかりますか?
wa-ka-ri-mas ka

1c A (Yes,) I understand.

(はい、)わかります。
(hai) wa-ka-ri-mas

1d I don't understand.

わかりません。
wa-ka-ri-ma-sen

A No, I don't understand.

いいえ、わかりません。
T-e wa-ka-ri-ma-sen

10b today	今日	kyō
10c tonight	今夜	kon-ya

Past

(three days) ago	(3日)前	(mik·ka) ma·e
day before yesterday	おととい	o-to·toy
11a last month	先月	sen·ge·tsu
11b last night	ゆうべ	yū·be
11c last week	先週	sen·shū
11d last year	去年	kyo·nen
since (May)	(5月)から	(go·ga·tsu) ka·ra
12a yesterday	きのう	ki·nō
12b yesterday afternoon	きのうの午後	ki·nō no go·go
12c yesterday evening	きのうの晩	ki·nō no ban
12d yesterday morning	きのうの朝	ki·nō no a·sa

Future

day after tomorrow	あさって	a·sat·te
in (six days)	(6日)後	(mu·i·ka) go
next ...	来...	rai...
13a next month	来月	rai·ge·tsu
13b next week	来週	rai·shū
13c next year	来年	rai·nen
14a tomorrow	明日	a·shi·ta
14b tomorrow afternoon	明日の午後	a·shi·ta no go·go
14c tomorrow evening	明日の晩	a·shi·ta no ban
14d tomorrow morning	明日の朝	a·shi·ta no a·sa
until (June)	(6月)まで	(ro·ku·ga·tsu) ma·de