

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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Menu Decoder

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Two-Way Dictionary

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
LanguageTOKYO
DIALECT
WHOLE
COUNTRYRegional
DialectsWESTERN
SHIKOKU; HONSHŪ WEST
OF THE JAPAN ALPSEASTERN
HOKKAIDŌ; HONSHŪ EAST
OF THE JAPAN ALPSRYŪKYŪAN DIALECTS
RYŪKYŪ ISLANDSKYŪSHŪ 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.

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

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

Q Do you understand?

わかりましたか?
wa-ka-ri-mash-ta ka

A Yes, I do understand.

はい、わかりました。
hai wa-ka-ri-mash-ta

A No, I don't understand.

いいえ、わかりません。
ī-e wa-ka-ri-ma-sen

I understand.

わかりました。
wa-ka-ri-mash-ta

I don't understand.

わかりません。
wa-ka-ri-ma-sen

I speak a little.

少し話せます。
su·ko·shi ha·na·se·mas

How do you pronounce this?

これはどう発音
しますか。
ko·re wa dō ha·tsu·on
shi·mas ka

How do you write 'shiatsu'?

「指圧」はどう書きますか?
shi·a·tsu wa dō ka·ki·mas ka

What does 'deguchi' mean?

「出口」はどういう意味ですか?
de·gu·chi wa dō yū i·mi des ka

Could you please write it down?

書いてくれませんか?
kai·te ku·re·ma·sen ka

Could you please repeat that?

繰り返してくれませんか?
ku·ri·ka·e·shi·te ku·re·ma·sen ka

Could you please speak more slowly?

もっとゆっくり話して
くれませんか?
mot·to yuk·ku·ri ha·na·shi·te
ku·re·ma·sen ka



**Slowly,
please!**

ゆっくり話して!

yuk·ku·ri
ha·na·shi·te

I'd like to learn some of your local dialects.

方言を習いたいのですが。
hō·gen o na·rai·tai no des ga

Would you like to learn some English?

英語を習いたいですか?
ē·go o na·rai·tai des ka