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JAPANESE

LEVEL

2



.....
: *Travelers should always check with their* :
: *nation's State Department for current* :
: *advisories on local conditions before* :
: *traveling abroad.* :
.....

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Notes on Japanese Culture and Communication

The objective of Pimsleur's *Japanese 2* is to introduce you to the language and culture of another country primarily through your ears, and only secondarily through your eyes. This approach is based upon the fact that more than 95 percent of our lives is spent in listening and talking — and less than five percent in reading and writing. The most effective and productive way to begin acquiring these necessary communication skills is by actually working with the “language in use,” as demonstrated by native speakers of the language being learned.

Efficiency is greatly increased when what you learn first is the most-frequently-used structures and vocabulary, so that you practice with the basic communication tools you require every day. This carefully-selected “core-language” keeps you focused entirely on the vocabulary and structures you need for daily communication. This is self-motivating because you begin to speak immediately and successfully.

As you learn the language, you are absorbing the culture. Language and culture are so closely intertwined that learning them separately can make you literally “culturally-deprived” and unable to produce appropriate and meaningful language. For this reason you must carefully notice the different (read “cultural”) ways the Japanese “act” in the various situations you will experience as you proceed through the lessons of this course. Being sensitive to “who is doing what to whom, and why” is some-thing you have learned to



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do almost unconsciously in your native tongue — you will have this same sense of “awareness” as you gain proficiency in your new language.

This implicit instruction will come from the audio sessions, as you learn to identify the intonation and melody of the speakers. We provide this Booklet to provide additional explicit instruction to further confirm what you have learned.

Acquiring the culture, “the map of the territory,” is like acquiring the terminology of a subject: it enables you to operate as a fellow member in that society. Your success in working with native speakers of Japanese will depend upon how sensitive you become to the accumulated heritage that is Japan.



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Lesson 1: Dialects in Japan

In Unit One, you heard *Ito san* asking about a trip to Osaka, one of the largest cities in Japan. Osaka is near Kyoto, the ancient capital. The culture of Osaka and Kyoto, generally known as the Kansai region, is distinctly different from that of the Kanto region, which includes the present capital of Tokyo and many surrounding areas such as Yokohama.

As is the case with any language, Japanese has many dialects. The main dialects are Hokkaido, Tohoku, Kanto, Kansai, and Kyushu. Though they are classified as dialects, they are more like various accents. Fortunately, standard Japanese is understood across the country. As you travel in Japan, you will hear Japanese people speaking with various accents that differ from the standard Japanese taught in this course. As long as you try to sound like the speakers on the audio, you will be perfectly understood wherever you go in Japan. Once you learn standard Japanese, you can then start to enjoy the variations as you travel in Japan and associate the various accents with the cultural characteristics in the respective regions.

Lesson 2: Introductions

When introduced to someone, a proper way to identify yourself would be to say, for example, *jameson to mooshimasu*. This means “I am called Jameson.” It translates as, “I say myself Jameson,” expressed in a humble fashion. This expression



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is appropriately modest and shows your sensitivity toward whatever difference in social status there may be between you and the person you're speaking with. The Japanese are very concerned with hierarchical relationships, and *mooshimasu* is a safe way to identify yourself when meeting someone whose position you don't know. You identify yourself humbly, elevating the status of the other person.

In social situations Americans almost always automatically introduce strangers to one another. However, many Japanese are not accustomed to doing so, and you may sometimes need to take the initiative and introduce yourself. Do not feel offended if you are not introduced, since your Japanese host is probably unaware of the Western custom of introduction.

The Japanese, on the other hand, will customarily exchange business cards when they meet someone for the first time. When you receive a card, it's considered polite to study the card long enough to understand and appreciate all the information on it, such as the person's name, title, and company she or he is working for. You can use some of this information as initial topics in your conversation. If you intend to conduct business in Japan, it will be very important to always carry your own business cards with you.



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Lesson 3: *honne* and *tatemae*

The Japanese are known to be sensitive to others' feelings, as well as concerned about maintaining their own face in their interpersonal interactions. They utilize a wide variety of communication tactics in order to carefully preserve their relationships with others. One of the most-commonly-used strategies, though difficult for foreign speakers to distinguish, is the deliberate distinction made between *tatemae*, or “overt opinions,” and *honne*, “true feelings.” Japanese people's reluctance to reject an offer by simply saying “No,” or their complimenting someone's positive attributes without touching on the more apparent negative side, are examples of *tatemae*.

It is sometimes difficult even for native Japanese to judge whether the speaker is disclosing his or her *honne*, when he or she says to you, *nihongo ga jozu desu ne*, “Your Japanese is very skilled.” The speaker may be trying not to hurt your feelings by offering you the compliment. Depending upon the situation and the relationship with the speaker, you will need to choose whether to say *arigato*, or *demo mada jozu ja arimasen*, “But I'm not skilled yet.”

Lesson 4: The Wide Variety of Tea

In this unit you heard *ocha wa doo desu ka?* meaning, “How about some tea?” While *ocha* literally means “tea,” which is normally green tea in Japan, this expression is used for a variety of drinks, such as coffee, brown tea, Japanese green tea, Chinese tea, and even many kinds of soft drinks.



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By asking *ocha wa doo desu ka?* the person is not so much suggesting that you have tea, but that you take a break and have something to drink to relax.

When visiting someone's house or office, you are usually offered a cup of tea before you ask for it. You may find that it is too bitter for you, but it's considered impolite to add cream or sugar. It's also in poor taste to ask for a different beverage, as this implies criticism of the host or hostess' chosen offering. If your host or hostess notices you are not drinking and asks if you would prefer another kind of drink, you may ask, for instance, *kohi wa arimasu ka?* meaning, "Do you have any coffee?"

You will find American franchised coffee shops in most large cities, so you can enjoy virtually the same kind of coffees you are accustomed to drinking. Though coffee used to be very expensive in Japan, the price has come down considerably, thanks to the large franchised shops. You will find the coffee comparable in taste and price to that in the U.S.



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Lesson 5: *uchi* vs. *soto*

You learned, *uchi*, “house,” in this unit. The word refers not only to a house as a physical building, but also and more often to a social and symbolic unit that surrounds the speaker, such as his or her family, community, or company. You will often hear a business person, for example, speak of *uchi no kuruma*. He is not referring to a personal car, but instead to a car owned, operated, or even sold as merchandise by his company.

Japan is a society that places more value on collectivity, in comparison to the U.S. which highly values individualism. People in Japan are more concerned about what group you belong to rather than what you as an individual are like. The Japanese make a clearer distinction between those who belong to the same group as they do and those who don't. Once you are accepted as an *uchi no hito*, an “in-group member,” you will feel comfortably involved with and protected by the group. If you remain as *soto no hito*, or “an outsider,” then you will inevitably feel more distance from the group. The language used among the in-group members reflects more intimacy and less formality than the language used with out-group members.



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Lesson 6: Bus Transportation in Japan

In this unit the American visitor took a bus to Shinjuku. Buses are a very common means of public transportation in Japan. There are both local buses and long distance express buses that connect large cities such as Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka, and Fukuoka. When using Japanese buses, you will need to know the routes that a local bus system serves, the fares, and also whether to pay when you get on or when you get off. On Tokyo metropolitan buses, for instance, there is generally one flat rate and you pay when you get on. In addition, you are sometimes required to have the exact change. Just ask a person waiting at the bus stop, *oikura desu ka?* “How much is it?”

Prepaid Cards

You can avoid the difficulty of always having to carry the exact change when you get on a bus or a train, or when you make a telephone call, by using “prepaid cards” which are widely available in Japan. These are a kind of credit card, with a limited amount of credit equal to the price paid to purchase the card. Most prepaid cards are designed for one type of transaction and are available at many stores and vending machines.

A train card, for example, is a plastic card with a magnetic strip that can be inserted in a slot at the train station. You will find a gate that separates the concourse and the platform. As you go through it, you must either have a ticket you have purchased from a vending machine in the concourse



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or a prepaid card. The card is also available at the vending machine. Having a card saves you from lining up to buy a ticket every time you ride a train.

The price of the card ranges from 1,000 to 5,000 yen and credits you with the comparable amount of train rides. The card usually gives you “bonus rides” worth approximately 10% of the price you’ve paid.

There are many types of prepaid cards, among them bus cards, highway cards, telephone cards, and cards designed for use in department or convenience stores. Prepaid cards have rapidly become popular in Japan, and they can be very convenient for a visitor.

Lesson 7: *tegami* and *meeru*

The word for “letter” is *tegami*, but it is a means of communication rapidly becoming obsolete in Japan. Many Japanese people, especially the young, have started using *meeru*, “e-mail,” more often than *tegami*. Since they can send and receive e-mail on their mobile phones, there is a constant flurry of communication.

tegami, a conventional method of information exchange, now seems to be reserved as a more formal method of transmitting special and personal messages. You can give your messages more impact in *tegami* than in e-mail. It costs 80 yen, or about 75 cents, to send a letter



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(up to 50 grams or 1³/₄ pounds) across the country. A postcard costs 50 yen, or about 45 cents. Both letters and postcards take one to three days to get to their destinations within Japan, and they are both very reliable.

Lesson 8: *nanika nomitai n desu ga.*

You learned previously how to express your desire for something less demandingly by saying, *nanika nomitai n desu ga*. The *ga* at the end literally means “but,” and it is added to soften your request and make it less direct. It implies, “I would like something to drink, but I don’t want to put you to any trouble and if it is too much trouble for you, that is all right.” It shows your modesty and respect for the other person’s time and effort.

Japanese speakers often show their extreme consideration for others in such an evasive and indirect manner, that foreigners are sometimes confused. This serves to save face. You may be at first annoyed by the speakers' ambiguity, because it only seems to imply their non-commitment to their own words, indecisiveness, and even insincerity. Such ambiguity, however, is believed to lubricate the social relationships among the Japanese, and you will soon likely find yourself ending your request with a slightly extended *ga* It really softens your tone of voice, particularly when requesting another person’s favor, or stating a claim.



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Lesson 9: Days of the Week

You've been introduced to the Japanese words for several days of the week. Here is the week in total: *nichi yoobi* is Sunday, *getsu yoobi*, Monday; Tuesday is *ka yoobi*. The rest go *sui yoobi*, *moku yoobi*, *kin yoobi*, *do yoobi*, respectively. You'll notice that they all end in the same way: *yoobi*, meaning "day of the week." In fact, people sometimes omit *yoobi* and may simply say, *getsu*, *ka*, *sui*, etc.

While the Japanese used to be known for their hardworking habits, working six days a week, many companies have come to give their workers two days off per week in recent years. Most schools have adopted a five-day-per-week class schedule, but some schools, mostly private, still require their students to take classes on Saturdays. You will still find many high school students commuting on trains and buses on Saturdays.

Lesson 10: Incomplete Sentences

In this unit, you heard a Japanese person asking the American when he arrived in Japan, by saying *itsu nihon e*. This is yet another example of leaving a statement, this time a question, unfinished. The Japanese person is omitting the last part of the question: *korare mashita ka?*

Leaving the sentence unfinished like this is an informal way of asking a question, and it should be used among close



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friends, people of the same social rank, or by a superior addressing a subordinate. You should not use such informal remarks with someone you have just met or a business associate who occupies a higher rank than you, as in this situation it may offend.

Lesson 11: Politeness: *imasu ka?* vs. *irasshaimasu ka?*

The significance of observing the appropriate levels of politeness when you speak to Japanese people, especially those whose social status is apparently different from yours, cannot be overstressed. Although as a foreign speaker you are not always expected to know subtle nuances, if you wish to get ahead in business, for instance, having some knowledge concerning the levels of politeness and actually practicing them in your communication will surely help you in your attempt to attain your personal and professional goals.

In this unit you learned *imasu ka?* and *irasshaimasu ka?* They both mean “Is ... here?” The latter is far more polite than the former. If you are telephoning to a close friend’s home, and you ask another person in the family for your friend, you may safely ask ... *wa imasu ka?* When speaking to a business associate, however, you would generally ask, *irasshaimasu ka?* You will find it necessary to make a distinction between the way you address your close friend and your business associate.

Initially, you may find the concept of using different expressions to convey different levels of politeness difficult



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to understand and remember. But stop and think for a moment about your regular English usage. While you may use the same words or phrases in different situations, you express your politeness by subtle changes in your tone, your intonation, or even sometimes your voice. You do not say, “How are you?” in exactly the same way when you see your friend, your grandmother, or when you greet an extremely important guest to your company or family.

Lesson 12: Traveling In and Around Japan

You have learned the names of many cities in Japan, among them, Osaka, Nara, and Okinawa. These are all popular places to visit, and foreign tourists as well as business people often go there. Each region in Japan has its own distinct cultural flavor, and you will enjoy the different attractions they offer. You should take advantage of the small size of the country and the well-developed public transportation to travel to different regions while in Japan.

You will also find other Asian cities quite easily accessible from Japan. Seoul, Korea is only one and a half hours away from Tokyo; Shanghai and Hong Kong are only three hours away. If you have some extra time to spend, you may want to explore these exotic Asian cities.



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Lesson 13: *ii desu ne*

When you say *ii desu ne* in response to someone offering you something to eat at a restaurant, it means, “That’s a good idea. I’d love to.” The same expression can also be used when you wish to give an affirmative answer to someone’s inquiry. For example, if you’re trying on some new clothes in a department store, a clerk may say, *ikaga desu ka?* “How is it?” You can respond by saying, *ii desu ne*. The *ne* at the end will implicitly ask the clerk if she agrees. *ii desu ne* in this context implies, “I like it. Don’t you?” The clerk will probably say *hai*, indicating “I agree.”

You must be careful, however, when you say *ii desu* without *ne* at the end. The meaning changes drastically, and instead it shows the speaker’s refusal and withdrawal. If you say *ii*, *ii desu* in response to “Let’s eat something at a restaurant,” it means, “No, thank you. I’ll pass.” Whether you put the *ne* at the end or not turns the meaning around completely, so you need to be careful, especially when you are offered something.

Lesson 14: *tsumetai* and *samui*

In this unit you heard *tsumetai*, which means “cold.” This is used to describe cold objects such as drinks and food. When you visit in a Japanese home, you may be asked whether you want *atsui ocha*, “hot tea,” or *tsumetai ocha*, “iced tea.” Hot tea is served most of the time, but during the



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summer cold tea that is made from roasted barley or cold Chinese oolong tea may be served.

You can also use *tsumetai* to refer to a person who is cold-hearted. You may hear some Japanese people say *tsumetai hito*, “a cold person.”

If you want to talk about cold weather, on the other hand, you must say *samui* instead of *tsumetai*. *samui* is used to describe a cold day, week, month, season, or a cold place. *tsumetai*, on the other hand, refers to more specific objects and phenomena, such as drinks, water, and wind.

Newspapers in Japan

Keeping abreast of what is happening in your home country is an important concern, particularly if you conduct business for extensive periods of time abroad. Most major English newspapers and magazines are readily available in large cities in Japan. If you cannot find the ones you would like to read at a kiosk, a large bookstore, which you should find in virtually every town, is very likely to carry them. You can also subscribe to English papers published by Japanese news companies. They are mostly English versions of Japanese papers and give you information on what is occurring in Japan and your local community. Thanks to advanced satellite and cable systems in major hotels, you can also watch TV news from over ten different countries in their original languages. The Internet is of course accessible in most hotels in Japan.



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Climate in Japan

Despite Japan's small size, the climate varies dramatically since it stretches lengthwise (some 1,500 miles) from north to south. When visiting, you must be careful to plan what kind of clothes you will need, which will depend on which part of the country you will be visiting. In Hokkaido, the northernmost island, and the northern and mountain areas of Honshu, for example, it gets quite cold. In fact, the winter Olympics were held in Sapporo in 1974 and held again in Nagano in central Japan in 1998. However, if you are in Okinawa, the southernmost part of the country, you will find a sub-tropical climate.

Except for these extreme climates, the rest of the country has four distinct seasons. Generally speaking, Japan gets a fair amount of rain every year, particularly during the rainy season that lasts from mid-June to mid-July. The rain is of course indispensable to rice, the nation's staple diet. The summer in Japan is generally hot and humid. If you are traveling to Japan for pleasure, you should plan to be there either in the spring or fall, if possible.

Lesson 15: *musume* and *musuko*

We have stressed that showing your politeness is important in Japanese communication. The words used to describe family members change in a rather complex manner, depending on whether you are speaking of your



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own family or the family of the person you are speaking to. In this unit you referred to your own children as *musume*, “daughter,” and *musuko*, “son.” You also learned *musume san* and *musuko san* to refer to other peoples’ children. There are additional, different sets of words when you talk about other people’s children, with differing levels of politeness. Since this is complex, you are not expected to be able to use all of them correctly. If you are to stay in Japan for a long time, however, you will find such knowledge in politeness quite useful.

gochisoosama deshita

In this Unit you learned *gochisoosama deshita*, literally meaning, “It was a feast.” You may use this expression to indicate that you have finished eating and are ready to go, if you are eating out with someone, or to say that you have appreciated the good meal provided for you at someone’s house or at a restaurant. Japanese, in general, enjoy inviting guests to their homes or treating them at restaurants.

One thing to remember is that you should also repeat the expression *gochisoosama deshita* on a later date to show your gratitude. This consideration will be greatly appreciated. If you wish to thank your hosts for the meal provided for you the day before, simply add *kino wa*, and say *kino wa gochisoosama deshita*, “Thank you for the meal you cooked or paid for yesterday.”



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Lesson 16: *kuruma* and Driving in Japan

The word for car is *kuruma*, as you have learned. *kuruma*, however, originally means a wheel, or a tire. People have begun to use the word to refer to an automobile. When the Japanese say *kuruma de iku*, they mean either “go by taxi” or “drive one’s own car.”

Despite the well-developed public transportation system, many people now have their own cars, which results in heavy traffic in most cities. You must remember, if you drive in Japan, that cars are driven on the left side of the street as in the U.K. and Australia. Parking in large cities such as Tokyo and Osaka is often not only difficult to secure, but also costly. And automobile insurance is naturally expensive.

The minimum age required for driving is 18, but not everybody has a driver’s license, unlike in the U.S. You must go to driving school for more than a month to obtain a license, and it will cost at least \$2,000. As a foreign visitor traveling to cities in Japan, the best advice is to use public transportation or to find Japanese friends to drive you around.

Lesson 17: Telephones

You learned previously how to ask where the public telephone is. Though you may find pay phones in public places such as airports, train stations, and city halls, the



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number has been decreasing due to the rapidly increasing use of mobile phones. More than two thirds of the entire population of Japan own mobile phones. You can rent a mobile phone while traveling in Japan, but it can be costly, depending on when and how often you use it. The most economical way to make overseas phone calls is to use a prepaid card that you can purchase at most convenience stores, and find a phone (usually gray in color) that allows you to place an international call. Those phones are not available everywhere, but you will find them at airports, hotels, and large train stations.

Lesson 18: Hospitals and Clinics in Japan

Whenever you travel to a foreign country, you certainly hope to stay healthy and away from hospitals. However, you should have some basic knowledge as to how you can get medical care in case the need arises. You will find as many hospitals in Japan as in the U.S., and the Emergency Rooms operate in much the same way in the two countries. Should you need medical assistance, you will need to be able to describe what is wrong with you. Here are some basic expressions: *byoki*, “sick,” *kibun ga warui*, “I feel bad,” *netsu ga aru*, “I have a fever,” and *itai*, “hurt.” *atama ga itai* is “My head hurts” or “I have a headache;” *onaka ga itai* is “I have an abdominal pain;” and *ashi ga itai* is “My legs hurt.”

Aside from large hospitals, you will find many small clinics with doctors whose specialties are clearly identified,



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such as internal medicine, surgery, pediatrics, obstetrics, gynecology, and dermatology. You can simply walk into these clinics without an appointment. Many Japanese doctors have a minimal working knowledge of English.

Emergency: Calling an Ambulance

In case you need to report a fire or call for an ambulance, the number to dial is 119 and if you need to call the police, it is 110 all across Japan. While the police and fire stations in large cities have English-speaking staff on duty, their communication ability in the foreign language is limited. You need to know some basic words to report the emergency. You must also describe the location of the emergency. Most traffic lights have the street names written both in Japanese and in English. If you make the call from a public phone, you will find a special button that will directly connect you to the police or fire station. The public phone system allows the receivers of phone calls to identify the location of the caller, so you do not need to worry about explaining where you are. If, however, you call from a mobile phone, you will need to be able to tell them your exact location.

Lesson 19: Drugstores and Convenience Stores

Drugstores in Japan are similar to those in the U.S., except that in general they are less spacious, and therefore the variety of merchandise available is limited. In most drugstores, you can purchase over-the-counter as well as prescription drugs;



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items such as soap, shampoo, toothbrushes, and toothpaste; and some household goods, such as detergents and pesticides.

You will also find small drugstores adjacent to many clinics. These drugstores usually supply only medicines prescribed by the doctors in the clinics. While you are likely to find most of the common cold and stomach medicines that you see in the U.S., you may want to pack certain brands that you find especially effective when you travel to Japan.

Another popular place for light shopping is convenience stores. They are franchised and the stores are virtually everywhere in Japan. Though small, in comparison to supermarkets, most convenience stores carry almost everything you need. You can buy food, beverages, magazines, and stationery. They also have copy machines, will accept payments for your mail order purchases ranging from books and movie tickets to plane tickets, and accept parcels to be sent by overnight express carriers. These stores are literally “convenient.”

Lesson 20: *kanai* and *shujin*

In this unit you heard a man referring to his wife as *kanai*. The word literally means “inside the house,” and it is used as a humble form when someone refers to his own wife. The word for husband is *shujin*, and its literal meaning is “master.” Given today's emphasis on equality, the word *kanai* is gradually becoming less popular. Here the man is showing his modesty by referring to his wife as *kanai*. You, however, as the receiver of the message should never call his wife *anata*



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no kanai. You should, instead, call her *anata no okusan* or *okusama*. Though it literally means “deep inside the house,” the word does indicate your politeness. It is naturally still all right to call someone’s husband *anata no go shujin*. Note that *shujin* is preceded by the honorific *go*.

Some Japanese people have started to use neutral words: *tsuma* for one’s wife and *otto* for one’s husband. You should not, however, use these words when you refer to someone else’s spouse but instead, always call them *okusan* or *okusama* and *go shujin*. Many people still use *kanai* and *shujin* out of habit, without any chauvinistic intent.

Lesson 21: Trains in Japan

Japan is known for its well-developed, efficient railroad system. Most cities are connected by the Japanese Railways (or “JR”). There are several classes of trains, determined by the number of stops that they make. They are, in ascending order, *futsu* or “Regular Train” which provides local service and will make every stop on a line. After that you have the *kaisoku*, or “Limited Express Train,” which makes fewer stops and runs primarily for commuters. The *kyuukoo*, or “Express Train,” and the *tokkyuu*, or “Super Express Train,” make successively limited stops. And at the top of the line, you have the *shinkansen* “Bullet Trains” which usually run from one end of the line to the other with only a few stops in between. They run in the northern part of Japan between Akita and Tokyo; the central part, between Niigata and



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Tokyo; and the western part between Fukuoka and Tokyo via Osaka, Kyoto, and Nagoya.

When you use either the *tokkyuu* or *shinkansen*, you must pay for special express tickets in addition to the regular fare. If you know in advance that you will be using train services in Japan, you can save yourself quite a bit of money by purchasing a Japan Rail Pass prior to your departure from the U.S. Only foreign visitors can take advantage of this pass, which is valid for unlimited travel on JR lines.

Lesson 22: More Incomplete Sentences

You heard in this unit, *jim san no kuruma wa?* Strictly speaking from the grammatical perspective, this is not a complete sentence. Translated word for word, the statement only says “Mr. Jim’s car?” If we were to make it grammatically complete, it would be *jim san, anata no kuruma wa dou shimashita ka?*, “Mr. Jim, what did you do with your car?” You will notice that many Japanese statements are seemingly incomplete and even appear grammatically incorrect in English terms. Being able to read the speaker’s mind and to let others read yours is an important skill in Japanese daily communication. If you speak in Japanese using clear, complete, precise sentences, which is an important communication competency in English, you might be considered legalistic, aggressive, and even offensive. After some experience and practice, you will



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learn how to leave your language vague and “incomplete” in actual social situations.

Lesson 23: Playing Sports in Japan

Many Japanese people in recent years have become concerned about maintaining their health, and that concern drives them to participate in many kinds of sports from aerobics to rugby. Given the climatic features of Japan, people enjoy winter sports in the northern regions such as Hokkaido and Tohoku where they can ski from November to early May, and marine sports in the south including scuba diving and parasailing. The most popular sports are bowling, golf, softball, and tennis. While baseball used to be the most popular sport to watch, it has been replaced by soccer in recent years. You can enjoy virtually all sports in Japan that you are used to playing and/or watching at home.

Many Japanese parents are also enthusiastic about developing their children’s talent in sports. For example, a large number of children go to private swimming schools, where they are tested regularly to have their achievement certified. Some children belong to school or community sport teams such as soccer and baseball and compete against other schools and communities.



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Lesson 24: *zuibun isogashii n desu ne*

In this unit you heard *zuibun isogashii n desu ne*, meaning “You’re awfully busy, aren’t you?” addressed to someone who will be going on a business trip. In Japanese society, which highly values work, this statement is taken as a compliment. The implication behind the statement is that the busier you are, the more important a person you are in your *kaisha*. Business people in Japan spend a considerable amount of time traveling. Because of the size of the country, it is quite possible to be in Nagoya on Wednesday, Osaka on Thursday, and Kobe on Friday. It is only a one-hour ride on *shinkansen* from Nagoya to Kobe.

National Holidays in Japan

There are quite a few national holidays in Japan. All schools, government offices, post offices, banks, and most businesses — except stores — are closed on these holidays. The Japanese holidays are as follows:

January 1	New Year’s Day
2 nd Monday of January	Coming-of-Age Day
February 11	National Foundation Day
March 21 (<i>approx.</i>)	Vernal Equinox Day
April 29	Greenery Day (Formerly the Showa Emperor’s birthday)
May 3	Constitution Memorial Day



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May 4	National Holiday
May 5	Children's Day
July 20	Marine Day
3 rd Monday of September	Respect-for-the-Aged Day
September 23 (<i>approx.</i>)	Autumnal Equinox Day
2 nd Monday of October	Health-Sports Day
November 3	Culture Day
November 23	Labor Day
December 23	Emperor's Birthday

In case a holiday falls on a Sunday, the following Monday becomes an alternate holiday, called “Happy Monday.”

Lesson 25: *kedo*

In this unit *yamada san* was asked by the speaker whether she wanted to join him for *ocha*. She said in response *ainiku ... chotto ... san ji ni kaigi ga arimasu*, “Sorry, a little, there is a meeting at 3:00.” *chotto* is added to indicate that the speaker may be willing to, but is unable to accommodate the other person's request. It is often used to avoid hurting the other person's feelings, and it is another way to imply “no.”

Later, *yamada san* says, *ee, demo sono ato wa chotto hima desu kedo*, “Yes, but after that a little free time exists though.” She tries to make up for the necessary rejection by saying that she might perhaps be able to join him after the meeting. Note the *kedo* at the end of the sentence. Also



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note that the man says later, *sutaabackksu wa? chotto tooi desu kedo*, “How about Starbucks? It is a little far, though.”

You will notice that the Japanese often end their statements with *kedo*. This is yet one more of the many ways to soften the tone and imply that they would not terribly mind if the other person did not agree with their ideas, requests, or suggestions. *kedo* also suggests that the speakers are willing to accept and adapt to the other person’s ideas.

Many Japanese do not feel comfortable isolating themselves in any social settings, including meetings where Americans would readily expect to see open confrontation and clashes of ideas. You may wonder how the Japanese make group decisions. It certainly entails a long process in which subtle exchanges of ideas take place. Hierarchical relationships among the people involved in the process also play an important role. After careful and thorough exchange of ideas, people believe that decisions will naturally become clear. Active expressions such as “hammering out a decision” do not accurately describe the purpose of Japanese meetings.

However, in interacting with the Japanese, do not let the frequent use of *kedo* fool you. Many people attach the word only in order to make their assertions sound tentative, while in reality they may indeed be strongly committed to their ideas and not at all ready to change their positions. While they will not refute openly, *kedo* functions as a façade in many situations. Being able to pickup social cues and discern the distinction between *honne* and *tatemae* are important communication skills in Japanese culture.



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Lesson 26: Cheesecake and Japanese Sweets

Tasting exotic foods in a foreign country adds to enjoyment in international trips. There is quite a variety of sweets available in Japan, ranging from Western style cakes to traditional Japanese desserts. You will find the cakes in Japan similar to those in the U.S., except that they are smaller and less sweet. The most popular kind of Japanese sweet is called *manju*, sweetened bean paste wrapped in dough and either baked or steamed.

Another special kind of Japanese sweet that you should be alert to is called *higashi*. It is a small piece of cake, particularly sweet, and served with green tea at a tea ceremony. The tea served in the ceremony is a special kind and it is very bitter. The sweet that accompanies the tea is to compensate for the tea's bitter taste. You are expected to finish the *higashi* before you drink the tea. Both the tea and the sweets at the tea ceremony are considered to be an acquired taste and if you find them not to your liking, just say so. The Japanese host or hostess will not be offended.



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Lesson 27: Geography of Japan

Japan is an island country, but how many islands the country comprises is not so widely known. There are four main islands. Going from the north to the south, you have Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu.

Honshu is the largest island in size, population, and economic strength. Many metropolitan areas are concentrated along the Pacific coast on Honshu: Tokyo, Yokohama, Nagoya, Osaka, Kobe, and Hiroshima. While some fairly large cities, such as Niigata and Kanazawa, are on the Japan Sea, this coast is often referred to as *ura nihon*, or the back side of Japan.

Hokkaido is the northernmost island and it has acres and acres of farmland. Many agricultural and dairy products support the economy of Hokkaido. The largest city is Sapporo where the winter Olympics were held in 1972.

Shikoku is an island across the Setonaikai (the Inland Sea of Japan) from Honshu. It is the size of all the Hawaiian islands put together.

Kyushu is the southernmost of the four main islands and is connected with Honshu by a tunnel and a bridge. The largest city is Fukuoka.

Other than the four main islands, there are some 2,000 smaller ones, including the Okinawa Islands. The size of the entire country is about the same as that of the state of



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California. Considering that the population of Japan is about one half of that of the U.S., and that half of the population is concentrated in metropolitan areas such as Tokyo and Osaka, you can imagine how crowded the large cities are.

Public Transportation in Japan

Business people may frequently make sales trips by car, but the majority of people do not travel by car in Japan. There are many reasons that account for this. First of all, public transportation is well developed. You can actually choose among airplanes, trains, and buses. Airfares in Japan are comparable to those in the U.S.; the service is good and the planes are usually on time. The trains are probably used most often. And now that the country has completed its primary highway system, buses have become an inexpensive, alternate means of long-distance public transportation. A trip from Tokyo to Fukuoka, some 800 miles in distance, takes an hour and a half by airplane, five hours by the fastest *shinkansen* train, called *nozomi*, and fourteen hours by bus.

Traffic congestion is another reason why many people do not drive long distances, especially on a trip when punctuality is very important. The high price of gas is yet another reason.



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Lesson 28: *jaa, mata itsuka*

In this unit you heard *jaa, mata itsuka*, which means, “Well then, some other time.” The expression is used to show social politeness, and it is equivalent to “Let’s get together sometime.” In this case, you would not ask, “What exactly do you mean by ‘sometime’?” If you did, you might be considered socially incompetent and rude. In Japanese society, with the extreme concern for politeness in human relations, you will come across many such expressions. *chikai uchi ippai yari masho*, for instance, means “Let’s go for a drink some time soon.” In most cases, the person is likely to be saying it just to be polite, so the safest response is something like *ii desu ne*, or “That sounds good.”

Lesson 29: *osokunatte sumimasen*

In this unit you heard *osokunatte sumimasen*, which means “I’m sorry I’m late.” People’s concept of time is different from culture to culture, and their expectations vary accordingly. In some cultures, keeping someone waiting for fifteen minutes is a sign of insult, while in others showing up one hour late for an appointment is a common practice. Japan, in general, is classified into the punctual group. If you have a business appointment with someone to whom you must show respect, a prospective customer or employer for instance, you should plan to arrive early. If you are invited to someone’s house for a party, on the other hand, being a little late, say ten to fifteen minutes, is considered



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acceptable, and even polite. If you are late for more than half an hour, it is necessary to say *osokunatte sumimasen*. You should by all means avoid having to use this expression when you have a business appointment.

Lesson 30: Gift Giving

Gift giving is a very popular social practice in Japan. People customarily give gifts twice a year to their superiors, such as teachers and senior members at the work place. The gift in the summer is called *ochugen* and the one in winter is called *oseibo*. The *o* at the beginning of these is the honorific prefix. People also bring gifts when they visit someone's house for a get-together, when they visit an office on business, and when they visit family members, relatives, and friends at a hospital.

In this Lesson the person visiting a Japanese home brought some chocolate for the host's children. Items such as candies and chocolates, flowers, and wine make appropriate gifts to bring when you're invited for dinner.

The Japanese very rarely, if ever, have a potluck party. When invited for dinner, you may ask what, if anything, you may bring, but the chances are that you will be told "nothing." These customs are very similar in Japan and the U.S., but one difference you may need to be aware of is that you are expected to express your appreciation again the next time you see your host or hostess. *kono mae wa*



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arigato gozaimashita, “Thank you for the other day,” is an appropriate thing to say.

shitsurei shimasu

shitsurei shimasu means roughly, “I’m going to commit a rude thing.” The Japanese use this expression when they enter someone’s room or house. A similar expression, *ojama shimasu*, whose literal meaning is “I’m going to interfere with you,” can also be used in the same situation. When you take your leave, on the other hand, you simply make these expressions into the past tense and say *shitsurei shimashita* or *ojama shimashita*.



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Introduction to Reading Japanese

When you visit a foreign country such as Japan, where the language sounds very different, and the appearance of the written language does not even remotely resemble what you are used to, you may naturally find yourself somewhat intimidated. Just imagining the difficulty you may face in learning how to read and write can be discouraging. Mastering reading and writing Japanese is indeed an extremely long and complex process, and even many native speakers have not completed the learning process.

In this course you are learning spoken Japanese. While knowledge of the orthographic form of Japanese will be useful when visiting Japan, it is not necessary to acquire speech. In the following notes, however, some basic and important knowledge of written Japanese will be introduced. Once you understand the essentials that underlie written Japanese, you will find that beginning reading in the language is much easier and less intimidating than you may have anticipated.



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Kanji, the Chinese Characters

Kanji is the “pictorial” writing the Japanese borrowed from the Chinese. Each Kanji character represents an object or idea, and in written Japanese these objects and ideas combine in various ways to form new words and phrases. The pronunciation of each character varies depending on the context, and some Kanji have up to four or five different ways to be pronounced. One is required to be able to recognize and understand some 3,000 Kanji characters to achieve functional literacy in Japanese. It won’t be necessary, however, to be able to pronounce the Kanji characters, and you will certainly not need 3,000, but it will be rather convenient to get the general meaning of a basic core of some 50 characters when you see them in such public places as airports, train stations, on street signs, and in restaurant menus. As an example of Kanji, we will introduce you here to a few that are typical of the pictorial Kanji characters.

To get you started with reading Japanese, here is the character for “up” or “on.” Notice that it looks as if the whole character points upward:

上

This character pointing down means “down” or “under.”

下

When put together, these two characters form a Japanese word, meaning up and down. The word is used to indicate not only the physical upward and downward directions, but



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also a social relationship with a status difference.

上下

Here is another character, which means a “tree.” Can you see how the image of a tree was transformed into the Kanji character?

木

And here is the character for a “mountain.”

山

Many characters are made up of two or more parts: *hen* (or the left-hand radical) and *tsukuri* (or the right-hand radical). The Kanji for “tree” can serve as a *hen*, and it may be used to form such characters as “woods,” or a “forest.”

林 woods

森 forest

Here is a more complex character combining three parts: mountain, up, and down. Put together as one word, “mountain,” “up,” and “down” mean a “mountain pass” or a “peak.”

峠



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Katakana and Hiragana

When you can recognize some 50 basic Japanese Kanji characters, the rest will be fairly easy, as you will probably be able to guess what a new character may mean just by looking at it and identifying the component parts. The first step is to get rid of your anxiety about reading Japanese; take the time to become familiar with the fundamental patterns used to make up the Japanese Kanji characters.

The Kanji system adopted from Chinese is the basic Japanese written system, but, whereas the Chinese language uses only pictorial characters, Japanese uses two other types of writing systems in addition to the Kanji characters. They are Katakana and Hiragana. These are two different sets of “letters” representing Japanese sounds. Each letter represents either a vowel sound or a consonant plus a vowel, for example, ka, ki, ku, ke, ko, etc. The Japanese Hiragana and Katakana are both lined up in the same way. The vowels go: a, i, u, e, o. The consonants k, s, t, n, h, m, y, r, w are placed before the vowels. If you remember the order of Hiragana and Katakana in much the same way you memorized how the alphabet goes from A to Z, you can make great progress in reading and writing Japanese.

There are 46 Hiragana and Katakana symbols, as shown on the chart on the next page. Each block contains the transliterated phonetic representation of the character, followed by the Hiragana and then by the Katakana (in parentheses).



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Katakana

Katakana is the writing system used for Japanese / English cognate words, i.e., for words adopted from English into Japanese. You will find it particularly useful to learn Katakana, as you may need to read and write your name from time to time. Foreign and new words are spelled using Katakana, so you will see “restaurant,” “hotel,” “golf,” “gasoline,” and many others in Katakana.

Here is what they look like in combination:

レストラン
restaurant

ホテル
hotel

ゴルフ
golf

ガソリン
gasoline

Hiragana

Hiragana is the writing system comprised of letters used to represent grammatical endings and features that Chinese does not have. Unlike Kanji, in which a symbol represents a concept or an idea, in both the Hiragana and Katakana systems of Japanese, there is a connection between the symbol on the paper and the spoken word, and each letter is pronounced in only one way regardless of the context. Before Japanese children learn how to write the complex Kanji characters, they learn how to write Hiragana and they



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use it for every word. To illustrate, *yama* or “mountain” can be written in three different ways, in Kanji, Katakana, or Hiragana. However, since it is not a foreign word, it would rarely, if ever, be written in Katakana.

山	ヤマ	やま
mountain	mountain	mountain
<i>Kanji</i>	<i>Katakana</i>	<i>Hiragana</i>

While it is possible to use the phonetic Hiragana and Katakana scripts to represent almost any Japanese word, it is usually considered more appropriate to use the Kanji characters whenever possible, using the phonetic scripts only to represent foreign words (Katakana) or features unique to Japanese (Hiragana).

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Transliteration / Katakana / Hiragana

v c	a	あ (ア)	i	い (イ)	u	う (ウ)	e	え (エ)	o	お (オ)
k	ka	か (カ)	ki	き (キ)	ku	く (ク)	ke	け (ケ)	ko	こ (コ)
s	sa	さ (サ)	shi	し (シ)	su	す (ス)	se	せ (セ)	so	そ (ソ)
t	ta	た (タ)	chi	ち (チ)	tsu	つ (ツ)	te	て (テ)	to	と (ト)
n	na	な (ナ)	ni	に (ニ)	nu	ぬ (ヌ)	ne	ね (ネ)	no	の (ノ)
h	ha	は (ハ)	hi	ひ (ヒ)	fu	ふ (フ)	he	へ (ヘ)	ho	ほ (ホ)
m	ma	ま (マ)	mi	み (ミ)	mu	む (ム)	me	め (メ)	mo	も (モ)
y	ya	や (ヤ)			yu	ゆ (ユ)			yo	よ (ヨ)
r	ra	ら (ラ)	ri	り (リ)	ru	る (ル)	re	れ (レ)	ro	ろ (ロ)
w	wa	わ (ワ)							o	を (ヲ)
n,m	—ん	ン								



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Reading Japanese

Signs

Visitors to Japan are fortunate in that the international sign system and many English words are used in signs and directions. Rest rooms, for instance, can often be identified by male / female symbols, or by the words “WC,” or “Toilets.” English names are also widely used alongside Japanese. Store signs are often written both in English and Japanese Katakana. Some signs, however, are misspelled, or are the outcome of imaginative creation known as “Japanese English,” which sometimes makes it difficult for English-speaking people to understand exactly what product the business is selling.

Books

Most Westerners are accustomed to reading books starting from the front and reading each line left to right, starting from the top of the page. In books and traditional writing, however, Japanese is written in columns, top to bottom, starting on the right side of a page. The books appear to open “backwards” to English speakers, as the “front” of a Japanese book is the “back” of an English text. However, in signs, menus, and books in which some English words are used, such as academic papers, Japanese is now often written from left to right.



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