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Hiragana Chart

あ <i>a</i>	い <i>i</i>	う <i>u</i>	え <i>e</i>	お <i>o</i>
か <i>ka</i>	き <i>ki</i>	く <i>ku</i>	け <i>ke</i>	こ <i>ko</i>
さ <i>sa</i>	し <i>shi</i>	す <i>su</i>	せ <i>se</i>	そ <i>so</i>
た <i>ta</i>	ち <i>chi</i>	つ <i>tsu</i>	て <i>te</i>	と <i>to</i>
な <i>na</i>	に <i>ni</i>	ぬ <i>nu</i>	ね <i>ne</i>	の <i>no</i>
は <i>ha</i>	ひ <i>hi</i>	ふ <i>fu</i>	へ <i>he</i>	ほ <i>ho</i>
ま <i>ma</i>	み <i>mi</i>	む <i>mu</i>	め <i>me</i>	も <i>mo</i>
や <i>ya</i>	ゝ	ゆ <i>yu</i>	ヱ	よ <i>yo</i>
ら <i>ra</i>	り <i>ri</i>	る <i>ru</i>	れ <i>re</i>	ろ <i>ro</i>
わ <i>wa</i>	ヰ	ヱ	ヰ	を <i>wo</i>
ん <i>n</i>	ン	ン	ン	ン

Voiced and semi-voiced (dakuten / handakuten)

が <i>ga</i>	ぎ <i>gi</i>	ぐ <i>gu</i>	げ <i>ge</i>	ご <i>go</i>
ざ <i>za</i>	じ <i>ji</i>	ず <i>zu</i>	ぜ <i>ze</i>	ぞ <i>zo</i>
だ <i>da</i>	ち <i>ji</i>	づ <i>zu</i>	で <i>de</i>	ど <i>do</i>
ば <i>ba</i>	び <i>bi</i>	ぶ <i>bu</i>	べ <i>be</i>	ぼ <i>bo</i>
ぱ <i>pa</i>	ぴ <i>pi</i>	ぷ <i>pu</i>	ぺ <i>pe</i>	ぽ <i>po</i>

Combination sounds (yōon)

きゃ <i>kya</i>	きゅ <i>kyu</i>	きょ <i>kyo</i>	しゃ <i>sha</i>	しゅ <i>shu</i>
しょ <i>sho</i>	ちゃ <i>cha</i>	ちゅ <i>chu</i>	ちょ <i>cho</i>	にゃ <i>nya</i>
にゅ <i>nyu</i>	にょ <i>nyo</i>	ひゃ <i>hya</i>	ひゅ <i>hyu</i>	ひょ <i>hyo</i>
みゃ <i>mya</i>	みゅ <i>myu</i>	みょ <i>myo</i>	りゃ <i>rya</i>	りゅ <i>ryu</i>
りょ <i>ryo</i>	ぎゃ <i>gya</i>	ぎゅ <i>gyu</i>	ぎょ <i>gyo</i>	じゃ <i>ja</i>
じゅ <i>ju</i>	じょ <i>jo</i>	びゃ <i>bya</i>	びゅ <i>byu</i>	びょ <i>byo</i>
ぴゃ <i>pya</i>	ぴゅ <i>pyu</i>	ぴょ <i>pyo</i>		

Katakana Chart

ア <i>a</i>	イ <i>i</i>	ウ <i>u</i>	エ <i>e</i>	オ <i>o</i>
カ <i>ka</i>	キ <i>ki</i>	ク <i>ku</i>	ケ <i>ke</i>	コ <i>ko</i>
サ <i>sa</i>	シ <i>shi</i>	ス <i>su</i>	セ <i>se</i>	ソ <i>so</i>
タ <i>ta</i>	チ <i>chi</i>	ツ <i>tsu</i>	テ <i>te</i>	ト <i>to</i>
ナ <i>na</i>	ニ <i>ni</i>	ヌ <i>nu</i>	ネ <i>ne</i>	ノ <i>no</i>
ハ <i>ha</i>	ヒ <i>hi</i>	フ <i>fu</i>	ヘ <i>he</i>	ホ <i>ho</i>
マ <i>ma</i>	ミ <i>mi</i>	ム <i>mu</i>	メ <i>me</i>	モ <i>mo</i>
ヤ <i>ya</i>	?	ユ <i>yu</i>	?	ヨ <i>yo</i>
ラ <i>ra</i>	リ <i>ri</i>	ル <i>ru</i>	レ <i>re</i>	ロ <i>ro</i>
ワ <i>wa</i>	?	?	?	ヲ <i>wo</i>
ン <i>n</i>	?	?	?	?

Voiced katakana

ガ <i>ga</i>	ギ <i>gi</i>	グ <i>gu</i>	ゲ <i>ge</i>	ゴ <i>go</i>
ザ <i>za</i>	ジ <i>ji</i>	ズ <i>zu</i>	ゼ <i>ze</i>	ゾ <i>zo</i>
ダ <i>da</i>	ヂ <i>ji</i>	ヅ <i>zu</i>	デ <i>de</i>	ド <i>do</i>
バ <i>ba</i>	ビ <i>bi</i>	ブ <i>bu</i>	ベ <i>be</i>	ボ <i>bo</i>
パ <i>pa</i>	ピ <i>pi</i>	プ <i>pu</i>	ペ <i>pe</i>	ポ <i>po</i>

Extended katakana for foreign sounds

ファ <i>fa</i>	フィ <i>fi</i>	フェ <i>fe</i>	フォ <i>fo</i>	ヴ <i>vu</i>
ティ <i>ti</i>	ディ <i>di</i>	トゥ <i>tu</i>	ドゥ <i>du</i>	ウィ <i>wi</i>
ウェ <i>we</i>	ウォ <i>wo</i>	シェ <i>she</i>	ジェ <i>je</i>	チェ <i>che</i>

The long-vowel mark

Katakana uses a horizontal dash 'ー' to mark a long vowel. So 'コーヒー' is kō-hī (coffee), 'チーズ' is chī-zu (cheese), 'ビール' is bī-ru (beer).

Practice: decoding katakana menus

Coffee	コーヒー	Kōhī
Tea (Western style)	ティー	Tī
Beer	ビール	Bīru
Wine	ワイン	Wain
Juice	ジュース	Jūsu
Milk	ミルク	Miruku
Cheese	チーズ	Chīzu
Pizza	ピザ	Piza
Hamburger	ハンバーガー	Hanbāgā
Sandwich	サンドイッチ	Sandoitchi
Pasta	パスタ	Pasuta
Salad	サラダ	Sarada
Cake	ケーキ	Kēki
Ice cream	アイスクリーム	Aisukurīmu
Hotel	ホテル	Hoteru
Taxi	タクシー	Takushī
Bus	バス	Basu
Convenience store	コンビニ	Konbini
Restaurant	レストラン	Resutoran
Toilet	トイレ	Toire

Essential Kanji for Travelers

DOORS, EXITS, AND BUILDINGS		
Entrance	入口	Iriguchi
Exit	出口	Deguchi
Emergency exit	非常口	Hijōguchi
Open	営業中	Eigyōchū
Closed	閉店 / 休業	Heiten / Kyūgyō
Push	押す	Osu
Pull	引く	Hiku
No entry	立入禁止	Tachiiri kinshi
RESTROOMS		
Toilet / restroom	トイレ / お手洗い	Toire / O-tearai
Men	男 / 男性	Otoko / Dansei
Women	女 / 女性	Onna / Josei
Multi-purpose / accessible	多目的トイレ	Tamokuteki toire
STATIONS AND TRANSPORT		
Station	駅	Eki
Ticket	切符 / 乗車券	Kippu / Jōshaken
Ticket gate	改札	Kaisatsu
Platform	ホーム / 番線	Hōmu / Bansen

Track number	番線	Bansen
Train	電車	Densha
Bullet train	新幹線	Shinkansen
Local	各駅停車 / 普通	Kakueki teisha / Futsū
Express	急行 / 快速	Kyūkō / Kaisoku
Limited express	特急	Tokkyū
Reserved seat	指定席	Shiteiseki
Non-reserved	自由席	Jiyūseki
Transfer	乗換 / 乗り換え	Norikae
North exit	北口	Kitaguchi
South exit	南口	Minamiguchi
East exit	東口	Higashiguchi
West exit	西口	Nishiguchi
Central exit	中央口	Chūōguchi

On menus and in shops

GENERAL FOOD WORDS		
Food / dish	料理	Ryōri
Japanese cuisine	和食 / 日本料理	Washoku / Nihon ryōri
Set meal	定食	Teishoku
Lunch special	ランチ / 昼定食	Ranchi / Hiru teishoku

Today's special	本日の特別 / 日替わり	Honjitsu no tokubetsu / Higawari
Menu	メニュー / お品書き	Menyū / O-shinagaki
Drink	飲み物	Nomimono
Food / things to eat	食べ物	Tabemono

MAIN INGREDIENTS

Rice (cooked)	ご飯 / 米	Gohan / Kome
Noodles	麺	Men
Meat	肉	Niku
Beef	牛肉	Gyūniku
Pork	豚肉	Butaniku
Chicken	鶏肉	Toriniku
Fish	魚	Sakana
Seafood	海鮮	Kaisen
Egg	卵 / 玉子	Tamago
Vegetable	野菜	Yasai
Tofu	豆腐	Tōfu

DRINKS

Water	水 / お水	Mizu / O-mizu
Hot water	お湯	O-yu
Tea (green)	お茶 / 緑茶	O-cha / Ryokucha

Black tea	紅茶	Kōcha
Coffee	珈琲 / コーヒー	Kōhī
Sake (rice wine)	酒 / お酒 / 日本酒	Sake / O-sake / Nihonshu
Beer	ビール / 生	Bīru / Nama
TASTES AND TEMPERATURE		
Hot (temperature)	熱い / 温かい	Atsui / Atatakai
Cold	冷たい	Tsumetai
Spicy	辛い	Karai
Sweet	甘い	Amai
Salty	塩辛い / しょっぱい	Shiokarai / Shoppai
Sour	酸っぱい	Suppai
Delicious	美味しい	Oishii
AT THE SHOP		
Price	値段	Nedan
Tax included	税込	Zeikomi
Tax excluded	税抜	Zeinuki
Tax-free shopping	免税	Menzei
Discount / sale	割引 / セール	Waribiki / Sēru
Receipt	領収書 / レシート	Ryōshūsho / Reshīto
Cash	現金	Genkin
Card	カード	Kādo

Days, time, and the calendar

Day	日	Hi / Nichi
Month	月	Tsuki / Getsu
Year	年	Toshi / Nen
Hour / o'clock	時	Ji
Minute	分	Fun / Pun
Half (30 min)	半	Han
Morning (AM)	午前	Gozen
Afternoon (PM)	午後	Gogo
Today	今日	Kyō
Tomorrow	明日	Ashita
Yesterday	昨日	Kinō
Now	今	Ima
This week	今週	Konshū
Last week	先週	Senshū
Next week	来週	Raishū
This morning	今朝	Kesa
Tonight	今晚 / 今夜	Konban / Kon'ya
Weekend	週末	Shūmatsu
Holiday / day off	休日 / 休み	Kyūjitsu / Yasumi

People, family, and pronouns

Person	人	Hito / Nin / Jin
I / me (neutral)	私	Watashi
You (use sparingly)	あなた	Anata
Mr. / Ms. (suffix)	～さん	-san
Teacher / Doctor (suffix)	～先生	-sensei
Family	家族	Kazoku
Father (mine)	父	Chichi
Mother (mine)	母	Haha
Older brother (mine)	兄	Ani
Older sister (mine)	姉	Ane
Younger brother (mine)	弟	Otōto
Younger sister (mine)	妹	Imōto
Child	子ども	Kodomo
Friend	友達	Tomodachi
Married	結婚	Kekkon

Common reading & writing kanji

These appear in receipts, signs, books, and posters. Recognizing even a handful makes Japan feel less opaque.

Big	大	Dai / Ōkii
Small	小	Shō / Chiisai
Up / above	上	Jō / Ue
Down / below	下	Ka / Shita
High / expensive	高	Kō / Takai
Cheap / safe	安	An / Yasui
New	新	Shin / Atarashii
Old	古	Ko / Furui
Hot (drink)	熱	Netsu / Atsui
Cold	冷	Rei / Tsumetai
Mountain	山	San / Yama
River	川	Kawa
Sea / ocean	海	Umi
Tree / wood	木	Ki / Moku
Fire	火	Hi / Ka
Water	水	Mizu / Sui
Gold / money	金	Kin / Kane
Heart / mind	心	Kokoro / Shin

Eye	目	Me
Mouth	口	Kuchi / Guchi
Ear	耳	Mimi
Hand	手	Te
Foot	足	Ashi
Country	国	Kuni / Koku
Japan	日本	Nihon / Nippon
America	米国 / アメリカ	Beikoku / Amerika
English (language)	英語	Eigo
Japanese (language)	日本語	Nihongo
School	学校	Gakkō
University	大学	Daigaku
Hospital	病院	Byōin
Hotel	ホテル	Hoteru
Inn (Japanese)	旅館	Ryokan
Shop / store	店	Mise / Ten
Restaurant	食堂 / レストラン	Shokudō / Resutoran
Market	市場	Ichiba / Shijō
Park	公園	Kōen
Temple (Buddhist)	寺 / お寺	Tera / O-tera
Shrine (Shintō)	神社	Jinja

Castle	城	Shiro / Jō
Garden	庭園 / 庭	Teien / Niwa

Numbers in kanji

Japanese mixes Arabic numerals and kanji freely. On older menus, ryokan, and traditional shops, you will often see prices in kanji.

One	一	Ichī
Two	二	Ni
Three	三	San
Four	四	Shi / Yon
Five	五	Go
Six	六	Roku
Seven	七	Shichi / Nana
Eight	八	Hachi
Nine	九	Kyū / Ku
Ten	十	Jū
Hundred	百	Hyaku
Thousand	千	Sen
Ten thousand	万	Man
Yen	円	En

Numbers, Counters & Money

Japanese has two complete number systems. The native set (hitotsu, futatsu) is used for counting general objects up to ten. The Sino-Japanese set (ichi, ni, san) is used for everything else, money, time, dates, phone numbers. Learn both up to ten. After ten, only the Sino set matters.

Numbers 0 to 10

0	零 / ゼロ	Rei / Zero
1	一	Ichī
2	二	Ni
3	三	San
4	四	Yon / Shi
5	五	Go
6	六	Roku
7	七	Nana / Shichi
8	八	Hachi
9	九	Kyū / Ku
10	十	Jū

'Yon' (4) and 'nana' (7) are preferred in most everyday situations because 'shi' sounds like the word for death and 'shichi' is easily misheard.

Counting general objects (1 to 10)

This is the safest counting system for a tourist. Use these for asking 'one of these, please,' pointing at food, or buying souvenirs.

1 (one item)	一つ	Hitotsu
2 (two items)	二つ	Futatsu
3 (three items)	三つ	Mittsu
4 (four items)	四つ	Yottsu
5 (five items)	五つ	Itsutsu
6 (six items)	六つ	Muttsu
7 (seven items)	七つ	Nanatsu
8 (eight items)	八つ	Yattsu
9 (nine items)	九つ	Kokonotsu
10 (ten items)	十	Tō
How many?	いくつ	Ikutsu

In a shop or restaurant, you can almost always say 'hitotsu kudasai' (one, please) or 'futatsu kudasai' (two, please) while pointing. This will get you exactly what you want.

Numbers 11 to 1,000,000

Past ten, Japanese is built like a logical machine: 11 is 'ten-one' (jūichi), 20 is 'two-ten' (nijū), 25 is 'two-ten-five' (nijūgo).

11	十一	Jūichi
12	十二	Jūni
13	十三	Jūsan
14	十四	Jūyon
15	十五	Jūgo
20	二十	Nijū
21	二十一	Nijūichi
30	三十	Sanjū
40	四十	Yonjū
50	五十	Gojū
100	百	Hyaku
200	二百	Nihyaku
300	三百	Sanbyaku
500	五百	Gohyaku
600	六百	Roppyaku
800	八百	Happyaku
1,000	千	Sen
3,000	三千	Sanzen
8,000	八千	Hassen
10,000	一万	Ichiman
100,000	十万	Jūman

1,000,000	百万	Hyakuman
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Big numbers in Japanese group by 10,000 (man), not 1,000. A million yen is 'one-hundred-man' (hyakuman). When reading prices, watch for the 万 character: a sushi platter at '1 万円' is ¥10,000.

Money and prices

Yen	円	En
How much?	いくらですか	Ikura desu ka?
¥10	十円	Jūen
¥50	五十円	Gojūen
¥100	百円	Hyakuen
¥500	五百円	Gohyakuen
¥1,000	千円 / 一千円	Sen'en / Issen'en
¥2,000	二千円	Nisen'en
¥5,000	五千円	Gosen'en
¥10,000	一万円	Ichiman'en
¥30,000	三万円	Sanman'en
Total	合計	Gōkei
Change (money back)	お釣り	O-tsuri
Bill / check	お会計	O-kaikei
Coin	硬貨 / コイン	Kōka / Koin
Bill (paper money)	札 / お札	Satsu / O-satsu

Common counters

Japanese uses a different counter word depending on what is being counted. You can avoid most of these by using the native counting (hitotsu, futatsu) and pointing. But these are useful to recognize.

1 person	一人	Hitori
2 people	二人	Futari
3 people	三人	San-nin
4 people	四人	Yo-nin
5 people	五人	Go-nin
1 night (hotel)	一泊	Ippaku
2 nights	二泊	Nihaku
3 nights	三泊	Sanpaku
1 piece (flat: ticket, paper)	一枚	Ichimai
2 pieces (flat)	二枚	Nimai
1 (long: bottle, pen)	一本	Ippon
2 (long)	二本	Nihon
1 cup / glass	一杯	Ippai
2 cups	二杯	Nihai
1st floor	一階	Ikkai
2nd floor	二階	Nikai
Basement	地下	Chika

Time, Days & Calendar

Telling time

1 o'clock	一時	Ichiji
2 o'clock	二時	Niji
3 o'clock	三時	Sanji
4 o'clock	四時	Yoji
5 o'clock	五時	Goji
6 o'clock	六時	Rokuji
7 o'clock	七時	Shichiji
8 o'clock	八時	Hachiji
9 o'clock	九時	Kuji
10 o'clock	十時	Jūji
11 o'clock	十一時	Jūichiji
12 o'clock / noon	十二時 / 正午	Jūniji / Shōgo
Half past (e.g., 3:30)	三時半	Sanji han
10 minutes	十分	Jippun
15 minutes	十五分	Jūgofun
30 minutes	三十分 / 半	Sanjippun / Han
A.M.	午前	Gozen
P.M.	午後	Gogo

What time is it?	今、何時ですか	Ima, nanji desu ka?
At what time?	何時に	Nanji ni

Days of the week

Monday	月曜日	Getsuyōbi
Tuesday	火曜日	Kayōbi
Wednesday	水曜日	Suiyōbi
Thursday	木曜日	Mokuyōbi
Friday	金曜日	Kin'yōbi
Saturday	土曜日	Doyōbi
Sunday	日曜日	Nichiyōbi
What day is it?	何曜日ですか	Nan'yōbi desu ka?

The kanji for each weekday is based on the planets, much like Romance languages: 月 (moon), 火 (fire/Mars), 水 (water/Mercury), 木 (wood/Jupiter), 金 (gold/Venus), 土 (earth/Saturn), 日 (sun).

Months and dates

January	一月	Ichigatsu
February	二月	Nigatsu
March	三月	Sangatsu

April	四月	Shigatsu
May	五月	Gogatsu
June	六月	Rokugatsu
July	七月	Shichigatsu
August	八月	Hachigatsu
September	九月	Kugatsu
October	十月	Jūgatsu
November	十一月	Jūichigatsu
December	十二月	Jūnigatsu
What month?	何月	Nangatsu
What date?	何日	Nannichi

Useful time expressions

Today	今日	Kyō
Tomorrow	明日	Ashita
Day after tomorrow	明後日	Asatte
Yesterday	昨日	Kinō
Day before yesterday	一昨日	Ototoi
Now	今	Ima
Later	後で	Atode
Soon	もうすぐ	Mōsugu

Early	早い / 早く	Hayai / Hayaku
Late	遅い / 遅く	Osoi / Osoku
Every day	毎日	Mainichi
Every morning	毎朝	Maiasa
Every week	毎週	Maishū
This year	今年	Kotoshi
Last year	去年	Kyonen
Next year	来年	Rainen
Morning	朝	Asa
Daytime / noon	昼	Hiru
Evening / night	晩 / 夜	Ban / Yoru
Midnight	夜中	Yonaka

Weather & Climate

Japan has four very distinct seasons. Pack and plan accordingly: cherry blossoms (sakura) peak late March to early April; rainy season (tsuyu) runs June through mid-July; summer is hot and humid; autumn foliage (kōyō) peaks in November; winter is cold with heavy snow on the Sea of Japan coast.

Weather vocabulary

Weather	天気	Tenki
Fine / sunny	晴れ	Hare
Cloudy	曇り	Kumori
Rain	雨	Ame
Snow	雪	Yuki
Wind	風	Kaze
Typhoon	台風	Taifū
Earthquake	地震	Jishin
Hot (weather)	暑い	Atsui
Cold (weather)	寒い	Samui
Warm	暖かい	Atatakai
Cool	涼しい	Suzushii
Humid	蒸し暑い	Mushiatsui

Dry	乾燥	Kansō
Sunny weather	良い天気	li tenki
Bad weather	悪い天気	Warui tenki
Forecast	天気予報	Tenki yohō

Seasons

Season	季節	Kisetsu
Spring	春	Haru
Summer	夏	Natsu
Autumn / fall	秋	Aki
Winter	冬	Fuyu
Cherry blossom (season)	桜	Sakura
Autumn leaves	紅葉	Kōyō
Rainy season	梅雨	Tsuyu

Talking about the weather

You	今日はいい天気ですね	Kyō wa ii tenki desu ne	Nice weather today, isn't it?
Local	本当に。気持ちいいですね	Hontō ni. Kimochi ii desu ne	Really. It feels wonderful.

You	暑いですね	Atsui desu ne	It's hot, isn't it?
Local	そうですね。今日は三十度です	Sō desu ne. Kyō wa sanjū-do desu	Yes. It's 30 degrees today.
You	明日の天気はどうですか	Ashita no tenki wa dō desu ka?	How is tomorrow's weather?
Local	雨が降るそうです	Ame ga furu sō desu	It's supposed to rain.
You	傘を借りられますか	Kasa o kariraremasu ka?	Can I borrow an umbrella?
Local	はい、こちらにございます	Hai, kochira ni gozaimasu	Yes, right here.

Directions, Colors & Sizes

Directions (left, right, up, down)

Right	右	Migi
Left	左	Hidari
Up / above	上	Ue
Down / below	下	Shita
Front / in front	前	Mae
Back / behind	後ろ	Ushiro
Inside	中	Naka
Outside	外	Soto
Next to / beside	隣	Tonari
Near	近く	Chikaku
Far	遠い	Tōi
Straight ahead	まっすぐ	Massugu
This way	こちら	Kochira
That way	そちら	Sochira
Over there	あちら	Achira
Which way?	どちら	Dochira
Here	ここ	Koko
There	そこ	Soko

Over there	あそこ	Asoko
Where?	どこ	Doko

Compass directions

North	北	Kita
South	南	Minami
East	東	Higashi
West	西	Nishi
Northeast	北東	Hokutō
Northwest	北西	Hokusei
Southeast	南東	Nantō
Southwest	南西	Nansei

Colors

Red	赤	Aka
Blue	青	Ao
Yellow	黄色	Kiirō
Green	緑	Midori
White	白	Shiro
Black	黒	Kuro
Brown	茶色	Chairo

Gray	灰色 / グレー	Haiiro / Gurē
Pink	ピンク	Pinku
Orange	オレンジ	Orenji
Purple	紫	Murasaki
Gold	金色	Kin'iro
Silver	銀色	Gin'iro
Light blue	水色	Mizuiro
Dark	濃い	Koi
Light (in color)	薄い	Usui
Color	色	Iro

Sizes and amounts

Big / large	大きい	Ōkii
Small	小さい	Chiisai
Long	長い	Nagai
Short (length)	短い	Mijikai
Tall / high	高い	Takai
Short (height) / low	低い	Hikui
Wide	広い	Hiroi
Narrow	狭い	Semai
Heavy	重い	Omoi

Light (weight)	軽い	Karui
Thick	厚い	Atsui
Thin	薄い	Usui
A lot / many	たくさん	Takusan
A little / few	少し	Sukoshi
More	もっと	Motto
Enough	十分	Jūbun
Too much	多すぎ	Ōsugi
Same	同じ	Onaji
Different	違う	Chigau
Size (clothing)	サイズ	Saizu
Small / Medium / Large	S / M / L	Esu / Emu / Eru
Bigger size, please	もっと大きいサイズ をください	Motto ōkii saizu o kudasai
Smaller size, please	もっと小さいサイズ をください	Motto chiisai saizu o kudasai

Family Relationships

Japanese has two parallel sets of family words. The plain forms (chichi, haha, ani, ane) refer to your own family. The polite -san forms (otōsan, okāsan, onīsan, onēsan) refer to someone else's family, or are used to address your own family members directly. This distinction matters: using 'otōsan' to talk about your own father in a formal setting is overly polite; using 'chichi' to ask about a stranger's father is too blunt.

Family words, own family vs. others'

MY FAMILY (referring to own family)		
Family	家族	Kazoku
Father	父	Chichi
Mother	母	Haha
Older brother	兄	Ani
Older sister	姉	Ane
Younger brother	弟	Otōto
Younger sister	妹	Imōto
Siblings	兄弟	Kyōdai
Grandfather	祖父	Sofu
Grandmother	祖母	Sobo
Grandparents	祖父母	Sofubo

Husband	夫	Otto
Wife	妻	Tsuma
Son	息子	Musuko
Daughter	娘	Musume
Child / children	子ども	Kodomo
Parents	両親	Ryōshin
SOMEONE ELSE'S FAMILY (polite)		
Your / their family	ご家族	Go-kazoku
Father	お父さん	Otōsan
Mother	お母さん	Okāsan
Older brother	お兄さん	Onīsan
Older sister	お姉さん	Onēsan
Younger brother	弟さん	Otōto-san
Younger sister	妹さん	Imōto-san
Grandfather	おじいさん	Ojīsan
Grandmother	おばあさん	Obāsan
Husband	ご主人	Go-shujin
Wife	奥さん	Okusan
Son	息子さん	Musuko-san
Daughter	娘さん	Musume-san
Child	お子さん	O-ko-san

Parents	ご両親	Go-ryōshin
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Asking about family

You	ご家族は何人ですか	Go-kazoku wa nan'nin desu ka?	How many in your family?
Local	四人家族です	Yo-nin kazoku desu	We are a family of four.
You	兄弟はいますか	Kyōdai wa imasu ka?	Do you have siblings?
Local	姉が一人います	Ane ga hitori imasu	I have one older sister.
You	お子さんはいらっしゃいますか	O-ko-san wa irasshaimasu ka?	Do you have children?
Local	はい、二人います	Hai, futari imasu	Yes, I have two.
You	結婚されていますか	Kekkon sarete imasu ka?	Are you married?
Local	はい、結婚しています	Hai, kekkon shite imasu	Yes, I am married.

Other people in your life

Friend	友達	Tomodachi
Boyfriend / girlfriend	彼氏 / 彼女	Kareshi / Kanojo
Colleague	同僚	Dōryō

Boss	上司	Jōshi
Neighbor	ご近所	Go-kinjo
Friend of mine	友達のジョン	Tomodachi no Jon
Acquaintance	知り合い	Shiriai
Guest	お客さん	O-kyaku-san
Foreigner / outsider	外国人	Gaikokujin
Japanese person	日本人	Nihonjin

Addressing People & Honorifics

Japanese attaches a small suffix to almost every person's name. Using the right one signals respect and social awareness; using the wrong one is jarring. The good news: for visitors, 'san' covers 95% of all situations. The rest are useful to recognize and to choose deliberately when the moment calls for it.

The seven name suffixes

Mr. / Ms., universal polite	～さん	-san
Sir / Madam, very formal	～様	-sama
Junior male / boy / close peer	～くん	-kun
Child / close female / pet	～ちゃん	-chan
Teacher / doctor / master	～先生	-sensei
Senior (work / school)	～先輩	-senpai
Title (boss, section chief)	～部長 / 課長	-buchō / -kachō

When to use each

Meeting anyone new	Last name + san. e.g., Tanaka-san.
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Hotel staff, shopkeepers	Just be polite, they will address you as kyaku-sama (honored guest); you do not need to know their name.
Talking to a doctor or teacher	Last name + sensei. e.g., Yamada-sensei.
Children, friends' kids	First name + chan (girl, young child) or kun (boy).
Service or formal letters	Last name + sama.
Co-workers, peers	Last name + san. First name + san if close.
Yourself	Never attach any suffix to your own name.

Never call yourself 'Max-san' or sign your name with -san. Suffixes are only for others. Saying 'watashi wa Max desu' (I am Max) is enough.

Polite prefixes: o- and go-

Japanese also adds 'o' or 'go' to nouns to make them more polite, お茶 (o-cha, tea), お水 (o-mizu, water), ご家族 (go-kazoku, your family). For travelers, you do not need to use these yourself, but you will hear them constantly from staff.

Tea (polite)	お茶	O-cha
Water (polite)	お水	O-mizu

Money (polite)	お金	O-kane
Name (polite)	お名前	O-namae
Your family (polite)	ご家族	Go-kazoku
Your address (polite)	ご住所	Go-jūsho
Bill (polite)	お会計	O-kaikei

Useful ways to address people you don't know

Excuse me (universal)	すみません	Sumimasen
Excuse me (more polite)	失礼します	Shitsurei shimasu
Ma'am / Sir (only literal: customer)	お客様	O-kyaku-sama
Sir (older man, careful use)	おじさん	Ojisan
Ma'am (older woman, careful use)	おばさん	Obasan
Young man	お兄さん	O-nīsan
Young woman	お姉さん	O-nēsan
Children (group)	皆さん	Mina-san
Everyone	皆様	Mina-sama

To stop a stranger or get attention on the street, do not call them 'anata' (you). Just say 'sumimasen' and bow slightly. It works in every situation.

Greetings & Small Talk

Japanese greetings change with the time of day and the closeness of the relationship. Bowing accompanies all of them. The deeper the bow, the more formal the greeting.

Greetings by time of day

Good morning (formal)	おはようございます	Ohayō gozaimasu
Good morning (casual)	おはよう	Ohayō
Hello / good afternoon	こんにちは	Konnichiwa
Good evening	こんばんは	Konbanwa
Good night	おやすみなさい	Oyasuminasai
Welcome (entering a shop)	いらっしゃいませ	Irasshaimase
Goodbye (formal)	さようなら	Sayōnara
See you / bye	じゃあね / またね	Jā ne / Mata ne
See you tomorrow	また明日	Mata ashita
See you later	また後で	Mata ato de

'Sayōnara' implies a longer separation. Among friends and family, 'jā ne' or 'mata ne' is far more common. Hotel staff will see you off with 'itte rasshai' (have a good day out) and welcome you back with 'okaerinasai' (welcome home).

Polite essentials

Thank you (basic)	ありがとう	Arigatō
Thank you (polite)	ありがとうございます	Arigatō gozaimasu
Thank you very much	どうもありがとうございます	Dōmo arigatō gozaimasu
You're welcome	どういたしまして	Dō itashimashite
Excuse me / sorry / thanks	すみません	Sumimasen
I'm sorry (formal)	ごめんなさい	Gomennasai
I'm sorry (very formal)	申し訳ありません	Mōshiwake arimasen
Please (when requesting)	お願いします	Onegai shimasu
Please (here, take this)	どうぞ	Dōzo
Yes	はい	Hai
No	いいえ	Iie
Yes (casual)	うん	Un
No (casual)	ううん	Uun
OK / understood	わかりました	Wakarimashita
I don't understand	わかりません	Wakarimasen

'Sumimasen' is the Swiss Army knife of Japanese. It means 'excuse me' (to get attention), 'sorry' (for a bump), and 'thank you' (when someone has gone out of their way for you). When in doubt, sumimasen.

First meetings

You	はじめまして	Hajimemashite	Nice to meet you.
You	私はマックスです	Watashi wa Makkusu desu	I am Max.
You	どうぞよろしくお願 いします	Dōzo yoroshiku onegai shimasu	I look forward to knowing you.
Local	こちらこそ、よろしく お願いします	Kochira koso, yoroshiku onagai shimasu	Likewise, pleased to meet you.
You	どちらからですか	Dochira kara desu ka?	Where are you from?
Local	東京からです	Tōkyō kara desu	I'm from Tokyo.
You	私はハワイから来まし た	Watashi wa Hawai kara kimashita	I came from Hawaii.
Local	ハワイですか。いいで すね	Hawai desu ka. Ii desu ne	Hawaii? How nice.

How are you?

You	お元気ですか	O-genki desu ka?	How are you? / Are you well?
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Local	はい、元気です。あなたは？	Hai, genki desu. Anata wa?	Yes, I'm well. And you?
You	私も元気です。ありがとう	Watashi mo genki desu. Arigatō	I'm well too. Thank you.
You	ちょっと疲れています	Chotto tsukarete imasu	I'm a little tired.
You	風邪を引きました	Kaze o hikimashita	I caught a cold.
Local	それは大変ですね	Sore wa taihen desu ne	That's tough. / I'm sorry to hear that.

Small talk topics

You	日本は初めてです	Nihon wa hajimete desu	This is my first time in Japan.
Local	そうですか。楽しんでください	Sō desu ka. Tanoshinde kudasai	Is that so? Please enjoy it.
You	東京はとてもいいですね	Tōkyō wa totemo ii desu ne	Tokyo is really nice.
Local	ありがとうございます	Arigatō gozaimasu	Thank you (kindly).
You	日本語を少し勉強しています	Nihongo o sukoshi benkyō shite imasu	I'm studying a little Japanese.
Local	上手ですね	Jōzu desu ne	Your Japanese is good!
You	いえいえ、まだまだです	Ie ie, mada mada desu	Oh no, I have a long way to go.

You	観光で来ました	Kankō de kimashita	I came as a tourist.
Local	どこを観光しましたか	Doko o kankō shimashita ka?	Where have you been sightseeing?
You	京都と大阪に行きました	Kyōto to Ōsaka ni ikimashita	I went to Kyoto and Osaka.

Saying goodbye

Thank you for everything	いろいろありがとうございました	Iro iro arigatō gozaimashita
I had a great time	とても楽しかったです	Totemo tanoshikatta desu
Please take care	お元気で	O-genki de
Take care (going)	気をつけて	Ki o tsukete
I hope to see you again	また会いましょう	Mata aimashō
Excuse me, I'm leaving	失礼します	Shitsurei shimasu
Thank you for the meal	ご馳走様でした	Gochisōsama deshita
Thank you for having me	お邪魔しました	O-jama shimashita

Dining Out

Japanese dining etiquette is built on flow: you wait to be seated, you say 'itadakimasu' before eating, and 'gochisōsama' when finished. Tipping is not done and can actually offend. Most restaurants display plastic food models in the window, you can point to what you want even without a word of Japanese.

Restaurant types

Restaurant	レストラン	Resutoran
Diner / cafeteria	食堂	Shokudō
Cafe	喫茶店 / カフェ	Kissaten / Kafe
Sushi restaurant	寿司屋	Sushiya
Ramen shop	ラーメン屋	Rāmen'ya
Curry house	カレー屋	Karē'ya
Soba shop	そば屋	Soba'ya
Udon shop	うどん屋	Udon'ya
Yakitori (grilled chicken) shop	焼き鳥屋	Yakitori'ya
Yakiniku (grilled meat)	焼肉	Yakiniku
Tempura	天ぷら	Tenpura
Izakaya (Japanese pub)	居酒屋	Izakaya

Family restaurant	ファミレス	Famiresu
Convenience store	コンビニ	Konbini
Department store food hall	デパ地下	Depachika
Vending machine restaurant	券売機の店	Kenbaiki no mise

Entering and being seated

Staff	いらっしゃいませ	Irasshaimase	Welcome!
Staff	何名様ですか	Nan-mei sama desu ka?	How many in your party?
You	二人です	Futari desu	Two.
You	三人です	San-nin desu	Three.
Staff	禁煙席ですか、喫煙席ですか	Kin'enseki desu ka, kitsuenseki desu ka?	Non-smoking or smoking?
You	禁煙席をお願いします	Kin'enseki de onegai shimasu	Non-smoking, please.
Staff	カウンターでもよろしいですか	Kauntā demo yoroshii desu ka?	Is the counter okay?
You	テーブル席をお願いします	Tēburu seki de onegai shimasu	A table seat, please.
Staff	こちらどうぞ	Kochira e dōzo	This way, please.
You	ありがとうございます	Arigatō gozaimasu	Thank you.

Staff	お待たせしました	O-matase shimashita	Sorry to keep you waiting.
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Looking at the menu

You	メニューをお願いします	Menyū o onegai shimasu	Menu, please.
You	英語のメニューはありますか	Eigo no menyū wa arimasu ka?	Do you have an English menu?
Staff	はい、こちらです	Hai, kochira desu	Yes, here you are.
Staff	申し訳ありません、日本語だけです	Mōshiwake arimasen, nihongo dake desu	I'm sorry, only Japanese.
You	おすすめは何ですか	O-susume wa nan desu ka?	What do you recommend?
Staff	今日は刺身がおすすめです	Honjitsu wa sashimi ga o-susume desu	Today's recommendation is the sashimi.
You	これは何ですか	Kore wa nan desu ka?	What is this?
Staff	牛肉の煮込みです	Gyūniku no nikomi desu	It's stewed beef.
You	辛いですか	Karai desu ka?	Is it spicy?
Staff	少し辛いです	Sukoshi karai desu	A little spicy.
You	ベジタリアンメニューはありますか	Bejitarian menyū wa arimasu ka?	Do you have vegetarian options?

Ordering

Staff	ご注文はお決まりですか	Go-chūmon wa o-kimari desu ka?	Are you ready to order?
You	まだです。もう少し待ってください	Mada desu. Mō sukoshi matte kudasai	Not yet. Just a bit more, please.
You	これをお願いします	Kore o onegai shimasu	I'll have this, please.
You	ラーメンを一つください	Rāmen o hitotsu kudasai	One ramen, please.
You	天ぷら定食を二つください	Tenpura teishoku o futatsu kudasai	Two tempura set meals.
You	ビールをお願いします	Bīru o onegai shimasu	A beer, please.
You	水をください	Mizu o kudasai	Water, please.
Staff	他にご注文は？	Hoka ni go-chūmon wa?	Anything else?
You	以上です	Ijō desu	That's all.
Staff	かしこまりました	Kashikomarimashita	Certainly.
Staff	少々お待ちください	Shōshō o-machi kudasai	Please wait a moment.

Common food items

MAIN DISHES		
Sushi	寿司	Sushi
Sashimi (raw fish)	刺身	Sashimi
Tempura	天ぷら	Tenpura
Tonkatsu (pork cutlet)	豚カツ	Tonkatsu
Curry rice	カレーライス	Karē raisu
Donburi (rice bowl)	丼	Donburi
Beef bowl	牛丼	Gyūdon
Eel rice	うな丼 / うな重	Unadon / Unajū
Soba (buckwheat noodles)	そば	Soba
Udon (thick noodles)	うどん	Udon
Ramen (Chinese-style noodles)	ラーメン	Rāmen
Yakitori (grilled skewers)	焼き鳥	Yakitori
Sukiyaki	すき焼き	Sukiyaki
Shabu-shabu	しゃぶしゃぶ	Shabu-shabu
Okonomiyaki (savory pancake)	お好み焼き	Okonomiyaki
Takoyaki (octopus balls)	たこ焼き	Takoyaki
Onigiri (rice ball)	おにぎり	Onigiri
Bento (boxed meal)	弁当 / お弁当	Bentō / O-bentō

ON THE TABLE		
Rice (cooked)	ご飯	Gohan
Soup	汁 / スープ	Shiru / Sūpu
Miso soup	味噌汁	Miso shiru
Soy sauce	醤油	Shōyu
Wasabi	わさび	Wasabi
Pickles	漬物	Tsukemono
Salt	塩	Shio
Pepper	胡椒	Koshō
Sugar	砂糖	Satō
Vinegar	酢	Su
Chopsticks	箸 / お箸	Hashi / O-hashī
Fork	フォーク	Fōku
Knife	ナイフ	Naifu
Spoon	スプーン	Supūn
Plate	皿 / お皿	Sara / O-sara
Bowl	茶碗 / お碗	Chawan / O-wan
Glass / cup	コップ / グラス	Koppu / Gurasu
Napkin	ナプキン / おしぼり	Napukin / Oshibori

During the meal

You (before)	いただきます	Itadakimasu	Said before eating. Like 'bon appétit' but more reverent.
You	美味しいです	Oishii desu	It's delicious.
You	とても美味しい	Totemo oishii	Very delicious.
You	すみません、お水をもう一杯	Sumimasen, o-mizu o mō ippai	Excuse me, one more water.
Staff	はい、ただいまお持ちします	Hai, tada ima o-mochi shimasu	Yes, I'll bring it right away.
You	もう少しご飯をください	Mō sukoshi gohan o kudasai	A little more rice, please.
You	お代わりお願いします	O-kawari onegai shimasu	Refill, please.
You (after)	ご馳走様でした	Gochisōsama deshita	Said after eating. 'Thank you for the meal.'

Always say 'itadakimasu' before your first bite. Putting your hands together as if praying is the traditional gesture. After eating, 'gochisōsama deshita' (without it, you may seem rude to your host).

Paying the bill

You	お会計をお願いします	O-kaikei o onegai shimasu	The bill, please.
You	お勘定をお願いします	O-kanjō o onegai shimasu	The check, please (alternative).
Staff	全部で三千五百円です	Zenbu de sanzen gohyaku en desu	Three thousand five hundred yen total.
You	カードは使えますか	Kādo wa tsukaemasu ka?	Can I use a card?
Staff	現金のみです	Genkin nomi desu	Cash only.
Staff	はい、使えます	Hai, tsukaemasu	Yes, you can.
You	別々をお願いします	Betsu betsu de onegai shimasu	Separate checks, please.
You	一緒をお願いします	Issho de onegai shimasu	All together, please.
You	レシートをください	Reshīto o kudasai	Receipt, please.
Staff	ありがとうございます た	Arigatō gozaimashita	Thank you very much.

Many restaurants have a cashier near the door instead of paying at the table. The server gives you a slip; take it to the front. Tipping is not done, staff will chase you down to return forgotten money.

Special situations

You	アレルギーがあります	Arerugī ga arimasu	I have an allergy.
You	卵が食べられません	Tamago ga taberaremasen	I can't eat eggs.
You	肉は食べません	Niku wa tabemasen	I don't eat meat.
You	ベジタリアンです	Bejitarian desu	I'm vegetarian.
You	辛いものをお願いします	Karakunai mono o onegai shimasu	Something not spicy, please.
You	これは何が入っていますか	Kore wa nani ga haitte imasu ka?	What's in this?
You	ワサビ抜きでお願いします	Wasabi nuki de onegai shimasu	Without wasabi, please.
You	テイクアウトできますか	Teikuauto dekimasu ka?	Can I get this to go?
Staff	はい、お包みします	Hai, o-tsutsumi shimasu	Yes, I'll pack it.
Staff	店内のみとなっております	Tennai nomi to natte orimasu	Dine-in only.

Cultural context: dining

Slurping noodles is not rude, it is a compliment, and it cools the noodles. Lifting your soup bowl to drink from it directly is also normal. Never stick chopsticks upright in rice (it resembles funeral incense) and never pass food chopstick-to-chopstick (also funeral imagery). Pour drinks for others, not yourself; let someone pour for you in turn. The phrase 'kanpai!' (cheers) is the universal toast.

Shopping

Japan is shopping heaven, from convenience-store shelves to luxury department-store floors. Most shops have fixed prices, there is little haggling outside of antique markets and electronics shops. Many large stores offer tax-free shopping for tourists with a foreign passport.

Entering the shop

Staff	いらっしゃいませ	Irasshaimase	Welcome!
You	見てだけです	Mite iru dake desu	Just looking.
You	すみません、ちょっと ...	Sumimasen, chotto...	Excuse me, may I ask...
Staff	はい、何でしょうか	Hai, nan deshō ka?	Yes, how can I help?
You	これはいくらですか	Kore wa ikura desu ka?	How much is this?
Staff	三千元です	Sanzen en desu	Three thousand yen.
You	これと同じものはありますか	Kore to onaji mono wa arimasu ka?	Do you have the same as this?
You	色違いはありますか	Iro chigai wa arimasu ka?	Do you have other colors?
Staff	はい、こちらにございます	Hai, kochira ni gozaimasu	Yes, right here.

Staff	申し訳ありません、それだけです	Mōshiwake arimasen, sore dake desu	Sorry, that's all we have.
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Trying on clothes

You	試着できますか	Shichaku dekimasu ka?	Can I try this on?
Staff	はい、こちらどうぞ	Hai, kochira e dōzo	Yes, this way please.
You	M サイズはありますか	Emu saizu wa arimasu ka?	Do you have a medium?
Staff	サイズはいくつですか	Saizu wa ikutsu desu ka?	What size are you?
You	L サイズです	Eru saizu desu	Large.
You	もう少し大きいのはありますか	Mō sukoshi ōkii no wa arimasu ka?	Do you have a slightly larger one?
You	もう少し小さいのはありますか	Mō sukoshi chiisai no wa arimasu ka?	A slightly smaller one?
You	ちょうど良いです	Chōdo ii desu	It fits perfectly.
You	きついです	Kitsui desu	It's too tight.
You	ゆるいです	Yurui desu	It's too loose.
You	他の色はありますか	Hoka no iro wa arimasu ka?	Do you have other colors?

Tax-free shopping

You	免税できますか	Menzei dekimasu ka?	Is tax-free available?
Staff	はい、パスポートをお願いします	Hai, pasupōto o onegai shimasu	Yes, your passport please.
Staff	五千円以上のお買い物が免税対象です	Gosen en ijō no o-kaimono ga menzei taishō desu	Purchases over ¥5,000 qualify.
You	パスポートはこちらです	Pasupōto wa kochira desu	Here is my passport.
Staff	ありがとうございます	Arigatō gozaimasu	Thank you.
Staff	こちらは出国まで開けないでください	Kochira wa shukkoku made akenai de kudasai	Please don't open this until departure.

Tax-free works only with a passport at participating stores (look for the 'Tax-Free' sign). The minimum is usually ¥5,000. Consumables (food, cosmetics) are sealed and must leave Japan unopened.

Paying

You	これをください	Kore o kudasai	I'll take this.
You	これとこれをお願いします	Kore to kore o onegai shimasu	These two, please.
Staff	全部で四千五百円です	Zenbu de yonsen gohyaku en desu	Four thousand five hundred yen total.

You	カードは使えますか	Kādo wa tsukaemasu ka?	Can I use a card?
Staff	はい、こちらでお支払いいただけます	Hai, kochira de o-shiharai itadakemasu	Yes, pay here.
Staff	サインをお願いします	Sain o onegai shimasu	Sign, please.
Staff	暗証番号を入力してください	Anshō bangō o nyūryoku shite kudasai	Enter your PIN, please.
You	袋をください	Fukuro o kudasai	Bag, please.
You	袋はいりません	Fukuro wa irimasen	I don't need a bag.
Staff	袋は三円になります	Fukuro wa san en ni narimasu	The bag will be three yen.
You	プレゼント用に包んでください	Purezento yō ni tsutsunde kudasai	Please wrap it as a gift.
Staff	かしこまりました	Kashikomarimashita	Certainly.

Common shop vocabulary

Department store	デパート	Depāto
Supermarket	スーパー	Sūpā
Convenience store	コンビニ	Konbini
Drugstore / pharmacy	薬局 / ドラッグストア	Yakkyoku / Doraggu sutoa
Bookstore	本屋	Hon'ya

100-yen shop	百円ショップ	Hyaku-en shoppu
Souvenir	お土産	O-miyage
Gift	プレゼント	Purezento
Clothes	服 / 洋服	Fuku / Yōfuku
Shoes	靴	Kutsu
T-shirt	Tシャツ	Tī shatsu
Jacket / coat	ジャケット / コート	Jaketto / Kōto
Bag	鞆 / バッグ	Kaban / Baggu
Wallet	財布	Saifu
Sale	セール	Sēru
Discount	割引	Waribiki
Tax	税金 / 消費税	Zeikin / Shōhizei
Brand	ブランド	Burando

Transportation

Japan's transit network is one of the best in the world, punctual to the second, clean, and connected even to remote villages. A few key phrases and a prepaid IC card (Suica or Pasma) will carry you nearly anywhere.

Asking for directions

You	すみません、駅はどこですか	Sumimasen, eki wa doko desu ka?	Excuse me, where is the station?
Local	まっすぐ行って、右に曲がってください	Massugu itte, migi ni magatte kudasai	Go straight and turn right.
You	ここから近いですか	Koko kara chikai desu ka?	Is it close from here?
Local	歩いて十分ぐらいです	Aruite jippun gurai desu	About 10 minutes on foot.
You	地図で見せてもらえますか	Chizu de misete moraemasu ka?	Can you show me on a map?
You	もう一度言ってください	Mō ichido itte kudasai	Please say it once more.
You	ゆっくり話してください	Yukkuri hanashite kudasai	Please speak slowly.
You	道に迷いました	Michi ni mayoimashita	I'm lost.
Local	案内しましょうか	Annai shimashō ka?	Shall I guide you?

You	ありがとうございます 。助かります	Arigatō gozaimasu. Tasukarimasu	Thank you. That helps a lot.
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Trains and subways

You	東京駅までいくらですか	Tōkyō eki made ikura desu ka?	How much to Tokyo Station?
You	新宿までの切符を一枚ください	Shinjuku made no kippu o ichimai kudasai	One ticket to Shinjuku, please.
You	大人二枚お願いします	Otona nimai onegai shimasu	Two adult tickets, please.
You	子供一枚お願いします	Kodomo ichimai onegai shimasu	One child ticket, please.
You	京都行きの新幹線は何番線ですか	Kyōto yuki no shinkansen wa nan bansen desu ka?	Which track for the bullet train to Kyoto?
Staff	十四番線です	Jūyon bansen desu	Track 14.
You	この電車は新宿に止まりますか	Kono densha wa Shinjuku ni tomarimasu ka?	Does this train stop at Shinjuku?
Local	はい、止まります	Hai, tomarimasu	Yes, it stops there.
Local	いいえ、次の電車に乗ってください	lie, tsugi no densha ni notte kudasai	No, take the next train.
You	乗り換えはありますか	Norikae wa arimasu ka?	Do I need to transfer?

Local	東京駅で乗り換えてください	Tōkyō eki de norikaete kudasai	Please transfer at Tokyo Station.
You	次の電車は何時ですか	Tsugi no densha wa nanji desu ka?	What time is the next train?
Staff	三時十五分です	Sanji jūgo fun desu	3:15.

IC cards (Suica / Pasma)

You	Suica を買いたいです	Suica o kaitai desu	I'd like to buy a Suica.
Staff	デポジットは五百円です	Depojitto wa gohyaku en desu	The deposit is 500 yen.
You	三千円チャージしてください	Sanzen en chāji shite kudasai	Charge it with 3,000 yen, please.
You	残高はいくらですか	Zandaka wa ikura desu ka?	What's the balance?
You	返却したいです	Henkyaku shitai desu	I'd like to return it.

Suica and Pasma work nationwide on trains, buses, vending machines, and most convenience stores. You can also buy a paper ticket from the machines, they all have an English-language button.

Taking a taxi

You	タクシー乗り場はどこですか	Takushī noriba wa doko desu ka?	Where is the taxi stand?
Driver	どちらまで？	Dochira made?	Where to?
You	このホテルまでお願いします	Kono hoteru made onegai shimasu	To this hotel, please. (showing card)
You	東京駅まで行ってください	Tōkyō eki made itte kudasai	Please go to Tokyo Station.
You	急いでいます	Isoide imasu	I'm in a hurry.
You	ゆっくりで大丈夫です	Yukkuri de daijōbu desu	No rush, take your time.
You	ここで止めてください	Koko de tomete kudasai	Stop here, please.
Driver	千二百円です	Sen nihyaku en desu	1,200 yen.
You	領収書をお願いします	Ryōshūsho o onegai shimasu	A receipt, please.
Driver	ありがとうございました	Arigatō gozaimashita	Thank you very much.

Taxi doors open and close automatically, do not pull on them. Drivers do not expect tips. Many take credit cards now, but cash is still safest in rural areas.

Buses

You	このバスは京都駅に行きますか	Kono basu wa Kyōto eki ni ikimasu ka?	Does this bus go to Kyoto Station?
Driver	はい、行きます	Hai, ikimasu	Yes, it does.
You	次は何のバス停ですか	Tsugi wa nan no basu tei desu ka?	What's the next bus stop?
You	ここで降ります	Koko de orimasu	I'll get off here.
You	運賃はいくらですか	Unchin wa ikura desu ka?	What's the fare?
Driver	二百三十円です	Nihyaku sanjū en desu	230 yen.

Transportation vocabulary

Train	電車	Densha
Subway	地下鉄	Chikatetsu
Bullet train	新幹線	Shinkansen
Bus	バス	Basu
Taxi	タクシー	Takushī
Car	車	Kuruma
Bicycle	自転車	Jitensha
Airplane	飛行機	Hikōki
Airport	空港	Kūkō

Boat / ferry	船 / フェリー	Fune / Ferī
Station	駅	Eki
Bus stop	バス停	Basu tei
Ticket	切符 / きっぷ	Kippu
IC card	IC カード	Aishī kādo
One-way	片道	Katamichi
Round-trip	往復	Ōfuku
First train	始発	Shihatsu
Last train	終電	Shūden
Late	遅れ	Okure
On time	定刻	Teikoku
Delay	遅延	Chien
Map	地図	Chizu
Route	経路 / ルート	Keiro / Rūto
Address	住所	Jūsho

Hotels & Accommodation

Japan offers everything from international chain hotels to traditional ryokan with futon bedding and shared baths, and minimalist capsule hotels for solo travelers. Check-in is usually 3 p.m.; check-out is 10 or 11 a.m. Cash is widely accepted; most chains take cards.

Checking in

You	チェックインお願いします	Chekku in onegai shimasu	I'd like to check in.
Staff	ご予約のお名前は	Go-yoyaku no o-namae wa?	Your reservation name, please?
You	マックス・ファムです	Makkusu Famu desu	Max Pham.
Staff	パスポートをお願いします	Pasupōto o onegai shimasu	Passport, please.
You	はい、どうぞ	Hai, dōzo	Here you are.
Staff	こちらの用紙にご記入ください	Kochira no yōshi ni go-kinyū kudasai	Please fill in this form.
Staff	シングルルームを二泊ですね	Shinguru rūmu o nihaku desu ne?	A single room for two nights, correct?
You	はい、そうです	Hai, sō desu	Yes, that's right.
Staff	朝食付きです	Chōshoku tsuki desu	Breakfast is included.

Staff	お部屋は三階の三〇五号室です	O-heya wa sangai no san-maru-go gōshitsu desu	Your room is 305, on the third floor.
Staff	こちらが鍵でございます	Kochira ga kagi de gozaimasu	Here is your key.
Staff	朝食は六時から九時半まで二階のレストランです	Chōshoku wa rokuji kara kuji han made nikai no resutoran desu	Breakfast is 6:00 to 9:30 in the second-floor restaurant.
You	ありがとうございます	Arigatō gozaimasu	Thank you.

Asking for amenities and help

You	WiFi のパスワードを教えてください	WiFi no pasuwādo o oshiete kudasai	Please tell me the WiFi password.
You	アダプターを借りられますか	Adaputā o kariraremasu ka?	Can I borrow an adapter?
You	タオルをもう一枚お願いします	Taoru o mō ichimai onegai shimasu	One more towel, please.
You	歯ブラシはありますか	Ha-burashi wa arimasu ka?	Do you have a toothbrush?
You	ドライヤーはありますか	Doraiyā wa arimasu ka?	Is there a hairdryer?
You	クリーニングをお願いします	Kurīningu o onegai shimasu	Laundry service, please.

You	明日の朝、タクシーを呼んでください	Ashita no asa, takushī o yonde kudasai	Please call a taxi for tomorrow morning.
You	何時に出ますか	Nanji ni demasu ka?	What time will it come?
You	朝六時にお願いします	Asa rokuji ni onegai shimasu	6 a.m., please.
You	荷物を預けられますか	Nimotsu o azukeraremasu ka?	Can I leave my luggage?
Staff	はい、お預かりします	Hai, o-azukari shimasu	Yes, we'll hold it for you.
You	近くにコンビニはありますか	Chikaku ni konbini wa arimasu ka?	Is there a convenience store nearby?
Staff	ホテルを出て、左に二分です	Hoteru o dete, hidari ni nifun desu	Out of the hotel, two minutes to the left.

Reporting a problem

You	すみません、部屋が寒いです	Sumimasen, heya ga samui desu	Excuse me, the room is cold.
You	エアコンが効きません	Eakon ga kikimasen	The air conditioner isn't working.

You	お湯が出ません	O-yu ga demasen	There's no hot water.
You	電気がつきません	Denki ga tsukimasen	The light won't turn on.
You	WiFi がつながりません	WiFi ga tsunagarimasen	The WiFi won't connect.
You	鍵をなくしました	Kagi o nakushimashita	I lost my key.
You	部屋を変えてもらえますか	Heya o kaete moraemasu ka?	Could I change rooms?
Staff	申し訳ありません。すぐ係の者をお送りします	Môshiwake arimasen. Sugu kakari no mono o o-okuri shimasu	I apologize. I'll send someone right away.

Checking out

You	チェックアウトをお願いします	Chekku auto onegai shimasu	Check-out, please.
Staff	お部屋はいかがでしたか	O-heya wa ikaga deshita ka?	How was your room?
You	とても良かったです	Totemo yokatta desu	It was very nice.
Staff	全部で二万八千円になります	Zenbu de niman hassen en ni narimasu	The total is 28,000 yen.
You	カードで払います	Kâdo de haraimasu	I'll pay by card.

Staff	領収書はいかがいたしますか	Ryōshūsho wa ikaga itashimasu ka?	Would you like a receipt?
You	お願いします	Onegai shimasu	Yes, please.
Staff	ありがとうございました。お気をつけて	Arigatō gozaimashita. O-ki o tsukete	Thank you very much. Take care.

Hotel and room vocabulary

Hotel	ホテル	Hoteru
Ryokan (traditional inn)	旅館	Ryokan
Minshuku (B&B)	民宿	Minshuku
Capsule hotel	カプセルホテル	Kapuseru hoteru
Hostel	ゲストハウス	Gesuto hausu
Single room	シングル	Shinguru
Double room	ダブル	Daburu
Twin room	ツイン	Tsuin
Reservation	予約	Yoyaku
Check-in	チェックイン	Chekku in
Check-out	チェックアウト	Chekku auto
Key	鍵 / カードキー	Kagi / Kādo kī
Front desk	フロント	Furonto
Elevator	エレベーター	Erebētā

Stairs	階段	Kaidan
Floor	階	Kai
Room	部屋	Heya
Bed	ベッド	Beddo
Futon (Japanese bedding)	布団	Futon
Bath	風呂 / お風呂	Furo / O-furo
Shower	シャワー	Shawā
Toilet	トイレ	Toire
Air conditioner	エアコン	Eakon
Heater	暖房	Danbō
Pillow	枕	Makura
Blanket	毛布	Mōfu
Towel	タオル	Taoru
Yukata (cotton robe)	浴衣	Yukata
Slippers	スリッパ	Surippa
Hot spring	温泉	Onsen
Public bath	大浴場	Daiyokujō
Breakfast	朝食	Chōshoku
Luggage	荷物	Nimotsu
Safe	セーフ / 金庫	Sēfu / Kinko

Sightseeing & Activities

Japan's sights span 1,500-year-old temples, neon megacities, snow festivals, and craft villages. Most museums and gardens charge a small entry fee (¥300 to ¥1,500). Bring cash, even some major attractions are still cash-only.

At the tourist information center

You	観光案内所はどこですか	Kankō annaijo wa doko desu ka?	Where is the tourist information center?
You	観光パンフレットをください	Kankō panfuretto o kudasai	May I have a sightseeing brochure?
You	英語の地図はありますか	Eigo no chizu wa arimasu ka?	Do you have an English map?
Staff	はい、こちらにございます	Hai, kochira ni gozaimasu	Yes, right here.
You	おすすめの観光地はどこですか	O-susume no kankō chi wa doko desu ka?	What's a recommended sight?
Staff	清水寺は素晴らしいですよ	Kiyomizu-dera wa subarashii desu yo	Kiyomizu Temple is wonderful.
You	ここから歩いて行けますか	Koko kara aruite ikemasu ka?	Can I walk there from here?

Staff	歩いて二十分ぐらいです	Aruite nijuppun gurai desu	About 20 minutes on foot.
You	バスはありますか	Basu wa arimasu ka?	Is there a bus?
Staff	市バスの二〇六番が便利です	Shibasunohihyaku roku bangabenri desu	City bus 206 is convenient.

Temples and shrines

You	入場料はいくらですか	Nyūjō ryō wa ikura desu ka?	What is the entry fee?
Staff	大人五百円です	Otona gohyaku en desu	Adult is 500 yen.
You	学割はありますか	Gaku-wari wa arimasu ka?	Is there a student discount?
You	御朱印をいただけますか	Goshuin o itadakemasu ka?	May I receive a goshuin (temple stamp)?
Staff	三百円になります	Sanbyaku en ni narimasu	300 yen.
You	御朱印帳はありますか	Goshuinchō wa arimasu ka?	Do you sell goshuin books?
You	写真は撮ってもいいですか	Shashin wa totte mo ii desu ka?	May I take pictures?
Staff	はい、どうぞ	Hai, dōzo	Yes, please.
Staff	ここから先は撮影禁止です	Koko kara saki wa satsuei kinshi desu	No photography beyond this point.

You	お祈りはどうやってするのですか	O-inori wa dō yatte suru no desu ka?	How do I pray?
Staff	二礼二拍手一礼です	Nirei nihakushu ichirei desu	Two bows, two claps, one bow.

At a Shinto shrine, the sequence is: bow twice, clap twice (loudly), pray silently, bow once. At a Buddhist temple, you bow with hands together, no clapping. Tossing a small coin (¥5 is luckiest) into the offertory box is customary before praying.

Museums and attractions

You	今日は何時まで開いていますか	Kyō wa nanji made aite imasu ka?	What time are you open until today?
Staff	午後五時までです	Gogo goji made desu	Until 5 p.m.
You	最後の入場は何時ですか	Saigo no nyūjō wa nanji desu ka?	When is last admission?
Staff	四時半までです	Yoji han made desu	Until 4:30.
You	オーディオガイドはありますか	Ōdio gaido wa arimasu ka?	Do you have an audio guide?
Staff	英語版がございます。五百円です	Eigo-ban ga gozaimasu. Gohyaku en desu	We have English. 500 yen.
You	ロッカーはありますか	Rokkā wa arimasu ka?	Are there lockers?

Staff	入口の左にございます	Iriguchi no hidari ni gozaimasu	To the left of the entrance.
You	再入場はできますか	Sai-nyūjō wa dekimasu ka?	Can I re-enter?
Staff	本日中午なら可能です	Honjitsu chū nara kanō desu	Yes, within today.

Tours and experiences

You	ツアーに参加したいです	Tsuā ni sankā shitai desu	I'd like to join a tour.
You	英語のガイドはいますか	Eigo no gaido wa imasu ka?	Is there an English guide?
Staff	午前十時のツアーがございます	Gozen jūji no tsuā ga gozaimasu	There's a 10 a.m. tour.
You	何時間ぐらいかかりますか	Nanjikan gurai kakarimasu ka?	How long does it take?
Staff	約二時間です	Yaku nijikan desu	About two hours.
You	料金はいくらですか	Ryōkin wa ikura desu ka?	What's the price?
Staff	お一人様三千円です	O-hitori-sama sanzen en desu	3,000 yen per person.
You	予約は必要ですか	Yoyaku wa hitsuyō desu ka?	Do I need a reservation?

Staff	当日でも大丈夫です	Tōjitsu demo daijōbu desu	Same-day is fine.
You	予約をしたいです	Yoyaku o shitai desu	I'd like to make a reservation.

Sightseeing vocabulary

Sightseeing	観光	Kankō
Temple (Buddhist)	お寺	O-tera
Shrine (Shintō)	神社	Jinja
Castle	城 / お城	Shiro / O-shiro
Garden	庭園 / お庭	Teien / O-niwa
Park	公園	Kōen
Museum	博物館	Hakubutsukan
Art museum	美術館	Bijutsukan
Aquarium	水族館	Suizokukan
Zoo	動物園	Dōbutsuen
Tower	塔 / タワー	Tō / Tawā
Famous place	名所	Meisho
Map	地図	Chizu
Guidebook	ガイドブック	Gaido bukku
Brochure	パンフレット	Panfuretto
Entrance fee	入場料	Nyūjōryō

Ticket	入場券	Nyūjōken
Adult	大人	Otona
Child	子供	Kodomo
Senior	シニア / 高齢者	Shinia / Kōreisha
Discount	割引	Waribiki
Group	団体	Dantai
Open	営業中	Eigyōchū
Closed today	本日休館	Honjitsu kyūkan
Tour	ツアー	Tsuā
Guide	ガイド	Gaido
Experience	体験	Taiken
Festival	祭り / お祭り	Matsuri / O-matsuri
Souvenir	お土産	O-miyage

Photography

Japan is famously photogenic, but photography etiquette is taken seriously. Many temples, shops, and traditional districts have specific rules, and the geisha district in Kyoto, for example, fines tourists for unauthorized photos. Always ask first, especially when people are in the frame.

Asking permission

You	写真を撮ってもいいですか	Shashin o totte mo ii desu ka?	May I take a photo?
Local	はい、どうぞ	Hai, dōzo	Yes, please go ahead.
Local	すみません、ここはダメです	Sumimasen, koko wa dame desu	Sorry, not here.
You	あなたと一緒に写真を撮ってもいいですか	Anata to issho ni shashin o totte mo ii desu ka?	May I take a picture with you?
Local	もちろん、いいですよ	Mochiron, ii desu yo	Of course, sure!
Local	私はちょっと…	Watashi wa chotto…	I'd rather not…
You	ここで撮影できますか	Koko de satsuei dekimasu ka?	Is photography allowed here?
Staff	建物の外なら大丈夫です	Tatemono no soto nara daijōbu desu	Outside the building is fine.
Staff	フラッシュは禁止です	Furasshu wa kinshi desu	No flash.
Staff	三脚は使えません	Sankyaku wa tsukaemasen	Tripods aren't allowed.

Asking someone to take your photo

You	すみません、写真を撮ってもらえますか	Sumimasen, shashin o totte moraemasu ka?	Excuse me, could you take a photo?
Local	もちろん	Mochiron	Of course.
You	このボタンを押すだけです	Kono botan o osu dake desu	Just press this button.
You	ここに立ちます	Koko ni tachimasu	I'll stand here.
You	もう一枚お願いします	Mō ichimai onegai shimasu	One more, please.
You	縦でお願いします	Tate de onegai shimasu	Vertical, please.
You	横でお願いします	Yoko de onegai shimasu	Horizontal, please.
Local	はい、チーズ	Hai, chīzu	Say cheese!
Local	撮りました	Torimashita	Got it.
You	ありがとうございます	Arigatō gozaimasu	Thank you.

Photography vocabulary

Photo	写真	Shashin
Camera	カメラ	Kamera
Smartphone	スマホ	Sumaho
Selfie	自撮り	Jidori
Video	動画 / ビデオ	Dōga / Bideo
Photography prohibited	撮影禁止	Satsuei kinshi
No flash	フラッシュ禁止	Furasshu kinshi
Tripod	三脚	Sankyaku
Photo spot	撮影スポット	Satsuei supotto
Beautiful view	綺麗な景色	Kirei na keshiki
Famous spot	名所	Meisho
To photograph	撮る	Toru

Social Situations & Introductions

Polite acknowledgement matters in Japan more than most countries. A small bow, a soft 'sumimasen,' and a thoughtful response to a compliment will earn you remarkable warmth. The script below covers most polite social moments.

Introducing yourself fully

You	はじめまして、マックスです	Hajimemashite, Makkusu desu	Nice to meet you, I'm Max.
You	ハワイから来ました	Hawai kara kimashita	I came from Hawaii.
You	観光で来ました	Kankō de kimashita	I'm here for sightseeing.
You	仕事で来ました	Shigoto de kimashita	I came for work.
You	三週間日本にいます	San-shūkan Nihon ni imasu	I'll be in Japan three weeks.
You	よろしくお願いします	Yoroshiku onegai shimasu	I look forward to it.
Local	こちらこそ、よろしくお願いします	Kochira koso, yoroshiku onegai shimasu	Likewise.

Meeting friends of friends

Friend	こちら、私の友達のジョンさんです	Kochira, watashi no tomodachi no Jon-san desu	This is my friend John.
You	はじめまして、よろしくをお願いします	Hajimemashite, yoroshiku onegai shimasu	Nice to meet you.
John	こちらこそ、よろしくをお願いします	Kochira koso, yoroshiku onegai shimasu	Likewise.
You	ジョンさんはどちらにお住まいですか	Jon-san wa dochira ni o-sumai desu ka?	Where do you live, John?
John	横浜に住んでいます	Yokohama ni sunde imasu	I live in Yokohama.
You	お仕事は何ですか	O-shigoto wa nan desu ka?	What's your work?
John	エンジニアです	Enjinia desu	I'm an engineer.

Compliments and reactions

Local	日本語が上手ですね	Nihongo ga jōzu desu ne	Your Japanese is so good!
You	いえいえ、まだまだです	Ie ie, mada mada desu	Oh no, I have a long way to go.
Local	可愛いですね	Kawaii desu ne	It's cute!

You	ありがとう	Arigatō	Thank you.
Local	素敵な服ですね	Suteki na fuku desu ne	Lovely clothes!
You	ありがとうございます。 気に入っています	Arigatō gozaimasu. Ki ni itte imasu	Thank you. I really like them.
You	京都は本当に美しいで す	Kyōto wa hontō ni utsukushii desu	Kyoto is truly beautiful.
Local	気に入っていただけて 嬉しいです	Ki ni itte itadakete ureshii desu	I'm glad you like it.
You	日本の方は親切ですね	Nihon no kata wa shinsetsu desu ne	Japanese people are kind.
Local	とんでもないです	Tondemonai desu	Not at all (humble).

In Japan, the polite response to a compliment is to deflect, not accept. 'No, no, not at all' is far more common than 'thank you.' Practice 'ie ie, mada mada desu' (no no, far from it) for compliments about your Japanese.

Apologizing and excusing yourself

Excuse me / sorry	すみません	Sumimasen
I'm sorry	ごめんなさい	Gomennasai
I'm really sorry	本当にすみません	Hontō ni sumimasen
I apologize (formal)	申し訳ありません	Mōshiwake arimasen
Pardon me, I'm leaving	失礼します	Shitsurei shimasu
I was rude (excuse me)	失礼しました	Shitsurei shimashita
No, please don't apologize	いいえ、大丈夫です	lie, daijōbu desu
It's okay / no problem	大丈夫です	Daijōbu desu
Don't worry about it	気にしないでください	Ki ni shinai de kudasai

Top 30 Most Useful Phrases

1. Hello / good day	こんにちは	Konnichiwa
2. Thank you	ありがとうございます	Arigatō gozaimasu
3. Excuse me / sorry	すみません	Sumimasen
4. Please	お願いします	Onegai shimasu
5. Yes	はい	Hai
6. No	いいえ	Iie
7. I don't understand	わかりません	Wakarimasen
8. Do you speak English?	英語が話せますか	Eigo ga hanasemasu ka?
9. I'm sorry (apology)	ごめんなさい	Gomennasai
10. How much is it?	いくらですか	Ikura desu ka?
11. Where is the toilet?	トイレはどこですか	Toire wa doko desu ka?
12. This one, please	これをください	Kore o kudasai
13. The bill, please	お会計お願いします	O-kaikei onegai shimasu
14. Delicious!	美味しい	Oishii
15. It's okay / no problem	大丈夫です	Daijōbu desu
16. I don't need it	いりません	Irimasen
17. Please wait a moment	ちょっと待ってください	Chotto matte kudasai
18. Please help me	助けてください	Tasukete kudasai

19. What is this?	これは何ですか	Kore wa nan desu ka?
20. Where is...?	～はどこですか	～ wa doko desu ka?
21. Cheers!	乾杯	Kanpai
22. Goodbye	さようなら	Sayōnara
23. Good morning	おはようございます	Ohayō gozaimasu
24. Good evening	こんばんは	Konbanwa
25. Nice to meet you	はじめまして	Hajimemashite
26. I'm a foreigner	外国人です	Gaikokujin desu
27. I'm from America	アメリカから来ました	Amerika kara kimashita
28. Once more, please	もう一度お願いします	Mō ichido onegai shimasu
29. Slowly, please	ゆっくりお願いします	Yukkuri onegai shimasu
30. Have a good day	よい一日を	Yoi ichinichi o

Point-and-Say Phrases

These are the workhorses. Point at something, say the phrase, and the rest happens. Pointing is not rude in transactional situations, staff expect it.

Pointing at things

This one	これ	Kore
That one (near you)	それ	Sore
That one over there	あれ	Are
Which one?	どれ	Dore
Here	ここ	Koko
There	そこ	Soko
Over there	あそこ	Asoko
This one, please	これをください	Kore o kudasai
That one (near you), please	それをください	Sore o kudasai
The one over there, please	あれをください	Are o kudasai
I'd like this one	これにします	Kore ni shimasu
The same as this	これと同じもの	Kore to onaji mono
This and that	これとそれ	Kore to sore
A bit more	もう少し	Mō sukoshi
A bit less	もう少し少なめ	Mō sukoshi sukuname

This much	これぐらい	Kore gurai
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Pointing on a map or screen

I want to go here	ここに行きたいです	Koko ni ikitai desu
Please take me here	ここまでお願いしま す	Koko made onegai shimasu
Where am I now?	今、ここはどこです か	Ima, koko wa doko desu ka?
Could you write it down?	書いてもらえますか	Kaite moraemasu ka?
Could you show me?	見せてもらえますか	Misete moraemasu ka?
The address is this	住所はこれです	Jūsho wa kore desu
Can you show me on the map?	地図で教えてください	Chizu de oshiete kudasai

Problem-Solving Phrases

Communication problems

I don't understand	わかりません	Wakarimasen
I don't speak Japanese well	日本語があまり話 しません	Nihongo ga amari hanasemasen
Do you speak English?	英語が話せますか	Eigo ga hanasemasu ka?
Please speak slowly	ゆっくり話してくだ さい	Yukkuri hanashite kudasai
Once more, please	もう一度お願いしま す	Mō ichido onegai shimasu
Please write it	書いてください	Kaite kudasai
Please use simple Japanese	やさしい日本語でお 願いします	Yasashii nihongo de onegai shimasu
What does this mean?	これはどういう意味 ですか	Kore wa dō iu imi desu ka?
How do you say... in Japanese?	～は日本語で何と言 いますか	～ wa nihongo de nan to iimasu ka?
Is there an English speaker?	英語ができる人はい ますか	Eigo ga dekiru hito wa imasu ka?

Lost or in trouble

I'm lost	道に迷いました	Michi ni mayoimashita
I lost my wallet	財布をなくしました	Saifu o nakushimashita
I lost my passport	パスポートをなくしました	Pasupōto o nakushimashita
I lost my phone	スマホをなくしました	Sumaho o nakushimashita
I missed the train	電車に乗り遅れました	Densha ni nori-okuremashita
I missed my flight	飛行機に乗り遅れました	Hikōki ni nori-okuremashita
Please call the police	警察を呼んでください	Keisatsu o yonde kudasai
Please call the embassy	大使館に電話してください	Taishikan ni denwa shite kudasai
I left something on the train	電車に忘れ物をしました	Densha ni wasuremono o shimashita
The lost and found?	忘れ物センターは？	Wasuremono sentā wa?
Stolen!	盗られました	Nusumare mashita
I forgot something	忘れ物をしました	Wasuremono o shimashita

Clarification phrases

Excuse me, but...	すみませんが…	Sumimasen ga…
Is this right?	これで合っていますか	Kore de atte imasu ka?
Is this okay?	これでいいですか	Kore de ii desu ka?
Did I hear you correctly?	今、何と言いましたか	Ima, nan to iimashita ka?
So you're saying…?	つまり…ということですか	Tsumari…to iu koto desu ka?
I see / I understand	わかりました	Wakarimashita
I don't get it / unclear	よくわかりません	Yoku wakarimasen
Could you explain more?	もう少し説明してください	Mō sukoshi setsumei shite kudasai
What was that?	何ですか	Nan desu ka?
Pardon?	もう一度、すみません	Mō ichido, sumimasen

Medical & Emergencies

Japan is among the safest countries in the world, but accidents and illnesses still happen. Pharmacies sell most basic medications without a prescription. Travel insurance is strongly recommended, hospital visits without it can be expensive.

Emergency numbers

Police	110 (call 'hyaku-tō-ban')
Fire / ambulance	119
Japan Helpline (English)	0570-000-911
Tourist hotline (24/7, multilingual)	050-3816-2787

Emergency phrases

Help!	助けて	Tasukete
Help me, please	助けてください	Tasukete kudasai
Emergency!	緊急です	Kinkyū desu
Call an ambulance, please	救急車を呼んでください	Kyūkyūsha o yonde kudasai
Call the police, please	警察を呼んでください	Keisatsu o yonde kudasai

Fire!	火事だ	Kaji da
Earthquake!	地震だ	Jishin da
Watch out!	危ない	Abunai
I need help	助けが必要です	Tasuke ga hitsuyō desu
My friend is hurt	友達が怪我をしました た	Tomodachi ga kega o shimashita
I can't move	動けません	Ugokemasen
I'm scared	怖いです	Kowai desu

At the hospital or clinic

You	病院はどこですか	Byōin wa doko desu ka?	Where is the hospital?
You	気分が悪いです	Kibun ga warui desu	I don't feel well.
You	熱があります	Netsu ga arimasu	I have a fever.
You	頭が痛いです	Atama ga itai desu	My head hurts.
You	お腹が痛いです	O-naka ga itai desu	My stomach hurts.
Doctor	いつからですか	Itsu kara desu ka?	Since when?
You	昨日からです	Kinō kara desu	Since yesterday.
You	薬がほしいです	Kusuri ga hoshii desu	I'd like some medicine.
Doctor	アレルギーはありますか	Arerugi wa arimasu ka?	Any allergies?

You	ペニシリンにアレルギーがあります	Penishirin ni arerugī ga arimasu	I'm allergic to penicillin.
You	保険があります	Hoken ga arimasu	I have insurance.
Doctor	保険証を見せてください	Hokenshō o misete kudasai	Please show your insurance card.
You	病気の証明書をお願いします	Byōki no shōmeisho o onegai shimasu	Please give me a doctor's note.

Symptoms and body parts

FEELING UNWELL		
Sick / unwell	病気	Byōki
Fever	熱	Netsu
Pain / hurts	痛い	Itai
Cold (illness)	風邪	Kaze
Cough	咳	Seki
Runny nose	鼻水	Hanamizu
Headache	頭痛	Zutsū
Stomachache	腹痛	Fukutsū
Nausea	吐き気	Hakike
Diarrhea	下痢	Geri
Constipation	便秘	Benpi
Tired	疲れた	Tsukareta

Dizzy	めまい	Memai
Allergy	アレルギー	Arerugī
Injury / wound	怪我	Kega
Bleeding	出血	Shukketsu
BODY PARTS		
Head	頭	Atama
Eye	目	Me
Ear	耳	Mimi
Nose	鼻	Hana
Mouth	口	Kuchi
Throat	喉	Nodo
Tooth	歯	Ha
Neck	首	Kubi
Shoulder	肩	Kata
Arm	腕	Ude
Hand	手	Te
Finger	指	Yubi
Chest	胸	Mune
Stomach	お腹	O-naka
Back	背中	Senaka
Leg	足 / 脚	Ashi

Knee	膝	Hiza
Foot	足	Ashi

At the pharmacy

You	風邪薬はありますか	Kazegusuri wa arimasu ka?	Do you have cold medicine?
You	頭痛薬をください	Zutsūyaku o kudasai	Headache medicine, please.
You	胃薬をください	Igusuri o kudasai	Stomach medicine, please.
You	解熱剤はありますか	Genetsuzai wa arimasu ka?	Do you have fever reducer?
You	ばんそうこうをください	Bansōkō o kudasai	A bandage, please.
Pharmacist	症状を教えてください	Shōjō o oshiete kudasai	Tell me your symptoms.
You	熱と咳があります	Netsu to seki ga arimasu	I have a fever and cough.
Pharmacist	一日三回、食後にお飲みください	Ichinichi sankai, shokugo ni o-nomi kudasai	Three times a day, after meals.
You	副作用はありますか	Fukusayō wa arimasu ka?	Are there side effects?
Pharmacist	眠くなることがあります	Nemuku naru koto ga arimasu	It may cause drowsiness.

Dietary Restrictions & Allergies

Vegetarianism is uncommon in Japan and easily misunderstood, many 'vegetable' dishes contain dashi (fish stock), and 'no meat' is often interpreted as 'no red meat' (chicken and fish still allowed). Be specific and direct. For severe allergies, carry a written card in Japanese.

Stating restrictions clearly

I'm vegetarian	私はベジタリアンです	Watashi wa bejitarian desu
I'm vegan	私はビーガンです	Watashi wa bigan desu
I don't eat meat	肉を食べません	Niku o tabemasen
I don't eat fish	魚を食べません	Sakana o tabemasen
I don't eat dairy	乳製品を食べません	Nyūseihin o tabemasen
I don't eat eggs	卵を食べません	Tamago o tabemasen
I'm allergic to ____	～にアレルギーがあります	~ ni arerugī ga arimasu
I can't eat ____	～が食べられません	~ ga taberaremasen
Without meat, please	肉抜きをお願いします	Niku nuki de onegai shimasu
Without fish stock, please	出汁抜きをお願いします	Dashi nuki de onegai shimasu

I'm Muslim / halal please	ハラルをお願いします	Hararu de onegai shimasu
I'm Jewish / kosher	コーシャです	Kōsha desu
No pork, please	豚肉なしをお願いします	Butaniku nashi de onegai shimasu
No alcohol	アルコールなしで	Arukōru nashi de
What's in this?	これは何が入っていますか	Kore wa nani ga haitte imasu ka?
Does this have ____?	これは～が入っていますか	Kore wa ~ ga haitte imasu ka?

Common allergens

Eggs	卵	Tamago
Milk / dairy	牛乳 / 乳製品	Gyūnyū / Nyūseihin
Wheat / gluten	小麦 / グルテン	Komugi / Guruten
Buckwheat (soba)	そば	Soba
Peanuts	ピーナッツ / 落花生	Pīnattsu / Rakkasei
Tree nuts	ナッツ	Nattsu
Shellfish	甲殻類	Kōkakurui
Shrimp / prawn	海老	Ebi
Crab	蟹	Kani
Squid	イカ	Ika
Octopus	タコ	Tako

Soy	大豆	Daizu
Sesame	ごま	Goma
Fish	魚	Sakana
Beef	牛肉	Gyūniku
Pork	豚肉	Butaniku
Chicken	鶏肉	Toriniku
Mushrooms	きのこ	Kinoko
Onion	玉ねぎ	Tamanegi
Garlic	にんにく	Ninniku
Bonito flakes / fish stock	鰹節 / 出汁	Katsuobushi / Dashi

Dietary dialogue

You	ベジタリアン料理はありますか	Bejitarian ryōri wa arimasu ka?	Are there vegetarian dishes?
Staff	野菜炒めがございます	Yasai itame ga gozaimasu	We have stir-fried vegetables.
You	肉や魚は入っていますか	Niku ya sakana wa haitte imasu ka?	Is there meat or fish in it?
Staff	出汁を使っています	Dashi o tsukatte imasu	It contains fish stock.
You	出汁なしで作れますか	Dashi nashi de tsukuremasu ka?	Can you make it without stock?

Staff	確認してきます	Kakunin shite kimasu	I'll check.
You	ナッツ類のアレルギー があります	Nattsurui no arerugī ga arimasu	I have a nut allergy.
Staff	シェフに伝えます	Shefu ni tsutaemasu	I'll tell the chef.
You	命に関わるアレルギー です	Inochi ni kakawaru arerugī desu	It's a life- threatening allergy.
Staff	厳重に対応いたします	Genjū ni taiō itashimasu	We'll be very careful.

Convenience-store ingredient labels list allergens in Japanese, look for a small box labeled 'アレルギー物質'. Common ones use these kanji: 卵 (egg), 乳 (dairy), 小麦 (wheat), えび (shrimp), かに (crab), そば (buckwheat), 落花生 (peanut).

Cultural Etiquette

Japan is one of the world's most polite societies, but the rules are unwritten. Tourists are forgiven much; understanding even a few of these unspoken codes will earn you respect and warmth.

Bowing

Bowing replaces handshakes in nearly every situation. The depth and length of the bow signal the level of respect, a casual nod for friends, a 15-degree bow for greetings, a 30-degree bow for thanks, a 45-degree bow for apologies or to a senior. For tourists, a small forward bow with eyes lowered is appropriate in any situation. Do not extend your hand for a shake unless the Japanese person offers theirs first.

Tipping, don't

There is no tipping in Japan. None. Not at restaurants, taxis, hotels, salons, or tours. Service charges, when applied, are included in the price. Leaving cash on a restaurant table will likely cause staff to chase you down the street to return it. The exception: at high-end ryokan, some guests leave a small thank-you envelope (kokorozuke) of ¥1,000 to ¥3,000 for the okami (head hostess) at check-in, but this is optional and increasingly rare.

Shoes off

Shoes come off in: homes, ryokan, many traditional restaurants, temples, some museums, and dressing rooms. Look for: (1) a step up at the entrance (the genkan), (2) lined-up slippers, (3) other people taking off their shoes. Special toilet slippers are sometimes kept inside bathroom doors, change into these when entering the toilet and back to the regular slippers when leaving. Never wear toilet slippers out of the toilet area; this is the single most common foreign-visitor faux pas.

Train etiquette

Silence on trains is golden. Do not take phone calls. Set your phone to silent (manner mode, マナーモード). Eating and drinking are frowned upon except on long-distance trains like the shinkansen. Backpacks come off and are held in front in crowded cars. Priority seats are for the elderly, pregnant, and disabled, leave them empty even if no one needs them.

Eating while walking

Eating while walking is considered impolite, especially in formal areas. Convenience stores have small standing-eating spaces; festivals are the exception where street food is the point. Ice cream and drinks from vending machines are usually consumed standing next to the machine before walking on. Trash cans are rare on the street, carry your trash until you find a bin (often near vending machines or at stations).

Chopsticks dos and don'ts

Stick chopsticks upright in rice	Resembles funeral incense, bad luck
Pass food chopstick to chopstick	Used to pass bones at funerals, taboo
Wave chopsticks while talking	Considered impolite
Point at people with chopsticks	Rude, like pointing with a finger
Rub disposable chopsticks together	Implies they are cheap and splintery
Spear food with chopsticks	Use the tips properly

Slurping noodles is encouraged. Lifting your soup bowl to drink is normal. Pour drinks for others; never refill your own glass. Wait until everyone is served before starting, and always say 'itadakimasu' first.

Onsen (hot springs)

Wash thoroughly at the seated showers before entering the bath. The bath is for soaking, not cleaning. No swimsuits, everyone is nude, but separated by gender. Hair must not touch the water; tie it up. Towels stay out of the water; small ones are placed folded on your head. Tattoos may bar entry to traditional onsen, call ahead or seek out tattoo-friendly establishments (look for 'タトゥーOK').

Gift-giving culture

Bringing a small gift (o-miyage) when visiting someone's home or returning from a trip is standard. Japanese always travel home with omiyage for coworkers, typically individually wrapped sweets. If invited to a home, bring fruit, sweets, or alcohol from a nice department store. Wrap any gift; presentation matters as much as the content. Decline a gift twice before accepting, Japanese will offer two or three times out of politeness.

Grammar Essentials

You can travel in Japan with phrases alone. But understanding the engine helps you remix words to handle new situations. This chapter is the minimum grammar a traveler needs.

Sentence shape

Japanese word order is Subject, Object, Verb. The verb always comes last. 'I sushi eat' is the Japanese order, not 'I eat sushi'.

I am Max	私はマックスです	Watashi wa Makkusu desu
I eat sushi	私は寿司を食べます	Watashi wa sushi o tabemasu
I go to Tokyo	私は東京に行きます	Watashi wa Tōkyō ni ikimasu

The little particles

Japanese marks the role of each noun with a one-syllable particle. The four essentials:

は (wa)	Topic marker. 'As for ___, ...', Watashi wa = As for me.
を (o)	Direct object marker. Sushi o taberu = eat sushi.

に (ni)	Direction or time. Tōkyō ni iku = go TO Tokyo. Sanji ni = AT 3 o'clock.
で (de)	Place of action or method. Resutoran de taberu = eat AT the restaurant. Densha de iku = go BY train.
が (ga)	Subject marker. Often introduces new information.
の (no)	Possessive. Watashi no kaban = my bag.
と (to)	And / with. Sushi to tempura = sushi and tempura. Tomodachi to = with a friend.
か (ka)	Question marker. Add to end to make any statement a question.

Two big verb endings to know

Polite verbs end in -masu (present/future) or -mashita (past). To make any verb negative, swap -masu → -masen, or -mashita → -masen deshita.

I will eat	tabemasu (食べます)
I ate	tabemashita (食べました)
I won't eat / don't eat	tabemasen (食べません)
I didn't eat	tabemasen deshita (食べませんでした)
I will go	ikimasu (行きます)

I will not go	ikimasen (行きません)
I want to eat	tabetai desu (食べたいです)
I want to go	ikитай desu (行きたいです)

The all-purpose 'desu'

'Desu' is the polite copula, roughly 'is/am/are'. Stick it at the end of any noun or adjective to make a polite statement. Past tense is 'deshita'.

It's cold	寒いです	Samui desu
It was cold	寒かったです	Samukatta desu
I'm a student	学生です	Gakusei desu
It's beautiful	きれいです	Kirei desu
I'm Max	マックスです	Makkusu desu

Question-making

Adding 'ka' to the end of any polite sentence makes it a question. There is no change in word order.

You are a student	学生です	Gakusei desu
Are you a student?	学生ですか	Gakusei desu ka?
It's expensive	高いです	Takai desu
Is it expensive?	高いですか	Takai desu ka?

I'll eat	食べます	Tabemasu
Will you eat?	食べますか	Tabemasu ka?

Asking 'what / where / when'

何 (nani / nan)	What
どこ (doko)	Where
いつ (itsu)	When
誰 (dare)	Who
どうして / なぜ (dōshite / naze)	Why
どう (dō)	How
いくら (ikura)	How much (money)
いくつ (ikutsu)	How many
どれ (dore)	Which one

Making polite requests with 'kudasai'

Attach 'o ___ kudasai' to a noun to mean 'please give me ___'. Attach a verb's -te form to 'kudasai' to mean 'please do ___'.

Water, please	水をください	Mizu o kudasai
The menu, please	メニューをください	Menyū o kudasai
A receipt, please	領収書をください	Ryōshūsho o kudasai

Please wait	待ってください	Matte kudasai
Please come	来てください	Kite kudasai
Please look	みてください	Mite kudasai
Please call	呼んでください	Yonde kudasai
Please write it	書いてください	Kaite kudasai

'There is / I have', arimasu and imasu

Japanese uses two different verbs for 'there is'. 'Arimasu' is for objects (not living). 'Imasu' is for living things (people, animals).

There is a hotel	ホテルがあります	Hoteru ga arimasu
There is a person	人がいます	Hito ga imasu
Do you have it? (object)	ありますか	Arimasu ka?
I don't have it	ありません	Arimasen
I have a friend	友達があります	Tomodachi ga imasu
No one is there	誰もいません	Daremo imasen

Quick Reference Card

Hi / Good day	こんにちは	Konnichiwa
Thank you	ありがとう	Arigatō
Sorry / Excuse me	すみません	Sumimasen
Please	お願いします	Onegai shimasu
Yes / No	はい / いいえ	Hai / Iie
I don't understand	わかりません	Wakarimasen
English, please?	英語、お願いします	Eigo, onegai shimasu
This, please	これをください	Kore o kudasai
How much?	いくら？	Ikura?
Where's the toilet?	トイレはどこ？	Toire wa doko?
Where's the station?	駅はどこ？	Eki wa doko?
Help!	助けて	Tasukete

Numbers 1-10 at a glance

1 / 2 / 3	一 / 二 / 三	Ichī / Ni / San
4 / 5 / 6	四 / 五 / 六	Yon / Go / Roku
7 / 8 / 9	七 / 八 / 九	Nana / Hachi / Kyū
10 / 100 / 1,000	十 / 百 / 千	Jū / Hyaku / Sen
10,000	一万	Ichiman

Days at a glance

Mon / Tue / Wed	月 / 火 / 水	Getsu / Ka / Sui
Thu / Fri / Sat	木 / 金 / 土	Moku / Kin / Do
Sun	日	Nichi

Survival kanji at a glance

Entrance / Exit	入口 / 出口	Iriguchi / Deguchi
Men / Women	男 / 女	Otoko / Onna
Station	駅	Eki
Ticket	切符	Kippu
Hotel / Inn	ホテル / 旅館	Hoteru / Ryokan
Restaurant / Cafe	食堂 / カフェ	Shokudō / Kafe
Hospital	病院	Byōin
Police	警察	Keisatsu
Open / Closed	営業中 / 閉店	Eigyōchū / Heiten
Tax-free	免税	Menzei

Safe travels. Enjoy Japan, the country rewards small courtesies a hundredfold.

よい旅を! (Yoi tabi o! Have a good journey!)