

Beginning Japanese for Professionals: Book 1

Before We Begin

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Before We Begin

1. For whom is this textbook designed?

This textbook is designed for beginning learners who want to learn basic Japanese for the purpose of living and working in Japan. Unlike textbooks written primarily for students, whose content largely centers on student life, this book focuses more on social and professional life beyond school.

This textbook can be used for self-study, as part of an online course, or as a traditional college course. As a beginning level textbook, this book includes many elementary grammar patterns (Japanese Language Proficiency Test Levels 5 and 4), but the vocabulary and situations are selected specifically for working adults. Explanations are kept concise so as to only cover key points. The main focus is on oral communication.

This textbook was originally written for the first term (ten weeks) of the beginning Japanese course in the graduate program of Masters of International Management in the School of Business Administration at Portland State University. The goals of the Japanese courses are to provide students with a foundation for acquiring future business language skills and to increase students' knowledge of Japanese culture. This is the first edition that has been piloted in the program and will be replaced with revised editions in the future.

2. What kind of things can you do in Japanese after finishing this book?

Based on ILR (Interagency Language Roundtable) estimates, we assume that in order for an English speaking learner with average language aptitude to achieve the proficiency level of ILR Proficiency Scale 2: Limited Working Competence in Japanese, over one thousand hours of instruction will be required. The MIM program at PSU provides 150 hours of instruction in total. So, what can we expect our students to be able to do at the end of the program? It is not likely that they can negotiate business in Japanese or handle many professional interactions. However, it is possible that they can handle many everyday interactions, avoid well-known taboos, answer routine questions about themselves, and network for business purposes. The topics to be covered in this textbook are:

Greetings and Ritual Expressions
Meeting People and Self-Introductions
Exchanging Business Cards
Schedules and Calendar
Shopping
Eating and Drinking

Locations and Directions
Public Transportations
Family and My Profile
Leisure and Hobbies
Manners and Customs

3. How is this textbook structured?

This textbook is comprised of ten lessons that follow the introductory *Before We Begin* and Lesson 0 *Greetings and Ritual Expressions* sections. Each lesson consists of four dialogues. Each dialogue is followed by a vocabulary list, grammar notes, drills and exercises. At the end of each lesson, you will find a grammar review and application activities.

4. How is reading and writing handled in this textbook?

The modern Japanese is written using a combination of *kanji* (characters borrowed from China) along with *hiragana* and *katakana* (two independent systems representing Japanese syllables). While the textbook introduces *hiragana* and *katakana*, no reading or writing instruction is included in this volume.

5. How is Japanese pronunciation presented in this textbook?

The symbol  indicates that there is an audio recording for the section marked by this symbol. The accompanying audio should be maximally used to learn all the dialogues and vocabulary lists and to practice drills. Keep in mind as you learn how to speak Japanese that you can only learn accurate pronunciation by listening to and mimicking the pronunciation of native speakers. Avoid reading off the written scripts.

When using the audio, make sure you do not refer to the written scripts. For many of us, visual input affects audio processing so much that it may interfere with accurately perceiving the audio input. You should refer

to the written scripts only when you need help with particular parts of the audio. After peeking at the script, go back to the audio again.

In the first four lessons in the textbook, Japanese words and sentences are presented in Romanization (Roman alphabet representing Japanese sounds) along with the authentic Japanese script. Romanization is not meant to be an accurate representation of Japanese sounds but rather just a reminder of the sounds you hear when listening to your instructor or the audio recordings. Be particularly mindful not to pronounce Romanized Japanese as if you were reading English or any other language.

Starting in Lesson 5, Japanese words and sentences are presented using the authentic Japanese orthography. *Hiragana* will be placed above *kanji* to indicate the correct reading. This use of *kana* is called *furigana* and is common in comic books and other publications where the writer wants to ensure the correct reading of the *kanji* used.

6. How should you use this textbook?

The dialogues present frequently observed exchanges that are part of a longer conversation. It is practical and useful to memorize these to the point where you can recite them automatically and naturally. As suggested above, make sure you memorize dialogues using the audio and while integrating body language. You can expand each dialogue by adding elements before and after each to create a longer conversation. You can also change parts of the dialogue to fit a different context. Either way, the original dialogue serves as a base to explore other possibilities.

Each dialogue has at least two drills that target key grammar patterns and vocabulary. These are rather mechanical drills that are meant to train quick and automatic formation of language. The recommended procedure for these drill practices is to first listen to the two model exchanges and understand what changes to make in responding to the cues. Look at the scripts for the models if you are not sure what to do. Listen to the first cue, insert your response during the following pause, listen to the model answer, and repeat the model answer during the second pause. Repeat this procedure for the following cues. It is recommended that you loop back to the beginning of the drill frequently. Always give yourself a chance to respond to the cues before you listen to the model answer. Also think of the meaning as you do these drills. Needless to say, it doesn't make sense to just keep repeating the sounds you hear without knowing what you are saying.

Two types of exercises will follow the mechanical drills. The first is 'Say It in Japanese,' which is a translation activity. The last exercise 'Act in Japanese' is a role-play exercise, in which students can freely respond to each other within the given context and expand the suggested interchange into a longer interaction. For this exercise, students are encouraged to perform the roles as naturally as possible integrating body language, facial expressions, etc.

By answering the grammar review questions at the end of each lesson, you will self assess your understanding of the grammar before moving onto the next lesson. The parentheses at the end of each question indicate in which grammar note to find the answer to the question.

For Practical Applications, which concludes each lesson, it is suggested that relevant authentic materials such as restaurant menus, shopping mall directories, apartment listings, etc. are extensively used to accommodate the real world application of what has been practiced. Students are encouraged to freely and realistically ask and answer questions and exchange comments regarding those materials.

7. Last but not least...

Make a clear distinction between knowing the material (Fact) and being able to use the material in spontaneous conversations (Act). You may learn grammar quickly, but it takes a great deal of repetitive practice to develop the skills to speak Japanese in real-life situations. At the end of the day, it doesn't mean much if you cannot respond orally to a native speaker in a culturally appropriate way no matter how well you can answer grammar questions or recite vocabulary in isolation. In studying Japanese, always keep in mind the objectives and how best to reach them.

Have fun!