

Preadvanced Japanese

Before We Start

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Before We Start

Q: What level does this textbook target?

This textbook is designed for students who have intermediate competency in Japanese, roughly at Level 2 on the ILR (The Interagency Language Roundtable) proficiency scale, and are working on reaching Level 3.

ILR Level 2 – Limited working proficiency

- able to satisfy routine social demands and limited work requirements
- can handle with confidence most basic social situations including introductions and casual conversations about current events, work, family, and autobiographical information
- can handle limited work requirements, needing help in handling any complications or difficulties; can get the gist of most conversations on non-technical subjects (i.e. topics which require no specialized knowledge), and has a speaking vocabulary sufficient to respond simply with some circumlocutions
- has an accent which, though often quite faulty, is intelligible
- can usually handle elementary constructions quite accurately but does not have thorough or confident control of the grammar.

ILR Level 3 – Professional working proficiency

- able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in most conversations on practical, social, and professional topics
- can discuss particular interests and special fields of competence with reasonable ease
- has comprehension which is quite complete for a normal rate of speech
- has a general vocabulary which is broad enough that he or she rarely has to grope for a word
- has an accent which may be obviously foreign; has a good control of grammar; and whose errors virtually never interfere with understanding and rarely disturb the native speaker.

Q: How should this textbook be used?

This textbook can be used for self-study, as part of online course, and in a traditional classroom setting. It is comprised of three chapters, intended to be covered in one term of a quarter system.

Each chapter starts with 本文, the Main Text, introducing the theme of the chapter and presents みんなの声, Our Opinions, expanding on the theme. Students can copy and paste the entire text to one of the various online reading/annotation tools such as the following:

http://dokkai.mit.edu/reading_student.cgi
<http://www.polarcloud.com/rikaichan/>
<http://translate.webl.io.jp/>

These are useful tools. It's important to become proficient using them, for they will be most likely part of our lifelong learning of Japanese.

Q: How do we learn vocabulary?

表現ノート, Notes on Expressions, provide information on selected expressions and grammar, but you will not find vocabulary lists in this textbook. This is because one list does not serve everyone. The online reading sites listed above allow students to create their own custom vocabulary lists with one click. The availability of these online tools free students from the need to flip through paper dictionaries or to enter each item in digital dictionaries. The time saved can be used to strengthen reading comprehension skills.

Repetition is key to improving memory. This textbook is structured to ensure ample repetitions of key words and expressions in both the texts and the audio.

Q: How do we practice speaking and listening?

Functional reading requires simultaneous processing of multiple elements of language. Therefore, it's critical that training in reading skills utilizes audio, which learners listen to and repeat. If you are not already familiar with the sound, meaning, and conversational use of the words and expressions used in the text, it's likely that you are decoding rather than reading. Ideally, sub-vocalization should happen when reading both foreign and native language texts. Sub-vocalization helps with linguistic processing. The audio will support your learning how to vocalize, which is the prerequisite for appropriate sub-vocalization.

In addition, as students participate in class discussions and other activities related to their reading, vocalization skills will be reinforced, along with speaking and listening.

Remember that in our everyday life, reading is usually not an end in itself. After we read, we engage in various activities: tell others about what we read, share our opinions and debate the issues, make presentations, etc. All these activities require that you be able to TALK about what you read.

Each chapter has Drills on expressions and grammar, Kanji Drills, and Listening Exercises. These activities are to be performed using the accompanying audio. The

symbol ♦ indicates that there is an audio file for that section. The Main Texts, Our Opinions, and all the Drills have audio files.

In addition, each chapter contains video files of natural and unscripted interviews with native speakers on the theme. Viewing these videos, students can observe facial expressions, gestures, mannerisms, tone of voice, shifts in speech styles, dialects, and other communicative and cultural elements that are not typically presented in a textbook.

Q: How do we learn Kanji?

When we read, we recognize words and phrases and their readings, rather than individual symbols. We process the sounds and comprehend the meaning. When we encounter an unrecognized written word, we try to “sound out” and guess its meaning and reading. If we focus on individual Kanji and their meaning in English, this may hinder learning how to read.

For this reason, we need to learn Kanji using meaningful words and phrases, their readings, and their English meanings, instead of focusing on the original meaning of individual kanji character in isolation. This is also critical in developing your scanning skills, which is essential for functional reading.

You can make your own custom kanji /vocabulary lists using the online reading tools as mentioned above. In this textbook, major kanji words and expressions from the main texts are listed in Kanji Drills. The accompanying audio provides their correct readings. There are pauses before and after the model reading. The recommended procedure for these drills is to first try sounding out each word and test your memory during the first pause, check the model reading with the audio, and then repeat the model yourself during the second pause. Make sure you speak aloud.

Once you become comfortable reading the words, you are then ready to start writing. This follows the pedagogical principle that a passive activity should precede a productive activity. Production is easier when you have already established a solid visual memory.

To learn kanji stroke order, there are many excellent sites on the Internet. Find one that works for you.

Q: What other activities can supplement this textbook?

Upon completing each chapter in the textbook, students are ready to engage in more expanded linguistic activities and assignments utilizing what they have learned. These activities include team debates, PowerPoint presentations, speeches, interviews, videoconferences, emailing/texting, essay writing, online research, translations, blogs and online review writing.

Suggested topics for these activities are listed at the end of each chapter as まとめ, Summary.