

How to Study Japanese: A JET's Guide

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GOALS	★ Survive. Get by day-to-day	★★★ Discover the real Japan
	★★ Connect with people	★★★★ Fluency , and all its opportunities
MEDIA	<i>Read</i> books/manga/blogs/news <i>Watch</i> TV shows/anime/web media <i>Sing</i> at karaoke	
WHERE TO START	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Learn kana (hiragana and katakana). It's not particularly hard. 2. Learn set phrases. They're mega useful. 3. Learn everyday vocab. Know your pens from your pencils. 4. Learn particles. They're the building blocks of sentences. 	
BENCH-MARKING	JET Program language course: Monthly obligations The JLPT: You can aim for beginner, intermediate, or advanced Kanji Kentei: For mastering kanji specifically	
LEARN 漢字	<p>There are around 2,000 daily-use kanji. This may seem daunting at first, but there are patterns to them, and the more you study, the easier it gets to study kanji as a whole.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Learn radicals, especially the common ones. They're the building blocks of kanji, an "alphabet" of shared symbols. (e.g. 氵 goes in 汁 池 波 注 etc.) 2. Focus on their meanings first. 3. Learn the gist of stroke order and take the time to write them. 4. Get a kanji dictionary. Nelson's Japanese-English Character Dictionary is one option. 	
Speaking = Connecting		
<p>! Your foreignness is the perfect talking point. You're new; you need to ask lots of questions.</p> <p>? What's ...this word? ...this kanji? ...this called? ...this mean?</p> <p>---- Your students can teach you. Co-workers too. Introduce yourself to EVERYONE 1-on-1</p> <p>---- Sit in on other classes; just get the teacher's permission to join first</p> <p>---- Social hobbies: participate in local events, integrate you into the community</p> <p>---- Toastmasters: polish your public speaking, meet people, improve your Japanese</p>		

Portal for online resources: nihongo-e-na.com

Reading = *Discovering*

- Start with **kids' books**, but be careful of slang and “childish” language
- **Trivia books** on a topic you enjoy are a great motivator to keep reading
- Blogs by topic and popularity at **Blog Ranking**
- Join the local **library**; the librarian can find you books appropriate to your language ability
- “Graded readers” or *nembetsu* 年別: They range from easy to hard

Writing = *Expressing*

- Get a **tutor**, a **patient friend**, or try proofreading sites like **Lang-8**

Listening = *Understanding*

- **Children's songs**, lots of easy words and culturally informative
- **The news**, usually spoken very clearly. **NHK Radio News** lets you set the speed
- **Eavesdropping**, so you can ask people to stop talking about you when you're in front of them

General Stuff to Know

- Read as much English-language stuff as you can about the linguistic properties of Japanese.
- Japanese pronunciation works a little differently. Stress in English amplifies the pitch, length, and loudness of a syllable (to**MOR**row). In Japanese, only the pitch is affected, not the length or loudness.
- Written Japanese is different from spoken Japanese, and so is masculine vs. feminine speech.
- Vowel length matters. E.g. *koko* (here) vs. *koukou* (high school)

Awesome Learning Tools

Rikaichan for Firefox or **Rikaikun** for Chrome: Read kanji online with ease
Tae Kim's Guide to Japanese Grammar: Intuitive explanations; includes other topics
Tofugu: Hilarious explanations of language and culture
TEXTBOOKS: **Genki** (very popular, easy to use) • **Yookoso** (better grammar explanations)
DICTIONARIES: **Jisho.org** • **Kotoba** for iPhones or **JED** for Android • **Goo Jisho** (for Japanese people)
Yahoo Jisho (good for its encyclopedia entries) • **ALC.co.jp** (compiled by translators; good for usage)
KANJI: **AsahiKanji** • **ReadtheKanji** • **Anki** (customizable/downloadable flashcards)
VOCAB: **LanguageGuide.org** (divided by category, with exceptional audio to hear all the words)

You're going to make lots of mistakes. That just means you'll have funny stories to tell later, as well as proof you're actively learning. Connecting with your community will do wonders for leveling up. Your students will be great teachers if you show curiosity in learning, and your co-workers will appreciate the effort. Asking for help with your Japanese is almost always the perfect excuse to start a conversation.