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Japanese

3rd Edition

by Hiroko Chiba and Eriko Sato, PhD

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Japanese For Dummies® , 3rd Edition

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Introduction

We live in a wonderfully global and amazingly diverse society. Exchanging ideas, products, foods, and friendship across national and cultural boundaries is the key to making our lives richer and more meaningful and peaceful. Besides, traveling abroad is a lot of fun and an eye-opening experience. Grabbing your passport and setting off on an adventure is always exciting, but it's even more special when you can communicate with people in a different country in their own language.

If Japanese is the language you want to learn, for whatever reason, *Japanese For Dummies*, 3rd Edition, can help. It provides substantial learning materials and some of the cultural background behind the language. Now, I'm not saying that you'll be fluent overnight, but you will gain confidence, have fun, and continue to pick up more and more Japanese so that you can carry on a conversation with your Japanese-speaking co-worker, family member, friend, or neighbor.

About This Book

Japanese For Dummies, 3rd Edition, can help you whether you want to get familiar with Japanese because you're planning a trip to this island nation, because you deal with Japanese companies at work, because you want to understand Anime/Manga in Japanese, or because your new neighbor is Japanese and you want to be able to say *good morning* to him or her. (Try **ohayō gozaimasu** [oh-hah-yohh goh-zah-ee-mah-soo].) This book provides you with helpful and commonly used Japanese words and phrases on subjects as diverse as shopping, money, food, and sports in self-contained chapters and sections.

Simply turn to the topics that interest you the most, play the online audio examples, and start speaking! That's right, you don't have to go through this book in order. If I think you may want to know information that's contained in a different chapter than the one you're currently reading, I include a handy cross-reference so you can find the additional information when you're ready for it.

I also use a few conventions in this book to help your reading go smoothly:

- » In many places throughout this book, Japanese terms appear in two forms: Japanese scripts (like what you would read if you were in Japan) and the Romanized forms of words (which appear in **boldface** so you can easily find them in the text). The official term for Romanized Japanese is **rōmaji** (roh-mah-jee).
- » Pronunciations in parentheses and meanings or English equivalents in another pair of parentheses follow the Japanese terms. Note that meanings and English equivalents appear in *italics*.
- » Verb conjugations (lists that show you the basic forms of a verb) are given in tables in this order: the dictionary form, the negative (**nai-**) form, the stem form (or the form before the polite suffix **-masu**), and the **te**-form. You find Japanese scripts in the first column, **rōmaji** in the second column, and pronunciations in the third column. Here's a sample conjugation of the verb **taberu** (tah-beh-roo) (*to eat*):

Japanese Script	Rōmaji	Pronunciation
食べる	taberu	tah-beh-roo
食べない	tabenai	tah-beh-nah-ee
食べ(ます)	tabe (masu)	tah-beh (-mah-soo)
食べて	tabete	tah-beh-teh

- » Keep in mind that Japanese verbs don't conjugate like English verbs. You can't find exact counterparts for English verb forms such as infinitives, gerunds, and participles. In addition, you don't conjugate Japanese verbs in terms of the person and number, so **taberu** can mean *I eat, you eat, he eats, she eats, and they eat*. This difference may take a little getting used to, but it should make your verb-learning life a little easier.

To help you remember the most important new words and see the language in context, this book includes some special elements to reinforce the Japanese terms you're studying:

- » **Talkin' the Talk dialogues:** Hearing actual Japanese conversations is the best way to learn Japanese, which is why I include many dialogues under the "Talkin' the Talk" heading in this book. These exchanges show you the Japanese words in **rōmaji**, their pronunciations, and the English translations so that you can see how the language is actually used. All Talkin' the Talk dialogues are accompanied by audio recordings so that you can hear and pick

up the natural intonation and rhythm that are essential in conversational interactions.

- » **Words to Know blackboards:** Here's where you find key words and phrases from the Talkin' the Talk dialogues.
- » **Fun & Games activities:** Located at the end of chapters, these amusing activities help reinforce the vocabulary you practice in each chapter. You can find the solutions to these activities in Appendix C.

This book also features compact yet convenient mini-dictionaries — both Japanese–English and English–Japanese — in Appendix A. They include only very basic vocabulary words, mainly content words such as nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and verbs. For your convenience, I mark the conjugation class of the verbs: **u** for u-verbs, **ru** for **ru**-verbs, and **irr** for **irregular** verbs. Slightly irregular **u**-verbs are specified as **u (irr)**. In the English–Japanese mini-dictionary, I also designate verbs with (v.) because some English verbs also function as nouns. Last but certainly not least, I mark the type of adjectives: **i** for **i**-type adjectives and **na** for **na**-type adjectives. A few **i**-type adjectives with minor irregularities are specified as **i (irr)**.

Speaking of language quirks, you should know that English and Japanese sometimes express the same concept in very different ways. And Japanese has many words and phrases that you can't translate into English at all. In this book, I want you to focus on what is actually said (the content and intended meaning) rather than how it's said. So instead of giving you a literal translation, I give you a nonliteral, natural English translation. For example, the phrase **yoroshiku** (yoh-roh-shee-koo) can be literally translated as *appropriately*, but the phrase really means *pleased to meet you* if you say it when meeting someone new. This book gives the nonliteral, pleased-to-meet-you type translations (sometimes with the more literal translation for reference).

Your exploration of Japanese will also show you different ways of looking at the world of language because Japanese doesn't contain the same type of grammar items as European languages do. For example, Japanese doesn't have equivalents of English articles like *a* and *the*. Some verbs in English correspond to adjectives in Japanese. Here's another example: The verb *to want* is best represented by the Japanese adjective **hoshii**, so be ready to see some mismatch in the part-of-speech categories. And Japanese doesn't have a singular/plural distinction, such as *dog* and *dogs*, either. The information about specificity and numbers is expressed in very different ways. Also, Japanese sometimes has linguistic systems that European languages don't have. For example, Japanese speech styles clearly indicate degrees of respect or familiarity within conversational contexts.

Foolish Assumptions

To write this book, I had to work off of some assumptions about you. I'm thinking that

- » You don't know much Japanese, except maybe for a few words like **karate** and **sushi**.
- » You're not planning on taking a language-proficiency test for Japanese next month, and you're not planning on becoming a professional Japanese translator in the near future. You just want to be able to communicate basic information in Japanese and get to know the Japanese language.
- » You don't have time to spend hours and hours memorizing vocabulary and grammar rules.
- » You want to have fun in addition to learning Japanese.

Icons Used in This Book

To help you find certain types of information quickly, I've placed some icons throughout the book. Here are the six icons to keep an eye out for:



CULTURAL
WISDOM

If you're interested in information and advice about culture and travel, look for these icons. They draw your attention to interesting tidbits about Japan and Japanese culture.



GRAMMAR
CHAT

If you understand grammar, you can create an infinite number of sentences, so I use this icon to point out discussions of grammar facts.



REMEMBER

To ensure that you don't forget information important to the language, this icon serves as a reminder, just like a string tied around your finger.



TIP

This icon highlights suggestions that can make learning Japanese easier.



WARNING

This icon can keep you from making embarrassing or really foolish mistakes.

Beyond the Book

This book is full of useful information, but you can find even more online! Check out this book's Cheat Sheet, which contains useful questions, common expressions and phrases, Japanese numbers, and more all in a handy portable format. Just go to www.dummies.com and search for "Japanese For Dummies Cheat Sheet."

You can also hear all the 'Talkin' the Talk' dialogues provided in the book to get a better handle on correct pronunciation. Just go to www.dummies.com/go/japanesefd.

Where to Go from Here

You can read as much or as little as you want of this book and the chapters in it. Decide what topic you're interested in, consult the index or table of contents to find the proper section, and quickly discover what you need to know to speak about that topic in Japanese. Of course, if you're looking to get a foundation in the basics, I recommend turning to Chapters 2 and 3 first. These chapters introduce the fundamentals of Japanese pronunciation, writing systems, and grammar. Read them now and then refer to them later if you get hung up on how to read Japanese scripts or build sentences.

Well, are you ready? Head for the chapter that interests you or listen to the online audio examples. And make sure to use your favorite Japanese phrases when you hang out with your friends or family. If you think your family probably won't understand what you say, you can teach them Japanese. With a little dedication, you'll be able to confidently answer **Hai!** (hah-ee!) (*Yes!*) when people ask **Nihongo wa hanasemasu ka.** (nee-hohn-goh wah hah-nah-seh-mah-soo kah.) (*Can you speak Japanese?*)

1

Getting Started with Japanese

IN THIS PART . . .

Find out what the Japanese sounds sound like.

Get to know what Japanese writing scripts look like.

Discover Japanese grammar basics.

Understand numbers, basic words, and phrases used around your household.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Dipping your toes into Japanese writing and grammar
- » Working with simple expressions and basic numbers
- » Exploring Japanese at home, at work, at play, and abroad

Chapter **1**

Japanese in a Nutshell

Welcome to Japanese! Now that you've decided to learn this intriguing language, I'm sure you're eager to find out as much as you can as quickly as you can. After all, you probably have co-workers, friends, neighbors, and others to impress with your newfound language skills. Well, here's your chance to dive into Japanese. This chapter offers you a mini-preview of what you can find throughout *Japanese For Dummies*, 3rd Edition.

Discovering Basic Japanese Sounds and Script

Japanese sounds are pretty easy to pronounce. For one thing, Japanese has only five basic vowels: **a** (ah), **i** (ee), **u** (oo), **e** (eh), and **o** (oh). In addition, you don't see a long string of consonants before or after a vowel, unlike in Russian or Polish. You just have to pay attention to a handful of strange consonants, such the Japanese **r**, which makes a sound somewhere between the English **l** and **r**. You can pronounce basic sounds in Japanese along with the online audio recordings featured in Chapter 2.

Japanese writing, on the other hand, can be confusing because Japanese scripts don't look at all like Western alphabets. The Japanese scripts consist of two sets of **kana** (kah-nah) — phonetic symbols for Japanese syllables — and about 2,000

kanji (kahn-jee) characters, which are Chinese characters adapted for Japanese. If you just want to learn how to speak Japanese, you may want to skip focusing on these Japanese scripts and use **rōmaji** (roh-mah-jee), the Romanized spellings of Japanese words. However, getting used to the Japanese scripts is a good idea, especially if you plan to use your Japanese skills to travel. If you can recognize some of the Japanese scripts, you can get around in a Japanese town more easily because all street signs are written in only the Japanese scripts.

Another advantage of being able to recognize the Japanese scripts, especially **kana**, is that you can avoid reading Japanese like English. For example, the Japanese word that means *bamboo* is **take**. As an English speaker, you may have an urge to read **take** as teh-ee-koo because you know the English word *to take*, but the Japanese pronunciation of this word is tah-keh. In this case, the **rōmaji** may mislead you, but the **kana**, たけ, wouldn't because your existing knowledge in English can't interfere. Chapter 2 shows all **kana** characters and some representative **kanji** characters for your reference.

Getting a Grip on Basic Grammar

Japanese grammar is quite different from English grammar, particularly when it comes to word order in sentences. Even if grammar was your most hated subject, you can't avoid learning grammar if you want to speak Japanese like a native speaker. Without grammar, you'll sound like a big 2-year-old, saying things like the Japanese counterparts of *Brian car*, *me kiss Mary*, or *John in office*.



REMEMBER

You generally put the verb at the end of the sentence and add the particle **o** (oh) after the direct object noun. So to mean *to eat sushi*, say **sushi o taberu** (soo-shee oh tah-beh-roo), where **taberu** means *to eat*.

For further insight into Japanese grammar, head to Chapter 3, which tells you all about parts of speech; conjugation patterns; and the structure of words, phrases, and sentences.

Counting on Numbers

Numbers dominate everyday life. What time do you wake up? How many glasses of water do you drink a day? How many guests are you expecting? How much does buying groceries cost? Chapter 4 lets you count both small and large numbers and use them with the right counters.

Counters, you ask? The Japanese use a short, suffix-like element called a *counter* right after the number. The counter you use varies depending on the type of things you're counting or the kind of notions you're specifying. To start with, count the bare simple numbers from one to ten:

- » 一 **ichi** (ee-chee) (*one*)
- » 二 **ni** (nee) (*two*)
- » 三 **san** (sahn) (*three*)
- » 四 **yon** (yohn) or **shi** (shee) (*four*)
- » 五 **go** (goh) (*five*)
- » 六 **roku** (roh-koo) (*six*)
- » 七 **nana** (nah-nah) or **shichi** (shee-chee) (*seven*)
- » 八 **hachi** (hah-chee) (*eight*)
- » 九 **kyū** (kyooo) or **ku** (koo) (*nine*)
- » 十 **jū** (jooo) (*ten*)



TIP

Japanese also frequently uses the Arabic numerals (1, 2, and so on) that you're used to seeing.

You can read more about using numbers, including using them to tell time and specify dates, in Chapter 4.

Speaking Japanese around the House

You spend at least half of your time in your house every day — sleeping, cooking, eating, watching TV, and so on. Here are some terms to help you name the rooms in your house in Japanese:

- » ダイニング **dainingu** (dah-ee-neen-goo) (*dining room*)
- » 風呂場 **furoba** (foo-roh-bah) (*bathing room*)
- » キッチン **kitchin** (keet-cheen) (*kitchen*)
- » リビング **ribingu** (ree-been-goo) (*living room*)
- » 寝室 **shinshitsu** (sheen-shee-tsoo) (*bedroom*)

Chapter 5 introduces the Japanese words you need for naming things in your house and expressing what you do in your house.

Using Japanese in Social Scenarios

I can't stress enough that a language is a wonderful tool for communication. You can put yourself into someone else's shoes by learning a language and step into a new world. You communicate with people not only for socialization and entertainment but also for completing daily tasks successfully with your family, friends, and colleagues. That is, developing good language skills is the key to your success in your life! The following sections introduce you to some of the vocabulary you need in various social situations.

Beginning (and ending) conversations

It's always nice to hear warm greetings. Hello and goodbye are so important in our communication. This section introduces basic greetings and making small talk, as well as how to address people properly.

If you want to say something more than just "hello" when you see someone, make a point of knowing Japanese phrases that can help you initiate small talk. Start with questions like the following:

- » どちらまでですか。 **Dochira made desu ka.** (doh-chee-rah mah-deh deh-soo kah.) (*Where are you heading to?*)
- » いい天気ですね。 **Ii tenki desu ne.** (ee tehn-kee deh-soo neh.) (*It's nice today, isn't it?*)
- » ご兄弟は。 **Go-kyōdai wa** (goh-kyohh-dah-ee wah.) (*Do you have any siblings?*)
- » メールアドレスは。 **Mēru adoresu wa.** (mehh-roo ah-doh-reh-soo wah) (*What's your email address?*)

Chapter 6 shows you how to politely start a basic conversation in Japanese.

Getting to know you

When you make new friends, you may chat about your life — your family, your job, your hobbies, and so on. And you may want to know about them as well. If you tell new friends what your hobbies are, maybe they will have the same interests.

- » **Oshigoto wa nandesu ka.** (oh-shee-goh-toh wah nahn-deh-soo kah.) (*What is your job?*)

» **Watashi wa ani ga imasu.** (wah-tah-shee wah ah-nee gah ee-mah-soo.) (*I have a(n) older brother.*)

» **Jon san wa yoku tenisu o shimasu ka.** (John sahn wah yoh-koo the-nee-soo o shee-mah-soo ka.) (*John, do you often play tennis?*)

Chapter 7 introduces words and expressions you may use to get to know someone.

Asking for directions



REMEMBER

When you need to ask for directions to somewhere, name the place you want to go, add the particle **wa** (wah) after it, and say **doko desu ka** (doh-koh deh-soo kah), as in **Eki wa doko desu ka.** (eh-kee wah doh-koh deh-soo kah.) (*Where is the train station?*)

Chapter 8 shows you how to ask for or give directions in Japanese.

Making sense of money

You need money no matter where you go, and if you're headed to a foreign destination, you need to be prepared **ryōgae suru** (ryohh-gah-eh soo-roo) (*to exchange*) your country's currency for that of your destination country. Be sure to bring enough **genkin** (gehn-keen) (*cash*) to the exchange counter.



TIP

Even at a foreign **ginkō** (geen-kohh) (*bank*), you may be able to use your ATM card to withdraw funds from your **kōza** (kohh-za) (*account*) in the right currency.

For more money-related words, as well as information on the Japanese **en** (ehn) (*yen*), see Chapter 9.

Going shopping

Who doesn't love shopping? If you're looking for something in particular, name it, add **wa** (wah) after it, and say **arimasu ka** (ah-ree-mah-soo kah), as in **Sukāfu wa arimasu ka.** (soo-kahh-foo wah ah-ree-mah-soo kah.) (*Do you have a scarf?*) Definitely check the price, though. You can do so by asking **Ikura desu ka.** (ee-koo-rah deh-soo kah.) (*How much?*)

Turn to Chapter 10 for more words and phrases that can help you have successful shopping experiences in Japanese.

Dining out and exploring entertainment opportunities

Hanging out at home is fun, but if you do that 7 days a week, 365 days a year, it's going to get boring. So why not head out and explore the great restaurants and entertainment opportunities your community has to offer? If you love eating Japanese foods, you need to know how to place an order at a restaurant in Japanese. Your server will ask you, **Go-chūmon wa** (goh-chooo-mohn wah) (*Your order?*). That's your opportunity to say, for example, **Sushi o onegai shimasu.** (soo-shee oh oh-neh-gah-ee shee-mah-soo.) (*Sushi, please.*) Here are some words you may look for:

- ≫ レストラン **resutoran** (reh-soo-toh-rahnh) (*restaurants*)
- ≫ ハンバーガー **hanbāgā** (hahn-bahh-gahh) (*hamburger*)
- ≫ 美術館 **bijutsukan** (bee-joo-tsoo-kahn) (*art museums*)
- ≫ 劇場 **gekijō** (geh-kee-johh) (*theaters for performing arts*)
- ≫ 博物館 **hakubutsukan** (hah-koo-boo-tsoo-kahn) (*museums*)
- ≫ カラオケ **karaoke** (kah-rah-oh-keh) (*karaoke*)
- ≫ クラブ **kurabu** (koo-rah-boo) (*nightclub*)

Chapter 11 introduces how to dine out and go to fun places and shows you what you can do there, in Japanese.

Doing business and using technology

Do you want to work in Japan or in a Japanese company in the United States? If the answer to either question is *yes*, you need to have a bunch of business-related vocabulary under your belt. Chapter 12 provides such words, including

- ≫ ヴォイスメール **boisu-mēru** (boh-ee-soo-mehh-roo) (*voice mail*)
- ≫ 配達する **haitatsu suru** (hah-ee-tah-tsoo soo-roo) (*to deliver*)
- ≫ 確認する **kakunin suru** (kah-koo-noon soo-roo) (*to confirm*)
- ≫ コピーする **kopī suru** (koh-pee-ee soo-roo) (*to make copies*)
- ≫ 会議 **kaigi** (kah-ee-gee) (*meeting, conference*)
- ≫ メール **mēru** (mehh-roo) (*email*)
- ≫ パソコン **pasokon** (pah-soh-kohn) (*computer*)

Tackling Travel-Related Topics

After you've been studying Japanese for a while and the travel bug bites, you may feel like making the journey to Japan to really immerse yourself in the language and culture. From packing your bags to choosing accommodations and navigating emergencies, the next sections give you some of the basic vocabulary you need when traveling in Japan.

Preparing for a trip

The first step in preparing for your trip is to decide where to go. Then, depending on your destination, you'll need to get a passport and book a flight. Here are some Japanese terms to consider as you're getting ready to take a trip:

- » チケット **chiketto** (chee-keht-toh) (*ticket*)
- » 飛行機 **hikōki** (hee-kohh-kee) (*airplane*)
- » ホテル **hoteru** (hoh-teh-roo) (*hotel*)
- » パスポート **pasupōto** (pah-soo-pohh-toh) (*passport*)
- » スーツケース **sūtsukēsu** (sooo-tsoo-keh-h-soo) (*suitcase*)

Chapter 13 helps you make your travel plan and pack your suitcase.

Getting around with local transportation

Make sure you know the best ways of getting from place to place in a foreign country you're planning on visiting. In large urban areas, people often walk or take the **chikatetsu** (chee-kah-teh-tsoo) (*subway*). Other common methods of transportation may include one (or more!) of the following:

- » 電車 **densha** (dehn-shah) (*train*)
- » フェリー **ferī** (feh-reee) (*ferry*)
- » 自転車 **jitensha** (jee-tehn-shah) (*bicycle*)
- » タクシー **takushī** (tah-koo-sheee) (*taxi*)

I cover transportation information in Chapter 14.

Securing a place to stay

You have several options to choose from when choosing your accommodations in Japan:

- » ビジネスホテル **bijinesu hoteru** (bee-jee-neh-soo hoh-teh-roo) (*business hotel*)
- » 観光ホテル **kankō hoteru** (kahn-kohh hoh-teh-roo) (*tourist's hotel*)
- » カプセルホテル **kapuseru hoteru** (kah-poo-seh-roo hoh-teh-roo) (*capsule hotel*)
- » 旅館 **ryokan** (ryoh-kahn) (*Japanese-style inn*)
- » ユースホステル **yūsu hosuteru** (yooo-soo hoh-soo-teh-roo) (*youth hostel*)

Chapter 15 helps you choose the right accommodation for your needs, make a reservation, check in, and check out at the end of your trip.

Taking action during emergencies

No one likes to think about experiencing an emergency while traveling, but if you're in a foreign country, you're better off knowing what to do if an illness, injury, or emergency pops up. Chapter 16 provides you with the confidence and the Japanese to act wisely when you face an emergency.



REMEMBER

Memorize these phrases now — and hope you don't need them later:

- » だれか! **Dareka!** (dah-reh-kah!) (*Someone help!*)
- » 泥棒! **Dorobō!** (doh-roh-bohh!) (*A thief!*)
- » 火事! **Kaji!** (kah-jee!) (*Fire!*)
- » 助けて! **Tasukete!** (tah-soo-keh-teh!) (*Help me!*)