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# Everyday JAPANESE

日本語

A Basic Introduction to  
The Japanese Language & Culture

Schwarz/Ezawa

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A Basic Introduction to  
The Japanese Language & Culture

by Edward A. Schwarz  
& Reiko Ezawa



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*For Christina Kyoko*

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## PREFACE

What is **Bunraku**? **Gagaku**? **Sumō**? What is a **mikoshi**? A **hanamichi**? A **dohyō**? If you are not sure, you should be—if you want to know Japan. For the things these words (and many others like them) name are so uniquely Japanese that they are untranslatable. Indeed, Western travelers, students, teachers, and businessmen and women in Japan will regularly use these terms even when speaking in their native languages.

Those not familiar with Japan, however, find verbal translations and explanations inadequate to make these terms clear and understandable. It is the realization that words are not enough that inspired us to put this book together. We have attempted to *illustrate* such unique Japanese terms in the belief that one picture is worth a thousand words of explanation. Although we have been unable to illustrate every word in this book, we have illustrated or pictured as many as space allowed. For instance, what is a **mikoshi**? Even if we say that it is a “portable shrine,” you cannot fully understand what it is until you can visualize it. Therefore, we have included illustrations of a **mikoshi** so that you will be able to identify it when you see it. Conversely, if you see a **mikoshi** first, you can consult the illustrations of this book to learn what it is called in Japanese.

However, *Everyday Japanese* is more than an illustrated dictionary of Japanese terms. It is also a phrase book of useful Japanese for Westerners. We know that many travelers to Japan will want to communicate with the Japanese in Japanese, since this is an excellent way to learn about Japan. Therefore, we have assembled numerous Japanese expressions and dialogs to make communication as easy and painless as possible.

But this book is still more than an illustrated dictionary of Japanese and a phrase book. It is also an introduction to Japan—primarily through the Japanese language and illustrations, but also through notes that explain certain words and give practical information useful for visitors to

Japan. For instance, the note about **minshuku** (family inn, p. 30) not only describes what a **minshuku** is, but also explains how reservations may be made. Other items we have included are postal rates for international mail (p. 51), banking services (p. 56), and introductions to many Japanese arts, sports, religions, and other things Japanese (especially in Part Two, "Only in Japan"). While there may be many books available on Japanese art, sports, and religion, we hope that our introductory approach will provide enough information and vocabulary for you to be able to pursue your interests in Japan intelligently.

In preparing this book, we had many different kinds of readers in mind. For tourists, we have tried to provide language aids that will help them have a pleasant trip in Japan. For tourists who find Japanese pronunciation difficult, we have included Japanese written characters for every word, phrase, and sentence, so that they may communicate by showing this book to Japanese and letting them read the appropriate phrases or sentences for themselves. We also hope that tourists will also find this book an informative introduction to many things Japanese, from food to the arts.

For those who plan lengthy stays in Japan, we have included Part Three, "Living in Japan," which deals with such important business as immigration and the buying or renting of a house or an apartment. We also hope that this book will be a handy reference work for such everyday needs as postal rates for international mail and for words which are easily forgotten.

For the serious student of the Japanese language, we hope that the inclusion of **kanji** (Chinese characters) and **hiragana** (the Japanese syllabary) will be helpful.

We also hope that the vocabulary will be a useful supplement to the word lists normally found in Japanese-language textbooks.

Finally, we must say a word about learning Japanese and about this book. We don't want to disappoint you, but this book will not teach you to speak Japanese like a native. Many books claim, or imply, that they can teach you Japanese instantly, or at least in ten easy lessons. Well... it just isn't possible. And we do not make such claims. You

will not be fluent in Japanese even if you learn everything in this book. In fact, we have not even attempted to arrange the sections of the book in order of increasing difficulty, as a good textbook would. Rather, we have arranged the sections according to common situations and included the most useful Japanese for each section. Above all, we hope that *Everyday Japanese* will be an effective and enjoyable way for you to meet Japan by becoming acquainted with its language and culture.

E.A.S., R.E.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is impossible for us to express adequately our gratitude for the assistance and encouragement which many persons have given us in the preparation of this book. However, we would like to mention at least a few of the people who have helped us so much. First, we want to acknowledge a special debt to our good friend and best critic, Thomas Reibner, for his numerous suggestions and valuable advice.

For his recommendations and for his continued instruction about Japan and especially about Japanese music, we wish to thank Professor Kuzan Takahashi, master of the *shakuhachi* and of life. We also want to express our sincere gratitude to Yuzo Fujiyoshi for his timely encouragement and very helpful counsel.

Another person we want to thank is Masahiro Suda of Associate An, Ltd., who gave freely of his expert technical and photographic talents. And we cannot forget the careful and difficult work of Toshiaki Ono, who provided us with the main illustrations for this book.

We owe a special debt of gratitude to Yoshihisa Oshida, president of the Japan Gagaku Society, for his personal pictures of *gagaku*, *bugaku*, *kagura*, and the *hichiriki* player, not to mention his generous assistance in helping us better understand *gagaku* and obtain other pictures.

We also want to acknowledge the work *Shōzoku-Zufu* from the series *Kojitsu-Sōsho* as the source for our pictures of *sokutai* and *jūnihitoe*, reprinted here by permission.

For the many pictures provided by the gracious people of the Japan National Tourist Organization (marked throughout the book as JNTO), we wish to express our deep thanks. And for other pictures we want to thank the very busy but helpful people of the Toei Movie Company.

Last, but not least, we wish to thank Kazuhiko Nagai of the International Department of Shufunotomo Co., Ltd., for the original idea that inspired this book, and for his continued advice, assistance, and patience during the preparation of this book.

E.A.S., R.E.

## THE ARRANGEMENT OF THIS BOOK

There are three parts in this book. Part One, "Getting Around in Japan," is made up of sixteen common situations in which we have placed main emphasis on words, phrases, and sentences necessary and useful for getting around in Japan. Part Two, "Only in Japan," contains thirteen sections of things which can be found only in Japan, so notes are plentiful while useful expressions and dialogs are kept to a minimum. Part Three, "Living in Japan," is made up of five less common but very useful situations for the person who lives, or decides to live, in Japan. However, we have found it impossible to make each part completely separate from the other two; that is, there is considerable overlap and features of all three parts should be useful for everyone.

Each section of the book contains (1) an illustration and (2) a vocabulary list of twenty words. Subsequent pages of each section contain useful expressions and dialogs (especially in Part One), notes (especially in Part Two), additional words, and/or other features such as pictures or charts of useful information.

### **Plurals:**

English translations for most nouns in this book have been put in the singular, although they could have as easily been put in the plural. Most Japanese nouns do not make a distinction between the singular and the plural. For instance, **hon** means both "book" and "books," although we have listed only the singular form.



## SYMBOLS USED IN THIS BOOK

### Asterisk: \*

An asterisk after an entry of the vocabulary list of twenty words (facing the illustrations) indicates that an explanatory note will be found on one of the subsequent pages of that section.

### Brackets: [ ]

Brackets have been placed around words and numbers for which other words and numbers may be substituted. For example, “Chūō” (or the name of any other train line) may replace “Yamanote” as follows:

[Yamanote]-sen ([Yamanote] line)

[Chūō]-sen ([Chūō] line)

Similarly, “two” may be substituted for “one” as indicated by the brackets:

[ichi]-bansen (track number [one])

[ni]-bansen (track number [two])

### Prefix: (o-), (o)

The prefix *o* is enclosed in parentheses in this book to indicate that it is a term of politeness rather than a part of the word itself. For instance, **mizu** is the common word for “water,” but **omizu** is a more polite way of saying the same thing and is written (o)mizu for the sake of clarity. In the index of this book, words are listed without the polite prefix *o*.

### Suffix: (-sa-n), (-san)

In this book, the suffix **-san** is enclosed in parentheses to indicate that it is a term of politeness or address and not a necessary part of the word to which it is attached. For example, **untenshu** means “driver” or “drivers” in general, but **untenshu-san** is used in reference to a particular driver or when addressing him directly (Mr. Driver).

### Parentheses: ( ( ) )

Parentheses inside of parentheses are used in certain

English translations to indicate words added for clarity of meaning, although they do not actually appear in the Japanese expression or sentence. For example:

**Sumimasen ga.**

(Excuse me but. . . (I have a request).)

The added phrase (I have a request) would be understood by both the speaker and the listener of Japanese because the situation (stopping someone on the street to ask directions, for instance) would make the meaning clear.

**Abbreviation:      Lit:**

The abbreviation "Lit:" is used to indicate that a subsequent translation is a "literal" one. For example:

**Ogenki desu ka ?**

(How are you? Lit: Are you healthy?)

"Are you healthy?" is a literal translation of the Japanese question which is used in situations when English-speaking people would say "How are you?"

**Hyphen:      -**

Hyphens are included between syllables of words in the basic vocabulary list as an aid to pronunciation. In other places, the hyphens have been dropped due to lack of space except in some places where they add clarity, such as between numbers and counters:

<b>ichi-mai</b>	one thin, flat object
<b>ni-mai</b>	two thin, flat objects

# JAPANESE PRONUNCIATION

## The Syllabary:

In the Japanese language, each syllable consists of a vowel, or of a vowel and a consonant, except for the syllabic *n* and the letters *k*, *p*, *t*, and *s* when they occur as the first letter of a double consonant. In pronouncing Japanese, each syllable receives approximately equal stress and time. Below is a chart of the Japanese syllables with their **hiragana** (H) and **katakana** (K) systems of writing. **Hiragana** is used in writing Japanese when Chinese characters are not available, and **katakana** is used for foreign words brought into Japanese or for emphasis.

	H	K		H	K		H	K		H	K
<b>a</b>	あ	ア	<b>ka</b>	か	カ	<b>ga</b>	が	ガ	<b>sa</b>	さ	サ
<b>i</b>	い	イ	<b>ki</b>	き	キ	<b>gi</b>	ぎ	ギ	<b>shi</b>	し	シ
<b>u</b>	う	ウ	<b>ku</b>	く	ク	<b>gu</b>	ぐ	グ	<b>su</b>	す	ス
<b>e</b>	え	エ	<b>ke</b>	け	ケ	<b>ge</b>	げ	ゲ	<b>se</b>	せ	セ
<b>o</b>	お	オ	<b>ko</b>	こ	コ	<b>go</b>	ご	ゴ	<b>so</b>	そ	ソ
			<b>kya</b>	きゃ	キャ	<b>gya</b>	ぎゃ	ギャ	<b>sha</b>	しゃ	シャ
			<b>kyu</b>	きゅ	キュ	<b>gyu</b>	ぎゅ	ギュ	<b>shu</b>	しゅ	シュ
			<b>kyo</b>	きょ	キョ	<b>gyo</b>	ぎょ	ギョ	<b>sho</b>	しょ	ショ

	H	K		H	K		H	K		H	K
<b>za</b>	ざ	ザ	<b>ta</b>	た	タ	<b>da</b>	だ	ダ	<b>na</b>	な	ナ
<b>ji</b>	じ	ジ	<b>chi</b>	ち	チ	<b>ji</b>	ぢ	ヂ	<b>ni</b>	に	ニ
<b>zu</b>	ず	ズ	<b>tsu</b>	つ	ツ	<b>zu</b>	づ	ヅ	<b>nu</b>	ぬ	ヌ
<b>ze</b>	ぜ	ゼ	<b>te</b>	て	テ	<b>de</b>	で	デ	<b>ne</b>	ね	ネ
<b>zo</b>	ぞ	ゾ	<b>to</b>	と	ト	<b>do</b>	ど	ド	<b>no</b>	の	ノ
<b>ja</b>	じゃ	ジャ	<b>cha</b>	ちゃ	チャ				<b>nya</b>	にゃ	ニャ
<b>ju</b>	じゅ	ジュ	<b>chu</b>	ちゅ	チュ				<b>nyu</b>	にゅ	ニュ
<b>jo</b>	じょ	ジョ	<b>cho</b>	ちょ	チョ				<b>nyo</b>	にょ	ニョ

	H	K		H	K		H	K		H	K
<b>ha</b>	は	ハ	<b>pa</b>	ぱ	パ	<b>ba</b>	ば	バ	<b>ma</b>	ま	マ
<b>hi</b>	ひ	ヒ	<b>pi</b>	ぴ	ピ	<b>bi</b>	び	ビ	<b>mi</b>	み	ミ
<b>fu</b>	ふ	フ	<b>pu</b>	ぷ	プ	<b>bu</b>	ぶ	ブ	<b>mu</b>	む	ム
<b>he</b>	へ	ヘ	<b>pe</b>	ぺ	ペ	<b>be</b>	べ	ベ	<b>me</b>	め	メ
<b>ho</b>	ほ	ホ	<b>po</b>	ぽ	ポ	<b>bo</b>	ぼ	ボ	<b>mo</b>	も	モ
<b>hya</b>	ひゃ	ヒャ	<b>pya</b>	ぴゃ	ピャ	<b>bya</b>	びゃ	ビャ	<b>mya</b>	みゃ	ミャ
<b>hyu</b>	ひゅ	ヒュ	<b>pyu</b>	ぴゅ	ピュ	<b>byu</b>	びゅ	ビュ	<b>myu</b>	みゅ	ミュ
<b>hyo</b>	ひょ	ヒョ	<b>pyo</b>	ぴょ	ピョ	<b>byo</b>	びょ	ビョ	<b>myo</b>	みょ	ミョ

	H	K		H	K		H	K		H	K
<b>ya</b>	や	ヤ	<b>ra</b>	ら	ラ	<b>wa</b>	わ	ワ	<b>n</b>	ん	ン
			<b>ri</b>	り	リ						
<b>yu</b>	ゆ	ユ	<b>ru</b>	る	ル						
			<b>re</b>	れ	レ						
<b>yo</b>	よ	ヨ	<b>ro</b>	ろ	ロ						
			<b>rya</b>	りゃ	リャ						
			<b>ryu</b>	りゅ	リュ						
			<b>ryo</b>	りょ	リョ						

## Vowels:

There are only five vowel sounds in Japanese:

- a** sounds like “ah” as the *a* in father  
(not the *a* in cat or late)
- i** sounds like “ee” as the *i* in machine  
(not the *i* in sit or light)
- u** sounds like “oo” as the *u* in flu  
(not the *u* in cut or cute)
- e** sounds like “eh” as the *e* in get or let  
(not the *e* in me or free)
- o** sounds like “oh” as the *o* in open or hope  
(not the *o* in hot)

## Long Vowels:

Long vowel sounds are very important in the pronunciation of Japanese since the meaning of some words will

change according to the length of the vowel. For example, **o-ba-sa-n** (aunt) and **o-ba-a-sa-n** or **o-bā-sa-n** (grandmother) are distinguished by the length of the vowel *a*. Japanese write the long vowels in two separate syllables (when using **hiragana**) and if you think of them in the same way it makes pronunciation easier. We have used the following system to indicate long vowels:

- ā** (which is the same as **a-a**)
- i-i** (since printing a long mark over an *i* is difficult)
- ū** (which is the same as **u-u**).
- ē** (which is the same as **e-e**)
- ō** (which is the same as **o-o**)

In this book, we have consistently indicated long vowels in every word that has them, whether the word appears in a Japanese sentence or an English sentence, with one exception. The exception is that we have not marked long vowels in certain place names which commonly appear in English without long vowel marks, such as Tokyo and Kyoto (**Tōkyō** and **Kyōto** in Japanese).

## Short Vowels:

The vowels *u* and *i* are sometimes short; that is, they are not voiced or not pronounced at all when they appear between unvoiced consonants (**f, h, k, p, s, t, ch, sh**) or when *u* appears at the end of a sentence after an unvoiced consonant. Examples:

**u** between two unvoiced consonants:

**su:**

<b>desu ka?</b>	(is it?)	sounds like <b>deska?</b>
<b>sukoshi</b>	(a little)	sounds like <b>skoshi</b>
<b>suki</b>	(like)	sounds like <b>ski</b>

**ku:**

<b>kushami</b>	(sneeze)	sounds like <b>kshami</b>
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**tsu:**

<b>tsukue</b>	(desk)	sounds like <b>tskue</b>
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**fu:**  
**futatsu** (two) sounds like **ftatsu**

**i** between two unvoiced consonants:

**shi:**  
**shite** (doing) sounds like **shte**

**chi:**  
**chikai** (near) sounds like **chkai**

**ki:**  
**kitte** (stamp) sounds like **ktte**  
**kippu** (ticket) sounds like **kppu**

**hi:**  
**hitori** (one person) sounds like **htori**

**u** at the end of a sentence:

**Hon desu.** (It is a book.) sounds like **Hon des.**

## Consonants:

Most Japanese consonants are pronounced almost the same as English consonants except for the following:

- f** is made by blowing air between the lips, without letting the lower lip touch the teeth. The sound produced is approximately halfway between the *h* sound and the *f* sound of English.
- g** is hard, like the *g* in *go* or *get* (not the *g* in *gentle* or *judge*).
- n** is sometimes considered to be a full syllable itself (without any vowel). The pronunciation of the syllabic *n* is nasal; that is, the tongue does not touch any part of the roof of the mouth, and air is allowed to escape through the nose. It sounds something like the *ng* in *singer* or *ping-pong*, but without the slightest hint of a *g* sound.

Be careful not to confuse the syllabic *n* with the *n* in **na**, **ni**, **nu**, etc. The latter *n* is pronounced the same as the English *n*. When a syllabic *n* is followed by a vowel or *y*, we have separated them with a hyphen or with an apostrophe (**n-a** or **n'a**;

**n-yo** or **n'yo**).

- r** is pronounced between the *l* and *d* sounds of English. It is a flap-r, in which the tip of the tongue momentarily touches the roof of the mouth just behind the teeth.
- ch** is pronounced like the *ch* in cherry (not like the *ch* in chauvinist or chemistry).
- ts** is pronounced like the final *ts* in nuts or cuts.

## Double Consonants:

- kk** is pronounced like the *kk* in bookkeeper. The first *k* is a momentary pause (silence) equivalent in time to the pronunciation of one syllable of Japanese; the second *k* is pronounced as usual.
- pp** is pronounced like the *p* sounds connecting two words in English such as “flip past” (not like the *pp* in a single word such as pepper). The first *p* is a momentary pause (silence) equivalent in time to the pronunciation of one syllable of Japanese; the second *p* is pronounced as usual.
- tt** is pronounced like the *t* sounds connecting two words in English such as “flight time” (not like the *tt* in a single word such as butter). The first *t* is a momentary pause (silence) equivalent in time to the pronunciation of one syllable of Japanese; the second *t* is pronounced as usual.
- tch** is a variation of the *tt* sound since the pronunciation of *ch* in Japanese begins with the *t* sound. Therefore, the *t* of *tch* is a momentary pause (like the first *t* of the double consonant *tt*), and the *ch* is pronounced as usual.
- ss** is pronounced like the *s* sounds connecting two words in English such as “less shame” or “let’s sing” (not like the *ss* in a single word such as lesson or less). The first *s* sound is held for the length of time it takes to pronounce one syllable of Japanese, and then the sound is continued into the second *s*.

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