

The Football Coach's Japanese Phrasebook

500+ Essential Phrases for Coaching in Japan

Free guide for English-speaking coaches working in Japan (J-League, high school, youth) or with Japanese-speaking players. Includes formal and informal speech patterns with romaji pronunciation.

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Understanding Japanese Politeness Levels: Japanese has different levels of formality. Commands in training are typically short/direct (plain form), while speaking to parents or staff requires polite form (です/ます). This guide uses appropriate forms for each context. When in doubt, err on the side of being more polite.



Training Session Commands

Starting & Stopping

English	Japanese	Romaji
Go! / Start!	始め！	ha-ji-me
Stop!	止まれ！ / ストップ！	to-ma-re / su-TOP-pu
Freeze!	動くな！	u-go-ku-na
Again!	もう一回！	mou ik-kai
One more time	もう一度	mou i-chi-do
Reset!	最初から！	sai-sho ka-ra
Take a break	休憩！	kyuu-kei
Water break	給水タイム	kyuu-sui tai-mu
Gather round	集まれ！	a-tsu-ma-re
Listen up	聞いて！	kii-te
Pay attention	注目！	chuu-mo-ku
That's enough	そこまで！	so-ko ma-de
Finished / Done	終わり！	o-wa-ri
Good, let's continue	よし、続けて	yo-shi, tsu-zu-ke-te

Tempo & Intensity

English	Japanese	Romaji
Faster!	もっと速く！	mot-to ha-ya-ku
Slower!	もっとゆっくり！	mot-to yuk-ku-ri
Speed up!	スピードアップ！	su-piido AP-pu
Game speed!	試合のスピード！	shi-ai no su-piido
High intensity!	強度上げて！	kyou-do a-ge-te
Keep the tempo	テンポを維持して	tem-po wo i-ji shi-te
Push yourselves!	頑張れ！	gam-ba-re
Don't walk!	歩くな！	a-ru-ku-na
Sprint!	ダッシュ！	das-shu
Full effort!	全力で！	zen-ryo-ku de
Maximum effort!	最大限の力で！	sai-dai-gen no chi-ka-ra de
More energy!	もっと元気出して！	mot-to gen-ki da-shi-te
Stay focused!	集中して！	shuu-chuu shi-te

Movement Commands

English	Japanese	Romaji
Move!	動け！	u-go-ke
Stay there	そこにいて	so-ko ni i-te
Come here	こっち来て	kot-chi ki-te
Go there	あっち行って	at-chi it-te
Swap positions	ポジション変えて	po-ji-shon ka-e-te
Rotate!	ローテーション！	roo-tee-shon

Join the other group	あっちのグループに入って	at-chi no gu-ruu-pu ni hait-te
You're in	入って	hai-te
You're out	出て	de-te
Next group	次のグループ	tsu-gi no gu-ruu-pu
Form a line	一列に並んで	i-chi-re-tsu ni na-ran-de
Make a circle	円になって	en ni nat-te
Spread out	広がって	hi-ro-gat-te
Get closer	近づいて	chi-ka-zui-te

Technical Corrections

English	Japanese	Romaji
Use your left foot	左足を使って	hi-da-ri-a-shi wo tsu-kat-te
Use your right foot	右足を使って	mi-gi-a-shi wo tsu-kat-te
Both feet	両足	ryou-a-shi
Inside of the foot	インサイド	in-sai-do
Outside of the foot	アウトサイド	au-to-sai-do
Instep	インステップ	in-su-tep-pu
Head up!	顔上げ！	ka-o a-ge-te
Look up	上を見て	u-e wo mi-te
First touch	ファーストタッチ	faa-su-to tat-chi
Soft touch	ソフトタッチ	so-fu-to tat-chi
Body position	体の向き	ka-ra-da no mu-ki
Open your body	体を開いて	ka-ra-da wo hi-rai-te
Check your shoulder	首を振って	ku-bi wo fut-te
Bend your knees	膝を曲げて	hi-za wo ma-ge-te
Stay on your toes	つま先で立って	tsu-ma-sa-ki de tat-te

Ball Work

English	Japanese	Romaji
Pass!	パス！	pa-su
Short pass	ショートパス	shoo-to pa-su
Long pass	ロングパス	ron-gu pa-su
Through ball	スルーパス	su-ruu pa-su
Dribble	ドリブル	do-ri-bu-ru
Control the ball	ボールコントロール	boo-ru kon-to-roo-ru
Trap the ball	トラップ	to-rap-pu
Volley	ボレー	bo-ree
Header	ヘディング	he-din-gu
Chest it down	胸トラップ	mu-ne to-rap-pu
Shield the ball	ボールをキープ	boo-ru wo kii-pu
Keep possession	ポゼッションを維持して	po-zes-shon wo i-ji shi-te

Tactical Instructions

Formations & Positions

English	Japanese	Romaji
Formation	フォーメーション	foo-mee-shon
We play 4-3-3	4-3-3 でいく	yon-san-san de i-ku
Goalkeeper	ゴールキーパー / GK	goo-ru-kii-paa
Defender	ディフェンダー / DF	di-fen-daa
Centre-back	センターバック / CB	sen-taa-bak-ku
Full-back	サイドバック / SB	sai-do-bak-ku
Right-back	右サイドバック	mi-gi sai-do-bak-ku
Left-back	左サイドバック	hi-da-ri sai-do-bak-ku
Midfielder	ミッドフィルダー / MF	mid-do-fi-ru-daa
Defensive midfielder	守備的MF / ボランチ	shu-bi-te-ki MF / bo-ran-chi
Central midfielder	セントラルMF	sen-to-ra-ru MF
Attacking midfielder	トップ下	top-pu shi-ta
Winger	ウイング / サイドハーフ	ui-n-gu / sai-do-haa-fu
Forward / Striker	フォワード / FW	fo-waa-do
Centre-forward	センターフォワード	sen-taa fo-waa-do
Wing-back	ウイングバック	ui-n-gu-bak-ku

Note: Japanese football uses many English loanwords (katakana). "ボランチ" (volanchi) comes from Portuguese/Brazilian influence and refers to a holding midfielder. Many J-League terms blend English with Japanese.

Attacking Principles

English	Japanese	Romaji
Attack!	攻めろ！	se-me-ro
Width!	幅を使え！	ha-ba wo tsu-ka-e
Stretch them	広げろ	hi-ro-ge-ro
Find the space	スペースを見つけて	su-pee-su wo mi-tsu-ke-te
Make space	スペースを作って	su-pee-su wo tsu-kut-te
Between the lines	ライン間で	rai-n kan de
Third man run	3人目の動き	san-nin-me no u-go-ki
Overlap	オーバーラップ	oo-baa-rap-pu
Underlap	インナーラップ	in-naa-rap-pu
Switch the play	サイドチェンジ	sai-do-chen-ji
Play forward	前を向いて	ma-e wo mui-te
Turn!	ターン！	taa-n
Shoot!	シュート！	shuu-to
Cross it!	クロス！	ku-ro-su
One-two	ワンツー	wan-tsuu
Give and go	壁バス	ka-be pa-su
Support the ball	サポートして	sa-poo-to shi-te
Make the run	走り出して	ha-shi-ri-da-shi-te

Get into the box	エリアに入って	e-ri-a ni hait-te
Far post	ファー・ポスト	faa pos-to
Near post	ニア・ポスト	ni-a pos-to

Defensive Principles

English	Japanese	Romaji
Defend!	守れ！	ma-mo-re
Press!	プレス！	pu-re-su
High press	ハイプレス	hai pu-re-su
Drop!	下がれ！	sa-ga-re
Hold the line	ラインを保て	rai-n wo ta-mo-te
Squeeze!	コンパクトに！	kon-pak-to ni
Compact!	コンパクト！	kon-pak-to
Cover!	カバー！	ka-baa
Mark him!	マーク！	maa-ku
Man on!	来てる！	ki-te-ru
Behind you!	後ろ！	u-shi-ro
Clear it!	クリア！	ku-ri-a
Win the ball	ボールを取って	boo-ru wo tot-te
Block the shot	シュートをブロック	shuu-to wo bu-rok-ku
No foul!	ファウルするな！	fau-ru su-ru-na
Stay goalside	ゴール側にいて	goo-ru ga-wa ni i-te
Delay!	遅らせろ！	o-ku-ra-se-ro
Tackle!	タッカル！	tak-ku-ru
Intercept	インター・セプト	in-taa-se-pu-to

Transitions

English	Japanese	Romaji
Transition!	切り替え！	ki-ri-ka-e
Counter-attack!	カウンター！	kau-n-taa
Fast break!	速攻！	sok-koo
Get back!	戻れ！	mo-do-re
Everyone back!	全員戻れ！	zen-in mo-do-re
Recovery run	戻りのラン	mo-do-ri no ran
Quick!	早く！	ha-ya-ku
Go forward together	一緒に上がって	is-sho ni a-gat-te

Set Pieces

English	Japanese	Romaji
Free kick	フリーキック / FK	fu-rii-kik-ku
Direct free kick	直接FK	chok-se-tsutsu FK
Indirect free kick	間接FK	kan-se-tsutsu FK
Corner kick	コーナーキック / CK	koo-naa-kik-ku
Penalty kick	ペナルティキック / PK	pe-na-ru-ti-kik-ku

Throw-in	スローイン	su-roo-in
Goal kick	ゴールキック	goo-ru-kik-ku
Set up the wall	壁を作つて	ka-be wo tsu-kut-te
Attack the ball	ボールに行け	boo-ru ni i-ke
Near post run	ニアに走つて	ni-a ni ha-shit-te
Far post run	ファーに走つて	faa ni ha-shit-te
Short corner	ショートコーナー	shoo-to koo-naa



Match Day Communication

Pre-Match

English	Japanese	Romaji
Team meeting	ミーティング	mii-tin-gu
Here's the starting lineup	これがスタメンです	ko-re ga su-ta-men de-su
You're starting	君はスタメン	ki-mi wa su-ta-men
You're on the bench	君はベンチスタート	ki-mi wa ben-chi su-taa-to
Warm up properly	しっかりウォームアップして	shik-ka-ri woo-mu-ap-pu shi-te
This is the game plan	これが今日の戦術です	ko-re ga kyou no sen-jyu-tsutsu de-su
Focus!	集中!	shuu-chuu
Are you ready?	準備はいい?	jun-bi wa ii
Let's go!	行くぞ!	i-ku zo
Believe in yourselves	自分を信じて	ji-bun wo shin-ji-te
We can win this	勝てるぞ	ka-te-ru zo
Play as a team	チームとして戦おう	chii-mu to-shi-te ta-ta-ka-ou

During the Match

English	Japanese	Romaji
Good!	いいぞ！	ii zo
That's it!	それだ！	so-re da
Keep going!	続けて！	tsu-zu-ke-te
Come on!	頑張れ！	gam-ba-re
Nice play!	ナイスプレー！	nai-su pu-ree
Time!	時間ある！	ji-kan a-ru
No time!	早く！	ha-ya-ku
Stay calm	落ち着いて	o-chi-tsui-te
Relax	リラックス	ri-rak-ku-su
Don't rush	焦るな	a-se-ru-na
Patient!	辛抱強く！	shin-bou-zu-yo-ku
Wake up!	目を覚ませ！	me wo sa-ma-se
Concentrate!	集中しろ！	shuu-chuu shi-ro
Talk to each other!	声を出せ！	ko-e wo da-se
Communicate!	コミュニケーション！	ko-myuu-ni-kee-shon

Substitutions

English	Japanese	Romaji
Substitution!	選手交代!	sen-shu kou-tai
Get ready to come on	出る準備して	de-ru jun-bi shi-te
Warm up	アップして	ap-pu shi-te
You're coming off	交代だ	kou-tai da
Good game	お疲れ様	o-tsu-ka-re sa-ma
Well played	よく頑張った	yo-ku gam-bat-ta

Here's what I need from you	やってほしいことは	yat-te ho-shii ko-to wa
Play your position	ポジションを守って	po-ji-shon wo ma-mot-te

Half-Time & Post-Match

English	Japanese	Romaji
Half-time	ハーフタイム	haa-fu-tai-mu
Second half	後半	kou-han
Well done first half	前半よく頑張った	zen-han yo-ku gam-bat-ta
We need to improve	改善が必要だ	kai-zen ga hi-ts-u-you da
Keep doing what you're doing	今のままでいい	i-ma no ma-ma de ii
Change of plan	戦術を変える	sen-jyu-ts-u wo ka-e-ru
Full time	試合終了	shi-ai shuu-ryou
We won!	勝った！	kat-ta
We lost	負けた	ma-ke-ta
It was a draw	引き分けだった	hi-ki-wa-ke dat-ta
Proud of you all	みんな誇りに思う	min-na ho-ko-ri ni o-mou
We'll do better next time	次は頑張ろう	tsu-gi wa gam-ba-rou

Cultural Note - Post-Match Bowing: In Japanese football, it's traditional for the team to bow to the fans after a match, win or lose. This shows respect and gratitude. As a coach, participate in this ritual and encourage your team to bow sincerely.



Player Feedback Phrases

Positive Reinforcement

English	Japanese	Romaji
Excellent!	素晴らしい！	su-ba-ra-shii
Well done!	よくやった！	yo-ku yat-ta
Perfect!	完璧！	kan-pe-ki
Great job!	いいね！	ii ne
Beautiful!	うまい！	u-mai
That's the way!	それでいい！	so-re de ii
Keep it up!	その調子！	so-no chou-shi
Much better!	だいぶ良くなった！	dai-bu yo-ku nat-ta
Good improvement	上達したね	jou-ta-tsuta shi-ta ne
I can see your effort	努力が見える	do-ryo-ku ga mi-e-ru
Great attitude	いい姿勢だ	ii shi-sei da
Good decision	いい判断	ii han-dan
Smart play	賢いプレー	ka-shi-koi pu-ree

Constructive Corrections

English	Japanese	Romaji
Try again	もう一回やって	mou ik-kai yat-te
Not quite	もう少し	mou su-ko-shi
Almost!	惜しい！	o-shii
This way instead	こうして	kou shi-te
Watch me	見て	mi-te
Like this	こうやって	kou yat-te
Think about it	考えて	kan-ga-e-te
What could you do better?	どうすればもっと良くなる？	dou su-re-ba mot-to yo-ku na-ru
Next time, try...	次は...してみて	tsu-gi wa... shi-te mi-te
Focus on this	ここに集中して	ko-ko ni shuu-chuu shi-te
You can do better	もっとできる	mot-to de-ki-ru
Keep working on it	練習を続けて	ren-shuu wo tsu-zu-ke-te

Encouragement

English	Japanese	Romaji
Don't give up	諦めるな	a-ki-ra-me-ru-na
You can do it	できるよ	de-ki-ru yo
I believe in you	信じてる	shin-ji-te-ru
Stay positive	ポジティブに	po-ji-ti-bu ni
Head up	顔上げて	ka-o a-ge-te
Next time	次だ	tsu-gi da
It's okay, keep going	大丈夫、続けて	dai-jou-bu, tsu-zu-ke-te
Everyone makes mistakes	誰でもミスする	da-re de-mo mi-su su-ru

Learn from this	これから学んで	ko-re ka-ra ma-nan-de
Be brave	勇気を持つて	yuu-ki wo mot-te
Trust yourself	自分を信じて	ji-bun wo shin-ji-te
Fight! (encouragement)	ファイト！	fai-to



Goalkeeper-Specific Language

English	Japanese	Romaji
Goalkeeper	ゴールキーパー	goo-ru-kii-paa
Goalie (informal)	キーパー	kii-paa
Keeper!	キーパー！	kii-paa
Your ball!	キーパー！	kii-paa
Away!	出ろ！	de-ro
Stay!	待て！	ma-te
Come out!	出てこい！	de-te koi
Stay on your line	ラインを守れ	rai-n wo ma-mo-re
Organize your wall	壁を整理して	ka-be wo sei-ri shi-te
Talk to your defense	DFに声かけて	DF ni ko-e ka-ke-te
Command the box	エリアを支配して	e-ri-a wo shi-hai shi-te
Catch it!	キャッチ！	kyat-chi
Punch it!	パンチ！	pan-chi
Hold it!	抑えろ！	o-sa-e-ro
Get down!	倒れろ！	ta-o-re-ro
Make yourself big	体を大きく	ka-ra-da wo oo-ki-ku
Ready position	準備の姿勢	jun-bi no shi-sei
Diving save	ダイビングセーブ	dai-bin-gu see-bu
Footwork	足の運び	a-shi no ha-ko-bi
Distribution	配球	hai-kyuu
Throw it	投げて	na-ge-te
Kick it long	長く蹴って	na-ga-ku ket-te
Roll it out	転がして	ko-ro-ga-shi-te

Staff & Parent Communication

Team Staff

English	Japanese	Romaji
Head coach	監督	kan-to-ku
Assistant coach	コーチ / アシスタントコーチ	koo-chi / a-shi-su-tan-to koo-chi
Goalkeeper coach	GKコーチ	GK koo-chi
Fitness coach	フィジカルコーチ	fi-ji-ka-ru koo-chi
Physio / Trainer	トレーナー	to-ree-naa
Team manager	マネージャー	ma-nee-jaa
Team doctor	チームドクター	chii-mu do-ku-taa
Kit manager	用具係	you-gu ga-ka-ri
Referee	審判	shin-pan
Linesman	副審	fu-ku-shin

Parent Communication (Polite Form)

English	Japanese	Romaji
Hello parents	保護者の皆様	ho-go-sha no mi-na-sa-ma
Your child is doing well	お子さんは頑張っています	o-ko-san wa gam-bat-te i-ma-su
They're improving	上達しています	jou-ta-tsu shi-te i-ma-su
Training is at...	練習は...にあります	ren-shuu wa... ni a-ri-ma-su
The game is at...	試合は...にあります	shi-ai wa... ni a-ri-ma-su
Please arrive early	早めにお越しください	ha-ya-me ni o-ko-shi ku-da-sai
Bring water and snacks	お飲み物と軽食をお持ちください	o-no-mi-mo-no to kei-sho-ku wo o-mo-chi ku-da-sai
The match is cancelled	試合は中止です	shi-ai wa chuu-shi de-su
Training is cancelled	練習は中止です	ren-shuu wa chuu-shi de-su
Do you have any questions?	ご質問はありますか？	go-shi-tsuumon wa a-ri-ma-su ka
Thank you for your support	ご支援ありがとうございます	go-shi-en a-ri-ga-tou go-zai-ma-su

Injury & Medical

English	Japanese	Romaji
Are you okay?	大丈夫？	dai-jou-bu
Where does it hurt?	どこが痛い？	do-ko ga i-tai
Can you walk?	歩ける？	a-ru-ke-ru
Can you continue?	続けられる？	tsu-zu-ke-ra-re-ru
Take a rest	休んで	ya-sun-de
Get some ice	アイシングして	ai-shin-gu shi-te
Stretch it out	ストレッチして	su-to-ret-chi shi-te
You need to see the doctor	医者に診てもらって	i-sha ni mi-te mo-rat-te
It's just a knock	軽い接触だけ	ka-rui ses-sho-ku da-ke
Take your time	ゆっくりして	yuk-ku-ri shi-te

Cultural Note - Respect & Hierarchy: In Japanese football culture, respect for seniority (先輩 senpai / 後輩 kouhai) is very important. Younger players show respect to older players and all players show respect to coaches. Using appropriate honorifics (-san, -kun) and polite language with parents and officials is expected. Always remove your hat when speaking to parents or officials.



Common Mistakes to Avoid

Cultural Awareness! Understanding Japanese etiquette is as important as the language. Here are common mistakes foreign coaches make:

Language Mistakes

Mistake	Why It's Wrong	Correct Approach
Using casual speech with parents	Disrespectful in hierarchical culture	Use -です/-ます polite forms
Shouting player's name only	Can seem rude without title	Add -kun (boys) or -san
Using あなた (anata = you)	Can be too direct/rude	Use person's name or omit subject
Saying いいえ (iie = no) directly	Too blunt for Japanese culture	Soften with ちょっと... (chotto = a bit...)
Literal translation of English expressions	Often doesn't work/sounds odd	Learn Japanese football terminology

Pronunciation Pitfalls

Word	Common Mistake	Correct Pronunciation	Notes
試合 (match)	shi-ai as one syllable	shi-a-i (3 syllables)	Each vowel pronounced
頑張れ (go for it)	gam-ba-re with hard R	gam-ba-re (soft R)	Japanese R is between R and L
ボール (ball)	bawl	boo-ru (2 syllables)	Long "o" sound
コーチ (coach)	coach	koo-chi (2 syllables)	Long "o" sound

Cultural Mistakes

Mistake	Why It's Wrong	Better Approach
Singling out players publicly for criticism	Causes loss of face (embarrassment)	Give negative feedback privately
Being overly casual with staff	Seen as unprofessional	Maintain appropriate formality
Skipping the bow	Expected in all greetings/thanks	Bow when greeting, thanking, apologizing
Wearing shoes in certain areas	Very disrespectful in Japanese culture	Follow local customs, look for shoe storage
Not participating in team rituals	Team bowing, group activities are important	Join in post-match bows, team huddles
Being too physically affectionate	Personal space is valued	High fives are okay, limit hugging/touching
Showing frustration openly	Emotional control is valued	Stay calm, save emotions for appropriate times

False Friends (English Loanwords with Different Meanings)

Japanese Word	What You Think It Means	What It Actually Means
ファイト (faito)	Fight (aggression)	Go for it! / Good luck! (encouragement)
マンション (manshon)	Mansion	Apartment building
スマート (sumaato)	Smart (intelligent)	Slim / stylish
ナイーブ (naiibu)	Naive	Sensitive / delicate
テンション (tension)	Tension (stress)	Energy / excitement level

Quick Reference Cards

10 Essential Commands

English	Japanese	Romaji
Go!	始め！	ha-ji-me
Stop!	止まれ！	to-ma-re
Again!	もう一回！	mou ik-kai
Good!	いいぞ！	ii zo
Pass!	パス！	pa-su
Shoot!	シュート！	shuu-to
Press!	プレス！	pu-re-su
Cover!	カバー！	ka-baa
Move!	動け！	u-go-ke
Fight!/Go for it!	ファイト！	fai-to

Numbers (For Formations & Drills)

Number	Japanese	Romaji
1	一 / いち	i-chi
2	二 / に	ni
3	三 / さん	san
4	四 / よん	yon
5	五 / ご	go
6	六 / ろく	ro-ku
7	七 / なな	na-na
8	八 / はち	ha-chi
9	九 / きゅう	kyuu
10	十 / じゅう	juu
11	十一	juu-i-chi

Essential Greetings

English	Japanese	Romaji
Hello (general)	こんにちは	kon-ni-chi-wa
Good morning	おはようございます	o-ha-you go-zai-ma-su
Good evening	こんばんは	kom-ban-wa
Goodbye	さようなら	sa-you-na-ra
See you (casual)	じゃあね / また	ja-a ne / ma-ta
Thank you	ありがとうございます	a-ri-ga-tou go-zai-ma-su
Sorry / Excuse me	すみません	su-mi-ma-sen
Nice to meet you	よろしくお願ひします	yo-ro-shi-ku o-ne-gai shi-ma-su

Good work (after practice)	お疲れ様でした	o-tsu-ka-re sa-ma de-shi-ta
Please (when asking)	お願ひします	o-ne-gai shi-ma-su

Emergency Phrases

English	Japanese	Romaji
Help!	助けで！	ta-su-ke-te
Call a doctor!	医者を呼んで！	i-sha wo yon-de
Call an ambulance!	救急車を呼んで！	kyuu-kyuu-sha wo yon-de
Don't move him/her	動かさないで	u-go-ka-sa-nai-de
Stay calm	落ち着いて	o-chi-tsui-te
Everyone stay back	みんな下がって	min-na sa-gat-te

Key Cultural Tips for Coaching in Japan:

- **Punctuality is essential** - Arrive early, never late. Being on time means being 5-10 minutes early
- **Bowing** - Bow when greeting, thanking, apologizing. Deeper bows show more respect
- **Business cards (名刺)** - Present and receive with both hands, study briefly, never write on them
- **Group harmony (和)** - Team success over individual glory; avoid singling out players
- **Hierarchy (先輩/後輩)** - Respect seniority; use appropriate language levels
- **Work ethic** - Japanese players often value hard work and repetition; "一生懸命" (ishokenmei = giving your all)
- **Quiet confidence** - Boasting is frowned upon; let actions speak
- **Club activities (部活)** - High school football clubs have intense commitment; understand this culture

The Football Coach's Japanese Phrasebook

By Kevin Middleton / Football Coaching Academy

Part of the 360TFT ecosystem