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*Travelers should always check with
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Third Edition

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Notes on Japanese Culture and Communication

These are the Culture Notes for Pimsleur's *Japanese 1*. The objective of *Japanese 1* is to introduce you to the language and culture of Japan primarily through your ears, and only secondarily through your eyes.

This approach is based upon the fact that more than 95 percent of our lives is spent in listening and talking, and less than 5 percent in reading and writing. The most effective and productive way to begin acquiring these necessary communication skills is by actually working with the "language in use," as demonstrated by native speakers of the language being learned.

Efficiency is greatly increased when what you learn first are the most-frequently-used structures and daily life vocabulary, so that you practice with the practical tools you require every day. This carefully selected "core-language" allows the tutor on the audio to keep you focused entirely on essential language. This is self-motivating because you will begin to use it immediately and successfully.

As you learn the language, you are absorbing the culture. Language and culture are so closely intertwined that learning them separately can make you literally "culturally-deprived," that is, unable to

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produce appropriate and meaningful language. For this reason you must carefully notice the different ways the Japanese "act" in the various situations you will experience. Being sensitive to "who is doing what to whom, and why," is what you have learned to do almost unconsciously in your native tongue — you will attain this same sense of "awareness" as you gain proficiency in your new language. This implicit instruction will come from the lessons, as you learn to identify the intonation and melody of the speakers. This Audio will provide additional explicit instruction to further confirm what you have learned.

Acquiring the culture, "the map of the territory," is like acquiring the terminology of a subject: it enables you to operate as a fellow member in that society. Your success in working with native speakers of Japanese will depend upon how sensitive you become to the accumulated heritage that is Japanese.

sumimasen

You will find yourself using and hearing this expression quite often in your interactions with the Japanese. *sumimasen* is used for several purposes. It is often used to express the speaker's sincere and polite attitude toward others. However, Japanese people use this expression to convey not only "Excuse me," but also "I'm sorry," and even "Thank you." You will hear them say *sumimasen* to attract

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someone's attention when initiating a conversation. You might also hear this expression from someone who mistakenly steps on your foot in a crowded train and wishes to apologize. It is a very useful expression in a wide range of social contexts.

Word Order

Japanese word order is very different from what you are accustomed to in English. Word endings such as *masu*, *masen*, and *masu ka*—determine whether the speaker is making a statement, negating or asking something—and they come at the end of a sentence. You need to, therefore, listen to the speaker all the way through to the end of the sentence to find out the speaker's intention. This may be confusing to you at first, but as you become skillful, you will be able to use this sentence structure to your advantage, as you can carefully sense the listener's feeling while you speak. You can then decide on the overall tone of your message by modifying the ending accordingly.

Expressions of Modesty and Deference in Japanese Communication

When someone compliments the Japanese on good work, nice clothes, a beautiful house, a wonderful dinner, etc., it is customary for them to downplay their abilities, possessions, etc. While negating a compliment may be considered a sign of

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lack of confidence or even insincerity in some cultures, the Japanese frequently use it as an expression of modesty and deference in daily communication. As a case in point, consider this conversation:

"That was a wonderful meal! You are a great cook, *suzuki san*."

"Oh, no. I only followed a recipe. Anybody can cook."

"I certainly can't. Could you teach me?"

"Can I teach? Oh, no. You cook far better than I can. I'm the one who needs to take lessons from you."

Suzuki may be seen as too modest by American standards, but this is socially acceptable behavior in Japan. This humility is only seen as avoiding appearing to be arrogant or conceited.

... *ne*

ne at the end of sentences, as in *nihongo ga wakarimasu ne*, is roughly equivalent to the English "isn't it?" "aren't you?" "don't you?" etc. The use of *ne* shows that the speaker expects the listener to agree with him or her. You will hear this used frequently in Japanese; in fact, some people may end virtually every sentence with *ne*. Living in a more collectivistic society than the U.S., the Japanese value being aligned with and maintaining

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harmonious relationships with others. The frequent use of *ne* illustrates their desire to avoid creating any potential for conflict or disagreement with one another.

Omission of Subjects

Japanese speakers often rely on the listener's ability to understand their real intention from what appears to be subtle and evasive verbal and nonverbal signals. Being able to leave some things unsaid so that the other can read between the lines is an important skill in Japanese communication. A person who explains things in great detail is considered legalistic and is often frowned upon. The frequent omission of subjects is one example of this ambiguous and seemingly incomplete form of Japanese communication. This style of speech may frustrate foreign learners of Japanese at first, but after a while it will become natural.

The Japanese language has several words for "you." The one to use depends upon the speaker's relationship with the person being spoken to. Among these are the common *anata*, the informal *anta*, the formal *kimi* (often used by a superior to address his or her junior), and *omae*, used only by male speakers. However, you will often hear people address one another without using any of these, simply leaving "you" to be understood.

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domo

domo is used to emphasize your politeness, as in *domo arigato gozaimasu*. It is used for a variety of purposes: to indicate "indeed" and "very much," or to show the speaker's suspicious feeling as in *domo okashii*, "I have a doubt about it." Japanese speakers are very fond of using *domo* in many contexts. Although in formal, "correct" speech, *domo* should be followed by a word that it modifies, Japanese speakers often use it alone. You will often hear them say *domo, domo* when they greet each other.

Public Transportation

Two areas in Tokyo, *Ueno* and *Shinjuku* are very busy districts, since they are the hubs of major railroad and subway lines, serving millions of people every day who travel to, from, and around the Tokyo metropolitan area. There are numerous railroad companies and subway lines in Tokyo, and they are still being further developed.

The complex subway lines make it quite challenging for international travelers, and sometimes the local residents as well, to figure out the best way to travel to their destinations. You may sometimes get an uncertain response or no response at all when you ask passersby in downtown Tokyo for directions. The public

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transportation system in Japan is generally well developed, but in order to take full advantage of it, you need to first memorize the names of major districts that will help orient you to the right directions and the best method of transportation.

nanika

nanika, a very commonly used word and a convenient expression, is equivalent to "something" in English. You can use it for a variety of purposes: seeking a person's opinion, stating yours, and making your statement evasive. It can be followed by an adjective and an infinitive: for example, *nanika tsumetai nomimono* (something cold to drink). You will hear many native Japanese speakers pronounce it *nanka* which is informal and casual, often used between friends and people of an equal status.

Particles

When speaking English with non-native speakers, you can usually guess their fluency by their familiarity with idiomatic expressions. For example, when someone says, "John is engaged with Beth" instead of "engaged to" you can guess that the person is not a native speaker of English. The same is true of the Japanese language. There are many one-syllable words or particles that you need to be able to use properly in order to convey your ideas accurately to

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the listener. *wa*, *ga*, *de*, *ni*, *mo*, *ka*, *no*, and *to* are some examples of these particles.

- *wa* is often used to indicate that the preceding words are the main topic of a sentence: for example, *watashi wa nihonjin desu*.
- *ga* is often used the same way, as in, *nihongo ga jozu desu*.
- *de* indicates a place, as in *anata no tokoro de*.
- *ni* is equivalent to the English "at" when accompanied by a word indicating time, as in *ni ji ni*, "at two o'clock."
- *mo* is "also," as in *anata mo* — "you too."
- *ka* is put at the end of a sentence to make it a question.
- *no* is possessive, as in *anata no nihongo* ("your Japanese").
- *to* is approximately equivalent to "with" in English, as in *anata to tabetai desu* — "(I) want to eat with you."

Though they may be confusing at times, learning to use these particles properly will greatly contribute to your fluency in Japanese.

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Cognates and "Borrowed English Loan Words"

No language is free from words borrowed from other languages, and Japanese is no exception. Many English words have been adopted in Japanese, although the Japanese often pronounce them so differently that English speakers can hardly recognize that they were originally English. *resutoran* and *biiru* illustrate this point. You need to pronounce these and other words with English origins as the Japanese do, so that you can make yourself understood.

Often, the Japanese have changed not only the pronunciation, but also the form and meanings of these originally English words. Japanese speakers often prefer to shorten or abbreviate loan words: for example, *pasokon* for "personal computer" and *terebi* for "television." There are as well some English words used in Japanese whose meanings have changed to a greater or lesser extent. For example, there are many apartment complexes that are called "mansions" in Japan, usually referring to condominiums. You may find a pair of socks marked "free size," which really means "one size fits all." In a restaurant, you may be served *mikkusu sando*, or "mixed sandwiches." "Mixed" in this context means "assorted," and you will find various kinds of sandwiches on one plate.

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Addressing People

Japanese speakers generally use family names to address each other. The use of first names is usually limited to family members and close friends. The polite *san* is added to a family name and this can be used to address virtually anyone: male and female, young and old, strangers and acquaintances alike. Occasionally it may be attached to one's first name. Japanese rarely address one another without attaching some kind of title to the end of the person's name, and *san* is by far the most common. If they feel close to you, they may call you, for instance, "Mary *san*," or "Dave *san*," equivalent to "Miss Mary" or "Mr. Dave," as a sign of friendly courtesy. When referring to yourself, however, you would never use *san*. This is a polite title, used only when referring to others.

Counting Things

You will find counting in Japanese is easy, no matter how large the number may be. You will need to know large numbers, as 1,000, 20,000, 100,000 and maybe more. The value of one American dollar has fluctuated between 80 and 140 yen in the last ten years, and thus prices will usually appear as large numbers. For example, it costs 700 to 1,000 yen to buy lunch, 330 yen to buy a bottle of beer, and 2,000 to 3,000 yen to take a bus from Narita International Airport to downtown Tokyo.

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Another important thing to remember when counting things in Japanese is that there are a wide variety of words used as "counters" that must accompany the numbers. The "counter" you use will vary, depending largely on the shape of the material you are counting. For example, *ni hon* for "two bottles." *hon* is the "counter" for long things, such as bottles, trees, poles, pencils, hair, etc. "One bottle," however, is not *ichi hon*, but *ippon*. "Three bottles" is *san bon*, and "six bottles" is *roppon*. Although the pronunciation of *hon* may appear to change without any logical consistency, it has simply been adjusted for easier pronunciation. Several other "counters" you may find useful are *mai*, used for flat material such as paper, cloth, and plates, and *dai*, used for many kinds of machinery including computers, cars, and heavy industrial equipment. *ken* is used to count houses and shops. People are counted as *nin*, though one person and two persons are exceptions and counted as *hitori* and *futari*, respectively. Starting with three people you can say *san nin*, *yo nin*, *go nin*, etc.

Meals of a Day

Japanese does not have unique names for each meal such as "breakfast," "lunch," and "dinner." The word *gohan* is used for every meal preceded by *asa* or "morning" for breakfast, *hiru* or "day" for lunch, and *yoru* or *yu* for "evening" or dinner. *Gohan*

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alone means "rice," so it is used to refer to a meal or rice, depending upon the context.

You will find that many Japanese people these days do not eat rice with every meal. They often have coffee and toast with butter, margarine, and various kinds of jelly for breakfast, while the traditional Japanese style breakfast consists of a bowl of rice, fish, eggs, seaweed, and *miso* (soy bean paste) soup. For lunch, noodles made from buckwheat (*soba*), and flour (*udon*) or spaghetti are popular. Many American fast food chains are also popular, especially among young people. The Japanese dinner consists of rice, fish, meat, and vegetables. As is commonly known, the Japanese consume more fish than average Americans.

Circumlocution

You will find the Japanese people to be very subtle when they must express a negative response. Concerned with saving face, the Japanese resort to a variety of verbal and nonverbal communication strategies, and avoid directly saying "no" whenever they can.

One common way to turn down a proposal is to remain silent. When you do not receive an immediate response to an offer, then the chances are that the person does not want to accept it, but at the same

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time does not want to offend you or make you feel bad. A long delay in responding may be another form of refusal. In Japan, unless you are speaking with someone you know very well and a mutual trust exists, you will rarely hear a straight answer given to a difficult question, especially when that answer involves some kind of refusal. How do you reach that level? It will take some time, but if you are sensitive to another culture quite different from yours, and have a positive attitude toward adapting to it, you will be able to acquire the communication skills necessary to establish, maintain, and develop trusting relationships with the local people.

Levels of Politeness

The Japanese language has complex rules concerning the levels of politeness and deference necessary in different social situations. As you listen to conversations between Japanese friends, you may hear more informal expressions. For example, instead of asking *nan ji desu ka?* for "What time is it?" they might simply ask, *nan ji?* "What time?" Another example is *wakatta* for "understood" rather than *wakarimashita*. The Japanese language has many ways for the speakers to differentiate between formal and informal expressions in daily conversations.

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When you visit Japan and listen to a conversation between two friends, you may be discouraged at first as you find many unfamiliar expressions exchanged, but this happens when you learn any foreign language.

chotto ... or "a little"

Japanese speakers often use *chotto* when they wish to indicate their hesitation, refusal, and confusion. Japanese in general are tentative and indirect in their communication, and the word *chotto* is very convenient in helping them express their modesty. Even when a proposal submitted by a subordinate needs substantial improvement, for example, the superior may say "*mo chotto*" (a little more), indicating that the subordinate needs to work on it before the proposal can be accepted. When you hear this word, be aware that it can cover various degrees, and it may not literally mean just "a little."

... masen ka?

When inviting a person to do something, you have a range of forms in English to express various degrees of politeness. The Japanese show their deference toward the listener by changing how they end a sentence. To invite a person to have lunch with you, you could directly ask by saying,

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watashi to hirugohan o tabemasu ka? For native Japanese speakers, however, this expression, literally translated as "Do you have lunch with me?" is far too direct and even offensive and would not be used in actual conversations. The "request" is more than likely to be turned down. Asking the same question in a negative form, *watashi to hirugohan o tabemasen ka?* considerably softens the tone, and it will probably make the listener feel more comfortable either accepting or declining the offer. This is equivalent to "Why don't you ...?" and "Won't you ...?" in English.

Yen: Japanese Currency

The yen is the unit of Japanese currency, and its value against the U.S. dollar has appreciated in the last few decades. Until the early 1970's the exchange rate was fixed at one U.S. dollar to 360 yen, but it now fluctuates between 80 to 120 yen. Although in writing it is symbolized as "yen," its pronunciation is more like *en*. There are four notes: 10,000 yen, 5,000 yen, 2,000 yen, and 1,000 yen that are of different sizes and colors. The 2,000 yen notes were issued in commemoration of the year 2000 but they have not been circulated very widely. Also there are six kinds of coins: 500 yen, 100 yen, 50 yen, 10 yen, 5 yen, and 1 yen.

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Good-bye

sayonara has become widely known as "good-bye forever" through the movies, TV dramas, and other media. It may indeed imply in some contexts that the person using this expression has no intention of seeing the other person ever again. It can, however, be readily used to say "good-bye" when you will be seeing the person in the near future.

jaa mata is an expression equivalent to "See you." It is a fairly informal way of ending a conversation, and of expressing your intention to see the person again. *jaa, atode*, literally meaning "then later," implies to Japanese speakers that the speaker is expecting to see the other person again on the same day, whereas English speakers may not when they say, "See you later." You may want to be careful of this difference.

takusan, sukoshi

There is no clear and explicit difference between singular and plural forms of nouns in Japanese. In English, most words need an "s" or "es" at the end to indicate plurals, but most Japanese words do not change. Whether the nouns are countable or uncountable, you can use *takusan* for "a lot of" and *sukoshi* for "a little" or "a few." For example, "one beer" is *biiru ippon*, "two beers" is *biiru nihon*,

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and "many beers" is *biiru takusan*. "I have a lot of money" is *watashi wa okane o takusan motte imasu*, and "I have a little money" is *watashi wa okane o sukoshi motte imasu*.

The word *sukoshi* has a variety of functions in daily conversations. It not only stands alone to mean a small quantity, but you can also say *watashi wa nihongo o sukoshi hanashimasu*, meaning "I speak a little Japanese," *sukoshi hoshii desu*, "I want a little," or even, *sukoshi ososugimas*, "It's a little too late."

Drinks

Japanese, just like Americans and Europeans, enjoy drinking when they dine. Many business meetings are followed by or even conducted during dinners and drinking parties. In these social occasions, people establish personal relationships with one another as they discuss more casually their individual feelings. Beer is by far the most popular alcoholic drink, but most alcoholic drinks such as wine, whiskey, bourbon, brandy, gin, vodka, and rum are also available. Japanese sake, made from rice, is also popular, and it is served either cold or warm. *Shochu*, or distilled liquor made from a variety of grains such as wheat, rice, and sometimes potatoes, is also a popular drink among Japanese. If you do not care for an alcoholic drink, you can of course ask for

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any soft drink you are used to. In addition to most soft drinks available in America and Europe, cold oolong tea (Chinese tea) is served in most places. In general, hot Japanese green tea is served free of charge in most restaurants.

itte kimasu

itte kimasu literally means, "I am going" or "I am leaving." When Japanese go somewhere, they usually say it to those they are leaving behind. In response, the person who is staying usually says *itte rasshai*, literally meaning, "Please go." Of course they use this expression to wish the person a good trip. When people come home they say *tadaima*, or "I've just come home," to which others respond by saying *okaerinasai*, meaning, "Welcome back." These sets of greetings are exchanged when people go in and out of the house and are very common among the Japanese; you are sure to hear them when staying in a Japanese home. As a short-term visitor from a foreign country you are not expected to say these greetings, but if you do, your efforts will surely be appreciated.

~ desu ga

In order to make *hoshii desu*, "I want," more polite, you can say *hoshii n desu ga*, "I would like." The last particle, *ga*, means "but" and when added at

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the end of a request, it helps the speaker express his or her reservation. The person who ends a request with *ga* indicates that "While I wish it could be done, I would understand even if it cannot be done." This is just another instance that demonstrates the Japanese value on modesty. It is also a sign of their desire to depend upon others' benevolence, which is known as *amae*. One's ability to depend on others as well as respond to others' call for dependence is an important social ability. You will also hear *desu kedo*, essentially the same as and even more polite than *desu ga*.

kyo wa nani o shimasu ka? Indicating Time

In Japanese, the words or phrases that indicate time are usually placed in the beginning of a sentence, unlike in English where these words are normally at the end. You may notice when a Japanese person speaks to you in English, she or he may habitually begin a sentence with time, such as, "Yesterday, I went to see my friend." "Today, what would you like to do?" When you speak Japanese, it is often desirable to begin a sentence with a word or phrase indicating time.

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shujin, goshujin / kanai, okusan

When Japanese people introduce their spouses, they do not introduce them by their names. While English-speaking people will introduce their spouses, saying, "This is my wife, Mary" or "This is my husband, Bill," when Mr. Sato introduces his wife to you, he will say simply *kanai desu*, or *kore wa watashi no kanai (tsuma) desu*, "This is my wife." When Mrs. Sato wants to introduce her husband to you, she will probably say *shujin desu*, or *kore wa watashi no shujin (otto) desu*, "This is my husband." You may be surprised when you find the meanings of *kanai* and *shujin*. *kanai* literally means "inside the house," and *shujin* means "master."

Since *kanai* and *shujin* refer to one's spouse in a modest manner, you will never use them for another person's spouse. For "your husband" you simply add *go* for politeness to *shujin*, and say *goshujin*, or *anata no goshujin*. "Your wife" is *anata no okusan*, or simply, *okusan*. Here we have a different word, *okusan*, which means "a person deep inside (the house)." Coming from the North American culture where equality between the two sexes is a serious concern, you may be astonished to see that Japanese women are still treated as a minority or a weaker sex. Role differentiation with regard to sex is more distinct in Japan than in the United States. The society is changing, however, influenced by

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the global concern for racial, sexual, and religious equality and is importing and incorporating some new policies. You'll find many men now referring to their wives as *tsuma*, and women to their husbands as *otto*, much more neutral terms than *kanai* and *shujin*. Interestingly, however, there is no word to replace *okusan* when referring to your conversational partner's wife. The original meanings of these terms however, are being lost, and they are only titles that people continue to use without any derogatory connotation.

hajimemashite. dozo yoroshiku.

When you meet someone for the first time, you greet that person by saying, "How do you do?" "Pleased to meet you," or something similar. Many Japanese people say *hajimemashite*, or *dozo yoroshiku*. Literally, *hajimemashite* means "(I am meeting you) for the first time," and it has come to be used as an initial greeting remark. *dozo yoroshiku* is a more implicit expression with a wide latitude of possible interpretations, depending on the context, the nature of the relationship that is about to develop, etc. It literally means "Please be good to me" and it symbolizes the value that many Japanese people place on mutual dependency known as *amae*. Just as with many other expressions used as social lubricants such as, "Let's get together sometime," "Drop in when you are in the neighborhood," the

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real function of *dozo yoroshiku* is to make the initial encounter between people go smoothly.

hitori, futari, san nin

When you count a number of people in Japanese, you use regular numbers except for "one" and "two." "One" is *ichi*, "two" is *ni*, and the word that shows you are counting people is *nin*. The Japanese perceive that it would be awkward to say *ichi nin*, and *ni nin*, so they use an old way of counting instead. "One person" is *hitori*, "two persons," *futari*. The rest is easy and regular: *san nin*, *yo nin*, *go nin*, *roku nin*, *shichi nin*, and so on. Also notice that when you want to say "eleven persons" and "twelve persons," you say *ju ichi nin* and *ju ni nin* instead of *ju hitori* and *ju futari*.

otoko no ko, onna no ko

Notice that in Japanese there are no special words such as "boys" and "girls." Rather, you say literally, "a male child," and a "female child." You can use these words for all ages from newborn babies to children in high school and sometimes even in college. An important cultural difference you may notice if you spend some time living in Japan is that Japanese children are generally more dependent on their parents than their U.S. counterparts are, and that they frequently appear to be less mature. Parental

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support for children is usually continued through, and often beyond, college. You would not find it awkward, therefore, to call a twenty-two-year-old male college graduate *otoko no ko*. You may often hear Japanese refer to their children as *ookii otoko no ko*, *chiisai onna no ko*, etc. They literally mean "a big boy" and "a small girl," respectively, and the Japanese may be actually talking about the size of their children, or they may be calling a grown-up boy *ookii otoko no ko* and a very young girl *chiisai onna no ko*. The context will determine the meaning.

otearai, toire

Just as you can find many words in English that indicate a lavatory, you will come across a variety of expressions in Japanese. Two of them are *otearai* and *toire*. *otearai* literally means "a place to wash hands" and is equivalent to "washroom" or "bathroom" in English. *toire* is an imported version of "toilet," and it is very commonly used. Japanese also use *keshoushitsu*, roughly equivalent to "powder room." The most direct and straight expression of *benjo*, equivalent to "lavatory", is rarely used in daily conversations. An interesting discovery you may make in a Japanese home is that the toilet and the bath are in separate rooms, unlike in the U.S. where you most often find both in one room. In Japan, a toilet and a bath are regarded as facilities that perform very different functions.

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ah, so desu ka?

ah, so is an expression stereotypically associated with Japanese in many old U.S. films, and it is commonly known to Americans as an utterance that Japanese make frequently. While the Japanese may not use it as often as it is depicted in the films, it is indeed an appropriate expression to show your surprise at an unexpected finding or to confirm the response to your inquiry. Remember to make it into a polite form by adding *desu ka* at the end when you say it to a person to whom you need to show respect. *ah, so* without *desu ka* is perfectly appropriate between friends.

kodomo, kodomo san

When you talk about someone else's family members, you show your respect by adding *san* at the end. The *san* is equivalent to Mr., Mrs., and Miss. When you talk about your own family members, on the other hand, you never use *san*. This is an example of Japanese human-relationship-centered communication, and it serves to maintain smooth and harmonious personal ties in Japanese society.

The Japanese manner of expressing politeness is complicated by their notion of modesty. They show their deference to others by not only symbolically heightening the other's status, but also by lowering

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their own. You may often hear the Japanese speak ill of their own family members. A mother may say, for example, "My son is dumb, and he's doing so poorly in school. Your son seems really smart and you have nothing to worry about. I am embarrassed." The other person will, of course, respond by saying something like, "Please stop joking. My son only spends a lot of time in his room, pretending to study so hard. But I have no idea what he is doing. Maybe he's listening to music, or reading comic books." The two mothers clearly do not mean what they say to each other. While such an interaction may appear to be overly condescending and insincere to people from the U.S. culture, it is an important aspect of social interaction in Japan. You, as a non-native speaker, are not expected to play the complex social game, but an awareness will contribute greatly to your comfort in and appreciation of the culture.

Weights and Measures

Whenever you travel to a foreign country, you are likely to come across different perceptions of weights, distances, heights, volumes, etc. If you are visiting Japan for a short period of time as a tourist, these differences may not affect you very much, but if you are to stay there for an extensive period of time, engaging in business as well as social conversations, you will find some knowledge concerning the Japanese system quite useful. Even

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when the Japanese speak to you in English, they will still use the system to which they are accustomed.

Here are some examples to show you how the U.S. weights translate to their Japanese counterparts.

- One foot is about 30 centimeters, and an inch is about 2.5 centimeters. If you are 6 feet tall, then you are 180 centimeters tall, and if you are 5 feet 6 inches, then you are about 165 centimeters.
- One pound is about 0.45 kilograms, which means that if you weigh 100 pounds, that is about 45 kilograms, and 150 pounds translates into 67.5 kilograms. When you visit a grocery store, you will find various things priced by 100 grams.
- One gallon of gas is roughly equal to 3.8 liters.
- Finally, the road signs that tell you the distance to your destination and also the traffic signs indicating speed limits are all in kilometers. One mile is approximately 1.6 kilometers, and thus 40 kilometers per hour, which is a common city speed limit, is 25 miles per hour.

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Again, as a foreign visitor you may not need to know all of these, but if you can get used to them, it will facilitate your daily activities.

Getting Around in Japan

If you drive while in Japan, it could be quite challenging for you, as well as it is for local residents. The Japanese must go to a special driving school to obtain a driver's license. The fee for driving school can be quite expensive. The number of skills that are necessary to get around in crowded cities accounts for the high fee. You should apply for an international driver's license prior to your departure for Japan. You must remember that the Japanese drive on the left side of the road, as the British do. Because of the limited space, parking is a problem in big cities and it is also quite expensive, so you may want to think twice before driving in Japan.

Public transportation, on the other hand, is well developed and very convenient for both local trips and long distance traveling. You may enjoy a Shinkansen bullet train ride across the country from Aomori, the northern tip of Honshu (the largest island) all the way through Tokyo, Nagoya, Kyoto, Osaka, to Fukuoka, the largest city on the island of Kyushu, the southernmost major island. Air traffic has been developed quite extensively, and as a result air fares have become reasonable in recent years. The major

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airports are located in Sapporo, Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka, Fukuoka, and Okinawa.

oo kei

The Japanese have borrowed many words from English: *gasorin* for "gasoline," *depaato* for a "department store," etc. O.K. has become a universally recognized expression, and it is no exception in Japan. You will hear many Japanese use *oo kei* to indicate that everything is all right, or to ask you whether something is all right with you. You will also notice that they may accompany the verbal utterance of *oo kei* with a nonverbal sign, index finger bent to touch the thumb to form a "zero." That same sign is also used to indicate money in Japan.

Store Hours

It is important to know when the Japanese department stores are open as they do not always keep the same store hours as those in the U.S. They usually open at 10:00 AM and close around 6:30 PM on regular business days, including weekends. Unlike some stores in the U.S., many Japanese department stores and small shops are open on Sundays. In fact, the stores are most crowded on Sundays. Each department store, however, has designated one weekday as a day off, usually Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday. You will find the Japanese stores

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extremely crowded with people during two main gift-giving seasons every year: mid-to-late July and December. During these seasons, most stores stay open till 8:00 or 9:00 PM.

ni, san

ni, san, literally meaning "two (or) three," can be used in combination with many words: *ni, san nin* ("a few people"), *biiru ni, san bon* ("a few beers"), and *ni, san shukan* ("a few weeks"). We have repeatedly stressed ambiguity and indirectness as features of Japanese communication, and *ni, san* is just another example. Even when the speaker knows precisely how many people he or she is talking about, the expression *ni, san nin* may be used. Although the expression literally indicates only two or three as possibilities, four or even five are not completely excluded. To respond to the question, "How many beers did you have last night?" a Japanese person may say *ni, san bon*, while he might, in fact, have had five or six. The range of possibilities included in *ni, san* is wider than that of "a few."

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***takushii* – Taxis in Japan**

Taxis are readily available in most cities, and even in fairly small towns. You can flag one down on the street or phone for a pick-up. Most taxis, both company-owned and privately-operated, are connected by radio. They are clean, safe, and convenient. The fares vary, depending on the city you are in. They are slightly more expensive in large cities such as Tokyo, Yokohama, and Osaka than in smaller places such as Hiroshima, Fukuoka, and Sapporo. You do not need to tip the driver, but simply pay the fare displayed on the machine by the driver's seat. An interesting discovery you will make is that the rear passenger door opens and closes automatically. Just as long as you can clearly tell the driver where you wish to go, or show a map and point to your destination, you will get there safely and rapidly by taxi.

jaa

In any spoken language you can find interjections which are used frequently, but which have no specific meanings. Some examples in English are "well, ah, uh, um." *jaa* is a good Japanese example. It can be used in a variety of situations and gives the speaker a chance to think carefully about what he or she is about to say, to take a turn to speak, etc. You can use it when you wish to say "See you later" to a

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friend. You can also say *jaa* when you ask a series of questions. For example,

"biiru o nomimasu ka?"

"iie, nomimasen."

"jaa, osake o nomimasu ka?"

How naturally you use these interjections may be a good indicator of your mastery of the language you are learning.

masu, mashita, masen

As stated before, Japanese word order is quite different from English. In English, the general meaning of a sentence is made clear early in the sentence. You can figure out whether something is happening now, will happen in the future, has already happened, or did not happen at all, by listening to the first part of a sentence. The Japanese language, on the other hand, places the important words toward the end of a sentence. The difference among *masu*, *mashita*, and *masen* is very small, and they come in the very end of a sentence. Such an attribute of the Japanese language may require your extra attention, and you need to be careful not to jump to conclusions until you hear the entire sentence.

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Continuing Success

Throughout *Japanese 1*, you have learned many essential elements of the Japanese language. Practicing using the expressions you have learned in the thirty units will assure you successful initial encounters with the Japanese people. We hope you will keep up with your daily practice and further build upon your vocabulary. One additional aspect of competency that you will find useful and important is your sensitivity to cross-cultural differences in values, thought patterns, space and time orientations, mannerisms, etc. You can also continue to build on your communication skills by proceeding on to *Japanese 2*.

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