

# Company culture in Japan

COMMUNICATION

LEVEL  
Upper-intermediate

NUMBER  
EN\_BE\_3910X

LANGUAGE  
English

lingoda

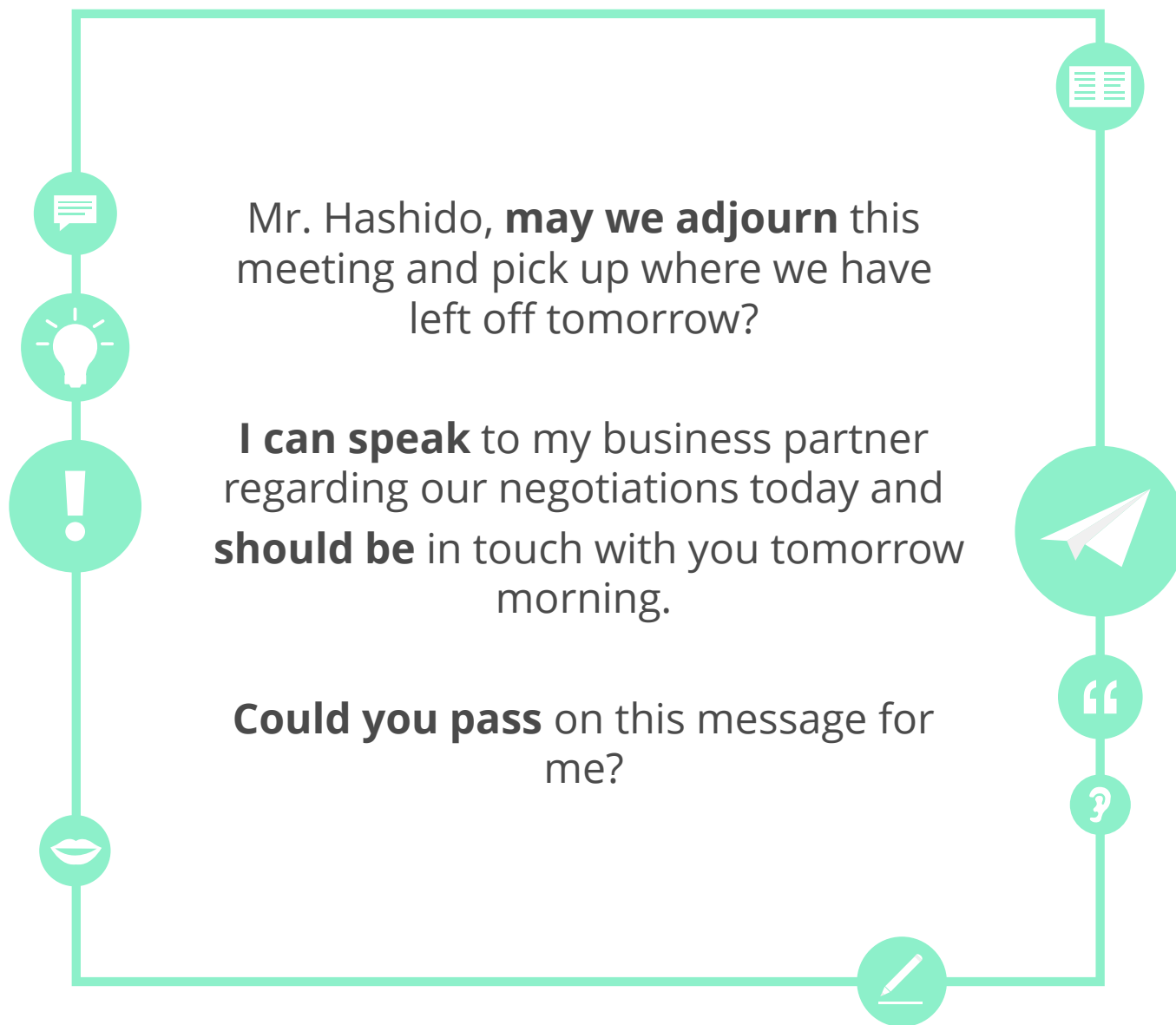




## Goals

- Can understand typical business culture and conduct in Japan
- Can use key phrases and modal verbs to express reluctance and polite disagreement







## Quick facts about Japan

- The **official names** of Japan are **Nihon** and **Nippon**, which both mean *Land of the Rising Sun*.
- Japan **does not have an official language**, but the national language is Japanese.
- The capital and largest city is **Tokyo**.
- The population is estimated at **126 million**, the **eighth most populated** nation in the world.





## Quick facts

### Japan's economy:

- A major **economic power** in the world
- **International trade** is very important for sustained growth
- A global player in the **automotive**, **telecommunication**, and **banking industries**

Can you name any Japanese companies? Do you work with any?





## Quick facts

### Japanese societal values:

- Thinking first how one's **actions will affect others.**
- Owing much to elders. **Elders** must be **respected** and **thought of first.**
- **Peace and harmony** of group before individual needs.
- **Order, form, and process.**
- **Working hard, kindness, and good fortune.**
- Expressing **gratitude** in everything one does.



## Quick facts



### Japanese business culture:

- **Proper** Japanese business etiquette is **essential** in Japanese culture to gain new partners and clients.
- Japan is an **economic powerhouse**. Therefore, **going global** to Japan is a popular move among companies.



Use your own words

**How can knowing Japan's economy, values, and business culture be helpful in conducting negotiations?**



## Business culture

Dealing effectively with **Japanese business culture** requires a knowledge of what is **polite** and **impolite**.



Hello, Mr. Hashido, **it is a pleasure** to finally meet you.



## Body language

**It is important to keep the following things in mind when conducting business affairs in Japan.**

**It is generally considered impolite to:**

1. Give a vigorous handshake
2. Pat someone on the back or shoulder
3. Be overly expressive with hand gestures
4. Show unusual facial expressions
5. Be overly loud and carefree
6. Put hands in pockets
7. Point a finger or chopsticks at anyone
8. Cross legs or show soles of shoes





## Language: inappropriate vs. appropriate

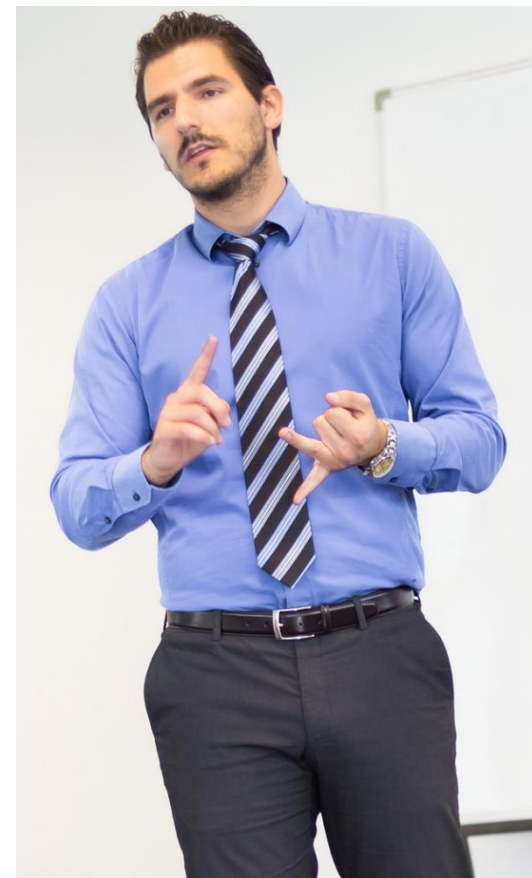
**It is also important to keep language appropriate when conducting business affairs.**

### **Inappropriate language:**

1. Informal
2. Using accusatory tone
3. Overly talkative
4. Expressing direct refusals

### **Appropriate language:**

1. Formal
2. Deep seriousness
3. Restrained speech
4. Expressing gratitude frequently
5. Use apologies frequently
6. Avoid topics like funerals and death





## Classification

Identify which action is polite or impolite in Japanese business culture.

handshake

hearty laughter

bow

friendly pat on  
the back

informal  
language

expressive  
hand gestures

show of respect  
to elders

reserved  
demeanor

upright posture



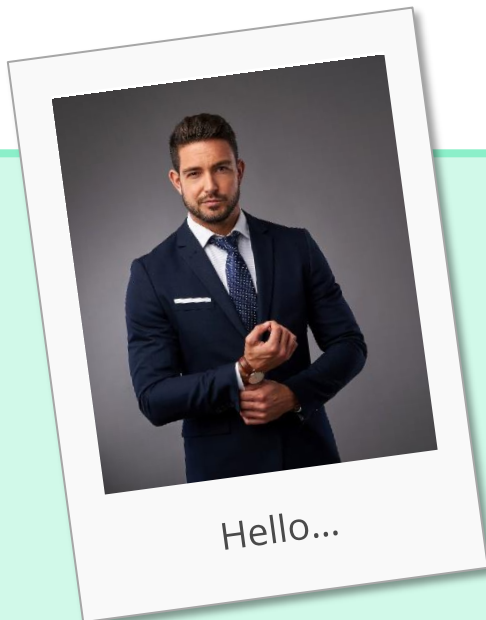
## Language: formal

- Formal language is important when **conducting business within** Japanese culture.
- Formal language generally does not use **shortened versions of words or slang words**.
- Formal language is more **rigidly structured** and places an emphasis on **conventional speech patterns**.

Informal		Formal
Hi Ken, good to see ya.	→	Hello, Mr. Hashido, it's a pleasure to finally meet you.
Thanks for the invite.	→	Thank you for the invitation
Sorry I was late getting here.	→	My sincerest apologies for keeping you waiting.
Just to give you a heads up...	→	I would like to let you know...
We can confirm that...	→	We are able to confirm that...
I'd like to know...	→	I would like to know...



## Practise



Let's say you need to make the best first impression on a client that you are meeting in Tokyo, Japan. What would you say?

Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, thank you for the invitation.

Hello, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_.  
Nice to finally meet you

How was your flight?

How was the weather  
in \_\_\_\_\_ when  
you left?

How is your hotel?



## Important formal phrases

Some of the **most important phrases** when conducting negotiations within Japanese business culture are used in the following scenarios: **greetings and polite disagreements.**



**I respect your point** but that is not the way I see it...



## Formal phrases: greetings

Greetings are important if you want to make a good **first impression**.

### Formal greetings

Good morning / good afternoon / good evening

It is nice to finally meet you / pleased to finally meet you

How have you been?

Hello. How do you do?

How was your flight / drive?







## Formal phrases: polite disagreements

- You will frequently come across the need **to tactfully disagree** in a business negotiation. **Polite disagreements** will allow you to **make your point gently** and to **keep you from sounding rude or overly direct**.
- When **expressing disagreement**, begin by using **soft language** or **with an apology**. This takes the tension off the situation.

True, <b>that is a fair point</b> , but I have to disagree with you on...	I <b>respect your point</b> but that isn't the way I see it; instead, I think that...	<b>That is one way</b> of looking at it.
I see your point, but I <b>have to respectfully disagree</b> ...	<b>I don't think you and I have</b> the same opinion on this	<b>As far as</b> I'm concerned...
<b>I hear what you are saying</b> , but...	<b>I understand</b> where you are coming from but...	<b>I'm not sure</b> that I agree with you.
<b>I value your point</b> but that is not the way I see it...	<b>I see what you are saying</b> but I think...	<b>I don't think</b> I have the same opinion on the issue...
<b>I am afraid</b> I do not agree	<b>I'm sorry</b> , I have to disagree with you	<b>I'm sorry</b> but I don't agree



## Write sentences

**Imagine you are in a business meeting where you need to disagree at least six times. Use these six polite disagreement phrases and turn them into sentences. When possible offer a solution to complete your thought.**

I don't think you  
and I have the  
same opinion  
on this

True, that is a fair  
point, but I have  
to disagree with  
you on...

I hear what you  
are saying,  
but...

I'm sorry, I have  
to disagree with  
you

That's one way  
of looking at it

I'm not sure  
that I agree  
with you

A vertical notepad with a blue binding on the left and six horizontal lines for writing.



## Free talk

**Read through the situations below and think of as many polite phrases and expressions as you can to express a greeting and polite disagreement in each case.**

A first meeting with  
your Japanese  
business partner

You would like to  
conclude a  
business meeting.  
What would you  
say?

A request for you to  
contribute to a work  
project that you  
don't want to be  
part of

You do not agree  
with the terms that  
you are offered

## Modal verbs in negotiation language

**Modal verbs** are very useful for negotiating. They are used to **express an opinion or attitude** about a **possible fact** or to **control a possible outcome**.



Sorry, I **should have been** clearer. I'll rephrase that.



You **may have** misunderstood me. I'll try to be clearer.



## Modal verbs

Modal verbs are used to express ability, permission, requests, and suggestions.

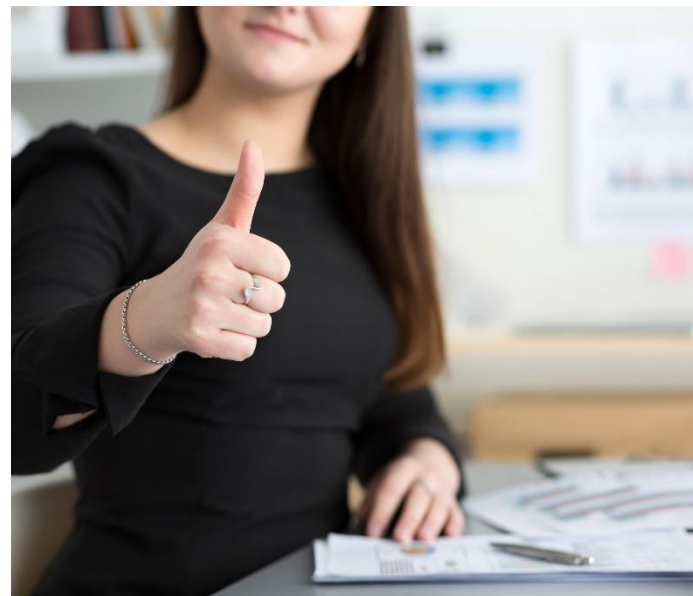
### Modal verbs express...

**Ability:** can / could (past tense)

**Permission:** can / may (formal) and could (past tense)

**Requests:** could and would

**Suggestions:** should and could



## Modal verbs – review

Modal verbs are usually used in combination with another verb. To form a phrase in the present tense, the modal verb is conjugated and the other verb appears in the infinitive form.

To form a phrase using **modal verbs** in the **past tense** use the following formula:

Modal verb + have (perfect tense) + verb in past participle

To form a **negative phrase** using **modal verbs** in the **past tense** use the following similar formula:

Modal verb + not + have (perfect tense) + verb in past participle



You **must realise** that we have not been able to do that for years.



You **could not have handled** the negotiations more successfully. Congratulations.



## Modal verbs

- Here are some examples...

- Ability
- Permission
- Request
- Suggestions

- I can speak to my business partner regarding our commitment.
- Can I ask you a question?
- May we adjourn and pick up where we left off tomorrow?
- Could you pass on this message for me?
- You should send this email this weekend.



## Dialogue: fill in with modal verbs



\_\_\_\_\_ I call you on your cell phone to discuss this further?

Absolutely! \_\_\_\_\_ you call me after 3 o'clock on Friday?



I \_\_\_\_\_ do that.

Ok. However, we \_\_\_\_\_ not talk too long, because I have only one hour before my next appointment.







## Fill in the gaps

Fill in the modal verbs that correspond to each sentence.

could

may

might

cannot

should

1. I \_\_\_\_\_ need to think about the offer. Can I get back to you in two days?
2. I \_\_\_\_\_ accept the offer, because it does not seem fair to me.
3. I am unable to prepare for the interview today, but I \_\_\_\_\_ need some help getting ready tomorrow.
4. You \_\_\_\_\_ not accept the offer right away. Tell them you will think about it.
5. I \_\_\_\_\_ offer you additional products if you choose to buy from our company.





## Fill in the gaps

**Fill in the modal verb and the corresponding infinitive verb to complete the sentence.**

1. You \_\_\_\_\_ that we have not been able to do that for years.
2. It \_\_\_\_\_ a little differently in Germany.
3. I \_\_\_\_\_ you, but I am out of town on business.
4. You \_\_\_\_\_ her to accept those terms so quickly.
5. You \_\_\_\_\_ too careful when handling the negotiation process.
6. I \_\_\_\_\_ to offer a different perspective on the issue.
7. With respect, you \_\_\_\_\_ that my values are just as important.
8. You \_\_\_\_\_ that I can have the finished product available in a month.

cannot be

will find

would like

should not allow

would visit

will see

might be done

must realise



## Reminder



Take a minute to remember what you have learnt about the Japanese culture along the lesson. Can you name at least five relevant aspects about it?



## Reflect on the lesson

Take a moment to review any new **vocabulary, phrases, language structures** or **grammar points** you have come across for the first time in this lesson.

Review them with your teacher one more time to make sure you don't forget!





## Answer key

### Exercise p.24:

Shall/Could, can/could, can/should

### Exercise p.25:

might, cannot, may/could, should, could

### Exercise p.26:

must realise, might be done, would visit, should not allow, cannot be, would like, will find, will see





## E-mail

**Write a formal e-mail responding to your Japanese business partner using five to seven sentences in the space below. In the previous email, your partner wrote to you to accept the contract terms. However, you have something else in mind. Use what we have learned with formal greetings, polite disagreements, reluctance, and modal verbs to discuss what you want.**

	-	□	×
To:			
Subject:			
Dear Mr. _____,			



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