

= Yotsuba & ! =

Yotsuba & ! (???? ! , Yotsuba to !) is an ongoing Japanese comedy manga series by Kiyohiko Azuma , the creator of Azumanga Daioh . It is published in Japan by ASCII Media Works , formerly MediaWorks , in the monthly magazine Dengeki Daioh and collected in thirteen tank?bon volumes . It depicts the everyday adventures of a young girl named Yotsuba as she learns about the world around her , guided by her father , the neighbors , and their friends . Several characters in Yotsuba & ! were previously featured in a one @-@ shot manga called " Try ! Try ! Try ! " The phrase Yotsuba to means " Yotsuba and , " a fact reflected in the chapter titles , most of which take the form " Yotsuba and [something] . "

The manga was licensed for English @-@ language distribution by ADV Manga , which released five volumes between 2005 and 2007 . Volume six was supposed to have been released in February 2008 , but was delayed indefinitely in order to focus on ADV 's core business of anime . At New York Comic Con 2009 , Yen Press announced that it had acquired the North American license for the series ; it reprinted the first five volumes with new translations along with volume six in September 2009 , and is continuing with later volumes .

= = Story = =

Yotsuba & ! is centered on Yotsuba Koiwai , a five @-@ year @-@ old adopted girl who is energetic , cheerful , curious , odd , and quirky ? so odd and quirky that even her own father calls her strange . She is also initially ignorant about many things a child her age would be expected to know , among them doorbells , escalators , air conditioners , and even playground swings . This naïveté is the premise of humorous stories where she learns about , and frequently misunderstands , everyday things .

At the start of the series , Yotsuba and her adoptive father , Koiwai , relocate to a new city with the help of Koiwai 's best friend , an impressively tall man nicknamed Jumbo . Yotsuba makes a strong impression on the three daughters of the neighboring Ayase family , Asagi , Fuuka , and Ena . Most of her daily activities and misadventures often originate from interactions with these characters .

The series has no continuing plot ? the focus of the stories is Yotsuba 's daily voyage of discovery . Many chapters take place on successive days (for details , see List of Yotsuba & ! chapters) , so that the series follows , almost literally , the characters ' daily lives . The tone can be summarized by the motto , used on chapter title pages and advertising , " Today is always the most enjoyable day " , or in the original translation , " Enjoy Everything " (???????? ? ????????? , Itsudemo ky? ga , ichiban tanoshii hi) .

= = Main characters = =

= = = Koiwai household = = =

Yotsuba Koiwai (??? ??? , Koiwai Yotsuba) / " Yotsuba " (??? , Yotsuba)

Yotsuba is depicted as an energetic five @-@ year @-@ old girl with a child 's wonder towards the world . She is infectiously enthusiastic about nearly everything . Before moving to their present house , she and Koiwai used to live with his mother , and before that on an island that is , according to Yotsuba , " to the left " . Almost nothing is known about her biological parentage other than that she was orphaned somewhere outside Japan and then adopted by Koiwai . Hence , people often think she is a foreigner . She is an excellent swimmer and enjoys drawing , although others only praise her art to avoid hurting her feelings .

The name " Yotsuba " (???) can be translated as " four leaved clover , " and is part of the phrase yotsuba no kur?b? (????????? ? , " four @-@ leaf clover ") . Her green hair is always styled into four pigtails (even at bedtime) , similarly to her namesake .

Yousuke Koiwai (??? ?? , Koiwai Yousuke) / " Daddy " (????? , t? @-@ chan)

Yousuke Koiwai is Yotsuba 's adoptive father . The manga avoids the subject of her adoption or even her birth parents . When his neighbor Fuuka asks , he tells her that he found Yotsuba while visiting a foreign country and decided to adopt her and bring her back to Japan , with no further details . Although he often casually tells people that Yotsuba is a weirdo , he can be very offbeat and silly himself . He is depicted as a youthful dad with the carefree lifestyle of a slacker . He usually wears an undershirt and boxer shorts while at home , and apologizes when people see him in his " irresponsible " clothes . He works at home as a freelance translator , although the materials he translates are not described . When he does leave the house , usually shopping or with friends , he often brings Yotsuba . Despite his laid @-@ back personality and playful behavior , Koiwai does aim to be a good father and proper role model to Yotsuba and punishes her if he feels she has done something warranting it .

= = = Ayase household = = =

The Ayase family lives next @-@ door to the Koiwais .

Asagi Ayase (?? ??? , Ayase Asagi)

20 @-@ something years old and the oldest of the three Ayase sisters , Asagi lives at home while attending a nearby university . She is depicted as a very attractive young woman who enjoys creating mischief and teasing people , especially her parents ; her friend Torako once called her a horrible person for manipulating Ena . She often teases Yotsuba for entertainment , although not maliciously . Her mother claims Asagi was very much like Yotsuba when she was young . Mrs. Ayase is puzzled how such a cute child could turn out to be a delinquent , much to Asagi 's annoyance . Asagi 's irreverence may have come from her mother 's teasing when she was a child . For example , in the past when Asagi presented Mrs. Ayase with a four @-@ leaf clover , her mother asked for a five @-@ leaf clover instead . Unable to locate one , young Asagi was reduced to tears . Yotsuba often refers to her as the " Pretty one " .

Fuuka Ayase (?? ?? , Ayase F?ka)

The middle Ayase sister , Fuuka (also romanized as Fuka) is 16 years old and in her second year of high school . She appears to be the most dependable and responsible of the sisters . Fuuka usually buys the groceries and is active in the community . During Yotsuba 's eventful first visit to her school , one student calls her " vice @-@ president . " Fuuka often finds herself going out of her way to help out the Koiwais , even though she does not really intend to do so . Besides Jumbo , she has observed the Koiwais ' eccentricities and oddball tendencies more than anyone else . Other characters often lightly ridicule her for making ban puns and wearing t @-@ shirts with strange pictures on them (such as Chiyo 's " father " from Azumanga Daioh , who also appears as a plushie in her room and as a keychain on her bag) . Yotsuba has referred to her as " the one who is not pretty " , much to Fuuka 's dismay .

Ena Ayase (?? ?? , Ayase Ena)

The youngest Ayase sister , Ena is about 10 years old and goes to a nearby elementary school . As the one closest to Yotsuba 's age , she and her best friend Miura play with Yotsuba most frequently . Ena is generally well @-@ liked and is arguably the most earnestly kind character of the series . She tries to be eco @-@ friendly by telling people about the negative effects of global warming , limiting her use of air conditioning , and teaching Yotsuba the benefits of recycling . Appreciative , level @-@ headed and smart , she serves as a big sister figure to Yotsuba . However , her attempts to spare the five @-@ year @-@ old 's fragile feelings sometimes lead her to say little white lies , like praising Yotsuba 's unspectacular drawings or letting Yotsuba believe that her friend Miura (concealed in a cardboard costume) is a real robot named Cardbo (in ADV 's translation) or Danbo (in Yen 's translation) (???? , Danb?) , often landing herself and Miura in trouble as a result . During her free time , Ena often sketches (she has very good drawing skills) or plays with her finely @-@ dressed teddy bears . Eager and willing to try out new experiences , Ena is not squeamish and even enthusiastic about activities like holding large frogs and cleaning out live fish . Yotsuba once referred to her as the " small one " .

Mrs. Ayase (????? , Ayase @-@ ke no Haha) / " Mommy " (????? , k? @-@ chan)

The mother of the Ayase sisters . She frequently has Yotsuba over as a guest and even tells her to visit them every day . Yotsuba 's habit of calling her " Mom " is due to her generosity (she is fond of giving Yotsuba treats because she likes to watch her eat) and tolerant nature (she doesn 't mind Yotsuba soaking her with a water pistol then acting dead to play the part) . Nostalgia might why she dotes on Yotsuba so much , since during Yotsuba 's visits she often reminisces about Asagi 's younger years (cuter and better days according to her) . Asagi exasperates her constantly , although her husband comments that the two have very similar personalities , which both deny . She likes ice creams , cakes , and other sugary desserts . Yotsuba likes to come over to have them , since they 're always in the fridge - much to Mr. Koiwai 's embarrassment and disapproval .

Mr. Ayase (????? , Ayase @-@ ke no Chichi)

The father of the three sisters . Mr. Ayase is almost never seen at home , particularly during the regular workweek . While his profession is not yet revealed , it seems to be some sort of salaryman . Asagi teases him about his constant absences , even sometimes referring to him in the past tense as if he is dead . Still , Mr. Ayase is on very good terms with his family ; he dotes on Ena and tries to protect Fuuka . Fuuka and Ena seem to take after his personality : laid @-@ back , congenial , optimistic , and sentimental . Yotsuba seems to treat him with extra respect , although he , like the other Ayases , treat her as family .

= = = Friends = = =

Takashi Takeda (?? ? , Takeda Takashi) / " Jumbo " (???? , Janbo)

A friend of Koiwai and Yotsuba who has known Koiwai since they were children . He dwarfs the other characters at 210 centimeters (6 ft 11 in) , especially Yotsuba . He is always referred to as " Jumbo " and works as a florist at his father 's flower shop , which Yotsuba and Fuuka only discover through chance . Jumbo helps the Koiwais move in and frequently visits their house (usually with gifts for Yotsuba such as ice cream) , and Yotsuba more or less sees him as family . He tends to make deadpan jokes that go over the heads of the younger children , like Yotsuba and Ena , but he means well . At the same time , he is rather impulsive , and often goes all @-@ out in organizing impromptu activities for the younger children such as catching cicadas , fishing and star @-@ gazing . He also develops a deep infatuation with Asagi at first meeting , but is too shy and awkward around beautiful women to directly act upon it . As a result , he often takes advantage of Yotsuba 's relationship with Asagi , but due to Yotsuba 's naïveté , these schemes are never effective .

Miura Hayasaka (?? ??? , Hayasaka Miura)

Ena 's close friend and classmate who lives in a nearby high @-@ rise condo . Miura is tomboyish and brusque , in both her appearance and speech (this is very noticeable in the Japanese version ; see gender differences in spoken Japanese) . She wears short hair and boyish clothes , such as sports jerseys . She has an active nature - for instance , she can ride a unicycle and likes to wear roller shoes . Most of the time , she is frank and tends to reply in a tsukkomi @-@ like manner when she feels wronged or ridiculed . Miura also sometimes teases Yotsuba , even up to the point where Yotsuba is on the verge of tears , though Ena is always on hand to smooth things over . In the end , she is good at heart and the three are good friends . Miura is very squeamish . Unlike Ena , she hated the sight of gutting the fish and was scared by a large frog that Yotsuba caught .

Torako (??)

A close friend of Asagi who also attends the same university as her . The two frequently plan trips and hang out together . Focused on being ' cool ' , Torako smokes cigarettes constantly and is very skinny . Her name means " tiger " (? , tora) " girl " (? , ko) and Yotsuba enjoys calling her just Tora (" tiger ") . She is fond of taking photos on her old SLR camera . Jumbo has yet to meet Torako and was quite apprehensive , assuming that she was male and Asagi 's boyfriend . Generally humorless and no @-@ nonsense , Torako was annoyed by Yotsuba at first , but she ended up liking her and now considers being around her " fun . "

Yanda (???) , actual surname Yasuda (??)

Yanda is a friend of Koiwai and Jumbo . Though he is mentioned in the first and fourth chapters , when Jumbo calls Yanda " no good " for making lame excuses for not helping the Koiwais move , he

does not appear until chapter 30 . He is childish , as shown by the petty pranks he plays on Yotsuba , including bribing her with candy then taking it back when it does not work and prank @-@ calling her . He enjoys teasing Yotsuba and acting as her " nemesis " . Koiwai refers to Yanda as his k?hai , junior , but in what context he is Koiwai 's junior is unknown . He lives from paycheck to paycheck and eats instant ramen because he does not get paid until the end of the month , and only eats frozen meals the rest of the time .

Hiwatari (??) / " Miss Stake " (???? , Shima?)

A friend of Fuuka 's , given name unknown , who is in the same homeroom . Her first official appearance is in chapter 45 , when she visits Fuuka 's home and recognizes Yotsuba from her trip to their high school in chapter 40 . Hiwatari is a bit eccentric . Her nickname Miss Stake (???? , Shima?) comes from a " mistake " she made when she first introduced herself to her class (in Japanese , shimau used as an auxiliary verb can mean to do something by accident , hence the pun) .

= = Development = =

In 1998 , Azuma published a one @-@ shot manga and two webcomics called " Try ! Try ! Try ! " , in which Yotsuba , her father (who is unnamed) , Ena , Fuka , and Asagi first appeared . Although some of these characters , including Yotsuba herself , are largely the same as in Yotsuba & ! , Fuka has a different character design , a more mischievous personality , and a different spelling of her given name (in " Try ! Try ! Try ! " , it is written with the kanji ?? , meaning " wind @-@ summer " ; in Yotsuba & ! , it is ?? , meaning " wind @-@ scent ") .

= = Media = =

= = = Anime = = =

An anime " spin @-@ off " based on cat versions of Azuma 's character Danbo has been announced and is due to air in October 2016 as part of a " mini @-@ anime " program . This project will not adapt any of Yotsuba & ! .

Despite its popularity and the success of Azumanga Daioh , no plans have been announced for an anime adaptation of Yotsuba & ! . In an entry posted on his website on 15 May 2005 , Azuma said there were no plans for it to be animated ; he reiterated this on the 5 December 2008 , claiming that the stories and style of Yotsuba & ! are not well @-@ suited for animation .

= = = Manga = = =

The manga is written and illustrated by Kiyohiko Azuma , and published by ASCII Media Works in the monthly sh?nen (aimed at teenage boys) manga magazine Dengeki Daioh since the March 2003 issue , with serialization on @-@ going . Chapters have been collected in thirteen tank?bon volumes .

In English , Yotsuba & ! was originally licensed by ADV Manga , who published five volumes between 2005 and 2007 before dropping the license . The North American license was picked up by Yen Press , which republished the first five volumes along with the sixth in September 2009 . All thirteen volumes have since been released . In addition , the series is licensed in France by Kurokawa , in Spain by Norma Editorial , in Germany by Tokyopop Germany , in Italy by Dynit , in Finland by Punainen j?ttil?inen , in Korea by Daiwon C.I. , in Taiwan by Kadokawa Media , in Vietnam by TVM Comics , and in Thailand by NED Comics .

Each chapter of Yotsuba & ! takes place on a specific , nearly sequential day of a common year starting on Wednesday . The year was initially believed to be 2003 , coinciding with the date of the manga 's serialization , but Azuma has stated that the manga always takes place in the present day . This allows the appearance of products created after 2003 , such as the Nintendo DS Mr. Ayase

plays in chapter forty @-@ two .

= = = Calendars = = =

Both monthly and daily Yotsuba & ! calendars have been released every year since 2005 , although a monthly calendar for 2009 was not released due to constraints on Azuma 's schedule . The 2005 edition of the monthly calendar featured pictures of Yotsuba playing with animals such as lions , zebras , and kangaroos . The 2006 , 2007 , 2008 , and 2010 editions feature photographs altered to include Yotsuba doing such things as playing with other children or reaching for a balloon . The photographs were by Miho Kakuta , with drawings by Kiyohiko Azuma . The daily calendars have a mix of original and manga artwork , with occasional captions , as well as other fun items ? for example , the 2006 calendar had a game of shiritori ongoing through the year . The daily calendars run from April to March , following the Japanese school year instead of the calendar year .

The 2010 monthly calendar was released in November 2009 .

= = = Music = = =

Two Yotsuba & ! music CDs have been released , both purely instrumental , called " image albums " . The music is designed to elicit mental images of events described by the titles . Both albums are composed by Masaki Kurihara and performed by the Kuricorder Pops Orchestra , who also worked together on the Azumanga Daioh soundtrack .

The first album , Yotsuba & ? , released in April 2005 , follows Yotsuba throughout the course of a typical day .

The second album , Yotsuba & ? Music Suite (General Winter) , released in November 2006 , depicts the season of winter , including Christmas and New Year 's celebrations . " General Winter " (??? , Fuyu Sh?gun) is a personification of harsh winters , similar to Jack Frost .

= = = Picture books = = =

A Yotsuba & ! picture book , Yotsuba & Monochrome Animals , was published on 16 December 2006 (ISBN 978 @-@ 4 @-@ 8402 @-@ 3714 @-@ 7) . The book has pictures of Yotsuba playing with various black @-@ and @-@ white colored animals , such as pandas . The name of each animal is given in Japanese and English , along with the scientific classification of the species . Another book called Find Yotsuba was released in 2013 , which is actually a compilation of all the calendar illustrations released previously .

= = Reception = =

Yotsuba & ! is drawn not in the vertical four @-@ panel strips of Azuma 's earlier series , Azumanga Daioh , but in a full @-@ page format , giving him more artistic scope . Azuma 's work on Yotsuba & ! has been noted for its clean art , detailed backgrounds , and expressive faces . Azuma is also praised for his joyous tone , slice @-@ of @-@ life storytelling , comedic writing , and eccentric yet realistic characters , especially Yotsuba herself .

The Comics Reporter described the series as " read [ing] like a love letter to the way kids can be at the age of 2 ? 5 , " and a reviewer at Anime News Network compared Azuma 's ability to capture " the wonder of childhood " to Bill Watterson 's in Calvin and Hobbes . Manga : The Complete Guide described it as " a light , feel @-@ good manga , like an endless summer day . " Nicholas Penedo of Animeland said " with Yotsuba , we find ourselves plunged into the wonderful world of childhood , " calling the French edition of volume eight , " A beautiful manga for children and adults . " BD Gest praised Azuma 's skill in making distinct secondary characters , calling them " immediately recognisable " , and saying that they each spice up the story in their own ways . However , Azuma has been criticized for creating characters that are " too clean , too perfectly functional , " for overusing " outrageous expressions and reactions , " and for dragging out jokes too long .

Yotsuba & ! has been popular with readers as well as reviewers . For example , on Amazon.co.jp , volume six was the third best @-@ selling comic in Japan for the first half of 2007 and volume eight was the second best @-@ selling comic in Japan for 2008 ; volumes seven and eight both were number two on the Tohan comics chart the week they debuted . Volume eight sold more than 450 @,@ 000 copies in 2008 , making it one of the top 50 bestselling manga volumes on the Oricon chart for the year . The first five volumes of the English translation were each among the top 100 selling graphic novels in the United States in the month of release . Volume six of the English edition reached number 3 on the New York Times best seller list for manga , and it stayed on the list for four weeks . Volume 8 debuted at No. 2 on the manga best seller list .

The series had sold a total of 13 million copies worldwide as of December 5 , 2015 , and 2 million of which are published outside of Japan , including the U.S. , France , Germany , Italy , Spain , Russia , Sweden , Finland , Korea , China , Taiwan , Indonesia , Thailand , and Vietnam .

= = = Awards and recognitions = = =

Yotsuba & ! received an Excellence Award for Manga at the 2006 Japan Media Arts Festival , where the jury citation praised the vivid characters and gentle atmosphere . In 2008 Yotsuba & ! was nominated for the 12th Osamu Tezuka Culture Award and the Eisner Award in the " Best Publication for Kids " category , but did not win either , and was runner @-@ up for the first annual Manga Taish? award . In 2016 , Yotsuba & ! won the Grand Prize at the 20th Osamu Tezuka Culture Awards , sharing it with Kei Ichinoseki 's Hanagami Sharaku . The English translation was listed as one of the best 20 comics of 2005 by Publishers Weekly , one of the best comics of 2006 by the staff of The Comics Journal , and one of the top graphic novels for teens in 2008 by YALSA . Volume one was named Book of the Month in the June 2005 issue of Newtype USA .

There was an exhibit of Yotsuba & ! artwork at the Gallery of Fantastic Art in Tokyo from 2 ? 17 December 2006 . The lead article of the May 2009 issue of the Japanese design magazine Idea was a study of Yotsuba & ! , focusing on book design , interior layout , and how translated editions were handled .