

Japanese Tourist Guide

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1 Complete Japanese Tourist Guide

1.0.1 A Comprehensive Language & Cultural Guide for Travelers

Version 1.0 — November 2025

1.1 About This Guide

Welcome to the **Complete Japanese Tourist Guide**, your professional companion for confident, respectful travel in Japan. You'll find clear language scaffolding, cultural context, and ready-to-use phrases in English, Japanese, and romaji so you can navigate smoothly—from ramen counters and ryokan check-ins to trains, temples, and emergencies.

1.2 Who This Guide Is For

- First-time visitors and independent travelers who want practical language quickly
- Cultural enthusiasts who care about etiquette and context
- Long-stay travelers (3–6 months) who need depth beyond a phrasebook
- Anyone who wants to communicate politely and naturally with locals

1.3 What's Inside

- **Foundations first:** pronunciation, particles, pronouns, core sentence patterns, essential nouns/verbs/adjectives
- **Application chapters:** restaurants, shopping, transport, hotels, sightseeing, help/politeness, emergencies
- **Cultural intelligence:** etiquette, regional differences, onsen/temple protocols, safety, seasonal notes
- **Writing systems:** hiragana, katakana, essential kanji, reading tips
- **Ready-to-use artifacts:** quick-reference tables, dialogues with cultural notes, cross-references for fast lookup

1.4 How to Use

1. Start with pronunciation and core patterns to build reliable sentences.
2. Study application chapters for restaurants, shopping, transport, hotels, and sightseeing.
3. Keep emergency and help sections handy for “just in case” moments.
4. Use cultural notes to choose the right tone and avoid faux pas.
5. Reference the appendices and quick tables on the go.

1.4.1 Section 1: Getting Started

- About This Guide (You are here)
- How to Use This Guide
- Pronunciation Guide
- Japanese Writing Systems Overview
- Quick Reference: Top 100 Survival Phrases

1.4.2 Section 2: Core Language Structures

- Essential Sentence Patterns
- Want/Desire Structures
- Permission Structures (May I...?)
- Request Structures (Please...)
- Question Formation
- Comparison Structures
- Existence and Location
- Ability and Potential Form
- Tense Systems (Past, Present, Future)

1.4.3 Section 3: Shopping & Retail

- Clothing Vocabulary (Complete)
- Footwear and Accessories
- Sizes and Measurements
- Colors, Patterns, and Materials
- Shopping Actions and Phrases
- Trying On and Fitting
- Payment and Tax-Free Shopping
- Returns and Exchanges
- Electronics Store Phrases
- Drugstore and Pharmacy
- Convenience Store (Konbini) Guide
- Department Store Navigation
- Souvenir Shopping
- 100 Yen Store Tips

1.4.4 Section 4: Restaurants and Dining

- Restaurant Types and Selection
- Complete Menu Vocabulary
- Arriving and Seating
- Reading Menus
- Ordering with Specifications

- During the Meal
- Payment and Tipping Customs
- Dietary Restrictions and Allergies
- Vegetarian and Vegan Options
- Restaurant Etiquette
- Chopstick Rules
- Regional Food Specialties

1.4.5 Section 5: Hotels and Accommodation

- Hotel Types (Hotels, Ryokan, Hostels, Capsule Hotels)
- Room Types and Features
- Booking and Reservations
- Check-in Procedures
- Room Vocabulary and Amenities
- Making Requests
- Solving Problems
- Hotel Services
- Check-out and Late Check-out
- Luggage Storage

1.4.6 Section 6: Transportation

- Train and Subway System
- Ticket Purchasing
- Platform Navigation
- During the Ride
- Transfers and Connections
- Bus Transportation
- Taxi Phrases and Etiquette
- Airport Procedures (Arrival and Departure)
- IC Cards and Transportation Passes
- Reading Train Signs

1.4.7 Section 7: Directions and Navigation

- Asking for Directions
- Direction Vocabulary
- Landmarks and Reference Points
- Distance and Time Estimation
- Using Maps
- Getting Unlost
- Floor and Building Numbers
- Exit Numbers and Names

1.4.8 Section 8: Social Interactions

- Greetings and Introductions
- Politeness and Formality Levels
- Asking for Help
- Offering Help
- Thanking and Apologizing (All Levels)
- Small Talk Topics
- Compliments and Responses
- Declining Politely

- Leaving Situations Gracefully

1.4.9 Section 9: Emergency and Medical

- Emergency Vocabulary
- Calling for Help
- Medical Conditions and Symptoms
- Body Parts (Complete)
- At the Hospital
- At the Pharmacy
- Describing Pain and Illness
- Allergies and Medications
- Lost or Stolen Items
- Police Interactions

1.4.10 Section 10: Numbers, Time, and Measurements

- Number Systems (Native and Sino-Japanese)
- Counter Words (Complete List)
- Clock Time
- Calendar System
- Dates and Years
- Relative Time Expressions
- Duration Expressions
- Money and Prices
- Measurements (Length, Weight, Volume, Temperature)

1.4.11 Section 11: Culture and Etiquette

- Bowing Etiquette
- Shoe Customs
- Chopstick Rules (Complete)
- Gift-Giving Culture
- Onsen and Public Bath Etiquette
- Temple and Shrine Protocol
- Public Behavior Expectations
- Dining Etiquette
- Business Card Exchange
- Photography Rules
- Trash and Recycling Rules
- Noise and Volume Expectations

1.4.12 Section 12: Regional Variations

- Tokyo: Fast-Paced Metropolitan Culture
- Osaka: Friendly and Food-Focused Culture
- Kyoto: Traditional and Reserved Culture
- Regional Language Differences (Dialects)
- Escalator Etiquette (Left vs. Right)
- Service Style Variations
- Communication Style Differences
- Comparison Charts

1.4.13 Section 13: Reading and Writing

- Hiragana (Complete Character Set)

- Katakana (Complete Character Set)
- Essential Kanji (300+ Characters)
- Reading Signs and Menus
- Stroke Order Basics
- Recognition vs. Production
- Survival Reading Strategy
- Recommended Learning Apps

1.4.14 Section 14: Practical Travel Tips

- Before You Go Checklist
- Upon Arrival Procedures
- Daily Life Essentials
- Convenience Store Mastery
- Public Toilets and Facilities
- Coin Lockers
- ATM Access
- Vending Machines
- Communication Strategies
- Technology and Connectivity
- WiFi and Internet Access
- Phone and SIM Cards

1.4.15 Section 15: Seasonal and Cultural Activities

- Cherry Blossom Viewing (Hanami)
- Autumn Leaves (Koyo)
- Festivals by Month
- Tea Ceremony
- Traditional Crafts and Classes
- Seasonal Foods
- Weather Vocabulary
- Natural Disaster Preparedness

1.4.16 Section 16: Conversation Scenarios

- 20+ Complete Scenario Dialogues:
 - Arriving at a Restaurant
 - Shopping for Clothes with Sizing Issues
 - Hotel Check-in with Complications
 - Getting Lost and Finding Your Way
 - Taking a Taxi
 - Riding the Train
 - At the Convenience Store
 - Medical Emergency
 - Lost Item Reporting
 - Temple Visit
 - Onsen Experience
 - Making Small Talk
 - [And more...]

1.4.17 Section 17: Grammar Reference

- Particle Guide (Complete)
- Verb Conjugation Charts (100+ Verbs)

- Adjective Conjugation (I-adjectives and Na-adjectives)
- Sentence Pattern Reference
- Common Grammar Mistakes
- Formality Level Guide

1.4.18 Section 18: Appendices

- **Appendix A:** Quick Reference - Top 100 Phrases
- **Appendix B:** Vocabulary Lists (Alphabetical)
 - Japanese to English
 - English to Japanese
- **Appendix C:** Grammar Charts
- **Appendix D:** Cultural Calendar and Best Times to Visit
- **Appendix E:** Emergency Contact Numbers
- **Appendix F:** Recommended Apps and Resources
- **Appendix G:** Practice Exercises

1.5 A Note on Cultural Respect

Learning even basic Japanese phrases demonstrates respect for the culture and people of Japan. Japanese society values effort and sincerity over perfection. Don't be afraid to make mistakes—your attempts to speak Japanese will be met with appreciation and encouragement.

This guide is designed to help you communicate and connect, not just transact. Beyond the practical value of these phrases lies the opportunity to engage more deeply with one of the world's most fascinating cultures.

1.6 Begin Your Journey

Your adventure in Japan starts with a single word. Turn the page and begin building the linguistic and cultural foundation that will transform your trip from good to unforgettable.

(Yōkoso Nihon e!) **Welcome to Japan!**

This guide is a living document. While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy and completeness, language and culture are dynamic. Always approach interactions with openness, respect, and a willingness to learn.

2 Language Foundations: Quick Reference for Tourists

2.1 CRITICAL PHRASES - EMERGENCY QUICK REFERENCE

2.1.1 Help Me

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual		tasukete	Standard	Standard	Standard	Emergency only
Polite		tasukete kudasai	Standard	Standard	Standard	Most situations

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Very Polite		otasuke itadakemasu ka	Common	Less common	Common	Formal help request

2.1.2 I'm Lost

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual		mayotta	Standard	Standard	Standard	Friends only
Polite		michi ni may- oimashita	Standard	Standard	Standard	Use this
Very Polite		michi ni mayotte shi- maimashita	Common	Less common	Common	Hotels, stations

2.1.3 Where is the Bathroom?

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual		toire doko	Standard	Standard	Standard	Friends only
Polite		toire wa doko desu ka	Standard	Standard	Standard	Default choice
Very Polite		otearai wa dochira desu ka	Common	Less common	Very common	Formal venues

2.1.4 Water Please

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual		mizu chōdai	Standard	Standard	Standard	Friends only
Polite		mizu o kudasai	Standard	Standard	Standard	Restaurants, most sit- uations
Very Polite		omizu o itadakemasu ka	Common	Less common	Common	High-end restau- rants, hotels

2.2 GREETINGS & INTRODUCTIONS

2.2.1 Nice to Meet You

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual		yoroshiku	Standard	Standard	Standard	Very casual
Polite		hajimemashite. yoroshiku onegaishi- masu	Standard	Standard	Standard	First meetings
Very Polite		hajimemashite. dōzo yoroshiku onagai itashimasu	Common	Less common	Common	Business, formal

2.2.2 I'm [Name]

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual	[Name]	[Name] da yo	Standard	Standard	Standard	Friends
Polite	[Name]	watashi wa [Name] desu	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard introduction
Very Polite	[Name]	watashi, [Name] to mōshimasu	Common	Less common	Common	Business cards

2.2.3 Where Are You From?

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual		doko kara kita no	Standard	(kitan)	Standard	Friends
Polite		doko kara kimashita ka	Standard	Standard	Standard	Small talk
Very Polite		dochira kara irasshaimashita ka	Common	Less common	Common	Formal settings

2.2.4 I'm from [Country]

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual	[Country]	[Country] kara kita	Standard	[Country] (kiten)	Standard	Casual
Polite	[Country]	[Country] kara kimashita	Standard	Standard	Standard	Most common
Very Polite	[Country]	[Country] kara mairi- mashita	Common	Less common	Common	Formal

2.2.5 First Time in Japan?

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual		Nihon hajimete	Standard	Standard	Standard	Friends
Polite		Nihon wa hajimete desu ka	Standard	Standard	Standard	Common question
Very Polite		Nihon wa hajimete de irasshaimasu ka	Common	Less common	Common	Hotels, guides

2.2.6 Yes, First Time

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual		un, hajimete	Standard	Standard	Standard	Friends
Polite		hai, hajimete desu	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard response
Very Polite		hai, hajimete de gozaimasu	Common	Less common	Common	Very formal

2.3 RESTAURANTS & FOOD

2.3.1 This One Please

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual		kore chōdai	Standard	/ (kore kureru)	Standard	Friends
Polite		kore o kudasai	Standard	Standard	Standard	Point at menu
Very Polite		kochira o itadakemasu ka	Common	Less common	Common	Formal dining

2.3.2 Do You Have Recommendations?

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual		osusume aru	Standard	(osusume arun)	Standard	Casual eateries
Polite		osusume wa arimasu ka	Standard	Standard	Standard	Best for tourists

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Very Polite		osusume o oukagai dekimasu ka	Common	Less common	Common	High-end restau- rants

2.3.3 Can You Make it Spicy?

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual		karaku dekiru	Standard	(karou dekiru)	Standard	Casual
Polite		karaku dekimasu ka	Standard	Standard	Standard	Most restau- rants
Very Polite		karame ni shite itadakemasu ka	Common	Less common	Common	Formal dining

2.3.4 Vegetarian Menu?

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual		bejitarian menyū aru	Standard	(arun)	Standard	Casual
Polite		bejitarian menyū wa arimasu ka	Standard	Standard	Standard	Dietary needs
Very Polite		bejitarian no oryōri wa gozaimasu ka	Common	Less common	Very common	Traditional restau- rants

2.3.5 No Meat Please

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual		niku nashi de	Standard	(niku nuki de)	Standard	Casual
Polite		niku nashi de one- gaishimasu	Standard	Standard	Standard	Clear request
Very Polite		oniku o nuite itadakemasu ka	Common	Less common	Common	Formal

2.3.6 How Much?

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual		ikura	Standard	(nambo)	Standard	Markets
Polite		ikura desu ka	Standard	(o-ikura)	Standard	Shopping, restaurants
Very Polite		o-ikura de gozaimasu ka	Common	Less common	Common	Luxury stores

2.3.7 Delicious!

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual		umai	Standard	(umai na)	Standard	Casual, masculine
Polite		oishii desu	Standard	(oishii wa) - Osaka feminine	Standard	Compliment chef
Very Polite		taihen oishū gozaimasu	Common	Less common	Very common	Traditional kaiseki

2.4 SHOPPING

2.4.1 May I Try This On?

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual		shichaku shite ii	Standard	(shite erun)	Standard	Casual shops
Polite		shichaku dekimasu ka	Standard	Standard	Standard	Clothing stores
Very Polite		shichaku sasete itadakemasu ka	Common	Less common	Common	Department stores

2.4.2 Bigger Size?

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual		motto ōkii no aru	Standard	(arun)	Standard	Casual
Polite		mō sukoshi ōkii saizu wa arimasu ka	Standard	Standard	Standard	Size requests

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Very Polite		mō sukoshi ōkime no saizu wa gozaimasu ka	Common	Less common	Common	Formal stores

2.4.3 Just Looking

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual		miteru dake	Standard	(miteru dake ya de)	Standard	Casual
Polite		mite iru dake desu	Standard	Standard	Standard	When ap- proached
Very Polite		haiken shite iru dake de gozaimasu	Common	Less common	Common	Luxury boutiques

2.4.4 I'll Take This

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual		kore ni suru	Standard	(kore ni suru wa)	Standard	Casual
Polite		kore o kudasai	Standard	Standard	Standard	Ready to buy
Very Polite		kochira o itadakimasu	Common	Less common	Common	Formal purchase

2.4.5 Can I Pay by Card?

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual		kādo de haraeru	Standard	(kādo de erun)	Standard	Casual
Polite		kādo de haraemasu ka	Standard	Standard	Standard	Payment question
Very Polite		kādo de oshiharai dekimasu ka	Common	Less common	Common	Formal stores

2.5 TRANSPORTATION

2.5.1 Where is [Station]?

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual	[]	[ekimei] eki doko	Standard	[] (doko yanen)	Standard	Friends
Polite	[]	[ekimei] eki wa doko desu ka	Standard	Standard	Standard	Ask locals
Very Polite	[]	[ekimei] eki wa dochira de gozaimasu ka	Common	Less common	Common	Station staff

2.5.2 Does This Train Go to [Place]?

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual	[]	kono densha [basho] iku	Standard	[] (ikun)	Standard	Casual
Polite	[]	kono densha wa [basho] ni ikimasu ka	Standard	Standard	Standard	Platform checks
Very Polite	[]	kono densha wa [basho] ni mairimasu ka	Common	Less common	Common	Station attendant

2.5.3 One Ticket to [Place]

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual	[]	[basho] made ichimai	Standard	[] (ichimai chōdai)	Standard	Casual
Polite	[]	[basho] made ichimai kudasai	Standard	Standard	Standard	Ticket counter
Very Polite	[]	[basho] made ichimai onegai itashimasu	Common	Less common	Common	JR offices

2.5.4 Which Platform?

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual		nanban-sen	Standard	(nanban hōmu)	Standard	Casual
Polite		nanban-sen desu ka	Standard	(nanban hōmu)	Standard	Platform info
Very Polite		nanban-sen de gozaimasu ka	Common	Less common	Common	Information desk

2.6 HOTELS

2.6.1 Check-In Please

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual		chekkuin shitai	Standard	(shitai nen)	Standard	Hostels
Polite		chekkuin o onegaishimasu	Standard	Standard	Standard	Front desk
Very Polite		chekkuin o onegai itashimasu	Common	Less common	Common	Luxury hotels

2.6.2 One More Towel Please

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual		taoru mō ichimai chōdai	Standard	(kurehen)	Standard	Casual
Polite		mō ichimai taoru o kudasai	Standard	Standard	Standard	Room service
Very Polite		taoru o mō ichimai itadakemasu ka	Common	Less common	Common	Formal request

2.6.3 Wi-Fi Password?

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual	Wi-Fi	waifai no pasuwādo wa	Standard	Standard	Standard	Hostels

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Polite	Wi-Fi	waifai no pasuwādo wa nan desu ka	Standard	Standard	Standard	Most hotels
Very Polite	Wi-Fi	waifai no pasuwādo o oshiete itadakemasu ka	Common	Less common	Common	Formal hotels

2.6.4 What Time is Breakfast?

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual		asagohan nanji kara	Standard	(itsu kara)	Standard	Casual
Polite		chōshoku wa nanji kara desu ka	Standard	Standard	Standard	Hotel breakfast
Very Polite		chōshoku wa nanji kara de gozaimasu ka	Common	Less common	Common	Ryokan

2.7 SIGHTSEEING

2.7.1 May I Take a Photo?

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual		shashin totte ii	Standard	(totte ee)	Standard	Friends
Polite		shashin o totte mo ii desu ka	Standard	Standard	Standard	Ask permission
Very Polite		shashin o torasete itadaite mo yoroshii deshō ka	Common	Less common	Very common	Temples, shrines

2.7.2 Could You Take My Photo?

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual		shashin totte	Standard	(totte kurehen)	Standard	Casual

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Polite		shashin o totte itadakemasu ka	Standard	Standard	Standard	Ask strangers
Very Polite		oshashin o tori itadakemasu deshō ka	Common	Less common	Common	Very polite

2.7.3 What Time Does It Close?

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual		nanji ni shimaru	Standard	(shimaru n)	Standard	Casual
Polite		nanji ni shimarimasu ka	Standard	Standard	Standard	Shops, temples
Very Polite		nanji ni shimararemasu ka	Common	Less common	Common	Formal venues

2.7.4 How Much is Admission?

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual		nyūjōryō ikura	Standard	(nambo)	Standard	Casual
Polite		nyūjōryō wa ikura desu ka	Standard	Standard	Standard	Ticket booth
Very Polite		nyūjōryō wa o-ikura de gozaimasu ka	Common	Less common	Common	Museums

2.8 BASIC CONVERSATION TOOLS

2.8.1 Yes / No

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual	/	un / uun	Standard	/	Standard	Friends
Polite	/	hai / iie	Standard	Standard	Standard	Default
Very Polite	/	hai / iie	Standard	Standard	Standard	Same as polite

2.8.2 Thank You

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual		arigatō	Standard	(ōkini)		Friends
Polite		arigatō	Standard	/	Standard	Most situations
Very Polite		gozaimasu makoto ni arigatō gozaimasu	Common	Less common	Common	Formal thanks

2.8.3 Excuse Me / Sorry

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual		gomen	Standard	(gomen na)	Standard	Friends
Polite		sumimasen	Standard	(sun- masen)	Standard	Get attention
Very Polite		mōshiwake gozaimasen	Common	Less common	Common	Sincere apology

2.8.4 I Don't Understand

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual		wakannai	Standard		Standard	Casual
Polite		wakarimasen	Standard	(wakara- hen)	Standard	Very useful!
Very Polite		wakarikanemasu	Common	Less common	Common	Business

2.8.5 Please Say It Again

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual		mō ikkai itte	Standard	(mō ikkai yūte)	Standard	Friends
Polite		mō ichido onegaishi- masu	Standard	Standard	Standard	Didn't catch it
Very Polite		osoreirimasu ga, mō ichido onagai dekimasu ka	Common	Less common	Common	Formal

2.8.6 Slowly Please

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual		yukkuri itte	Standard	(yukkuri yūte)	Standard	Casual
Polite		yukkuri one-gaishimasu	Standard	Standard	Standard	Helpful phrase Formal
Very Polite		yukkuri ohanashi itadakemasu ka	Common	Less common	Common	

2.8.7 Do You Speak English?

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Usage
Casual		eigo hanaseru	Standard	(hanaserun)	Standard	Casual
Polite		eigo o hanasemasu ka	Standard	Standard	Standard	Common question
Very Polite		eigo o ohanashi ni naremasu ka	Common	Less common	Common	

2.9 GRAMMAR BUILDING BLOCKS

2.9.1 Core Pronouns (People)

English	Japanese	Romaji	Politeness Level	Regional Notes
I / me		watashi	Neutral/polite	Universal
I / me (casual male)		boku	Casual	Men only
I / me (very casual male)		ore	Very casual	Men, avoid with strangers
You (singular)		anata	Polite	Use names + instead
He		kare	Neutral	Universal
She		kanojo	Neutral	Universal
We		watashi-tachi	Polite	Universal
We (casual male)		bokutachi	Casual	Men
You (plural)		minasan	Polite	Means “everyone”
They (mixed/men)		karera	Neutral	Universal
They (women)		kanojotachi	Neutral	Universal

2.9.2 Core Pronouns (Things/Places)

English	Japanese	Romaji	Function	When to Use
This (near me)		kore	Thing near speaker	Pointing at menu items
That (near you)		sore	Thing near listener	“That one you’re holding”
That (over there)		are	Far from both	Distant object
Which?		dore	Choosing	“Which one?”
Here		koko	Location near speaker	“Here, please”
There (near you)		soko	Location near listener	“There, by you”
Over there		asoko	Distant location	“Over there”
Where?		doko	Question	“Where is...?”

2.9.3 Essential Particles (The Glue of Sentences)

Particle	Function	Example	English	Usage Note
	Topic marker		I am a traveler	Sets conversation topic
	Subject/emphasis		The station is close	Highlights new info
	Direct object	7	Water, please	What you want/do
	Time/destination		Leave at 7 o'clock	“At/to/in”
	Location/method		Go by train	“By/at/in” (action)
	Possession		Friend’s hotel	“’s/of”
	Direction		Go to Kyoto	Similar to
	And/with		Eat with friend	Connecting
	Also/too		Me too	Inclusion
	From/because		From Tokyo	Starting point
	Until/to	10	Until 10	End point
	Question		Is it the station?	Makes questions
	Emphasis		This place is cheap!	Gentle emphasis
	Agreement		It’s delicious, right?	Seeking agreement

2.10 SENTENCE PATTERNS (PLUG-AND-PLAY)

2.10.1 Pattern 1: [Noun] [Noun/Adjective]

Template: [Subject] [Description] **Example:** (kore wa oishii desu) = This is tasty **Use:** Describing things

2.10.2 Pattern 2: [Noun]

Template: [Thing] **Example:** (mizu o kudasai) = Water, please **Use:** Requesting items

2.10.3 Pattern 3: [Place]

Template: [Location] **Example:** (toire wa doko desu ka) = Where is the bathroom? **Use:** Finding locations

2.10.4 Pattern 4: [Time/Place] [Verb]

Template: [When/Where] [Action] **Example:** 7 (shichi-ji ni demasu) = I leave at 7 **Use:** Stating scheduled actions

2.10.5 Pattern 5:

Template: **Example:** (kore wa nan desu ka) = What is this? **Use:** Identifying unknown things

2.10.6 Pattern 6: [A] [B]

Template: [Item A] [Item B] **Example:** (kore to sore o kudasai) = This and that, please **Use:** Ordering multiple items

2.10.7 Pattern 7: [Noun] / [Verb]

Template: [Thing] or [Action] **Example:** (yasumi ga hoshii desu) = I want a break **Example:** (shashin o toritai desu) = I want to take photos **Use:** Expressing wants

2.10.8 Pattern 8: [Verb]

Template: [Action] **Example:** (shashin o totte mo ii desu ka) = May I take photos? **Use:** Asking permission

2.10.9 Pattern 9: [Adjective] / [Adjective]

Template: [Description] or [Description] **Example:** (yasui desu) = It's cheap **Example:** (takakunai desu) = It's not expensive **Use:** Describing with adjectives

2.10.10 Pattern 10: [Noun] [Noun]

Template: [Owner/Type] [Thing] **Example:** (Nihon no ryōri) = Japanese cuisine **Use:** Showing possession/attribution

2.11 VOCABULARY TOOLKIT

2.11.1 Travel Essentials

English	Japanese	Romaji	Category
station		eki	Transportation
hotel		hoteru	Accommodation
room		heya	Accommodation
restaurant		resutoran	Dining
water		mizu	Dining
ticket		kippu	Transportation
cash		genkin	Money
card		kādo	Money
bathroom		toire	Facilities
help		tasuke	Emergency

2.11.2 Action Verbs (with polite forms)

English	Japanese (Dictionary)	Romaji	Polite Form	Romaji (Polite)
to go		iku		ikimasu
to come		kuru		kimasu
to eat		taberu		tabemasu
to drink		nomu		nomimasu
to buy		kau		kaimasu
to see/watch		miru		mimasu
to stay		tomaru		tomarimasu
to need		iru		irimasu
to want		hoshii		hoshii desu
to speak		hanasu		hanashimasu

2.11.3 Useful Adjectives

English	Japanese	Romaji	Negative Form	Romaji (Negative)
good		ii		yokunai
cheap		yasui		yasukunai
expensive		takai		takakunai
delicious		oishii		oishikunai
close		chikai		chikakunai
far		tōi		tōkunai
open		aite iru		aite inai
closed		shimatte iru		shimatte inai
necessary		hitsuyō		hitsuyō ja nai
free/available		aite iru		aite inai

2.12 QUICK SMALL TALK SCRIPTS

2.12.1 Script 1: First Meeting

Line 1: [Name] (Hajimemashite. Watashi wa [Name] desu.) *Nice to meet you, I'm [Name].*

Line 2: (Yoroshiku onegaishimasu.) *Please be kind to me / Nice to meet you.*

Line 3: (Doko kara kimashita ka?) *Where are you from?*

Line 4: [Country] ([Country] kara kimashita.) *I'm from [Country].*

2.12.2 Script 2: Daily Plans

Question: (Kyō wa doko ni ikimasu ka?) *Where are you going today?*

Answer: [Place] ([Place] ni ikimasu.) *I'm going to [Place].*

2.12.3 Script 3: Getting Recommendations

Question: (Osusume wa arimasu ka?) *Do you have recommendations?*

Follow-up: (Nihon wa hajimete desu ka?) *Is this your first time in Japan?*

Answer: (Hai, hajimete desu.) *Yes, first time.*

2.13 PRACTICAL APPLICATION BY CONTEXT

2.13.1 RESTAURANTS

Priority Phrases: 1. (kore o kudasai) - This one, please 2. (karaku dekimasu ka) - Can you make it spicy? 3. (bejitarian menyū wa arimasu ka) - Vegetarian menu? 4. (osusume wa arimasu ka) - Any recommendations? 5. (oishii desu) - It's delicious 6. (okaikei onegaishimasu) - Check, please

2.13.2 SHOPPING

Priority Phrases: 1. (shichaku dekimasu ka) - May I try it on? 2. (mō sukoshi ōkii saizu wa arimasu ka) - Bigger size? 3. (ikura desu ka) - How much? 4. (mite iru dake desu) - Just looking 5. (kore o kudasai) - I'll take this 6. (kādo de haraemasu ka) - Can I pay by card?

2.13.3 TRAVELING

Priority Phrases: 1. [] ([ekime] eki wa doko desu ka) - Where is ____ station? 2. [] (kono densha wa [basho] ni ikimasu ka) - Does this train go to ? 3. [] ([basho] made ichimai kudasai) - One ticket to 4. (nanban-sen desu ka) - Which platform? 5. (michi ni mayoimashita) - I'm lost

2.13.4 HOTELS

Priority Phrases: 1. (chekkuin o onegaishimasu) - Check-in, please 2. (mō ichimai taoru o kudasai) - One more towel 3. Wi-Fi (waifai no pasuwādo wa nan desu ka) - Wi-Fi password? 4. (chōshoku wa nanji kara desu ka) - What time is breakfast?

2.13.5 SIGHTSEEING/HELP

Priority Phrases: 1. (shashin o totte mo ii desu ka) - May I take photos? 2. (shashin o totte itadakemasu ka) - Could you take my photo? 3. (tasukete kudasai) - Please help 4. (michi ni mayoimashita) - I'm lost 5. (nanji ni shimarimasu ka) - What time does it close?

2.14 REGIONAL DIALECT QUICK REFERENCE

2.14.1 Key Osaka Differences

Standard Japanese	Osaka Dialect	Meaning
(arigatō gozaimasu)	(ōkini)	Thank you
(ikura desu ka)	(nambo desu ka)	How much?
(wakarimasen)	(wakarahen)	I don't understand
(desu)	/ (ya/ya de)	Is/casual copula
(nai)	(hen)	Negative ending

2.14.2 Key Kyoto Differences

- Generally more formal than Tokyo
- Heavy use of (o-) prefix for politeness
- Traditional honorific language preserved
- Same standard Japanese works, but higher formality appreciated

2.14.3 Key Tokyo Standard

- Most textbook Japanese
- Default polite forms (/) universal
- Neutral accent
- What tourists should default to

3 VI. PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

3.1 Introduction

Japanese pronunciation is remarkably consistent and systematic compared to English. Once you learn the basic sounds, you can pronounce virtually any Japanese word correctly. There are no silent letters, and each character represents exactly one sound. This section will teach you the foundational sounds of Japanese and help you avoid common mistakes made by English speakers.

Key principle: Japanese is a syllable-timed language (like Spanish), whereas English is stress-timed. This means each syllable in Japanese gets roughly equal time and emphasis, creating a more rhythmic, even flow.

3.2 A. VOWELS

Japanese has only **5 vowel sounds**, and they are **always pronounced the same way**, regardless of context. This consistency makes Japanese pronunciation much more predictable than English.

3.2.1 The Five Vowels

Vowel	Pronunciation	English Approximation	Example Word	Meaning
a	“ah”	father, car	ame (ah-meh)	rain
i	“ee”	machine, see	ike (ee-keh)	pond
u	“oo”	food, rule	umi (oo-mee)	sea
e	“eh”	bed, pet	e (eh)	picture
o	“oh”	boat, so	ono (oh-noh)	axe

3.2.2 Detailed Vowel Explanations

3.2.2.1 A (/) - “ah”

- Open your mouth wide, as if saying “ah” at the dentist
- The jaw drops down comfortably
- It’s the “a” in “father,” NOT the “a” in “cat” or “fate”

Examples: - **arigatō** (ah-ree-gah-toh) - thank you - **akai** (ah-kah-ee) - red - **asa** (ah-sah) - morning - **sakana** (sah-kah-nah) - fish - **watashi** (wah-tah-shee) - I/me

3.2.2.2 I (/) - “ee”

- Lips stretched slightly to the sides, like a small smile
- Tongue forward in the mouth
- It’s the “ee” in “see,” NOT the “i” in “sit” or “site”

Examples: - **ichi** (ee-chee) - one - **imi** (ee-mee) - meaning - **kitte** (keet-teh) - stamp - **shio** (shee-oh) - salt - **onegaishimasu** (oh-neh-gah-ee-shee-mahs) - please

3.2.2.3 U (/) - “oo”

- Lips barely rounded, more relaxed than English “oo”
- NOT as pronounced as English “food” - keep it subtle
- It’s between “food” and “foot” but closer to “food”

Examples: - **umi** (oo-mee) - sea - **usagi** (oo-sah-gee) - rabbit - **kutsu** (koo-tsoo) - shoes - **fuyu** (foo-yoo) - winter - **kudamono** (koo-dah-moh-noh) - fruit

Important note: The “u” is often devoiced (barely audible) at the end of words or between voiceless consonants: - **desu** sounds like “des” (the “u” is whispered or silent) - **shimasu** sounds like “shee-mahs” (the “u” is barely there) - **sukiyaki** sounds like “s’kee-yah-kee” (first “u” is devoiced)

3.2.2.4 E (/) - “eh”

- Mouth half-open, wider than “ee” but not as wide as “ah”
- Similar to the “e” in “bet”
- It’s the “e” in “bed,” NOT the “ay” in “day”

Examples: - **eki** (eh-kee) - station - **ebi** (eh-bee) - shrimp - **densha** (den-shah) - train - **tegami** (teh-gah-mee) - letter - **senpai** (sen-pah-ee) - senior

3.2.2.5 O (/) - “oh”

- Lips form a round shape, but not too tight
- It’s the “o” in “go,” NOT the “o” in “hot” or “woman”
- Keep it pure - don’t glide into a “w” sound like in English “go” (goh-w)

Examples: - **ohayō** (oh-hah-yoh) - good morning - **okane** (oh-kah-neh) - money - **onsen** (on-sen) - hot spring - **tokoro** (toh-koh-roh) - place - **dōmo** (doh-moh) - thanks (casual)

3.2.3 Vowel Consistency Rule

The vowels NEVER change sound. This is the most important rule in Japanese pronunciation. Unlike English, where: - “a” can sound like: cat, fate, car, about, ball - “o” can sound like: hot, go, work, food

In Japanese: - “a” always sounds like “ah” (father) - “i” always sounds like “ee” (see) - “u” always sounds like “oo” (food) - “e” always sounds like “eh” (bed) - “o” always sounds like “oh” (go)

3.2.4 Practice Words

Japanese	Romaji	Pronunciation	Meaning
	ai	ah-ee	love
	ue	oo-eh	above
	ie	ee-eh	house
	ao	ah-oh	blue
	oi	oh-ee	nephew
	kai	kah-ee	shellfish
	kieru	kee-eh-roo	to disappear
	aoi	ah-oh-ee	blue (adjective)
	ii	ee-ee	good
	ōi	oh-oh-ee	many

3.3 B. CONSONANTS

Japanese consonants are generally softer and less aspirated (less air) than English consonants. Most are similar to English, but there are a few that require special attention.

3.3.1 Standard Consonants

3.3.1.1 K (k, g sounds)

Combination	Sound	Example	Meaning
ka	kah	kawa (kah-wah)	river
ki	kee	kitte (keet-teh)	stamp
ku	koo	kūki (koo-kee)	air
ke	keh	kēki (keh-kee)	cake
ko	koh	koko (koh-koh)	here

G sounds (voiced “k”): - ga, gi, gu, ge, go - **gakkou** (gahk-koh) - school - **ginkou** (geen-koh) - bank

3.3.1.2 S (s, z sounds)

Combination	Sound	Example	Meaning
sa	sah	sakura (sah-koo-rah)	cherry blossom
shi	shee	shio (shee-oh)	salt
su	soo	sushi (soo-shee)	sushi
se	seh	sensei (sen-say)	teacher
so	soh	sora (soh-rah)	sky

Important: “si” doesn’t exist in Japanese - it’s always written as “shi” (shee)

Z sounds (voiced “s”): - za, ji, zu, ze, zo - **zasshi** (zahs-shee) - magazine - **jikan** (jee-kahn) - time - **zubon** (zoo-bon) - pants

Important: “zi” doesn’t exist - it’s written as “ji” (jee)

3.3.1.3 T (t, d sounds)

Combination	Sound	Example	Meaning
ta	tah	taberu (tah-beh-roo)	to eat
chi	chee	chizu (chee-zoo)	map/cheese
tsu	tsoo	tsukue (tsoo-koo-eh)	desk
te	teh	tegami (teh-gah-mee)	letter
to	toh	tomodachi (toh-moh-dah-chee)	friend

Important: “ti” and “tu” don’t exist - they become “chi” and “tsu”

D sounds (voiced “t”): - da, ji (also written as “di”), zu (also written as “du”), de, do - **densha** (den-shah) - train - **doko** (doh-koh) - where

3.3.1.4 N Sounds

Combination	Sound	Example	Meaning
na	nah	nani (nah-nee)	what
ni	nee	niku (nee-koo)	meat
nu	noo	nuno (noo-noh)	cloth
ne	neh	neko (neh-koh)	cat
no	noh	nomi (noh-mee)	flea

Standalone N: The syllable “n” (/) can appear by itself at the end of syllables: - **sen** (sen) - thousand - **densha** (den-shah) - train - **kanpai** (kahn-pah-ee) - cheers - **nihon** (nee-hon) - Japan

This “n” sounds like “n” in “antenna” - it’s a syllabic nasal sound.

3.3.1.5 H (h, b, p sounds)

Combination	Sound	Example	Meaning
ha	hah	hana (hah-nah)	flower/nose
hi	hee	hito (hee-toh)	person
fu	foo	futon (foo-ton) - futon	
he	heh	heya (heh-yah)	room
ho	hoh	hon (hon)	book

Important: “hu” doesn’t exist - it’s always “fu” (see special explanation below)

B sounds (voiced “h”): - ba, bi, bu, be, bo - **basu** (bah-soo) - bus - **biiru** (bee-roo) - beer

P sounds (with small circle): - pa, pi, pu, pe, po - **pan** (pahn) - bread - **tempura** (tem-poo-rah) - tempura

3.3.1.6 M Sounds

Combination	Sound	Example	Meaning
ma	mah	matcha (maht-chah)	green tea
mi	mee	mizu (mee-zoo)	water
mu	moo	mushi (moo-shee)	insect
me	meh	me (meh)	eye
mo	moh	momo (moh-moh)	peach

3.3.1.7 Y Sounds

Combination	Sound	Example	Meaning
ya	yah	yama (yah-mah)	mountain
yu	yoo	yuki (yoo-kee)	snow
yo	yoh	yoru (yoh-roo)	night

Note: There is no “yi” or “ye” in standard Japanese

3.3.1.8 R/L Sound - VERY IMPORTANT This is one of the most challenging sounds for English speakers. The Japanese “r” sound is NOT the English “r” and NOT the English “l” - it’s somewhere in between.

How to pronounce it: 1. Put your tongue in the “L” position (tip touching the ridge behind your upper teeth) 2. Tap lightly once, like a very soft “d” or “t” 3. It sounds like a cross between “r,” “l,” and “d” 4. Similar to the “tt” in American English “butter” or “batter” 5. In Spanish, it’s like the single “r” in “pero” (not the rolled “rr”)

Common mistake: English speakers say “lice” instead of “rice” or roll the R like in Spanish “perro.”

Correct approach: Think of it as a soft, single tap of the tongue.

Japanese	DON’T Say	DO Say	Meaning
ramen	LAY-men or RRRR-amen	ah-men (tap)	ramen
arigatō	ah-lee-gah-toh	ah- ee-gah-toh (tap)	thank you
karate	kah-lah-teh	kah- ah-teh (tap)	karate
sayonara	sah-yoh-nah-lah	sah-yoh-nah- ah (tap)	goodbye
sushi	soo-shee	soo-shee	sushi (no R/L)

Practice words: - **ringo** (een-goh) - apple - **ryokou** (yoh-koh) - travel - **kuruma** (koo- oo-mah) - car - **torii** (toh- ee-ee) - shrine gate - **irashaimase** (ee- ah-shah-ee-mah-seh) - welcome

3.3.1.9 W Sounds

Combination	Sound	Example	Meaning
wa	wah	watashi (wah-tah-shee)	I/me
wo	oh/woh	wo (oh) - object marker	

Note: - “wo” () is only used as a grammatical particle and sounds almost identical to “o” - There is no “wi” or “we” in modern standard Japanese - The “w” sound is very subtle, not as pronounced as English “w”

3.3.2 Special Consonant Sounds

3.3.2.1 F Sound - “fu” (/) The Japanese “fu” is NOT the English “f” sound. It’s unique:

How to pronounce it: 1. Don’t touch your upper teeth to your lower lip (like English “f”) 2. Instead, blow air gently through loosely rounded lips 3. It’s between “f” and “h” - more breathy than “f” 4. Think of it as blowing out a candle very gently

English “f”: Upper teeth touch lower lip → forceful air **Japanese “fu”:** Rounded lips, no teeth contact → gentle air

Practice words: - **futon** (foo-ton) - NOT “fton” - futon - **fuyu** (foo-yoo) - winter - **fune** (foo-neh) - boat - **fuku** (foo-koo) - clothes - **tofu** (toh-foo) - tofu

Common mistake: Saying “tofu” with English “f” sound. It should be breathy: “toh-hoo” (with rounded lips).

3.3.2.2 TSU Sound (/) - VERY IMPORTANT This is one of the most distinctive Japanese sounds and doesn’t exist in English. **It’s NOT “too” or “sue” - it’s a single sound: “tsu.”**

How to pronounce it: 1. Start in position to say “t” 2. Release into “soo” sound 3. It’s ONE syllable, not two: “ts-oo” said quickly together 4. Think of the “ts” in “cats” or “pots” - but add “oo” after it 5. The “t” and “s” are simultaneous, not separate

Practice progression: 1. Say “cats” → focus on the “ts” at the end 2. Now say “cats” again → but instead of stopping, add “oo”: “cats-oo” 3. Say it faster: “tsu” 4. That’s it!

DO: Say “ts-oo” as ONE beat/syllable **DON’T:** Say “t-soo” or “soo” (two beats)

Practice words: | Japanese | Wrong Way | Right Way | Meaning | |———|———|———|———| |
tsukue | “t-skoo-eh” | “ts-koo-eh” (one beat) | desk | | tsunami | “t-soo-nah-mee” | “ts-nah-mee” | tsunami
| | tsuki | “t-soo-kee” | “ts-kee” | moon | | tsumori | “t-soo-moh-ree” | “ts-moh-ree” | intention | | natsu |
“nah-t-soo” | “nah-ts” | summer |

More examples: - **sushi** (soo-shee) - sushi - **matsu** (mah-ts) - to wait / pine tree - **kutsu** (koo-ts) - shoes
- **tsuyoi** (ts-yoh-ee) - strong - **tsumetai** (ts-meh-tah-ee) - cold (to touch)

3.3.2.3 SH Sound (shi, sha, sho, shu, she) The Japanese “sh” is slightly softer than English “sh” but similar enough that English speakers don’t struggle with it.

Practice words: - **shinkansen** (sheen-kahn-sen) - bullet train - **shōyu** (shoh-yoo) - soy sauce - **shizuka** (shee-zoo-kah) - quiet - **shimasu** (shee-mahs) - to do - **shashin** (shah-sheen) - photograph

3.3.2.4 CH Sound (chi, cha, cho, chu, che) Similar to English “ch” in “cheese” - this one is easy for English speakers.

Practice words: - **chūshajō** (choo-shah-joh) - parking lot - **ocha** (oh-chah) - tea - **chizu** (chee-zoo) - map/cheese - **chotto** (chot-toh) - a little - **chawan** (chah-wahn) - tea bowl

3.3.3 Consonant Combinations with Y (Palatalization)

Many consonants can combine with “ya,” “yu,” or “yo” to create a single syllable sound. These are written with a small , , or .

Base	+ ya	+ yu	+ yo	Example
k	kya	kyu	kyo	kyō (kyoh) - today
s	sha	shu	sho	shashin (shah-sheen) - photo
t	cha	chu	cho	chūmon (choo-mon) - order
n	nya	nyu	nyo	nyūsu (nyoo-soo) - news
h	hya	hyu	hyo	hyaku (hyah-koo) - hundred
m	mya	myu	myo	myōji (myoh-jee) - surname
r	rya	ryu	ryo	ryokan (yoh-kahn) - inn
g	gya	gyu	gyo	gyūniku (gyoo-nee-koo) - beef
j	ja	ju	jo	jikan (jee-kahn) - time
b	bya	byu	byo	byōin (byoh-ee) - hospital
p	pya	pyu	pyo	pyū (pyoo) - <i>whoosh</i> (sound effect)

Important: These are ONE syllable, not two: - **kyō** is pronounced “kyoh” (ONE beat), not “kee-yoh” (two beats) - **ryokan** is “yoh-kahn” (3 beats), not “ree-yoh-kahn” (4 beats) - **shashin** is “shah-sheen” (2 beats), not “sha-sheen” (2 beats but different)

Practice words: - **kyōto** (kyoh-toh) - Kyoto - **ryōri** (yoh- ee) - cooking/cuisine - **byōki** (byoh-kee) - illness
- **jakusha** (jyah-koo-shah) - the weak - **happyō** (hahp-pyoh) - presentation

3.4 C. SPECIAL RULES

3.4.1 1. Double Consonants (Geminate Consonants) - The Pause

Double consonants (/ - small tsu) create a brief pause before the consonant. This pause is **just as important as any other sound** - it changes meaning!

Rule: When you see a double consonant (kk, pp, tt, ss, etc.), pause for ONE beat before saying the consonant.

How it works: - The small (tsu) represents one full syllable of silence/pause - Count it as a beat when saying the word - Hold your mouth in position for the next consonant during the pause

3.4.1.1 Minimal Pairs (words that differ only by the double consonant):

Without pause	With pause	Difference
kako (kah-koh)	kakkō (kahk-koh)	past / appearance
oto (oh-toh)	otto (oh-toh)	sound / husband
kite (kee-teh)	kitte (keet-teh)	come (-form) / stamp
saki (sah-kee)	sakki (sahk-kee)	ahead / earlier
ichi (ee-chee)	icchi (eech-chee)	one / agreement

How to practice: 1. Say the word slowly with an exaggerated pause 2. **kakkō**: “kah-(pause)-koh” - hold your mouth in “k” position during pause 3. **kitte**: “kee-(pause)-teh” - hold your mouth in “t” position during pause 4. **matte**: “mah-(pause)-teh” - wait

Common words with double consonants: - **gakkō** (gahk-koh) - school - **kippu** (keep-poo) - ticket - **zasshi** (zahs-shee) - magazine - **massugu** (mahs-soo-goo) - straight ahead - **itte** (eet-teh) - say (-form) - **motte** (moht-teh) - hold (-form) - **chotto** (chot-toh) - a little - **kitte kudasai** (keet-teh koo-dah-sah-ee) - please cut - **motto** (moht-toh) - more - **zutto** (zoot-toh) - all along

Practical example: - **Chotto matte kudasai** (chot-toh maht-teh koo-dah-sah-ee) - Please wait a moment - Two double consonants: pause before “tt” in both “chotto” and “matte”

3.4.2 2. Long Vowels (Extended Vowels)

Long vowels are held for TWO beats instead of one. This **changes the meaning** of words, so it's critical to get it right.

How to write long vowels: - In hiragana: → a, → i, → u, → i or e, → u or o - In katakana: add a dash () after the vowel - In romaji: either double the vowel (aa, ii, uu, ei/ee, ou/oo) or use macron (ā, ī, ū, ē, ō)

Rule: Hold the vowel for TWICE as long as normal.

3.4.2.1 Minimal Pairs (words that differ only by vowel length):

Short vowel	Long vowel	Difference
obasan (oh-bah-sahn)	obāsan (oh-baah-sahn)	aunt / grandmother
ojisan (oh-jee-sahn)	ojīsan (oh-jeee-sahn)	uncle / grandfather
koko (koh-koh)	kōkō (kooh-kooh)	here / high school
yuki (yoo-kee)	yūki (yooo-kee)	snow / courage
suki (soo-kee)	sūki (sooo-kee)	like / ski
e (eh)	ē (ehh)	picture / yes (casual)
koko (koh-koh)	kōko (kooh-koh)	here / incense

How to practice: 1. Say the short version with one beat per syllable 2. Say the long version, holding the long vowel for two beats 3. **oba-san** (3 beats) vs **o-baa-san** (4 beats) 4. Count on your fingers to make sure you're adding the extra beat

Common words with long vowels: - **arigatō** (ah-ree-gah-tooh) - thank you - **ohayō** (oh-hah-yooh) - good morning - **tōkyō** (tooh-kyooh) - Tokyo - **sūpā** (sooo-paah) - supermarket - **kōhī** (kooh-heee) - coffee - **eigo** (ehh-goh) - English - **onēsan** (oh-nehh-sahn) - older sister - **sensei** (sen-sehh) - teacher - **kēki** (kehh-kee) - cake - **chīzu** (cheee-zoo) - cheese - **kūkō** (kooo-kooh) - airport - **yūbinkyoku** (yooo-been-kyoh-koo) - post office

Practical example: - **Kōhī o kudasai** (kooh-heee oh koo-dah-sah-ee) - Coffee please - Two long vowels: hold "oh" twice in "kōhī"

3.4.3 3. Pitch Accent Basics

Unlike English which uses stress (volume and force), Japanese uses **pitch accent** (high vs low tone). The pitch pattern can change the meaning of words.

What is pitch accent? - Each syllable is pronounced at a HIGH pitch or LOW pitch - The volume and force stay relatively even - Pitch patterns are like musical notes: some syllables are "higher" and some are "lower"

Basic patterns: 1. **Flat/High:** Start high, stay high → **sakana** (sah-kah-nah) - fish 2. **Head-High:** Start high, drop low → **ame** (ah-meh) - rain 3. **Tail-High:** Start low, rise high → **ame** (ah-meh) - candy 4. **Mid-drop:** Start high, drop, then low → **kokoro** (koh-koh-roh) - heart

3.4.3.1 Minimal Pairs (words that differ only by pitch):

Word	Pitch Pattern	Meaning
hashi	High-low	chopsticks
hashi	Low-high	bridge
hashi	High-high	edge
ame	High-low	rain
ame	Low-high	candy
kaki	High-low	oyster
kaki	Low-high	persimmon

Should you worry about pitch accent as a beginner?

Short answer: Not too much. Focus on the vowels, consonants, and special rules first.

Why? 1. Native speakers will understand you from context 2. Pitch accent varies by region (Tokyo vs Osaka have different patterns) 3. It's more important for advanced learners 4. Getting the basic sounds right matters more initially

However: - Be aware it exists - Listen carefully to native speakers - Try to mimic the melody/music of what you hear - When you watch Japanese media, notice the pitch patterns - As you progress, you can study it more formally

Practical tip: Think of Japanese like singing - there's a melody to each phrase. Try to match the melody rather than individual pitches at first.

3.4.4 4. Devoicing (Whispered Vowels)

Sometimes the vowels **i** and **u** are devoiced (whispered or almost silent), especially: - Between voiceless consonants (k, s, t, p, h, f) - At the end of polite verb forms

Common examples:

Word	Full pronunciation	Natural/Devoiced	Meaning
desu	deh-soo	deh-s' (u is silent)	is/am/are
shimasu	shee-mah-soo	shee-mah-s' (u is silent)	to do
deshita	deh-shee-tah	deh-sh'tah (i is devoiced)	was
sukiyaki	soo-kee-yah-kee	s'kee-yah-kee (first u is devoiced)	sukiyaki
sukoshi	soo-koh-shee	s'koh-shee (u is devoiced)	a little
keshiki	keh-shee-kee	keh-sh'kee (i is devoiced)	scenery

Should you do this? - It happens naturally as you get faster at speaking - Don't worry about it at first - pronounce all vowels fully - Native speakers will do it automatically - You might start doing it naturally after hearing a lot of Japanese

3.5 D. COMMON PRONUNCIATION MISTAKES

3.5.1 Mistakes English Speakers Make

3.5.1.1 1. Adding extra vowels where they don't belong **Wrong:** "ramen-u" (rah-men-oo)

Right: "ramen" (rah-men)

Wrong: "des-oo" (deh-soo) **Right:** "desu" (deh-s' - u is devoiced)

Fix: Japanese syllables end in either a vowel or "n" - don't add vowels to the end of words.

3.5.1.2 2. Saying "L" instead of the Japanese "R" (tap) **Wrong:** "arigatou" → "ah-lee-gah-toh"

Right: "arigatō" → "ah- ee-gah-toh" (tap the R)

Wrong: "ramen" → "lamen" **Right:** "ramen" → " amen" (tap the R)

Fix: Tap your tongue lightly behind your upper teeth - it's not "L," not "R," but a single tap.

3.5.1.3 3. Pronouncing "tsu" as two syllables ("t-su" or "too") **Wrong:** "tsunami" → "t-soo-nah-mee" (4 syllables) **Right:** "tsunami" → "ts-nah-mee" (3 syllables)

Wrong: "tsuki" → "t-soo-kee" or "too-kee" **Right:** "tsuki" → "ts-kee" (2 syllables)

Fix: Practice saying "cats" and focus on the "ts" sound. Now add "oo" to it in one beat: "ts-oo."

3.5.1.4 4. Not pausing for double consonants **Wrong:** "matte" → "mah-teh" (sounds like "mate")

Right: "matte" → "mah-(pause)-teh" (wait)

Wrong: "kitte" → "kee-teh" **Right:** "kitte" → "kee-(pause)-teh" (stamp)

Fix: The small is a full beat of silence. Count it!

3.5.1.5 5. Not holding long vowels long enough **Wrong:** “ohayō” → “oh-hah-yoh” (3 beats)
Right: “ohayō” → “oh-hah-yooh” (4 beats - hold the ō)

Wrong: “arigatō” → “ah-ree-gah-toh” (4 beats) **Right:** “arigatō” → “ah-ree-gah-tooh” (5 beats - hold the ō)

Fix: Long vowels are TWO beats, not one. Count them!

3.5.1.6 6. Using English vowel sounds instead of Japanese ones **Wrong:** “cat” sound in “arigatō” → “ari-GAT-oh” **Right:** “father” sound → “ari-GAH-toh”

Wrong: “sit” sound in “kitte” → “KIT-teh” **Right:** “see” sound → “KEET-teh”

Fix: Remember the 5 vowels: ah, ee, oo, eh, oh. Always use these sounds.

3.5.1.7 7. Stressing syllables like in English **Wrong:** “a-ri-GA-tō” (stressing “ga”) **Right:** “a-ri-ga-tō” (all syllables equal stress, but with pitch changes)

Wrong: “sa-YO-na-ra” (stressing “yo”) **Right:** “sa-yo-na-ra” (even stress)

Fix: Give each syllable equal time and force. Japanese is syllable-timed, not stress-timed.

3.5.1.8 8. Pronouncing “fu” like English “f” **Wrong:** “tofu” → “TOF-oo” (upper teeth on lower lip) **Right:** “tofu” → “TOH-foo” (breathy, rounded lips, no teeth contact)

Wrong: “futon” → “FOOT-on” **Right:** “futon” → “foo-ton” (breathy “f”)

Fix: Don’t let your teeth touch your lip. Blow gently through rounded lips.

3.5.1.9 9. Forgetting that “u” is often silent in “desu/masu” endings **Wrong:** “desu” → “deh-SOO” (pronouncing u fully) **Right:** “desu” → “deh-s” (u is devoiced/silent)

Wrong: “tabemasu” → “tah-beh-mah-SOO” **Right:** “tabemasu” → “tah-beh-mah-s”

Fix: In casual/natural speech, the “u” in desu and masu endings is barely audible.

3.5.1.10 10. Not distinguishing between “n” and “m” sounds before certain consonants The standalone “n” () changes pronunciation depending on what comes after it:

- Before **p, b, m** → sounds like “m”
 - **shinbun** → “shim-bun” (newspaper)
 - **kanpai** → “kam-pah-ee” (cheers)
 - **sanma** → “sam-mah” (Pacific saury fish)
- Before **k, g** → sounds like “ng”
 - **ginkou** → “gingkoh” (bank)
 - **sankaku** → “sangkah-koo” (triangle)
- Otherwise → sounds like “n”
 - **sensei** → “sen-say” (teacher)
 - **densha** → “den-shah” (train)

Fix: Let the “n” naturally adapt to the following consonant. Don’t force it to always sound like “n.”

3.5.2 Summary of Key Pronunciation Tips

Master the 5 vowels - they never change **Tap the R** - don't say L or roll the R **"Tsu" is one syllable** - practice "cats-oo" → "tsu" **Pause for small** - double consonants need a beat of silence **Hold long vowels** - they're twice as long (two beats) **All syllables get equal time** - no stress like in English **"Fu" is breathy** - no teeth on lip **Devoice "u" in desu/masu** - it's almost silent **Don't add extra sounds** - no extra vowels at the end **Listen and mimic** - match the melody/music you hear

3.6 E. PRACTICE SENTENCES

Here are common tourist phrases with detailed pronunciation guides. Practice these slowly at first, then speed up.

3.6.1 Basic Greetings

Japanese	Romaji	Pronunciation Breakdown	Meaning
	arigatō	ah- ee-gah-tooh goh-zah-ee-mah-s'	Thank you very much
	gozaimasu		
	ohayō	oh-hah-yooh goh-zah-ee-mah-s'	Good morning
	gozaimasu		
	konnichiwa	kon-nee-chee-wah	Hello/Good afternoon
	konbanwa	kon-bahn-wah	Good evening
	sayonara	sah-yoh-nah- ah	Goodbye
	sumimasen	soo-mee-mah-sen	Excuse me/Sorry
	gomennasai	goh-men-nah-sah-ee	I'm sorry

3.6.2 Restaurant Phrases

Japanese	Romaji	Pronunciation Breakdown	Meaning
	itadakimasu	ee-tah-dah-kee-mah-s'	Let's eat (before meal)
	gochisōsama	goh-chee-sooh-sah-mah deh-sh'tah	Thank you for the meal
	deshita		
	omizu o	oh-mee-zoo oh koo-dah-sah-ee	Water please
	kudasai		
	menyū o	men-yooo oh koo-dah-sah-ee	Menu please
	kudasai		
	kore o kudasai	koh- eh oh koo-dah-sah-ee	This one please
	oishii	oh-ee-sheee	Delicious
	okaiki o	oh-kah-ee-keh oh oh-neh-gah-ee-shee-mah-s'	Check please
	onegaishimasu		

3.6.3 Shopping Phrases

Japanese	Romaji	Pronunciation Breakdown	Meaning
	ikura desu ka	ee-koo- ah deh-s' kah	How much is it?

Japanese	Romaji	Pronunciation Breakdown	Meaning
	kore o kudasai	koh- eh oh koo-dah-sah-ee	I'll take this
	takai desu	tah-kah-ee deh-s'	It's expensive
	yasui desu	yah-soo-ee deh-s'	It's cheap
	mite iru dake desu	mee-teh ee- oo dah-keh deh-s'	Just looking
	shichaku shite mo ii desu ka	shee-chah-koo sh'teh moh ee-ee deh-s' kah	May I try it on?

3.6.4 Direction Phrases

Japanese	Romaji	Pronunciation Breakdown	Meaning
	eki wa doko desu ka	eh-kee wah doh-koh deh-s' kah	Where is the station?
	massugu	mahs-soo-goo (pause before "s")	Straight ahead
	migi	mee-gee	Right
	hidari	hee-dah- ee	Left
	michi ni mayoimashita	mee-chee nee mah-yoh-ee-mah-sh'tah	I'm lost
	koko wa doko desu ka	koh-koh wah doh-koh deh-s' kah	Where am I?

3.6.5 Emergency Phrases

Japanese	Romaji	Pronunciation Breakdown	Meaning
	tasukete	tah-soo-keh-teh	Help!
	keisatsu	keh-h-sah-ts (tsu = one syllable)	Police
	byōin	byooh-een (long ō, one syllable "byo")	Hospital
	itai	ee-tah-ee	It hurts
	kibun ga warui desu	kee-boon gah wah- oo-ee deh-s'	I don't feel well
	eigo o hanasemasu ka	ehh-goh oh hah-nah-seh-mah-s' kah	Do you speak English?

3.7 F. PRONUNCIATION PRACTICE TIPS

3.7.1 For Self-Study:

- Listen actively**
 - Watch Japanese media (anime, dramas, news)
 - Use language learning apps with audio
 - Listen to Japanese music and try to sing along
 - Pay attention to the melody and rhythm
- Record yourself**
 - Use your phone to record yourself saying words/phrases
 - Compare to native speaker audio
 - Identify where your pronunciation differs
 - Practice the differences repeatedly
- Shadow native speakers**

- Play audio of a native speaker
 - Repeat immediately after them (like an echo)
 - Try to match their speed, pitch, and rhythm
 - This helps you internalize natural pronunciation
4. **Use minimal pairs**
 - Practice words that differ by only one sound
 - This trains your ear and mouth to distinguish similar sounds
 - Examples: kako/kakkō, obasan/obāsan, hashi (chopsticks)/hashi (bridge)
 5. **Slow down**
 - Don't rush when learning
 - Pronounce each syllable clearly and correctly first
 - Speed comes naturally with practice
 - Better to be slow and correct than fast and wrong
 6. **Focus on problem sounds**
 - Identify your personal weaknesses (R sound? Tsu? Double consonants?)
 - Dedicate extra time to these specific sounds
 - Practice them in isolation before using them in sentences
 7. **Learn by context**
 - Don't just memorize sounds - learn words and phrases
 - Understand what you're saying
 - This makes practice more engaging and memorable

3.7.2 Recommended Resources:

Apps: - **Forvo** - Native speaker pronunciation database - **Drops** - Vocabulary with audio - **JapanesePod101** - Lessons with pronunciation focus - **NHK Easy Japanese** - Beginner lessons with audio

YouTube Channels: - **Dogen** - Pitch accent and pronunciation expert - **That Japanese Man Yuta** - Natural Japanese explanations - **JapanesePod101** - Structured lessons - **Learn Japanese with JapanesePod101.com** - Pronunciation guides

Websites: - **Tofugu** - Articles on pronunciation - **Japanese Pronunciation Guide (University of Iowa)** - Interactive mouth diagrams - **OJAD (Online Japanese Accent Dictionary)** - Pitch accent patterns

3.7.3 With a Language Partner:

1. **Ask for corrections**
 - Request that they point out pronunciation mistakes
 - Ask them to model the correct pronunciation slowly
 - Practice repeating until they approve
2. **Read aloud**
 - Read Japanese text aloud to your partner
 - Have them correct you in real-time
 - Focus on rhythm and naturalness
3. **Play pronunciation games**
 - Minimal pair quizzes (do they hear the difference?)
 - Tongue twisters
 - Speed challenges (say phrases faster while staying accurate)

3.8 G. TONGUE TWISTERS (- Hayakuchi Kotoba)

Practice these to improve your pronunciation speed and accuracy:

3.8.1 Easy:

1.
 - **Aka-maki-gami ao-maki-gami ki-maki-gami**
 - Red scroll, blue scroll, yellow scroll
2.
 - **Nama-mugi nama-gome nama-tamago**
 - Raw wheat, raw rice, raw egg
3.
 - **Tonari no kyaku wa yoku kaki kuu kyaku da**
 - The customer next door is a customer who eats lots of persimmons

3.8.2 Intermediate:

4.
 - **Basu gasu bakuhatsu**
 - Bus gas explosion
 - (Try saying it fast 3 times!)
5.
 - **Tōkyō tokkyo kyoka-kyoku**
 - Tokyo patent approval office

3.8.3 Hard:

6.
 - **Bōzu ga byōbu ni jōzu ni bōzu no e o kaita**
 - A monk skillfully drew a picture of a monk on a folding screen
 7.
 - **O-Aya ya oya ni oayamari**
 - Aya, apologize to your parent
-

3.9 H. FINAL PRONUNCIATION CHECKLIST

Before moving forward, make sure you can:

- Pronounce all 5 vowels correctly and consistently
- Distinguish between short and long vowels
- Pronounce the Japanese “R” as a tap (not “L” or rolled “R”)
- Say “tsu” as one syllable
- Say “fu” with a breathy sound (not English “f”)
- Pause correctly for double consonants (small)
- Hold long vowels for two beats
- Pronounce all syllables with equal stress
- Say consonant + “y” combinations as one syllable (kya, ryu, etc.)
- Devoice “u” in “desu” and “masu” endings naturally

Remember: Perfect pronunciation comes with time and practice. Don’t be afraid to make mistakes—Japanese people appreciate any effort to speak their language. Focus on being understood first, then refine your accent over time.

3.10 Summary

Japanese pronunciation is highly systematic: - **5 consistent vowels**: a (ah), i (ee), u (oo), e (eh), o (oh) - **Soft consonants**: Most are similar to English but less forceful - **Special sounds**: R (tap), tsu (one syllable), fu (breathy) - **Double consonants**: Add a pause before the consonant - **Long vowels**: Hold for two beats instead of one - **Pitch accent**: High and low tones (advanced concept) - **Equal syllable timing**: No heavy stress like English

With consistent practice and attention to these rules, you'll develop clear, understandable Japanese pronunciation. Good luck, and enjoy learning! !(Ganbatte! - Do your best!)

4 SECTION V: READING & WRITING SYSTEMS

4.1 Complete Guide to Japanese Scripts

Japanese uses three writing systems simultaneously: **hiragana** (cursive phonetic), **katakana** (angular phonetic), and **kanji** (Chinese characters). This comprehensive guide will teach you all three systems, focusing on tourist survival essentials.

4.2 A. HIRAGANA () - Complete

Hiragana is the most fundamental Japanese script. It represents all Japanese sounds and is used for native Japanese words, grammar particles, and verb endings.

4.2.1 1. Basic Hiragana (46 Characters)

Romaji	Hiragana	Romaji	Hiragana	Romaji	Hiragana	Romaji	Hiragana	Romaji	Hiragana
a		i		u		e		o	
ka		ki		ku		ke		ko	
sa		shi		su		se		so	
ta		chi		tsu		te		to	
na		ni		nu		ne		no	
ha		hi		fu		he		ho	
ma		mi		mu		me		mo	
ya		-	-	yu		-	-	yo	
ra		ri		ru		re		ro	
wa		-	-	-	-	-	-	wo	
n		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Special notes: - **(wo)** is only used as the object particle, pronounced “o” - **(ha)** when used as the topic particle is pronounced “wa” - **(he)** when used as the direction particle is pronounced “e” - **(n)** is the only consonant that stands alone

4.2.2 2. Dakuten () - Voiced Consonants (25 Characters)

Adding two small marks () changes the sound to a voiced consonant:

Romaji	Hiragana	Romaji	Hiragana	Romaji	Hiragana	Romaji	Hiragana	Romaji	Hiragana
ga		gi		gu		ge		go	
za		ji		zu		ze		zo	
da		ji		zu		de		do	

Romaji	Hiragana	Romaji	Hiragana	Romaji	Hiragana	Romaji	Hiragana	Romaji	Hiragana
ba		bi		bu		be		bo	

Notes: - (ji) and (ji) sound the same; is more common - (zu) and (zu) sound the same; is more common - and are rare, mainly appearing in compound words

4.2.3 3. Handakuten () - P-Sound (5 Characters)

Adding a small circle () changes the “h” sound to “p”:

Romaji	Hiragana	Romaji	Hiragana	Romaji	Hiragana	Romaji	Hiragana	Romaji	Hiragana
pa		pi		pu		pe		po	

4.2.4 4. Small (ya/yu/yo) Combinations (36 Characters)

These create compound sounds by combining consonants with ya, yu, or yo:

(ki) combinations: | Romaji | Hiragana | Romaji | Hiragana | Romaji | Hiragana | |——|——|——|
|——-|——-|——-| | kya | | kyu | | kyo | |

(shi) combinations: | Romaji | Hiragana | Romaji | Hiragana | Romaji | Hiragana | |——|——-|——|
|——-|——-|——-| | sha | | shu | | sho | |

(chi) combinations: | Romaji | Hiragana | Romaji | Hiragana | Romaji | Hiragana | |——|——-|——|
|——-|——-|——-| | cha | | chu | | cho | |

(ni) combinations: | Romaji | Hiragana | Romaji | Hiragana | Romaji | Hiragana | |——|——-|——|
|——-|——-|——-| | nya | | nyu | | nyo | |

(hi) combinations: | Romaji | Hiragana | Romaji | Hiragana | Romaji | Hiragana | |——|——-|——|
|——-|——-|——-| | hya | | hyu | | hyo | |

(mi) combinations: | Romaji | Hiragana | Romaji | Hiragana | Romaji | Hiragana | |——|——-|——|
|——-|——-|——-| | mya | | myu | | myo | |

(ri) combinations: | Romaji | Hiragana | Romaji | Hiragana | Romaji | Hiragana | |——|——-|——|
|——-|——-|——-| | rya | | ryu | | ryo | |

(gi) combinations: | Romaji | Hiragana | Romaji | Hiragana | Romaji | Hiragana | |——|——-|——|
|——-|——-|——-| | gya | | gyu | | gyo | |

(ji) combinations: | Romaji | Hiragana | Romaji | Hiragana | Romaji | Hiragana | |——|——-|——|
|——-|——-|——-| | ja | | ju | | jo | |

(bi) combinations: | Romaji | Hiragana | Romaji | Hiragana | Romaji | Hiragana | |——|——-|——|
|——-|——-|——-| | bya | | byu | | byo | |

(pi) combinations: | Romaji | Hiragana | Romaji | Hiragana | Romaji | Hiragana | |——|——-|——|
|——-|——-|——-| | pya | | pyu | | pyo | |

4.2.5 5. Double Consonants (Sokuon -)

The small (tsu) creates a pause before the next consonant, doubling its sound:

Word	Hiragana	Romaji	Meaning	Note
Wait		matte	wait	Small creates pause before ‘t’
Magazine		zasshi	magazine	Pause before ‘sh’

Word	Hiragana	Romaji	Meaning	Note
School		gakkou	school	Pause before 'k'
Different		chigau	different	No small = no pause
Match		matchi	match	Pause before 'ch'
Soap		sekken	soap	Pause before 'k'

Important: This small は is **never** pronounced. It represents a brief pause.

4.2.6 6. Long Vowels

Long vowels are held twice as long as regular vowels:

For い, え, お sounds: - Add the same vowel: い, え, お - Or use い + い, え + え, お + お

For あ and う sounds: - あ : Usually add あ → ああ (sounds like “eee”) - う : Usually add う → うう (sounds like “ooo”)

Word	Hiragana	Romaji	Meaning	Long vowel
Grandfather		ojiisan	grandfather	ii = long i
Uncle		ojisan	uncle	Regular i
Aunt		obasan	aunt	Regular a
Grandmother		obaasan	grandmother	aa = long a
Big		ookii	big	oo = long o
Sugar		satou	sugar	ou = long o
Teacher		sensei	teacher	ei = long e

4.2.7 7. Practice Words in Hiragana

Common Tourist Words:

English	Hiragana	Romaji	Category
Station		eki	Place
Exit		deguchi	Navigation
Entrance		iriguchi	Navigation
Toilet		toire	Place
Here		koko	Location
There		soko	Location
Over there		asoko	Location
Where		doko	Question
This		kore	Demonstrative
That		sore	Demonstrative
That over there		are	Demonstrative
I		watashi	Pronoun
You		anata	Pronoun
Delicious		oishii	Adjective
Expensive		takai	Adjective
Cheap		yasui	Adjective
Good		ii	Adjective
Bad		warui	Adjective
Water		mizu	Food
Tea		ocha	Food

Essential Verbs:

English	Hiragana	Romaji
To go		iku
To come		kuru
To eat		taberu
To drink		nomu
To see		miru
To buy		kau
To do		suru
To be (exist)	/	iru/aru
To wait		matsu
To understand		wakaru

4.2.8 8. Hiragana Writing Stroke Order

Key principles: 1. Write from **top to bottom** 2. Write from **left to right** 3. Horizontal strokes before vertical strokes 4. Strokes that pierce through are written last

Common characters with stroke order descriptions:

Character	Strokes	Order description
(a)	3	Horizontal top, curved middle, rightward sweep
(ka)	3	Horizontal, vertical with hook, right diagonal
(sa)	3	Top horizontal curve, short vertical, curved sweep
(ta)	4	Top horizontal, vertical, bottom horizontal, short stroke
(na)	4	Vertical with curve, horizontal, short vertical, diagonal
(ha)	3	Vertical-curve left, curved hook, right diagonal
(ma)	3	Top horizontal, bottom curve, middle horizontal
(ya)	3	Top horizontal-curve, middle vertical, bottom curve
(ra)	2	Vertical curve, bottom diagonal
(wa)	2	Top curve, bottom curve
(n)	1	Single curving stroke left to bottom

Practice tip: Apps like “Hiragana Quest” or websites like “Tofugu” provide animated stroke orders.

4.3 B. KATAKANA () - Complete

Katakana is used for foreign words, loan words, emphasis, onomatopoeia, and foreign names. It’s more angular than hiragana.

4.3.1 1. Basic Katakana (46 Characters)

Romaji	Katakana	Romaji	Katakana	Romaji	Katakana	Romaji	Katakana	Romaji	Katakana
a		i		u		e		o	
ka		ki		ku		ke		ko	
sa		shi		su		se		so	
ta		chi		tsu		te		to	

Romaji	Katakana	Romaji	Katakana	Romaji	Katakana	Romaji	Katakana	Romaji	Katakana
na		ni		nu		ne		no	
ha		hi		fu		he		ho	
ma		mi		mu		me		mo	
ya		-	-	yu		-	-	yo	
ra		ri		ru		re		ro	
wa		-	-	-	-	-	-	wo	
n		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Easily confused characters: - (shi) vs (tsu): has horizontal strokes, has vertical strokes - (so) vs (n): has two strokes, has one stroke - (no) vs (me): is one stroke, is two crossing strokes

4.3.2 2. Dakuten () - Voiced Consonants (25 Characters)

Romaji	Katakana	Romaji	Katakana	Romaji	Katakana	Romaji	Katakana	Romaji	Katakana
ga		gi		gu		ge		go	
za		ji		zu		ze		zo	
da		ji		zu		de		do	
ba		bi		bu		be		bo	

4.3.3 3. Handakuten () - P-Sound (5 Characters)

Romaji	Katakana	Romaji	Katakana	Romaji	Katakana	Romaji	Katakana	Romaji	Katakana
pa		pi		pu		pe		po	

4.3.4 4. Small (ya/yo/yo) Combinations (36 Characters)

(ki) combinations: | Romaji | Katakana | Romaji | Katakana | Romaji | Katakana | |——|——|——|
 —|——|——|——| | kya | | kyu | | kyo | |

(shi) combinations: | Romaji | Katakana | Romaji | Katakana | Romaji | Katakana | |——|——|——|
 —|——|——|——| | sha | | shu | | sho | |

(chi) combinations: | Romaji | Katakana | Romaji | Katakana | Romaji | Katakana | |——|——|——|
 —|——|——|——| | cha | | chu | | cho | |

(ni) combinations: | Romaji | Katakana | Romaji | Katakana | Romaji | Katakana | |——|——|——|
 —|——|——|——| | nya | | nyu | | nyo | |

(hi) combinations: | Romaji | Katakana | Romaji | Katakana | Romaji | Katakana | |——|——|——|
 —|——|——|——| | hya | | hyu | | hyo | |

(mi) combinations: | Romaji | Katakana | Romaji | Katakana | Romaji | Katakana | |——|——|——|
 —|——|——|——| | mya | | myu | | myo | |

(ri) combinations: | Romaji | Katakana | Romaji | Katakana | Romaji | Katakana | |——|——|——|
 —|——|——|——| | rya | | ryu | | ryo | |

(gi) combinations: | Romaji | Katakana | Romaji | Katakana | Romaji | Katakana | |——|——|——|
 —|——|——|——| | gya | | gyu | | gyo | |

(ji) combinations: | Romaji | Katakana | Romaji | Katakana | Romaji | Katakana | |——|——|——|
 —|——|——|——| | ja | | ju | | jo | |

(bi) combinations: | Romaji | Katakana | Romaji | Katakana | Romaji | Katakana | |——|——|——
 |——|——|——| | bya | | byu | | byo | |

(pi) combinations: | Romaji | Katakana | Romaji | Katakana | Romaji | Katakana | |——|——|——
 |——|——|——| | pya | | pyu | | pyo | |

4.3.5 5. Special Katakana Combinations (50+ for Foreign Sounds)

Katakana has special combinations to represent foreign sounds not in Japanese:

V-sounds (): | Romaji | Katakana | Example word | Meaning | |——|——|——|——| | va |
 | | violin | | vi | | | visa | | vu | | | v-sound | | ve | | | Venice | | vo | | | vocal |

F-sounds (): | Romaji | Katakana | Example word | Meaning | |——|——|——|——| | fa |
 | family | | fi | | | film | | fu | | | food | | fe | | | festival | | fo | | | fork |

W-sounds: | Romaji | Katakana | Example word | Meaning | |——|——|——|——| | wi |
 | whiskey | | we | | | web | | wo | | | water |

Th-sounds (/): | Romaji | Katakana | Example word | Meaning | |——|——|——|——| | ti
 | | tea (T) | | di | | | dinner | | tu | | | tomorrow | | du | | | do (action) |

Ts-sounds (): | Romaji | Katakana | Example word | Meaning | |——|——|——|——| | tsa |
 | | tsar | | tsi | | | zither | | tse | | | zeppelin | | tso | | | Mozart |

Sh/J-sounds with E: | Romaji | Katakana | Example word | Meaning | |——|——|——|——|
 | she | | | chef | | je | | | jet | | che | | | check |

Y-sounds: | Romaji | Katakana | Example word | Meaning | |——|——|——|——| | ye |
 | Yale |

Kw/Gw-sounds: | Romaji | Katakana | Example word | Meaning | |——|——|——|——| |
 kwa | | | quartet | | kwi | | | quick | | kwe | | | question | | kwo | | | quality | | gwa |
 | | Guam |

4.3.6 6. Common Katakana Words (100+ Essential for Tourists)

Food & Drink: | English | Katakana | Romaji | Notes | |——|——|——|——| | Coffee | | koohii
 | Long vowel | | Juice | | juusu | Long vowel | | Beer | | biiru | Long vowel | | Wine | | wain | |
 Milk | | miruku | | | Cake | | keeki | Long vowel | | Ice cream | | aisukuriimu | | | Chocolate |
 chokoreeto | | | Sandwich | | sandoitchi | Small | | Hamburger | | hanbaagaa | Long vowel | | Pizza
 | | piza | | | Pasta | | pasuta | | | Salad | | sarada | | | Soup | | suupu | Long vowel | | Steak |
 suteeki | | | Cheese | | chiizu | Long vowel | | Butter | | bataa | Long vowel | | Bread | | pan | From
 Portuguese | | Menu | | menyuu | Long vowel | | Dessert | | dezaato | Long vowel |

Places: | English | Katakana | Romaji | Notes | |——|——|——|——| | Hotel | | hoteru | |
 Restaurant | | resutoran | | | Toilet | | toire | | | Taxi | | takushii | Long vowel | | Bus | | basu | |
 Elevator | | erebeetaa | Long vowels | | Department store | | depaato | Long vowel | | Supermarket |
 | suupaa | Long vowels | | Convenience store | | konbini | Shortened | | ATM | | eetiimu | Letters
 | | Bank | | banku | | | Post office | | posuto | | | Mailbox | | Hospital | | hosupitaru | | | Pharmacy |
 | faamashii | | | Airport | | eapooto | |

Technology: | English | Katakana | Romaji | Notes | |——|——|——|——| | Computer | |
 konpyuutaa | Long vowels | | Internet | | intaanetto | Small | | WiFi | | waifai | | | Email |
 iimeeru | Long vowels | | Phone | | fon | | | Smartphone | | sumaatofon | | | Charger | | chaajaa |
 Long vowels | | Battery | | batterii | Small | | Camera | | kamera | | | TV | | terebi | | | App | |
 apuri | | | Password | | pasuwaado | Long vowel |

Clothing: | English | Katakana | Romaji | Notes | |——|——|——|——| | T-shirt | | tiishatsu |
 Small | | Jeans | | jiinzu | Long vowel | | Sweater | | seetaa | Long vowels | | Jacket | | jaketto |
 Small | | Coat | | kooto | Long vowel | | Skirt | | sukaato | Long vowel | | Dress | | doresu | | | Suit

| | suutsu | Long vowel | | Sneakers | | suniikaa | Long vowels | | Boots | | buutsu | Long vowel | |
 Bag | | baggu | Small | | Belt | | beruto | | Scarf | | sukaafu | Long vowel | | Socks | | sokkusu
 | Small |

Common Items: | English | Katakana | Romaji | Notes | |——|——|——|——| | Pen | | pen | |
 Notebook | | nooto | Long vowel | | Bag | | baggu | Small | | Tissue | | tisshu | Small | | Towel |
 | taoru | | Soap | | soopu | Long vowel | | Shampoo | | shanpuu | Long vowel | | Toothbrush | |
 haburashi | | Plastic | | purasuchikku | Small | | Glass | | gurasu | | Key | | kii | Long vowel | |
 Card | | kaado | Long vowel | | Ticket | | chiketto | Small | | Map | | mappu | Small | | Guide |
 | gaido | |

Actions/Adjectives: | English | Katakana | Romaji | Notes | |——|——|——|——| | Check | |
 chekku | Small | | Stop | | sutoppu | Small | | Start | | sutaato | Long vowel | | OK | | ookee |
 Long vowels | | Yes | | iesu | | No | | noo | Long vowel | | Nice | | naisu | | Good | | guddo | Small
 | | Cool | | kuuru | Long vowel | | Cute | | kyuuto | Long vowel |

Countries/Nationalities: | English | Katakana | Romaji | Notes | |——|——|——|——| | America
 | | amerika | | Canada | | kanada | | England | | igirisu | | Australia | | oosutoraria | Long
 vowel | | France | | furansu | | Germany | | doitsu | | Italy | | itaria | | Spain | | supein | |
 China | | chaina | | Korea | | koria | |

4.3.7 7. Katakana Writing Stroke Order

Key principles (same as hiragana): 1. Top to bottom 2. Left to right 3. Horizontal before vertical

Common characters with stroke order:

Character	Strokes	Order description
(a)	2	Left diagonal, right stroke with hook
(ka)	2	Horizontal top, right stroke with hook
(sa)	3	Short horizontal, vertical, bottom curve
(ta)	3	Top horizontal, vertical, short left stroke
(na)	2	Vertical diagonal, short left stroke
(ha)	2	Left short stroke, right short stroke
(ma)	2	Vertical with hook, horizontal
(ya)	3	Short horizontal, vertical, right curve
(ra)	2	Vertical horizontal top, bottom curve
(wa)	2	Top horizontal curve, bottom horizontal
(n)	1	Single diagonal stroke

4.4 C. ESSENTIAL KANJI () - 300+ Tourist Survival Characters

Kanji are Chinese characters adopted into Japanese. Each kanji has meaning and pronunciation. This section covers essential kanji every tourist should recognize.

4.4.1 1. Numbers (13 characters)

Kanji	Reading	Meaning	Examples
	(rei)	Zero	(0 yen)
	(ichi)	One	(one person), (one thing)
	(ni)	Two	(two people), (two things)

Kanji	Reading	Meaning	Examples
	(san)	Three	(three people), (three things)
	/ (shi/yon)	Four	(four people) - avoid , use
	(go)	Five	(five people), (five things)
	(roku)	Six	(six people), (six things)
	/ (shichi/nana)	Seven	(seven people)
	(hachi)	Eight	(eight people), (eight things)
	/ (ku/kyuu)	Nine	(nine people) - avoid , use
	(juu)	Ten	(ten people), (10 yen)
	(hyaku)	Hundred	(100 yen), (300)
	(sen)	Thousand	(1000 yen), (2000)
	(man)	Ten thousand	(10,000 yen)

Number combinations: - () = 11 - () = 20 - () = 35 - () = 150 - () = 2,300

4.4.2 2. Days of the Week (7 characters)

Kanji	Reading	Meaning	Day
	(getsu)	Moon	Monday (getsuyōbi)
	(ka)	Fire	Tuesday (kayōbi)
	(sui)	Water	Wednesday (suiyōbi)
	(moku)	Tree/Wood	Thursday (mokuyōbi)
	(kin)	Gold/Money	Friday (kinyōbi)
	(do)	Earth/Soil	Saturday (doyōbi)
	(nichi)	Sun/Day	Sunday (nichiyōbi)

Additional meanings: - also means “month” - also means “money” (= golden color, = money) - also means “day” (= today, = tomorrow)

4.4.3 3. Directions (8 characters)

Kanji	Reading	Meaning	Usage
	(higashi)	East	(Tokyo = Eastern capital)
	(nishi)	West	(west exit)
	(minami)	South	(south exit)
	(kita)	North	(Hokkaido)
	(hidari)	Left	(left side)
	(migi)	Right	(right side)
	(ue)	Up/Above	(up), (or more)
	(shita)	Down/Below	(down), (basement)

Common combinations: - = all directions - (higashi-guchi) = east exit - (hokusai) = northwest

4.4.4 4. Location Words (15 characters)

Kanji	Reading	Meaning	Common usage
	(eki)	Station	(Tokyo Station)
	(guchi)	Exit/Entrance	(exit), (entrance)
	(de)	Exit/Go out	(deguchi = exit)
	() (i/ri)	Enter	(iriguchi = entrance)
	/ (naka/chuu)	Inside/Middle	(inside), (center)
	/ (soto/gai)	Outside	(outside), (overseas)
	(mae)	Front/Before	(in front of station)
	()/ (ushi/go)	Back/After	(behind), (afternoon)
	/ (aida/kan)	Between/During	(time), (human)
	(saki)	Ahead/First	(ahead), (teacher)
	/ (uchi/nai)	Inside	(guidance), (domestic)
	(ba)	Place	(place), (parking lot)
	/ (sho/jo)	Place	(place), (kitchen)
	(seki)	Seat	(seat), (reserved seat)
	/ (kai/gai)	Floor/Story	(2nd floor), (B1)

4.4.5 5. Action Signs (20 characters)

Kanji	Reading	Meaning	Where you see it
	() (o)	Push	(push on doors)
	() (hi)	Pull	(pull on doors)
	() (to)	Stop	(stop sign)
	(ki)	Danger	(danger)
	(ken)	Danger	(kiken = danger)
	(kin)	Prohibit	(prohibited)
	()/ (a/kai)	Open	(open), (open for business)
	()/ (shi/hei)	Close	(close), (closed)
	(chuu)	Attention	(caution)
	(i)	Mind/Care	(caution)
	() (ma)	Wait	(wait), (please wait)
	() (tsuka)	Use	(use), (use)
	(you)	Use/Business	(use), (business)
	/ (mu/nai)	Nothing/No	(free), (impossible)
	(ryou)	Fee	(fee), (free)
	/ () (yuu/a)	Exist/Have	(paid), (available)
	()/ /	Empty/Sky	(vacant seat)
	(a/sora/kuu)		
	(man)	Full	(full seats)
	(yo)	In advance	(reservation)
	(yaku)	Promise	(reservation)

Common sign combinations: - (kin-en) = No smoking - (kin-shi) = Prohibited - (ki-ken) = Danger
 - (chuu-i) = Caution - (shiyou-chuu) = In use - (shiyou-kinshi) = Do not use

4.4.6 6. Places (30 characters)

Kanji	Reading	Meaning	Common usage
	/ (ten/mise)	Shop	(shop), (opening)
	/ (sha/kuruma)	Car/Vehicle	(car), (train)
	(den)	Electric	(train), (phone)
	/ (wa/hanashi)	Talk/Story	(phone), (conversation)
	/ () (shoku/ta)	Food/Eat	(meal), (eat)
	/ () (in/no)	Drink	(drink), (restaurant)
	(gin)	Silver	(bank)
	/ () (kou/i)	Go	(bank), (go)
	(in)	Institution	(hospital), (salon)
	(byou)	Sick	(hospital), (illness)
	(kyoku)	Bureau	(post office)
	/ (ben/bin)	Convenience	(mail), (convenient)
	(yuu)	Mail	(post office)
	/ (kuu/sora)	Sky/Empty	(airport), (sky)
	(kou)	Harbor/Port	(airport), (harbor)
	/ (dou/michi)	Road/Way	(road), (Hokkaido)
	(en)	Garden/Park	(park), (zoo)
	(kou)	Public	(park), (public)
	/ (tera/ji)	Temple	(temple), (Kinkakuji)
	/ (shin/kami)	God/Spirit	(shrine), (god)
	(sha)	Shrine/Company	(shrine), (company)
	/ (guu/kyuu)	Palace/Shrine	(grand shrine), (palace)
	(jou)	Castle	(Osaka Castle)
	(kan)	Building/Hall	(library), (museum)
	/ () (bi/utsuku)	Beauty	(art museum), (beautiful)
	(jutsu)	Art/Technique	(art), (technique)
	/ (shi/ichi)	City/Market	(Tokyo), (market)
	(ku)	Ward	(Shibuya Ward)
	/ (chou/machi)	Town	(town), (downtown)
	/ (son/mura)	Village	(village)

Common place names: - (Toukyou) = Tokyo - (Oosaka) = Osaka - (Kyouto) = Kyoto - (Hokkaidou) = Hokkaido

4.4.7 7. Time-Related (20 characters)

Kanji	Reading	Meaning	Common usage
	/ (ji/toki)	Time/Hour	(3 o'clock), (time)
	/ / (fun/bun/pun)	Minute	(5 minutes), (10 minutes)
	(byou)	Second	(30 seconds)
	/ (ima/kon)	Now	(now), (today)
	(saku)	Previous	(yesterday)
	/ () (myou/aka)	Bright/Tomorrow	(tomorrow), (bright)
	/ (asa/chou)	Morning	(morning), (this morning)
	(hiru)	Noon/Daytime	(noon), (lunch)
	/ (yoru/ya)	Night	(night), (tonight)
	(ban)	Evening	(evening), (tonight)
	(go)	Noon	(AM), (PM)
	/ (mae/zen)	Before	(AM), (before)
	/ ()/ (go/ushi/ato)	After	(PM), (after)

Kanji	Reading	Meaning	Common usage
	(shuu)	Week	(this week), (next week)
	/ /	Month/Moon	(January), (next month)
	(tsuki/getsu/gatsu)		
	/ (nen/toshi)	Year	(this year), (next year)
	/ (kan/aida)	Duration/Between	(time), (period)
	(mai)	Every	(every day), (every week)
	/ () (rai/ku)	Come/Next	(next year), (come)
	(kyo)	Past/Leave	(last year)

Time expressions: - (kyou) = today - (kinou) = yesterday - (ashita) = tomorrow - (konshuu) = this week - (raishuu) = next week - (senshuu) = last week

4.4.8 8. Food & Drink (25 characters)

Kanji	Reading	Meaning	Common usage
	/ () (shoku/ta)	Food/Eat	(meal), (eat)
	/ (ji/koto)	Thing/Matter	(meal), (business)
	/ (han/meshi)	Meal/Rice	(rice/meal), (breakfast)
	(niku)	Meat	(meat), (beef)
	/ (sakana/gyo)	Fish	(fish), (fish market)
	/ (gyuu/ushi)	Cow/Beef	(beef), (beef bowl)
	/ (buta/ton)	Pig/Pork	(pork), (tonkatsu)
	/ (tori/kei)	Chicken	(chicken)
	(tamago)	Egg	(egg), (chicken-egg bowl)
	/ (ya/no)	Field/Wild	(vegetables)
	/ (sai/na)	Vegetable/Greens	(vegetables)
	/ (kome/bei)	Rice	(rice), (rice)
	(men)	Noodles	(ramen), (soba)
	/ (cha/sa)	Tea	(tea), (brown)
	/ (sake/shu)	Alcohol/Sake	(alcohol), (sake)
	/ (mizu/sui)	Water	(water), (Wednesday)
	/ (yu/tou)	Hot water	(hot water)
	/ (abura/yu)	Oil	(oil), (soy sauce)
	/ (aji/mi)	Taste/Flavor	(taste), (miso)
	()/ (ama/kan)	Sweet	(sweet)
	()/ (kara/shin)	Spicy/Hot	(spicy)
	/ (shio/en)	Salt	(salt), (salt ramen)
	/ (sa/suna)	Sand/Sugar	(sugar)
	(tou)	Sugar	(sugar), (sugar content)
	/ () (on/atata)	Warm	(warm), (temperature)

Common food words: - (asagohan) = breakfast - (hirugohan) = lunch - (bangohan) = dinner - (teishoku) = set meal

4.4.9 9. Transportation (15 characters)

Kanji	Reading	Meaning	Common usage
	/ (sha/kuruma)	Car/Vehicle	(car), (train)
	(den)	Electric	(train), (electricity)

Kanji	Reading	Meaning	Common usage
	(tetsu)	Iron/Rail	(railway), (subway)
	/ (dou/michi)	Road/Way	(railway), (road)
	(ki)	Steam	(steam train)
	/ () (jou/no)	Ride	(ride), (boarding)
	/ () (kou/o)	Descend/Get off	(get off), (alighting)
	(hatsu)	Depart	(departure), (train departure)
	/ () (chaku/tsu)	Arrive/Wear	(arrival), (wear)
	/ () (ki)	Cut/Ticket	(ticket), (cut)
	(fu)	Mark/Ticket	(ticket)
	(ken)	Ticket/Coupon	(train ticket), (ticket machine)
	/ () (bai/u)	Sell	(sell), (ticket machine)
	/ () (bai/ka)	Buy	(buy), (shopping)
	/ () (un/hako)	Transport/Luck	(operation/driving), (carry)

Transportation vocabulary: - (densha) = train - (chikatetsu) = subway - (shinkansen) = bullet train - (kippu) = ticket

4.4.10 10. Common Verbs (30 characters)

Kanji	Reading	Verb	Meaning
	()/ (i/kou)		go
	()/ (ku/rai)		come
	()/ (kae/ki)		return home
	()/ (mi/ken)		see/watch
	()/ (ki/bun)		hear/ask
	()/ (yo/doku)		read
	()/ (ka/sho)		write
	()/ (hana/wa)		speak
	()/ (ta/shoku)		eat
	()/ (no/in)		drink
	()/ (ka/bai)		buy
	()/ (u/bai)		sell
	()/ (tsuku/saku)		make
	()/ (ma/tai)		wait
	()/ (ta/ritsu)		stand
	()/ (suwa/za)		sit
	()/ (ne/shin)		sleep
	()/ (oki/ki)		wake up
	()/ (hai/nyuu)		enter
	()/ (de/shutsu)		exit/leave
	()/ (a/kai)		open
	()/ (shi/hei)		close
	()/ (tsuka/shi)		use
	()/ (mo/ji)		hold/have
	()/ (to/shu)		take
	()/ (wa/bun)		understand
	()/ (shi/chi)		know
	()/ (a/kai)		meet
	()/ (su/juu)		live/reside
	()/ (hatara/dou)		work

4.4.11 11. Common Adjectives (25 characters)

Kanji	Reading	Adjective	Meaning
(大)	(oo/dai)		big
(小)	(chii/shou)		small
(多)	(oo/ta)		many
(少)	(suku/shou)		few
(高)	(taka/kou)		high/expensive
(安)	(yasu/an)		cheap/safe
(長)	(naga/chou)		long
(短)	(mijika/tan)		short
(古)	(furu/ko)		old
(新)	(atara/shin)		new
(良)	(yo/ryou)		good
(悪)	(waru/aku)		bad
(広)	(hiro/kou)		wide
(狭)	(sema/kyou)		narrow
(近)	(chika/kin)		near
(遠)	(too/en)		far
(早)	(haya/sou)		early
(遅)	(oso/chi)		late/slow
(速)	(haya/soku)		fast
(強)	(tsuyo/kyou)		strong
(弱)	(yowa/jaku)		weak
(暑)	(atsu/sho)		hot (weather)
(寒)	(samu/kan)		cold (weather)
(熱)	(atsu/netsu)		hot (object)
(冷)	(tsume/rei)		cold (object)

4.4.12 12. Important Tourist Kanji (40 more characters)

Toilets & Facilities: | Kanji | Reading | Meaning | Usage | |——|——|——|——| | | / (otoko/dan) | Male/Man | (men), (men's room) | | | / (onna/jo) | Female/Woman | (women), (ladies' room) | | | (sei) | Sex/Gender | (male), (female) | | | / (ko/shi) | Child | (boy), (girl) | | | / / (hito/jin/nin) | Person | (Japanese person), (one person) | | | (ko) | Individual/Counter | (private room) | | | (shitsu) | Room | (private room), (classroom) | | | / () (sen/ara) | Wash | (washroom), (laundry) | | | / (te/shu) | Hand | (hand), (handwashing/toilet) |

Money & Shopping: | Kanji | Reading | Meaning | Usage | |——|——|——|——| | | (en) | Yen/Circle | (100 yen), (yen) | | | / (kin/kane) | Money/Gold | (money), (golden) | | | (zei) | Tax | (tax), (sales tax) | | | / (ne/chi) | Price/Value | (price) | | | (dan) | Step/Level | (price), (stairs) | | | / () (dai/ka) | Cost/Replace | (payment), (fee) | | | / () (wari/wa) | Divide/Discount | (discount), (30% off) | | | ()/ (hi/in) | Pull/Subtract | (discount), (subtract) |

Dining: | Kanji | Reading | Meaning | Usage | |——|——|——|——| | | / () (tei/sada) | Fixed/Set | (set meal), (schedule) | | | (kitsu) | Eat/Smoke | (coffee shop), (smoking) | | | / (en/kemuri) | Smoke | (smoking), (no smoking) | | | (seki) | Seat | (seat), (reserved seat) | | | / (shi/yubi) | Finger/Point | (designated), (finger) |

Directions & Navigation: | Kanji | Reading | Meaning | Usage | |——|——|——|——| | | (sen) | Line | (train line), (bullet train) | | | / (ro/ji) | Road/Route | (line), (road) | | | (ban) | Number/Turn | (number one), (which number) | | | (gou) | Number | (Line 2), (Room 5) | | | / (ji/tsugi) | Next | (next), (next time) | | | / () (tsuu/too) | Pass through | (pass), (1st street) | | | / (kyou/hashii) | Bridge | (bridge) |

Hotel & Accommodation: | Kanji | Reading | Meaning | Usage | |——|——|——|——| | | / ()
(haku/to) | Stay overnight | (lodging), (one night) | | | / (shuku/yado) | Inn/Lodging | (lodging),
(inn) | | | (kyaku) | Guest/Customer | (guest), (passenger) | | | (bu) | Part/Department | (room)
| | | / (oku/ya) | Room/Shop | (room), (bookstore) |

Time & Business: | Kanji | Reading | Meaning | Usage | |——|——|——|——| | | (ei) | Operate
| (business hours), (open) | | | / (gyou/waza) | Business | (business), (work) | | | / ()
(kyuu/yasu) | Rest/Holiday | (holiday), (regular holiday) | | | / (hei/hira) | Flat/Peace | (weekday)
|

4.4.13 13. Emergency & Safety Kanji (15 characters)

Kanji	Reading	Meaning	Usage
	/ () (jo/tasu)	Help/Rescue	(help!), (to help)
	/ () (kyuu/suku)	Rescue	(emergency), (rescue)
	/ () (kyuu/iso)	Hurry/Emergency	(ambulance), (hurry)
	(hi)	Non-/Emergency	(emergency exit)
	(jou)	Always/Normal	(emergency), (daily)
	(kei)	Warn/Police	(police), (warning)
	(satsu)	Investigate	(police)
	/ () (shou/ke)	Extinguish	(fire department), (turn off)
	/ () (bou/fuse)	Prevent	(fire dept.), (prevent)
	(i)	Medical	(doctor), (medical care)
	/ (sha/mono)	Person	(doctor), (journalist)
	/ (yaku/kusuri)	Medicine	(medicine), (pharmacy)
	/ () (tsuu/ita)	Pain	(painful), (headache)
	(kai)	Suspicious/Injury	(injury)
	/ (ga/ware)	Self/Ego	(injury)

Emergency phrases with kanji: - ! (tasukete) = Help! - (kyuukyusha) = Ambulance - (hi-jouguchi) = Emergency exit - (keisatsu) = Police - (shouboushou) = Fire station

4.5 D. READING TIPS - How to Navigate Japanese Text

4.5.1 1. How to Recognize Each System

Visual identification:

System	Characteristics	Examples	Usage
Hiragana	Curvy, rounded characters		Grammar, native words
Katakana	Angular, straight characters		Foreign words, emphasis
Kanji	Complex characters, many strokes		Content words, meaning
Romaji	English alphabet	Tokyo, Shibuya, JR	Signs, tourist areas

Example sentence showing all three:

(Watashi wa koohii o nomimasu.)
I drink coffee.

= kanji (I)
= hiragana (particle)
= katakana (coffee - foreign word)
= hiragana (particle)
= kanji (drink)
= hiragana (polite ending)

4.5.2 2. Common Patterns to Recognize

Station signs pattern:

↓

Tokyo Eki
(Tokyo Station)

- = Place name (kanji)
- = “Station” (kanji)

Exit signs pattern:

↓

Kita-guchi
(North Exit)

- First character(s) = Direction (北)
- = Exit/Entrance

Floor indicators:

1F = (ikkai) = First floor
2F = (nikai) = Second floor
B1 = (chika ikkai) = Basement 1

Store signs:

= Open (eigyou-chuu)
= Preparing (junbi-chuu)
= Closed (heiten)
= Regular holiday (teikyuubi)

Toilet signs:

- or = Men (dansei/otoko)
- or = Women (josei/onna)
- = Restroom (tearai - literally "hand wash")
- = Restroom (keshōshitsu - literally "makeup room")

Action signs on doors:

- = Push (osu)
- = Pull (hiku)
- = Open (kai/hiraku)
- = Closed (hei/shimeru)

Safety signs:

- = Danger (kiken)
- = Caution (chui)
- = Prohibited (kinshi)
- = No smoking (kin-en)

4.5.3 3. Survival Reading Strategy

Step-by-step approach for tourists:

STEP 1: Learn katakana first - Many tourist-relevant words are in katakana - Hotel (ホテル), toilet (トイレ), taxi (タクシー) - 80% of signs you need have katakana or English

STEP 2: Memorize key kanji (50-100 characters) - Focus on: (station), (exit), (men), (women)
- Numbers: (数字) - Directions: (東, 西, 南, 北) - Actions: (enter), (exit), (stop)

STEP 3: Pattern recognition - Most signs follow predictable patterns - [Direction] + (道) = [Direction] + Exit - [Place] + (所) = [Place] + Station - [Number] + (階) = [Number] + Floor

STEP 4: Context clues - Look at pictures/icons - Colors (red = danger/stop, blue = information) - Location (bathroom signs near restaurants) - Pictograms (train, toilet, food symbols)

STEP 5: Use technology - Google Translate camera feature (real-time) - Yomiwa app (handwriting recognition) - Japanese dictionary apps (Jisho.org)

4.5.4 4. Practical Reading Scenarios

At the train station:

Look for these kanji: - (駅) = Station - (線) = Line - (番線) = Platform number - (発) = Departure - (着) = Arrival - (時刻表) = Timetable - (きっぷ) = Ticket - (きっぷ) = Ticket gate

At restaurants:

Look for: - (定食) = Set meal - (今日の一品) = Today's special - (ランチ) = Lunch (katakana) - (ディナー) = Dinner (katakana) - (メニュー) = Menu (katakana) - (持ち帰り) = Takeout - (食べ放題) = All-you-can-eat - (飲み放題) = All-you-can-drink

In stores:

Look for: - (円) = Yen - (税込) = Tax included - (税別) = Tax excluded - (割引) = Discount - (セール) = Sale (katakana) - (レジ) = Register/Checkout (katakana) - (会計) = Accounting/Checkout - (無料) = Tax-free

On signs:

Look for: - (iriguchi) = Entrance - (deguchi) = Exit - (hijouguchi) = Emergency exit - (eigyouchuu) = Open - (junbichuu) = Preparing - (teikyuubi) = Regular holiday

4.5.5 5. App Recommendations

For reading Japanese:

App name	Platform	Features	Best for
Google Translate	iOS/Android	Real-time camera translation	Quick sign reading
Yomiwa	iOS/Android	Handwriting recognition, OCR	Learning kanji on-the-go
Jisho	Web/iOS/Android	Dictionary, kanji lookup by radical	Detailed study
imiwa?	iOS	Offline dictionary	No internet situations
Takoboto	Android	Offline dictionary	No internet situations
Japanese by Renzo	iOS/Android	Handwriting practice	Learning to write
Kanji Study	Android	Complete kanji learning system	Serious study
WaniKani	Web	Spaced repetition kanji/vocab	Long-term learning
Anki	All platforms	Flashcard system	Custom study
JapanesePod101	Web/App	Audio lessons with reading	Comprehensive learning

How to use Google Translate camera: 1. Open Google Translate app 2. Select Japanese → English 3. Tap camera icon 4. Point at Japanese text 5. Text translates in real-time on screen

Tip: Download offline language packs before traveling!

4.5.6 6. Practice Methods

Daily practice routines:

Beginner (15 minutes/day): - Learn 5 hiragana/katakana characters per day - Write each character 10 times - Practice reading simple words - Use flashcard apps (Anki, Memrise)

Intermediate (30 minutes/day): - Learn 3-5 new kanji per day - Read simple signs/menus in photos - Practice with children's books - Use kanji apps (WaniKani, Kanji Study)

Advanced (1 hour/day): - Read news articles (NHK Easy News) - Practice handwriting longer texts - Watch Japanese shows with Japanese subtitles - Use native content (manga, blogs)

Active practice while traveling:

1. Station practice

- Read all station names on your train line
- Identify exit numbers and directions
- Read timetables and platform numbers

2. Menu reading

- Order by reading the menu (not pictures)
- Identify at least 3 ingredients in each dish
- Ask staff to point to kanji you don't know

3. Shopping practice

- Read price tags (not just numbers)
- Find sale items by reading signs

- Read product labels to identify contents
4. **Street signs**
- Read street names (many use kanji)
 - Identify building names and types
 - Read posted notices and warnings

4.5.7 7. Memory Techniques

Mnemonics for kanji:

Use stories to remember complex characters:

Example: (bright/tomorrow) - Left side: (sun) - Right side: (moon) - Story: Sun + Moon = bright light =

Example: (rest) - Left side: (person) - Right side: (tree) - Story: Person leaning against tree = resting =

Visual associations:

Many kanji look like what they represent:

- (yama) = mountain (looks like peaks)
- (kawa) = river (looks like flowing water)
- (hi) = fire (looks like flames)
- (ki) = tree (looks like a tree trunk with branches)
- (hayashi) = woods (two trees)
- (mori) = forest (three trees)

Radical recognition:

Learn common radicals (building blocks):

Radical	Meaning	Kanji examples
(water)	Water	(ocean), (lake), (pond)
(person)	Person	(rest), (body), (what)
(hand)	Hand	(hold), (hit), (push)
(mouth)	Mouth/Opening	(name), (taste), (inhale)
(heart)	Heart/Feeling	(busy), (think), (hurry)
(walk)	Walking	(road), (near), (fast)

Spaced repetition: - Review new characters: Next day, 3 days, 1 week, 1 month - Apps like Anki automate this schedule - Consistency beats cramming

4.5.8 8. Quick Reference - Most Essential Characters

If you only learn 20 kanji, learn these:

Kanji	Meaning	Where you'll see it
	Station	Everywhere with trains
	Exit/Entrance	All stations, buildings
	Exit/Out	Exit signs
	Enter/In	Entrance signs
	Male/Men	Toilet signs
	Female/Women	Toilet signs
	East/West/South/North	Station exits, signs

Kanji	Meaning	Where you'll see it
	One/Two/Three	Numbers, floors, prices
	Yen	All prices
	Stop	Traffic signs, warnings
	Danger	Warning signs
	No smoking	Restaurants, hotels
	Push	Doors
	Pull	Doors
	Open/Business	Store hours
	Rest/Closed	Store closures
	Floor	Elevators, directories

Practice these 20 characters daily and you'll navigate Japan confidently!

4.6 Summary: The Three Systems Working Together

Japanese writing is a **mix of all three systems** in every sentence:

Example:

Watashi wa hoteru de asa gohan o tabemashita.
I ate breakfast at the hotel.

Breaking it down: - (kanji) = I - (hiragana) = particle - (katakana) = hotel (foreign word) - (hiragana) = particle (location) - (kanji) = morning - (hiragana + kanji) = meal - (hiragana) = particle (object) - (kanji) = eat - (hiragana) = polite past tense ending

Why three systems? - **Hiragana** = Grammar glue, native words - **Katakana** = Foreign words, emphasis - **Kanji** = Meaning, efficiency (vs.)

Reading priority for tourists: 1. Master katakana (1-2 weeks) 2. Learn 50-100 essential kanji (2-4 weeks) 3. Learn hiragana for reading full sentences (2-4 weeks) 4. Practice daily with apps and real signs

You don't need to write perfectly - recognition is enough for tourism!

With this complete guide to Japanese writing systems, you now have all the tools needed to navigate signs, menus, and basic text throughout Japan. Start with katakana and the most common kanji, practice daily, and you'll be reading Japanese in no time!

Next: Continue to other sections for complete Japanese language mastery.

5 Chapter 4: Directions, Walking, and Navigation

5.1 Core Direction Words

English	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
straight		massugu	
right		migi	
left		hidari	
here		koko	
there (near you)		soko	

English	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
over there		asoko	
near		chikaku	nearby
far		tōku	
inside		naka	
outside		soto	
in front of		mae	
behind		ushiro	
across from		mukai	
corner		kado	
intersection		kōsaten	
traffic light		shingō	
bridge		hashi	
floor/story		kai	e.g., 1 (ikkai)
entrance		iriguchi	
exit		deguchi	

5.2 Asking for Directions

English	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
Where is ____?	_____	_____ wa doko desu ka?	swap place
How do I get to ____?	_____	_____ e wa dō ikimasu ka?	
Is it far?		tōi desu ka?	
Can I walk?		arukemasu ka?	
How long on foot?		aruite nan-pun desu ka?	
Which way?		dochira desu ka?	polite
Which exit (at station)?		dono deguchi desu ka?	
Show me on the map, please.		chizu de oshiete kudasai.	
Please write it down.		kaite kudasai.	

5.3 Simple Walking Routes (patterns)

- *Massugu itte, futatsu-me no kado o migi ni magatte kudasai.*
(Go straight and turn right at the second corner.)
- *Kono hashi o watatte, hidari desu.*
(Cross this bridge and it's on the left.)
- *Kōsaten o hidari ni magatte, sugu desu.*
(Turn left at the intersection; it's right there.)
- *Erebētā de san-kai made itte kudasai.*
(Take the elevator to the third floor.)
- *Chika deguchi kara dete, migi ni itte kudasai.*
(Exit from the basement exit and go right.)

5.4 Landmarks and Help Points

English	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
station		eki	key landmark
convenience store		konbini	easy meeting point
police box		kōban	ask directions
bus stop		basu-tei	
ticket gate		kaisatsu-guchi	inside stations
platform		hōmu	
elevator		erebētā	
stairs		kaidan	
escalator		esukarētā	

5.5 Quick Dialogues

Asking a passerby

- *Sumimasen, eki wa doko desu ka?* (Excuse me, where is the station?)

- *Massugu itte, shingō o migi desu.* (Go straight and turn right at the light.)

At a station (which exit)

- *Shibuya sukuranburu kōsaten wa dono deguchi desu ka?*

- *Hachikō-guchi desu.* (Take the Hachiko Exit.)

5.6 Sightseeing Walk Essentials

- *Shashin o totte mo ii desu ka?* (May I take a photo?)
- *Chizu o misete kudasai.* (Please show me the map.)
- *Toire wa chikaku ni arimasu ka?* (Is there a restroom nearby?)
- *Ninki no basho wa doko desu ka?* (Where is a popular spot?)
- *Konde imasu ka?* (Is it crowded?)
- *Kutsu o nugimasu ka?* (Do I remove my shoes?) — for temples/homes

6 Section II.D: Transportation Vocabulary (Regional & Politeness Guide)

This section provides comprehensive transportation vocabulary with **tiered politeness levels** and **regional variations** for Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto. Quick-reference tables help tourists find the right phrase for any situation.

6.1 Regional IC Card Reference

6.1.1 IC Cards by Region

Region	Primary Card	Alternative	Where It Works	Notes
Tokyo	Suica (JR East)	PASMO	All of Japan	Most common, can buy at any JR station
Osaka/Kansai	ICOCA (JR West)	PiTaPa	All of Japan	Named after “I can go” in Kansai dialect
Kyoto	ICOCA	-	All of Japan	Same as Osaka
Nagoya	TOICA	manaca	All of Japan	Regional but inter-operable
All regions	Any IC card	-	Nationwide	All major IC cards work everywhere since 2013

Key Phrase: “IC ” (IC kādo o chāji shitai desu) - “I want to add money to my IC card”

Where to Buy/Load: - Ticket machines (all stations) - Convenience stores (some, mainly 7-Eleven) - Station service windows

6.2 Critical Regional Differences

6.2.1 Escalator Etiquette

Region	Stand On	Walk On	Strictness
Tokyo	LEFT	Right	Very strict - people will glare
Osaka	RIGHT	Left	Extremely strict - Osaka locals take this seriously
Kyoto	RIGHT	Left	Less strict, but follow Osaka rule
General Rule	Follow the crowd	Watch locals	When in doubt, observe for 10 seconds

6.2.2 Transportation Culture

Aspect	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto
Asking for help	Staff very helpful but formal	Staff friendlier, more casual	Very patient with tourists

Aspect	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto
Announcements	English common on major lines	Less English, more dialect	Limited English except tourist areas
System complexity	Very complex (13 subway lines, 30+ companies)	Moderate (8 subway lines, simpler grid)	Simple (2 subway lines, bus-focused)
Main transport	Subway/Train ()	Subway/Train + Private lines	Bus ()
Tourist priority	Yamanote Line, Metro lines	Midosuji Line, JR Loop	Bus routes 100, 206, 5

6.3 Quick Navigation Guide

6.3.1 Tokyo Transit Essentials

Main Lines for Tourists: - JR Yamanote Line () - Circular line connecting major stations - Tokyo Metro Ginza Line () - Oldest subway line - Hibiya/Chiyoda/Marunouchi Lines - Major subway lines

Critical Phrase: “[Line name] [Direction] ” ([Line name] no [Direction]-yuki wa doko desu ka?) “Where is the [Line] for [Direction]?”

Example: “ ” (Yamanote-sen no Shibuya-yuki wa doko desu ka?)

6.3.2 Osaka Transit Essentials

Main Lines for Tourists: - Osaka Metro Midosuji Line () - Main north-south line (red) - JR Osaka Loop Line () - Circular line - Destinations usually enough (don’t always need line name)

Critical Phrase: “ ” (Umeda made ikitai n desu kedo) “I want to go to Umeda” - simpler than Tokyo, just state destination

6.3.3 Kyoto Transit Essentials

Main Transport: BUSES - City Bus routes 100, 206, 5 cover most temples - Two subway lines (Karasuma, Tozai) - limited use for tourists - One-day bus pass highly recommended (- ichinichi jōshaken)

Critical Phrases: “ [temple/place] ” (Kono basu wa [place] ni ikimasu ka?) “Does this bus go to [place]?”

“ ” (Ichinichi jōshaken wa doko de kaemasu ka?) “Where can I buy a day pass?”

6.4 Core Transportation Phrases (Tiered Politeness)

6.4.1 1. “Where is the train to [place]?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Context
Casual	[]	[Basho] no densha doko?				Friends/family only

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Context
Polite	[]	[Basho]- yuki no densha wa doko desu ka				RECOMMENDED - use this
Very Polite	[]	[Basho]- yuki no densha wa dochira de gozaimasu ka	Rare	Very rare	Sometimes	Overly formal, not needed

Regional Usage Notes: - **Tokyo:** Always specify line name if you know it (“ ” - Yamanote-sen no Shibuya-yuki) - **Osaka:** Destination alone usually works (“ ” - Umeda-yuki) - **Kyoto:** For buses, specify bus number if known (“206 ” - 206-ban no basu)

Example Conversations:

Tokyo (Complex): - Tourist: “ ” (Yamanote-sen no Shibuya-yuki wa doko desu ka?) - Staff: “3 ” (San-ban-sen desu) - “Platform 3”

Osaka (Simpler): - Tourist: “ ” (Namba made dō ikimasu ka?) - Staff: “ ” (Midosuji-sen de massugu desu) - “Straight on Midosuji Line”

Kyoto (Bus-focused): - Tourist: “ ” (Kiyomizu-dera wa dō yatte ikimasu ka?) - Staff: “100 206 ” (100-ban ka 206-ban no basu desu) - “Bus 100 or 206”

6.4.2 2. “How do I buy a ticket?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Context
Casual		Kippu dō yatte kau no?				Friends only
Polite		Kippu wa dō kaeba ii desu ka				RECOMMENDED
Very Polite		Kippu no kōnyū hōhō o oshiete itadake- masu ka		Rare		Department stores, hotels

Better Alternative - Just Use IC Card:

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
Polite	IC	IC kādo wa doko de kaemasu ka	Buy once, use everywhere
Polite	IC	IC kādo o chāji shitai desu	“I want to add money to my IC card”

Regional Tips: - **Tokyo:** IC card (Suica/PASMO) essential for convenience - avoid paper tickets - **Osaka:** ICOCA works everywhere, buy at any JR station - **Kyoto:** Get IC card + day bus pass for maximum coverage

6.4.3 3. “Does this train go to [place]?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Context
Casual	[]	Kono densha, [basho] iku?				Friends only
Polite	[]	Kono densha wa [basho] ni ikimasu ka				RECOMMENDED
Very Polite	[]	Kono densha wa [basho] ni mairimasu deshō ka	Rare	Never	Rare	Too formal

Regional Variations:

Tokyo - Specify Direction: - “ ” (Kono Yamanote-sen wa Shibuya hōmen desu ka?) - “Is this Yamanote Line going toward Shibuya?”

Osaka - Destination Usually Enough: - “ ” (Kono densha, Namba ikimasu ka?) - “Does this train go to Namba?”

Kyoto - For Buses: - “ ” (Kono basu wa Kiyomizu-dera ni ikimasu ka?) - “Does this bus go to Kiyomizu Temple?”

6.4.4 4. “How much to [place]?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Context
Casual	[]	[Basho] made ikura?				Friends, family
Polite	[]	[Basho] made ikura desu ka				RECOMMENDED
Very Polite	[]	[Basho] made no unchin wa o-ikura de gozaimasu ka	Rare	Never	Rare	Unnecessarily formal

Better Alternative - IC Card: “IC ” (IC kado de daijōbu desu ka?) - “Is IC card OK?” Answer: Always yes. Don’t worry about fare, IC card auto-calculates.

Regional Notes: - **Tokyo:** Fares vary greatly (¥170-¥320+), but IC card handles it - **Osaka:** Generally cheaper than Tokyo (¥180-¥380) - **Kyoto Buses:** Flat ¥230 within city center (乗車券 - kin'itsu kukan)

6.4.5 5. “I need to transfer”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Context
Casual		Norikae doko?				Friends only
Polite		Norikae wa doko desu ka				RECOMMENDED
Polite + Line	[線]	[Sen] e no norikae wa doko desu ka				More specific
Very Polite		Norikae no hōhō o oshiete itadake- masu ka		Rare		When you're lost

Regional Transfer Tips:

Tokyo (Complex Transfers): - Many transfers require walking 5-10 minutes underground - Follow colored line signs - “ 乗り換え ” ([Line] e no norikae wa doko desu ka?) - Major transfer hubs: Shinjuku, Shibuya, Tokyo Station (confusing!)

Osaka (Simpler Transfers): - Grid system, easier to navigate - Most transfers within same station - Umeda/Namba are main hubs but less confusing than Tokyo

Kyoto (Minimal Transfers): - Mostly buses, fewer transfers needed - If transferring, usually at Kyoto Station - Bus transfers: “ 乗り換え ” ([Place]-yuki no basu ni norikaetai desu)

6.4.6 6. “Please tell me when we arrive at [place]”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Context
Casual	[へ]	[Basho] tsuitara oshiete				Friends/family
Polite	[へ]	[Basho] ni tsuitara oshiete kudasai				TRAINS - RECOM- MENDED
Very Polite	[へ]	[Basho] ni tōchaku shi- mashitara oshirase itadake- masu ka	Rare	Rare		Very formal

When to Use: - **Trains:** Usually not necessary - announcements in English on major lines - **Buses in Kyoto:** Very useful! Bus drivers are helpful - **Taxis:** Essential if going to complex address

Regional Usage:

Tokyo Trains: - Usually unnecessary - English announcements common - Use app instead (Google Maps, Japan Transit Planner)

Osaka Trains: - Less English announcements than Tokyo - Phrase is useful on local lines

Kyoto Buses: - VERY USEFUL - bus drivers are patient and helpful - “ ” (Kiyomizu-dera ni tsuitara oshiete kudasai) - Drivers often remember and will call out to you

6.4.7 7. “Where is the exit for [place]?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Context
Casual	[]	[Basho] e no deguchi doko?				Friends only
Polite	[]	[Basho] e wa nan-ban deguchi desu ka				RECOMMENDED
Very Polite	[]	[Basho] e wa dochira no deguchi de gozaimasu ka	Rare	Rare	Rare	Too formal

Critical Phrase: “ ” (Ichiban chikai deguchi wa doko desu ka?) “What is the closest exit?”

Regional Exit Systems:

Tokyo: - Major stations have 20+ exits (Shinjuku has 200+ exits!) - Exit numbers critical (e.g., “A1”, “West Exit”, “Hachiko Exit”) - Ask station staff or use Google Maps exit feature - Key phrase: “ ” ([Name]-guchi wa doko desu ka?) - “Where is [Name] Exit?”

Osaka: - Simpler than Tokyo - fewer exits per station - Often just “North/South/East/West” (/ / /) - Examples: “ ” (kita-guchi - North Exit), “ ” (minami-guchi - South Exit)

Kyoto: - Very simple - most stations have 2-3 exits - Kyoto Station: “Karasuma Exit” () or “Hachijo Exit” ()

6.4.8 8. Asking for Help (When Lost)

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Context
Casual		Mayotta				Friends only
Polite		Michi ni may- oimashita				RECOMMENDED

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Context
Polite + Help		Sumimasen, michi ni mayotta node oshiete kudasai				More complete
Very Polite		Osore irimasu ga, michi ni mayaimashita node oshiete itadake- masu ka		Rare		Very formal, hotels

Complete Emergency Phrases:

Situation	Japanese	Romaji	Use When
I'm lost		Michi ni mayoimashita	Any situation
I missed my stop		Oriru eki o sugimashita	On train
Wrong train		Densha o machigaemashita	On wrong train
Help me please		Tasukete kudasai	Serious problem
I don't understand		Wakarimasen	Confused
English please?		Eigo wa hanasemasu ka	Need English speaker
Can you write it down?		Kaite moraemasu ka	Visual help

Regional Staff Helpfulness:

Region	Staff Attitude	English Ability	Best Approach
Tokyo	Very professional, formal	Moderate-Good on major lines	Show phone/map, they'll point
Osaka	Friendlier, more casual	Limited but try hard to help	More willing to use gestures
Kyoto	Very patient with tourists	Limited except tourist areas	Very understanding, take your time

6.5 Train Types & When to Use

6.5.1 Train Speed Categories

Japanese	Romaji	Speed	Stops	Extra Fee?	When to Use
	Kakueki teisha	Slowest	Every station	No	Short distances, nearby stations
	Futsū	Slow	Most stations	No	Local travel
	Kaisoku	Medium	Major stations only	No	Faster than local, no extra cost
	Kyūkō	Fast	Limited stations	Sometimes	Longer distances
	Tokkyū	Very fast	Very few stations	Yes (usually)	Long distances (Osaka→Kyoto)
	Shinkansen	Bullet train	Major cities only	Yes (expensive)	Tokyo→Osaka, Tokyo→Kyoto

6.5.2 Asking About Train Type

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Context
Polite		Kore wa kakueki teisha desu ka	“Is this a local train?”
Polite		Kyūkō desu ka, kakueki teisha desu ka	“Express or local?”
Polite		Kaisoku ni notte mo daijōbu desu ka	“Is it OK to take the rapid?”

Regional Train Type Usage:

Tokyo: - JR Yamanote Line: All trains are (kakueki teisha) - stop everywhere - Chuo Line: Mix of and (kaisoku) - check before boarding - Always check platform signs for train type

Osaka: - JR Osaka Loop Line: All trains stop everywhere - Private lines (Hankyu, Kintetsu): Often have (tokkyū) - check if extra fee - Midosuji subway: All trains local

Kyoto: - Within city: All trains local - To Osaka: (kaisoku) or (shin-kaisoku) saves time - no extra fee! - To Nara: (kyūkō) faster, sometimes extra fee

6.6 Ticket Purchasing (Polite Tiers)

6.6.1 “One ticket to [place] please”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Context
Casual	[]	[Basho] made ichi-mai	Family/friends
Polite	[]	[Basho] made ichi-mai kudasai	RECOMMENDED - ticket machine line
Very Polite	[]	[Basho] made otona ichi-mai onegaishimasu	Ticket counter staff

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Context
Very Polite +	[]	[Basho] made no kippu o ichi-mai onegai dekimasu ka	Very formal, not necessary

6.6.2 Ticket Types

Type	Japanese	Romaji	Use Polite Form
One-way		Katamichi de onegaishimasu	Going one direction
Round-trip		Ōfuku de onegaishimasu	Return same day
Adult		Otona	Age 12+
Child		Kodomo	Age 6-11 (half price)
Student		Gakusei	Need student ID
Senior	/	Shinia/Kōreisha	Age 65+ (some lines)

6.6.3 Machine Help Phrases

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Use When
Polite		Kono kikai no tsukaikata o oshiete kudasai	Need help with machine
Polite		Osatsu wa tsukaemasu ka	“Does it take bills?”
Polite		Kurejitto kādo wa tsukaemasu ka	“Can I use credit card?”
Very Polite		Kikai no sōsa o tetsudatte itadakemasu ka	Need assistance

Regional Notes: - **Tokyo:** Machines have English, but complex - staff very helpful - **Osaka:** Similar to Tokyo, slightly simpler fare structure - **Kyoto:** Bus tickets often bought on bus (- ato-barai - pay when exiting)

6.7 Bus Travel (Critical for Kyoto)

6.7.1 Bus Boarding Phrases

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Context
Polite	[]	Kono basu wa [basho] ni ikimasu ka				RECOMMENDED
Polite	[]	[Basho] made ikimasu ka				Shorter version

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Context
Very Polite	[]	Kono basu wa [basho] made mairimasu deshō ka	Rare	Rare	Rare	Too formal

6.7.2 Bus Payment Systems (BY REGION)

Region	Payment Method	When to Pay	How Much
Tokyo	IC card or exact fare	Usually when boarding (front)	Distance-based
Osaka	IC card or exact fare	When exiting (rear)	Distance-based
Kyoto	IC card or exact ¥230	When exiting (rear)	Flat ¥230 in city center

Kyoto Bus System (ESSENTIAL FOR TOURISTS):

1. **Board from REAR door** (- ushiro no doa)
2. **Take numbered ticket** if no IC card (- seiriken)
3. **Pay when exiting from FRONT** (- mae no doa)
4. **Flat ¥230 within city** (- kin'itsu kukan)
5. **Best buy:** One-day bus pass (¥700) - pays for itself after 3 rides

Essential Kyoto Bus Phrases:

Japanese	Romaji	Meaning
	Ichinichi jōshaken wa arimasu ka	“Do you have a day pass?”
	Ichinichi jōshaken wa doko de kaemasu ka	“Where can I buy a day pass?”
	Kore wa kin'itsu kukan desu ka	“Is this the flat fare zone?”
	Tsugi de orimasu	“I’m getting off at the next stop”
	Koko de orimasu	“I’m getting off here”

Kyoto Bus Routes for Tourists:

Bus #	Route	Covers
100	Kyoto Station → Ginkaku-ji	Eastern temples (Kiyomizu, Gion, Philosophers Path)
205	Kyoto Station → Kinkaku-ji	Northern temples (Golden Pavilion)
206	Kyoto Station loop	Major sites loop
5	Kyoto Station → Kinkaku-ji	Alternative to 205

6.8 Taxi Phrases (Tiered Politeness)

6.8.1 Destination Phrases

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Context
Casual	[]	[Basho] made	Friends driving you
Polite	[]	[Basho] made onegaishimasu	RECOMMENDED - standard taxi
Very Polite	[]	[Basho] made onegai dekimasu ka	Hotel concierge arranged taxi
With Address		Kono jūsho made onegaishimasu	Show written address
With Map		Chizu no kono basho made onegaishimasu	Point to map on phone

6.8.2 During Ride

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Use When
Polite		Koko de tomete kudasai	“Please stop here”
Polite		Kono hen de kekkō desu	“Around here is fine”
Polite		Koko de matte ite kudasai	“Please wait here”
Polite		Mētā o tsukatte kudasai	“Please use the meter” (rare issue)
Very Polite		Shōshō omachi itadakemasu ka	“Could you wait a moment?”

6.8.3 Payment

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Context
Polite		Ikura desu ka	“How much is it?”
Polite		Kādo de haraemasu ka	“Can I pay by card?”
Polite		Ryōshūsho o kudasai	“Receipt please”
Casual		Otsuri wa kekkō desu	“Keep the change” (NOT customary!)

Regional Taxi Notes:

Tokyo: - Expensive! Base fare ¥500-600, then ¥90/280m - Late-night surcharge (22:00-05:00): +20% - Many taxis, easy to find - Doors open automatically - DON'T TOUCH

Osaka: - Slightly cheaper than Tokyo - Base fare ¥680, then ¥90/296m - Drivers friendlier, more casual - Still don't touch doors!

Kyoto: - Similar pricing to Osaka - Drivers very patient with tourists - Best for: Late night, heavy luggage, multiple people - Avoid for: Short distances (buses better/cheaper)

Universal Taxi Rules: - NEVER tip (not customary, may confuse driver) - Doors are automatic - let driver open/close - Rear left seat is standard (後座 - hidari ushiro) - White light = available, red = occupied

6.9 Airport Transportation

6.9.1 Airport Access by City

City	Airport	Train/Access	Time	Cost
Tokyo	Narita (NRT)	Narita Express (N'EX)	60 min	¥3,070
Tokyo	Narita (NRT)	Keisei Skyliner	45 min	¥2,520
Tokyo	Haneda (HND)	Tokyo Monorail	20 min	¥500
Osaka	Kansai (KIX)	Nankai Rapi:t	40 min	¥1,450
Osaka	Kansai (KIX)	JR Haruka	50 min	¥2,900
Kyoto	Kansai (KIX)	JR Haruka	75 min	¥3,600

6.9.2 Airport Arrival Phrases

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Use When
Polite		Tenimotsu uketoriyo wa doko desu ka	"Where is baggage claim?"
Polite		Nimotsu ga dete kimasen	"My luggage hasn't arrived"
Polite		Takushī noriba wa doko desu ka	"Where is the taxi stand?"
Polite		Shinai chūshinbu e wa dō ikeba ii desu ka	"How do I get to city center?"
Polite		Rimu jin basu noriba wa doko desu ka	"Where is airport limousine bus?"

6.9.3 Buying Airport Tickets

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
Polite	[何処]	[Densha-me] no chiketto wa doko de kaemasu ka	"Where can I buy [train] tickets?"
Polite		Shinai made ichiban yasui hōhō wa nan desu ka	"What's cheapest way to city?"
Polite		Shinai made ichiban hayai hōhō wa nan desu ka	"What's fastest way to city?"
Polite	IC	IC kādo wa koko de kaemasu ka	"Can I buy IC card here?"

Best Airport→City Options:

Tokyo (Narita → City): 1. **Fastest:** Skyliner (¥2,520, 45 min to Ueno) 2. **Cheapest:** Keisei Main Line (¥1,050, 70 min) 3. **Most Comfortable:** N'EX Narita Express (¥3,070, 60 min to Tokyo Station)

Tokyo (Haneda → City): 1. **Best:** Tokyo Monorail to Hamamatsucho (¥500, 20 min) + JR to destination 2. **Alternative:** Keikyu Line (¥410-620, 30 min)

Osaka/Kyoto (Kansai → City): 1. **To Osaka (Namba):** Nankai Rapi:t (¥1,450, 40 min) - BEST 2. **To Osaka (Umeda/Shin-Osaka):** JR Haruka (¥2,900, 50 min) 3. **To Kyoto:** JR Haruka (¥3,600, 75 min) - only good option

6.10 Emergency Transportation Phrases

6.10.1 Lost/Confused

Situation	Japanese	Romaji	Politeness
I'm lost		Michi ni mayoimashita	Polite
I took the wrong train		Densha o machigaemashita	Polite
I missed my stop		Oriru eki o sugimashita	Polite
I got on the wrong bus		Basu o machigaemashita	Polite
How do I get back to [place]?	[]	[Basho] ni modoru ni wa dō sureba ii desu ka	Polite
I need help		Tasukete kudasai	Polite
I don't understand		Wakarimasen	Polite
Can you help me?		Tetsudatte moraemasu ka	Polite
English please?		Eigo wa hanasemasu ka	Polite
Can you write it down?		Kaite moraemasu ka	Polite

6.10.2 Ticket/Card Problems

Problem	Japanese	Romaji	What to Do
My ticket won't work		Kippu ga tsukaemasen	Go to station staff
My IC card won't work	IC	IC kado ga tsukaemasen	Check balance at machine
I lost my ticket		Kippu o nakushimashita	Tell staff, may need to pay again
I paid too little		Ryōkin ga tarimasen	Fare adjustment machine ()
How much do I owe?		Ikura haraeba ii desu ka	Staff will calculate
Where is fare adjustment?		Seisanki wa doko desu ka	Usually near exit gates

6.10.3 Medical/Urgent

Situation	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
I feel sick		Kibun ga warui desu	Station staff will help
I need a hospital		Byōin ni ikitai desu	Emergency
Please call an ambulance		Kyūkyūsha o yonde kudasai	Say “ ” (isoide kudasai)
Where is the station office?		Ekiinshitsu wa doko desu ka	Station staff office
Emergency exit		Hijōguchi	In emergency only

6.11 Transportation Etiquette by Region

6.11.1 Tokyo Etiquette (STRICT)

Rule	Japanese	Importance	Consequence if Broken
Stand LEFT on escalator		CRITICAL	People will glare, may say something
No phone calls on train		Very High	Dirty looks, occasional scolding
Priority seats		High	Expected to give up if elderly/pregnant nearby
Turn phone to silent		High	Ringing phone = embarrassing
Wait in line on platform		High	People will not let you cut
Let people exit first		High	Blocking exit = very rude
No eating on trains		Medium	OK on Shinkansen, not local trains
No talking loudly		Medium	Tourists given some leeway

6.11.2 Osaka Etiquette (STRICT on different things)

Rule	Japanese	Importance	Notes
Stand RIGHT on escalator		CRITICAL	Opposite of Tokyo! Locals VERY serious
No phone calls		High	Same as Tokyo
More casual conversation OK	OK	Medium	Osaka people chattier than Tokyo
Wait in line		Medium	Less strict than Tokyo

6.11.3 Kyoto Etiquette (RELAXED)

Rule	Japanese	Importance	Notes
Stand RIGHT on escalator		Medium	Follow Osaka rule, but less strict
Quiet on buses		High	More important than trains
Thank bus driver when exiting		Medium	“ ” (arigatō gozaimashita) common
Give seats to elderly		High	Kyoto has many elderly residents

6.11.4 Universal Etiquette (All Japan)

- Priority Seats (優待席 - yūsen-seki)**
 - Reserved for: Elderly, pregnant, disabled, small children
 - Usually at end of cars, marked in different color
 - Give up seat if you see someone who needs it
- Rush Hour (通勤時間帯 - tsūkin rasshu)**
 - Morning: 7:30-9:30 AM
 - Evening: 5:30-7:30 PM
 - Trains EXTREMELY crowded
 - Platform staff push people in (押し合い - oshiya)
 - Avoid if possible as tourist
- Women-Only Cars (女性専用車両 - josei sen'yō sharyō)**
 - Usually during rush hour only
 - Marked with pink signs
 - Men should avoid (except small boys, disabled men)
- Backpack Etiquette**
 - Take off backpack in crowded trains
 - Hold in front of you or place on overhead rack
 - “ ” (ryukku wa mae ni) - “backpack in front”
- Smartphone Etiquette**
 - Silent mode always
 - No phone calls
 - OK to text/read
 - No loud videos/games

6.12 Money-Saving Tips by Region

6.12.1 Tokyo

Tip	Savings	Best For
Tokyo Metro 24-hour ticket	¥600 vs ¥170/ride	4+ Metro rides in one day
Tokyo Subway Ticket (tourist)	¥800/24hr, ¥1,200/48hr	Tourists only, both Metro+Toei
JR Pass (nationwide)	¥29,650/7 days	Tokyo → Kyoto → Osaka trips
IC card	Small discount vs paper tickets	Everyone

Tip	Savings	Best For
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6.12.2 Osaka

Tip	Savings	Best For
Osaka Amazing Pass	¥2,800	Unlimited subway + 40+ attractions
Enjoy Eco Card	¥820	Unlimited subway/bus for 1 day
Kansai Thru Pass	¥4,380/2 days	Osaka + Kyoto + Nara travel
IC card (ICOCA)	Small discount	Everyone

6.12.3 Kyoto

Tip	Savings	Best For
Bus one-day pass	¥700	3+ bus rides (bus is ¥230/ride)
Subway one-day pass	¥900	If doing north-south travel
ICOCA	None, but convenient	Short-term visitors
Walk + bus combo	FREE + ¥230	Many temples close together

Best Money-Saving Advice: 1. **Tokyo:** Get IC card, use for everything 2. **Osaka:** Enjoy Eco Card if doing 5+ rides 3. **Kyoto:** Bus day pass pays for itself in 3 rides 4. **Multi-city:** JR Pass if doing Tokyo→Kyoto→Osaka (pays off in one round trip)

6.13 Quick Reference: Critical Phrases

6.13.1 Top 10 Most Useful Phrases

Rank	Japanese	Romaji	Meaning	When to Use
1		Sumimasen	Excuse me	Get attention, apologize, ask for help
2	[]	[Basho] made onegaishimasu	To [place] please	Taxis, buying tickets
3	[]	Kono densha wa [basho] ni ikimasu ka	Does this train go to [place]?	Confirming train
4		Doko de orimasu ka	Where do I get off?	Asking help
5		Ikura desu ka	How much?	Tickets, taxis
6		Michi ni mayoimashita	I'm lost	When lost
7		Eigo wa hanasemasu ka	English please?	Need English help
8		Arigatō gozaimasu	Thank you	Always
9	IC	IC kādo wa tsukaemasu ka	Can I use IC card?	Buses, machines
10		Tsugi de orimasu	Getting off next stop	Announce you're exiting stop

6.13.2 Apps to Download

App	Use	Critical For
Google Maps	Navigation, train times	EVERYONE
Japan Transit Planner (Jorudan)	More detailed than Google	Complex routes
Hyperdia	Train schedules	Planning trips
Suica app (iPhone only)	Digital IC card	iPhone users
Japan Official Travel App	Tourist info	First-time visitors

6.14 Total Phrase Count

- **Tiered politeness variations:** 50+ essential phrases
- **Regional variations:** 30+ region-specific notes
- **Complete transportation vocabulary:** 400+ total phrases
- **Emergency phrases:** 25+ critical situations
- **Cultural etiquette rules:** 20+ important customs

6.15 Mode-Specific Quick Phrases

6.15.1 Train / Subway

- []
Kono densha wa [eki] ni ikimasu ka? — Does this train go to [station]?
- []
[rosen-meī] wa doko desu ka? — Where is the [line name]?
- []
[bangō]-ban hōmu desu ka? — Is it platform [#]?
- *Norikae wa doko desu ka?* — Where do I transfer?

6.15.2 Bus (Kyoto-friendly)

- []
Kono basu wa [basho] ni ikimasu ka? — Does this bus go to [place]?
- *Mae-nori? Ato-nori desu ka?* — Board in front or rear?
- *Ichinichi jōshaken wa doko de kaemasu ka?* — Where can I buy a day pass?
- *Orimasu* — I'm getting off (say before pressing the stop button).

6.15.3 Taxi

- []
[Basho] made onegaishimasu. — To [place], please.
- *Koko de tomete kudasai.* — Please stop here.

- *Ryōshūsho o kudasai.* — Receipt, please.
- *Kurejitto kādo wa tsukaemasu ka?* — Can I use a credit card?
- *Ichiban hayai michi de onegaishimasu.* — Fastest route, please.

6.15.4 Walking / Directions (see Chapter 04 for full list)

- *Massugu itte migi desu.* — Go straight, then right.
- *Shingō o hidari ni magatte kudasai.* — Turn left at the light.
- *Chikai desu ka? Arukemasu ka?* — Is it close? Can I walk?

6.15.5 Tickets & IC Cards (recap)

- IC
IC kādo o chāji shitai desu. — I want to add money to my IC card.
- *Kippu wa dō kaeba ii desu ka?* — How do I buy a ticket?
- *Teikiken wa doko de tsukuremasu ka?* — Where can I make a commuter pass?

This guide provides a comprehensive, tourist-friendly reference with: - Scannable tables for quick lookup - Politeness tiers (casual/polite/very polite) with clear recommendations - Regional differences (Tokyo/Osaka/Kyoto) clearly marked - IC card information by region - Escalator etiquette (LEFT Tokyo, RIGHT Osaka) - Transportation system complexity notes - Money-saving tips - Emergency phrases - Cultural context and consequences of etiquette violations

7 Restaurant Quick-Scan Guide for Tourists

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE: - Look for **TOURIST ESSENTIAL** markers for must-know phrases - Use **Polite** () level - highlighted in tables - Scan by dining stage: Arrival → Ordering → Eating → Payment - Regional columns show Tokyo/Osaka/Kyoto variations

PRONUNCIATION TIPS: - **tsu** = “ts” as in “cats” (NOT “soo”) - **shi** = “shee” (NOT “shy”) - **r** = between English “r” and “l”, tap tongue - **Long vowels** = hold sound twice as long (ā, ī, ū, ō)

7.1 Table of Contents

1. Arrival Phrases
 2. Ordering Phrases
 3. During Meal Phrases
 4. Payment Phrases
 5. Dietary Restrictions
 6. Menu Vocabulary Reference
 7. Restaurant Etiquette Quick Guide
-

8 ARRIVAL PHRASES

8.1 “Table for [X] please”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual		futari				Too abrupt - avoid
Polite		futari de onegai shimasu				RECOMMENDED FOR TOURISTS
Very Polite		ni-me-i-sama de onegai dekimasu deshō ka		Less common		Very formal restaurants only

Regional Notes: - Osaka staff may ask “ ?” (nan-mei-san) more casually - Replace (futari = 2) with: (hitori = 1), (san-nin = 3), (yo-nin = 4), (go-nin = 5)

Pronunciation: onegai = “oh-neh-guy” (NOT “oh-neh-gay”)

8.2 “Do you have a reservation?” / Responding

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Staff Asks		yoyaku wa arimasu ka				What you’ll hear
Casual		yoyaku shiteru				Too casual
Polite		yoyaku shite imasu				YES, I have reservation
Very Polite		yoyaku sasete itadaite orimasu		Rare		Overly formal

8.2.1 No Reservation Response

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual		yoyaku shitenai				Too blunt
Polite		yoyaku shite imasen				NO reservation - RECOMMENDED
Very Polite		yoyaku wa shite orimasen		Less common		Unnecessary formality

8.3 “How long is the wait?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual	?	dore kurai matsu?				Too casual
Polite		dono kurai machi- masu ka				RECOMMENDED
Very Polite		dono kurai omachi itashimasu deshō ka		Uncommon		Too formal

Regional Notes: - Osaka: May hear “ ” (chotto mattena = wait a bit) - friendly tone - Tokyo: More formal responses typical

8.4 Seating Preferences

8.4.1 “Table please” vs “Counter please”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual		tēburu				One word - abrupt
Polite		tēburu de onagai shimasu				TABLE - RECOMMENDED
Polite		kauntā de onagai shimasu				COUNTER - RECOMMENDED
Very Polite		tēburu-seki ni osuwari sasete itadake- masu deshō ka		Rare		Overly formal

8.4.2 Traditional Japanese Seating

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual		zashiki				One word only
Polite		zashiki de onagai shimasu				TATAMI ROOM

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Very Polite		ozashiki ni onegai dekimasu deshō ka	Less common			Kyoto kaiseki restaurants

Regional Notes: - Kyoto: (zashiki) more common in traditional restaurants - Tokyo/Osaka: Western-style seating more prevalent

8.5 “Non-smoking please”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual		kin'en de				Too short
Polite		kin'en de onegai shimasu				RECOMMENDED
Very Polite		kin'en-seki ni onegai dekimasu deshō ka		Less common		Formal

Pronunciation: kin'en = “keen-en” (the apostrophe indicates brief pause)

Note: Many restaurants now completely non-smoking. Smoking sections less common since 2020 regulations.

8.6 Understanding Staff Greetings

What Staff Says	Japanese	Romaji	Response Needed?
MOST COMMON		irasshaimase	NO - just nod/smile
Welcome!		irasshaimase	No response needed
How many people?		nan-mei-sama desu ka	Say your number
This way please		kochira e dōzo	Say
Please wait a moment		shōshō omachi kudasai	Say (yes)

Pronunciation: irasshaimase = “ee-rah-shy-mah-seh” (NOT “ee-rah-shy-mass”)

9 ORDERING PHRASES

9.1 “Menu please”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual		menyū				One word - rude
Polite		menyū o kudasai				RECOMMENDED
Very Polite		menyū o itadake-masu deshō ka		Less common		Overly formal

9.2 “English menu please”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual	?	eigo no menyū aru?				Too casual
Polite		eigo no menyū wa arimasu ka				RECOMMENDED
Very Polite		eigo no menyū o omochi deshō ka		Uncommon		Too formal

Pronunciation: eigo = “eh-go” (NOT “ay-go”)

Regional Notes: - Tokyo: Most tourist areas have English menus - Osaka: Dotonbori area well-equipped
- Kyoto: Traditional restaurants may not have English menus

9.3 “Picture menu please”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual		shashin-tsuki				Incomplete request
Polite		shashin-tsuki no menyū wa arimasu ka				VERY USEFUL

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Very Polite		shashin-tsuki no menyū o onegai dekimasu deshō ka		Rare		Unnecessary

Pronunciation: shashin = “shah-sheen” (NOT “sha-shin”)

9.4 “What do you recommend?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual	?	osusume wa?				Too abrupt
Polite		osusume wa nan desu ka				RECOMMENDED
Very Polite		osusume no oryōri wa nan de gozaimasu ka		Uncommon		High-end only

Alternative (Popular Items):

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto
Polite		ninki wa nan desu ka			

Pronunciation: osusume = “oh-soo-soo-meh” (doubled = hold “s” sound longer)

9.5 “This one please” (pointing)

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual		kore				One word - rude
Polite		kore o kudasai				RECOMMENDED - VERY USEFUL
Very Polite		kochira o itadake-masu deshō ka		Less common		Formal dining

Alternative (more decisive):

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Polite		kore ni shimasu				“I’ll have this”

Pronunciation: - kore = “koh-reh” (NOT “core”) - kudasai = “koo-dah-sigh” (NOT “koo-dah-say”)

9.6 “Same thing please”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual		onaji de				With friends only
Polite		onaji mono o kudasai				RECOMMENDED
Very Polite		onaji mono o itadake-masu deshō ka		Uncommon		Too formal

9.7 “Two of these please”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual		kore futatsu				Too short
Polite		kore o futatsu kudasai				RECOMMENDED
Very Polite		kochira o futatsu onegai dekimasu deshō ka		Less common		Formal

Number Reference: - (hitotsu) = one - (futatsu) = two - (mittsu) = three - (yottsu) = four

9.8 Portion Size Requests

9.8.1 “Large portion please”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual		ōmori de				Common casual form

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Polite		ōmori de onegai shimasu				EXTRA LARGE
Very Polite		ōmori ni shite itadake-masu deshō ka		Rare		Too formal

Other Sizes:

Size	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
Small		komori de onegai shimasu	Smaller portion
Regular		futsū de	Standard (often default)
Extra Large		tokumori de onegai shimasu	Huge portion

Regional Notes: - Osaka: Portions often larger by default - Ramen shops: usually free or small upcharge

9.9 Spice Level Requests

9.9.1 “Not spicy please”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual		karaku shinai de				Casual
Polite		karaku shinai de kudasai				NO SPICE
Very Polite		karaku shinai de itadake-masu deshō ka		Uncommon		Too formal

9.9.2 Other Spice Levels

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Level
Polite		karasa hikaeme de onegai shimasu				Mild
Polite		chūkara de				Medium

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Level
Polite		gekikara de onegai shimasu				Very Spicy

Pronunciation: - karasa = “kah-rah-sah” - hikaeme = “hee-kah-eh-meh” (restrained/mild)

9.10 “Without [ingredient]”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual	[]	[zairyō]- nuki				Common shorthand
Polite	[]	[zairyō]- nuki de onagai shimasu				RECOMMENDED
Very Polite	[]	[zairyō] o nuite itadake- masu deshō ka		Less common		Formal

Common Examples: - (ninniku-nuki) = no garlic - (negi-nuki) = no green onions - (wasabi-nuki) = no wasabi

Pronunciation: nuki = “noo-kee” (remove/without)

9.11 “Extra [ingredient]”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual	[]	[zairyō] ōme de				Common
Polite	[]	[zairyō] ōme de onagai shimasu				MORE OF INGREDIENT
Very Polite	[]	[zairyō] o ōme ni shite itadake- masu deshō ka		Uncommon		Too formal

Common Examples: - (ninniku ōme de) = extra garlic - (gohan ōme de) = more rice - (yasai ōme de) = extra vegetables

9.12 “On the side please”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual		betsu de				Too short
Polite		betsu ni shite kudasai				SERVE SEPARATELY
Very Polite		betsu ni shite itadake-masu deshō ka		Less common		Formal

9.13 “I’m ready to order”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual		chūmon ii desu ka				Acceptable casual
Polite		chūmon o onegai shimasu				RECOMMENDED
Very Polite		gochūmon o onegai dekimasu deshō ka		Uncommon		Too formal

If Not Ready:

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual		mada				One word - acceptable
Polite		chotto matte kudasai				“One moment please”

Pronunciation: chotto = “choh-toh” (a little/moment)

9.14 “That’s all”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual		ijō				One word - acceptable
Polite		ijō desu				DONE ORDERING

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Very Polite		ijō de gozaimasu		Less common		Overly formal

9.15 Food Questions

9.15.1 “What’s in this?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual	?	kore nani haitteru?				Too casual
Polite		kore ni wa nani ga haitte imasu ka				INGREDIENTS
Very Polite		kochira ni wa nani ga haitte orimasu deshō ka		Uncommon		Formal

9.15.2 “Is this spicy?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual	?	kore karai?				With friends
Polite		kore wa karai desu ka				RECOMMENDED
Very Polite		kochira wa karō gozaimasu deshō ka		Rare		Too formal

9.15.3 “Is this raw?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual	?	kore nama?				Too casual
Polite		kore wa nama desu ka				UNCOOKED?

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Very Polite		kochira wa nama de gozaimasu ka		Less common		Formal

10 DURING MEAL PHRASES

10.1 ESSENTIAL MEAL RITUALS

10.1.1 “Let’s eat” (Before Eating)

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Standard		itadakimasu				ALWAYS SAY BEFORE EATING

NO VARIATIONS - This phrase is the same across all politeness levels and regions. It shows gratitude.

Pronunciation: itadakimasu = “ee-tah-dah-kee-mahs” (NOT “ee-tah-dah-kee-mahss”)

10.1.2 “Thank you for the meal” (After Eating)

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual		gochisōsama				With close friends
Polite		gochisōsama deshita				ALWAYS SAY AFTER EATING

Pronunciation: - gochisōsama = “goh-chee-soh-sah-mah” (ō = long “oh” sound) - deshita = “deh-shee-tah”

Regional Notes: Same across all regions - universal politeness marker.

10.2 “This is delicious”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual (Male)		umai				Men only, casual
Casual		oishii				Friends/family
Polite		oishii desu				RECOMMENDED
Very Polite		taihen oishū gozaimasu		Rare		High-end kaiseki

Enhanced Compliments:

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Meaning
Polite		totemo				“Very
		oishii desu				delicious”
Polite		sugoku				“Really
		oishii desu				delicious”

Pronunciation: - oishii = “oh-ee-shee” (NOT “oh-shy”) - totemo = “toh-teh-moh” - sugoku = “soo-goh-koo”

Regional Notes: - Osaka: May hear ~ (umai na~) from locals - very casual - All regions appreciate compliments!

10.3 “Excuse me” (Getting Attention)

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Standard		sumimasen				MOST
						COMMON -
						USE THIS
Very Polite		osore irimasu		Less common		High-end restaurants

Regional Variations:

Region	Alternative	Romaji	Notes
Osaka		suimasen	Contracted form, very common
Casual		chotto	“Hey” - too casual for tourists

Pronunciation: sumimasen = “soo-mee-mah-sen” (NOT “soo-mee-mah-zen”)

10.4 “More water please”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual		omizu				Too short
Polite		omizu o				WATER
		kudasai				REFILL
Very Polite		omizu o itadake- masu deshō ka		Less common		Formal

Note: Water is FREE at all Japanese restaurants - never hesitate to ask!

10.5 “Another beer please”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual		bīru mō				With friends
Polite		ippai bīru o mō ippai kudasai				BEER REFILL
Very Polite		bīru o mō ippai itadake- masu deshō ka		Uncommon		Too formal

Pronunciation: - mō = “moh” (more/another) - ippai = “eep-pie” (one glass/cup)

10.6 “Refill please” (Rice - FREE)

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual		okawari				Acceptable casual
Polite		okawari kudasai				RICE REFILL (FREE)
Polite		gohan no okawari kudasai				More explicit
Very Polite		gohan no okawari o itadake- masu deshō ka		Less common		Formal

Important: Rice refills () are FREE at most teishoku restaurants!

10.7 Tableware Requests

10.7.1 “Chopsticks please”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual		ohashi				Too short
Polite		ohashi o kudasai				CHOPSTICKS
Very Polite		ohashi o itadake- masu deshō ka		Uncommon		Too formal

10.7.2 Other Tableware

Item	Japanese	Romaji	Polite Form
Fork		fōku	
Spoon		supūn	
Knife		naifu	
Plate		osara	
Small plate		kozara	
Napkin		napukin	
Wet towel		oshibori	

Pronunciation: - ohashi = “oh-hah-shee” - oshibori = “oh-shee-boh-ree”

10.8 “Where’s the bathroom?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual	?	toire doko?				Too casual
Polite		otearai wa doko desu ka				POLITE - RECOM- MENDED
Polite		toire wa doko desu ka				CASUAL WORD, POLITE FORM
Very Polite		otearai wa dochira deshō ka		Less common		Formal

Regional Notes: - (otearai) = more polite word for toilet/bathroom - (toire) = direct from English “toilet” - acceptable but less refined - Both understood everywhere

Pronunciation: - otearai = “oh-teh-ah-rye” - doko = “doh-koh” (where)

10.9 Problem Situations

10.9.1 “This isn’t what I ordered”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual		chūmon to chigau				Too direct
Polite		chūmon to chi- gaimasu				WRONG ORDER
Very Polite		gochūmon to kotonatte orimasu ga		Less common		Formal

10.9.2 “I’m still waiting for...”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual	[]	[ryōri] mada kitenai				Too casual
Polite	[]	[ryōri] ga mada kite imasen				MISSING ORDER
Very Polite	[]	[ryōri] ga mada maitte orimasen ga		Uncommon		Very formal

Example: (rāmen ga mada kite imasen) = “The ramen hasn’t come yet”

10.9.3 “This is cold” (food temperature)

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual		kore tsumetai				Too direct
Polite		kore wa tsumetai desu				FOOD IS COLD
Very Polite		kochira samete orimasu ga		Less common		Formal complaint

Follow-up Request:

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Meaning
Polite		atatamete kudasai				“Please heat this up”

10.10 “I’m full”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual		onaka ippai				With friends
Polite		onaka ippai desu				SATISFIED

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Very Polite		onaka ga ippai ni nari- mashita		Less common		Formal

Pronunciation: onaka = “oh-nah-kah” (stomach)

10.11 “Can I take this home?” (Leftovers)

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual	?	mochikaereru?				Too casual
Polite		mochikaere masu ka				CAN I TAKE OUT?
Very Polite		omochikae dekimasu deshō ka		Less common		Formal

Container Request:

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto
Polite		omochikae yō no yōki o kudasai			

IMPORTANT: Many restaurants in Japan do NOT allow takeout of leftovers due to food safety concerns. Always ask first.

11 PAYMENT PHRASES

11.1 “Check please”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual		kaikai				One word - acceptable
Polite		okaikei o onagai shimasu				MOST FORMAL - RECOM- MENDED
Polite		okanjo onagai shimasu				COMMON - RECOM- MENDED

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Very Polite		okaikai o onagai dekimasu deshō ka		Less common		Overly formal

Regional Notes: - Both forms used everywhere - (okaikai) = more formal - (okanjo) = slightly more casual but still polite

Pronunciation: - okaikai = “oh-kye-keh” - okanjo = “oh-kahn-joh”

11.2 “How much is it?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual	?	ikura?				Too casual
Polite		ikura desu ka				TOTAL COST?
Very Polite		oikura deshō ka		Less common		Formal

Pronunciation: ikura = “ee-koo-rah” (how much)

11.3 “Together please” vs “Separate please”

11.3.1 One Bill for Everyone

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual		issho de				Common casual
Polite		issho de onagai shimasu				ONE BILL
Very Polite		goissho de onagai dekimasu deshō ka		Uncommon		Too formal

11.3.2 Split Bills

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual		betsubetsu de				Common casual
Polite		betsubetsu de onagai shimasu				SEPARATE BILLS

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Very Polite		betsubetsu ni shite itadake- masu deshō ka		Less common		Formal

11.3.3 Split Evenly (Dutch Treat)

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual Polite		warikan de warikan ni shimasu				With friends SPLIT EVENLY

Pronunciation: - isscho = “ees-shoh” (together) - betsubetsu = “beh-tsoo-beh-tsoo” (separate) - warikan = “wah-ree-kahn” (split bill)

Regional Notes: - Tokyo: Separate bills common - Osaka: More communal payment culture, but accommodates - Some restaurants may NOT split bills - ask first

11.4 “I’ll treat you”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual Polite		ogoru yo gochisō shimasu				Friends only I’M PAYING
Very Polite		gochisō sasete itadaki- masu		Less common		Very formal

Alternative:

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Meaning
Polite		watashi ga zen’in-bun haraimasu				“I’ll pay for everyone”

11.5 Payment Location

11.5.1 “Where do I pay?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual	?	doko de harau?				Too casual
Polite		doko de haraimasu ka				WHERE TO PAY?
Very Polite		dochira de oshiharai sureba yoroshii deshō ka		Uncommon		Too formal

11.5.2 “Can I pay here?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual	?	koko de haraeru?				Too casual
Polite		koko de harae-masu ka				PAY AT TABLE?
Very Polite		kochira de oshiharai dekimasu deshō ka		Less common		Formal

What Staff Might Say:

Japanese	Romaji	Meaning
	reji de onegai shimasu	“Please pay at the register”
	kochira de daijōbu desu	“Here is fine”

Common Practice: Most restaurants = pay at register. High-end = pay at table.

11.6 Payment Method

11.6.1 “Cash”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Standard		genkin de				PAYING CASH

11.6.2 “Card”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Standard		kādo de				PAYING BY CARD

More Specific:

Payment Type	Japanese	Romaji
Credit card		kurejitto kādo de
Debit card		debitto kādo de

11.6.3 “What cards do you accept?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual	?	dono kādo tsukaeru?				Too casual
Polite		dono kādo ga tsukae masu ka				ACCEPTED CARDS?
Very Polite		dono kādo ga goriyō kanō deshō ka		Uncommon		Too formal

Specific Card Brands:

Card	Japanese	Question Form
Visa	VISA	VISA
Mastercard		
JCB	JCB	JCB
American Express		

IMPORTANT: Some small restaurants are CASH ONLY. Always carry cash!

11.6.4 “Cash only?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual	?	genkin nomi?				Acceptable
Polite		genkin nomi desu ka				RECOMMENDED

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Very Polite		genkin nomi de gozaimasu ka		Less common		Too formal

11.7 “Receipt please”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual		ryōshūsho				One word - acceptable
Polite		ryōshūsho o kudasai				RECEIPT
Very Polite		ryōshūsho o itadake- masu deshō ka		Less common		Formal

Pronunciation: ryōshūsho = “ryoh-shoo-shoh” (receipt)

Note: In Japan, receipts are usually given automatically.

11.7.1 “Is tax included?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual	?	zeikomi?				Acceptable short form
Polite		zeikomi desu ka				TAX INCLUDED?
Very Polite		zeikomi de gozaimasu ka		Less common		Formal

What You Might See: - (zeikomi) = tax included - (zeinuki) = tax not included - (shōhizei) = consumption tax (10% as of 2024)

11.8 Final Thanks

11.8.1 “Thank you very much”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual		arigatō				Friends only

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Polite		arigatō				STANDARD - PRESENT TENSE
Polite (Past)		goza-arigatō				AFTER SERVICE - USE THIS
Very Polite		makoto ni arigatō goza-imashita		Less common		Very formal

When Leaving: - Use past tense: (arigatō gozaimashita) - Also acceptable: (gochisōsama deshita)

Pronunciation: - arigatō = “ah-ree-gah-toh” (NOT “ah-ree-gah-toe”) - gozaimasu = “goh-zye-mahs” (NOT “goh-zye-mahss”) - gozaimashita = “goh-zye-mah-shee-tah”

12 DIETARY RESTRICTIONS

12.1 CRITICAL ALLERGY PHRASES

12.1.1 “I have an allergy”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual		arerugī aru				Too casual - unsafe
Polite		arerugī ga arimasu				GENERAL STATEMENT
Very Polite		arerugī o motte orimasu		Less common		Formal

Pronunciation: arerugī = “ah-reh-roo-ghee” (allergy)

12.1.2 “I’m allergic to [food]”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual	[]	[tabemono] no arerugī				Incomplete - unsafe
Polite	[]	[tabemono] no arerugī ga arimasu				SPECIFIC ALLERGEN

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Very Polite	[]	[tabemono] no arerugī o motte orimasu		Less common		Formal

Examples: - (tamago no arerugī ga arimasu) = “I’m allergic to eggs” - (ebi no arerugī ga arimasu) = “I’m allergic to shrimp” - (komugi no arerugī ga arimasu) = “I’m allergic to wheat”

12.1.3 “I can’t eat [food]”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual	[]	[tabemono] taber- arenai				Too casual
Polite	[]	[tabemono] ga taber- aremasen				CANNOT EAT
Very Polite	[]	[tabemono] o shokusuru koto ga dekimasen		Rare		Too formal

12.1.4 “Does this contain [food]?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual	[] ?	kore [tabemono] haitteru?				Too casual
Polite	[]	kore ni [tabe- mono] wa haitte imasu ka				CHECK IN- GREDIENTS
Very Polite	[]	kochira ni [tabemono] wa fukumarete orimasu deshō ka		Less common		Formal

Examples: - (kore ni tamago wa haitte imasu ka) = “Does this contain eggs?” - (kore ni pīnattsu wa haitte imasu ka) = “Does this contain peanuts?”

12.1.5 “Can you make it without [food]?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual	[] ?	[tabemono]- nashi de tsukureru?				Too casual
Polite	[]	[tabemono]- nashi de tsukure- masu ka				SUBSTITUTION REQUEST
Very Polite	[]	[tabemono] o suite itadake- masu deshō ka		Less common		Formal

12.1.6 “This is a serious allergy”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Polite		kore wa jūdai na arerugī desu				EMPHASIZE SEVERITY
Very Polite		kochira wa jūtoku na arerugī de gozaimasu		Less common		Very formal

Alternative:

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Meaning
Polite		omoi arerugī hannō ga deru kamo shiremasen	“I might have a severe reaction”

12.1.7 “I carry an EpiPen”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual		epipen motteru				Too casual
Polite		epipen o motte imasu				EMERGENCY MEDICATION

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Very Polite		epipen o shoji shite orimasu		Less common		Formal

Note: EpiPen () is understood in Japan. Show the device if needed.

12.2 Common Allergens - Quick Reference

English	Japanese	Romaji	Phrase Pattern
Shellfish		kōkaku-rui	
Peanuts		rakkasei	
Tree nuts		nattsu-rui	
Eggs		tamago	
Milk/Dairy		nyūseihin	
Wheat		komugi	
Soy		daizu	
Fish		sakana	
Shrimp		ebi	
Crab		kani	
Sesame		goma	
Buckwheat		soba	
Gluten		guruten	

CRITICAL NOTE: Buckwheat () is one of Japan's most serious allergens. Many restaurants share equipment.

12.3 VEGETARIAN/VEGAN PHRASES

12.3.1 "I'm vegetarian"

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual		bejitarian				One word - incomplete
Polite		bejitarian desu				STATE PREFERENCE
Very Polite		bejitarian de gozaimasu		Less common		Formal

12.3.2 "I'm vegan"

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual		bīgan				One word - incomplete
Polite		bīgan desu				NO ANIMAL PRODUCTS
Very Polite		bīgan de gozaimasu		Less common		Formal

IMPORTANT: Vegetarian/vegan concepts less common in traditional Japanese cuisine. Be specific!

12.3.3 “I don’t eat meat”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual		niku tabenai				Too casual
Polite		niku o tabe-masen				NO MEAT
Very Polite		niku wa kuchi ni itashimasen		Rare		Very formal

12.3.4 “I don’t eat fish either”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual		sakana mo tabenai				Too casual
Polite		sakana mo tabe-masen				NO FISH
Very Polite		sakana mo kuchi ni itashimasen		Rare		Very formal

CRITICAL: In Japan, many “vegetarian” dishes use fish broth (dashi). Always clarify!

12.3.5 “Does this have meat broth?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual	?	niku no dashi haitteru?				Too casual

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Polite		kore ni wa niku no dashi ga haitte imasu ka				CHECK BROTH
Very Polite		kochira ni wa niku no dashi ga fukumarete orimasu ka		Less common		Formal

12.3.6 “Does this have fish sauce?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual	?	gyoshō haitteru?				Too casual
Polite		kore ni wa gyoshō ga haitte imasu ka				FISH SAUCE CHECK
Very Polite		kochira ni wa gyoshō ga fukumarete orimasu deshō ka		Less common		Formal

12.3.7 “Is the dashi vegetarian?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual	?	dashi wa yasai bēsu?				Too casual
Polite		dashi wa yasai bēsu desu ka				BROTH BASE
Very Polite		dashi wa yasai bēsu de gozaimasu ka		Less common		Formal

CRITICAL: Most Japanese dashi uses: - (katsuobushi) = bonito/fish flakes - (niboshi) = dried sardines - (kombu) = kelp (vegetarian)

Only Buddhist temple restaurants (- shōjin ryōri) guaranteed vegetarian.

12.3.8 “Do you have vegetarian options?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual	?	bejitarian ryōri aru?				Too casual
Polite		bejitarian ryōri wa arimasu ka				VEGGIE OPTIONS?
Very Polite		bejitarian- muke no oryōri wa gozaimasu deshō ka		Less common		Formal

12.3.9 “Plant-based only please”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	When to Use
Casual		shokubutsusei nomi de				Acceptable
Polite		shokubutsusei nomi de onagai shimasu				PLANTS ONLY
Very Polite		shokubutsusei no mono dake de onagai dekimasu deshō ka		Less common		Formal

12.4 Dietary Preference Terms

English	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
Vegetarian		bejitarian	No meat/fish
Vegan		bīgan	No animal products
Halal		harāru	Islamic dietary law
Kosher		kōshā	Jewish dietary law
Gluten-free		guruten furī	No gluten
Dairy-free		nyūseihin-nashi	No dairy
Low-carb		tei-tōshitsu	Low carbohydrate

Regional Notes: - Tokyo: More vegetarian/vegan options in trendy areas (Shibuya, Harajuku) - Kyoto: Buddhist temple food (shōjin ryōri) naturally vegetarian - Osaka: Fewer vegetarian options, but improving

13 MENU VOCABULARY REFERENCE

13.1 Restaurant Types (Regional Specialties)

Type	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Notes
Ramen shop		rāmen-ya	popular	popular	popular	Regional broth preferences
Sushi restaurant		sushi-ya	Edo-style	famous	Traditional	Tokyo: Nigiri focus
Izakaya		izakaya		Very social	Traditional	Osaka: Loudest atmosphere
Conveyor belt sushi		kaiten-zushi				Affordable option
Yakiniku		yakiniku		Popular		Korean BBQ style
Okonomiyaki restaurant		okonomiyaki-ya			Less common	Osaka specialty
Takoyaki stand		takoyaki-ya	Available	Origin city	Rare	Osaka invention
Kushikatsu restaurant		kushikatsu-ya	Available	Specialty	Less common	Osaka: Shinsekai area
Kaiseki restaurant		kaiseki-ryōri	High-end	Available	Traditional center	Kyoto: Most refined
Udon/soba shop		udon/soba-ya	popular	popular	popular	Regional preferences

Regional Ramen Styles: - **Tokyo** (): (shōyu rāmen) - soy sauce base, clear brown broth - **Osaka** (): (tonkotsu rāmen) - pork bone, creamy white broth (from Kyushu influence) - **Kyoto** (): (tori-paitan rāmen) - chicken broth, lighter/refined

13.2 Ramen Varieties (Regional Notes)

English	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto
Soy sauce ramen		shōyu rāmen	Classic style	Available	Available
Miso ramen		miso rāmen	Popular	Available	Available
Pork bone ramen		tonkotsu rāmen	Available	Very popular	Less common
Salt ramen		shio rāmen	Available	Available	Refined style
Chicken broth ramen		tori-paitan rāmen	Growing trend	Available	Traditional
Dipping noodles		tsukemen	Originated here	Popular	Available

13.3 Sushi Types (All Regions)

English	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
Hand-pressed sushi		nigiri-zushi	Fish on rice ball
Rolled sushi		maki-zushi	Rice and filling in seaweed
Hand roll		temaki	Cone-shaped
Scattered sushi		chirashi-zushi	Sushi rice bowl with toppings
Tuna		maguro	Most common
Salmon		sāmon	Popular with tourists
Fatty tuna		ō-toro	Premium/expensive
Yellowtail		hamachi	Young yellowtail
Eel		unagi	Grilled freshwater eel
Sea urchin		uni	Expensive delicacy
Salmon roe		ikura	Salmon eggs
Egg omelet		tamago	Sweet egg sushi

Pronunciation Tips: - (maguro) = “mah-goo-roh” - (hamachi) = “hah-mah-chee” - (uni) = “oo-nee” (NOT “you-knee”)

13.4 Rice Bowls - Donburi (All Regions)

English	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
Beef bowl		gyūdon	Cheap, fast, everywhere
Pork cutlet bowl		katsudon	Breaded pork with egg
Chicken and egg bowl		oyakodon	Literally “parent-child bowl”
Tempura bowl		tendon	Tempura over rice
Eel bowl		unadon	Grilled eel over rice

Pronunciation: - (don/donburi) = “dohn” or “dohn-boo-ree” - (oyakodon) = “oh-yah-koh-dohn”

13.5 Noodles (Regional Preferences)

English	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto
Thick wheat noodles		udon	Available	Specialty	Available
Buckwheat noodles		soba	Specialty	Available	Traditional
Fried noodles		yakisoba			

English	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto
Curry udon		karē udon	Popular	Very popular	Available

Regional Notes: - **Osaka:** Famous for thick, chewy (udon) - **Tokyo:** Known for (soba) culture - **Kyoto:** Traditional (soba) preparation

13.6 Grilled Foods - Yakitori (All Regions)

English	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
Grilled chicken skewers		yakitori	Various chicken parts
Chicken thigh		momo	Most popular
Chicken skin		kawa	Crispy
Chicken meatball		tsukune	Ground chicken
Green onion chicken		negima	Chicken with leek

Ordering: Usually ordered by stick (= ippon = one stick)

13.7 Izakaya Foods (All Regions)

English	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
Soybean		edamame	Boiled green soybeans
Fried chicken		karaage	Japanese-style
Fried tofu		agedashi dōfu	In broth
Grilled fish		yakizakana	Salt-grilled
Potato salad		poteto sarada	Japanese-style

13.8 Osaka Specialties

English	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
Savory pancake		okonomiyaki	Cabbage pancake - OSAKA SPECIALTY
Octopus balls		takoyaki	Fried octopus balls - OSAKA INVENTION
Deep-fried skewers		kushikatsu	Breaded skewers - Shinsekai specialty
Steamed bun		butaman	Pork bun (Osaka term)

Regional Difference: - Osaka: (butaman) - Tokyo: (nikuman) - Same item, different name!

13.9 Kyoto Specialties

English	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
Buddhist vegetarian cuisine		shōjin ryōri	Temple food, completely vegetarian
Simple tofu hot pot		yudofu	Kyoto specialty
Pickled vegetables		tsukemono	Kyoto famous for variety
Traditional multi-course		kaiseki-ryōri	Most refined in Kyoto

13.10 Drinks - Non-Alcoholic (All Regions)

English	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
Water		mizu	FREE everywhere
Hot water		oyu	FREE
Green tea		ocha	Usually FREE
Coffee		kōhī	Hot or iced
Iced coffee		aisu kōhī	Very popular
Oolong tea		ūron-cha	Common
Calpis		karupisu	Sweet milky drink
Ramune		ramune	Marble soda

Pronunciation: - (ocha) = “oh-chah” - (karupisu) = “kah-roo-pee-soo” (sounds like “cow piss” - avoid saying in English!)

13.11 Drinks - Alcoholic (All Regions)

English	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
Beer		bīru	Most popular
Draft beer		nama-bīru	Fresh draft
Japanese sake		nihon-shu	Rice wine
Hot sake		atsukan	Warmed sake
Cold sake		reishu	Chilled sake
Shochu		shōchū	Distilled spirit
Highball		haibōru	Whiskey and soda
Chu-hai		chūhai	Shochu with soda
Plum wine		umeshu	Sweet plum liqueur

Beer Sizes: - (dai jokki) = Large mug - (chū jokki) = Medium mug - (shō jokki) = Small mug

Pronunciation: - (nama-bīru) = “nah-mah bee-roo” - (shōchū) = “shoh-choo”

13.12 Condiments (All Regions)

English	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
Soy sauce		shōyu	Essential
Wasabi		wasabi	Japanese horseradish
Pickled ginger		gari	Sushi accompaniment
Sesame seeds		goma	Common topping
Seven-spice blend		shichimi	Spicy powder
Japanese mustard		karashi	Hot mustard
Ponzu		ponzu	Citrus soy sauce
Tonkatsu sauce		tonkatsu sōsu	Sweet thick sauce

13.13 Taste Descriptors

English	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
Delicious		oishii	Most common
Sweet		amai	Sugary
Spicy hot		karai	Chili hot
Salty		shiokarai	Too salty
Sour		suppai	Acidic
Umami		umami	Savory
Light		assari	Light, refreshing
Rich		nōkō	Rich, thick
Crispy		karikari	Crunchy
Chewy		mochimochi	Chewy texture
Soft		fuwafuwa	Fluffy

Pronunciation: - (oishii) = “oh-ee-shee” - (mochimochi) = “moh-chee-moh-chee”

14 RESTAURANT ETIQUETTE QUICK GUIDE

14.1 ESSENTIAL DO’S

14.1.1 ALWAYS Do These:

1. **Say** (itadakimasu) before eating
 - Shows gratitude for food
 - Everyone says it together
 - No politeness variations - same for all
2. **Say** (gochisōsama deshita) after eating
 - Thank you for the meal
 - Say when leaving table
 - Universal across Japan
3. **Slurp noodles**
 - NOT rude - shows appreciation!
 - Cools hot noodles
 - Especially ramen, soba, udon
4. **Lift rice bowl when eating**

- Hold bowl in hand
 - Eat over bowl
 - Don't leave on table
 - 5. **Finish everything on your plate**
 - Shows appreciation
 - Leaving food can be wasteful
 - Okay to say “ ” if too much
 - 6. **Pour drinks for others first**
 - Never pour your own
 - Wait for others to pour yours
 - Group dining courtesy
 - 7. **Use wet towel () for HANDS ONLY**
 - Not for face
 - Use before eating
 - Return when done
-

14.2 CRITICAL DON'TS

14.2.1 NEVER Do These:

1. **NO TIPPING**
 - Can offend staff
 - Service included in price
 - Just say thank you
 2. **Don't stick chopsticks upright in rice**
 - (tate-bashi)
 - Resembles funeral incense
 - Very bad luck/disrespectful
 3. **Don't pass food chopstick to chopstick**
 - (hashi-watashi)
 - Funeral bone ritual
 - Use plate as intermediary
 4. **Don't rub disposable chopsticks together**
 - (kosuri-bashi)
 - Implies cheap quality
 - Insults restaurant
 5. **Don't walk while eating**
 - (aruki-nagara tabenai)
 - Considered very rude
 - Sit or stand still
 6. **Don't blow your nose at table**
 - Go to restroom
 - Very rude in Japan
 - Sniffing is better
 7. **Don't pour your own drink (when with others)**
 - Wait for companion to pour
 - Social etiquette
 - Pour for others first
-

14.3 Chopstick Etiquette Summary

14.3.1 CORRECT Chopstick Use:

- Hold properly (upper moves, lower stays still)
- Use chopstick rest when not eating
- Pinch food gently
- Keep tips parallel

14.3.2 WRONG Chopstick Use (Taboos):

Taboo	Japanese	Romaji	Why It's Wrong
Standing in rice		tate-bashi	Funeral ritual
Passing food		hashi-watashi	Funeral bone ceremony
Licking		name-bashi	Unhygienic
Pointing		sashi-bashi	Rude gesture
Hovering		mayoi-bashi	Indecisive/rude
Stabbing		sashi-bashi	Improper use
Moving dishes		yose-bashi	Use hands

14.4 Sushi-Specific Etiquette

1. **Eat nigiri in ONE BITE**
 - Don't bite in half
 - If too big, ask for smaller pieces
2. **Dip FISH side in soy sauce**
 - Not rice side
 - Rice absorbs too much
3. **Don't mix wasabi in soy sauce**
 - Put wasabi directly on sushi
 - Chef already added correct amount
4. **Use fingers OR chopsticks**
 - Both acceptable
 - Fingers traditional
 - Chopsticks also fine
5. **Pickled ginger () between pieces**
 - Palate cleanser
 - Not eaten WITH sushi

14.5 Payment Etiquette

1. **Pay at register (most restaurants)**
 - Not at table
 - Take bill to front
 - Look for (reji) sign
2. **Place cash/card in tray**
 - Don't hand directly
 - Use small tray provided
 - Change returned in tray
3. **NO TIPPING - EVER**
 - Service included

- Can be insulting
- Just say thank you

14.6 Regional Etiquette Differences

Behavior	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto
Conversation volume	Quieter	Louder/more energetic	Very quiet
Standing on escalator	Left side	Right side	Right side
Formality level	More formal	More casual/friendly	Most formal
Staff interaction	Professional distance	Chatty/warm	Polite/reserved

END OF RESTAURANT GUIDE

Total Coverage: - Tiered politeness for all conversational phrases - Regional variations (Tokyo/Osaka/Kyoto)
 - One-line scannable format - Dining stage organization - Tourist essential markers - Pronunciation tips - 500+ vocabulary items - Complete etiquette guide - Dietary restrictions with safety emphasis - Regional food specialties

15 II. COMPLETE VOCABULARY BY CATEGORY

15.1 A. SHOPPING

Quick Reference: All shopping phrases include politeness tiers and regional variations (Tokyo/Osaka/Kyoto)

15.2 ESSENTIAL SHOPPING PHRASES (Tiered by Politeness)

15.2.1 “Can I try this on?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Context
Casual		shichaku dekiru?				Friends shopping together
Polite		shichaku shite mo ii desu ka				USE THIS - Standard polite
Very Polite		shichaku sasete itadake-masu deshō ka				Luxury boutiques, formal shops

Tokyo: Department stores (Mitsukoshi, Isetan) expect very polite in high-end areas **Osaka:** Clerks are more casual; polite level is sufficient everywhere **Kyoto:** Traditional shops near temples prefer very polite; modern areas accept polite

Price Expectations: Department stores ¥5,000-50,000+, Boutiques ¥3,000-30,000, Chain stores ¥1,000-10,000

15.2.2 “Just looking / browsing”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Context
Casual		miteru dake				Young people's shops (WEGO, Spinns)
Polite		mite iru dake desu				USE THIS - Most common
Alternative		hitori de mite imasu				“Looking by myself” (clerks back off)

Tokyo: Clerks hover more; use alternative to get space **Osaka:** Less aggressive sales approach **Kyoto:** Traditional shops may leave you alone automatically

15.2.3 “How much is this?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Context
Casual		kore ikura?				Street vendors, casual shops
Polite		kore wa ikura desu ka				USE THIS - Safe everywhere
Polite Alt.		o-nedan wa?				Elegant phrasing for upscale shops
Very Polite		o-nedan o oshiete itadake-masu ka		Rare		Luxury boutiques (Ginza, Gion)

Regional Shopping Culture: - **Tokyo Ginza:** Expect ¥10,000+ items; very polite expected - **Osaka Shinsaibashi:** Bargaining sometimes acceptable in small shops - **Kyoto Kawaramachi:** Mix of traditional (formal) and modern (casual OK)

15.2.4 “Do you have this in a different size?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Context
Casual		chigau saizu aru?				Fast fashion (GU, Uniqlo)
Polite		chigau saizu wa arimasu ka				USE THIS
Specific - Larger		wan saizu ue wa arimasu ka				One size up
Specific - Smaller		wan saizu shita wa arimasu ka				One size down
Very Polite		chigau saizu o o-mochi deshō ka				Designer boutiques

Size Culture Notes: - Japanese sizes run small (US M = JP L typically) - Asking for XXL may require “ ” (plus-size specialty shops) - Osaka shops more likely to stock wider size ranges

15.2.5 “Can I try a different color?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Context
Casual		chigau iro aru?				Casual retailers
Polite		chigau iro wa arimasu ka				USE THIS
Polite Alt.		hoka no iro o misete moraemasu ka				“Can you show me other colors?”
Very Polite		hoka no o-iro wa gozaimasu ka		Rare		High-end shops

Popular Shopping Colors (by region): - **Tokyo:** Black, white, navy, gray (conservative work culture) - **Osaka:** Brighter colors accepted in daily wear - **Kyoto:** Subdued traditional colors (indigo, tea brown, plum)

15.2.6 “I’ll take this / I’ll buy this”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Context
Casual		kore kudasai				Perfectly acceptable everywhere

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Context
Polite		kore o itadaki- masu				Slightly more formal
Polite Alt.		kore o kaimasu				“I’ll buy this”
Very Polite		kochira o itadaki- masu				Luxury purchases

Note: “ ” (kudasai) alone is common and polite enough for all contexts.

15.2.7 “Do you accept credit cards?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Context
Casual		kādo tsukaeru?				Small shops, asking peers
Polite		kurejitto kādo wa tsukae masu ka				USE THIS
Polite Alt.		kādo de harae masu ka				“Can I pay by card?”
Very Polite		kurejitto kādo de no o-shiharai wa kanō deshō ka		Rare		Formal establishments

Payment Culture: - **Tokyo:** 90%+ accept cards; contactless common - **Osaka:** More cash-based small shops in traditional areas - **Kyoto:** Tourist areas accept cards; neighborhood shops may be cash only - **Minimum purchase:** Some small shops require ¥1,000+ for card use

15.2.8 “This is too expensive / Do you have something cheaper?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Context
Direct		takasugimasu				Can sound rude in Tokyo
Polite		motto yasui mono wa arimasu ka				USE THIS
Polite Alt.		o-tegori na kakaku no mono wa arimasu ka				“More affordable option?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Context
Osaka-style		mō chotto makete kurehen?	Avoid		Avoid	Osaka dialect bargaining

Bargaining Culture: - **Tokyo:** Almost never acceptable; fixed prices - **Osaka:** Small shops/markets may negotiate; try politely - **Kyoto:** Traditional crafts fixed price; flea markets negotiable - **Never bargain:** Department stores, chain stores, luxury boutiques

15.2.9 “Can I return/exchange this?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Context
Casual		henpin dekiru?				Not recom- mended
Polite		kore o henpin dekimasu ka				Return request
Polite Alt.		kore o kōkan dekimasu ka				Exchange request
Very Polite		henpin sasete itadakitai no desu ga				Formal return

Return Policies (stricter than Western countries): - **Tokyo Department Stores:** Usually 7-14 days with receipt, unworn - **Osaka Local Shops:** May not accept returns (exchange only) - **Kyoto Traditional:** Often no returns (inspect carefully before buying) - **All regions:** Sale items typically final sale

15.2.10 “Is this tax-free?” (For tourists)

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Context
Casual		menzei?				Too abrupt
Polite		menzei dekimasu ka				USE THIS
Polite Alt.		menzei sābisu wa arimasu ka				“Do you have tax-free service?”
Very Polite		menzei taiō shite itadake- masu ka				Upscale shops

Tax-Free Shopping: - **Minimum:** ¥5,000 per store (consumables), ¥5,000 (general goods) - **Tokyo:** Tax-free counters in all major areas (Shibuya, Shinjuku, Ginza) - **Osaka:** Abundant in Namba, Umeda, Shinsaibashi - **Kyoto:** Common in tourist districts (Kawaramachi, near temples) - **Bring passport:** Required for all tax-free purchases

15.2.11 “Where is the fitting room?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Context
Casual		shichakushitsu doko?				Very casual shops only
Polite		shichakushitsu wa doko desu ka				USE THIS
Very Polite		shichakushitsu wa dochira deshō ka				Upscale boutiques

Fitting Room Rules (stricter than West): - Remove shoes before entering (slippers usually provided) - Item limit: Often 3-5 pieces maximum - No photos in many stores - Must remove makeup carefully (makeup guards provided)

15.2.12 “Does this look good on me? / Does it suit me?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Context
Casual		niau?				Asking friends
Polite - Opinion		dō miemasu ka				Asking clerk “How does it look?”
Polite - Suit		watashi ni niaimasu ka				“Does it suit me?”
Very Polite		o-niai deshō ka				Formal shops

Note: Clerks will almost always say yes (Japanese customer service). Ask friends for honest opinions.

15.2.13 “It’s too big/small/tight/loose”

Fit Issue	Polite Japanese	Romaji	Notes
Too big		ōkisugimasu	Common issue for Westerners
Too small		chīsasugimasu	Common for Japanese sizes
Too long		nagasugimasu	Pants, sleeves
Too short		mijikasugimasu	Dress length, etc.
Too tight		kitsusugimasu	Waist, chest
Too loose		yurusugimasu	Baggy fit

Fit Issue	Polite Japanese	Romaji	Notes
Perfect fit		pittari desu	Just right!

Use everywhere: These are standard polite forms acceptable in all regions.

15.2.14 “I need a bag” vs “I don’t need a bag”

Phrase	Japanese	Romaji	Context
Bag please		fukuro o kudasai	Standard request
I need a bag		fukuro ga hitsuyō desu	More direct
I don’t need a bag		fukuro wa irimasen	Eco-conscious
I have my own bag		mai baggu ga arimasu	Common in Japan

Environmental Note: Plastic bags now cost ¥3-5 in most stores (law since 2020). Bring eco-bag ().

Regional Bag Culture: - **Tokyo:** Strong eco-bag culture, expect charges - **Osaka:** More merchants offer free small bags still - **Kyoto:** Traditional shops may provide beautiful paper bags (free)

15.3 CLOTHING VOCABULARY

15.3.1 1. Clothing Items (Complete)

15.3.1.1 Tops (25 items)

English	Japanese	Romaji	Price Range (¥)
Shirt	T	shatsu	2,000-15,000
T-shirt		T-shatsu	1,000-8,000
Blouse		burausu	3,000-20,000
Sweater		sētā	3,000-30,000
Cardigan		kādigan	3,000-25,000
Hoodie		pākā	2,000-12,000
Jacket		jaketto	5,000-50,000
Coat		kōto	10,000-100,000
Down jacket		daun jaketto	8,000-80,000
Raincoat		rein kōto	3,000-15,000
Vest		besuto	2,000-15,000
Tank top		tanku toppu	1,000-5,000
Camisole		kyamisōru	1,000-6,000
Polo shirt		poro shatsu	2,000-10,000
Dress shirt		wai shatsu	2,000-15,000
Turtleneck		tātoru nekkū	2,000-20,000
Sweatshirt		torēnā	2,000-10,000
Blazer		burezā	8,000-50,000
Long-sleeve shirt		nagasode shatsu	2,000-12,000
Short-sleeve shirt		hansode shatsu	1,500-10,000
Sleeveless shirt		nō surību	1,500-8,000
Henley shirt		henrī nekkū	2,000-10,000

English	Japanese	Romaji	Price Range (¥)
Button-down shirt		botan daun shatsu	3,000-15,000
Flannel shirt		furanneru shatsu	3,000-12,000
V-neck shirt	V	V-nekku shatsu	1,500-10,000

15.3.1.2 Bottoms (20 items)

English	Japanese	Romaji	Price Range (¥)
Pants	/	pantsu / zubon	3,000-20,000
Jeans		jīnzu	3,000-25,000
Shorts		shōto pantsu	2,000-10,000
Skirt		sukāto	3,000-20,000
Leggings		reginsu	1,000-5,000
Dress	/	wanpīsu / doresu	5,000-50,000
Overalls		ōbā ōru	5,000-20,000
Culottes		kyurotto	3,000-15,000
Cargo pants		kāgo pantsu	3,000-15,000
Sweatpants		suwetto pantsu	2,000-10,000
Chinos		chinopan	3,000-15,000
Slacks		surakkusu	4,000-25,000
Mini skirt		mini sukāto	2,000-12,000
Long skirt		rongu sukāto	3,000-18,000
Pleated skirt		purītsu sukāto	3,000-20,000
A-line skirt	A	A-rain sukāto	3,000-18,000
Pencil skirt		taito sukāto	3,000-18,000
Maxi dress		makishi wanpīsu	5,000-30,000
Jumpsuit		janpu sūtsu	5,000-30,000
Romper		ronpāsu	3,000-15,000

15.3.1.3 Underwear & Basics (15 items)

English	Japanese	Romaji	Price Range (¥)
Underwear		shitagi	500-5,000
Panties		pantī	500-3,000
Briefs		burīfu	500-2,000
Boxers		torankusu	500-3,000
Boxer briefs		bokusā burīfu	800-3,000
Bra		burajā	1,500-8,000
Sports bra		supōtsu bura	1,500-6,000
Undershirt		hadagi	800-3,000
Socks		kutsushita	300-2,000
Stockings		sutokkingu	300-1,500
Tights		taitsu	500-2,000
Thermal underwear		hītotekku	1,000-2,500
Long underwear		rongu andā uea	1,500-5,000
Slip		surippu	1,500-6,000
Camisole (under)		innā kyamisōru	1,000-4,000

Shopping Tips: - **Uniqlo/GU:** Budget basics (¥500-3,000) - **Department store underwear:** Wacoal, Triumph (¥3,000-10,000) - **Heattech:** Uniqlo's thermal line, essential for winter (¥1,000-2,000)

15.3.1.4 Outerwear (15 items)

English	Japanese	Romaji	Price Range (¥)
Winter coat		fuyuyō kōto	15,000-150,000
Trench coat		torencchi kōto	10,000-80,000
Pea coat		pī kōto	10,000-50,000
Parka		pākā kōto	15,000-100,000
Windbreaker		uindo burēkā	3,000-20,000
Poncho		poncho	3,000-15,000
Cape		kēpu	5,000-30,000
Bomber jacket		bonbā jaketto	8,000-40,000
Denim jacket		denimu jaketto	5,000-25,000
Leather jacket		rezā jaketto	20,000-150,000
Fleece jacket		furīsu jaketto	3,000-15,000
Rain jacket		ama gappa	2,000-15,000
Suit jacket		uwagi	15,000-100,000
Track jacket		jāji	3,000-15,000
Vest coat		besuto kōto	8,000-40,000

Regional Climate Notes: - **Tokyo:** Cold winters (need down coat Dec-Feb) - **Osaka:** Milder, lighter coats sufficient - **Kyoto:** Humid summers, cold winters (need versatile outerwear)

15.3.1.5 Traditional Clothing (10 items)

English	Japanese	Romaji	Price Range (¥)	Where to Buy
Kimono		kimono	10,000-1,000,000+	Specialty shops, dept. stores
Yukata		yukata	3,000-30,000	Summer, festival shops
Hakama		hakama	8,000-50,000	Formal wear shops
Haori		haori	5,000-100,000	Kimono shops
Obi		obi	3,000-200,000	Kimono accessories
Geta		geta	2,000-15,000	Shoe shops, souvenir stores
Zōri		zōri	3,000-30,000	Formal footwear shops
Tabi		tabi	500-3,000	Kimono accessory shops
Jinbei		jinbei	2,000-8,000	Summer clothing shops
Happi coat		happi	2,000-10,000	Festival shops, souvenir stores

Rental Options (cheaper than buying): - **Tokyo:** Asakusa kimono rental ¥3,000-10,000/day - **Osaka:** Dotonbori yukata rental ¥3,000-8,000/day - **Kyoto:** Gion kimono rental ¥3,000-15,000/day (most authentic)

15.3.2 2. Footwear (Complete)

15.3.2.1 Shoe Types (30 items)

English	Japanese	Romaji	Price Range (¥)
Shoes		kutsu	3,000-50,000
Sneakers		sunīkā	4,000-30,000
Running shoes		ranningu shūzu	5,000-25,000
Boots		būtsu	8,000-60,000
Ankle boots		shōto būtsu	6,000-40,000
Knee-high boots		rongu būtsu	10,000-60,000
Rain boots		rein būtsu	2,000-10,000
Snow boots		sunō būtsu	5,000-20,000
Sandals		sandaru	2,000-15,000
Flip-flops		bīchi sandaru	500-3,000
Slippers		surippa	500-5,000
Indoor slippers		shitsunai baki	1,000-5,000
Heels		hīru	5,000-40,000
High heels		hai hīru	6,000-50,000
Pumps		panpusu	5,000-30,000
Wedges		wejji sōru	5,000-25,000
Flats		furatto shūzu	3,000-20,000
Ballet flats		baree shūzu	3,000-20,000
Loafers		rōfā	5,000-30,000
Oxfords		okkusufōdo	8,000-40,000
Slip-ons		surippon	3,000-15,000
Mules		myūru	4,000-25,000
Clogs		kuroggsu	3,000-15,000
Espadrilles		esupadorīyu	3,000-15,000
Dress shoes		doresu shūzu	8,000-50,000
Work boots		wāku būtsu	10,000-40,000
Hiking boots		tozangutsu	8,000-40,000
Sandals (formal)		sutorappu	5,000-30,000
		sandaru	
Platform shoes		atsuzoko kutsu	5,000-25,000
Boat shoes		dekki shūzu	5,000-20,000

Shoe Shopping Tips: - **Japanese sizes:** Measured in cm (22.0-30.0cm typically) - **Width:** Many brands offer 2E, 3E, 4E widths (E = wider) - **ABC Mart:** Popular chain with affordable options - **Odakyu/Keio:** Department store shoe floors have quality options

15.3.2.2 Shoe Sizes (Complete) **How to find your size:** Measure foot in cm, ask “ ” (nan senchi desu ka)

Size (cm)	Japanese	Men's US	Women's US	Notes
22.0cm	22	-	5	Women's small
23.0cm	23	-	6	Women's average
24.0cm	24	6	7	Women's/Men's overlap
25.0cm	25	7	8	Unisex common
26.0cm	26	8	9	Men's average
27.0cm	27	9	10	Men's common
28.0cm	28	10	11	Men's large
29.0cm	29	11	12	Harder to find
30.0cm	30	12	13	Specialty stores

Size Issues: - **Large feet (28cm+):** Try (senmon-ten = specialty stores) - **Wide feet:** Ask for (habahiro) or 3E/4E width - **Narrow feet:** Ask for (hosume)

15.3.3 3. Bags & Accessories (Complete)

15.3.3.1 Bags (25 items)

English	Japanese	Romaji	Price Range (¥)
Bag	/	kaban / baggu	3,000-100,000+
Backpack		ryukkusakku	5,000-40,000
Handbag		hando baggu	10,000-200,000
Tote bag		tōto baggu	2,000-30,000
Shoulder bag		shorudā baggu	5,000-50,000
Messenger bag		messenjā baggu	5,000-30,000
Clutch		kuratchi baggu	3,000-50,000
Suitcase		sūtsukēsu	10,000-80,000
Wallet		saifu	3,000-50,000
Coin purse		kozeni ire	1,000-10,000
Pouch		pōchi	1,000-8,000
Cosmetic bag		keshō pōchi	1,500-10,000
Eco bag		eko baggu	500-3,000

Popular Bag Brands: - **Tokyo:** Porter, Anello, Samantha Thavasa - **Osaka:** More affordable brands, outlet malls - **Kyoto:** Traditional fabric bags, local artisan shops

15.3.4 4. Sizes & Measurements (Complete)

15.3.4.1 Letter Sizes (Standard)

English	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
Extra small	XS	XS	Rare in Japan
Small	S ()	S (esu)	Common Japanese size
Medium	M ()	M (emu)	Most common
Large	L ()	L (eru)	Larger than Western L
Extra large	XL	XL	Hard to find
Free size		furī saizu	One size (usually fits S-M)

Important: Japanese sizes run 1-2 sizes smaller than US/EU sizes.

15.3.4.2 Japanese Women's Sizes

Japanese Size	Japanese	US Size	UK Size	EU Size
Size 5	5 (go-gō)	0-2	4-6	30-32
Size 7	7 (nana-gō)	4	8	34
Size 9	9 (kyū-gō)	6	10	36
Size 11	11 (jū-ichi-gō)	8	12	38
Size 13	13 (jū-san-gō)	10	14	40

Japanese Size	Japanese	US Size	UK Size	EU Size
Size 15	15 (jū-go-gō)	12	16	42

Size Phrases: - “What size do you wear?” = (nan saizu desu ka) - “I’m a size M” = M (M saizu desu) - “Do you have plus sizes?” = (ōkii saizu wa arimasu ka)

15.3.4.3 Fit Descriptors

English	Japanese	Romaji	Usage
Too big		ōkisugimasu	Common complaint
Too small		chīsasugimasu	Very common
Too tight		kitsusugimasu	Waist, chest
Too loose		yurusugimasu	Baggy
Perfect fit		pittari	Just right!
A bit big		sukoshi ōkii	Slightly large
A bit small		sukoshi chīsai	Slightly small

15.3.5 5. Colors (Complete)

15.3.5.1 Basic Colors (20 items)

English	Japanese	Romaji	Popular in Japan?
Black	/	kuro / burakku	Most popular
White	/	shiro / howaito	Very common
Navy	/	kon / neibī	Business standard
Gray	/	haiiro / gurē	Work wear
Beige		bēju	Neutral favorite
Brown	/	chairo / buraun	Classic
Red	/	aka / reddo	Accent color
Blue	/	ao / burū	Common
Green	/	midori / gurīn	Less common
Pink		pinku	Women’s wear
Purple	/	murasaki / pāpuru	Accent
Yellow	/	kiiro / ierō	Rare
Orange		orenji	Rare

Color Culture: - **Tokyo:** Black, navy, gray dominate (conservative business culture) - **Osaka:** More acceptance of brighter colors - **Kyoto:** Traditional colors (indigo, tea, plum) in traditional wear

15.3.5.2 Patterns (15 items)

English	Japanese	Romaji	Popularity
Solid		muji	Most common
Striped		sutoraipu	Business shirts
Checkered		chekku	Casual wear
Floral		hanagara	Women’s wear
Polka dot		mizutama	Retro/cute style

English	Japanese	Romaji	Popularity
Plaid		tātan chekku	Winter wear

15.3.6 6. Materials (Complete)

15.3.6.1 Fabrics (25 items)

English	Japanese	Romaji	Price Quality
Cotton	/	men / kotton	Budget-Mid
Polyester		poriesuteru	Budget
Wool	/	yōmō / ūru	Mid-High
Silk	/	kinu / shiruku	High-Luxury
Cashmere		kashimia	Luxury
Linen	/	asa / rinen	Mid-High
Denim		denimu	Mid
Leather	/	kawa / rezā	High

Quality Questions: - “What’s this made of?” = (kore wa nan no sozai desu ka) - “Is this 100% cotton?” = 100% (kore wa men hyaku pāsento desu ka)

15.4 ADVANCED SHOPPING PHRASES

15.4.1 Asking About Stock

Phrase	Japanese	Romaji	Context
Do you have this in stock?		kore wa zaiko ga arimasu ka	Checking availability
When will you restock?		itsu nyūka shimasu ka	Out of stock item
Is this the last one?		kore wa saigo no hitotsu desu ka	Final item
Can you check in the back?		bakkuyādo o kakunin shite moraemasu ka	Request stock check

15.4.2 Asking About Sales/Discounts

Phrase	Japanese	Romaji	Context
Is this on sale?		kore wa sēru chū desu ka	Sale status
When is the next sale?		tsugi no sēru wa itsu desu ka	Timing question
Do you have coupons?		kūpon wa arimasu ka	Discount inquiry
Can I use points?		pointo wa tsukae masu ka	Loyalty program

Sale Seasons in Japan: - **New Year Sale** (): Jan 2-3 (huge discounts) - **Winter Sale:** Late December - February - **Summer Sale:** July - August - **Black Friday:** Growing in popularity (late November)

15.4.3 Gift Shopping

Phrase	Japanese	Romaji	Context
It's a gift		purezento desu	Gift purpose
Gift wrap please		gifuto rappingu o onegai shimasu	Wrapping request
Can you put a ribbon on it?		ribon o tsukete moraemasu ka	Add ribbon
Separate bags please		betsubetsu no fukuro de onegai shimasu	Multiple gifts

Gift Culture: Japanese gift wrapping is elaborate and beautiful. Department stores offer free wrapping.

15.5 STORE TYPES & LOCATIONS

15.5.1 Major Store Types

Store Type	Japanese	Romaji	Price Level	Examples
Department store		depāto	Mid-High	Mitsukoshi, Isetan, Takashimaya
Shopping mall		shoppingu mōru	Mid	Lumine, Marui
Outlet store		autoretto	Budget-Mid	Gotemba, Rinku
Fast fashion		fasuto fasshon	Budget	Uniqlo, GU, Zara
Boutique		butikku	High	Independent designers
Thrift store		furugi-ya	Budget	2nd Street, Mode Off
Convenience store		konbini	Budget	7-Eleven, Lawson, FamilyMart

15.5.2 Shopping Districts by Region

15.5.2.1 Tokyo Shopping Areas

Area	Japanese	Best For	Price Level
Ginza		Luxury brands, department stores	High-Luxury
Shibuya		Youth fashion, trends	Budget-Mid
Harajuku		Alternative fashion, streetwear	Budget-Mid
Shinjuku		Everything, department stores	All levels
Omotesando		Designer boutiques	High
Asakusa		Traditional items, souvenirs	Budget-Mid
Akihabara		Electronics, anime goods	Budget-Mid

15.5.2.2 Osaka Shopping Areas

Area	Japanese	Best For	Price Level
Shinsaibashi		Fashion, department stores	Mid
Namba		Souvenirs, street shopping	Budget-Mid
Umeda		Department stores, underground mall	Mid-High
Amerikamura		Streetwear, youth fashion	Budget
Tenjinbashi		Local shopping arcade	Budget

15.5.2.3 Kyoto Shopping Areas

Area	Japanese	Best For	Price Level
Kawaramachi		Modern fashion, department stores	Mid
Gion		Traditional crafts, kimono	High-Luxury
Teramachi		Shopping arcade, variety	Budget-Mid
Kyoto Station		Department stores, souvenirs	Mid-High

15.6 PAYMENT & CHECKOUT PHRASES

15.6.1 “What’s the total?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Context
Polite		zenbu de ikura desu ka	USE THIS
Polite Alt.		gōkei wa ikura desu ka	“What’s the sum total?”
Casual		ikura?	Markets only

15.6.2 “Is tax included?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Context
Polite		zeikomi desu ka	USE THIS
Polite Alt.		zeikomi de ikura desu ka	“How much with tax?”

Note: Japanese prices often shown as (zeikomi = tax-included) or (zeinuki = before tax). Final price at register may differ.

15.6.3 Payment Method Questions

Payment Type	Phrase	Japanese	Romaji
Credit card	Can I pay by card?		kādo de harae masu ka
Cash	Cash only?		genkin no mi desu ka
Contactless	Can I use contactless?		hi-sesshoku kessai wa tsukae masu ka

Payment Type	Phrase	Japanese	Romaji
QR payment	Can I use PayPay?		peipei wa tsukae masu ka

Common Payment Apps in Japan: - PayPay (most popular) - Line Pay - Rakuten Pay - d (D-barai)

15.7 RETURN & EXCHANGE POLICIES

15.7.1 Return Phrases (Use Carefully)

Situation	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
I want to return this		kore o henpin shitai desu	Serious request
Can I exchange this?		kore o kōkan dekimasu ka	Exchange preferred
This is defective		kore wa furyō-hin desu	Manufacturing defect
It doesn't fit		saizu ga aimasen	Size issue
I changed my mind		ki ga kawarimashita	Honest but may be refused

Japanese Return Culture (Stricter than West): - Many stores **no returns** policy () - Exchange more acceptable than refund - Must have receipt () - Unworn, tags attached () - Time limit usually 7-14 days - Sale items often final

Regional Differences: - **Tokyo department stores:** More flexible (7-14 days) - **Osaka local shops:** Often exchange only, no returns - **Kyoto traditional shops:** Inspect before buying - usually no returns

15.8 SHOPPING ETIQUETTE & CULTURE

15.8.1 Important Cultural Rules

1. **Remove shoes in fitting rooms** - Slippers usually provided
2. **Use makeup guards** - Place tissue over face when trying on tops
3. **Don't bargain** - Fixed prices except flea markets
4. **Bring eco-bag** - Plastic bags cost ¥3-5 (since 2020 law)
5. **Be quiet** - Don't talk loudly on phone
6. **Return items to original location** - If not buying
7. **Wait in line** - No cutting, orderly queues
8. **Cash still common** - Have yen for small shops

15.8.2 Staff Interaction

Common staff phrases (you'll hear): - (irasshaimase) - Welcome! (no need to respond) - (nanika o-sagashi desu ka) - Looking for something? - (o-kaikei yoroshii desu ka) - Ready to check out? - (arigatō gozaimashita) - Thank you! (say back)

If you need space to browse: - “ ” (hitori de mite imasu) = “I'm looking by myself” - “ ” (daijōbu desu) = “I'm okay/fine”

15.8.3 Regional Shopping Personalities

Tokyo: - Staff more formal, hover more - Expect perfect presentation - Rush hour shopping intense - Best for: Trends, variety, department stores

Osaka: - Staff friendlier, more casual - Better prices in local shops - Less crowded than Tokyo - Best for: Value, street shopping, outlets

Kyoto: - Traditional shops very formal - Modern areas similar to Tokyo - Tourist pricing in some areas - Best for: Traditional crafts, kimono, souvenirs

15.9 QUICK REFERENCE: ONE-LINE SCANNER

Need to find something fast? Use Ctrl+F to search:

- Try on → “Can I try this on?”
 - Size → “Do you have this in a different size?”
 - Price → “How much is this?”
 - Bag → “I need a bag” vs “I don’t need a bag”
 - Return → “Can I return/exchange this?”
 - Tax-free → “Is this tax-free?”
 - Big/Small → “It’s too big/small/tight/loose”
 - Colors → “Can I try a different color?”
 - Credit → “Do you accept credit cards?”
 - Sale → “Is this on sale?”
-

15.10 APPENDIX: Store Chains & Price Ranges

15.10.1 Budget Fashion (¥500-5,000)

Store	Japanese	Specialty	Quality
Uniqlo		Basics, quality	Best value
GU		Trendy, very cheap	Decent
Shimamura		Family clothing	Basic
WEGO		Youth streetwear	Fun

15.10.2 Mid-Range (¥5,000-20,000)

Store	Japanese	Specialty	Quality
Zara		Fast fashion trends	Good
H&M		European style	OK
Muji		Minimalist basics	Excellent
Beams		Select shop	Great

15.10.3 High-End (¥20,000+)

Store	Specialty	Locations
Isetan	Department store	Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto
Mitsukoshi	Luxury dept. store	Major cities

Store	Specialty	Locations
Takashimaya	Premium shopping	Major cities
Matsuya Ginza	Luxury brands	Tokyo Ginza

END OF SHOPPING VOCABULARY

For complete language foundations, see Section 01 For grammar and sentence patterns, see Section 03 (if available)

16 HOTELS - COMPLETE VOCABULARY & PHRASES

16.1 Table of Contents

- Hotel Types & Regional Context
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 - During Stay - Problems
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 - Onsen Etiquette & Phrases
-

16.2 Hotel Types & Regional Context

English	Japanese	Romaji	Common in	Notes
Regular hotel		hoteru	All regions	Western-style standard hotel
Business hotel		bijinesu hoteru	Tokyo, Osaka	Budget, compact, functional rooms
Ryokan		ryokan	Kyoto, hot spring areas	Traditional Japanese inn
Minshuku		minshuku	Rural areas	Family-run guesthouse
Capsule hotel		kapuseru hoteru	Tokyo, Osaka	Pod-style sleeping compartments
Love hotel		rabu hoteru	Urban areas	Short-stay themed hotels

English	Japanese	Romaji	Common in	Notes
Guest house		gesuto hausu	Kyoto, tourist areas	Budget accommodation, shared facilities
Hostel		hosuteru	All cities	Dormitory-style budget lodging
Resort hotel		rizōto hoteru	Okinawa, Hokkaido	Full-service vacation hotel
Onsen hotel		onsen hoteru	Hot spring areas	Hotel with hot spring baths
City hotel		shiti hoteru	Tokyo, Osaka	Urban full-service hotel
Pension		penshon	Mountain/rural areas	Small Western-style inn

16.3 Regional Hotel Culture Guide

16.3.1 Tokyo Hotels (Business-Focused)

Atmosphere: Efficient, professional, minimal small talk **Typical Hotels:** Business hotels, city hotels, capsule hotels **Service Style:** Fast check-in/out, self-service amenities, automated systems **Staff Interaction:** Polite but brief, focused on speed **Expected Politeness:** Polite form (standard business Japanese)

Cultural Notes: - Often have automated check-in kiosks - Breakfast typically buffet-style, quick service - Less likely to have personal recommendations - Staff may speak some English in major hotels - Rooms are compact and efficiently designed

16.3.2 Osaka Hotels (Casual-Friendly)

Atmosphere: Warm, friendly, helpful staff **Typical Hotels:** Business hotels, city hotels, guesthouses **Service Style:** Personal touch, staff may chat, offer local tips **Staff Interaction:** Friendly, may use casual-polite mix **Expected Politeness:** Polite form, but relaxed atmosphere

Cultural Notes: - Staff often provide local food recommendations - More likely to help with directions and tips - May use Kansai dialect expressions - Warmer, more conversational service - Budget options are abundant

16.3.3 Kyoto Ryokan (Traditional)

Atmosphere: Formal, traditional, reverent **Typical Hotels:** Ryokan, traditional inns, onsen hotels **Service Style:** Attentive, anticipatory, ceremonial **Staff Interaction:** Very polite, formal greetings, traditional service **Expected Politeness:** Very polite form required

Cultural Notes: - Remove shoes at entrance (genkan) - Wear provided yukata/slippers - Futon bedding prepared by staff - Kaiseki meals served in room or dining area - Public baths (onsen/ofuro) available - Quieter, more respectful atmosphere expected

16.4 Ryokan vs Western Hotels

16.4.1 Key Differences

Aspect	Ryokan (Traditional)	Western Hotel	Notes
Entrance	Remove shoes at genkan	Keep shoes on	Ryokan provide slippers
Flooring	Tatami mats	Carpet/wood	Don't wear slippers on tatami
Bedding	Futon on floor	Western bed	Staff lay out/put away futon
Clothing	Yukata provided	Regular clothes	Wear yukata in building/onsen
Meals	Kaiseki included	Breakfast only/separate	Elaborate multi-course dinner
Bath	Communal onsen/ofuro	Private bathroom	Wash before entering bath
Service	Nakai (room attendant)	Housekeeping	Personal service in ryokan
Atmosphere	Quiet, formal	Casual	Respect traditional etiquette

16.4.2 Phrases Specific to Ryokan

English	Japanese	Romaji	Context
Where should I remove my shoes?		Doko de kutsu o nugimasu ka	Entrance area
May I wear the yukata to dinner?		Yukata de yūshoku ni ikemasu ka	Dress code
What time will you prepare the futon?		Futon wa nan-ji ni shiite itadakemasu ka	Evening service
What time is kaiseki dinner?		Kaiseki ryōri wa nan-ji desu ka	Meal timing
Where is the communal bath?		Dai-yokujō wa doko desu ka	Onsen location
Men's/women's bath	/	Otoko-yu/onna-yu	Bath designation
Private bath available?		Kashikiri-buro wa arimasu ka	Reserved bathing
What time does the bath close?		Ofuro wa nan-ji made desu ka	Bath hours

16.5 Room Types & Features

English	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
Single room		shinguru rūmu	One single bed
Double room		daburu rūmu	One double bed
Twin room		tsuin rūmu	Two single beds
Triple room		toripuru rūmu	Three beds
Suite		suīto	Multiple rooms, premium
Japanese-style room		washitsu	Tatami mats, futon bedding
Western-style room		yōshitsu	Standard bed, Western furniture
Smoking room		kitsuen-shitsu	Smoking permitted
Non-smoking room		kin'en-shitsu	No smoking
Room with bath		basu-tsuki heya	Private bathroom
Room with view		keshiki no yoi heya	Scenic view
Deluxe room		derakkusu rūmu	Upgraded amenities
Standard room		sutandādo rūmu	Basic room type
Economy room		ekonomī rūmu	Budget option
Connecting rooms		konekutingu rūmu	Adjoining rooms with door
Accessible room		baria furī rūmu	Wheelchair accessible
Corner room		kado-beya	Room at building corner
Executive room		eguzekutibu rūmu	Business-class room
Family room		famirī rūmu	Large room for families
Studio room		sutajio rūmu	Open-plan layout
Junior suite		junia suīto	Smaller suite
Penthouse		pentohausu	Top-floor luxury suite
Ocean view		ōshan byū	Facing ocean
Mountain view		yama-gawa	Facing mountains
City view		machi-gawa	Facing city
Garden view		teien-gawa	Facing garden
Upper floor		kōsō-kai	High floor
Lower floor		teisō-kai	Low floor
Quiet room		shizuka na heya	Away from noise
Pet-friendly room		petto-ka no heya	Allows pets

16.6 Hotel Vocabulary

16.6.1 Room Items

English	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
Bed		beddo	Standard bed
Single bed		shinguru beddo	One-person bed
Double bed		daburu beddo	Two-person bed
Queen bed		kuin beddo	Larger bed
King bed		kingu beddo	Largest bed

English	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
Pillow		makura	Head cushion
Extra pillow		tsuika no makura	Additional pillow
Blanket		mōfu	Warm cover
Sheets		shītsu	Bed linen
Duvet		kake-buton	Comforter
Mattress		mattoresu	Bed base
Bedside table		beddo saido tēburu	Nightstand
Lamp		ranpu	Light fixture
Bedside lamp		beddo saido ranpu	Table lamp
Alarm clock		mezamashi-dokei	Wake-up clock
Television		terebi	TV
Remote control		rimokon	TV/AC remote
Telephone		denwa	Room phone
Desk		tsukue	Work surface
Chair		isu	Seat
Sofa		sofa	Couch
Armchair		āmu chea	Cushioned chair
Table		tēburu	Surface
Closet		kurōzetto	Wardrobe
Wardrobe		wādorōbu	Clothing storage
Hangers		hangā	Clothes hangers
Safe		kinko	Security box
Mini-bar		mini bā	Small refrigerator
Refrigerator		reizōko	Fridge
Kettle		ketoru	Electric kettle
Electric kettle		denki ketoru	Water heater
Tea bags		tī baggu	Tea sachets
Coffee		kōhī	Coffee packets
Cups		kappu	Drinking cups
Glasses		gurasu	Drinking glasses
Mugs		magu kappu	Large cups
Ice bucket		kōri-ire	Ice container
Tray		torei	Serving tray
Mirror		kagami	Reflective surface
Full-length mirror		zenshin-kagami	Body mirror
Window		mado	Opening
Curtains		kāten	Window covering
Blinds		buraindo	Window shades
Blackout curtains		shakō kāten	Light-blocking curtains
Air conditioner		eakon	Climate control
Heater		hītā	Room heater
Fan		senpūki	Electric fan
Humidifier		kashitsuki	Moisture device
Dehumidifier		joshitsuki	Moisture remover
Air purifier		kūki seijōki	Air cleaner
Luggage rack		nimotsu-oki	Suitcase stand
Suitcase stand		sūtsukēsu-oki	Luggage holder
Trash can		gomi-bako	Waste bin
Wastebasket		kuzu-bako	Small bin
Floor lamp		furoa ranpu	Standing light
Ceiling light		tenjō shōmei	Overhead light

English	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
Reading light	USB	dokusho-tō	Book light
Power outlet		konsento	Electrical socket
USB port		USB pōto	Charging port
Door		doa	Entry/exit
Key		kagi	Physical key
Key card		kī kādo	Electronic key
Door chain		doa chēn	Security chain
Peephole		nozoki-ana	Door viewer
Do not disturb sign		doa nobu sain	Privacy sign
Carpet		kāpetto	Floor covering
Tatami mat		tatami	Japanese flooring
Slippers		surippa	Indoor footwear
Robe		basu rōbu	Bathrobe
Nightwear		nemaki	Sleepwear
Yukata		yukata	Light kimono
Notebook		memo-chō	Writing pad
Pen		pen	Writing tool
Hotel directory		kannai-annai	Information booklet
Room service menu		rūmu sābisu menyū	Food ordering menu

16.6.2 Bathroom Items

English	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
Bathroom		yokushitsu	Bath area
Toilet		toire	WC
Western toilet		yōshiki toire	Sit-down toilet
Japanese toilet		washiki toire	Squat toilet
Bidet function		woshuretto	Electronic bidet
Toilet seat		benza	Seat
Toilet paper		toiretto pēpā	Tissue roll
Toilet brush		toire burashi	Cleaning brush
Sink		senmen-dai	Wash basin
Faucet		jaguchi	Tap
Hot water		o-yu	Heated water
Cold water		reisui	Chilled water
Bathtub		yokusō	Bath
Shower		shawā	Shower
Shower head		shawā heddo	Spray nozzle
Shower curtain		shawā kāten	Splash guard
Drain		haisui-kō	Water outlet
Bath mat		basu matto	Floor mat
Towel		taoru	Cloth towel
Bath towel		basu taoru	Large towel
Hand towel		hando taoru	Small towel
Face towel		feisu taoru	Face cloth
Washcloth		sengan taoru	Face washing cloth
Shampoo		shanpū	Hair wash
Conditioner		kondishonā	Hair treatment
Body soap		bodi sōpu	Body wash
Hand soap		hando sōpu	Hand wash
Face soap		sengan fōmu	Facial cleanser

English	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
Shower gel		shawā jeru	Body wash gel
Bar soap		sekken	Solid soap
Toothbrush		ha-burashi	Dental brush
Toothpaste		hamigaki-ko	Dental paste
Dental floss		dentaru furosu	Tooth floss
Mouthwash		mausu wosshu	Oral rinse
Razor		kamisori	Shaving tool
Shaving cream		shēbingu kurīmu	Shave foam
Hair dryer		doraiyā	Hair dryer
Blow dryer		hea doraiyā	Hair dryer
Hair brush		hea burashi	Hair grooming
Comb		kushi	Hair comb
Cotton swabs		menbō	Q-tips
Cotton pads		kotton	Facial pads
Tissues		tisshu	Facial tissue
Toilet tissue		toiretto tisshu	Bathroom tissue
Mirror		kagami	Reflective surface
Makeup mirror		keshō-kagami	Magnifying mirror
Scale		taijū-kei	Weight scale
Bathrobe		basu rōbu	Robe
Bathrobe hook		basu rōbu-kake	Robe hanger
Towel rack		taoru-kake	Towel bar
Shelf		tana	Storage shelf
Cabinet		kyabinetto	Storage unit
Ventilation fan		kankisen	Exhaust fan
Bathroom light		yokushitsu shōmei	Bath lighting
Amenity kit		ameniti kitto	Toiletries set
Slippers		surippa	Bathroom slippers
Laundry bag		randorī baggu	Clothes bag
Sanitary bags		sanitarī baggu	Disposal bags

16.6.3 Amenities & Facilities

English	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
WiFi	WiFi / LAN	waifai / musen LAN	Wireless internet
Internet		intānetto	Network connection
Free WiFi	WiFi	muryō waifai	Complimentary wireless
Parking		chūsha-jō	Car parking
Free parking		muryō chūsha-jō	Complimentary parking
Valet parking		barē pākingu	Attended parking
Breakfast		chōshoku	Morning meal
Buffet breakfast		baikingu chōshoku	Self-service breakfast
Continental breakfast		konchinentaru chōshoku	Light breakfast
Breakfast included		chōshoku-tsuki	Meal included
Restaurant		resutoran	Dining facility
Bar		bā	Drink lounge
Lobby		robī	Reception area

English	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
Front desk		furonto	Reception desk
Concierge		konsheruju	Guest services
Bellhop		beru bōi	Luggage porter
Room service		rūmu sābisu	In-room dining
Housekeeping		hausu kīpingu	Cleaning service
Laundry service		randorī sābisu	Clothes washing
Dry cleaning		dorai kurīningu	Professional cleaning
Laundry room		koin randorī	Self-service laundry
Washing machine		sentaku-ki	Clothes washer
Dryer		kansō-ki	Clothes dryer
Iron		airon	Clothes iron
Ironing board		airon-dai	Ironing surface
Gym		jimu	Fitness center
Fitness center		fittonesu sentā	Exercise facility
Pool		pūru	Swimming pool
Indoor pool		okunai pūru	Inside pool
Outdoor pool		okugai pūru	Outside pool
Hot tub		jagujī	Whirlpool bath
Spa		supa	Wellness center
Sauna		sauna	Steam room
Massage		massāji	Body treatment
Onsen		onsen	Hot spring bath
Public bath		dai-yokujō	Communal bath
Private bath		kashikiri-buro	Reserved bath
Elevator		erebētā	Lift
Stairs		kaidan	Steps
Emergency exit		hijō-guchi	Safety exit
Ice machine		seihyō-ki	Ice maker
Vending machine		jidō-hanbaiki	Drink/snack machine
Drink machine		dorinku jihanki	Beverage vending
Snack machine		sunakku jihanki	Food vending
Convenience store		konbini	Small shop
Gift shop		omiyage-ten	Souvenir store
Business center		bijinesu sentā	Work facilities
Meeting room		kaigi-shitsu	Conference room
Conference room		kanfarensu rūmu	Large meeting space
Banquet hall		enkai-jō	Event space
Smoking area		kitsuen-jo	Designated smoking
Smoking room		kitsuen-shitsu	Indoor smoking area
Non-smoking floor		kin'en furoa	Smoke-free floor
Luggage storage		nimotsu-azukari	Baggage holding
Coin locker		koin rokkā	Paid storage
Safe deposit box		kashi-kinko	Security box
ATM	ATM /	ētiemu / genkin jidō	Cash machine
Currency exchange		azuke-harai-ki	Money exchange
Shuttle service		ryōgae-jo	Transport service
Airport shuttle		shatoru basu	Airport transport
Taxi service		kūkō shatoru	Cab arrangement
Rental car		takushī tehai	Car hire
		rentakā	

English	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
Bicycle rental		jitensha rentaru	Bike hire
Library		raiburarī	Reading room
Garden		teien	Outdoor space
Terrace		terasu	Outdoor area
Rooftop		okujō	Top floor outdoor
Chapel		chaperu	Wedding venue
Kids club		kizzu kurabu	Children's area
Playground		asobi-ba	Play area
Game room		gēmu rūmu	Recreation room
Movie theater		shiatā	Screening room
Karaoke room		karaoke rūmu	Singing room

16.7 Hotel Phrases - Tiered Politeness

16.7.1 Booking/Reservation

16.7.1.1 “I’d like to make a reservation”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Notes
Casual		Yoyaku shitai			×	Friends booking together
Polite		Yoyaku shitai no desu ga				STANDARD
Very Polite		Yoyaku o onegai shitai no desu ga				High-end hotels

Regional Notes: - Tokyo: Staff expect standard polite form, quick transaction - Osaka: Polite form works, staff may respond warmly - Kyoto: Use polite or very polite, especially at ryokan

16.7.1.2 “Do you have availability?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Notes
Polite		Kūshitsu wa arimasu ka				STANDARD
Very Polite		Kūshitsu wa gozaimasu deshō ka				Luxury hotels, ryokan

Regional Notes: - Tokyo: Standard polite sufficient for business hotels - Osaka: Standard polite works everywhere - Kyoto: Very polite appreciated at traditional ryokan

16.7.1.3 “How much per night?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Notes
Casual		Ippaku ikura			×	Very casual
Polite		Ippaku ikura desu ka				STANDARD
Very Polite		Ippaku o-ikura deshō ka				Premium establishments

Regional Notes: - Tokyo: Direct pricing questions acceptable - Osaka: Casual-polite mix common - Kyoto: Very polite form shows respect at high-end ryokan

16.7.1.4 “Is breakfast included?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Notes
Polite		Chōshoku wa tsuite imasu ka				STANDARD
Very Polite		Chōshoku wa tsuite orimasu deshō ka				Formal inquiry

Regional Notes: - Tokyo: Business hotels often have buffet included - Osaka: Ask about local breakfast specialties - Kyoto: Ryokan typically include elaborate Japanese breakfast

16.7.2 Check-in

16.7.2.1 “I’d like to check in”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Notes
Polite		Chekkuin o onagai shimasu				STANDARD
Very Polite		Chekkuin o onagai dekimasu deshō ka				High-end hotels

Regional Notes: - Tokyo: Fast, efficient check-in process - Osaka: Staff may engage in friendly conversation - Kyoto: Formal greeting, may be served tea at ryokan

16.7.2.2 “I have a reservation”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Notes
Casual		Yoyaku shiteru			×	Too casual for hotels
Polite		Yoyaku shite imasu				STANDARD
Very Polite		Yoyaku sasete itadaite orimasu				Very formal

Regional Notes: - Tokyo: State name and confirmation number - Osaka: Friendly acknowledgment expected - Kyoto: Staff will bow and use honorific language

16.7.2.3 “Where is the elevator?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Notes
Polite		Erebētā wa doko desu ka				STANDARD
Very Polite		Erebētā wa dochira deshō ka				More respectful

Regional Notes: - Tokyo: Staff will point or escort you - Osaka: May get extra directions/tips - Kyoto: Ryokan staff often escort guests to room

16.7.2.4 “What time is breakfast?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Notes
Polite		Chōshoku wa nan-ji desu ka				STANDARD
Very Polite		Chōshoku wa nan-ji kara deshō ka				Formal inquiry

Regional Notes: - Tokyo: Buffet typically 6:30-10:00 - Osaka: May be flexible timing - Kyoto: Ryokan serve set breakfast at designated time (7:00-8:30)

16.7.2.5 “What’s the WiFi password?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Notes
Polite	WiFi	Waifai no pasuwādo wa nan desu ka				STANDARD
Very Polite	WiFi	Waifai no pasuwādo o oshiete itadakemasu ka				More polite

Regional Notes: - Tokyo: Often printed on key card or in room - Osaka: Staff will write it down for you - Kyoto: Traditional ryokan may have limited WiFi

16.7.3 During Stay - Requests

16.7.3.1 “Can I have another towel?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Notes
Casual		Taoru mō ichi-mai	×		×	Too abrupt
Polite		Taoru o mō ichi-mai moraemasu ka				STANDARD
Very Polite		Taoru o mō ichi-mai itadakemasu deshō ka				Formal request

Regional Notes: - Tokyo: Call front desk or housekeeping - Osaka: Staff respond quickly and warmly - Kyoto: Ryokan nakai will personally deliver

16.7.3.2 “Please clean my room”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Notes
Polite		Heya o sōji shite kudasai				STANDARD
Very Polite		Heya o sōji shite itadakemasu deshō ka				Respectful

Regional Notes: - Tokyo: Daily service standard in hotels - Osaka: Staff may ask if you need anything else - Kyoto: Ryokan clean while you're at breakfast or out

16.7.3.3 “Can I borrow an iron?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Notes
Polite		Airon o kari-raremasu ka				STANDARD
Very Polite		Airon o o-kari dekimasu deshō ka				More polite

Regional Notes: - Tokyo: Often available at front desk or in-room - Osaka: Staff will bring to room - Kyoto: May not be available in traditional ryokan

16.7.3.4 “I need more toilet paper”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Notes
Casual		Toiretto pēpā chōdai	×	×	×	Too casual
Polite		Toiretto pēpā o kudasai				STANDARD
Very Polite		Toiretto pēpā o itadakemasu ka				Polite request

Regional Notes: - Tokyo: Call housekeeping, quick delivery - Osaka: Staff may bring extra supplies - Kyoto: Ryokan staff very attentive to needs

16.7.4 During Stay - Problems

16.7.4.1 “The air conditioner doesn’t work”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Notes
Polite		Eakon ga ugokimasen				STANDARD
Very Polite		Eakon ga ugokanai no desu ga				Softer complaint

Regional Notes: - Tokyo: Report to front desk, maintenance comes quickly - Osaka: Staff may offer room change immediately - Kyoto: Traditional ryokan may not have AC, use fan/heater

16.7.4.2 “There’s no hot water”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Notes
Polite		O-yu ga demasen				STANDARD
Very Polite		O-yu ga denai no desu ga				Polite problem report

Regional Notes: - Tokyo: Urgent issue, maintenance responds fast - Osaka: Staff apologetic, quick fix - Kyoto: Rare in ryokan (hot spring water system)

16.7.4.3 “The room is too noisy”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Notes
Polite		Heya ga urusa-sugimasu				STANDARD
Very Polite		Heya ga sukoshi sawagashii no desu ga				Softer complaint

Regional Notes: - Tokyo: May offer room change if available - Osaka: Staff will investigate and apologize - Kyoto: Ryokan are typically very quiet

16.7.4.4 “I can’t connect to WiFi”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Notes
Polite	WiFi	Waifai ni setsuzoku dekimasen				STANDARD
Very Polite	WiFi	Waifai ni setsuzoku dekinai no desu ga				Polite issue report

Regional Notes: - Tokyo: Staff can help troubleshoot, English support common - Osaka: May send technician or reset router - Kyoto: Some traditional ryokan have weak/no WiFi

16.7.4.5 “I lost my key”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Notes
Polite		Kagi o nakushi- mashita				STANDARD
Very Polite		Kagi o nakushite shi- maimashite				Apologetic tone

Regional Notes: - Tokyo: Bring ID to front desk, new card issued - Osaka: Staff understanding, quick replacement - Kyoto: Report immediately, may have fee

16.7.5 During Stay - Services

16.7.5.1 “I’d like to order room service”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Notes
Polite		Rūmu sābisu o chūmon shitai desu				STANDARD
Very Polite		Rūmu sābisu o onagai shitai no desu ga				More formal

Regional Notes: - Tokyo: Available at city/business hotels, English menu often available - Osaka: Friendly service, may suggest local specialties - Kyoto: Ryokan serve meals at set times in room or dining area

16.7.5.2 “Can you call a taxi for me?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Notes
Polite		Takushī o yonde moraemasu ka				STANDARD
Very Polite		Takushī o o-yobi itadakemasu deshō ka				Very polite

Regional Notes: - Tokyo: Quick service, taxis abundant - Osaka: Staff may help with directions too - Kyoto: Limited taxis, may need to wait or use hotel shuttle

16.7.5.3 “Can I extend my stay?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Notes
Polite		Shukuhaku o enchō dekimasu ka				STANDARD
Very Polite		Shukuhaku o enchō sasete itadakemasu deshō ka				Very formal

Regional Notes: - Tokyo: Check availability, may need to change rooms - Osaka: Staff flexible if rooms available - Kyoto: Ryokan often fully booked, ask early

16.7.5.4 “Do you have laundry service?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Notes
Polite		Randorī sābisu wa arimasu ka				STANDARD
Very Polite		Randorī sābisu wa gozaimasu ka				Formal inquiry

Regional Notes: - Tokyo: Business hotels often have coin laundry or paid service - Osaka: Ask about pricing, usually per item - Kyoto: High-end ryokan offer laundry service

16.7.6 Check-out

16.7.6.1 “I’d like to check out”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Notes
Polite		Chekkuauto o onegai shimasu				STANDARD
Very Polite		Chekkuauto o onegai dekimasu deshō ka				Formal

Regional Notes: - Tokyo: Fast process, often automated - Osaka: Staff may ask about your stay - Kyoto: Ryokan staff bow deeply, thank you for visit

16.7.6.2 “Can I see my bill?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Notes
Polite		Seikyū-sho o misete moraemasu ka				STANDARD
Very Polite		Seikyū-sho o haiken sasete itadakemasu ka				Very formal

Regional Notes: - Tokyo: Bill ready at front desk, itemized - Osaka: Staff explain charges if asked - Kyoto: Bill often prepared in advance

16.7.6.3 “I’ll pay by credit card”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Notes
Polite		Kādo de haraimasu				STANDARD
Very Polite		Kādo de o-shiharai sasete itadakimasu				Formal

Regional Notes: - Tokyo: Cards widely accepted - Osaka: Credit cards standard - Kyoto: Some smaller ryokan may prefer cash

16.7.6.4 “There’s a mistake on the bill”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Notes
Polite		Seikyū-sho ni machigai ga arimasu				STANDARD
Very Polite		Seikyū-sho ni machigai ga aru yō na no desu ga				Softer approach

Regional Notes: - Tokyo: Staff will review and correct immediately - Osaka: Apologetic, quick resolution - Kyoto: Very apologetic, may offer discount/compensation

16.7.6.5 “Can I leave my luggage here?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Notes
Polite		Nimotsu o azuker- aremasu ka				STANDARD
Very Polite		Nimotsu o o-azukari itadakemasu deshō ka				Very polite

Regional Notes: - Tokyo: Common service, free storage until evening - Osaka: Staff helpful, may store for days - Kyoto: Ryokan usually accommodate, free service

16.7.6.6 “Thank you for your hospitality”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Notes
Polite		Osewa ni narimashita				STANDARD
Very Polite		Taihen osewa ni narimashita				Very thankful

Regional Notes: - Tokyo: Appropriate for all hotels - Osaka: Staff respond warmly - Kyoto: Essential at ryokan, shows cultural awareness

16.8 Onsen Etiquette & Phrases

16.8.1 Onsen Rules (Universal)

1. **Wash before entering** - Thoroughly clean body at washing stations
2. **No clothing** - Enter bath completely naked (small towel to carry OK, don't put in water)
3. **No tattoos** - Many onsen ban visible tattoos (some allow if covered with patches)
4. **Hair up** - Long hair must be tied up, don't let it touch water
5. **Quiet** - Speak softly, onsen are for relaxation
6. **Small towel** - Can bring small towel (tenugui) for modesty, place on head when in bath
7. **Don't swim** - Onsen are for soaking, not swimming
8. **Hydrate** - Drink water before and after

16.8.2 Gender Separation

Japanese	Romaji	English	Sign Color
	Otoko-yu	Men's bath	Blue/Black
	Onna-yu	Women's bath	Red/Pink
	Kon'yoku	Mixed bath	Yellow (rare)
	Kashikiri-buro	Private bath	Green

16.8.3 Onsen Phrases

16.8.3.1 “Where is the onsen/public bath?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
Polite		Dai-yokujō wa doko desu ka	STANDARD
Very Polite		Dai-yokujō wa dochira deshō ka	More formal

16.8.3.2 “What time is the onsen open?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
Polite		Onsen wa nan-ji kara nan-ji made desu ka	STANDARD
Very Polite		Onsen wa nan-ji kara nan-ji made o-hairi itadakemasu ka	Formal

Typical Hours: 6:00-10:00 (morning), 15:00-23:00 (evening)

16.8.3.3 “Do you have private baths?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
Polite		Kashikiri-buro wa arimasu ka	STANDARD
Very Polite		Kashikiri-buro wa gozaimasu deshō ka	Formal

Pricing: Usually extra fee (2,000-5,000 yen for 45-60 minutes)

16.8.3.4 “Are tattoos allowed?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
Polite		Irezumi wa daijōbu desu ka	STANDARD
Very Polite		Tatū ga aru no desu ga nyūyoku dekimasu ka	Explaining situation

Alternative Phrases: - “I have a small tattoo” - (Kakuseba daijōbu desu ka) (Chīsai tatū ga arimasu) - “Can I cover it?” -

16.8.3.5 “Where can I wash my body?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
Polite		Karada o arau basho wa doko desu ka	STANDARD

Process: 1. Enter changing room (脱衣所 datsui-jo) 2. Undress completely, put clothes in basket 3. Take small towel (手ぬぐい tenugui) 4. Enter bath area 5. Sit on stool at washing station (洗い場 arai-ba) 6. Wash thoroughly with soap/shampoo 7. Rinse completely 8. Enter bath

16.8.3.6 “How hot is the water?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
Polite		O-yu wa nan-do kurai desu ka	STANDARD

Typical Temperatures: - 40-42°C (104-108°F) - Standard comfortable temperature - 43-45°C (109-113°F)
- Hot (熱い atsui) - 38-40°C (100-104°F) - Warm (ぬるい nurui)

16.8.3.7 “Is there a rotenburo (outdoor bath)?”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
Polite		Rotenburo wa arimasu ka	STANDARD
Very Polite		Rotenburo wa gozaimasu ka	Formal

16.8.3.8 “This is my first time at an onsen”

Politeness	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
Polite		Hajimete onsen ni hairimasu	STANDARD
Very Polite		Onsen wa hajimete na no desu ga	Asking for guidance

Staff Response: They will explain the rules and process

16.8.4 Onsen Vocabulary

English	Japanese	Romaji	Notes
Hot spring		onsen	Natural hot spring
Public bath		dai-yokujō	Large communal bath
Outdoor bath		rotemburo	Open-air bath
Indoor bath		uchiyu	Indoor hot spring
Private bath		kashikiri-buro	Reserved/family bath
Changing room		datsui-jo	Undressing area
Locker		rokkā	Storage locker
Basket		kago	Clothes basket
Small towel		tenugui	Modesty towel
Bath towel		basu taoru	Large drying towel
Washing area		arai-ba	Shower stations
Stool		isu	Sitting stool
Bucket		oke	Water bucket
Shampoo		shanpū	Hair wash
Soap		sekken	Body soap
Shower		shawā	Shower
Water fountain		mizu-nomi-ba	Drinking water
Sauna		sauna	Steam room
Cold bath		mizu-buro	Cold plunge
Jacuzzi		jagujī	Jet bath
Milky bath		hakudaku-yu	Cloudy mineral water
Clear bath		tōmei-yu	Clear water
Salt bath		shio-yu	Saltwater bath
Sulfur bath		iō-sen	Sulfur spring

16.8.5 Regional Onsen Differences

16.8.5.1 Tokyo Area Onsen

- **Style:** Modern, clean facilities
- **Type:** Often super-sento (large public baths) or spa facilities
- **Notable:** Odaiba Oedo Onsen, Hakone day trips
- **Atmosphere:** Less traditional, more like spa experience

16.8.5.2 Osaka Area Onsen

- **Style:** Mix of traditional and modern
- **Type:** Neighborhood sento (public bath houses) common
- **Notable:** Spa World (themed baths)
- **Atmosphere:** Casual, local regulars

16.8.5.3 Kyoto Area Onsen

- **Style:** Traditional, ryokan-attached
- **Type:** Natural hot springs in scenic areas
- **Notable:** Arashiyama, Kurama areas
- **Atmosphere:** Peaceful, respectful, traditional

16.8.5.4 Famous Onsen Towns

- **Hakone** (near Tokyo) - Sulfur springs, mountain views
- **Kinosaki** (near Kyoto) - Seven public baths, yukata town stroll

- **Beppu** (Kyushu) - Variety of spring types, “hells” (jigoku)
- **Kusatsu** (Gunma) - Strong acidic waters, yumomi performance

Total Phrases: 350+ - Hotel Types: 12 - Regional Culture Guides: 3 regions - Ryokan vs Western: Complete comparison - Room Types: 30+ - Vocabulary: 200+ terms - Tiered Politeness Phrases: 50+ core interactions - Onsen Section: Complete etiquette guide

Coverage Complete: Tiered politeness (casual/polite/very polite) Regional variations (Tokyo/Osaka/Kyoto) Ryokan vs Western hotel differences Check-in/out regional differences Onsen etiquette integrated with phrases Scannable quick-find format Cultural context for each region

This comprehensive guide provides hotel vocabulary and phrases with appropriate politeness levels for different regions and hotel types throughout Japan. Use regional notes to adapt your language to the local culture and hotel style.

17 SECTION IV: CULTURAL GUIDE

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- **A. Regional Differences**
 - **B. Etiquette Guide**
 - **C. Safety Guide**
-

17.2 A. Regional Differences

Understanding regional differences in Japan will enhance your travel experience and help you navigate social situations more effectively. Each region has its own personality, customs, and characteristics.

17.2.1 Tokyo ()

17.2.1.1 Personality & Pace Tokyo is Japan’s fast-paced, bustling capital. Life moves quickly here, and efficiency is paramount. People are always on the move, and the city operates with clockwork precision. The atmosphere is professional, business-oriented, and cosmopolitan.

17.2.1.2 Social Behaviors

- **Reserved and formal:** Tokyoites tend to be more formal and reserved, especially with strangers
- **Less likely to engage:** Random conversations with strangers are rare
- **Professional demeanor:** Even casual interactions maintain a level of formality
- **Personal space highly valued:** People keep to themselves on trains and public spaces
- **Queue discipline:** Perfect adherence to queuing etiquette

17.2.1.3 Communication Style

- **Standard Japanese (hyōjungo):** Tokyo dialect is considered standard Japanese
- **Direct but polite:** Communication is straightforward but maintains politeness
- **Business-like tone:** Even in casual settings, there’s a professional quality
- **Less expressive:** Body language and vocal inflection are more subdued
- **English signage:** Most common of all Japanese cities

17.2.1.4 Dining Culture

- **International variety:** Every cuisine imaginable is available
- **Trendy and innovative:** Latest food trends start here
- **Expensive options:** High-end dining is prevalent
- **Late-night dining:** Many 24-hour options available
- **Solo dining normalized:** Eating alone is completely acceptable
- **Michelin-starred density:** Highest concentration of Michelin stars in the world

17.2.1.5 Restaurant Service Methods

- **Efficient and quick:** Service is fast-paced
- **Minimal interaction:** Staff are attentive but not chatty
- **Call button system:** Most restaurants have call buttons at tables
- **Self-service water:** Often self-serve water stations
- **English menus:** More common than other cities

17.2.1.6 Business Hours

- **Extended hours:** Many shops open 10:00-21:00 or later
- **24-hour options:** Abundant convenience stores and some restaurants
- **Later start times:** Businesses may open later than other cities
- **Late nightlife:** Bars and clubs stay open very late
- **Sunday operations:** Most businesses operate seven days a week

17.2.1.7 Nightlife

- **Extensive and diverse:** Every type of nightlife imaginable
- **District-specific:** Roppongi (international), Shibuya (young), Shinjuku (diverse), Ginza (upscale)
- **Late trains:** Trains run until midnight-1:00 AM
- **All-night options:** Karaoke, internet cafes, and some bars operate 24/7
- **Safe even late:** Generally safe at all hours

17.2.1.8 Cost of Living

- **Expensive:** One of the world's most expensive cities
- **Accommodation:** Hotels ¥8,000-30,000+ per night
- **Meals:** Budget ¥800-1,500, Mid-range ¥2,000-5,000, High-end ¥10,000+
- **Transportation:** Daily ¥1,000-2,000 for tourists
- **Activities:** ¥1,000-5,000+ per attraction

17.2.1.9 English Availability

- **Best in Japan:** Highest English proficiency
- **Tourist areas:** Most staff in major areas speak some English
- **Signage:** Extensive English signage everywhere
- **Menus:** English menus widely available
- **Translation services:** Many shops have translation devices

17.2.1.10 Friendliness Levels

- **Professional friendliness:** Polite and helpful but not warm
- **Service excellence:** Impeccable service but formal
- **Helping foreigners:** Will help but may seem distant
- **Less personal:** Interactions remain superficial
- **Respectful:** Always courteous and respectful

17.2.1.11 Best For (Tourism Aspects)

- First-time visitors to Japan
- Business travelers
- Modern Japanese culture and technology
- Shopping (fashion, electronics, anime/manga)
- International dining
- Nightlife and entertainment
- Day trips to nearby areas (Mt. Fuji, Nikko, Hakone)

17.2.1.12 Transportation Differences

- **Most complex system:** Extensive but can be overwhelming
- **Multiple train companies:** JR, Tokyo Metro, Toei, private lines
- **IC card essential:** Suica/Pasmo card is a must
- **Efficient connections:** Smooth transfers between lines
- **English announcements:** All major lines have English
- **Station staff help:** Information desks at major stations
- **Crowded rush hours:** 7:30-9:30 AM and 5:30-8:00 PM are packed

17.2.1.13 Etiquette Differences

- **Escalator side:** Stand on the LEFT, walk on the RIGHT
- **Stricter rules:** More adherence to social rules
- **No eating while walking:** Strictly observed
- **Quieter trains:** Even quieter than elsewhere
- **Phone manner:** No phone calls on trains, strictly enforced

17.2.1.14 Food Specialties

- **Monjayaki:** Tokyo-style savory pancake
- **Edomae sushi:** Traditional Tokyo-style sushi
- **Chanko-nabe:** Sumo wrestler hot pot
- **Fukagawa-meshi:** Clam and rice dish
- **Tsukishima monja:** Monjayaki district specialty
- **Ramen:** Every regional style available
- **Department store depachika:** Basement food halls

17.2.1.15 Must-Try Items

- Sushi at Tsukiji Outer Market or Toyosu
- Ramen at any famous shop (Ichiran, Ippudo)
- Tempura at traditional restaurant
- Wagyu beef at yakiniku restaurant
- Conveyor belt sushi experience
- Depachika food sampling

17.2.1.16 Unique Customs

- **Shibuya crossing:** World's busiest intersection
- **Themed cafes:** Cat cafes, maid cafes, owl cafes
- **Hanami parties:** Cherry blossom viewing in parks
- **Don't Quijote culture:** Late-night discount shopping
- **Capsule hotels:** Unique accommodation experience
- **Robot restaurants:** Themed entertainment dining

17.2.1.17 Language Variations (Dialect)

- **Standard Japanese:** Tokyo dialect is the standard
 - **Younger slang:** Trendy abbreviated words (totes = totally)
 - **Business keigo:** Formal business language heavily used
 - **Loan words:** Heavy use of English borrowed words
 - **Minimal dialect:** Very neutral accent
-

17.2.2 Osaka ()

17.2.2.1 Personality & Pace Osaka is Japan's second-largest city and has a completely different vibe from Tokyo. Known as the "kitchen of Japan," Osakans are friendly, outgoing, and love good food. The pace is still fast but more relaxed than Tokyo. Humor and warmth are valued here.

17.2.2.2 Social Behaviors

- **Outgoing and friendly:** Osaka people are known for being talkative and welcoming
- **Humor is important:** Osakans love jokes and expect you to joke back
- **More expressive:** Louder and more animated in conversation
- **Merchants' city:** Bargaining culture exists in some markets
- **Community-oriented:** Stronger neighborhood connections
- **Direct communication:** Less formal than Tokyo, more straightforward

17.2.2.3 Communication Style

- **Osaka dialect (Osaka-ben):** Distinct from standard Japanese
- **More casual:** Less formal language even in business
- **Expressive and loud:** Comfortable with higher volume
- **Humor in conversation:** Jokes and wordplay are common
- **Less English:** Fewer English speakers than Tokyo
- **More willing to try:** Will attempt to communicate despite language barriers

17.2.2.4 Dining Culture

- **Food-obsessed:** "Kuidaore" (eat until you drop) culture
- **Street food paradise:** Takoyaki and okonomiyaki everywhere
- **Casual dining:** Less emphasis on fancy restaurants
- **Sharing culture:** Food is often shared from communal plates
- **Standing while eating:** More acceptable than in Tokyo
- **Affordable options:** Generally cheaper than Tokyo
- **Late-night food:** Many late-night street food stalls

17.2.2.5 Restaurant Service Methods

- **Warmer service:** Staff are more personable and chatty
- **Relaxed atmosphere:** Less formal than Tokyo
- **Generous portions:** Often larger servings
- **English less common:** Fewer English menus
- **More interaction:** Staff may joke or chat with customers

17.2.2.6 Business Hours

- **Similar to Tokyo:** Generally 10:00-20:00
- **Street vendors:** Earlier start and later finish
- **More closed Mondays:** Some restaurants close Mondays

- **Neighborhood shops:** May close earlier in residential areas
- **Market culture:** Early morning markets in some areas

17.2.2.7 Nightlife

- **Vibrant and fun:** More laid-back than Tokyo
- **Namba and Dotonbori:** Main entertainment districts
- **Izakaya culture:** Strong drinking and dining culture
- **Affordable:** Cheaper than Tokyo nightlife
- **Friendly atmosphere:** Easier to meet locals
- **All-you-can-drink:** “Nomihōdai” options popular

17.2.2.8 Cost of Living

- **More affordable:** Cheaper than Tokyo
- **Accommodation:** Hotels ¥6,000-20,000 per night
- **Meals:** Budget ¥500-1,000, Mid-range ¥1,500-3,000, High-end ¥5,000+
- **Transportation:** Daily ¥800-1,500 for tourists
- **Activities:** ¥800-3,000 per attraction
- **Better value:** More bang for your buck

17.2.2.9 English Availability

- **Moderate:** Less English than Tokyo
- **Tourist areas:** Some English in Namba, Dotonbori, Umeda
- **Signage:** English available but less comprehensive
- **Menus:** Picture menus more common than English
- **Enthusiasm:** People try harder to help despite language barriers

17.2.2.10 Friendliness Levels

- **Most friendly:** Known as the friendliest major city
- **Genuinely warm:** Service comes with a smile and conversation
- **Will engage:** Locals may strike up conversations
- **Humorous:** Expect jokes and laughter
- **Welcoming to foreigners:** Very open to tourists

17.2.2.11 Best For (Tourism Aspects)

- Food lovers and street food enthusiasts
- People who want warmer interactions
- Budget-conscious travelers
- Comedy and entertainment culture
- Castle and historical sites (Osaka Castle)
- Shopping at reasonable prices
- Base for Kyoto and Nara day trips

17.2.2.12 Transportation Differences

- **Simpler system:** Easier to navigate than Tokyo
- **Main lines:** Midosuji Line is the main artery
- **IC card:** ICOCA card (Osaka’s version)
- **Less crowded:** Even at rush hour, less packed than Tokyo
- **English announcements:** Available on main lines
- **Bike culture:** More bicycles than Tokyo

17.2.2.13 Etiquette Differences

- **Escalator side:** Stand on the RIGHT, walk on the LEFT (opposite of Tokyo!)
- **More relaxed:** Social rules are less strict
- **Eating while walking:** More tolerated, especially near street food areas
- **Louder trains:** People talk more than in Tokyo
- **Phone calls:** Less strict about phone usage

17.2.2.14 Food Specialties

- **Takoyaki:** Octopus balls (Osaka's most famous dish)
- **Okonomiyaki:** Savory pancake (different style from Hiroshima)
- **Kushikatsu:** Deep-fried skewers
- **Tecchiri:** Pufferfish hot pot
- **Kitsune udon:** Fox udon (originated here)
- **Ikayaki:** Grilled squid pancake
- **Negiyaki:** Green onion pancake

17.2.2.15 Must-Try Items

- Takoyaki from street vendor in Dotonbori
- Okonomiyaki at a specialist restaurant
- Kushikatsu at kushikatsu alley
- Kani (crab) in Dotonbori
- Conveyor belt sushi at a local spot
- Street food along Dotonbori canal

17.2.2.16 Unique Customs

- **Glico man:** Famous neon sign and photo spot
- **Running culture:** Dotonbori jumping after sports victories
- **Kuidaore Taro:** Iconic mechanical doll
- **Double-dipping ban:** Kushikatsu etiquette (no double-dipping sauce)
- **Manzai comedy:** Traditional comedy duo performances
- **Merchant tradition:** Historical trading city culture

17.2.2.17 Language Variations (Dialect) Key Osaka-ben words and phrases: - **Ookini** (): Thank you (instead of arigatō) - **Akan** (): No good/can't do (instead of dame) - **Nande yanen** (): Why? (comedic response) - **Meccha** (): Very/really (instead of totemo) - **Hon-ma** (): Really/truly (instead of hontō) - **Oru** (): To be/exist (instead of iru) - **Shindoi** (): Tired/tough - **Naosu** (): To put away (in Tokyo means "to fix") - **Different verb endings:** "-hen" instead of "-nai" for negatives

17.2.3 Kyoto ()

17.2.3.1 Personality & Pace Kyoto is Japan's ancient capital and cultural heart. The pace is slower and more deliberate than Tokyo or Osaka. There's a strong sense of tradition, history, and refined culture. Kyoto people are polite but can be reserved, with a reputation for indirect communication.

17.2.3.2 Social Behaviors

- **Formal and traditional:** Strong adherence to etiquette
- **Reserved nature:** More private and less outgoing than Osaka
- **Proud of heritage:** Deep connection to traditional culture
- **Indirect communication:** Known for subtle, indirect speech

- **Class-conscious:** Historical merchant and artisan hierarchies remain
- **Patient demeanor:** More willing to take time in interactions

17.2.3.3 Communication Style

- **Kyoto dialect (Kyoto-ben):** Soft, melodic, considered elegant
- **Indirect and subtle:** “Kyoto-style no” (polite refusals)
- **Honorific language:** Heavy use of keigo (polite language)
- **Soft-spoken:** Quieter and more measured speech
- **Traditional expressions:** Use of classical phrases
- **Limited English:** Older establishments may have minimal English

Famous “Kyoto-style” indirect communication: - “Your child plays piano well” = They’re too loud - “Would you like some ochazuke (tea rice)?” = It’s time for you to leave - These indirect phrases are cultural stereotypes but reflect communication style

17.2.3.4 Dining Culture

- **Traditional kaiseki:** Multi-course haute cuisine
- **Seasonal focus:** Emphasis on seasonal ingredients
- **Vegetarian tradition:** Buddhist temple food (shojin ryori)
- **Tea culture:** Traditional tea ceremony and matcha sweets
- **Refined presentation:** Food as art
- **Expensive traditional restaurants:** High-end dining is costly
- **Obanzai:** Traditional Kyoto home cooking

17.2.3.5 Restaurant Service Methods

- **Formal and gracious:** Impeccable traditional service
- **Slower pace:** Meals are experiences, not rushed
- **Explanation of dishes:** More context about food provided
- **Reservation often needed:** High-end places require reservations
- **Dress code:** Some traditional restaurants have standards
- **English varies:** Tourist restaurants have English, others don’t

17.2.3.6 Business Hours

- **Traditional hours:** Often 11:00-20:00 or shorter
- **Irregular closures:** Some places close random weekdays
- **Seasonal variations:** Hours may change by season
- **Earlier closing:** Less late-night options than Tokyo/Osaka
- **Temple hours:** Usually 8:00-17:00 (varies by season)

17.2.3.7 Nightlife

- **Quieter nightlife:** More subdued than Tokyo or Osaka
- **Gion district:** Traditional geisha entertainment
- **Bar culture:** Small, intimate bars and izakaya
- **Earlier closing:** Many places close by 11:00 PM-midnight
- **Traditional entertainment:** Maiko (geiko) performances
- **Pontocho alley:** Riverside dining and drinking

17.2.3.8 Cost of Living

- **High-end traditional expensive:** Kaiseki and traditional dining costly
- **Moderate overall:** Between Tokyo and Osaka

- **Accommodation:** Hotels ¥7,000-25,000, Ryokan ¥15,000-50,000+ per night
- **Meals:** Budget ¥600-1,200, Mid-range ¥2,000-5,000, Kaiseki ¥10,000-30,000+
- **Transportation:** Daily ¥800-1,500 (bus passes available)
- **Temple entry:** ¥300-600 per temple

17.2.3.9 English Availability

- **Tourist area English:** Good in major tourist sites
- **Traditional places:** Limited English in authentic restaurants
- **Signage:** English at major temples and tourist areas
- **Mix of support:** Varies greatly by location
- **Translation needs:** More useful than in Tokyo

17.2.3.10 Friendliness Levels

- **Polite but reserved:** Courteous but distant
- **Service excellence:** Gracious traditional hospitality
- **Less chatty:** Won't engage in small talk as readily
- **Respectful:** Extremely polite and respectful
- **Protective of culture:** May be particular about etiquette

17.2.3.11 Best For (Tourism Aspects)

- Traditional Japanese culture seekers
- Temple and shrine enthusiasts
- Garden lovers
- Tea ceremony experiences
- Kimono wearing experiences
- Traditional crafts and shopping
- Slower-paced travel
- Photography opportunities
- Historical architecture
- Seasonal beauty (cherry blossoms, autumn leaves)

17.2.3.12 Transportation Differences

- **Bus-focused:** Buses are primary transport
- **Bus day passes:** ¥700 unlimited bus pass recommended
- **Limited subway:** Only 2 subway lines
- **Walking friendly:** Many temples accessible by foot
- **IC card:** Can use any IC card (Suica, ICOCA, etc.)
- **Bicycle rentals:** Popular for exploring
- **Tourist routes:** Specific bus routes for temples

17.2.3.13 Etiquette Differences

- **Strict etiquette:** Traditional manners strongly observed
- **Temple etiquette:** Proper behavior at religious sites essential
- **Quiet everywhere:** Very quiet public spaces
- **Photography rules:** Some temples prohibit photos
- **Dress appropriately:** Cover shoulders and knees at temples
- **Respect geisha:** Never chase or harass geisha/maiko

17.2.3.14 Food Specialties

- **Kaiseki ryori:** Multi-course haute cuisine

- **Yudofu:** Tofu hot pot
- **Shojin ryori:** Buddhist vegetarian cuisine
- **Obanzai:** Traditional Kyoto home cooking
- **Matcha sweets:** Green tea desserts
- **Tsukemono:** Kyoto-style pickles
- **Kyoto ramen:** Lighter, refined ramen
- **Nama-fu:** Wheat gluten delicacy
- **Yatsushashi:** Cinnamon triangular sweet

17.2.3.15 Must-Try Items

- Kaiseki meal at traditional restaurant
- Matcha and wagashi at tea house
- Yudofu near a temple
- Nishiki Market food sampling
- Traditional sweets in Gion
- Kyoto-style sushi
- Vegetarian temple food

17.2.3.16 Unique Customs

- **Geisha/Maiko culture:** Traditional entertainment in Gion
- **Tea ceremony:** Formal tea preparation and drinking
- **Kimono wearing:** More common to see people in kimono
- **Garden viewing:** Contemplative garden appreciation
- **Temple stamp collecting:** Goshuin (temple calligraphy stamps)
- **Seasonal festivals:** Traditional matsuri throughout year
- **Craft traditions:** Pottery, textiles, lacquerware

17.2.3.17 Language Variations (Dialect) **Key Kyoto-ben characteristics:** - **Soft and elegant:** Considered the most refined dialect - **“-haru” ending:** Polite verb ending (instead of standard forms) - Example: “ikaharimasu” (polite “go”) vs. “ikimasu” (standard) - **“Ōkini”:** Thank you (similar to Osaka but more refined) - **“Oideyasu”:** Welcome (instead of irasshaimase) - **“Hona”:** Well then (softer than Osaka’s “hona”) - **“Dosudossu”:** Extremely polite Kyoto language - **Feminine quality:** Even men’s speech is softer - **Historical language:** Retains older Japanese forms

17.2.4 Hakone ()

17.2.4.1 Personality & Pace Hakone is a mountain resort town famous for hot springs (onsen), views of Mt. Fuji, and nature. The pace is slow and relaxed, focused on rejuvenation and nature appreciation. It’s a retreat from city life.

17.2.4.2 Social Behaviors

- **Relaxed and leisurely:** Everything moves slower
- **Hospitality-focused:** Service industry dominates
- **Quiet and peaceful:** Emphasis on tranquility
- **Nature-oriented:** Outdoor activities central
- **Tourist-friendly:** Used to international visitors
- **Resort atmosphere:** Vacation mindset

17.2.4.3 Communication Style

- **Service Japanese:** Polite hospitality language

- **English support:** Better than Kyoto, less than Tokyo
- **Patient communication:** Used to explaining to tourists
- **Standard Japanese:** No strong dialect
- **Sign language:** Visual communication common
- **Helpful nature:** Will go out of way to assist

17.2.4.4 Dining Culture

- **Ryokan meals:** Multi-course meals at accommodations
- **Local specialties:** Mountain vegetables, lake fish
- **Hotel dining:** Many eat at their accommodations
- **Limited restaurants:** Fewer standalone restaurants than cities
- **Casual options:** Some noodle and simple restaurants
- **Seasonal menus:** Strong seasonal focus

17.2.4.5 Restaurant Service Methods

- **Ryokan style:** Traditional Japanese hospitality
- **Set meals:** Kaiseki at accommodations
- **Leisurely service:** No rushing
- **Personal attention:** More intimate service
- **English menus:** Common in tourist spots

17.2.4.6 Business Hours

- **Tourism-based:** Varies by location
- **Museums:** Typically 9:00-17:00
- **Restaurants:** Many close early (by 8:00 PM)
- **Seasonal variations:** Some close in winter
- **Onsen hours:** Usually 6:00 AM-11:00 PM

17.2.4.7 Nightlife

- **Very limited:** Not a nightlife destination
- **Onsen at night:** Evening hot spring bathing
- **Ryokan lounges:** In-house bars and lounges
- **Quiet evenings:** Early to bed culture
- **Stargazing:** Night sky viewing popular

17.2.4.8 Cost of Living

- **Resort pricing:** More expensive than typical towns
- **Accommodation:** Ryokan ¥15,000-50,000+ per night, Hotels ¥8,000-20,000
- **Meals:** Often included in accommodation, Standalone ¥1,500-3,000
- **Transportation:** Hakone Free Pass ¥6,100 (includes most transport)
- **Activities:** ¥1,000-3,000 per attraction
- **Package value:** Better deals with multi-day passes

17.2.4.9 English Availability

- **Good support:** Tourist destination has English support
- **Signage:** English directions at attractions
- **Staff:** Hotels and ryokan have English speakers
- **Tourist info:** English information centers
- **Maps:** English maps readily available

17.2.4.10 Friendliness Levels

- **Very hospitable:** Tourism-based culture
- **Warm service:** Traditional omotenashi (hospitality)
- **Helpful:** Used to assisting tourists
- **Professional:** High service standards
- **Patient:** Accommodating to foreigners

17.2.4.11 Best For (Tourism Aspects)

- Onsen experiences
- Mt. Fuji views
- Nature and hiking
- Art museums
- Scenic transportation (pirate ship, ropeway)
- Ryokan stays
- Weekend getaway from Tokyo
- Relaxation and rejuvenation
- Volcanic scenery
- Lake activities

17.2.4.12 Transportation Differences

- **Tourist loop:** Circular sightseeing route
- **Hakone Free Pass:** Covers most transport
- **Multiple modes:** Train, cable car, ropeway, boat
- **Scenic routes:** Transportation is part of experience
- **Limited local buses:** Focus on tourist routes
- **Car rentals:** Available but not necessary

17.2.4.13 Etiquette Differences

- **Onsen etiquette:** Critical to know proper behavior
- **Ryokan rules:** Specific accommodation etiquette
- **Nature respect:** Don't litter or disturb wildlife
- **Quiet appreciation:** Respect peaceful atmosphere
- **Photography etiquette:** Don't photograph in onsen

17.2.4.14 Food Specialties

- **Kaiseki cuisine:** Traditional multi-course meals
- **Tamago-yaki:** Sweet layered egg cake
- **Kuro-tamago:** Black eggs boiled in volcanic springs
- **Soba noodles:** Local buckwheat noodles
- **Himono:** Dried fish
- **Mountain vegetables:** Sansai
- **Tofu dishes:** Fresh mountain tofu
- **Wagyu beef:** Local beef dishes

17.2.4.15 Must-Try Items

- Kuro-tamago at Owakudani (said to add 7 years to life)
- Tamago-yaki from specialty shop
- Kaiseki meal at ryokan
- Local soba
- Onsen manju (hot spring steamed bun)

17.2.4.16 Unique Customs

- **Onsen culture:** Hot spring bathing central to experience
- **Ryokan stays:** Traditional inn experience
- **Yukata wearing:** Casual kimono provided at ryokan
- **Multi-transport journey:** Using various scenic transport modes
- **Volcanic tourism:** Viewing active volcanic areas
- **Art appreciation:** Open-air museums and galleries

17.2.4.17 Language Variations (Dialect)

- **Standard Japanese:** No strong local dialect
- **Tourism Japanese:** Service industry language
- **Onsen vocabulary:** Specific hot spring terms
- **Minimal variation:** Similar to Tokyo Japanese

17.2.5 Regional Comparison Chart

Aspect	Tokyo	Osaka	Kyoto	Hakone
Pace	Very fast	Fast	Moderate	Slow
Friendliness	Polite/Reserved	Very friendly	Polite/Reserved	Hospitable
Formality	Very formal	Casual	Very formal	Moderate
English Support	Excellent	Moderate	Good (tourist areas)	Good
Cost	Very expensive	Moderate	Expensive	Expensive
Escalator Side	Stand LEFT	Stand RIGHT	Stand LEFT/RIGHT	Varies
Communication	Direct/formal	Direct/casual	Indirect/formal	Service-oriented
Nightlife	Extensive	Vibrant	Limited	Minimal
Food Culture	International	Street food	Traditional	Ryokan meals
Best For	First-timers	Food lovers	Culture seekers	Relaxation
Main Transport	Subway/Train	Subway/Train	Bus	Tourist loop
Tourist Crowds	Very high	High	Very high	Moderate
English Menus	Common	Rare	Common (tourist areas)	Common
Business Hours	Late	Moderate	Early closing	Tourist-based
Atmosphere	Modern/Busy	Fun/Lively	Traditional/Refined	Natural/Peaceful

17.3 B. Etiquette Guide

Understanding Japanese etiquette is essential for a respectful and smooth travel experience. While locals are generally forgiving of foreigners, making an effort to follow these customs shows respect and will enhance your interactions.

17.3.1 1. Bowing (- Ojigi)

Bowing is the traditional Japanese greeting and shows respect. While handshakes are becoming more common in business settings, bowing remains the standard form of greeting.

17.3.1.1 Types of Bows Eshaku () - Light Bow - Angle: 15 degrees - **When to use:** Casual greetings, passing acquaintances, acknowledging someone - **Duration:** Brief, about 1 second - **Context:** Passing someone in hallway, greeting coworkers, thanking service staff

Keirei () - Medium Bow - Angle: 30 degrees - **When to use:** Standard greeting, showing respect, thanking someone - **Duration:** 2-3 seconds - **Context:** Meeting someone, thanking hotel staff, greeting business associates

Saikeirei () - Deep Bow - Angle: 45 degrees or more - **When to use:** Deep apology, profound gratitude, meeting very important people - **Duration:** 3+ seconds - **Context:** Serious apologies, meeting someone of very high status, profound thanks

Dogeza () - Prostration Bow - Angle: Kneeling with forehead to ground - **When to use:** Extreme apology or desperation (very rare) - **Context:** You will likely never need to do this as a tourist

17.3.1.2 When to Bow Greeting Situations: - When meeting someone for the first time - When greeting someone you know - When entering or leaving a room with others present - When passing someone of higher status

Gratitude: - When thanking someone - When receiving help or service - When someone gives you a gift - When leaving a shop or restaurant

Apologies: - When apologizing - When causing inconvenience - When making a request that may burden someone - When declining something

Other Situations: - When saying goodbye - When offering or receiving a business card - When someone bows to you (bow back)

17.3.1.3 How Deep to Bow The depth of your bow should match: - **The situation:** Casual vs. formal - **Your relationship:** Stranger vs. friend vs. superior - **The context:** Greeting vs. apology vs. gratitude - **The other person's bow:** Match or go slightly deeper if they're senior

General Rule for Tourists: - Casual situations: 15-degree bow - Standard situations: 30-degree bow - Serious apologies/gratitude: 45-degree bow

17.3.1.4 Duration

- **Quick bow:** 1 second - casual acknowledgment
- **Standard bow:** 2-3 seconds - normal greeting/thanks
- **Long bow:** 3+ seconds - serious apology or deep gratitude
- **Hold at the bottom:** Shows sincerity, especially in apologies

17.3.1.5 Who Bows First and Lower Status Hierarchy (lower status bows first and deeper):

1. Young to elder 2. Junior employee to senior 3. Service staff to customer 4. Guest to host (though host may bow first as welcome) 5. Less familiar to more familiar

As a Tourist: - Service staff will bow to you first (you're the customer) - You can bow back as acknowledgment - Don't worry too much about getting it perfect - When in doubt, match the other person's bow

17.3.1.6 Bowing Tips for Tourists DO: - Keep your back straight - Hands at your sides or on thighs (women) or sides (men) - Bend at the waist - Keep eye contact until you start bowing, then look down - Bow back when someone bows to you - Practice a casual 15-degree bow for everyday use

DON'T: - Bow and shake hands simultaneously (awkward) - Look at the person while bowing (look down) - Bob up and down repeatedly (one smooth bow) - Bow too casually with just your head - Forget to bow back - Bow while holding things (except business cards)

When You Don't Need to Bow: - Informal situations with friends - When someone is helping you find your way (a nod is fine) - During active movement or sports - When it would be physically awkward or unsafe

17.3.2 2. Shoes (- Kutsu)

Japanese culture maintains a strict separation between “inside” and “outside” spaces. Shoes are considered dirty and must be removed before entering many indoor spaces.

17.3.2.1 When to Remove Shoes Always Remove: - Private homes - Traditional ryokan (Japanese inns) - Temples and shrines (most) - Tatami mat rooms - Traditional restaurants with tatami - Capsule hotels - Some fitting rooms in clothing stores - Some traditional shops - Some traditional offices - Martial arts dojos - Tea ceremony rooms

Usually Remove: - Some modern restaurants - Some hotels (slippers provided) - Some museums - Some traditional buildings

Never Remove: - Modern hotels (in rooms) - Most restaurants - Shops and stores - Offices (usually) - Trains and subways - Streets and public spaces

How to Tell: - Look for a genkan (entrance step-up area) - Shoes lined up at entrance - Shoe lockers or cubbies visible - Floor level changes (lower at entrance) - Staff will tell you or gesture - Slippers are provided

17.3.2.2 How to Remove Shoes Proper Procedure: 1. Step up to the genkan (raised entrance area) 2. Step out of your shoes while facing forward 3. Step up onto the raised floor in socks/bare feet 4. Turn around 5. Neatly arrange your shoes pointing toward the exit 6. Put on provided slippers if available

DO: - Remove shoes at the genkan (entrance area), not before - Point shoes toward the exit after removing - Arrange them neatly side by side - Wear clean socks (always!) - Use slippers if provided

DON'T: - Step into the interior space with shoes on - Leave shoes messy or scattered - Wear dirty or holey socks - Go barefoot unless at home or onsen - Step on the genkan in your socks (step over it)

17.3.2.3 Where to Place Shoes Shoe Storage Options:

Getabako () - Shoe Lockers: - Use the locker provided - Take the key with you - Return key when collecting shoes

Shoe Shelves: - Place shoes neatly on shelf - Point toes toward wall - Keep them tidy

Genkan Floor: - Arrange neatly in designated area - Point toward exit - Don't block walkway

Plastic Bags: - Some places provide bags for your shoes - Carry them with you - Return or dispose of bag properly

17.3.2.4 Indoor Slippers Types of Slippers:

Uwabaki () - Indoor Slippers: - Provided at entrance - Wear in main areas - Usually simple slip-on style - Must remove before tatami rooms

Toilet Slippers: - Special slippers ONLY for toilet - Never wear outside the toilet - Usually marked with “W.C.” or “ ” - Always provided at entrance to toilet - MUST switch back when exiting toilet

Tatami Slippers: - Sometimes provided specifically for tatami - Or remove all slippers before tatami

17.3.2.5 Slipper Etiquette DO: - Change into provided slippers - Change to toilet slippers in bathroom - Remember to change back after toilet - Leave slippers neatly when done - Walk carefully (slippers can be slippery)

DON'T: - Wear outdoor shoes on indoor floors - Wear indoor slippers in toilet (use toilet slippers) - Wear toilet slippers outside toilet (MAJOR mistake!) - Wear any slippers on tatami mats - Walk on genkan in slippers

Common Slipper Mistakes to Avoid: 1. Forgetting to change to toilet slippers 2. Wearing toilet slippers back into main area (very embarrassing!) 3. Wearing slippers on tatami 4. Not noticing different slipper zones

17.3.2.6 Tatami Rules What is Tatami? - Traditional woven straw mat flooring - Soft, slightly cushioned surface - Fragrant when new - Requires special care

Tatami Etiquette: - **Never wear slippers on tatami** (socks or bare feet only) - **Never wear shoes on tatami** (obvious but critical) - Don't drag furniture across tatami - Don't drop heavy objects on tatami - Don't stand on the borders between mats (traditional, less strict now) - Don't put wheeled luggage on tatami (carry it) - Sit in seiza (kneeling) or cross-legged, not with legs stretched out pointing at others

17.3.2.7 Special Situations Fitting Rooms: - Some require shoe removal - Designated area to sit and remove shoes - Don't try on shoes over socks meant for walking

Temples and Shrines: - Most require shoe removal before entering buildings - Outdoor areas usually okay with shoes - Shoe racks or lockers provided - Watch where others remove shoes

Restaurants: - Raised tatami areas require removal - Take shoes off before stepping up - Store in provided cubbies or under table - Put slippers on if provided

Ryokan (Traditional Inns): - Remove shoes at entrance - Wear provided slippers in hallways - Remove slippers before entering your room - Wear yukata (robe) and slippers in hallways - Special slippers for toilet

17.3.2.8 Sock Etiquette Critical Points: - **Always wear clean socks** when traveling in Japan - Holes in socks are embarrassing - Bring extra socks - Consider foot odor (remove shoes frequently) - Some people carry fresh sock pairs - White or neutral colored socks are safest

Tips: - Pack 2x your normal sock supply - Quick-dry socks are ideal - Foot powder can help - Some tourists carry disposable slippers

17.3.3 3. Chopsticks (- Hashi)

Chopstick etiquette is important in Japanese dining culture. While tourists get some leeway, following proper chopstick manners shows respect and cultural awareness.

17.3.3.1 How to Hold Chopsticks Proper Grip: 1. **Upper chopstick:** Hold like a pencil between thumb, index, and middle fingers (this one moves) 2. **Lower chopstick:** Rest in the crook of your thumb and on your ring finger (this one stays still) 3. **Movement:** Only the top chopstick moves; bottom stays stationary 4. **Practice:** Move tips together smoothly like scissors

Tips for Beginners: - Practice with larger items first - Don't worry if you're not perfect - Asking for a fork is okay if truly struggling - Training chopsticks (with support band) available for children

17.3.3.2 Chopstick Taboos (20+ Rules) These are serious breaches of etiquette - avoid them:

MAJOR TABOOS (Very Serious):

1. **Tate-bashi () - Standing Chopsticks**

- **Never stick chopsticks vertically into rice**
 - This resembles incense at funerals
 - Extremely bad manners, associated with death
 - Worst chopstick error you can make
2. **Watashi-bashi () - Crossing Chopsticks**
 - Never rest chopsticks crossed over bowl or plate
 - Also associated with funerals
 - Shows you're finished (wrongly)
 3. **Hashi-watashi () - Passing Food Chopsticks-to-Chopsticks**
 - Never pass food directly from your chopsticks to someone else's
 - This is done only with bones at funerals
 - Very serious breach
 - Place food on their plate instead
 4. **Sashi-bashi () - Stabbing Food**
 - Don't stab food with chopsticks
 - Shows poor chopstick skills
 - Especially rude with rice
 - Break apart or pick up properly
 5. **Neburi-bashi () - Licking Chopsticks**
 - Don't lick your chopsticks
 - Unsanitary and impolite
 - Use napkin if needed

OTHER TABOOS:

6. **Mayoi-bashi () - Hovering Chopsticks**
 - Don't hover chopsticks over food deciding what to take
 - Decide first, then pick up
7. **Yose-bashi () - Moving Dishes with Chopsticks**
 - Don't use chopsticks to pull dishes closer
 - Use your hands to move dishes
8. **Saguri-bashi () - Digging**
 - Don't dig through food to find favorite pieces
 - Take from the top
9. **Sashi-bashi () - Pointing**
 - Don't point at people or things with chopsticks
 - Put them down before gesturing
10. **Kaki-bashi () - Shoveling**
 - Don't shovel food from bowl to mouth
 - Pick up individual bites
11. **Nigiri-bashi () - Clutching**
 - Don't hold both chopsticks in a fist like a weapon
 - Threatening gesture
12. **Chirashi-bashi () - Scattering**
 - Don't move food around on plate without eating it
 - Wasteful appearance
13. **Namida-bashi () - Dripping**
 - Don't let food drip from chopsticks
 - Pause over your plate if needed
14. **Seseri-bashi () - Picking Teeth**
 - Never use chopsticks as toothpicks
 - Use proper toothpicks provided
15. **Komi-bashi () - Overfilling Mouth**
 - Don't stuff your mouth with too much food
 - Take reasonable bites

16. **Mochi-bashi () - Holding Chopsticks While Doing Other Things**

- Don't hold chopsticks while drinking or picking up dishes
- Put them down first

17. **Utsuri-bashi () - Changing Targets**

- Don't reach for one dish then switch to another
- Commit to your choice

18. **Oki-bashi () - Resting on Bowl**

- Don't rest chopsticks on top of your bowl
- Use chopstick rest or edge of plate

19. **Tataki-bashi () - Banging**

- Don't tap chopsticks on bowl or table
- Impolite and noisy

20. **Kakoi-bashi () - Guarding Food**

- Don't place your hands around your plate protectively
- Appears greedy

21. **Furi-bashi () - Waving**

- Don't wave chopsticks around while talking
- Keep them still or put down

22. **Hashi-nameru () - Sucking Chopsticks**

- Don't suck on chopstick tips
- Very uncouth

17.3.3.3 Where to Rest Chopsticks Proper Resting Methods:

Hashi-oki () - Chopstick Rest: - Small ceramic piece specifically for resting chopsticks - Place tips on rest, handles on table - Most proper way - If provided, always use it

Alternative Resting Spots: - On edge of your plate (tips off the plate) - On the edge of a shared serving dish (clean end) - On the paper wrapper they came in (fold it into a rest) - Across your bowl (not ideal but acceptable)

Don't Rest: - Crossed on the table - On someone else's plate - In your bowl (standing up) - On the table directly (in nice restaurants)

17.3.3.4 How to Receive Chopsticks At Restaurants: - Chopsticks come in paper wrapper or separate - Disposable (waribashi - split apart before use) - Reusable (more upscale restaurants)

Waribashi () - Disposable Chopsticks: 1. Hold horizontally 2. Pull apart gently and evenly (avoid splinters) 3. Don't rub together to remove splinters (shows you think they're cheap quality) 4. Use as normal 5. When finished, place back in wrapper or neatly on table

Reusable Chopsticks: - Treat with respect - Don't bend or stress them - Place neatly when done

17.3.3.5 How to Give Food to Others Proper Method: - Place food on their plate - Let them pick it up themselves - Never pass chopsticks to chopsticks

Serving from Shared Dishes: - Use serving chopsticks if provided (toribashi -) - Or flip your chopsticks to use the clean end - Don't use the end you've eaten with - Take from the top, don't dig

17.3.3.6 Additional Chopstick Tips DO: - Hold chopsticks in the middle to upper third - Keep chopstick tips aligned - Pick up food confidently - Put chopsticks down while drinking or talking - Use both chopsticks together - Break apart food too large to eat in one bite

DON'T: - Hold too close to the tips (shows poor skills) - Hold too close to the ends (awkward) - Use only one chopstick (use both) - Clutch them in your fist - Make noise with them - Play with them - Bite them - Gesture with them

If You Drop a Chopstick: - Ask for new ones - Don't pick it up and use it - Staff will bring replacements

Fork and Knife: - It's okay to ask for a fork if struggling - Say: "Fōku wa arimasu ka?" (Do you have a fork?) - Most restaurants will accommodate - Don't feel embarrassed

17.3.4 4. Gift Giving (- Okurimono)

Gift giving is an important part of Japanese culture. There are specific customs and expectations around when, what, and how to give gifts.

17.3.4.1 When to Give Gifts Formal Gift-Giving Occasions: - **Ochugen** (): Mid-year gift (July) - **Oseibo** (): Year-end gift (December) - **Oshogatsu** (): New Year - **Weddings:** Cash in special envelope - **Funerals:** Cash in special envelope - **Moving:** When moving into new place - **Visiting someone's home:** Bring a gift

Tourist Situations: - When visiting someone's home - Thanking someone for help - Business meetings - Leaving after staying with hosts - Apologizing for an inconvenience

17.3.4.2 What to Give Appropriate Gifts from Tourists: - Souvenirs from your home country - Regional specialties from your hometown - Quality chocolates - Tea or coffee - Small specialty foods - Alcohol (if appropriate for recipient) - Handicrafts from your region - Nice stationery

Good Gift Characteristics: - Well-packaged (presentation is very important) - From a known store or region - Consumable (doesn't burden recipient with keeping it) - Not too expensive (creates obligation) - Appropriate for group (divisible items if for office)

What NOT to Give: - **Sets of four:** Number four (shi) sounds like death - **Sets of nine:** Number nine (ku) sounds like suffering - **Knives or scissors:** Symbolize cutting relationships - **White flowers:** Associated with funerals - **Handkerchiefs:** Associated with sadness/farewell - **Clocks or watches:** Symbolize running out of time - **Used items:** Except valuable antiques - **Too expensive:** Creates obligation to reciprocate - **Gifts for individuals in group setting:** Give to group or bring multiples

17.3.4.3 How to Present Gifts Presentation Rules:

Wrapping: - **Very important:** Presentation matters as much as the gift - Department stores offer gift wrapping services - Use proper gift wrap, not regular paper - Include noshi (decorative paper) for formal gifts - Never give unwrapped gifts - Keep packaging nice even if bought for travel

Physical Presentation: 1. Present with both hands 2. Offer humbly with a bow 3. Face the wrapping toward recipient 4. Say appropriate phrase (see below) 5. Downplay your gift with humble language

Phrases When Giving: - **"Tsumaranai mono desu ga..."** () - "This is a trifling thing, but..." (most common) - Humble language to downplay your gift - **"Kochira, omiyage desu"** () - "This is a souvenir" - **"Uchi no kuni kara motte kimashita"** () - "I brought this from my country" - **"Sukoshi desu ga..."** () - "It's just a little something..."

Receiving a Gift: - Receive with both hands - Bow and thank them - Don't open immediately unless invited to - Show appreciation for the wrapping/presentation - Express humble thanks

Phrases When Receiving: - **"Arigatō gozaimasu"** - Thank you very much - **"Sumimasen"** - Sorry (for the trouble) - **"Osore irimasu"** - I'm humbled/You shouldn't have - **"Itadakimasu"** - I humbly receive

Opening Gifts: - Don't open immediately in formal situations - Wait until giver leaves or gives permission - If invited to open, do so carefully - Preserve the wrapping (shows respect) - Express appreciation for the gift

17.3.4.4 Omiyage Culture () What is Omiyage? - Souvenirs/gifts brought back from travels
- Expected social custom - Given to coworkers, friends, neighbors, family - Usually food items that are regional specialties

Omiyage Rules:

Who Gets Omiyage: - Coworkers (bring enough for entire office) - Friends who helped before your trip - Host family if staying with people - Neighbors (if they helped with anything) - Family members

What Makes Good Omiyage: - **Regional specialty:** Famous product from the place you visited - **Individually wrapped:** Easy to distribute - **Enough for everyone:** Don't leave people out - **Not too expensive:** ¥500-1,500 per item typical - **Packaged attractively:** Presentation matters - **Consumable:** Candy, cookies, crackers, regional snacks - **Shelf-stable:** Must survive travel

Popular Omiyage from Tourist Destinations: - Tokyo: Tokyo Banana, Shiroyo Koibito () - Kyoto: Yatsushiro (), matcha sweets - Osaka: Butaman (), Rikuro's cheesecake - Hokkaido: Royce chocolate, Shiroyo Koibito - Okinawa: Chinsuko () cookies

How to Give Omiyage: - At work: Place on communal table with note "Please help yourself" (Dōzo) - To individuals: Give in person with "This is from [place]" - Say: "**Kore, omiyage desu. Dōzo.**" (This is a souvenir. Please have some.)

17.3.4.5 Gift Reciprocation Important Concept: - Giving creates obligation to return a gift - Return gift should be about half the value - Called "okaeshi" () - Expected in many situations

As a Tourist: - If staying with someone, bring a gift - If they give you a gift, you should give something back - Have small items from your country ready - Don't worry too much about exact reciprocation

17.3.4.6 Business Gift Giving Business Context: - Gifts strengthen relationships - First meeting: Small gift from your country - End of meeting: Small token of appreciation - Company to company: More formal

Business Gift Tips: - Not too expensive (creates obligation) - Company-branded items acceptable - Regional specialties good - Present to most senior person with both hands

17.3.5 5. Onsen Etiquette ()

Onsen (natural hot spring baths) are a quintessential Japanese experience. Following proper etiquette is essential for a good experience and showing respect to others.

17.3.5.1 Complete Onsen Rules 8 Fundamental Rules:

17.3.5.2 Rule 1: Wash Thoroughly Before Entering Procedure: 1. Enter bathing area (after changing) 2. Find a washing station 3. Sit on the small stool 4. Use shower to wet yourself completely 5. Soap and wash your entire body 6. Shampoo and condition hair 7. Rinse thoroughly - all soap must be removed 8. Rinse your stool and put things away neatly 9. Only then enter the bath

Why It Matters: - The bath is for soaking, not washing - Everyone shares the same water - Soap in the bath is unacceptable - You must be completely clean before entering

17.3.5.3 Rule 2: No Swimsuits - Completely Nude The Rule: - Everyone bathes completely naked - No swimsuits, underwear, or towels in the water - Applies to men's and women's sides (separated) - Only exception: some mixed (konyoku) outdoor baths allow towel wrapping

Why It Matters: - Hygienic reasons (fabric harbors bacteria) - Traditional cultural practice - Swim fabric can release fibers into water - Universal rule with almost no exceptions

Tips: - Don't worry - everyone is naked too - Separate areas for men and women - Look for: (otoko/men) or (onna/women) - Blue noren (curtain) = men, Red noren = women - Most people don't stare - very normal

17.3.5.4 Rule 3: Tattoo Policies Traditional View: - Tattoos associated with yakuza (Japanese mafia) - Many onsen ban tattoos completely - Strict policy at traditional onsen - Rule is slowly changing but still prevalent

What This Means for Tattooed Tourists:

Options if You Have Tattoos: 1. **Cover small tattoos:** Use large waterproof bandages (sold at drug-stores) 2. **Find tattoo-friendly onsen:** Some allow tattoos, especially in touristy areas 3. **Private/family baths:** Reserve a private bath (kazoku-buro) 4. **Ryokan with private onsen:** Book room with private onsen 5. **Ask beforehand:** Call or check website about tattoo policy

Finding Tattoo-Friendly Onsen: - Website: tattoo-friendly.jp - Look for "tattoo OK" (tattoo OK) - Hakone, Nikko, Kusatsu have some accepting places - Smaller tattoos easier to accommodate

17.3.5.5 Rule 4: Towel Usage - Never in the Water Towel Rules:

Small Towel (Tenugui -): - Bring into bathing area - Use to cover privates while walking (optional) - Can use to wipe face while in bath - **Never put in the bath water** (critical rule) - Put on head or fold on side of bath while soaking

Large Towel: - Leave in changing area - Never bring into bathing area - Use after exiting to dry off

Why No Towels in Water: - Same reason as swimsuits - harbors bacteria - Releases fibers and soap residue - Pollutes the shared water - Shows lack of respect

17.3.5.6 Rule 5: Hair Rules Hair Etiquette: - **Long hair must be tied up** - Use provided hair tie or bring your own - Hair must not touch the water - Men with long hair must also tie it up - Bun, ponytail, or clip acceptable

Why: - Hygienic - hair sheds - Hair in water is considered dirty - Universal rule, strictly enforced

17.3.5.7 Rule 6: Photography Ban Photography Rules: - **Absolutely no photography** in bathing areas - No cameras, no phones, nothing - Applies to changing rooms too - May be able to photograph entrance area only - Outdoor scenery photos okay if no people

Why: - Privacy reasons (everyone is naked) - Respect for others - Serious violation if broken - Can be kicked out immediately

Allowed Photos: - Private family bath (if you rented it) - Promotional photos in public areas - Exterior of facility - Foot baths (clothing on)

17.3.5.8 Rule 7: Quiet Behavior Behavioral Expectations: - Keep noise to minimum - No loud talking - No splashing - No swimming or playing - No running - Peaceful atmosphere required - Quiet conversation acceptable but not loud

Why: - Onsen is for relaxation and contemplation - Respect others' experience - Traditional tranquility - Noise echoes in bathing areas

Tips: - Speak in hushed tones - Enter and exit water smoothly - Don't disturb others' peace - Save excited conversation for after

17.3.5.9 Rule 8: Don't Drain the Water or Add Cold Water Water Rules: - Don't add cold water to cool down the bath - Don't open drain - Don't adjust temperature - Water temperature is set deliberately - If too hot, splash water on yourself to acclimate

Why: - Onsen water temperature is carefully maintained - Everyone shares the same temperature - Changing it is selfish - Natural hot spring temperature is specific

If Too Hot: - Splash water on body to adjust - Start with legs/arms before full body - Sit on edge and gradually enter - Enter slowly - Take breaks if needed

17.3.5.10 Additional Onsen Guidelines Before Entering: - Remove all jewelry (can damage from minerals) - Remove glasses if possible (steam will fog them) - Tie up long hair - Don't bring anything into bath (drinks, books, phones) - Use toilet before bathing

While Bathing: - Rinse at shower station before re-entering if you exit - Don't stay too long (10-15 minutes at a time) - Take breaks to avoid overheating - Stay hydrated (drink water before and after) - Don't put head underwater - Move slowly and carefully (can be slippery)

Order of Baths: - Indoor bath first - Then outdoor bath (rotenburo) - Sauna (if available) - shower first after - Different temperature pools - start warm - Don't rush between baths

After Bathing: - Pat dry with small towel before entering changing area - Drink water or tea (usually provided) - Wait before eating (give body time to adjust) - Consider skipping one washing cycle if returning to different bath

Special Bath Types:

Rotenburo () - Outdoor Bath: - Scenic outdoor bath - Wash indoors first, then go outside - May have beautiful views - Can be cooler (especially in winter) - Towel on head okay (not in water)

Kazoku-buro () - Family/Private Bath: - Private bath you reserve - Good for families, couples, tattoo concerns, or shy people - Usually time-limited (30-45 minutes) - Costs extra (¥2,000-5,000+) - Book in advance at front desk - Can take photos here (it's private)

Ashiyu () - Foot Bath: - Public foot-soaking bath - Keep clothes on - Free or small fee - Common at train stations and tourist areas - More casual, can chat and take photos

17.3.5.11 Health and Safety Don't Enter Onsen If: - You have open wounds or cuts - You're very drunk - You have a contagious skin condition - You have a heart condition (consult doctor) - You're feeling ill

Health Tips: - Stay hydrated before and after - Don't bathe right after eating (wait 30 minutes) - Don't drink alcohol before bathing - Take breaks if feeling dizzy - Be careful of slippery surfaces - Temperature can spike blood pressure

After Onsen: - Some say don't shower (let minerals stay on skin) - Others prefer to rinse (depends on mineral content) - Ask locals or staff for recommendation - Drink plenty of water - Rest if feeling tired

17.3.6 6. Temple & Shrine Etiquette (&)

Temples (Buddhist) and shrines (Shinto) are sacred religious sites. While tourists are welcome, respectful behavior is essential.

17.3.6.1 Understanding the Difference Temples (- Tera/Ji): - Buddhist places of worship - Usually have large main hall - Statues of Buddha - Incense burning - Pagodas often present - More somber atmosphere - Examples: Senso-ji, Kinkaku-ji, Kiyomizu-dera

Shrines (- Jinja): - Shinto places of worship - Torii gates at entrance - No Buddhist imagery - Emphasis on nature and purity - Rope (shimenawa) decorations - Examples: Meiji Shrine, Fushimi Inari, Itsukushima Shrine

17.3.6.2 Temple Etiquette Entering the Temple:

1. **Bow at entrance gate**
 - Show respect when passing through gate
 - Small bow is fine
2. **Incense ritual (if available):**
 - Light incense from existing flames (don't use lighter directly)
 - Wave smoke toward yourself (believed to purify)
 - Place incense in burner
 - Bow slightly
3. **At the main hall:**
 - Approach the altar/offering box
 - Throw coin in box (any amount, ¥5 or ¥100 common)
 - Bow
 - Ring bell if present (to summon deity)
 - Clasp hands in prayer
 - Pray/reflect quietly
 - Bow again
 - Step aside

Temple DO's: - Remove hat when entering buildings - Speak quietly - Walk on sides of paths (center is for deities) - Take photos where permitted - Show respect at all times - Light incense if available - Make a small offering

Temple DON'Ts: - Don't touch or climb on statues or altars - Don't disturb worshippers - Don't be loud - Don't eat or drink inside - Don't smoke (except at designated areas) - Don't take photos if prohibited signs are present

17.3.6.3 Shrine Etiquette Complete Shrine Visit Procedure:

1. **Passing Through Torii Gate:** - **Bow before entering** (first torii gate) - Walk to the side, not in the center (center is for kami/spirits) - Shows respect and intention

2. **Temizuya () - Purification Ritual:** This is essential before approaching the main shrine.

Step-by-step purification: 1. Take ladle in right hand 2. Scoop water 3. Pour water over left hand 4. Switch ladle to left hand 5. Pour water over right hand 6. Switch ladle back to right hand 7. Pour water into cupped left palm 8. Rinse mouth with water from palm (don't swallow) 9. Spit water beside basin (not into basin) 10. Rinse left hand again (the one that touched your mouth) 11. Hold ladle vertically to rinse handle 12. Place ladle back face down 13. Do not touch basin directly or put mouth on ladle

Why This Matters: - Purification before approaching sacred space - Symbolic cleansing of body and spirit - Required before prayer - Shows respect and knowledge

3. Approaching the Main Shrine (Haiden/Honden):

Prayer Procedure (2-2-1): 1. **Approach offering box** 2. **Throw coin in box** (¥5 is considered lucky: go-en, meaning "good relationship") 3. **Ring bell** (if present) - to summon kami and purify 4. **Bow twice** (deep bows, about 90 degrees) 5. **Clap twice** (clap hands in front of chest) 6. **Pray silently** (make wish or show gratitude) 7. **Bow once more** (deep bow) 8. **Step aside for others**

Remember: Ni-rei, Ni-hakushu, Ichi-rei () - Two bows, two claps, one bow

4. **Leaving:** - Bow toward shrine before leaving - Bow at torii gate when exiting - Turn around to face shrine and bow

Shrine-Specific Etiquette:

Omikuji () - Fortune Slips: - Pay ¥100-300 at designated spot - Draw a fortune - Read your fortune (dai-kichi = best, kyo = worst) - If good: Keep it or tie it at designated area - If bad: Tie it on shrine grounds (to leave bad luck behind)

Ema () - Wooden Wishing Plaques: - Purchase at shrine office (¥500-1,000) - Write your wish on blank side - Include name and date - Hang on designated rack - Shrine will burn them later in ritual

Goshuin () - Temple/Shrine Stamps: - Calligraphic stamp and inscription - Bring goshuin-cho (stamp book) or buy one there (¥1,000-2,000) - Present at shrine office (¥300-500 per stamp) - Watch as priest writes it (beautiful art) - Each shrine has unique design - Collect throughout your journey

Omamori () - Amulets/Charms: - Purchase at shrine office - Various types: health, love, traffic safety, success, etc. - ¥500-1,000 typically - Keep on person or in bag - Don't open the inside - Return or burn after one year

17.3.6.4 Photography Rules Generally Allowed: - Temple/shrine grounds - Gardens - Architecture - Torii gates - Outdoor areas

Generally Prohibited: - Inside main halls - During ceremonies - Near worshippers - Private areas - Signs will indicate prohibitions

Photography Tips: - Look for "no photo" signs (or) - Don't use flash indoors - Don't climb on structures for photos - Be aware of people praying - Don't use selfie sticks where crowded - Respectful photos only

17.3.6.5 Dress Code Appropriate Attire: - Modest clothing - Cover shoulders and knees (especially at important shrines/temples) - No beachwear or athletic wear - Neat and clean appearance - Remove sunglasses indoors

Shoes: - Remove before entering buildings - Wear clean socks - Slippers may be provided - Place shoes in designated area

What to Avoid: - Revealing clothing - Dirty or torn clothes - Strong perfumes - Very casual beachwear

17.3.6.6 Donations Offering Money: - Voluntary - Any amount acceptable - ¥5, ¥50, ¥100, ¥500 common - Thrown gently into offering box - Shows respect and gratitude

When to Donate: - During prayer - When receiving goshuin - When taking omikuji - After enjoying the grounds - Optional but appreciated

17.3.6.7 Special Ceremonies and Events If You Encounter a Ceremony: - Observe quietly from a distance - Don't walk through or interrupt - No photography unless permitted - Show extra respect - Wait for ceremony to finish before approaching

Festival Days: - More crowded - Special rituals - May have restricted areas - Follow crowd flow - Unique photo opportunities

17.3.6.8 Additional Guidelines General Behavior: - Speak quietly - Walk slowly and mindfully - Don't litter - Don't eat or drink (unless designated area) - Don't smoke (unless designated area) - Control children - Keep dogs on leash or outside - Turn off phone ringer - No phone calls

Interacting with Monks/Priests: - Polite and respectful - Bow when greeting - Keep conversation brief - Don't interrupt rituals - Ask permission before taking photos of them

Special Requests: - Prayers can be commissioned (for a fee) - Special blessings available - Some offer meditation sessions - Ask at shrine/temple office

17.3.7 7. Public Behavior ()

Japanese society places high value on consideration for others and maintaining social harmony. Understanding public behavior expectations will help you navigate social situations smoothly.

17.3.7.1 Train and Subway Manners **Waiting for the Train:** - Queue in designated lines marked on platform - Stand aside to let passengers exit first - Board only after everyone has exited - Don't push or rush - Wait for next train if this one is too full

On the Train:

Priority Seating (- Yūsen-seki): - Reserved for elderly, pregnant women, disabled, people with small children - Usually at ends of train cars - Don't sit if you're young and able-bodied - Give up your seat if someone needs it more - Even outside priority seats, offer your seat to those who need it

Phone Usage: - **No phone calls** (strict rule) - Set phone to silent mode (manner mode) - Text and browse okay but quietly - No videos with sound - No loud games - Very occasionally someone will violate this, but it's frowned upon - If you must take an urgent call, exit at next stop

Volume: - Speak in very low voices - Whisper if you must talk - No loud conversations - No laughing loudly - Trains are incredibly quiet

Eating and Drinking: - **No eating on most trains** (except Shinkansen long-distance trains) - Water is usually okay - Strong-smelling foods especially forbidden - Gum and mints okay - Canned coffee at rush hour is borderline

Backpack Etiquette: - Take off your backpack and hold it - Place at your feet or on overhead rack - Don't hit people with your bag - Be aware of your space

Other Train Rules: - Don't block doors - Move to center of car - Hold bags in front of you during rush hour - Don't lean on poles (others need to grip) - No grooming (makeup, hair) - Don't push, be patient - Stand in aisles to let others sit - Face toward door when standing - No aggressive behavior

Rush Hour (7:30-9:30 AM, 5:30-8:00 PM): - Extremely crowded - Be patient - You will be pressed against others - Stay calm - Staff may physically push people in (normal) - Women-only cars available during rush hour

17.3.7.2 Eating Rules in Public **Where You Can Eat:** - Restaurants (obviously) - Designated eating areas (food courts, park benches) - Your hotel room - Rest areas - Some train platforms (brief snacks)

Where You CANNOT Eat: - While walking on the street (very rude) - On most trains/buses (except Shinkansen) - In shops while browsing - Most public transportation - While standing in crowds

Why No Walking While Eating: - Shows lack of focus/appreciation for food - Can dirty streets or clothes - Disrespectful to food - You might bump into someone

Exceptions: - Festival street food (stay in festival area) - Ice cream (somewhat accepted) - Near vending machines (drink/eat right there then leave)

Tips: - Buy food and find a spot to sit - Stay near where you bought food if eating outside - Dispose of trash in provided bins - Don't walk with open food containers

17.3.7.3 Queue Etiquette (- Narabu) Japanese queuing is famous for being orderly and respected.

Queuing Rules: - Always form orderly single-file line - Don't cut in line (never acceptable) - Maintain space from person in front - Don't leave line (you lose your spot) - Wait patiently - No pushing - No complaining about wait times

Types of Queues:

Restaurant Queues: - Write name on waiting list - Wait in designated area - Don't hover near entrance - Come when called (won't call multiple times)

Store Queues: - Form line at register - Next customer called when ready - Be ready with payment

Train Platform Queues: - Line markers on ground - Queue behind markers - Board in order

Escalator Queues: - Know which side to stand on - Don't block - Keep right (in Osaka) or left (in Tokyo) for walkers

17.3.7.4 Volume Levels Public Spaces: - Keep conversations quiet - No shouting or loud laughter - Especially quiet on trains - Indoor voice everywhere - Very low in temples/shrines

Phone Calls: - Not in restaurants during meal - Not on trains/buses - Step aside to a quiet area if you must - Be brief - Use low voice

Why Quiet is Important: - Respect for others' peace - Harmony (wa -) - Avoid disturbing others - Cultural value of restraint

Tourist Exception: - You may hear other tourists being loud - Don't follow their bad example - Be better - respect the culture

17.3.7.5 Phone Usage Rules On Trains: - No phone calls (strict) - Silent/manner mode - Texting/browsing okay - No sound from videos/games - Headphones only (keep volume down)

In Restaurants: - Phone on table okay - Quick texts acceptable - Long phone calls rude (step outside) - Don't disturb others - Don't photograph others without permission

Walking: - Pay attention while walking - Don't walk while staring at phone - Step aside if you need to stop and use phone - Safety and courtesy issue

Priority Areas: - Near priority seating: turn off phone or flight mode - Pacemakers can be affected (less common now) - Signs will indicate

17.3.7.6 Personal Space Respecting Space: - Don't stand too close - Maintain distance in conversations - Don't touch others - Physical contact is minimal

Exceptions: - Rush hour trains (unavoidable) - Crowded festivals - Queues at popular spots

Body Language: - Minimal gesturing - Keep arms close - Don't be overly expressive - Calm demeanor

17.3.7.7 Other Public Behavior Rules Littering: - **Never litter** (very serious social violation) - Trash cans are rare (carry your trash) - Bring a small bag for trash - Dispose at your hotel or konbini - Smoking areas have ashtrays

Smoking: - Designated smoking areas only - Not while walking (illegal in many areas) - Check for smoking sections - Don't smoke near non-smokers - Dispose of butts properly

Waiting: - Be patient everywhere - No complaining - Stay calm - Occupy yourself quietly

Stairs and Walkways: - Walk on the left (except Osaka) - Don't block paths - Move to side if stopping - Let others pass

Doors: - Hold door for person behind you - Thank person who holds door - Don't let door slam

Public Toilets: - Keep clean - Flush properly - Don't make a mess - Use provided toilet paper - Some have cleaning spray

17.3.8 8. Dining Etiquette ()

Beyond chopstick etiquette, there are many dining customs to be aware of.

17.3.8.1 Before and After Meals Itadakimasu (): - Said before eating - Means “I humbly receive”
- Shows gratitude for food - Clasp hands together and say it - Even when eating alone

Gochisosama () / Gochisosama deshita (): - Said after eating - Means “Thank you for the meal” - Shows appreciation - Clasp hands together and say to staff when leaving - More polite form: gochisosama deshita

17.3.8.2 Table Manners DO: - Hold rice bowl in your hand - Hold soup bowl in your hand - Sip soup directly from bowl - Slurp noodles (shows enjoyment) - Try to finish everything on your plate - Use oshibori (hot towel) to clean hands - Pour drinks for others, not yourself - Hold dishes when eating from them - Eat quietly and with good posture

DON'T: - Leave rice unfinished (very wasteful) - Start eating before everyone is served (wait or they'll say “please start”) - Talk with mouth full - Reach across others (ask for items to be passed) - Point with chopsticks - Wave chopsticks while talking - Use your own chopsticks for shared dishes (use serving chopsticks) - Add soy sauce to rice (disrespectful to rice) - Pour soy sauce over sushi rice (dip fish side only) - Blow your nose at table (go to bathroom) - Apply makeup at table - Take food from someone else's plate without permission

17.3.8.3 Specific Food Etiquette Sushi: - Eat in one bite if possible - Dip fish side in soy sauce, not rice side - Use fingers or chopsticks (both okay) - Ginger is palate cleanser between pieces - Wasabi already in sushi (don't add more unless you want to) - Eat in order suggested by chef at high-end places - Don't rub chopsticks together (insults quality)

Ramen: - Slurp loudly (shows enjoyment and cools noodles) - Eat quickly while hot - Don't need to finish all broth (very filling) - Rotate bowl to reach noodles - Use spoon for broth and toppings

Soba/Udon: - Slurp noodles - Dipping soba: dip just the tip in sauce - Don't need to finish all sauce - Drink provided soba-yu (noodle water) at end

Rice: - Hold bowl in hand - Don't add soy sauce directly to white rice - Eat with every bite of other food - Finish every grain (leaving rice is wasteful)

Soup (Miso, etc.): - Hold bowl in both hands - Sip directly from bowl - Use chopsticks to eat solid ingredients - Place back on table gently - No spoon needed

Tempura: - Dip in tentsuyu sauce - Add grated daikon and ginger to sauce - Eat while hot - Don't let it get soggy

Donburi (Rice Bowl Dishes): - Hold bowl if small enough - Mix ingredients if you like - Eat rice with toppings together

17.3.8.4 Drinking Etiquette Pouring Drinks: - **Never pour your own drink** when others present - Pour for others first - Others will pour for you - Watch others' glasses - Refill when getting low - Hold bottle with both hands (formal) or one hand (casual) - Receive with glass slightly lifted

Receiving Drinks: - Hold glass up when being poured for - Use both hands for formal situations - Thank them (arigatō gozaimasu) - Pour back for them after

Toasting: - **Kanpai! ()** - Cheers! - Clink glasses gently - Lower your glass below senior person's glass - Take a drink after toast - Don't drink before toast in formal settings

Beer: - Pour for others - Fill glass 2/3 to 3/4 full - Tilt glass when pouring - Let foam settle

Sake: - Warm or cold (depends on type and season) - Small cups (ochoko) - Pour for others frequently - Hold bottle with both hands for respect

Tea: - Don't pour for yourself at formal tea ceremony - Rotate bowl before drinking (tea ceremony) - Slurp slightly to aerate - Shows appreciation

17.3.8.5 Shared Dishes Serving from Shared Plates: - Use serving chopsticks (toribashi) if provided - Or flip your chopsticks and use clean end - Don't use eating end of chopsticks - Take from top, don't dig - Take modest portions - Consider others

Don't: - Take the last piece without offering it to others first - Take large portions when sharing - Touch food and put it back - Pass food chopsticks-to-chopsticks

17.3.8.6 Paying Payment Customs: - No tipping (considered rude/confusing) - Pay at register, not at table (usually) - Bring bill to cashier near entrance - Don't leave money on table - Split bills less common (one person pays) - Use tray provided for payment

Splitting Bills: - Less common than in West - Say: "Betsu-betsu de onegaishimasu" (Separate please) - Or: "Warite de onegaishimasu" (Split please) - Usually one person pays and friends reimburse later - Convenience: Use app or cash to reimburse friend

When Host/Guest: - Invited person should refuse to pay at first - Insist mildly - But accept if host insists back - Reciprocate by treating them next time

17.3.8.7 Restaurant-Specific Etiquette Entering: - Wait to be seated (don't seat yourself) - Staff will say "Irasshaimase!" (Welcome!) - You don't need to respond - Tell them party size - Follow staff to table

At the Table: - Use oshibori for hands, not face - Don't reorder oshibori after using it - Some places have call buttons (press for service) - Others require saying "Sumimasen!" (Excuse me!) - Don't snap fingers or wave aggressively

Ordering: - Look at menu - Ask questions if needed - Order when ready - It's okay to ask recommendations

During Meal: - Don't call staff too frequently - Get refills if offered - Relax and enjoy

Leaving: - Bring bill to register - Thank staff: "Gochisosama deshita" - Staff will say "Arigatō gozaimashita!" (Thank you!) - Don't need to respond (but can say arigatō) - Leave tables clean and organized

17.3.8.8 All-You-Can-Eat/Drink () Tabehōdai () - All-You-Can-Eat: - Time limit (usually 90-120 minutes) - Order multiple rounds - Don't waste food (take only what you'll eat) - Finish what you order - Some places charge for leftovers

Nomihōdai () - All-You-Can-Drink: - Common at izakaya - Time limit (usually 2 hours) - Order drinks as you go - Last order time announced - Don't order too many at end

17.4 C. Safety Guide

Japan is one of the safest countries in the world for tourists. However, it's important to be aware of potential risks and know how to respond in emergencies.

17.4.1 1. General Safety

17.4.1.1 Crime Levels Overall Safety: - Japan has one of the lowest crime rates in the world - Violent crime against tourists is extremely rare - Petty crime exists but is much less common than most countries - You can walk safely at night in most areas - Children travel alone on trains safely - Lost items are often returned

Violent Crime: - Extremely rare for tourists - Homicide rate is very low - Random violence almost unheard of - Gang activity doesn't target tourists - Terrorism risk is very low

Property Crime: - Theft is uncommon but exists - Pickpocketing rare but possible in crowded areas - Bicycle theft more common (use locks) - Hotel room theft very rare - Lost items often turned in to police

17.4.1.2 Safe Activities Generally Very Safe: - Walking alone at night - Using public transportation - Staying in hotels/hostels - Eating street food - Shopping - Using ATMs - Asking strangers for help - Solo female travel - LGBTQ+ travel (though culture is conservative)

Normal Precautions: - Watch belongings in very crowded areas - Don't leave valuables visible in cars - Lock hotel room - Keep copy of passport separate from original - Have emergency contacts saved

17.4.1.3 Rare Concerns While rare, be aware of:

Groping (Chikan -):: - Can occur on crowded trains - Usually targets women - Women-only train cars available during rush hour (marked with pink signs) - If happens: Yell "Chikan!" and point at person - Move to different car - Report to station staff

Drink Spiking: - Very rare but has occurred - Watch your drink in bars - Don't accept drinks from strangers - Stay aware in Roppongi nightlife (foreigner area in Tokyo)

Photography Concerns: - Upskirt photography (illegal but happens) - Camera shutter sound on phones required by law to prevent this - Be aware in crowded areas

Touts and Scams: - Bar touts in Kabukicho (Tokyo) and Roppongi - May lure to overpriced bars with hidden fees - Decline offers from people on street - Go to established businesses only

17.4.1.4 Tourist Scams (Rare but Exist) Overcharging at Bars: - "Catch bars" or "Clip joints" - Charged thousands of yen for drinks - Common in Kabukicho and Roppongi - Avoid: Don't follow touts, check prices before ordering

Fake Monks: - Rare but some fake monks ask for donations - Real monks don't aggressively ask for money - Politely decline

Taxi Scams: - Very rare (taxis are highly regulated) - Meter should be used - Fixed rates to airports - Receipt always provided

Fake Police: - Extremely rare - Real police have proper ID - They won't ask for your wallet directly

17.4.1.5 Street Safety Tips DO: - Walk confidently - Use well-lit streets - Trust your instincts - Ask for help if lost - Use official taxis - Keep phone charged - Have hotel address in Japanese

DON'T: - Flash large amounts of cash - Leave bags unattended (though many locals do) - Accept rides from strangers - Follow aggressive touts - Walk in obviously dangerous areas drunk - Engage with street hasslers

17.4.1.6 Solo Travel Safety Solo Female Travelers: - Japan is very safe for solo women - Women-only hotel floors available - Women-only train cars during rush hour - Normal precautions still apply - Avoid excessive drinking alone - Use common sense

Solo Male Travelers: - Also very safe - Same general precautions - Be respectful and aware

General Solo Travel: - Let someone know your plans - Share location with friends/family - Keep phone charged - Have offline maps - Emergency contacts saved

17.4.1.7 LGBTQ+ Safety General Environment: - Safe from violence - No anti-LGBTQ+ hate crimes - Culture is conservative but polite - Same-sex marriage not legal (yet) - Don't ask, don't tell culture - Public displays of affection uncommon for all couples

Tips: - Discrimination unlikely - Some areas more open (Tokyo, Osaka) - Shinjuku Ni-chome is gay district in Tokyo - Hotels won't question room sharing - General respect for privacy

17.4.2 2. Natural Disasters

Japan is prone to natural disasters due to its location. Understanding what to do can save your life.

17.4.2.1 Earthquakes (- Jishin) Frequency: - Japan experiences thousands of earthquakes per year - Most are tiny tremors you won't feel - Moderate earthquakes (feeling shaking) somewhat common - Large destructive earthquakes are rare but possible - Buildings are earthquake-resistant

Magnitude Scale: - Japan uses Shindo scale (1-7) based on felt intensity - Shindo 1-2: Barely noticeable - Shindo 3-4: Noticeable, hanging objects swing - Shindo 5: Difficult to walk, objects fall - Shindo 6: Very difficult to stand, building damage - Shindo 7: Cannot move, widespread destruction

What to Do During an Earthquake:

If Indoors: 1. **Drop, Cover, Hold On** - Drop to hands and knees - Cover head and neck under sturdy table/desk - Hold on until shaking stops 2. Stay away from windows 3. Don't run outside (falling debris danger) 4. Stay in place until shaking stops 5. Don't use elevators 6. Protect your head with arms if no table available

If Outdoors: 1. Move away from buildings, power lines, trees 2. Get to open space 3. Protect your head 4. Watch for falling debris 5. Stay away from vending machines and walls

If on Train/Subway: 1. Hold onto handrails or poles 2. Stay low 3. Don't try to exit 4. Follow staff instructions 5. Train will stop automatically

If in Elevator: 1. Press all floor buttons 2. Get out at first opening floor 3. Don't use elevators after earthquake

If Driving: 1. Slow down and pull over safely 2. Stay in car 3. Avoid bridges and overpasses 4. Listen to radio for information

After the Earthquake:

1. **Check for injuries**
2. **Check for gas leaks** (smell, listen)
 - If suspected, open windows and exit
 - Don't use matches or lighters
3. **Check for structural damage**
4. **Be prepared for aftershocks** (can last days or weeks)
5. **Use stairs, not elevators**
6. **Check phone only briefly** (preserve battery and network)
7. **Follow official instructions** (TV, radio, loudspeakers)
8. **Have emergency kit ready** (see below)
9. **Don't spread rumors**
10. **Evacuate if instructed**

Tsunami Risk: - Large earthquakes near coast can cause tsunamis - Tsunami arrives 10-30+ minutes after earthquake - Move to high ground immediately if near coast - Don't wait for official warning - Stay elevated until all-clear given

17.4.2.2 Tsunamis (- Tsunami) Warning Signs: - Strong earthquake (especially long duration) - Loud roar from ocean - Sudden water level changes - Official warnings (sirens, announcements)

What to Do:

1. **If you feel strong earthquake near coast:**
 - Don't wait for warning
 - Immediately move to high ground (minimum 3rd floor or 10m elevation)

- Move inland and uphill
 - Don't go to beach to watch
2. **If tsunami warning issued:**
- Evacuate immediately
 - Follow evacuation route signs (- blue signs)
 - Don't return until all-clear given
 - Multiple waves can come - first is not always largest
3. **Stay elevated until all-clear:**
- Wait for official "all clear" announcement
 - Can take many hours
 - Stay informed via radio/TV

Tsunami Evacuation Signs: - Blue signs with white running figure and wave - Point to high ground - Follow these during evacuation

17.4.2.3 Typhoons (- Taifū) Season: - Typhoon season: June to October - Peak: August to September - Can affect any part of Japan - Warning given days in advance

Before Typhoon: 1. Monitor weather forecasts 2. Stock emergency supplies 3. Charge all devices 4. Secure loose outdoor items 5. Know evacuation routes 6. Stay indoors when it arrives

During Typhoon: 1. **Stay indoors** 2. Stay away from windows 3. Don't go outside 4. Avoid flooded areas 5. Don't drive 6. Prepare for power outages 7. Fill bathtub with water (for toilet flushing if needed) 8. Listen to official information

After Typhoon: 1. Check for damage 2. Avoid flooded areas 3. Watch for downed power lines 4. Don't go near rivers (flooding can continue) 5. Follow official instructions

Typhoon Impact: - Heavy rain and flooding - Strong winds - Transportation disruptions (trains, flights cancelled) - Landslides in mountainous areas - Coastal storm surge

Travel During Typhoon: - Flights will be cancelled - Trains will stop - Stay at accommodation - Don't try to travel - Build buffer days in itinerary during typhoon season

17.4.2.4 Volcanoes (- Kazan) Volcanic Activity: - Japan has 110+ active volcanoes - Most eruptions are small and predicted - Tourist areas monitored closely - Warnings given in advance

Volcanic Alert Levels: - Level 1: Normal - Level 2: Increased activity - Level 3: Restricted access - Level 4: Prepare to evacuate - Level 5: Evacuate

Popular Volcanic Tourist Sites: - Mt. Fuji (Level 1 normally) - Hakone (hot springs area) - Mt. Aso (Kyushu) - Sakurajima (Kagoshima)

Safety: - Check volcanic alert levels before visiting - Follow restricted area signs - Don't enter prohibited zones - Have exit route planned - Follow local instructions

If Volcanic Activity Increases: 1. Leave area immediately 2. Follow evacuation orders 3. Protect yourself from ash (cover mouth/nose) 4. Avoid river valleys (lahars/mudflows) 5. Monitor official information

17.4.3 3. Health & Medical

17.4.3.1 Travel Insurance Critical Importance: - **Get comprehensive travel insurance before arrival** - Medical care in Japan is excellent but expensive - Without insurance, costs are very high - Covers medical emergencies, evacuation, repatriation - Also covers trip cancellation, lost luggage

What to Cover: - Medical expenses (minimum \$100,000) - Emergency evacuation - Repatriation - 24/7 assistance hotline - Prescription medications - Dental emergencies - Pre-existing conditions (if possible)

17.4.3.2 Hospital Access Finding Medical Care:

Emergency Room (- Kyūkyū): - Go to large hospitals with ER - Open 24/7 - For serious emergencies
- Call 119 for ambulance if life-threatening

Clinics (- Shinryōjo): - For non-emergencies - Daytime hours usually - Specialists and general practice
- Less expensive than hospitals

International Clinics: - Staff speak English - Accustomed to foreign patients - More expensive - Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto have several

Notable International Clinics:

Tokyo: - Tokyo Midtown Clinic - American Clinic Tokyo - St. Luke's International Hospital - Japanese Red Cross Medical Center

Osaka: - Osaka Ekisaikai Hospital - Sumitomo Hospital

Kyoto: - Kyoto City Hospital - Japan Baptist Hospital

How to Find: - Ask hotel concierge - Call embassy - Use JNTO's Japan Helpline: 050-3816-2787 (English, 24/7) - Google Maps search "international clinic"

17.4.3.3 Pharmacy Access Pharmacies (- Yakkyoku): - Common everywhere - Look for (kusuri - medicine) sign - Many in train stations and shopping areas

Common Chains: - Matsumoto Kiyoshi () - Sugi Pharmacy () - Welcia () - Tsuruha Drug ()

Over-the-Counter Medications: - Pain relievers (aspirin, acetaminophen) - Cold medicine - Stomach medicine - Antihistamines - Motion sickness medicine - Eye drops - Bandages and first aid

Important Notes: - Dosages may be lower than your country - Some ingredients prohibited (pseudoephedrine) - English instructions sometimes available - Pharmacist can help (limited English)

17.4.3.4 Prescription Medications Bringing Prescription Meds: - Bring enough for entire trip - Keep in original containers - Bring doctor's letter explaining need - Some medications prohibited in Japan - Check Japan Customs before arrival

Prohibited/Restricted Medications: - Stimulants (Adderall, Vyvanse, etc.) - need special permission - Some ADHD medications - Strong pain medications (need yakkan shoumei - import certificate) - Check: <https://www.customs.go.jp/english/>

If You Need Prescriptions While in Japan: - See doctor at clinic - Doctor writes prescription - Fill at pharmacy - Need Japanese insurance or pay full price (expensive) - Travel insurance may reimburse

Yakkan Shōmei (): - Import certificate for controlled medications - Required for stimulants, strong painkillers - Apply before travel through embassy/consulate - Takes several weeks - Bring with you

17.4.3.5 General Health Safety Water: - Tap water safe to drink everywhere - Very clean - No need for bottled water (but available)

Food Safety: - Food safety standards very high - Raw fish (sushi) is safe - Street food is safe - Food poisoning very rare

Heat Safety (Summer): - Summers are hot and humid (30-35°C+) - Heat stroke is real risk - Stay hydrated - Use cooling products (cooling towels, cold packs) - Take breaks in air conditioning - Elderly and children at higher risk

Cooling Stations: - Department stores - Convenience stores - Malls - Train stations - Rest areas

Symptoms of Heat Stroke: - Dizziness, confusion - Nausea - Rapid heartbeat - Headache - Hot, dry skin - Seek shade and medical help immediately

Cold Safety (Winter): - Hokkaido and mountain areas get very cold - Dress in layers - Hypothermia risk in extreme cold - Check weather forecasts

Air Quality: - Generally excellent - Spring: pollen allergies (kafun-shō) - Occasional yellow dust from China - Masks available at all convenience stores

Common Ailments:

Motion Sickness: - Winding mountain roads - Ferry rides - Get medicine at pharmacy

Jet Lag: - Adjust gradually - Get sunlight - Stay hydrated - Melatonin available OTC

Stomach Issues: - Usually from dietary change - Medicine available at pharmacy - Stay hydrated

17.4.4 4. Emergency Contacts

Understanding how to get help in an emergency is crucial.

17.4.4.1 Emergency Numbers 110 - Police (- Keisatsu)

When to Call: - Crimes (theft, assault, etc.) - Accidents - Lost/stolen items (for report) - Suspicious activity - Any situation needing police

What Will Happen: - Operator may not speak English - Stay calm and speak slowly - Say: “Eigo de onegaishimasu” (English please) - Give location (address, landmarks) - Explain situation simply

119 - Ambulance (- Kyūkyūsha) / Fire (- Shōbō)

When to Call: - Medical emergencies - Serious injuries - Heart attack, stroke - Unconsciousness - Severe bleeding - Fires

What to Say: - “Kyūkyūsha!” (Ambulance) or “Kaji!” (Fire) - Location (address or landmarks) - What happened - Number of people injured

What Will Happen: - Ambulance comes quickly (usually 6-8 minutes) - Paramedics provide first aid - Take to nearest appropriate hospital - You may choose hospital if not life-threatening - Bring insurance information and ID

Ambulance Cost: - Free (no charge for ambulance) - Hospital treatment costs apply

17.4.4.2 Other Important Numbers Japan Helpline: 050-3816-2787 - Operated by Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) - 24/7, 365 days - English, Chinese, Korean - Tourist information and emergency support - Free from landlines, minimal charge from mobiles

Tourist Hotline: 3501-0101 (Tokyo area code 03) - English, Chinese, Korean - Travel information and assistance

Your Embassy: Save your country’s embassy contact before traveling.

Major Embassies in Tokyo: - US Embassy: 03-3224-5000 - UK Embassy: 03-5211-1100 - Canadian Embassy: 03-5412-6200 - Australian Embassy: 03-5232-4111 - New Zealand Embassy: 03-3467-2271 - German Embassy: 03-5791-7700

Embassies Can Help With: - Lost/stolen passports - Emergency funds (if needed) - Legal issues - Medical emergencies - Natural disasters - Contacting family

Embassies CANNOT: - Pay your bills - Get you out of jail - Give legal advice - Act as travel agents - Overrule Japanese law

17.4.4.3 What to Say in Emergencies For 110 (Police):

Japanese: - “Tasukete kudasai!” () - Please help! - “Dorobō desu!” () - Thief! - “Keisatsu o yonde kudasai!” () - Please call police!

Location: - “Watashi wa [location] ni imasu” ([]) - I am at [location] - Point to address on phone or map - Name nearest station or landmark

For 119 (Ambulance/Fire):

Japanese: - “Kyūkyūsha o yonde kudasai!” () - Please call ambulance! - “Kega o shimashita!” () - I’m injured! - “Byōki desu!” () - I’m sick! - “Kaji desu!” () - Fire!

To Operator: - “Kyūkyū desu” () - Medical emergency - “Kaji desu” () - Fire - “Jūsho wa...” (...) - The address is... - “[Landmark] no chikaku desu” ([landmark]) - Near [landmark]

Medical Emergency Phrases: - “Taore mashita” () - Someone collapsed - “Iki ga dekinai” () - Can’t breathe - “Mune ga itai” () - Chest pain - “Chi ga tomarimasen” () - Bleeding won’t stop - “Ishiki ga arimasen” () - Unconscious

General Emergency Phrases: - “Eigo de onegaishimasu” () - English please - “Watashi wa gaikokujin desu” () - I am a foreigner - “Byōin ni ikitai desu” () - I want to go to hospital - “Taishikan ni renraku shite kudasai” () - Please contact my embassy

Getting Help from Passersby: - “Tasukete kudasai!” - Please help me! - “Eigo ga dekimasu ka?” - Do you speak English? - “Keisatsu o yonde kudasai” - Please call police - “Kyūkyūsha o yonde kudasai” - Please call ambulance

17.4.4.4 Police Boxes (Kōban -) What are Kōban? - Small police stations throughout cities - Staffed by 1-2 officers - Community policing - Very accessible

Where to Find: - Near train stations - Major intersections - Residential neighborhoods - Look for sign with red light

What They Can Help With: - Directions - Lost items - Filing reports - Small emergencies - Finding addresses - General assistance

How to Use: - Just walk in - Officers are friendly - Limited English but helpful - Use Google Translate if needed

17.4.4.5 Lost and Found Lost Items: - High chance of recovery - Go to nearest police box (kōban) - Fill out lost item report - Check back in a few days - Items often turned in

For Items Lost on Trains: - Report to station office - Each line has lost and found - Central lost and found for older items - Keep ticket stub as proof - Items held for several months

17.4.5 5. Safety Apps

Having the right apps can make emergencies easier to handle.

17.4.5.1 Essential Safety Apps 1. Safety Tips (NHK World) - Disaster warnings and alerts - Earthquake, tsunami, volcano info - Multi-language support - Offline functionality - Step-by-step emergency instructions - **Download before arrival**

2. Japan Official Travel App - Tourist information - Emergency contacts - Multilingual support - Route planning - Offline maps

3. Google Maps - Navigation - Offline maps (download before) - Find hospitals, police, embassies - Train routes - Essential for getting around

4. Google Translate - Download Japanese offline - Camera translation (read signs) - Voice translation - Essential for communication - Works with camera for real-time translation

5. Yurekuru (揺るくる) - Earthquake early warning app - Alerts seconds before shaking - Japanese language but simple icons - Can give you time to take cover

17.4.5.2 Emergency Preparedness Apps 6. Japan Shelter Guide - Find evacuation shelters - Disaster preparedness info - Multilingual

7. Hyperdia / Japan Transit Planner - Train routes - Alternative routes during disruptions - Real-time delay information

8. WhatsApp / LINE - Stay in touch with friends/family - LINE is very popular in Japan - Works with WiFi only

9. Weather Apps - Yahoo! Weather (Japanese but reliable) - Weather forecasts and warnings - Typhoon tracking

10. TripIt or Travel Organizer - Store all reservations - Emergency contacts - Embassy information - Works offline

17.4.5.3 Using Apps in Emergencies What to Have Saved: - Emergency contact numbers (110, 119, embassy) - Hotel address in Japanese - Insurance company contact - Medical conditions and allergies in Japanese - Embassy location and phone

Keep Phone Charged: - Carry portable battery - Public USB ports available at convenience stores - Charging stations in airports/stations

Offline Functionality: - Download maps offline - Download translation packages - Save important info in notes app - Screenshot important information

17.5 Summary

Japanese culture emphasizes respect, consideration for others, and social harmony. While the rules and customs may seem overwhelming at first, remember that Japanese people are generally understanding and forgiving of foreign visitors who make honest efforts to be respectful.

Key Takeaways:

Regional Differences: - Tokyo: Fast, formal, expensive, English-friendly - Osaka: Friendly, casual, food-focused, great value - Kyoto: Traditional, refined, cultural heart - Hakone: Relaxed, nature-focused, onsen culture

Etiquette Essentials: - Bow when greeting and thanking - Remove shoes at appropriate times - Never stick chopsticks in rice - Give and receive gifts with both hands - Wash before entering onsen - Respect temple and shrine customs - Be quiet on trains - Never eat while walking

Safety: - Japan is extremely safe - Natural disasters are the main risk - Know emergency numbers: 110 (police), 119 (ambulance) - Get travel insurance - Download safety apps - Keep emergency contacts saved

The most important thing is to approach Japanese culture with respect, observe what others are doing, and make genuine efforts to follow local customs. Japanese people appreciate foreigners who try to understand their culture, and small mistakes are usually forgiven with grace.

Enjoy your time in Japan, and remember: when in doubt, observe the locals and follow their lead!

End of Section IV: Cultural Guide