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JAPANESE III

SECOND EDITION



READING BOOKLET

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JAPANESE III

SECOND EDITION

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Japanese Culture and Communication

The objective of Pimsleur's Japanese programs (Levels I, II, and III) is to introduce you to the language and culture of Japan primarily through your ears, and only secondarily through your eyes. This approach is based upon the fact that more than 95 percent of our lives is spent in listening and talking, and less than 5 percent in reading and writing. The most effective and productive way to begin acquiring these necessary communication skills is by actually working with the "language in use," as demonstrated by native speakers of the language being learned.

Efficiency is greatly increased when what you learn first are the most-frequently-used structures and daily life vocabulary, so that you practice with the practical tools you require every day. This is self-motivating because you will begin to use your new language immediately and successfully.

Language and culture are so closely intertwined that learning them separately can make you literally "culturally-deprived," i.e., unable to produce appropriate and meaningful language. For this reason you must carefully notice the different (read "cultural") ways the Japanese "act" in the various situations you will experience as you proceed through the units of this course. Being sensitive to "who is doing what to whom, and why," is what you have learned to do almost unconsciously in your native tongue — you will learn this same

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Japanese Culture and Communication *(continued)*

sense of awareness as you gain proficiency in your new language. This implicit instruction will come from the audio sessions, as you learn to identify the intonation and melody of the speakers. This booklet provides additional explicit instruction to further confirm what you have learned.

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

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Unit 1: The Weather as a Topic for Small Talk

As is the case in conversation between Americans, the weather makes a nice topic for small talk that helps break the ice and makes it easy to initiate a conversation with just about any Japanese, including a complete stranger. Generally speaking, Japan has four distinct seasons, and the climatic change from one season to another is usually predictable.

While the Japanese ordinarily use the Western calendar system, they tend to follow the lunar calendar for traditional festivals, for rice farming, and as a guide for seasonal changes of weather. For instance, February 4th on the lunar calendar marks the beginning of spring, when in fact it is in the middle of winter. It is a good month before it actually gets warm in many parts of Japan. Psychologically, however, many people in Japan feel relieved on that day, prepared to welcome a warmer and more colorful season than the cold, damp, gray winter that they have put up with until then. From that day on, *ataatakaku narimashita ne*, or, “It’s gotten warmer, hasn’t it,” is an appropriate expression for greeting someone.

Likewise, August 7th is considered to be the beginning of fall, although it is still very hot in Japan, except in the northern regions such as Hokkaido. The Japanese exchange mid-summer post cards, inquiring how their friends are doing and wishing one another good health during the hot summer.

The Weather (*continued*)

After August 7th the card is called a “late summer greeting card,” instead of “hot season inquiry card,” which is the name used for the card through August 6th. In sum, the Japanese are generally keen on weather, and it makes a good topic for an initial conversation, with slight variations in temperature being noted and commented on.

***tsuyu*: The Rainy Season**

tsuyu refers to the annual rainy season in Japan. The beginning of the rainy season varies, depending on the region. In Okinawa, where it begins earliest, you may expect to have a lot of rainy days from early May to early June. In the southernmost island of Kyuushuu, it starts about one month later, from early June to early July. If you go all the way up to the Tohoku region, the northernmost part of the island of Honshu, the rainy season begins in mid-June and ends a month later. The northernmost island of Hokkaido does not have a rainy season. Unlike the rainy season in Southeast Asia, where they get heavy rain every day for a set time, the Japanese *tsuyu* is characterized by many consecutive drizzly days, with occasional days of severe weather. Heavy rains sometimes cause floods and landslides, and several casualties are reported every year. Although the description of such weather sounds rather gloomy, the rain is essential to growing rice,

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***tsuyu*: The Rainy Season (continued)**

the Japanese staple. The amount of rainfall during the *tsuyu* affects not only the farmers, but the entire national economy. The rain is welcomed, despite the gloomy feelings and the possibility of disaster it can bring. You may enjoy yourself far more, however, if you can avoid traveling to Japan during the rainy season.

Unit 2: Self-Introduction, Japanese-Style

When Diane Jackson introduced herself, she said the name of her company first, followed by her name: *ichiban ginkoo no Diane Jackson to mooshimasu*. In the past, Japanese society tended to place attainment of the company goal above the individual's. This tendency, however, may often be over-stressed in cross-cultural comparative analyses, as in fact it seems to be changing rapidly in today's Japanese society. The long-standing social habits are persistent, however, and you will notice that most Japanese people will announce their company or school names followed by their individual names in self-introductions.

It may be hard for you to understand what the person actually does in the company, since asking his or her title, position, or rank, is not easy. That is one of the reasons why the Japanese almost always exchange their business cards immediately upon

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Self-Introduction, Japanese-Style (*continued*)

meeting someone. The company name, the person's position, and the individual name are all written on the small piece of paper, and the Japanese feel comfortable letting the card represent them.

The business card, *meishi*, is extremely important in all business situations. It is absolutely necessary to have a stack of *meishi* at all times. Having your *meishi* made in two languages, one side in English and the other in Japanese, will be very useful. Normally, a younger or lower-ranking person will offer his card first, turned so the other person can read it immediately. After exchanging your *meishi* with someone, you need to carefully — and slowly — study the information on the card you have been given. It is also considered good manners to leave the other person's *meishi* on the table throughout the meeting so you can always refer to the information on the card.

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Taking Pictures

shasin o torimasu, as you have learned, means “taking pictures.” The Japanese typically enjoy taking pictures, as well as having theirs taken. In the U.S., you may have been asked to take their photos as they pose in groups in front of tourist spots. Do not be surprised to see groups of young people, especially females, posing with their index and middle fingers sticking up, forming “v-signs.” They may not know the original meaning associated with it, but nevertheless it is a most popular pose.

The technological advancement in photo-graphy has made available a wide variety of picture-taking instruments ranging from disposable cameras and digital cameras to video cameras installed on mobile phones. The large number of Japanese who carry mobile phones are always ready to take pictures and even send them to their family and friends. Be prepared to pose in front of your Japanese friends and associates for instant photo sessions!

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Unit 3: Making Compliments

In the beginning conversation of this unit, Mr. Jackson was complimented on his Japanese: *Jackson san, nihongo ga jozu desu ne!* He, of course, responded “No, not yet.” This type of exchange is used in a variety of situations. It is considered proper etiquette to compliment someone you know, particularly when the relationship is formal and still in an early stage of development.

You will find that the Japanese are very good at finding things to praise: the place you live, your garden, your clothes, your haircut, hairdo, and even hair color, as well as many other things that are not necessarily the outcome of your own efforts. The Japanese will often compliment you on your use of chopsticks since they believe that Westerners never eat with chopsticks. They are most likely to say how good your Japanese is even when you say only a few, fundamental words. In all cases it is both appropriate and polite to respond with a humble disclaimer.

***kokusaika*: The International Boom**

Living in an island country with no shared borders, the Japanese naturally need to look overseas for economic trade, technological enhancements, cultural exchange, etc. This growing trend accounts for the Japanese interest in *kokusaika* or “internationalization.” People who have experience

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***kokusaika*: The International Boom (continued)**

in foreign languages and have lived abroad are valued in many corporations.

You will notice that there are many English conversation schools in the cities and towns. Many colleges and other educational facilities, such as community centers, also place their focus on developing English and other foreign language skills. People who actually possess appropriate skills and experiences are often rewarded and more quickly promoted within a company. Being a native speaker of English, you may be approached in the street by complete strangers who would like to test their ability to communicate in English. Such a sudden and unexpected address is not intended to be rude: the Japanese do not mean to offend you.

Unit 4: Asking and Answering a Question with an Incomplete Sentence

Taylor san, oshigoto wa? literally translated, means, “Mr. Taylor, your job ...?” This is not a complete sentence, but rather the first half of *Taylor san, oshigoto wa nan desu ka?* In Japanese communication, seemingly incomplete “sentences” are often used and, in this case, *nan desu ka?* is left to be understood. The full sentence sometimes is considered too formal and rigid in casual conversation. Such a question might sound to the Japanese as though Mr. Taylor were being

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Incomplete Sentences ... (continued)

questioned in court. Since incomplete sentences are a Japanese communication skill, you will do well responding to another person as soon as you have recognized the question, rather than waiting and expecting him / her to finish the sentence. Likewise asking Japanese incomplete questions is not regarded as a lack of linguistic skill, but rather a sign of communicative competence.

To Add an “o” or Not?

You have learned that the Japanese often add “o” to the beginning of a word to make it polite, such as “*onomimono*,” asked by a waitress at a restaurant. Whether and when to add “o” is a very difficult question as there is no formal rule. Several patterns are present, however. When you ask about your conversation partner, especially if the person is above you in age, position, status, etc., you often add “o” such as “*oshigoto wa nan desu ka?*” You should not respond to the question by saying, “*watashi no oshigoto wa ...*” You have also heard a woman complimenting your Japanese by saying “*nihongo ga ojozu desu ne.*” Do not respond, “*ie, mada ojozu ja arimasen.*” A general rule is that you do not add “o” when referring to yourself.

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Unit 5: Friendly People in Service Industries

People in service industries in Japan, such as department stores, restaurants, hotels, and travel agencies are generally very kind and eager to help their customers. They try to please you by smiling and speaking in polite language. They greet you by saying *irasshaimase* meaning “Welcome,” or “Thank you for coming.” When you stop at a gas station in a car, for instance, several attendants will come rushing to your car, saying *irasshaimase*. They will wash your windows, dispose of any rubbish in your car, offer to check the engine, etc. They even stop the traffic in the street for you to pull out without difficulty.

Sometimes American visitors to Japan mistake the professional courtesy as a personal offer of friendship. You should remember that it is generally part of the service provided and probably does not represent personal interest in you. Misreading someone’s friendly façade may sometimes lead to an embarrassing situation.

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Alcoholic Beverages in Japan

Beer is one of the most popular drinks in Japan. You will find it served in virtually every restaurant, whether casual or formal; in small food stands at such places as baseball stadiums and train stations; and even in the street. There are many vending machines for beer as well. Business people often start a dinner meeting with a beer, and then shift to stronger drinks such as wine, *sake*, and whiskey. Beer plays an important role in breaking the ice.

Some restaurants favor one brand of beer over another. In each brand there are several kinds available, such as lager, draft, and dark draft. Draft beer is particularly popular in Japan.

Another interesting thing you will find is “beer gardens,” usually on the roofs of buildings in large cities. They are usually open from May to October, and they attract a large number of people on their way home from work. Drinking beer with your Japanese acquaintances may help develop personal and business relationships.

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Unit 6: English Loan-Words

In this unit you heard *nooto* (notebook), *teeburu* (table) and *booru pen* (ballpoint pen), words that were taken from English, which have been adopted in Japanese. In conversations between business associates, there are likely to be a number of such words, especially if they involve computer related topics such as *konpyuuta* (computer), *nettowaku* (network), and *meeru* (mail). The words, however, are pronounced very differently. They are frequently shortened, and they often have slightly different meanings than in English. *kopii* can refer to a photocopy of a document, a copy machine, or even advertising copy. *eakon* is short for air conditioner, *apo* for appointment, *purezen* comes from presentation, and *nego* from negotiation. *naitaa* is a combination of “night” and “er” and is used for a night baseball game. Although these words originally come from English, they are often difficult for native speakers of English to understand. This is sometimes frustrating to the Japanese speakers who believe that they are using “English words” as they would be used in communication among native speakers of English.

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Unit 7: Vacations

Traveling and camping are some of the typical ways for the Japanese to spend their leisure time. There is a major difference, however, in the way vacations are perceived in Japan and in the West. In Japan, most vacations are taken throughout the country during three “vacation periods” which coincide with three major national holidays. The first one is from the end of April to the beginning of May, which is actually a series of different national holidays and is known as “Golden Week.” The second vacation time is in the middle of school summer vacation in mid-August and coincides with the “Obon festival,” a Buddhist holiday to worship dead souls. And the last one is at the end of the year when people return to their hometowns to celebrate the beginning of a new year with their relatives. You may want to think twice about traveling to Japan at these times as it is extremely hard to make reservations for transportation or lodging then.

Unit 8: *onsen* - Hot Springs

In this unit you were introduced to the *onsen* or “hot spring.” The Japanese are very fond of bathing in hot springs. The hot water that comes out of each spring is classified by its content, varying in such qualities as the amount of iron, sulfur, and magnesium it contains, as well as the degree of transparency. You will find a number of hotels, with

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onsen - Hot Springs (continued)

various other leisure facilities, established around the hot springs, which serve as tourist centers. They are advertised according to the effects that the hot springs are expected to bring. Some of them are said to be good for the treatment of neuralgia, rheumatism, and healing external wounds; some are expected to help you keep your skin youthful and moist. Many Japanese enjoy a relaxing overnight trip to a hot spring resort with their families, a group of friends, or co-workers.

As a visitor to Japan, you need to be prepared for your first trip to a hot spring. Before you jump into the bath, you have to thoroughly wash your body outside of the bath, and only after that can you go into the swimming-pool-size bath which is shared by many other people. It is also noteworthy that some baths are outside, which Japanese people particularly enjoy. The temperature of the water is around 105 degrees F, considerably hotter than in America, and, as in hot tubs, one should not stay in too long. There are usually separate baths for men and for women, and the baths are generally entered unclothed.

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Unit 9: Staying in a *ryokan*, a Japanese-Style Inn

While in Japan you may want to consider staying at a traditional Japanese-style inn called a *ryokan*. While there are many Western-style hotels in the urban areas across the country, in the remote resort areas, you will find primarily *ryokan* and very few hotels.

After checking in at a *ryokan*, you will be escorted to your *tatami* (straw mat) room by a kimono-wearing woman who will carry your luggage for you. She is usually assigned to several rooms and is in charge of making the guests' stay as comfortable as it can be. In your room she will serve you a cup of tea as a welcome and give you basic information about the hotel, such as the locations of fire exits and other facilities. Before leaving the room, she will then ask you what time you would like to have dinner. If you wish to tip, this is the right moment to do so. You are tipping for the hospitality in advance rather than for the service already provided.

Dinner is usually delivered to your room, and it consists of a number of small dishes of fish, meat, and vegetables that are specialties in the particular area. You will be asked what you wish to drink. After dinner you may choose to take a walk, watch TV (which you will find in your room), go to a bar, or do some shopping in a souvenir store in the *ryokan*. In most *ryokan*, particularly in hot spring resort areas, there is a large public bath.

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Staying in a *ryokan* (continued)

You may go native and try relaxing along with other Japanese tourists. Should you decide not to use the public bath, however, you can use the one in your room.

In the evening, the “futon crew” will set up a futon (a Japanese-style mattress which is spread on the floor) in your room. Your hostess will ask you what time you wish to have your breakfast the next day. Most *ryokan* in Japan are quite hospitable, offering extended personal services to their guests, and the price for a night in a *ryokan* is either comparable to staying in a Western-style hotel or slightly higher as the service provided is more personal. The bill will typically include a one-night stay, dinner, and breakfast.

Unit 10: Referring to Colleagues and Supervisors without the Polite *san*

You learned that you refer to your colleague without *san* at the end of his/her name, when you speak to an outside group. You may be surprised to hear someone refer to his/her superior, including even the president of the company without *san*. This is in contrast to how you refer to your boss in the U.S. It is common for an American secretary to say, for instance, “Mr. Gordon is out of his office at the moment” or “Dr. Johnson will be here later.”

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Referring to Colleagues (*continued*)

Japanese often show their politeness by “humbling” not only themselves, but all those who belong to their *uchi*, or inside group. As you have learned that Japanese are concerned about politeness in their communication, it may come as a surprise at first when you hear them referring to their superiors without *san*, but it is a norm strongly adhered to. Likewise when you do business with the Japanese, you are expected not to call your supervisor “Mr. Smith” or “Ms. Johnson.” You always need to place yourself and people of your own group below the person with whom you communicate in a formal setting.

Unit 11: *gurai* / *kurai* - “Approximately”

In this unit the woman asked the man how to get to the American Embassy and also how long it would take to get there. She asked, *dono gurai kakarimasu ka?* and the man responded, *nijuppun gurai desu*. *gurai* means “about” or “approximately,” and it is used in a variety of contexts. *gurai* may also be pronounced *kurai* depending on the pronunciation of the word it follows. It has been stressed a number of times that the Japanese tend to be flexible in their communication. *gurai* is another example. It can be used both in questions, such as *dono gurai kakarimasu ka?* and in responses, such as *nijuppun gurai desu*. Rather than directly expressing a lack of commitment or an uncertainty,

gurai / kurai - “Approximately” (continued)

this indicates that the answer is probably correct, but is subject to other outside influences beyond the speaker’s control. Thus, when a Japanese says, *nijuppun gurai desu*, he or she implies, “I believe that it will probably take about twenty minutes, but I could be wrong because of the traffic and other conditions. If I am wrong, I am sorry.”

Ending a Sentence with *ga*

The woman who wanted to go to the U.S. Embassy said *amerika taishikan e ikitai n desu ga*, ending the statement with *ga*. *ga* literally means “but” and ending a sentence with it is not grammatically sound. This is yet another way for Japanese speakers to show their reservation. They imply “I would like to ask you how I could go to the embassy, and it would be great if you could tell me. But if it is too much trouble for you, I understand.” The person who answered the phone also said *sumimasen, tanaka wa ima dekakete orimasu ga*. She wanted to convey, “I’m sorry, but Tanaka is not here right now. But if there is anything I could do for you, would you like to tell me?” Though grammatically marginal, ending a statement, especially a request, with *ga* shows your reservation, modesty, and tentativeness.

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Unit 12: Calling Home

You are likely to make phone calls to someone in the U.S. while you are in Japan. Credit card calls are not as readily made from Japanese pay phones as in the U.S. Instead, you are encouraged to purchase prepaid “phone cards.” There are several kinds of cards available, depending on how much credit you would like to purchase. The most popular are 500 yen and 1,000 yen cards. Some convenience stores sell 3,000 yen and 5,000 yen cards specifically for international phone calls. You must use the gray pay phones to make international calls. In order to place a call, you first insert the prepaid card. The amount of credit that is left on the card will be displayed on the phone. Then you dial 001 for an international call, followed by the country code (1 for the U.S. and Canada), the area code, and the number. The connections are usually very good and you will find it very easy to call abroad.

Given the availability and fairly reasonable price, you may want to consider taking your cell phone with you to Japan, if it allows you to make overseas calls. Renting one that is capable of international calls is another option. You need to check to see whether you can use your phone overseas or if one is available for rent prior to your departure from the U.S.

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Unit 13: Feeling Unwell

In this unit you learned how to say you are sick. Getting sick in a foreign country, where you do not have sufficient language ability to communicate about your illness effectively, can be stressful. Here are some useful words you may need to use when describing your symptoms to a doctor, pharmacist, or friends. When you have a cold, you can simply say *kaze desu*, which literally means “It is a cold.” *kaze* also means a wind, and the Japanese may associate the typical winter disease with strong winds. *itai* means a pain or “hurts,” so when you have a pain or an ache, you say *itai* after the part of your body that hurts: *atama ga itai* (head hurts — “I have a headache”), *nodo ga itai* (throat hurts — “I have a sore throat”), *onaka ga itai* (stomach hurts — “I have a stomach ache”), *ashi ga itai* (foot or leg hurts), *ha ga itai* (a tooth hurts), etc.

There are, of course, other symptoms that are more complicated and difficult to describe. When you have a fever, you say *netsu ga arimasu* (“I have a fever”). Note that in Japan the temperature is given in Centigrade, and the normal temperature of 98.6 degrees F, which translates into 37 degrees C. If you have diarrhea, you need to say *geri desu*. *benpi* means constipation. If you got sick and vomited, you would say *modoshi mashita*, which literally means “I have returned it.” You do not want to have to use these expressions while in Japan, but

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Feeling Unwell (*continued*)

not knowing them at all when you have to is even worse. You should try to remember the minimal expressions, and the following list of words may be useful in describing your symptoms.

memei ga shimasu: I feel dizzy.

ashikubi o nenza shimashita: I sprained my ankle.

hakike ga shimasu: I have nausea.

samuke ga shimasu: I have a chill.

seki ga demasu: I have a cough.

yubi o yakedo shimashita: I burnt my finger.

keiren shimashita: I had a cramp.

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Unit 14: Communicating Through an Interpreter

You have been working hard to become communicatively competent in Japanese. You have acquired basic expressions that you will find quite useful in daily conversation with your Japanese associates. When you attend a meeting, however, the level of competency required to attain your professional goals is quite high, and that is when you will communicate through an interpreter. Though you may be able to carry on a casual conversation in Japanese, it is advisable to use a professional interpreter in order to ensure a high level of understanding. While it may be time-consuming, and expensive at times, communicating through an interpreter can give you some advantages. The contents of communication may be officially recorded, as the interpreter remains as a neutral liaison between you and your Japanese counterparts. Make sure you learn an appropriate way to communicate through an interpreter. As the interpreter finishes translating what you have just stated, it is the other party's turn to speak and your turn to listen even if you haven't finished making your point. People who are unaccustomed to using an interpreter often forget this rule of conversation.

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Unit 15: *kaigi* - “Meetings”

As is sometimes the case in U.S. organizations, Japanese business meetings are frequent and long. But given the Japanese people’s concern for harmony, avoiding face loss, and their indirect manner of communication, their meetings are often much longer than their U.S. counterparts. These meetings can be stressful for Americans seeking rapid resolutions to questions and problems. If you are to conduct business with the Japanese, you should be prepared for what often appears to be a waste of time and manpower. Since direct confrontation is not the Japanese way of dealing with conflict, meetings are viewed as places providing the opportunity to sense the general direction of people’s ideas, rather than as places for argument and debate. The Japanese view a decision as something that emerges by itself after a long discussion, whereas Americans tend to think they “make” decisions. The Japanese say *kimaru*, which is a passive form for “decide”; they seldom say *kimeru*, the active form. You may at times be frustrated by the Japanese people’s seemingly slow process toward a decision, but to succeed in business in Japan you will need to be aware of the differences.

kanpai - “Dry your Cup”

When you attend a party in Japan, small or large, formal or informal, *kanpai* (a toast) is very common. The host, the eldest person attending the party, or an honorable member designated by the host, is usually the one who proposes the toast. After a brief speech celebrating the party, the toast master will say, *kanpai*, which means “dry your cup.” You are not, however, expected to finish your drink in one gulp. Instead, after sipping it, you need to put your glass on the table and clap your hands, showing your gratitude to the host, or celebrating the occasion. At a formal party it is usually after the *kanpai* that people engage in casual conversation. Japanese commonly do only one *kanpai* per party. You need to and will learn appropriate ways to join celebrating parties as you travel to different cultures. Just watch how the local people do it and be aware.

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Unit 16: *tokorode* - “By the way ...”

tokorode is a word used to introduce a new topic in a conversation. Its closest English translation is “by the way.” *tokorode*, however, carries a subtly different nuance than that of “by the way.” Not only does it introduce a new, different, and most likely important topic, but it also implies to the listener that the new topic may be somewhat uncomfortable and displeasing. The speaker attempts to prepare the listener for this by using *tokorode*. You need to pay specially close attention to what a Japanese speaker has to say following *tokorode*, as this is yet another communication device that many Japanese use in their interpersonal relationships to avoid causing loss of face.

***koban* - “Police Station Boxes”**

Today there are police station boxes in every city and town in Japan, and they are a major factor in the world-renowned safety of Japan’s streets. Besides watching over what is going on in their neighborhoods, the policemen stationed in the *koban* also serve as sources of information for people looking for addresses in the area. The police officers are usually friendly and ready to help. Those in big cities such as Tokyo and Osaka are specially trained to help foreign tourists in English.

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Unit 17: Male and Female Patterns of Speech

Gender affects the manner of communication in any culture. However, the sex of the speaker is reflected more clearly in Japanese communication than in English. In Japanese, you can often tell whether the speaker is a man or a woman, as there are features specifically used only by either a male or a female speaker. A Japanese woman's speech is considered to be more "polite." Women tend to attach the polite "o" at the beginning of many words which men do not feel necessary. Women say *oshoyu* for soy sauce and *ogenkan* for an entrance to the house, just to name a few. With the influence of the younger generation, however, the distinction between male and female patterns of speech is becoming less clear in Japanese society. You, as a foreign speaker of Japanese, do not need to worry so much about making gender related mistakes, and the expressions you have learned in this course are gender-free and may be used by both male and female speakers.

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Polite Forms

In this unit, you learned *donata*, a polite form for *dare* or “who.” We have stressed that the Japanese are concerned about showing politeness in their communication. Not only is it important to learn these polite forms, but it is also necessary to remember how to match the rest of the sentence to the level of politeness indicated by the polite forms. The plain way to ask who is going to the U.S. is *dare ga amerika e ikimasu ka?* and the polite way is *donata ga amerika e irasshaimasu ka?* It would be very awkward to mix two levels of politeness in one sentence. If you are not sufficiently confident in appropriate use of polite expressions, it is better to stay on a plain level and ask simply, *dare ga amerika e ikimasu ka?*

Unit 18: Traveling in Groups

You may have noted the Japanese preference for doing things in groups. This tendency is prevalent in many social contexts: education, business, politics, and recreation as well. You will notice that almost everywhere you go in Japan, people travel in groups. While many Americans take advantage of package group tours, the Japanese do so far more frequently when traveling abroad. They generally find it more secure and comfortable to travel with a group of friends, co-workers, alumni from the same high school, etc., especially to a place where

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Traveling in Groups (*continued*)

they have never been before. Such groups tend to only make brief stops at famous spots filled with other tourists. Generally, the group members stay only at hotels where there is Japanese speaking staff and they eat at restaurants where the food is not extremely “foreign.” You may wonder to what extent, if at all, they can experience the culture through direct contact with the local people. It *is* difficult and they usually end up speaking Japanese to one another, eating Japanese food, and even reading Japanese newspapers while away from home. If you encounter such a group in the U.S., you may get a very positive response if you try out your Japanese language skills on them.

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Unit 19: Ancient Capitals - Nara and Kyoto

In this unit we visited the city of Nara, which is located 25 miles east of Osaka, or some 250 miles west of Tokyo. Nara was the capital of Japan between 710 and 784. The city still retains the atmosphere of ancient Japan. Many Buddhist temples and artifacts, including the *Daibutsu* of Nara, or Great Buddha, a 72-foot giant statue dating from the eighth century, attract many foreign and Japanese tourists. Its relatively serene atmosphere is particularly attractive during the fall when the leaves turn bright yellow and red.

Another well-known place to visit in the same region is Kyoto. It was the national capital as well as the place of residence of the Japanese imperial family for more than 1,000 years, from 794 to 1868. Kyoto is indeed the center of Japanese culture and of Buddhism in Japan. Many Buddhist temples and shrines that have been meticulously maintained over the years are easily accessible by bus or taxi. One of the most famous is *Kinkakuji*, or the Temple of the Gold Pavilion, which is literally covered with gold leaves.

Kyoto is only a little more than two hours away from Tokyo by the Shinkansen Bullet Train, and Nara is another thirty-minute ride from Kyoto. When you visit Japan, be sure to visit at least one of the ancient capitals. You will appreciate some of the national treasures as well as the Japanese people's value on antiquity.

Digital Tickets and Cards

kaisatsuguchi, or “ticket gate,” was introduced in this unit. The scene of a train station employee collecting or checking passengers’ tickets is now obsolete. Most train stations in Japan have installed automatic ticket checking machines. The level of technological advancement you will see in each station varies. One of the simpler automatic ticket checkers has a slot to insert your ticket. The machine then reads the magnetic information strip on the ticket. The gate is now opened and the checked ticket is returned from another slot on the machine. Advanced checkers now available in large cities such as Tokyo and Osaka have a small window against which you will gently touch your prepaid card. The most advanced machines allow you to use a mobile phone in place of a prepaid card. The phone sends a special signal, and the machine immediately checks whether you have sufficient credit. If you choose not to purchase such a multi-functioned mobile phone for your relatively short stay in Japan, the most advanced ticket checking machines will still accept conventional paper tickets that you can buy at the train stations.

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Unit 20: Commuting to Work

In this unit two colleagues were talking about commuting to work. In large cities, such as Tokyo, Yokohama, Nagoya, and Osaka, figuring out the best way to go to and from work is a serious matter. Riding a crowded train for two hours each way is not unusual in the metropolitan Tokyo area, since the price of land is extremely high and people are forced to live in the remote suburbs.

If you decide to commute by car, which may give you more privacy, finding a parking space in the center of a large city is both difficult and very expensive. With the heavy traffic, it may take you as much as half an hour to go just a few miles during rush hour.

A popular alternative for many people is a bicycle. Many people ride their bicycles from home to the nearby station, leave them in a bicycle parking lot for which they pay a monthly fee, and change to a train. The parking lot is much like “Park & Go” in the U.S. You will see some people resorting to yet another alternative: running. Both for pragmatic and health reasons, there are some people who run to and from work, carrying office clothes in backpacks and changing after they get to work.

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Unit 21: *hanami* - Flower Viewing

hanami means “seeing flowers.” Japanese people welcome the spring every year by celebrating the blossoming of the trees, particularly the *sakura*, or cherry blossoms. They enjoy *hanami* when the cherry blossoms bloom by having parties underneath the trees in parks across the country. Since Japanese law does not prohibit drinking in public parks, the parties often include alcoholic drinks, a variety of food items, and very often karaoke. Japan stretches lengthwise from the north to the south, which means that the time when the cherry blossoms bloom varies dramatically, depending on where you are in Japan. It is one of the Meteorological Agency’s prime duties to predict when the cherry trees will bloom in each part of the country, and they announce when the *sakura zensen* or “cherry front” reaches the major cities of Japan. In Okinawa, the southernmost part of the country, the flowers bloom as early as in January, and the *sakura zensen* works its way up north, reaching Hokkaido, its final destination, in the beginning of May.

Visiting a Japanese House

When visiting a Japanese house, etiquette usually requires that you bring some small gifts, such as *okashi* (sweets), fruit, or a bottle of wine. If you ask your hosts what you could bring to the dinner, they will very likely say “nothing.” Use your consideration in deciding what the best gift

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Visiting a Japanese House (*continued*)

is: your thought will be greatly appreciated. When you present the gift, you will say it's nothing but a small thing, regardless of the value of the gift. This is another way of humbling yourself and elevating your host.

When serving dinner, a hostess will say something like, "There's not anything delicious, but please eat." Don't take this literally. Dinner will invariably be delicious, but again she is behaving according to the Japanese custom of being humble.

When entering a Japanese house, taking your shoes off is required.

Unit 22: *bijutsu kan* - "Art Museum"

In this unit you went to visit a *bijutsu kan*, or an "art museum." *hakubutsu kan* means "museum" in general, while *bijutsu kan* refers specifically to an "art museum." The *kan* at the end of these words means "building," and in general, a word that ends with *kan* usually means a building for some specific purpose. *taiiku kan* is a gymnasium, *toshokan* a library, and *ryokan* a "travel house" or a Japanese-style inn. In most large cities in Japan you will find quite a few art museums, and they house Japanese as well as international art. In Tokyo, for instance, you could spend an entire week just visiting various museums. Although you may find their size is quite modest,

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bijutsu kan - “Art Museum” (continued)

there are museums in virtually every historical spot across the country, exhibiting uniquely local artifacts, including the excavated remains of ancient culture such as plates, bowls, jewelry, and agricultural equipment. Some of the oldest date back to several centuries B.C.

konde imasu - “Crowded”

In this unit, you have also learned *konde imasu*, for “crowded.” Because of the limited space in Japan, you will often encounter situations where this expression is used: museums, train stations, parks, restaurants, and streets. When a street is crowded, you will say, *michi ga konde imasu*. While traffic congestion is common in big cities in the U.S., the congestion in large cities in Japan, such as Tokyo, Osaka, and Fukuoka, is overwhelming at times. The Japanese word for traffic congestion is *juutai*, and it literally indicates bumper-to-bumper traffic. The word “capital expressway” in Tokyo often sounds cynical, as the congestion is as long as ten miles long in morning and evening rush hours. Be prepared to spend a long time to travel even a short distance in the Tokyo metropolitan area by car, or use alternative means such as the subway.

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Unit 23: Recreational Activities

In addition to the nationwide vacation time, the Japanese place much value on year-round recreational activities. On weekends, many families go out camping, fishing, mountain climbing, or whatever outdoor sport is available. The number of recreational vehicles such as mini-vans, station wagons, and a variety of four-wheel drive cars has been rapidly increasing in recent years.

Tennis and golf are also very popular among a wide range of people. High schools have tennis clubs as part of their extracurricular activities, and it is one of the most popular sports among students. There is a drawback, however. The scarcity of land is a major cause of many problems. Most tennis clubs, for example, are private in that you must either join the club or be accompanied by a member. You need to make a reservation, sometimes as much as a month in advance. The same is true of golf courses. Most golf clubs have strict rules about tee-time — they're limited to "members only" on weekends. A lifetime membership in some golf courses in the Tokyo area can cost well over \$300,000, and a member still needs to pay some \$100 per round for the caddie fee, for the use of a locker, tax, etc. If you are not a member, you can still play as a visitor, but a round of golf including the greens fee, caddie fee, etc. can cost you as much as \$250. Tee time can be reserved by phone one month in advance, and whether it rains

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Recreational Activities *(continued)*

or shines, you'd better play. Otherwise you must pay a cancellation fee.

Unit 24: Japanese Names

Throughout the course you have heard several popular Japanese last names, including *tanaka*, *ito*, *yamada*, and *suzuki*. Other popular names include *nakamura*, *saito*, *yoshida*, *yamamoto*, *inoue*, and *mori*. They are all made up of one or two, sometimes three, Kanji. Most of the characters used for people's names refer to things in nature. *tanaka*, for example, literally means "in a rice field." *yama* means "a mountain" and *mori* means, "a forest." You can also have, *oomori* "a large forest," *nakamori* "a medium forest," and *komori* "a small forest."

Initially, Japanese names may seem strange to you, but once you've learned several popular names, you will note the short syllables and the similarity of the patterns and find them not as difficult to remember as they first seemed. Historically, there were only a few common first names, such as *taro*, for a male, and *yoko*, for a female, equivalent to John and Mary in the U.S. First names, however, have become much more varied in recent years, and a wide range of individual names now exist.

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Unit 25: Exchanging for *yen*

Given that Japan is a cash society, it is important that you have some *yen* immediately after your arrival. You must, for example, pay cash for your limousine bus ride from the airport to your hotel. A ride from Narita, the Tokyo International Airport, to downtown Tokyo is 3,000 yen (approximately U.S. \$27).

You can purchase *yen* at the major inter-national airports in Japan: Narita (Tokyo), Kansai (Osaka), Chubu (Nagoya), Chitose (Sapporo) and Fukuoka (in the city of the same name). A bank in town, of course, is also a place where you can exchange your money. When you are pressed for time, you can do the same at the front desk of your hotel. The exchange rate at a hotel, however, may not be as good, since you are charged a service fee. There is also a limit to how much you can exchange at hotels.

Only recently have credit cards started to become acceptable in restaurants and stores. The most widely recognized international credit cards in Japan are Visa® and Mastercard®. American Express® is not as popular in Japan as Diners Club International, which is not as well known in the U.S. When you use a credit card, there is the possibility that the exchange rate will fluctuate between the time of your purchase and when you receive the bill.

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Japanese Cake

Japanese cuisine, as you know, is considerably different from American. A number of dishes have been introduced to Americans through Japanese restaurants in the U.S., such as *tempura*, *sushi*, and *sukiyaki*. You will encounter many other dishes while in Japan, however, some of which you may find are definitely acquired tastes. The small quantity of food in each serving will also be another discovery you will make. Yet another finding which may be surprising is that the Japanese aren't big on desserts. Japanese meals typically end without any desserts. Occasionally you may have some fruit, or small portions of "Japanese cake." Uniquely Japanese cakes that you would not find in the U.S. include *manju*, a bun with a bean-jam filling; *mochi*, rice cakes that come in a wide range of colors and textures; and *senbei*, or rice crackers flavored with salt, soy sauce, or sugar. You will find many Japanese enjoy these cakes with their afternoon tea as well as after dinner. If your sweet tooth gets the best of you, you can now find a wide variety of Western style cakes, cookies, and chocolates sold at many places including bakeries and supermarkets. In recent years Western pastry has become increasingly popular and many different kinds of cakes are now readily available, although still not served in traditional restaurants or homes.

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Unit 26: Japanese Numbering System

One of the most important skills in acquiring a practical competency in a foreign language is counting. You need to know how to count and to understand the numbers in conversations in numerous contexts, such as asking the price of something, making reservations, understanding where your hotel room is, giving telephone numbers, etc. Japanese numbers are not difficult to learn. Once you can count to ten, you can combine the numbers to count up to ninety-nine. The rest is also easy, as all you need after that is the words for hundred, thousand, ten thousand, and one hundred million. The first basic numbers follow. Although there are distinctive characters for each number, you will most often see them written with Arabic numerals.

	零	zero: <i>rei</i>		
—	one: <i>ichi</i>	六	six: <i>roku</i>	
二	two: <i>ni</i>	七	seven: <i>shichi</i>	
三	three: <i>san</i>	八	eight: <i>hachi</i>	
四	four: <i>yon</i>	九	nine: <i>kyu</i>	
五	five: <i>go</i>	十	ten: <i>ju</i>	

From eleven to ninety-nine, you simply combine those numbers. Eleven, for instance, is “ten-one,” -- *ju ichi*. Eighteen is “ten-eight” --

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Japanese Numbering System *(continued)*

ju hachi. Twenty is made by putting together two and ten -- *ni ju*. Thirty-six is made up of three, ten, and six -- *san ju roku*.

Here is the balance of the number words you need:

百	hundred: <i>hyaku</i>
千	thousand: <i>sen</i>
万	ten thousand: <i>man</i>
十万	one hundred thousand: <i>ju man</i> (ten ten thousand)
百万	one million: <i>hyaku man</i> (one hundred ten thousand)
億	one hundred million: <i>oku</i>

To illustrate, 1,552,983 (one million five hundred fifty-two thousand nine hundred eighty-three) is *hyaku go ju go man ni sen kyū hyaku hachi ju san*.

With longer numbers, the Japanese numbering system may appear to be complicated at first. Japanese numbers are, however, fairly simple. Once you learn these few crucial words and concepts, the rest is easy.

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Yes / No / Definitely

Johnson san was asked in this unit by *Suzuki san* whether he had been to a new coffee shop, and if he wanted to go there with her sometime. He responded by saying, *ee, zehi*. This reply indicates strong affirmation to the inquiry, and is equivalent to “definitely” or “absolutely.” It is always used to express the speaker’s affirmation or to stress a request as in, *zehi tabete kudasai*, or “Please eat it, by all means.” It is never used for negation.

In English “yes” is always positive and “no” is always negative, but in Japanese it is sometimes quite the opposite, depending on how the questions are formed. It is not uncommon therefore for Japanese people to make a mistake when using English, and vice versa. For example, suppose you ate breakfast at 10 o’clock and now it’s 12 o’clock. You are asked *onaka ga suite imasen ne?* literally, “You aren’t hungry are you?” (The questioner is assuming that you are not hungry.) The English response would be either, “No, I’m not,” or “Yes, I am.” To answer that in Japanese, however, you can either say, *hai, suite imasen* (That’s right, your assumption is right, I am not hungry.) or *iie, suite imasu* (No, your assumption is wrong. I am hungry.) Since the Japanese respond to how the question is asked, negative questions are tricky for non-native speakers.

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Unit 27: “Fillers” in Japanese

The male speaker in this unit says *anoo*, as he tries to get someone’s attention in a bank. As in any language, there is a wide variety of utterances in Japanese, “fillers,” that the speaker can use in order to fill the vacuum in conversation.

In English you may say, “you know,” “I mean,” or “uh,” to indicate to the other person that you have something to say, but are not quite ready to say it. *anoo* does not have any literal English translation, but you will hear everyone in Japan say it quite often. Another filler that you will often hear is *eeto*, which is close to “let me see.” If you want to show that you are listening carefully to what another person is saying and generally agree with what she or he says, you may say *so desu ne* or, more informally, *so, so*. These expressions will come naturally as you progress in your Japanese conversational ability. They may in fact be a barometer of your accomplishment, as you begin using them instinctively in situations.

Unit 28: Reading, a Popular Hobby

Reading is a popular hobby among the Japanese. A recent survey has shown that the average Japanese adult spends approximately \$130 per year on books. You can find a popular novel in paperback anywhere from \$7.00 to \$12.00 in Japan. You will find many large bookstores in suburban areas in Japan. Because it is such a homogeneous culture, in

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Unit 28: Reading, a Popular Hobby *(continued)*

comparison to the U.S., the people share a general knowledge about social affairs. Books, as well as a variety of magazines, are an important source of this knowledge. The fear of being left out in society because of a lack of certain information may be at least part of the driving force behind the interest in reading. Given this social trend, once a novel by a popular or controversial writer is published, everyone wants to read it! The books will literally sell like hotcakes. The late Matsumoto Seicho, mentioned in this unit, was a very popular mystery and suspense writer. His well-thought out and controversial stories have made him one of the best read Japanese authors. The “Harry Potter” series has also been translated in Japanese and it has become quite popular among a wide variety of readers in Japan.

Unit 29: Learning New Skills in Japan

The speaker in this unit arrived at work early in the morning and studied a language before starting work. This is not unusual and many Japanese, young and old, do tend to have a strong motivation to learn new skills. You will find English conversation schools in virtually every town across the country. There are multitudes of schools for specific purposes, such as computers, cooking, accounting, tax laws, and estate management. Schools that spe-

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Learning New Skills *(continued)*

cialize in traditional Japanese arts, such as the tea ceremony, flower arrangement, and calligraphy are also abundant.

Due to the interest in fitness, many schools offer lessons in aerobics, swimming, yoga, and various forms of dance. Going to one of these schools not only helps people accomplish their goals, but can also be an end in itself. It is a place where you can socialize with others who share common interests. Some of these schools are especially popular among older adults who have retired and have not only time and money to spare, but also are looking for company. Given the increasing percentage of people who are 65 years and older in Japan, the popularity of these schools is likely to grow. If you are a foreigner residing in Japan for some time, you may find a course at one of these schools an interesting experience.

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Unit 30: Traditional Japanese Clothing

James san in this unit decided to buy a *yukata*, a cotton kimono frequently worn in the summer, as a souvenir for his wife. The *yukata* is certainly a piece of traditional Japanese clothing, but people in Japan today do not wear it as frequently as people in former generations did. There are only a few occasions when the Japanese, especially women, routinely wear kimonos. The second Monday in January is a national holiday in Japan, celebrating all the people who turned twenty in the past year and reached the age of maturity. On this day many women go out in traditional kimonos to ceremonies, often held by the municipal government, and later to parties with their friends. The formal kimonos worn by women up to the age of twenty are called *furisode*, meaning “long hanging sleeves,” which is a sign that the woman is unmarried. The sleeves are actually long enough to reach the wearer’s ankles. Married women, and those who have passed the age of twenty, wear kimonos with regular length sleeves, which are half as long as the *furisode*. Other occasions for Japanese women to wear kimonos include New Year’s Day, wedding receptions, and a mid-summer festival where they go out to watch fireworks. Of course they wear *yukatas*, rather than the heavy, multi-layered kimonos, on that occasion.