

How to Use This Book

You are now about to begin learning the Japanese language following a carefully developed system. Assisting you in this endeavor—along with your instructors—are the textbook and accompanying video and audiotapes. But in order for the textbook to be as effective as possible, it should be used in the manner intended. It was designed on the basis of a particular approach to foreign-language learning, and in order to gain the greatest possible benefit from using it, following the recommended procedures is important.

The following are basic underlying assumptions which have affected the construction of this textbook:

1. The order of the lessons is of crucial importance.

Each lesson presumes control of what has been introduced previously. Only Lesson 1 is completely new; each later lesson consists of a limited amount of new material combined with material introduced earlier that is already familiar. Thus, each lesson serves both to add new knowledge and to review old.

2. No lesson can be omitted.

Each lesson is heavily dependent on all preceding lessons. Since explanations of vocabulary, structural patterns, and usage are regularly included within the lesson where they first occur in the textbook, the failure to cover every lesson carefully will result in persisting problems.

3. No part of any lesson can be omitted.

Developing a skill involves the forming of new habits, and new habits are acquired only through extensive practice. In addition to explanatory material, each lesson in this text includes a variety of practice material aimed at developing fluent oral control of the language. To omit reading the explanations is to fail to take advantage of the shortcuts to learning provided by systematization. To omit any of the recommended drill procedures is to stint on the skill side of language learning and run the risk of becoming able only to talk *about* Japanese.

4. Developing speaking and listening skills in a foreign language cannot be done through the eye.

For memorization and drill practice, oral models are absolutely necessary. Romanized Japanese (i.e., Japanese written with the letters of our alphabet) should serve only to remind you of what you have already heard—and heard many, many times. The letters used in romanization are all familiar to English speakers, but when used to represent Japanese, they represent a completely different set of sounds. If you have studied French, or German, or Spanish—or even Vietnamese—this will not surprise you. ‘Six’ as an English word and ‘six’ as a French word stand for totally different pronunciations. You must not attempt to

read any of the Japanese material that follows until you first become familiar with Japanese sounds, and next learn the spelling code according to which familiar symbols represent those sounds in a completely regular and predictable fashion. You may be surprised to learn the native pronunciation of familiar Japanese place names like 'Tokyo,' 'Kyoto,' and 'Osaka'; and of cultural borrowings like 'kimono,' 'sake,' and 'sukiyaki.'

The Japanese, of course, use a completely different writing system, but they, too, postpone using their written code until they have already learned to speak. For foreigners who are interested in learning to read Japanese, it is most efficient to study the special written symbols *after* acquiring at least some familiarity with the material being read. In other words, if you are told that a particular symbol in the Japanese writing system stands for **X** at a time when you also have to be instructed as to what **X** means, 'reading' in its usual sense is impossible; you will undoubtedly proceed to decode—to move directly from Japanese symbols to your own native language, bypassing the Japanese language completely. To avoid this, we recommend that beginning readers start out by reading only material in which they have already acquired oral competence.¹

Always listen to an utterance first; *after that* you may check to see how it is represented in a written code, but *do not let the written form become a crutch* for your understanding or speaking. Remember that most conversations in the real world proceed free of any connection with the written language. Listening and speaking are very different from reading and writing; they are totally different kinds of skills and are best acquired through different approaches. The ability to speak and understand a language is much more significant as an aid to learning to read than the reverse.

The lessons that follow the Introduction are organized in the following way:

SECTIONS A AND B

Each of these sections contains **Core Conversations** (which may be single exchanges between two people or longer conversations), their **English Equivalents**, **Breakdowns** with **Supplementary Vocabulary**, **Miscellaneous Notes**, **Structural Patterns**, **Drills**, and **Application Exercises**.

Core Conversations are to be *memorized*, using the accompanying video and audiotapes. Note that new vocabulary and new patterns are thus acquired in context with appropriate pronunciation and intonation. While supplementary vocabulary is included (with the Breakdowns), even these items should be practiced within a familiar context; they should not be memorized or practiced as isolated items. A word means what it means *in context*.

The English Equivalents and Breakdowns will assist you in comprehending the Core Conversations. The Miscellaneous Notes and Structural Patterns should be read carefully as soon as the Core Conversations have at least become familiar. The Japanese language is totally unrelated to English: unless you understand in depth how the language is put together, you will continue to encounter seemingly baffling examples which actually should not be at all surprising. It is important to strive for thorough understanding of the building blocks of the language and to take advantage of its regularity as an independent system.

Drills are to be practiced with the tapes. Your performance in these drills must not be

1. For those interested in reading, see the forthcoming *Japanese: The Written Language* for a systematic introduction, and *Japanese: The Spoken Language—Supplement* for the written Japanese version of all the Japanese-language material included in this text.

considered satisfactory until you can participate promptly and accurately according to the models, without reference to the textbook. For each stimulus in these drills, there is only one correct answer, which follows the model of the first example of the drill. (For example, one drill may require you to answer every stimulus question in the negative [Stimulus: 'Are you hungry?' Response: 'No, I'm not.'] regardless of your actual condition.) All the drills are response drills, which means that each stimulus + response is actually a short conversation.

Application Exercises, on the other hand, suggest practice that utilizes reality—provided by either visual aids or your general knowledge—as the basis for correct responses.

SECTION C

Eavesdropping (devoid of any negative connotations!) involves listening in on Japanese conversations on tape, and answering questions about their content. Note that (a) only the questions are printed in the textbook; and (b) the language of both the questions and answers is English. This section represents a kind of situation that commonly occurs in real life: imagine that you are being questioned by an English-speaking friend, who doesn't understand Japanese as well as you do, about the meaning of a Japanese conversation that you have both overheard. This portion of the lesson involves processing from Japanese to English, a competence distinct from operating within the foreign language alone, but one which is also important to develop.

Utilization presents typical situations in which the Japanese you have learned might be utilized. A situational orientation of this kind is intended to emphasize the importance of speaking a foreign language according to what is grammatically and culturally appropriate in a given setting, rather than through direct translation of what would be appropriate in your native language in a similar setting. Again, the ease with which you produce accurate answers will be a clear signal of the degree to which you have mastered the material. Slow, hesitant, mistake-ridden answers—produced only after constant checking back to earlier explanatory material—clearly signal the need for further study and practice before moving to the next lesson. Remember that each lesson presupposes good control of everything that has already been introduced. And remember too that the acquisition of a skill like speaking takes *time* and *practice*. If the foundation is weak, ultimate collapse becomes a worrisome possibility; but if each lesson is systematically mastered, increment by increment, a solid proficiency can be acquired.

The **Check-up** is intended to check your control of the 'fact' component of the lesson. We assume that the foreign language student can learn a foreign language more quickly if the patterns of the language are explained systematically. While learning *about* a language will never produce foreign language proficiency unless supplemented by hours of active practice, it can speed the process by guiding you to accurate, extended usage of the patterns that are being drilled.

The Check-up section can be covered outside of class. The relevant notes should be carefully checked if there are questions that present difficulties. The questions themselves serve to emphasize the most important structural features that have been introduced in each lesson.