

Japanese is Possible!

Lesson 8

A man said to the universe, "I exist!"

- Review of JIP Objectives
 - Existing in Japanese
 - A Note on GA
 - Example Sentences
 - More Popular Words
 - Important Points to Remember
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Review of JIP Objectives

I just want to take a few minutes to review the objectives of "Japanese is Possible!" Unlike your average college course, this column will not focus on "formal" Japanese and learning the Chinese characters (Kanji) before teaching anything else. On the contrary, those things will be saved for last since they are the least useful. Learning things with no immediate relevance harms your motivation. Once you're watching Anime without subtitles, then you can learn those nice extras!

How to exist

In English and other languages, one uses a form of the verb "to be" to indicate his or her present location. ("I *am* at the store.") Anyone who has studied Spanish knows that the verb used to indicate location (*estar* literally "to stay") is not the same as the verb used to indicate a personal characteristic (*ser*). Japanese is like this. (To tell you the truth, you *can* use *desu* to indicate location in Japanese and not be wrong, but the method that I am about to teach you is, I believe, a bit more grammatically correct.)

In Japanese, when something is in a particular place, it *exists* there. You use the verbs *iru* and *aru* (both meaning "to exist") to express this. Use *iru* to show the location of animate objects (people, animals), and *aru* for inanimate objects (books, tables, sewing machines). The simple sentence pattern is like this:

Something *wa/ga* somewhere *ni aru/iru*.

And you can expand from there. Notice that you need to use the particle *ni* (at/in/on) after the location and before the verb.

Takashi san wa mise ni iru.
[Takashi *topic* store *at/in* exists.]
Takashi is at the store.

Pasokon ga tsukue ni aru.
[Computer *sj* desk *on* exists.]
A computer is on the desk.

A Note on GA

There is a lot of similarity between WA and GA, in that they both have to do with the subject of the sentence. However, here is a way to keep them straight.

GA - "This, as opposed to something else"

ranma ga koko ni iru
[Ranma *sj* here *at* exists.]
Ranma is here.

ranma wa koko ni iru.
[Ranma *topic* here *at* exists.]
Ranma is here. (this may or may not indicate emphasis on *here*)

Similar? Yes. However, they would answer different questions. If someone said, "Where is Ranma?" you would respond "Ranma is here." On the other hand, if someone said, "Who is in here?" someone might respond "RANMA is here".

Example Sentences

As you learn the various parts of Japanese grammar, you need to reinforce the new things you learn by using them in sentences. You should read many Japanese sentences that use the words and grammar you learned. That way, you get a feel for what Japanese sentences look like, and exactly how the different grammar "items" come together.

kono heya wa hiroi desu ne
[This room *topic* wide is *right?*]
This room is spacious, isn't it?

Jibun no atama o taberu nante muri desu yo!
[one's own head *oj* to eat (such a thing such as) impossible is!]
It's impossible to eat your own head!

omae o korosu

[you *oj* kill]
I will kill you.

minna no chikara ga hitsuyou desu.
[everyone's power *sj* necessary is.]
We need everyone's power.

More Popular Words

Nouns

asa - morning
chikara - power
jibun - yourself/oneself
kage - shadow
ki - energy, spirit

kokoro - heart
kotae - answer
minna - everyone
makoto - truth
pasokon - computer
tsukue - desk

Adjectives

hitsuyou - necessary
muri - hopeless, impossible
saigo - last, the end
ookii - big
chiisai - small

Verbs

noru - to ride
tekagen suru - to hold back
tasukeru - to rescue
tamesu - to test
mukau - to face, to head for
tomaru - to stop
kikoeru - to be heard
korosu - to kill **tsukeru** - to attach

Extra words

arigatou - thank you
jibun no - one's own
kanarazu - without a doubt
kesshite - never
omae - you (disrespectful/casual)
~ **nante** - such a thing such as ~ (Don't use *wa* or *ga* after *nante*)

Common Phrases

omae no saigo da!
you ('s) end is!
It's the end of you!

kono mama
as it is now

sou desu yo
That's the way it is!

There are many words and phrases involving the word **KI**.
Some examples include:

ki ga suru - to decide

ki o tsukeru - to be careful ("attach some thought/energy to it")

tenki - weather (literally, "heaven's spirit/mood")

Writing in Japanese

It's come to that point in time. It's time for you to start learning the eerie and mysterious Japanese writing systems. But the truth is, there's really nothing mysterious (or eerie) about them, and I will help you to understand them.

First, some background. There are three writing systems in the Japanese language, and all three are used in nearly every Japanese publication in the world since the beginning of the century. Two of the systems are called kana. They are the Japanese equivalent of our alphabet, since each character has a sound associated with it, but no meaning. The third system, Kanji is a collection of "picture characters," each of which has a meaning of its own. We will start by learning one of the kana systems known as "hiragana."

Hiragana is called a syllabary, because it is a system that consists of syllables. There are forty-six hiragana characters currently in use, and forty-five of them are syllables ending in vowels. The last one is the syllable 'n.' I will first teach you the syllables that are lone vowels, and today, we will just go over the first vowel 'a.'



To write it, first draw the horizontal stroke across the top. Then, draw the vertical stroke through that. Finally, draw the third curved stroke, starting at the higher end and finishing in the bottom right corner of the character.

That's all there is to it. Next week, I will try to display the characters on your screen using Japanese encoding, but I will continue with these .gif images for the rest of the lone vowels. If a dialog pops up on your screen on the next lesson, asking

whether you want to install Japanese language support, tell it that you do want to.

Important Points to Remember

- How to become proficient in Japanese -

As you learn more Japanese grammar, you'll be able to understand an increasing amount of the dialogue in a typical Anime episode. I recommend watching subtitled Anime for quite a while before you go do "raw Japanese". It's nice to have subtitles for a while, because then you get a feel for what the different words and phrases mean. You also get a feel for what a typical Japanese sentence looks and sounds like. You learn the words and phrases from a website or book, but you learn how they're used by watching Anime, listening to songs, playing Japanese video games, and reading manga. It's a step you can't leave out. Only through sheer repetition can an American get a Japanese native's ear for Japanese!

I don't believe you can leave out either part. Unless you're under the age of 5, you can't learn Japanese just by watching Anime. However, I don't think a teenager or adult can learn Japanese well without immersing him/herself to a certain degree.

The keys to learning Japanese are:

- Believe you can do it - make friends with the language
- Slow and steady - learn at least 1 word every day
- Listen to it and use it as often as possible
- Study ONLY when you are in the mood and have time
- Look at word lists and review EVEN when you're busy (at work, etc)
- Stop worrying about what the words sound like to an American

Next Time

- Adjectives as modifiers
- Example Sentences
- Review
- More Popular Words
- Two more vowels

That's all for now. See you soon!

