

Language

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Japanese is the language spoken across all of Japan. While the standard language, or *hyōjungo*, is understood by almost all Japanese, regardless of their level of education, many Japanese speak strong local dialects (known as *ben*, as in the famous dialect of Kansai, *Kansai-ben*). These dialects, particularly in rural areas, can be quite difficult to understand, even for Japanese from other parts of the country. Luckily, you can always get your point across in *hyōjungo*.

In this language guide you'll find a selection of useful Japanese words and phrases. For information on food and dining, including words and phrases that will help in deciphering menus and ordering food in Japanese, see p85. For information on language courses available in Japan, see p792.

GRAMMAR

To English speakers, Japanese language patterns often seem to be back to front and lacking in essential information. For example, where an English speaker would say 'I'm going to the shop' a Japanese speaker would say 'shop to going', omitting the subject pronoun (I) altogether and putting the verb at the end of the sentence. To make

TRYING ENGLISH IN JAPAN

Visitors to Japan should be warned that many Japanese do not speak or understand much English. Although English is a required subject in both junior high school and high school, and many students go on to study more of it in university, several factors conspire to prevent many Japanese from acquiring usable English. These include the nature of the English educational system, which uses outdated methods like translation; the extreme difference between English and Japanese pronunciation and grammar; and the typical reticence of the Japanese, who may be shy to speak a language that they haven't mastered.

There are several ways to facilitate communication with Japanese who may not have a mastery of spoken English:

- Always start with a smile to create a sense of ease.
- Speak very slowly and clearly.
- When asking for information, choose people of university age or thereabouts, as these people are most likely to speak some English. Also, Japanese women tend to speak and understand English much better than Japanese men.
- If necessary, write down your question; Japanese are often able to understand written English even when they can't understand spoken English.
- Use the sample phrases in this chapter and, if necessary, point to the Japanese phrase in question.

matters worse, many moods which are indicated at the beginning of a sentence in English occur at the end of a sentence in Japanese, as in the Japanese sentence 'Japan to going if' – 'if you're going to Japan'.

Fortunately for visitors to Japan, it's not all bad news. In fact, with a little effort, getting together a repertoire of travellers' phrases should be no trouble – the only problem will be understanding the replies you get.

WRITTEN JAPANESE

Japanese has one of the most complex writing systems in the world, which uses three different scripts – four if you include the increasingly used Roman script, romaji. The most difficult of the three, for foreigners and Japanese alike, is kanji, the ideographic script developed by the Chinese. Not only do you have to learn a couple of thousand of them, but unlike Chinese many Japanese kanji have wildly variant pronunciations depending on context.

Due to the differences between Chinese and Japanese grammar, kanji had to be supplemented with a 'syllabary' (an alphabet of syllables), known as hiragana. And there is yet another syllabary that is used largely for representing foreign loan words such as *terebi* (TV) and *biiru* (beer); this script is known as katakana. If you're serious about learning to read Japanese you'll have to set aside several years.

If you're thinking of tackling the Japanese writing system before you go or while you're in Japan, your best bet would be to start with hiragana or katakana. Both these syllabaries have 48 characters each, and can be learned within a week, although it'll take at least a month to consolidate them. Once in the country, you can practise your katakana on restaurant menus, where such things as *kōhii* (coffee) and *kēiki* (cake) are frequently found. Practise your hiragana on train journeys, as station names are usually indicated in hiragana (in addition to English and kanji). If you fancy continuing on to learn the kanji, be warned that it'll take quite a few years.

ROMANISATION

The romaji used in this book follows the Hepburn system of romanisation. In addition, common Japanese nouns like *ji* or *tera* (temple) and *jinja* or *jingū* (shrine) are written without an English translation.

Silent Letters

Hepburn romaji is a direct system of Romanisation that doesn't fully reflect all elements of spoken Japanese. The most obvious of these is the tendency in everyday speech to omit the vowel 'u' in many instances. In this language guide, and in Useful Words & Phrases on p102, these silent

letters have been retained to provide accuracy in the written Romanisations, but they have been enclosed in square brackets to aid accurate pronunciation.

LANGUAGE BOOKS

Lonely Planet's *Japanese Phrasebook* gives you a comprehensive mix of practical and social words and phrases that should cover almost any situation confronting the traveller to Japan.

If you'd like to delve deeper into the intricacies of the language, we recommend *Japanese for Busy People* for beginners, *Introduction to Intermediate Japanese* (Mizutani Nobuko) for intermediate students, and *Kanji in Context* (Nishiguchi Koichi and Kono Tamaki) for more advanced students. One of the best guides to the written language, for both study and reference, is *Kanji & Kana* (Wolfgang Hadamizky and Mark Spahn).

PRONUNCIATION

Unlike other languages in the region with complicated tonal systems, such as Chinese, Vietnamese and Thai, Japanese pronunciation is fairly easy to master.

The following examples reflect British pronunciation:

a	as in 'father'
e	as in 'get'
i	as in 'macaroni'
o	as in 'bone'
u	as in 'flu'

Vowels appearing in this book with a macron (or bar) over them (*ā, ē, ō, ū*) are pronounced in the same way as standard vowels except that the sound is held twice as long. You need to take care with this as vowel length can change the meaning of a word, eg *yuki* means 'snow', while *yūki* means 'bravery'.

Consonants are generally pronounced as in English, with the exception of the few listed below:

f	this sound is produced by pursing the lips and blowing lightly
g	as in 'get' at the start of word; and nasalised as the 'ng' in 'sing' in the middle of a word
r	more like an 'l' than an 'r'

ACCOMMODATION

I'm looking for a ...

... o sagashite imasu

...を探しています。

camping ground	キャンプ場
<i>kyampu-jō</i>	
family-style inn	民宿
<i>minshiku</i>	
guesthouse	ゲストハウス
<i>gesuto hausu</i>	
hotel	ホテル
<i>hoteru</i>	
inn	旅館
<i>ryokan</i>	
Japanese-style inn	旅館
<i>ryokan</i>	
youth hostel	ユースホステル
<i>yūsu hosuteru</i>	

Do you have any vacancies?

aki-beya wa arimasu

空き部屋はありますか？

I don't have a reservation.

yoyaku wa shiteimasen

予約はしていません。

single room	シングルルーム
<i>shinguru rūmu</i>	
double room	ダブルルーム
<i>daburu rūmu</i>	
twin room	ツインルーム
<i>tsuin rūmu</i>	
Japanese-style room	和室
<i>washitsu</i>	
Western-style room	洋室
<i>yōshitsu</i>	
Japanese-style bath	お風呂
<i>o-furo</i>	
room with a (Western-style) bath	バス付きの部屋
<i>basu tsuki no heya</i>	

How much is it (per night/per person)?

(ippaku/hitori) ikura desu

(一泊/一人)いくらですか？

Does it include breakfast/a meal?

chōshoku/shokujī wa tsuite imasu

(朝食/食事)は付いていますか？

I'm going to stay for one night/two nights.

hito-ban/futa-ban tomarimasu

(一晩/二晩)泊まります。

Can I leave my luggage here?

nimatsu o azukatte itadakemasen ka?

荷物を預かっていただけませんか？

CONVERSATION & ESSENTIALS

The all-purpose title *san* is used after a name as an honorific and is the equivalent of Mr, Miss, Mrs and Ms.

Good morning.

ohayō gozaimasu

おはようございます。

Good afternoon.

konnichiwa

こんにちは。

Good evening.

kombanwa

こんばんは。

Goodbye.

sayōnara

さようなら。

See you later.

dewa mata

ではまた。

Please/Go ahead. (when offering)

dōzo

どうぞ。

Please. (when asking)

onegai shimasu

お願いします。

Thanks. (informal)

dōmo

どうも。

Thank you.

dōmo arigatō

どうもありがとう。

Thank you very much.

dōmo arigatō gozaimasu

どうもありがとうございます。

Thanks for having me. (when leaving)

o-sewa ni narimashita

お世話になりました。

You're welcome.

dō itashimashite

どういたしまして。

No, thank you.

ie, kekkō desu

いいえ、けっこうです。

Excuse me/Pardon.

sumimasen

すみません。

Excuse me. (when entering a room)

o-jama shimasu/shitsurei shimasu

おじゃまします。/失礼します。

I'm sorry.

gomen nasai

ごめんなさい。

What's your name?

o-namae wa nan desu ka?

お名前は何ですか？

My name is ...

watashi wa ... desu

私は...です。

This is Mr/Mrs/Ms (Smith).

kochira wa (Sumisu) san desu

こちらは(スミス)さんです。

Pleased to meet you.

dōzo yoroshiku

どうぞよろしく。

Where are you from?

dochira no kata desu ka?

どちらのかたですか？

How are you?

o-genki desu ka?

お元気ですか？

Fine.

genki desu

元気です。

Is it OK to take a photo?

shashin o totte mo ii desu ka?

写真を撮ってもいいですか？

Cheers!

kampai!

乾杯！

Yes.

hai

はい。

No.

ie

いいえ。

No. (for indicating disagreement)

chigaimasu

違います。

No. (for indicating disagreement; less emphatic)

chotto chigaimasu

ちょっと違います。

OK.

daijōbu (desu)/ōke

だいじょうぶ(です)。/オーケー。

Requests

Please give me this/that.

kore/sore o kudasai

(これ/それ)をください。

Please give me a (cup of tea).

(o-cha) o kudasai

(お茶)をください。

Please wait (a while).

(shōshō) o-machi kudasai

(少々)お待ちください。

SIGNS

Information

annaigo 案内所**Open** *eigyōchū* 営業中**Closed** *junbichū* 準備中**Entrance** *iriguchi* 入口**Exit** *deguchi* 出口**Toilets** *o-tearai/toire* お手洗い/トイレ**Male** *otoko* 男**Female** *onna* 女

Please show me the (ticket).

(kippu) o misete kudasai

(切符)を見せてください。

DIRECTIONS

Where is the ...?

... wa doko desu ka?

...はどこですか？

How far is it to walk?

aruite dono kurai kakarimasu ka?

歩いてどのくらいかかりますか？

How do I get to ...?

... e wa dono yō ni ikeba ii desu ka?

...へはどのように行けばいいですか？

Where is this address please?

kono jūsho wa doko desu ka?

この住所はどこですか？

Could you write down the address for me?

jūsho o kaite itadakemasen ka?

住所を書いていただけませんか？

Go straight ahead.

massugu itte

まっすぐ行って。

Turn left/right.

hidari/migi e magatte

(左/右)へ曲がって。

near/far

chikai/tōi

近い/遠い

HEALTH

I need a doctor.

isha ga hitsuyō desu

医者が必要です。

How do you feel?

kibun wa ikaga des[u] ka?
気分はいかがですか?

I'm ill.

kibun ga warui des[u]
気分が悪いです。

It hurts here.

koko ga itai des[u]
ここが痛いです。

I have diarrhoea.

geri o shite imasu
下痢をしています。

I have a toothache.

ha ga itamimas[u]
歯が痛みます。

I'm ...

watashi wa ... 私は...

diabetic

tōnyōbyō des[u] 糖尿病です。

epileptic

tenkan des[u] てんかんです。

asthmatic

zensoku des[u] 喘息です。

I'm allergic to antibiotics.

kōsei-busshitsu ni arerugii ga arimas[u]
抗生物質にアレルギーがあります。

I'm allergic to penicillin.

penishirin ni arerugii ga arimas[u]
ペニシリンにアレルギーがあります。

antiseptic

shōdokuyaku 消毒薬

aspirin

asupirin アスピリン

condoms

kondōmu コンドーム

contraceptive

hinin yō piru 避妊用ピル

dentist

ha-isha 歯医者

doctor

isha 医者

hospital

byōin 病院

medicine

kusuri 薬

pharmacy

yakkyoku 薬局

tampons

tampon タンポン

(a) cold

kaze 風邪

EMERGENCIES**Help!**

tas[u]ketel!
助けて!

Call a doctor!

isha o yonde kudasai!
医者を呼んでください!

Call the police!

keisatsu o yonde kudasai!
警察を呼んでください!

I'm lost.

michi ni mayoi mash[i]ta
道に迷いました。

Go away!

hanarero!
離れる!

diarrhoea

geri 下痢

fever

hatsunetsu 発熱

migraine

henzutsū 偏頭痛

LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES**Do you speak English?**

eigo ga hanasemas[u] ka?
英語が話せますか?

Does anyone speak English?

donata ka eigo o hanasemas[u] ka?
どなたか英語を話せますか?

Do you understand English/Japanese?

ei-go/nihon-go wa wakarimas[u] ka?
(英語/日本語)はわかりますか?

I don't understand.

wakarimasen
わかりません。

I can't speak Japanese.

nihongo wa dekimasen
日本語はできません。

How do you say ... in Japanese?

nihongo de ... wa nan to iimas[u] ka?
日本語で...は何といいますか?

What does ... mean?

... wa donna imi des[u] ka?
...はどんな意味ですか?

What is this called?

kore wa nan to iimas[u] ka?
これは何といいますか?

Please write in Japanese/English.

nihongo/eigo de kaite kudasai
(日本語/英語)で書いてください。

Please speak more slowly.

mō chotto yukkuri itte kudasai
もうちょっとゆっくり言ってください。

Please say it again more slowly.

mō ichidō, yukkuri itte kudasai
もう一度、ゆっくり言ってください。

NUMBERS

0	<i>zero/rei</i>	ゼロ/零
1	<i>ichi</i>	一
2	<i>ni</i>	二
3	<i>san</i>	三
4	<i>yon/shi</i>	四
5	<i>go</i>	五
6	<i>roku</i>	六
7	<i>nana/shichi</i>	七
8	<i>hachi</i>	八
9	<i>kyū/ku</i>	九
10	<i>jū</i>	十
11	<i>jūichi</i>	十一
12	<i>jūni</i>	十二
13	<i>jūsan</i>	十三
14	<i>jūyon/jūshi</i>	十四
20	<i>nijū</i>	二十
21	<i>nijūichi</i>	二十一
30	<i>sanjū</i>	三十
100	<i>hyaku</i>	百
200	<i>nihyaku</i>	二百
1000	<i>sen</i>	千
5000	<i>gosen</i>	五千
10,000	<i>ichiman</i>	一万
20,000	<i>niman</i>	二万
100,000	<i>jūman</i>	十万
one million	<i>hyakuman</i>	百万

QUESTION WORDS

What?	<i>nani?</i>	なに?
When?	<i>itsu?</i>	いつ?
Where?	<i>doko?</i>	どこ?
Who?	<i>dare?</i>	だれ?

SHOPPING & SERVICES

bank	<i>ginkō</i>	銀行
embassy	<i>taishi-kan</i>	大使館
post office	<i>yūbin kyoku</i>	郵便局
market	<i>ichiba</i>	市場

a public telephone

kōshū denwa 公衆電話

toilet

o-tearai/toire お手洗い/トイレ

the tourist office

kankō annaijo 観光案内所

What time does it open/close?

nanji ni akimas[u]/shimaimasu[u] ka?
何時に(開きます/閉まります)か?

I'd like to buy ...

... o kaitai des[u]
...を買いたいです。

How much is it?

ikura des[u] ka?
いくらですか?

I'm just looking.

miteiru dake des[u]
見ているだけです。

It's cheap.

yasui des[u]
安いです。

It's too expensive.

taka-sugi mas[u]
高すぎます。

I'll take this one.

kore o kudasai
これをください。

Can I have a receipt?

ryōshūsho o itadakemasen ka?
領収書をいただけませんか?

big

ōkii 大きい

small

chiisai 小さい

shop

mise 店

supermarket

sūpā スーパー

bookshop

hon ya 本屋

camera shop

shashin ya 写真屋

department store

depōto デパート

TIME & DAYS

What time is it?
ima nan-ji des[u] ka? 今何時ですか?

today

kyō 今日

tomorrow

ash[i]ta 明日

yesterday	
<i>kinō</i>	きのう
morning/afternoon	
<i>asa/hiru</i>	朝/昼
Monday	
<i>getsuyōbi</i>	月曜日
Tuesday	
<i>kayōbi</i>	火曜日
Wednesday	
<i>suiyōbi</i>	水曜日
Thursday	
<i>mokuyōbi</i>	木曜日
Friday	
<i>kinyōbi</i>	金曜日
Saturday	
<i>dayōbi</i>	土曜日
Sunday	
<i>nichiyōbi</i>	日曜日

TRANSPORT

What time does the next ... leave?

tsugi no ... wa nanji ni demas[u] ka?
次の...は何時に出發すか?

What time does the next ... arrive?

tsugi no ... wa nanji ni tsukimas[u] ka?
次の...は何時に着きますか?

boat	
<i>bōto/fune</i>	ボート/船
bus (city)	
<i>shibas[u]</i>	市バス
bus (intercity)	
<i>chōkyōribas[u]</i>	長距離バス
tram	
<i>romen densha</i>	路面電車
train	
<i>densha</i>	電車
bus stop	
<i>basutei</i>	バス停

station	
<i>eki</i>	駅
subway (train)	
<i>chikatetsu</i>	地下鉄
ticket	
<i>kippu</i>	切符
ticket office	
<i>kippu uriba</i>	切符売り場
timetable	
<i>jikokuhyō</i>	時刻表
taxi	
<i>takushi</i>	タクシー
left-luggage office	
<i>nimotsu azukarijo</i>	荷物預かり所
one way	
<i>katamichi</i>	片道
return	
<i>ōfuku</i>	往復
non-smoking seat	
<i>kin'en seki</i>	禁煙席

How much is the fare to ...?

... made ikura des[u] ka?
...までいくらですか?

Does this (train, bus, etc) go to ...?

kore wa ... e ikimas[u] ka?
これは...へ行きますか?

Please tell me when we get to ...

... ni tsuitara oshiete kudasai
...に着いたら教えてください。

I'd like to hire a ...

... o karitai no des[u] ka
...を借りたいのですが。

I'd like to go to ...

... ni ikitai desu
...に行きたいです。

Please stop here.

koko de tomete kudasai
ここで停めてください。



Also available from Lonely Planet:
Japanese Phrasebook

Glossary

ageya – magnificent banquet halls where artists, writers and statesmen gathered in a ‘floating world’ ambience of conversation, art and fornication

aimai – ambiguous and unclear

Ainu – indigenous people of Hokkaidō and parts of northern Honshū

aka-chōchin – red lantern; a working man’s pub marked by red lanterns outside

ama – women divers

Amaterasu – sun goddess and link to the imperial throne

ama-zake – sweet sake served at winter festivals

ANA – All Nippon Airlines

ANK – All Nippon Koku

annai-sho/annai-jo – information office

arubaito – from the German *arbeit*, meaning ‘to work’, adapted into Japanese to refer to part-time work; often contracted to *baito*

asa-ichi – morning market

awamori – local alcohol of Okinawa

ayu – sweetfish caught during *ukai*

bangasa – rain umbrella made from oiled paper

banzai – ‘hurrah’ or ‘hurray’; in the West this exclamation is, for the most part, associated with WWII, although its more modern usage is quite peaceful; literally ‘10,000 years’

bashō – *sumō* tournament

basho-gara – fitting to the particular conditions or circumstances; literally ‘the character of a place’

bentō – boxed lunch, usually of rice, with a main dish and pickles or salad

bonsai – the art of growing miniature trees by careful pruning of branches and roots

boso-zoku – ‘hot-car’ or motorcycle gangs, usually noisy but harmless

bottle-keep – system whereby you buy a whole bottle of liquor in a bar, which is kept for you to drink on subsequent visits

bugaku – dance pieces played by court orchestras in ancient Japan

buke yashiki – *samurai* residence

bunraku – classical puppet theatre using huge puppets to portray dramas similar to *kabuki*

burakumin – traditionally outcasts associated with lowly occupations such as leather work; literally ‘village people’

bushidō – a set of values followed by the *samurai*; literally ‘the way of the warrior’

butsudan – Buddhist altar in Japanese homes

champuru – stir-fry with mixed ingredients such as *goya* and *fū*

chaniwa – tea garden

chanoyu – tea ceremony

charm – small dish of peanuts or other snack food served with a drink at a bar – it’s often not requested but is still added to your bill

chikan – men who feel up women and girls on packed trains

chimpira – *yakuza* understudy; usually used pejoratively of a male with *yakuza* aspirations

chizu – map

chō – city area (for large cities) between a *ku* and *chōme* in size; also a street

chōchin – paper lantern

chōme – city area of a few blocks

chōnan – oldest son

chu – loyalty

daibutsu – Great Buddha

daifuku – sticky rice cakes filled with red bean paste and eaten on festive occasions; literally ‘great happiness’

daimyō – regional lords under the *shōgun*

daira/taira – plain

danchi – public apartments

danjiri – festival floats

dantai – a group of people

dengaku – fish and vegetables roasted on skewers with a sweet miso sauce

donko – name for local trains in country areas

eboshi – black, triangular *samurai* hat

eki – train station

ekiben – *bentō* lunch box bought at a train station

ema – small votive plaques hung in shrine precincts as petitions for assistance from the resident deities

engawa – traditional veranda of a Japanese house overlooking the garden

enka – often described as the Japanese equivalent of country and western music, these are folk ballads about love and human suffering that are popular among the older generation

enryō – individual restraint and reserve

ero-guro – erotic and grotesque *manga*

fu – urban prefecture

fū – gluten

fude – brush used for calligraphy

fugu – poisonous blowfish or pufferfish

fundoshi – loincloth or breechcloth; a traditional male garment consisting of a wide belt and a cloth drawn over the genitals and between the buttocks. Usually seen only at festivals or on *sumō* wrestlers.

furigana – Japanese script used to aid pronunciation of *kanji*
furii kippu – one-day open transport ticket
fusuma – sliding screen
futon – traditional quilt-like mattress that is rolled up and stowed away during the day
futsū – a local train; literally ‘ordinary’

gagaku – music of the imperial court
gaijin – foreigners; literally ‘outside people’
gaijin house – cheap accommodation for long-term foreign residents
gaman – to endure
gasoreen sutando – petrol stations
gasshō-zukuri – an architectural style; literally ‘hands in prayer’
gei-no-kai – the ‘world of art and talent’; usually refers to TV
geisha – woman versed in arts and dramas who entertains guests; not a prostitute
gekijō – theatre
genkan – foyer area where shoes are removed or replaced when entering or leaving a building
geta – traditional wooden sandals
giri – social obligations
giri-ninjō – combination of social obligations and personal values; the two are often in conflict
go – board game; players alternately place white and black counters down, with the object to surround the opponent and make further moves impossible; probably originated in China, where it’s known as *weiqi*
goya – bitter melon

habu – a venomous snake found in Okinawa
hachimaki – headband worn as a symbol of resolve; *kamikaze* pilots wore them in WWII, students wear them to exams
haiku – 17-syllable poems
hanami – blossom viewing (usually cherry blossoms)
haniwa – earthenware figures found in Kōfun-period tombs
hanko – stamp or seal used to authenticate any document; in Japan your *hanko* carries much more weight than your signature
hantō – peninsula
hara – marshlands
hara-kiri – belly cutting; common name for *seppuku* or ritual suicide
hara-kyū – acupuncture
hari – dragon-boat races
hashi – chopsticks
hatsu-mōde – first shrine visit of the new year
heiwa – peace
henrō – pilgrims on the Shikoku 88 Temple Circuit
higasa – sunshade umbrella

higawari ranchi – daily lunch special
Hikari – express *shinkansen*
hiragana – phonetic syllabary used to write Japanese words
hondō – main route
honsen – main rail line

ichi-go – square wooden sake ‘cups’ holding 180ml
ichi-nichi-jōsha-ken – day passes for unlimited travel on bus, tram or subway systems
IDC – International Digital Communications
ijime – bullying or teasing; a problem in Japanese schools
ikebana – art of flower arrangement
imobō – a dish consisting of a local type of sweet potato and dried fish
irezumi – a tattoo or the art of tattooing
irori – hearth or fireplace
itadakimasu – an expression used before meals; literally ‘I will receive’
ITJ – International Telecom Japan
ittaikan – feeling of unity, of being one type
izakaya – Japanese version of a pub; beer and sake and lots of snacks available in a rustic, boisterous setting

JAC – Japan Air Commuter
JAF – Japan Automobile Federation
JAL – Japan Airlines
JAS – Japan Air System
jigoku – boiling mineral hot springs, which are definitely not for bathing in; literally ‘hells’
jika-tabi – split-toe boots traditionally worn by Japanese carpenters and builders
jikokuhyō – timetable or book of timetables
jinja – shrine
jitensha – bicycle
jizō – small stone statues of the Buddhist protector of travellers and children
JNTO – Japan National Tourist Organization
JR – Japan Railways
JTB – Japan Travel Bureau
jujitsu – martial art from which judo was derived
juku – after-school ‘cram’ schools
JYHA – Japan Youth Hostel Association

kabuki – a form of Japanese theatre based on popular legends, which is characterised by elaborate costumes, stylised acting and the use of male actors for all roles
kaikan – hotel-style accommodation sponsored by government; literally ‘meeting hall’
kaiseki – Japanese cuisine which obeys very strict rules of etiquette for every detail of the meal, including the setting
kaisha – a company, firm
kaisoku – rapid train
kaisū-ken – a book of transport tickets
kaiten-zushi – sushi served at a conveyor-belt restaurant (also the name of such a restaurant)

kakizome – New Year’s resolutions
kami – Shintō gods; spirits of natural phenomena
kamidana – Shintō altar in Japanese homes
kamikaze – typhoon that sunk Kublai Khan’s 13th-century invasion fleet and the name adopted by suicide pilots in the waning days of WWII; literally ‘divine wind’
kampai – ‘Cheers!’
kampō – Chinese herbal medicines that were dominant in Japan until the 19th century, when Western pharmaceuticals were introduced
kana – the two phonetic syllabaries, *hiragana* and *katakana*
kanbi-ryori – mainly steamed crab
kanji – Chinese ideographic script used for writing Japanese; literally ‘Chinese script’
Kannon – Buddhist goddess of mercy (Sanskrit: *Avalokiteshvara*)
kannushi – chief priest of a Shintō shrine
karakasa – oiled paper umbrella
karakuri – mechanical puppets
karaoke – bars where you sing along with taped music; literally ‘empty orchestra’
kasa – umbrella
kashiwa-mochi – pounded glutinous rice with a sweet filling, wrapped in an aromatic oak leaf
katakana – phonetic syllabary used to write foreign words
katamichi – one-way transport ticket
katana – Japanese sword
katsuo-bushi – thin flakes of *katsuo* (bonito) fish often used as a flavouring for broth or as a condiment
KDD – Kokusai Denshin Denwa (International Telephone & Telegraph)
keigo – honorific language used to show respect to elders or those of high rank
keiretsu – business cartels
ken – prefecture
kendō – oldest martial art; literally ‘the way of the sword’
ki – life force, will
kimono – brightly coloured, robe-like traditional outer garment
kin’en-sha – nonsmoking carriage
kissaten – coffee shop
kōban – police box
kōgen – general area, plain
koi – carp; considered to be a brave, tenacious and vigorous fish. Many towns have carp ponds or channels teeming with colourful ornamental *nishiki-goi* (ornamental carp).
koinobori – carp banners and windsocks; the colourful fish pennants that are flown in honour of sons whom it is hoped will inherit a carp’s virtues. These wave over countless homes in Japan in late April and early May for Boys’ Day, the final holiday of Golden Week. These days, Boys’ Day has become Children’s Day and the windsocks don’t necessarily simply fly in honour of the household’s sons.

kokki – Japanese national flag
kokumin-shukusha – peoples’ lodges; an inexpensive form of accommodation
kokuritsu kōen – national park
kokuritsu – Japanese word for Japan Railways (JR)
Komeitō – Clean Government Party; third-largest political party
kotatsu – heated table with a quilt or cover over it to keep the legs and lower body warm
koto – 13-stringed instrument that is played flat on the floor
ku – ward
kuidaore – eat until you drop (Kansai)
kūkō – airport
kura – mud-walled storehouses
kyakuma – drawing room of a home, where guests are met
kyōiku mama – a woman who pushes her kids through the Japanese education system; literally ‘education mother’
kyūō – ordinary express train (faster than a *futsū*, only stopping at certain stations)

live house – nightclub or bar where live music is performed

machi – city area (for large cities) between a *ku* and *chōme* in size; also street or area
machiya – traditional Japanese townhouse
maiko – apprentice *geisha*
mama-san – woman who manages a bar or club
maneki-neko – beckoning cat figure frequently seen in restaurants and bars; it’s supposed to attract customers and trade
manga – Japanese comics
matcha – powdered green tea
matsuri – festival
meinichi – the ‘deathday’ or anniversary of someone’s death
meishi – business card
mentsu – face
miai-kekkan – arranged marriage
mibun – social rank
miko – shrine maidens
mikoshi – portable shrines carried during festivals
minshuku – the Japanese equivalent of a B&B; family-run budget accommodation
miso-shiru – bean-paste soup
MITI – Ministry of International Trade & Industry
mitsubachi – accommodation for motorcycle tourists
mizu-shōbai – entertainment, bars, prostitution etc
mochi – pounded rice made into cakes and eaten at festive occasions
mōfu – blanket
morning service – *mōningu sābisu*; a light breakfast served until 10am in many *kissaten*
mura – village

nagashi-somen – flowing noodles
nengajō – New Year cards
N'EX – Narita Express
NHK – Nihon Hōsō Kyōkai (Japan Broadcasting Corporation)
Nihon – Japanese word for Japan; literally 'source of the sun'
nihonga – term for Japanese-style painting
ningyō – Japanese doll
ninja – practitioners of *ninjutsu*
ninjutsu – 'the art of stealth'
Nippon – see *Nihon*
nō – classical Japanese drama performed on a bare stage
noren – cloth hung as a sunshade, typically carrying the name of the shop or premises; indicates that a restaurant is open for business
norikae – to change buses or trains; make a connection
norikae-ken – transfer ticket (trams and buses)
NTT – Nippon Telegraph & Telephone Corporation

o- – prefix used to show respect to anything it is applied to; see *san*
obanzai-ryōri – home-style cooking
o-bāsan – grandmotherly type; an old woman
obi – sash or belt worn with a *kimono*
o-cha – tea
ofuku – return ticket
o-furo – traditional Japanese bath
o-jōsan – young college-age woman of conservative taste and aspirations
okashi-ya – sweet shops
okiya – *geisha* quarters
okononiyaki – cabbage pancakes
OL – 'office lady'; female employee of a large firm; usually a clerical worker – pronounced 'ō-eru'
o-miai – arranged marriage
o-miyage – souvenir
onnagata – male actor playing a woman's role (usually in *kabuki*)
onsen – mineral hot-spring spa area, usually with accommodation
origami – art of paper folding
o-shibori – hot towels provided in restaurants
o-tsumami – bar snacks or *charms*
oyaki – wheat buns filled with pickles, squash, radish and red-bean paste

pachinko – popular vertical pinball game, played in *pachinko* parlours
puripeido kādo – 'prepaid card'; a sort of reverse credit card: you buy a magnetically coded card for a given amount and it can be used for certain purchases until spent. The prepaid phonecards are the most widespread but there are many others such as Prepaid Highway Cards for use on toll roads.

raidā hausu – basic shared accommodation/houses, catering mainly to those touring on motorcycles
rakugo – Japanese raconteurs, stand-up comics
reien – cemetery
reimen – *soba* noodles served with *kimchi* (spicy Korean pickles)
reisen – cold mineral spring
Rinzai – school of Zen Buddhism which places an emphasis on *kōan* (riddles)
rō – vegetable wax
robatayaki – *yakitori-ya* with a deliberately rustic, friendly, homy atmosphere; see also *izakaya*
romaji – Japanese roman script
rōnin – students who must resit university entrance exams; literally 'masterless *samurai*'
ropeway – Japanese word for a cable car or tramway
rotemburo – open-air or outdoor baths
ryokan – traditional Japanese inn
ryōri – cuisine

sadō – tea ceremony; literally 'way of tea'
saisen-bako – offering box at Shintō shrines
sakazuki – sake cups
sakoku – Japan's period of national seclusion prior to the Meiji Restoration
sakura – cherry blossoms
salaryman – standard male employee of a large firm
sama – even more respectful suffix than *san*; used in instances such as *o-kyaku-sama* – the 'honoured guest'
samurai – warrior class
san – suffix which shows respect to the person it is applied to; see also *o-*, the equivalent honorific. Both can occasionally be used together as *o-kyaku-san*, where *kyaku* is the word for guest or customer.
sansai – mountain vegetables
san-sō – mountain cottage
satori – Zen concept of enlightenment
seku-hara – sexual harassment
sembei – flavoured rice crackers often sold in tourist areas
sempai – one's elder or senior at school or work
sensei – generally translates as 'teacher' but has wider reference
sentō – public baths
seppuku – ritual suicide by disembowelment
setto – set meal
seza – a kneeling position
shamisen – a three-stringed traditional Japanese instrument that resembles a banjo
shi – city (to distinguish cities with prefectures of the same name eg Kyoto-shi)
shiken-jigoku – the enormously important and stressful entrance exams to various levels of the Japanese education system; literally 'examination hell'
shikki – lacquerware

shinkansen – ultra fast 'bullet' trains; literally 'new trunk line', since new train lines were laid for the high speed trains
Shintō – the indigenous religion of Japan
shirabyōshi – traditional dancer
shitamachi – traditionally the low-lying, less affluent parts of Tokyo
shōchū – strong distilled alcohol often made from potatoes; sometimes wheat or rice is used
shodō – Japanese calligraphy; literally the 'way of writing'
shogekijō – small theatre
shōgi – a version of chess in which each player has 20 pieces and the object is to capture the opponent's king
shōgun – former military ruler of Japan
shōgunate – military government
shōji – sliding rice-paper screens
shōjin ryōri – vegetarian meals (especially at temple lodgings)
Shugendō – offbeat Buddhist school, which incorporates ancient Shamanistic rites, Shintō beliefs and ascetic Buddhist traditions
shūji – a lesser form of *shodō*; literally 'the practice of letters'
shukubō – temple lodgings
shunga – explicit erotic prints; literally 'spring pictures', the season of spring being a popular Chinese and Japanese euphemism for sexuality
shuntō – spring labour offensive; an annual 'strike'
shūyū-ken – excursion train ticket
soapland – Japanese euphemism for bathhouses that offer sexual services
soba – buckwheat noodles
soroban – abacus
Sōtō – a school of Zen Buddhism which places emphasis on *zazen*
sukiyaki – thin slices of beef cooked in sake, soy and vinegar broth
sumi-e – black-ink brush paintings
sumō – Japanese wrestling

tabi – split-toed Japanese socks used when wearing *geta*
tadaima – a traditional greeting called out upon returning home; literally 'now' or 'present'
taiko – drum
tako – kite
tanin – outsider, stranger, someone not connected with the current situation
tanka – poems of 31 syllables; see *waka*
tanuki – racoon or dog-like folklore character frequently represented in ceramic figures
tarento – 'talent'; generally refers to musical performers
tatami – tightly woven floor matting on which shoes are never worn. Traditionally, room size is defined by the number of tatami mats.

tatemaie – 'face'; how you act in public, your public position
TCAT – Tokyo City Air Terminal
teiki-ken – discount commuter passes
teishoku – set meal
tekitō – suitable or appropriate
tennō – heavenly king, the emperor
TIC – Tourist Information Center
to – metropolis, eg Tokyo-to
tosu – toilet
tokkuri – sake flask
tokkyū – limited express; faster than an ordinary express (*kyūkō*) train
tokonoma – alcove in a house in which flowers may be displayed or a scroll hung
torii – entrance gate to a Shintō shrine
tsukiai – after-work socialising among salarymen
tsunami – huge tidal waves caused by an earthquake
tsuru – cranes; a symbol of longevity often reproduced in *origami* and represented in traditional gardens

uchi – has meanings relating to 'belonging' and 'being part of'; literally 'one's own house'
uchiwa – paper fan
udon – thick white noodles
ukai – fishing using trained cormorants
ukiyo-e – wood-block prints; literally 'pictures of the floating world'
umeboshi – pickled plums thought to aid digestion; often served with rice in *bentō* sets
wa – harmony, team spirit; also the old *kanji* used to denote Japan, and still used in Chinese and Japanese as a prefix to indicate things of Japanese origin; see *wafuku*
wabi – enjoyment of peace and tranquillity
wafuku – Japanese-style clothing
waka – 31-syllable poem; see *tanka*
wanko – lacquerware bowls
waribashi – disposable wooden chopsticks
warikan – custom of sharing the bill (among good friends)
wasabi – Japanese horseradish
washi – Japanese handmade paper

yabusame – horseback archery
yakimono – pottery or ceramic ware
yakitori – charcoal-broiled chicken and other meats or vegetables, cooked on skewers
yakitori-ya – restaurant specialising in *yakitori*
yakuza – Japanese mafia
yamabushi – mountain priests (Shugendō Buddhist practitioners)
yama-goya – mountain huts
yamato – a term of much debated origins that refers to the Japanese world
yamato damashii – Japanese spirit, a term with parallels to the German *Volksgeist*; it was harnessed by

the militarist government of the 1930s and 1940s and was identified with unquestioning loyalty to the emperor

yamato-e – traditional Japanese painting

yanqui – tastelessly dressed male, with dyed hair and a cellular phone

yatai – festival floats/hawker stalls

YCAT – Yokohama City Air Terminal

yōfuku – Western-style clothing

yukar – epic poems

yukata – light cotton summer *kimono*, worn for lounging or casual use; standard issue when staying at a *ryokan*

zabuton – small cushions for sitting on (used in *tatami* rooms)

zaibatsu – industrial conglomerates; the term arose prior to WWII but the Japanese economy is still dominated by huge firms like Mitsui, Marubeni and Mitsubishi, which are involved in many different industries

zazen – seated meditation emphasised in the Sōtō school of Zen Buddhism

Zen – introduced to Japan in the 12th century from China, this offshoot of Buddhism emphasises a direct, intuitive approach to enlightenment rather than rational analysis