

## Japanese

The Japanese language is spoken by over 130 million people in Japan and in Japanese communities across the globe. It is distinguished by its use of different words that reflect the relative status of the speaker, the listener, and persons mentioned in conversation. For instance, children use different words and phrases when talking to adults and managers use different words and phrases when talking to subordinates.

There are **four** main writing systems used in Japanese:

**Kanji** (漢字) – is based on traditional Chinese characters. Kanji is mostly used when describing nouns and the stems of adjectives and verbs.

**Hiragana** (平仮名) – is a writing system where each character represents a particular sound or syllable. This is used in words where there is no kanji equivalent, particles such as から "from", and suffixes such as *san* さん "Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms".

**Katakana** (片仮名) – which also represent phonetic syllables are used to describe foreign words and names, and commonly used animals, plants or objects that there are no kanji equivalents. For example "television" is written *terebi* (テレビ).

**Rōmaji** (ローマ字), literally "Roman letters" – is used for some loan words like "CD" and "DVD".

The Japanese language has absorbed a large number of foreign words from various other languages: Chinese (along with *kanji*) in the 6<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> centuries, Portuguese in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and English after World War II. Today, 80 percent of loanwords are from English and written in *katakana*. Examples include: *maikaa* (my car), *taimingu* (timing), *konpyuutaa* (computer), *supiido* (speed), and *rasshu awaa* (rush hour).

English words that come from Japanese vocabulary include: tsunami, futon, sushi, judo, karate, karaoke, and honcho.

Japanese has four different ways of addressing people. *Kun* is used for a younger man or a man of lower rank. *Chan* is for little children or intimate friends. *San* is universally used for almost anyone but children. *Sama* is very polite and is used when speaking to customers or very important persons. These titles are placed after a person's name.

In Polly-Glot Tots classes, we use Hiragana writing. Boys are addressed with Kun, Chan for girls and San for caregivers.

### Commonly Used Japanese Phrases

English	Japanese	Japanese
Me, I	watashi	わたし
Me, I (for males)	boku	ぼく
Yes	hai	はい
No	iie	いいえ
What	nani	なに
Name	namae	なまえ
Nice to meet you	Hajimemashite	はじめまして
Excuse me/sorry	sumimasen	すみません
Thank you	arigatou gozaimasu	ありがとうございます
Sorry	gomen nasai	ごめん なさい
Good morning	ohayougozaimasu	おはようございます
Good afternoon	konnichi wa	こんにちは
Good evening	konnban wa	こんばんは
How are you?	ogenki desu ka	おげんき ですか
I'm fine	genki desu	げんき です
Japan	nihon	にほん