



## LEARNING JAPANESE

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Without a doubt, the most distinctive feature of Japanese is its writing system. Being able to read and write Japanese requires mastery of Chinese characters (kanji) and two other writing systems: hiragana and katakana.

If you are a true beginner, communication becomes the ultimate goal. Katakana and hiragana should be mastered; their accurate recall should be the least of your worries. Speaking will involve grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. The least difficult aspect of Japanese is pronunciation. It may not sound like it at times, but the syllables receive equal stress. In addition to any textbooks that you use, people around you will provide an ample source of vocabulary.

As far as grammar is concerned, find a good book and study it. Kanji can seem very intimidating at first; however, it can be mastered. Elementary school books can help in practising writing. Follow the suggested stroke order. This will help you keep your kanji neat and also serve as a mnemonic device. Ultimately the key is repetition and usage. Mastery of kanji involves knowledge of the radicals and the structure of kanji. This may seem very distant to you, but some knowledge of the structure of kanji can help you even at the early stages of your studies.

The above are merely suggestions and hints. In the end, your methods of study will be based on your learning style and use of the language. However you end up studying, or not studying, be patient and enjoy!

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### STUDY TIPS

- Carry a notebook and dictionary with you at all times. You might feel stupid, but you won't remember that important word you learnt earlier after your sixth beer.
- As you tell your students, don't be embarrassed about making mistakes.

- Talk to the little people – young children usually speak simple Japanese.
- Watch TV, especially game shows and children’s programmes. Funny and useful.
- Be patient and relax. We all learn at our own pace and some people take longer than others. Japanese is a difficult language to master, but it can be achieved.

For those confident with their Japanese, GET CERTIFIED!

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## CERTIFICATION

For those of you planning to study Japanese while on JET, you may wish to gain certification. Or maybe you simply need a test to motivate you to study, as so many of us do. There are various tests of Japanese language ability.

### **The Japanese Language Proficiency Test**

This Japanese Language Proficiency Test or *JLPT* as it is more commonly known is the most popular test. The test has 4 levels, with Level 4 being the easiest and 1 the most difficult.

The test is offered in Sapporo at the beginning of December every year. It costs 5,200¥ to take. The JLPT is an all-day test, divided into 3 sections:

1. Kanji / Vocabulary
2. Listening
3. Reading / Grammar

The first 2 sections are worth 100 points each and the last is worth 200. 60% or higher is a pass for levels 4 to 2, and 70% or higher is a pass for level 1.

The application procedure for the test is painstaking. You can get applications at Maruzen in Sapporo for about 500¥. If you don’t live in/near Sapporo, call Maruzen (011-241-7252) to have one shipped to you. Have it shipped COD (*Nihongo noryoku shiken gansho* sent by *takyubin chakubarai*). Applications are due in mid-September.

### **The JETRO Business Japanese Proficiency Test**

This exam has 3 levels, and is more difficult than the Japanese Language Proficiency Test. It is primarily a listening exam with all business-related Japanese. It is offered in the spring each year.

## Japanese Test of Communication (JTOC)

JTOC is offered twice a year, and costs about 6,250円. It is a 2 hour exam that focuses on listening comprehension and measure non-native Japanese speakers' communicative ability in Japanese.

The JTOC has no levels, but is a single exam with questions that vary in difficulty. The test is not pass/fail: instead, you receive a numerical score ranging from 0 to 1000 with 1000 being the highest possible score. There is no limit to the number of times you can take the exam. The highest score achieved is the score on record for the examinee.

As always, the official [hajat/forum](#) is where you will find all the answers to any questions you may have regarding life in Hokkaido.

*HAJET kindly asks you to use paper wisely and only print this document if you really, really must. LOVE HOKKAIDO, LOVE THE ENVIRONMENT!*

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## USEFUL RESOURCES

JEES	<a href="http://www.jees.or.jp">www.jees.or.jp</a>
JETRO	<a href="http://www.jetro.go.jp">www.jetro.go.jp</a>
Japanese Pod 101	<a href="http://www.japanesepod101.com">www.japanesepod101.com</a>
JLPT Study	<a href="http://www.jlptstudy.com">www.jlptstudy.com</a>
JLPT Kanji Project	<a href="http://www.jlpt-kanji.com">www.jlpt-kanji.com</a>
StudyJapanese.org	<a href="http://www.studyjapanese.org">www.studyjapanese.org</a>
The Kanji Site	<a href="http://www.kanjisite.com">www.kanjisite.com</a>

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Hokkaido Association of Japan Exchange and Teaching  
[www.hajet.org](http://www.hajet.org)

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