

# Resources for Japanese Study

## Learning Style

**L** – Listening    **R** – Reading  
**S** – Speaking    **W** – Writing

**A note on resources:** Where the web address is not given, Google will suffice.

**SRS (Spaced Repetition Systems)** - SRS is a scientific way to memorize flashcard items. The idea behind SRS is that flashcards appear at a time when you are just about to forget them; by reviewing this way, you build better long-term memory. Several of the listed online resources contain SRS technology.

**Also:** if there aren't enough on this list for you, check out [tofugu.com](http://tofugu.com) for an online menu!

## Part 1: Learning the Kana (Japanese characters)

Beginners should focus especially on learning the kana right away.

| Name                                     | Description   | Free?               | Style                    |
|--|---|---------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>iKnow (formerly smart.fm)</b>         | This website teaches kana, and then vocabulary in the form of the 6000 most commonly used words. The words are categorized in 1000s by their frequency. It uses SRS to keep track of your learning. | 1,000 yen per month | <b>R</b><br><b>vocab</b> |
| <b>Textfugu</b>                          | An online Japanese textbook for beginners. Includes kana learning.  | No                  | <b>R</b>                 |
| <b>A guide to Writing Kanji and Kana</b> | Two books covering all the jōyō (common use) Kanji. Book one includes hiragana and katakana. Examples and ample practice space.   | No                  | <b>W</b>                 |

## Part 2: Dictionaries in book form

Dictionaries are so important. Comprehensive for at home, compact for on-the-go.




| Name  | Description  | Free? | Style          |
|---|--|-------|----------------|
| <b>Kodansha's Furigana Japanese Dictionary</b>                        | A really useful Japanese/English dictionary for learners up to advanced level. All the words come with furigana (kana written in small script above kanji for reading) | No    | <b>vocab</b>   |
| <b>Japanese Character Dictionary, by Spahn &amp; Hadamitzky</b>       | A big book reference for hard-to-find kanji & kanji compounds. It has 47,000 entries, and lookup by radical/stroke order, or reading.                                  | No    | <b>kanji</b>   |
| <b>A dictionary of Basic/ Intermediate/ Advanced Japanese Grammar</b> | A series of grammar dictionaries published by the Japan Times. Contains very comprehensive explanations of grammar structures and usage (including example sentences)  | No    | <b>grammar</b> |

|   |  |    |              |
|---|--|----|--------------|
| <b>The Kodansha Kanji Learner's Dictionary</b>              | A great resource for intermediate learners who want to develop a more nuanced method of learning kanji characters. | No | <b>kanji</b> |
| <b>The New Nelson Japanese-English Character Dictionary</b> | Has over 70,000 entries. Published by Tuttle Publishing.   | No |              |
| <b>Beyond Polite Japanese</b>                               | A dictionary of slang and colourful informal language; great for watching television/movies                        | No | <b>fun</b>   |

### Part 3: Dictionaries – Online and Electronic



You can also purchase handheld dictionaries at almost any electronics store in Japan.

| <i>Web-browsing Dictionaries</i> |   |      |          |
|----------------------------------|---|------|----------|
| <b>Rikaichan</b>                 | A pop-up Japanese dictionary extension for Firefox. Allows you to view the definition for any word or kanji simply by moving the mouse cursor over it. Fantastic for reading Japanese websites. | Free | <b>R</b> |
| <b>Hiragana Megane</b>           | Literarily translated as “Hiragana-glasses”, HiraganaMegane provides furigana for Japanese websites. Very helpful.  | Free | <b>R</b> |
| <b>Rikai.com</b>                 | An online service like Rikaichan that provides pop-up definitions for Japanese words on websites. Inferior to Rikaichan because it struggles with more complex websites.                        | Free | <b>R</b> |
| <b>Popjisyo.com</b>              | An online pop-up dictionary service for web-browsing. May work slightly better than Rikai.com   | Free | <b>R</b> |
| <i>Online Dictionaries</i>       |   |      |          |
| <b>www.jisho.org</b>             | Denshi Jisho is an easy-to-use and powerful online Japanese dictionary. You can find words, kanji, and example sentences in a variety of ways.  | Free |          |
| <b>WWJDIC</b>                    | An online version of the mother of all (most) Japanese dictionary software (JMDICT)   | Free |          |
| <b>Nihongo resources.com</b>     | A reliable online Japanese dictionary site that uses the WWJDIC data, but with a nicer interface. It also provides free Japanese grammar and Kanji lessons.                                     | Free |          |
| <b>www.alc.co.jp</b>             | A powerful web dictionary designed for Japanese users. However, it has excellent example sentences, and can be useful for looking up unfamiliar grammar.  | Free |          |

| <i>iPhone &amp; iPod Touch, Nintendo DS</i>   |  |         |
|---|--|---------|
| <b>Japanese</b><br>    | An excellent dictionary with a powerful and unique system for viewing entries by category, not found elsewhere. Contains lists of proverbs, counters, and kanji by JLPT level. Also has a countdown to the next JLPT or Japanese school year. Allows you to create custom vocabulary lists. Very detailed and well-linked entries. Also allows traditional-style lookup by radical/stroke count. More expensive, but highly recommended. | \$9.99  |
| <b>Jisho Touch</b><br> | A good dictionary app with an attractive and minimal interface. It features persistence search history, a kanji-zoom view, and the ability to mark favorite entries for easy recall.   | \$14.99 |
| <b>Kotoba</b><br>      | An excellent dictionary app that's completely free, yet has an interface and features on par with the other apps mentioned here. Features a really excellent search-function, detailed entry view, and a very useful "kanji-decomposition" feature.  | Free    |
| <b>Kanji Sonomama Rakubiki Jiten</b>  | A very popular Japanese dictionary for the Nintendo DS. Allows you to lookup kanji by writing them on the touch-screen.  | No      |

## Part 4: Kanji

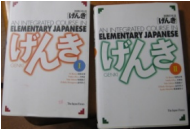


Become literate. Open your world.


|   |   |        |                      |
|---|---|--------|----------------------|
| <b>Kanji Survival Guide</b>   | An excellent resource for the illiterate beginner, deciphering everything from your AC remote control to signs you'll see at your school. Available during orientation from AJET or through the AJET website.                                   | ¥1,500 | <b>kanji</b>         |
| <b>Remembering the Kanji</b><br> | By James Heisig. A somewhat controversial approach towards learning the kanji – this series first teaches you to use mnemonics to learn the meaning and writing ONLY of kanji. The reading of characters are not covered until the second book. | No     | <b>R</b>             |
| <b>Reviewing the Kanji</b>  | Partner to the above: <a href="http://kanji.koohii.com/">http://kanji.koohii.com/</a>   | Free   | <b>W</b><br><b>R</b> |
| <b>Kanji in Context</b><br>      | A textbook series comprising a reference book and two workbooks, it seeks to teach the Kanji in a sequence that's most useful and easiest to remember. Good for intermediate and advanced learners.   | No     | <b>kanji</b>         |

|  |   |      |            |
|--|---|------|------------|
| <b>Kanji Step</b>                              | Practice hiragana, katakana and kanji. There's also a JLPT diagnostic test, so you can check your proficiency to figure out which level of the test is best for you.  | Free | <b>W</b>   |
| <b>Basic Kanji Book</b>                        | 4 different books, each covering about 500 kanji. Includes onyomi and kunyomi (Japanese and Chinese readings for a character), writing space and practice exercises.  | No   | <b>R W</b> |
| <b>A guide to Reading and Writing Japanese</b> | This book covers all of the 1,945 characters in the General Use set of Japanese Characters, with particularly detailed coverage of the 1,009 Essential characters that Japanese children must learn in the first six years of grade school. | No   |            |
| <b>Hyaku-en Books</b>                          | Many Hyaku-en (dollar) stores carry practice books for the kanji taught to different levels of primary school. Kanji includes space for writing, practice exercises and onyomi (but usually not kunyomi)                                    | ¥100 | <b>W</b>   |



## Part 5: Grammar

Courses and books to help you string sentences together.

|  |  |      |                      |
|--|--|------|----------------------|
| <b>Genki (I and II)</b>                                |  <p>Highly recommended for beginners to start off with. Contains very clear grammar explanations and varieties of exercises for individuals, partners, and groups. Workbooks are also available. The more advanced book in this series is called <i>An Integrated Approach to Intermediate Japanese</i></p> | No   | <b>R<br/>L<br/>S</b> |
| <b>An Integrated Approach to Intermediate Japanese</b> | Essentially the 3 <sup>rd</sup> book in the Genki series, and follows a similar format. Since this is an intermediate course, dialogues do not have English translations.  | No   | <b>R</b>             |
| <b>Japanese for Busy People</b>                        |  <p>A widely used series of 3 textbooks, popular for business learners. Available in either kana or Romanized versions (Tip: use the kana version!) Includes a CD.</p>  | No   | <b>R<br/>L</b>       |
| <b>CLAIR course</b>                                    |  <p>November to May, beginner (in Romaji!), intermediate, and advanced levels. Six textbooks per level. Not a lot of grammar explanation given, but good for review and for keeping Japanese in front of you on a daily basis.</p>  | Free | <b>R<br/>W<br/>L</b> |

|   |  |      |          |
|---|--|------|----------|
| <b>Guide to Japanese Grammar</b>  | A comprehensive grammar guide with exercises –written by Tae Kim (and often referred to simply as “Tae Kim”  | No   | <b>R</b> |
| <b>jGram</b><br> | A free online database of Japanese grammar, contributed by users. As well as a reference, it contains a number of study features such as quizzes and daily lessons via e-mail. | Free | <b>R</b> |





## Part 6: JLPT Focused

|  |   |                               |                            |
|--|---|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>speedanki.com</b>   | A simple and fairly minimal online flashcard site, containing the appropriate kanji for the four JLPT levels. Allows you to create an account so that your progress will be saved. Does not incorporate any Spaced Repetition mechanics though, to the best of my knowledge.  | Free                          | <b>kanji vocab</b>         |
| <b>White Rabbit Flashcards</b><br> | 3 volumes, for JLPT 4 <sup>th</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> , and 2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade. Each card includes stroke order, memorization strategies for radicals, vocabulary words, onyomi, kunyomi, and kanji which look similar. Onyomi is written in katakana, and kunyomi is written in hiragana.                                   | \$28.00<br>\$48.88<br>\$64.00 | <b>vocab</b>               |
| <b>完全マスタ</b><br>—<br>             | <b>(kanzen masutaa) Complete Master Series</b><br>Books for both Kanji and Grammar, starting from N4.   | No                            | <b>kanji grammar</b>       |
| <b>Unicom Inc Series</b>   | Grammar and Kanji books starting from N5.   | No                            | <b>kanji</b>               |
| <b>日本語総まとめ問題集</b>  | <b>(nihongoso matome mondaishu)</b><br>These books are JLPT based. There are different books for grammar, vocabulary, kanji, and reading. All levels have the English translation.  | No                            | <b>all</b>                 |
| <b>Kanji Preparation</b>   | A resource to aid the learning of Japanese Kanji. Included in this site is a listing of the full Jouyou Kanji, classified into JLPT levels, with a lookup of vocabulary for each JLPT level. Including printable kanji lists, save kanji and vocab to your folder, and kanji and vocabulary level marks to indicate JLPT level. | Free                          | <b>kanji</b>               |
| <b>JLPT Study Page</b>   | Resources for studying for the JLPT N5 to N2. Contains vocabulary, kanji and grammar lists from past tests.   | Free                          | <b>vocab kanji grammar</b> |


\*Some resources have not updated to the new N~ system.

Old and new system equivalence: N1=Level 1, N2=Level 2, N3=new, N4=Level 3, N5=Level 4

## Part 7: iPhone, iPod touch, and iPad Applications

|   |   |             |                |
|---|---|-------------|----------------|
| <b>Japanese Flip</b><br>         | <p>A Japanese vocabulary-learning (with Kanji) flashcard-app by the author of the Kana and Kanji Flip apps. Has JLPT annotation.</p>  | \$5.99      | <b>kanji</b>   |
| <b>iKanji Touch</b><br>          | <p>iKanji touch is a powerful kanji reference and learning app for ipod touch. It has some excellent testing and teaching functionality. Includes some SRS functionality.</p>                                       | \$8.99      | <b>kanji</b>   |
| <b>Kanjipop</b><br>              | <p>A simple iphone game for reviewing kanji. Pick the correct kanji for a given reading before the time runs out. Very simple, but attractive graphics, and a useful time-killer when you're waiting somewhere.</p> | \$1.99      | <b>kanji</b>   |
| <b>Kanji Flip</b>   | <p>An app for learning kanji. It includes some SRS functionality. Does not function as a kanji reference.</p>   |             | <b>kanji</b>   |
| <b>Juku N1(2,3) Bunpou</b><br> | <p>4 flashcard applications that contains JLPT grammar for N4 to N1. Examples are included as well.</p>   | \$0.99 each | <b>grammar</b> |

## Part 7: Games

|  |  |        |          |
|--|--|--------|----------|
| <b>LRNJ</b>  | <p>A retro-styled RPG (role playing game) for learning Japanese. Available for Windows and Mac OSX. Free demo available.</p>             | \$20   |          |
| <b>Nihongo-Up</b><br> | <p>A simple, pretty looking game for reviewing kanji, kana, and particles. Nice music, too. Available for Windows and Mac OSX.</p>       | \$4.99 | <b>W</b> |
| <b>Kageyama Method: Tadashii Kanji Kakitori-Kun</b>  | <p>A cute game that teaches you to write kanji. Designed for Japanese people, but otherwise suitable for advanced beginners onwards.</p> | No     | <b>W</b> |

## Part 8: Others

|                           |  |      |                      |
|---------------------------|--|------|----------------------|
| <b>JapanesePod101.com</b> | <p>Free, excellent audio and video podcasts for learning Japanese. More Japanese podcasts can be found in the podcasts directory of the iTunes store (still free!)</p>                     | Free | <b>L</b>             |
| <b>Nihongo Juku</b>       | <p><a href="http://www.njuku.com">http://www.njuku.com</a><br/> A blog for practice listening. The site contains audio files with the script. Good practice for reading and listening.</p> | Free | <b>L</b><br><b>R</b> |



## On Motivation:

**Kato Lomb's 10 "Requests" for Language Learning** – All except VII have been validated as strategies of "good" language learners in research and studies.

(source: <http://www.lingua.org.uk/lomb.alkire.html>)

1. Spend time tinkering with the language every day—if there is no more time available, then at least to the extent of a ten-minute monologue. Morning hours are especially valuable in this respect: the early bird catches the word!
2. If your enthusiasm for studying flags too quickly, don't force the issue but don't stop altogether either. Move to some other form of studying, e.g., instead of reading, listen to the radio; instead of assignment writing, poke about in the dictionary, etc.
3. Never learn isolated units of speech, but rather learn words and grammatical elements in context.
4. Write phrases in the margins of your text and use them as 'prefabricated elements' in your conversations.
5. Even a tired brain finds rest and relaxation in quick, impromptu translations of billboard advertisements flashing by, of numbers over doorways, of snippets of overheard conversations, etc., just for its own amusement.
6. Memorize only that which has been corrected by a teacher. Do not keep reading texts you have written that have not been proofread and corrected so as to keep mistakes from taking root in your mind. If you study on your own, each segment to be memorized should be kept to a size that precludes the possibility of errors.
7. Always memorize idiomatic expressions in the first person singular. For example, 'I am only pulling your leg.' Or else: 'Il m'a pose un lapin'—'He stood me up.'
8. A foreign language is a castle. It is advisable to attack it on all fronts at once: via newspapers, the radio, un-dubbed movies, technical or scientific articles, textbooks, or via a visit to your neighbor's.
9. Do not let the fear of making mistakes keep you from speaking, but do ask your conversation partner to correct you. Most importantly, don't get peeved if he or she actually obliges you—a remote possibility, anyway.
10. Be firmly convinced that you are a linguistic genius. If the facts demonstrate otherwise, heap blame on the pesky language you aim to master, on the dictionaries, or on this little book, not on yourself."

## 10 "No's" of Language Learning – all but 2. validated by research/studies

1. *Do not postpone* embarking on learning a new language—or restarting such a study—until the time of a prospective trip abroad. Rather, try to gain access to native speakers of your target language who are on a visit to your country and who do not speak your language. They could be relatives or friends. If you accompany them and show them around, they will help you solidify your knowledge of their language out of gratitude; they will enrich your



vocabulary and overlook the mistakes you make.

2. *Do not expect* the same behavior from your compatriots. Do not practice on them because they will be prone to giving prime time to your errors—or at the very least, they will be inclined to employ meaningful facial gestures—to demonstrate how much better they are at it.
3. *Do not believe* that instruction by a teacher in a course, however intense and in-depth that might be, gives you an excuse not to delve into the language on your own. For this reason you should, from the outset, get into browsing through illustrated magazines and into listening to radio programs and/or prerecorded cassettes.
4. In your browsing, *do not get obsessed* with words you don't know or structures you don't understand. Build comprehension on what you already know. Do not automatically reach for the dictionary if you encounter a word or two that you don't understand. If the expression is important, it will reappear and explain itself; if it is not so important, it is no big loss to gloss over it.
5. *Do not miss* noting down your impressions in your own words, with familiar expressions. Write in simple sentences; words you can't think of at the time can be replaced by words from your own language.
6. *Do not be deterred* from speaking by the fear of making mistakes. The flow of speech creates a chain reaction: the context will lead you to the right track.
7. *Do not forget* to store a large number of filler expressions and sentence-launching phrases in your memory. It is great when you can break the ice with a few formulas that are always on hand and can help you over the initial embarrassment of beginning a conversation, such as 'My English is kind of shaky' or 'It's been a while since I spoke Russian,' etc.
8. *Do not memorize* any linguistic element (expression) outside of its context, partly because a word may have several different meanings: e.g., the English word 'comforter' may refer to someone who is consoling another, or it can mean a knitted shawl, a quilt or eiderdown, or yet again a baby's pacifier. In addition, it is good, right off the bat, to get used to the practice of leaving the vortex of meanings around the word in your own language alone and reaching out to its kin word in the new language or to the context you have most frequently encountered it in.
9. *Do not leave* newly learned structures or expressions hanging in the air. Fix them in your memory by fitting them into different, new settings: into your sphere of interest, into the reality of your own life.
10. *Do not be shy* of learning poems or songs by heart. Good diction plays a more significant role in speech performance than the mere articulation of individual sounds. Verses and melodies impose certain constraints. They set what sounds must be long and which ones must be short in duration. The rhythm inherent in them guides speakers and helps them avoid the intonation traps of their native language."