

## Notes for Beginners

Hey newbies! Welcome to the fascinating and infuriating (but rewarding!) world of learning Japanese. For starters, you need to decide what your goal for the next year is (or longer, depending on how you're intending to stay, but setting a goal for the year is a good place to start). It's important to be realistic; we'd all like to magically attain fluency, but unless you a) are the kind of person who picks up languages incredibly easily, b) have a strong background in learning foreign languages, or c) are willing to devote all of your free time to studying and practising Japanese (and frankly, it would probably be d) all of the above), there is a limit to how far you will be able to go over the next twelve months. Don't let this prospect get you down though! Everyone learns at their own place and has their own strengths and weaknesses. It's our job here to help you clarify that goal, and to develop a strategy to reach it.

I'm going to assume you're reading this section because you're interested in learning more than your basic "survival Japanese". The bad news is you're almost certainly going to have to crack open a textbook at some point. The good news is that the rewards of learning Japanese will be totally worth it. Honest. Here's a list of some of the resources Emily and Jen have found most useful for their studies:

### Grammar Books

GENKI I: An Integrated Approach to Elementary Japanese

GENKI II: An Integrated Approach to Elementary Japanese

**An Integrated Approach to Intermediate Japanese** – Akira Miura & Naomi Hanaoka  
McGloin

**A Dictionary of Basic Japanese Grammar** – Seiichi Makino & Michio Tsutsui

**Nakama: Japanese Communication, Culture, Context** – Seiichi Makino

### Kanji Books

**Remembering the Kanji I and III** – James Heisig

**The Kodansha Kanji Learner's Dictionary** – Jack Halpern

### Websites

[www.memrise.com](http://www.memrise.com) (great for learning vocabulary)

[www.ajatt.com](http://www.ajatt.com) (All Japanese All The Time)

### Apps

**Midori** – Japanese dictionary app with hundreds of example sentences, kanji lists and kanji drawing function (paid app). Very user-friendly.

**imiwa?** - free Japanese dictionary app. Perhaps not as easy to use as Midori, but also comes with the option of other European languages.

**Anki** – (Almost) unbeatable spaced repetition system, now available for your mobile devices.

**Memrise** – memrise.com's own mobile app, so you can continue your studies on the go.

There are oodles of free beginner-level apps out there, so browse around and find one that works for you.

Remember though, you don't have to go it alone. Self-study is all well and good, but especially for speaking, the only way you're going to improve is through practice. Get creative: form a study group with other beginner ALTs in your area, or ask a friend to tutor you. Find a Japanese person in your town who wants to learn English, and ask them to teach you Japanese in return. If none of these is an option for you, there are companies which offer Japanese lessons over the internet that

you can sign up for at your convenience. But most importantly – get involved with life in Japan. Don't hide away thinking “I'll join this and do that *when my Japanese is better.*” The fastest way to improve is to go out there and make mistakes, struggle to be understood even with basic things, and to exist in a state of near constant embarrassment. It sounds tough (and it is!), but the first time you walk away from a conversation without wanting to hide under your bed (futon?) is a wonderful moment. 頑張れ〜！

P.S. - Even if you aren't a beginner, we'd still love to talk to you! There's always room for improvement in a language, and Emily is chock-full of tips and tricks to help you along the way to fluency.