

Studying Japanese

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(If you have any questions, then please contact me.)

Study

Scheduled regiment assumes a pattern of exercise routines. It prepares your mind for specific times of intense study and allows it to absorb the material with high efficacy during that period. It's possible to change the types of sets within a unit (e.g., kanji, grammar) and to make-up missed sessions. It holds you responsible on a very classic, classroom-like level.

...Try to study new material for forty minutes one day and choose a different material for a forty-minute session on the next day. Choose a particular day for holidays away from study. Cycle the kind of subject matter that you study.

- rigid and inflexible, feelings of guilt associated with procrastination, cramming

Spontaneous studying, stealing time away from everyday activities for language acquisition, is a fluid response to a busy lifestyle and a more immersive method. Its flexibility allows you to utilize forced waiting times (e.g., commute, school down-time). The subject of study is always close in your thoughts, so you spend more time with the language. It holds you responsible on a constant, more casual basis.

...Try keeping flash cards or a cellphone app with loaded materials with you at all times. If you find yourself waiting for something, anything really, then use that time to study. Do not feel guilty if you don't use every event of downtime for study.

- easy to forget, cumbersome, structureless

Spacing both environments and study times is vital for reinforcement. Spacing facilitates better recall without requiring more effort. Reviewing the same material in different environments at different moments forces the brain to absorb what it has forgotten from prior study sessions. It also lends itself well to breaking the bonds of cramming and short-term memory regurgitation. It broadens understanding of the material by allowing you to meditate on and utilize/review it before a more formal study session.

...Try studying the same subject matter for forty minutes in one environment, then review that material when the opportunity arises some other time somewhere else (e.g., waiting for the bus, sitting at a restaurant). Study something different (i.e., kanji one time v. grammar another time) in the same environment within which you had previously covered another subject.

Testing reinforces learning, rather than merely assessing progress. Retrieving information transmutes how we interact with that material, as opposed to simply accessing material. Measuring properties, in this case the level of language adroitness, moves you toward higher understanding of that data. Also, the harder it is to remember something for a test, the harder it is to later forget.

...Try quizzing yourself following a brief study session (forty minutes) and then take the same test preceding review of the same subject matter. Then test yourself one last time roughly one week following the second review.

Pacing means challenging yourself while not defeating yourself by setting goals and studying methods that pressure you to fail. Quantify the material that you want to learn within a certain group (e.g., JLPT2 study manual, medical terms, pick-up lines). Qualify the schedule for obtaining acquisition of that set and the means. Forgive yourself for procrastinating, but endeavor to be disciplined. Be realistic and take care of your health.

...Try taking a ten to twenty minute nap after work, then study for forty minutes (the mind has difficulty concentrating after about forty minutes with no breaks). Quiz yourself on the studied material and review for five minutes. Then do something, anything else, and forget about Japanese for awhile!

Motivation is required for marrying any effective study regiments. Create long-term (one year) and short-term (one week) goals for study. Explore why you intend to continue exploring the acquisition of the Japanese language. Discover if there is an end goal (e.g., JLPT1, permanent lifestyle in Japan, teaching Japanese). This will engender a growth mindset within the realm of each individual goal, which is more conducive to adaptability, curiosity, and efficacy, and ultimately to learning Japanese.

For more information on this subject, please visit these fine websites:

<http://bps-research-digest.blogspot.jp/2010/09/9-evidence-based-study-tips.html>

http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/07/health/views/07mind.html?pagewanted=1&_r=2&ref=homepage&src=me

<http://bps-research-digest.blogspot.jp/2010/04/how-to-nap.html>

On Association

We originally learned our native languages through physical associations. While this topic is highly debated, and I do not intend to argue whether written or pictorial representation is superior for learning new vocabulary, I think it's at least worth discussing. While all Japanese textbooks are written such that the vocabulary lists flow in written format, some experts believe that pictures assigned to foreign vocabulary may assist learning. For example, while we can associate the word "dog" with the Japanese word "inu," our minds must translate both of these phrases before associating them together. That is to say that our minds must conjure a symbol or image for dog in both English and Japanese before we can connect the words "dog" and "inu" together as having the same meaning. The benefit of using pictures is such that we can integrate new vocabulary more fluidly, more organically, by associating it directly with the object, opposed to the name transcribed to the object in our native tongues. This effectively removes the detail of having to translate twice for one word. Toward this end, we can utilize mnemonics.

Mnemonics are associative devices that facilitate the act of remembering. The most famous book for Japanese study that utilizes this memory device is Heisig's *Remembering the Kanji*.

General Resources

Anki Flashcards <http://ankisrs.net/>

Jisho <http://jisho.org/>

JLPT Website <http://www.jlpt.jp/e/>

Tofugu's 100 Best Resources for Learning Japanese

<http://www.tofugu.com/2010/04/06/tofugu-100-best-japanese-learning-resources/#textbooks>

Socializing

If you are interested in karate, I have a personal friend who is currently offering to teach ALTs for 500 yen per month. They meet once per week (Friday at 8:00pm), so that means each lesson is only 125 yen. He's a fourth degree black belt who can carry a conversation in both English and Japanese, and he has helped me to practice my Japanese for months. His email address is hiroyukings.srk@softbank.ne.jp.

Expert Level Resources

Read

Major Websites with Blog Rankings

<http://blog.with2.net/>

<http://www.blogmura.com/>

<http://blogranking.fc2.com/>

Books

A Dictionary of Advanced Japanese Grammar

Specialist Supplementary Texts *Power Japanese Series*

Textbooks in Japanese

Novella

Soil

20th Century Boy

Rabbit Press Flashcards

Listen

<http://radiko.jp/#>

Write

Forum Sites

<http://www.lang-8.com/>

<http://info.2ch.net/guide/map.html>

<http://livemocha.com/>

Intermediate Level Resources

Read

Books

Easy Books in Japanese (*Harry Potter*)

Ghibli Readers

Soil

Heisig's *Remembering the Kanji*
A Dictionary of Intermediate Japanese Grammar

Rabbit Press Flashcards

Blogs for Japanese Learning

<http://japanesewithmie.blogspot.jp/>

<http://www.nihongonoki.com/blog/>

<http://www.maggiesensei.com/>

Listen

<http://radiko.jp/#>

Write

Forum Sites

<http://www.lang-8.com/>

<http://livemocha.com/>

Beginner Level Resources

Passive Learning is a wonderful resource to utilize before undertaking the study of Japanese grammar or vocabulary. It's the act of staying present in the moment in such a way that you think about the sounds of Japanese – the pronunciation, the tone, the pitch, the rhythm. While you consciously focus on those sounds, your brain subconsciously constructs the sounds. This process makes the acquisition much smoother than studying a Japanese textbook out of context.

...Try watching TV (not anime) and movies or listening to the radio (<http://radiko.jp/#>). Make the activity a passive one by focusing on another task while listening. This works well in conjunction with studying kana.

Study the alphabets as soon as you can and completely bypass romaji, if possible. Romaji will only limit your growth, because the majority of Japanese study materials are written in hiragana, at the very least. If you learn romaji, then you must relearn Japanese through other methods afterward. Kana consist of the complete hiragana and katakana alphabets. You will see them everywhere in Japan, and there is no need to buy any books for the sake of memorization.

...Try this resource: <http://www.tofugu.com/japanese-resources/hiragana42/>

Textbooks, while often dry, are necessary for effective learning. There are a multitude of different resources and methods for beginning Japanese study. They all have many things in common: focus on vocabulary, basic grammar, and kana study, etc. So both the overall method and small differences set each of them apart. I recommend two: Textfugu and *Genki*. Textfugu is a new, organic project introduced by the website tofugu.com. It's focused on self-learners, which you all are from this point, and is purportedly quite challenging. Yet it's a fresh and effective tool in an otherwise saturated market. *Genki* is a classic, highly acclaimed textbook aimed at those who will be working in a classroom environment. It's available with a workbook, as well. *Genki* has the benefit of a successful history; many people have completed the textbook and found higher fluency as a result of its ascribed method. Although it is primarily used with a teacher, the

book lends itself well to self-lead learning, as well.

Supplements are a welcome tool to help fill in any voids that textbooks might unintentionally foster. I think that two are highly beneficial: *A Dictionary of Basic Japanese Grammar* and the website jgram.org. I would highly recommend purchasing a copy of *A Dictionary of Basic Japanese Grammar* for the cohesiveness, examples, charts, and simple diagrams. It is an excellent aid to your studies and a great quick reference guide. Jgram is an easy-to-follow website that should be useful at least up to the point when you finally pass N1 (Good luck!), with entries separated out by JLPT level and extra features, such as business and casual email writing guides.

...Try this resource: <http://dev.jgram.org/pages/viewList.php?t=15>