



## Language Exchange Lounge Series

Join our lively lounge events to meet friendly native speakers and fellow language learners from around the world!

**Hosted at the Asahikawa International Center from 18:00-19:00**



| Lounge  |    | Dates      |
|---|----|------------|
| <b>Solniska Lounge</b><br>Russian & Japanese Exchange | 中文 | 3/4 (Wed)  |
| <b>Pengyou Lounge</b><br>Chinese & Japanese Exchange  |    | 3/5 (Thu)  |
| <b>Nihongo Lounge</b><br>Japanese Exchange            |    | 3/18 (Wed) |
| <b>K x J Lounge</b><br>Korean & Japanese Exchange     |    | 3/19 (Thu) |

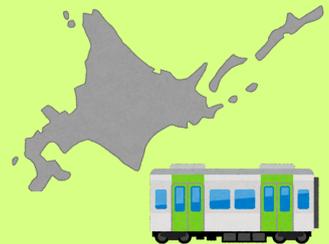


## JR HOKKAIDO LIMITED EXPRESS CHANGES:

The following information was written referencing the JR Hokkaido website.  
For more information, please visit <https://www.jrhokkaido.co.jp/>

### Key Changes:

- All limited expresses traveling between/through Asahikawa and Sapporo will only have reserved seating.
- JR Hokkaido will no longer offer S-Kippu tickets. All tickets will have reserved seating. **S-Kippu will no longer be sold on March 9, 2026, and all existing S-Kippu will be invalidated from March 13, 2026.**
- JR Hokkaido recommends riders to make their train reservations online through their website [eki-net.com](http://eki-net.com). See February 2026 Issue of Asahikawa Info on how to register



**ASAHIKAWA INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE**

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Check out our website and social media for information regarding the events above.

For further information or to register for events, contact:

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Website: <https://asahikawaic.jp/en/>



Scan the QR Code to check out our homepage!

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**\*\*The opinions expressed in the essays are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the AIC or the City of Asahikawa.\*\***



# Nihongo Tips: Kanji 101

Article by John M.

Resident from Myanmar learning Japanese calligraphy during the AIC event, “Experience Japanese Culture” 日本文化体験

## Intro

Many people I’ve met while studying Japanese have said that learning Kanji is one of their biggest challenges. To learn Japanese, you need to study 46 Hiragana characters, 46 Katakana characters, and about 1,500 to 2,000 Kanji (Chinese characters) to be able to live and work in Japan. This can be overwhelming for some people. However, even though Kanji might look hard at first, it becomes easier once you get used to it.

## In Japan, Kanji is Everywhere!

To visit or live in Japan, there are so many characters that people already see on a regular basis without realizing. Here are some common ones.

開

Open

閉

Close

小

Small

大

Large

You’ve probably seen many of these kanji in your daily life, even if you don’t know how to read them. Often, you can understand what they mean by looking at the context, like if there’s English nearby or by how the kanji is used.

If you pay attention to your surroundings—like signs, posters, or notes—you can easily learn these common kanji over time.



A Japanese stop sign with the word 止まれ (止 meaning stop)



**Observe and be aware of kanji in context—**



## Understanding How Kanji Works

### Readings

1

Most, if not all, kanji have more than one reading. These reading are called kun’yomi and on’yomi.

**Kun’yomi is for native Japanese words.** It’s based on the meaning of the kanji and is usually mixed with Hiragana. Kun’yomi readings are often a few vowels long.

**On’yomi comes from Chinese.** It’s used for kanji combinations and borrowed words.

学

**Meaning:** Learn, study

**Kun’yomi:** まなぶ *mana.bu*

**Ex.** 学ぶ (まなぶ/mana.bu) To learn

**On’yomi:** がく *gaku*

**Ex.** 学校 (がっこう/gakkou) School  
科学 (ががく/kagaku) Science

Japanese Kanji can have many readings. For example, 生 (life) can be read as :

- 生きる (いきる/Ikiru) to live
- 生 (なま/nama) raw, 人生 (じんせい/jinsei) life
- 誕生日 (たんじょうび/tanjoubi) birthday
- 生姜 (しょうが/shouga) ginger
- 生まれる (うまれる/umareru) to be born
- 生地 (きじ/kiji) dough, cloth, texture, material
- 生える (はえる/haeru) to grow

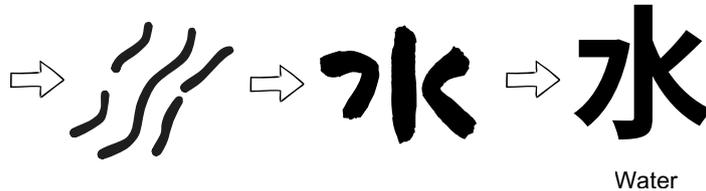
**Focus on learning the readings relevant to you and your daily life.**

These may seem like a lot for beginners, but with repeated exposure and use, they become easier to learn—especially the ones most relevant to you!

Many kanjis are like pictures because they symbolize things found in life.

**Radicals**

2



The left and right strokes represent the small currents in a river, while the middle stroke represents the big currents.

Water

Kanjis give hints on what a word means.

For instance, words with the Kanji for water (水) usually mean something relating to water.

**水**

Kun'yomi: **みず** mizu  
On'yomi: **すい** sui

Water

- 水着 (みずぎ/mizugi) - bathing suit
- 水道 (すいどう/suidou) - water supply; waterworks
- 水分 (すいぶん/suibun) - moisture; fluid; water
- 水泳 (すいえい/suiei) - swimming

Kanjis are made up of radicals (部首/ぶしゅ/bushuu) that make up a Kanji which can show both meaning & sound.

Kanjis with this 氵 (さんずい/sanzui) same radical often mean something relating to water 水.

**水**

Water

→ 氵

Water as a radical

- 海 (うみ/umi) - sea
- 池 (いけ/ike) - pond
- 滝 (たき/taki) - waterfall
- 洗う (あらう/arau) - wash

Kanjis with this 青 (あお) same radical often will be pronounced as せい.

**青**

Blue

Kun'yomi: **あお** ao  
On'yomi: **せい** sei



- 精神 (せいしん/seishin) - mentality; mental
- 申請 (しんせい/shinsei) - application
- 清掃 (せいそう/seisou) - clean

Radicals are combined to make even more complex Kanjis, with some giving hints on both its meaning and pronunciation.

氵

Water  
Meaning

+

青

Blue  
Pronunciation

=

**清**

Clean; Pure  
Combination

Kun'yomi: **きよ**.い kiyo.i  
On'yomi: **せい** sei

**The Importance of Kanji in Learning Japanese**

Learning to read and write in Japanese is just as important as speaking. It helps you become better at both speaking and writing. And once you get used to it, kanji can actually be fun to learn!

**Understanding kanji boosts vocabulary and helps grasp context, making Japanese easier to learn.**

# Learning English Casually

Written by Yoko N.  
Translated by AIC



I was never interested in English or studying abroad. Up until my third year of junior high, I somehow managed to keep up with my English classes. But before I knew it, I suddenly fell behind when I entered high school. By the time I had to take the university entrance exams, I couldn't understand any of the long passages. I took what was the equivalent of today's Japanese Common Test for University Admissions, and during the English section, I was desperate, so I cluelessly marked my sheet without reading a single passage. Miraculously, I was able to score exactly 100 out of 200 points. I still remember my teacher at the time genuinely praising my luck by telling me, "Well done!"

I would have never thought that I'd be studying English now. I landed a job where I was working with foreign colleagues and visitors from around the world. One of my colleagues, who is fluent in English, does her best at her job, always "wanting to learn more." Seeing her do her best with English motivated me, and before I knew it, I found myself thinking, "I wish I could speak English too."

That said, I only have a vague understanding of geography and country names since I didn't know much about the world nor did I have an interest in it back then. When it came to discussions of world cultures and news, I could barely keep up. To tackle this, I bought myself a book called Learn about the Countries of the World through Pictures—for elementary school students, which I keep handy on my desk. It's quite easy to read. Whenever I hear about a country I'm not familiar with, I secretly glance at the book to learn about it.

I started learning English in the same "easygoing" manner. Before I leave my house in the morning, I open my study app to do one lesson. During my commute to work and back, I spend my time listening to English.

I've been keeping up with this routine, and by the time April came around, I began to study for the Eiken seriously. At work, I made it my goal to say one English phrase a day, even though they were junior high level English.

"No worries."

Being able to say simple phrases brought me a bit of joy.

So, in June 2025, I took the Eiken Grade 3 exam. It had been several years since I had taken the exam, and being surrounded by elementary schoolers made me quite nervous, but I passed! I never thought I, the underachiever, would actually pass, so I was shocked when I saw the result.

Looking back, I didn't put in any extra work to pass. My environment pushed me, and I simply kept up with casually studying English. Through this experience, I felt that even if you're not good at English or interested in studying abroad, people can change. Each small step is surely a step forward!

I'm kind of thinking about giving the Eiken Grade Pre-2 a try. Afterward, I hope to one day travel abroad. Having studied English made me more interested in the world and expanded my perspective. Moving forward, I'll keep studying English at my own easygoing pace.