

Quick Japanese Lesson 3: 25 Japanese Words You Already Know!

In this quick Japanese lesson, I will introduce you to 25 Japanese vocabulary words that you already know! That's right. Believe it or not, you already have an impressive Japanese vocabulary that you can instantly put to use!

Would you believe me if I told you that you already have an impressive vocabulary of hundreds of Japanese vocabulary words? Well, I'm going to show you that you do, and introduce you to 25 of them right now!

Pronunciation of Japanese Vowels

Before I show you the Japanese vocabulary that you didn't know you had, we need to quickly go over Japanese vowels, so that you'll be able to pronounce these words correctly. The Japanese language has only 5 vowels (a-i-u-e-o), which are combined with 9 different consonants (K, S, T, N, H, M, R, W and Y (another consonant, N, is sometimes tacked onto the end of these combinations)) to make up all of the units of sound in the Japanese language. Once you learn to pronounce these basic sounds in Japanese, you'll be good to go with basic pronunciation.

The Japanese vowels are pronounced as follows:

A: pronounced as in "pa" or "ma" or "saw"

I: pronounced like the letter "E"

U: pronounced as in "you" or "goo" or "wu" or "sue"

E: pronounced like the letter "A" but abruptly, without dragging out the sound

O: pronounced like the letter "O"

25 Japanese Vocabulary Words You Already Know

Now that you know how to pronounce Japanese vowels correctly, let's get right to the vocabulary you already know. You may be surprised to learn that Japanese vocabulary contains thousands of borrowed words from English that are commonly used in everyday speech. By drawing on these words, you can tap into an enormous built-in vocabulary of Japanese words! Here are 25 to get you started, broken down phonetically, along with their meanings and katanaka spelling.

Anime (a-ni-me, アニメ): animation (Japanese anime)

Apaato (a-paa-to, アパート): apartment

Baiku (ba-i-ku, バイク): motorcycle (but not bicycle!)

Bataa (ba-taa, バター): butter

Biru (bi-ru, ビル): building

Biiru (bii-ru, ビール): beer

Desuku (de-su-ku, デスク): desk

Dorama (do-ra-ma, ドラマ): TV drama

Eakon (e-a-kon, エアコン): air conditioner

Furonto (fu-ron-to, フロント): front (reception) desk at a hotel

Garasu (ga-ra-su, ガラス): glass

Geemu sentaa (gee-mu sen-taa, ゲーム・センター): video arcade

Karaoke (ka-ra-o-ke, カラオケ): karaoke (but now you know how to actually pronounce it!)

Keeki (kee-ki, ケーキ): cake

Kurabu (ku-ra-bu, クラブ): club, nightclub

Koo-hii (Koo-hii、コーヒー): coffee

konbini (kon-bi-ni、コンビニ): convenience store

Meeru (mee-ru、メール): email (not not snail mail!)

Nooto (noo-to、ノート): notebook

Posuto (po-su-to、ポスト): mailbox or postbox

Puroresu (pu-ro-re-su、プロレスル): professional wrestling

Raningu (ru-nin-gu、ランニング): running

Sarada (sa-ra-da、サラダ): salad

Tenisu (te-ni-su、テニス): tennis

Terebi (te-re-bi、テレビ): TV, television

So there you have it. 25 Japanese vocabulary words that you already knew. You probably noticed that some of these words, such as meeru for e-mail, have been altered from the original English meanings. That's pretty common in Japanese, but you'll pick up how these words are used as you begin to practice and use the language.

As you probably surmised by now, these 25 words are just the tip of the iceberg. There are hundreds of other similar Japanese words that have been derived from English, most of which are used in everyday speech. As you tap into your inner-Japanese vocabulary, you'll discover that you already know a lot more Japanese than you thought!

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