



10 Ways to Kickstart Your Japanese Studies

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JAPAN SWITCH



Learning a language can be a daunting task, especially if you don't have a convenient school framework to guide you. I know how it feels, I've been there too. So I've compiled a list of things that have helped me stay excited and focused while I'm learning Japanese.

Here are my top ten tricks to help you along your way!

1. Collect memes about Japan (I swear this helps)



You may think this sounds useless, but humor is a great way of engaging yourself with the learning process. Memes show you that you're not alone. Other people are experiencing the same emotions you are. Plus, it's fun and you can share them with friends. What's there not to like?

2. Follow the Ask Japanese YouTube channel

No, I'm not being paid to promote them, I promise! The reason I'm giving [this particular channel](#) a shoutout is that they interview Japanese people in Japanese (with subtitles of course) about topics foreigners are interested in. Video games, fashion, they cover all sorts of topics.

It doesn't even have to be this channel, just find one that will let you engage in Japanese culture without getting bored or overwhelmed. YouTube videos, especially those produced in Japanese for a non-Japanese audience, are a great way to feel like you're part of a community and learn new things about Japan. It's even good listening practice!

3. Find a Japanese language community

This one can be hard, especially for all you introverted folks. But I promise it's the most important thing on this list! Find people who you can share your struggles with. People who, like you, are learning Japanese and can help you out when you get stuck. The best way to find a good group is to look for one centered around a shared interest, like maybe you all like the

same anime or everyone is super into cooking. Having that point in common makes it easier to feel comfortable with each other.

If you can't find a community in-person or are simply too shy for face-to-face conversation, there are plenty of places online you can join! Facebook, Reddit, and other social media groups are chock full of Japanese conversation clubs and study groups. Find one that suits you and lurk until you're ready to start making friends.

4. Start a Japanese hobby

Even though I said "Japanese hobby" I really mean any hobby that you can reasonably integrate your Japanese studies into. Whether it's art, gaming, sports, cooking, mascot characters, anime, or anything else, find a hobby you're passionate about and see what online Japanese resources there are related to it. Ideally, you can also find friends to share your excitement with.

This one is also great for goal-setting. Let's say you're really into baking. Why not make it a goal to find a recipe in Japanese and make something with it? Or you could try to play a Pokémon game in Japanese, or maybe watch a favorite movie without subtitles. There are a million ways to make studying fun for yourself!

5. Follow a Japanese celebrity

Even if you're not normally into famous people, there's probably at least one Japanese person who has something interesting to say. Maybe it's an actress you think is talented, or a band you're really into. Follow this person on whatever platforms you're familiar with and see if you can translate their posts. This is a great way to give yourself mini-assignments, especially if your celebrity doesn't post super often. Plus, it gives you someone to connect with who is part of Japanese culture!

6. Find something Japanese to listen to

There are so many options to choose from! News podcasts, J-Pop, radio dramas, YouTube videos, anything works as long as you're hearing those Japanese syllables on a daily basis. Even if you can't understand a word at first, you'll pick up more than you're expecting. It also helps your pronunciation and grasp of sentence structure. If you have a long commute, that's the perfect time to listen to things.

If you need more ideas for what to listen to, check out our article on [listening to Japanese!](#)

7. Start your day with flashcards

I know this sounds like no fun, but even going through five flashcards a day will help keep vocabulary and kanji fresh in your mind. I use Quizlet, but there are a lot of apps you can use if you don't want to carry around a thick wad of paper. I advise you to leave words in your flashcard deck even after you think you know them. Sometimes if you haven't used a word for a while it leaves your brain. Flashcards can also boost your confidence when you see just how many words are in your stack!

We've also included a list of free apps you can use.

8. Sing karaoke (I'm serious)

Scientists have determined that one of the best ways to improve your language pronunciation is to sing. You can look it up, they've published research papers and everything. This is especially true of Japanese, a language with a strict internal rhythm (go look up morae if you're curious). If you don't live near a convenient karaoke place, you can use YouTube and do it at home.

Added bonus: it's fun.

9. Keep a diary

It doesn't have to be complicated, but writing a daily sentence or two gives you practice formulating sentences, writing kanji (when applicable), and helps you keep track of your language growth. It can be as simple as writing 今日は晴れです (it's sunny today).

It's better to do this on paper since it gives you writing practice, but you can keep notes on your phone or a blog if you prefer typing.

10. Get yourself a teacher

Now you might be saying, "I can't afford expensive private lessons!" "I'm done with high school!" "There's no one in my area!" Well folks, there's always a way. If you're in the Tokyo metropolitan area, you should check out [Japan Switch](#). They're cheap, friendly, and flexible with times.

Otherwise, find someone in your area who can work with your budget and schedule. There's really nothing better than having a teacher who can guide and encourage you. There are plenty of options, whether you're looking for group lessons, online lessons, private meetings, or industry-specific tutoring.

I hope you found this article helpful! Even if not all of these habits grab you, adopting one or two will really help you stay on track. Remember, if you need more information about learning Japanese, living in Japan, or anything else, there are lots more articles like this one on the [BFF Tokyo](#) website!