Learning Japanese

The Japanese language is spoken by over 130 million people in Japan and in Japanese communities around the world.

Writing Systems
Kanji, Hiragana, Katakana, and Romaji
• Kanji (漢字) is used for nouns, parts of adjectives and verbs, and Japanese names.
• Hiragana (ひらがな) is used for words that don’t use kanji, in certain word endings, and in place of kanji characters that are difficult to read. Hiragana superscript is sometimes used as a guide to pronouncing kanji characters. Rosetta Stone provides this optional superscripting.
• Katakana (カタカナ) is used for foreign words, countries, names, and technical words.
• Romaji, which uses the Roman script, is often used for acronyms, company names, foreign words, or as a transliteration of Japanese characters. Romaji allows learners of Japanese to read Japanese without learning the characters.

Language Tips
• Japanese is written with no spaces between words.
• Learning to read hiragana and katakana is simplified by the fact that each character generally corresponds to a single syllable.
• Japanese words change depending on the formality of the situation. Rosetta Stone teaches you to communicate in informal or formal Japanese, as appropriate for the situation.
• Don’t be surprised if you see sentences without subjects. The Japanese language often does not specify the subject. The meaning of the subject is conveyed by the context.
• Nouns in Japanese do not change in the plural form. Instead, a number or counter before the noun indicates the quantity.

Language Family
Japanese

Dialect
Standard Japanese

Accent
As spoken in Tokyo

Your Learning Options
• Your Rosetta Stone course allows you to switch between kanji, kana, and romaji scripts. The kana script contains both hiragana and katakana.

  Kanji  Kana  Romaji

• Rosetta Stone assists you in reading kanji by providing an optional superscript. This option is useful once you have learned to read hiragana.

• If you are primarily interested in learning to speak Japanese, you can go through the course in romaji. If you’re interested in learning to speak and read Japanese, we suggest you study using our recommended course.