



ユ一・ゴツト・ジス!

THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO LEVELING UP IN JAPANESE

Just like in videogames, it's not always about the destination but the journey. Here are the recommended "levels" to get through Japanese without feeling like you're stuck grinding for EXP (experience)!



Hiragana

Check out Tofugu's [Hiragana: The Ultimate Guide](#) and memorize all the hiragana characters. It is a comprehensive guide with everything you need to aid you in learning hiragana, including videos, worksheets, and mnemonic charts. To test your memory of the characters, visit [RealKana](#) and [Drag n' Drop Hiragana](#). You want to master all 46 characters, along with the dakuten and combination hiragana. (It's easier than it sounds!)

Begin learning vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar

If you are a CIN library user:

- Use the free library [Mango](#) app to begin learning Japanese vocabulary and grammar. Almost all the Japanese is rendered in hiragana, and you will be able to hear how native speakers pronounce the language. Mango is available on desktop and as a mobile app. (Look for it [here!](#))
- Check out Japanese-language learning books and audio materials in CIN's catalog. (Find our special reading list [here!](#))
- If you're looking for a specific title that isn't in the catalog, ask a librarian to request it with our free Interlibrary Loan service!

If you are *not* a CIN library user:

- Visit [tofugu.com](#). It has a vast amount of information on almost any topic you can think of, and it's all free!
- Look for [TextFugu](#), an online Japanese-language learning textbook (the first "season" is free).
- [Tae Kim's Guide to Japanese](#) is a free website that walks you through what you need to know.
- [The Genki Textbook Series](#) is a highly acclaimed textbook series that's well worth looking into. (\$20-150 each)

katakana

Check out Tofugu's [Katakana: The Ultimate Guide](#) and memorize all 46 katakana characters, along with the dakuten and combination katakana. To test your memory of the characters, visit [RealKana](#) and [Drag n' Drop Katakana](#). Katakana is another important character set, reserved for spelling of foreign words.



kanji

Here it is... the boss level!!! But don't be too worried. There are great resources out there to help you learn the most difficult character set, which consists of thousands of characters. Kanji is incredibly important because it clarifies meaning and reduces confusion in understanding written Japanese.

- [WaniKani](#) is a comprehensive online resource that uses fun mnemonics to help you untangle even the most confusing of kanji characters. The first few "levels" are free.
- [Kanji from Zero](#) is a workbook series that teaches you how to write and read several kanji. (\$27) There's a corresponding YouTube channel, "[Learn Japanese From Zero!](#)"



JAPANESE-LANGUAGE BOOKS AND MATERIALS

Japanese-language children's books are a great place to start reading Japanese — they use simpler sentences and are usually written in the easier-to-read hiragana.

[Kinokuniya Bookstore Seattle](#) ([usa.kinokuniya.com/stores-kinokuniya-seattle](#)) — Great selection and online shopping available.

[Amazon Japan](#) ([www.amazon.co.jp](#)) — Shop in English for Japanese titles. International shipping available.

Need more Japanese reference books and dictionaries? Check out this link for a list: [www.tofugu.com/japanese/beginner-japanese-textbook](#)

[Legends of Localization](#) ([legendsoflocalization.com](#)) — Discusses facets of Japanese-to-English videogame localization. The author, Clyde Mandelin, also writes books discussing how bad videogame translations happen, how machine translations render Japanese into English, and how video games like the original *Legend of Zelda* were translated. Tons of interesting linguistic and cultural insights!

Need a list of manga books to read? Check out this link for a list of beginner's Japanese-friendly manga: [www.japanesetease.net/easy-to-read-manga-for-japanese-beginners-vol-01](#)