



How to Sound Intelligent in Japanese: A Vocabulary Builder

By Charles De Wolf

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For every student, a time eventually comes when basic grammar is no longer the problem. You can say a few words about the weather, or the fact that, yes, you are feeling hungry, or explain that you are going out for the day - and actually be understood. Beyond that, however, the going gets tough. You cannot make pertinent comments about philosophy, politics, art, science, law, or business - simply because you lack the necessary vocabulary. In fact, you may not be able to say that you are interested in "philosophy" at all, because you don't know the Japanese word for it. How do you go about acquiring this specialized vocabulary (most of which consists of kanji compounds)? Usually by spending hundreds of hours reading Japanese books or picking through a dictionary.

This book is an attempt to shorten that process by collecting a good number of the more commonly used key words from crucial areas of human endeavor. Now, without spending years mastering the written language, you can occasionally come up with the right word at the right moment in a conversation that is striving toward comprehensibility. This can even be done by students who do not have a strong grasp of kanji, for they can learn the words as sounds.

The areas covered in the book are ideas and theories; philosophy and religion; politics and government; the fine arts, humanities, and social sciences; science and technology; law and justice; and business and economics. This division allows the student to go the category where vocabulary is needed and learn the key words given there, rather than floundering around in a dictionary and hoping one has found what is needed. A further advantage of this arrangement is that certain kanji tend to be repeated over and over in certain categories: for example, the kanji read "gaku" in the science section of the book. This type of repetition allows the student to get a feeling for certain kanji and usages.

Beginning students can pick up individual words and put them in sentences of their own making, no matter how simple, and advanced students can get a better understanding of context by reading the sample sentences in the book. Since no one, even in their native tongue, can hope to be proficient in every field, advance students can quickly pick up key words in areas they are unfamiliar with.

Previously published in the *Power Japanese* series under the same title.

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Editorial Review

Review

"... this small book offers a wealth of difficult vocabulary presented in an accessible, interesting format." *The Japan Times*

"The author's explanations of usage solve long-standing mysteries." *The Daily Yomiuri*

" ... an easy, interesting way of learning new words." *The Nikkei Weekly*

"A highly recommended reference work for the serious student." *Tokyo Today*

"... an inviting read through the inclusion of interesting etymologies and, sometimes, jocular example sentences." *Asahi Evening News*

Language Notes

Text: English, Japanese

About the Author

CHARLES DE WOLF is a professor at Keio University, Tokyo. He is the translator of T-shirt Japanese Versus Necktie Japanese.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Donna Barragan:

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