

INFO SHEET - Japanese



Why you should study Japanese

Sushi, manga, sumo wrestling, and high-end electronics are just a few of the many things one may associate with Japan. But a country is so much more than just its stereotypes and Japan, with its rich cultural history, thriving economy, and distinctive artistic traditions, continues to play an influential role in our global community. Plus, if you scratch the surface of the language just a little, you'll uncover a puzzle as complex and curious as a cross between Sudoku, cryptography, and a choose-your-own-adventure!

To begin with, Japanese uses 3 different writing systems:

- **kanji:** words borrowed from Chinese
- **hiragana:** a phonetic writing system for Japanese words only
- **katakana:** used to spell out words borrowed from other languages

It also has something called **romaji**, which uses the Roman alphabet (same as English) to spell out the sounds of Japanese words to help with

pronunciation. And, just keep things interesting, Japanese can be written vertically from right to left or horizontally from top to bottom.

Plus, if it's true that language tells you something about the people who use it, then take a look at the Japanese words below to get an idea of things Japanese speakers feel are important:

- **honne (本音) vs. tatemae (建前):** what you truly believe vs. the behaviours and opinions you show in public
- **omotenashi (おもてなし):** the spirit of showing great hospitality and treating guests wholeheartedly
- **irusu (居留守):** pretending to be out when someone knocks on your door
- **komorebi (木洩れ日):** sunlight filtering through leaves
- **betsubara (べつばら):** literally this means "having another stomach" but it actually means having room for dessert even though you have already eaten a full dinner
- **shichitenhakki (七転八起):** an expression of resilience; literally "to fall down 7 times but get up 8"

Students who choose to minor in Japanese at Carleton come from a wide range of degree programs: political science, international business, applied linguistics, computer science, and engineering to name a few.

Some are attracted to the language itself. Others see it as an opportunity to pursue professional opportunities (employment and/or academic) in the island nation.

As well, many of our students choose to spend at least some time in Japan either on exchange or as part of the JET Program. Some have even fallen in love, gotten married, and now live in Japan!

Finally, if you do decide to pursue Japanese at Carleton, don't forget to check out CUJA, a student association whose members organize many events and activities every year.

carleton.ca/slals/languages/