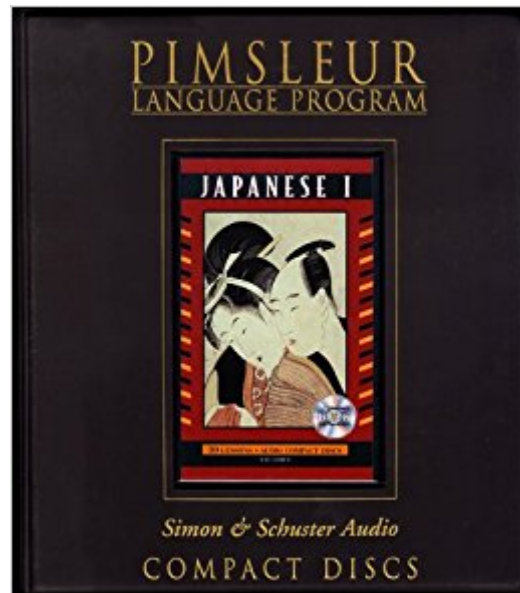




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Japanese I (Comprehensive)



Synopsis

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Book Information

Series: Comprehensive

Audio CD

Publisher: Pimsleur (January 1, 1999)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0671315889

ISBN-13: 978-0671315887

Product Dimensions: 13 x 11.5 x 1.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars 14 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #2,725,746 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #39 in [Books > Books on CD > Languages > Language Instruction > Japanese](#) #4610 in [Books > Books on CD > General](#) #368381 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences](#)

Customer Reviews

I know it's expensive - buy the 4 lesson cd/cassette starter set first. You will be buying the beginning 4 lessons twice but you'll know exactly what your getting. I have 4 other programs: Living Language, Rosseta Stone, Instant Immersion, Transparent Language - as well as a dozen books on learning Japanese - trying to learn from them has been torture compared to Pimsleur. Japanese (and Korean & Chinese) is twice as hard to learn because they are written with characters instead of the alphabet. You can't sound out words. I recommend you pickup a few Romanji books - which are Japanese words written alphabetically - a good one is "Japanese in 10 minutes a day". The biggest advantage of the Pimsleur system is that you will learn to understand Japanese spoken at full speed. Other methods have you build a vocabulary then go on to grammar so you memorize and memorize and then you are asked a question in normal everyday Japanese and are lost - after all, do you speak "proper" English all the time?

Preface: I'm going to Japan in Jan. 2006. Unlike most young people, who go there as English teachers, I'm going there as a kaishain (office worker). The company is Japanese. My co-workers will be Japanese with little English skills. My study of Japanese is not a hobby - my career partially depends on it. Therefore, my review is meant to build upon the 40+ other reviews. They have done a great job detailing both the strong and weak points of the Pimsleur course. Yes, it's repetitive. It teaches formal, stilted Japanese. Neither of the speakers are native Japanese speakers (imitate the man, whose accent is acceptable. The woman has a horrendous Chinese accent. I basically ignore her). Those who expect Pimsleur to be the perfect self-study course - dream on. I strongly feel it should be the backbone of your studies. But it must, MUST, be used in conjunction with multiple other resources. I've taken the liberty to list them below. I hope it will especially help those who are also studying Japanese as a necessity, not as a hobby. 1. I found "Basic Japanese I," which is a series of videos from the 1980's made by the Japanese Learning Foundation. It's complete with skits and a mini-drama about the adventures of a foreigner in Japan. It magnifies the Pimsleur lessons, as well as teaches you extra material. Not to mention, there are NATIVE speakers who talk at normal speeds and intonations and use "natural" Japanese. These are 30% more detailed and more difficult than Pimsleur ... but without Pimsleur, these would be very frustrating and thus

useless. Try to find this oldie-but-goodie (as well as the accompanying text). And be prepared to LAUGH at how very 1980s it is (in a BAD way). I spend 2 days on each lesson (there are 26 total).2. I use the Genki I textbook. Yes, they are technically for a classroom setting, but I've had no problems. They go into the grammatical points and teach additional vocabulary. It's essential to buy the CD's - the speakers are also native (they sound very much like anime voices, which is amusing), but they speak slowly, more slowly than Pimsleur. That's not a big deal, especially for a beginner like me. It also teaches you a little bit of Kanji, which is great. I highly recommend this series. But be prepared to spend about a week on each chapter (there are 12 total), and to listen to the audio again and again.3. Learn the kana's: hiragana and katakana. You won't believe how useful this has been to me. Don't even look at any romanji...if you can read the kana's, your pronunciation will be much much better. Kana Pict-O-Graphix (a little booklet with mnemonic devices to help you remember how each kana looks) is ESSENTIAL. And, it's only about \$7. Also, buy some workbooks, such as "Let's Learn Hiragana." You need to learn the stroke order, and practice writing. While I'm quite good at writing, reading is more challenging. But hey, at least I can!4. WATCH JAPANESE TV SHOWS AND MOVIES! LISTEN TO JAPANESE MUSIC! There are resources to find Japanese DVD's with English subtitles. I have those shows in .avi form, and then I extract the audio, and listen to it on my iPod. I don't understand a lot of it, but because I've watched the show a couple of times, I get the basic gist. Maybe it's just my imagination, but I feel like I'm starting to understand some words and grammar, simply by watching and listening. But, many foreigners claim to have learned English by watching movies and listening to music -why couldn't it work the other way?5. I'm lucky that I have a Japanese roommate, whose first language is Japanese (although her English is pretty decent). She's a good resource, but almost just a supplement. I don't think a language partner is too important, because it's not a natural situation. Living abroad in Japan will be my best lesson.6. It uses mnemonic devices, as well as a native speaker pronouncing every word, to help you with some basic vocab. I hope this review hasn't been overly off topic. In about a month, maybe a little less, I feel I'm progressing quite nicely. If I were put on the spot, I'd probably draw a blank and not be able to use any of the Japanese I've learned so far, but that's only natural. So, in closing...it's important to have realistic expectations. Pimsleur, while important, is just a part of really learning Japanese.

I've heard many language tapes and CDs and the Pimsleur is the best of them. While this is the best of the lot, and I recommend it, its greatest weakness is the lack of scripts for the CDs. It is easy for a non-native speaker to not hear a whispered "i" or "u." At times it is difficult to hear an

elongated vowel or the extra beat of a double consonant. Also, "t" and "d" can be mistaken for each other when one only has an auditory cue. If there was a script, one could see the spelling of the word and be better able to follow along with what the speaker is saying (it would help with review, too). Luckily my significant other is Japanese and when she hears me practicing she sometimes says something like "it's not "de" it's "te." I recommend you get a good English-Japanese dictionary to use as a new word is introduced to reduce the likelihood of mishearing the Native speaker and saying a word incorrectly. With the above caveat and potential solution in mind, I believe listening to the CDs can be of great benefit to learning basic Japanese.

The Pimsleur series is best for people who do not have the time to fuss around with coloring books and written material. The course is entirely on CD. You don't need to follow along in a book while you study. If you feel comfortable muttering Japanese in public, you can do your lessons while walking, biking, jogging, taking the subway, driving, or skiing -- to work, from work, on your lunch break, in line at the supermarket, you name it...It is the most comprehensive oral program out there, so if you want a comprehensive program, you should start and end with pimsleur. Don't buy some low-end learning product and then try to jump into Pimsleur II because the other product stopped; start with Pimsleur from the beginning. Each of the 45 CDs in the entire series builds upon the previous ones and reviews previous material. Drawback: yeah it's expensive. It's because no program can compete with them in completeness and ease-of-use. Other programs you actually have to set aside time to do lessons. Pimsleur goes faster this way, but if you don't have time for that, you just plug and play. If you're comfortable, you move on to the next CD. If not, you stay where you are. It's as easy as that. Of course, if you want to learn a few tourist phrases and be done, then find something cheaper. they're out there. Japanese learning software for your computer is probably the cheapest decent route. Drawback: eventually you're going to need to know how to read and write. Pimsleur does not teach this. HOWEVER, having the oral background Pimsleur gives you allows you to pick up the written parts much easier. So drop about \$20 on a few hiragana and katakana workbooks and some kanji flashcards, and zip through them. You'll find that with the Pimsleur background, you'll be able to easily make sense of what would have otherwise been gobble-dee-gook if you had started out trying to write as well.

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