80/20 Japanese
10 Steps to 500 Sentences

By Richard Webb
10 steps to 500 sentences

Let me show you just how easy Japanese is by teaching you to say over 500 different sentences in just 10 steps.

P.S. You’ll also learn the fundamental structure of every sentence in the Japanese language.
Step 1: Understand word order

For basic sentences in Japanese, just remember these three things:

1. The **person** doing the action **comes first**
2. The **verb** (action word) goes **at the end**
3. **Everything else** goes **in between**

Example:

I **bought** bread, at the supermarket

- **person**
- **verb**
- **everything else**
Japanese has these things called **particles**. These are basically **markers** that tell you what each word does.

Particles come **after** the word that they are marking.

```
I  wa  bread  wo  bought
```

- Person doing the action
- The thing the action is done to
Step 3: Learn some vocab

Now you know the absolute basics, you need some words.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People</th>
<th>Verbs (past tense)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>watashi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>[name]-san</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>watched</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things</td>
<td>hon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bread</td>
<td>pan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>television</td>
<td>terebi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This includes “you”. In Japanese, instead of saying “you”, it’s common practice to just refer to people by name.
Step 4: Mix and match

Now that we know some vocab to go with our basic grammar, it’s time to start making sentences!

watashi wa pan wo tabemashita
Sato-san wa pan wo kaimashita
Suzuki-san wa terebi wo mimashita
Tanaka-san wa terebi wo kaimashita
Abe-san wa hon wo yomimashita
Adachi-san wa hon wo kaimashita

person | everything else | verb
Step 5: Learn more particles

A couple more particles will allow us to add more detail:

**de**  Tells us *where the action takes place*, or *the mode of transport used* to travel

**ni**  Tells us the *destination of a movement*

```
watashi wa sūpā de pan wo kaimashita
(water) (supermarket) (bread) (bought)
```

Where it took place

```
watashi wa basu de hoteru ni ikimashita
(bus) (hotel) (went)
```

The mode of transport  The destination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>everything else</th>
<th>Verb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>watashi wa</td>
<td>sūpā de</td>
<td>pan wo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>basu</td>
<td>hoteru ni</td>
<td>ikimashita</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Step 6: Try out the new particles

Now let’s put these new particles to use.

watashi / [name]-san…

… wa sūpā de pan wo kaimashita
… wa netto (Internet) de terebi wo kaimashita
… wa ie (home) de terebi wo mimashita
… wa gakkō (school) de hon wo yomimashita
… wa kuruma (car) de sūpā ni ikimashita
… wa basu (bus) de gakkō ni kimashita (came)

person | everything else | verb
Step 7: Learn polite verb tenses

To change tenses, all we have to do is change the ending of the verb.

**Present/future tense - ends in masu**  
eg. tabemasu (eat)  
Use this for just about anything that you or someone else (a) does on a regular basis, or (b) will do in the future.

**Past tense - ends in mashita**  
eg. tabemashita (ate)  
Use this when talking about something that you or someone else did in the past.
Step 8: Practice using each tense

Now you can talk about actions in the past or future. Try it!

**I will buy** bread at the supermarket
watashi wa sūpā de pan wo kaimasu

**I bought** bread at the supermarket
watashi wa sūpā de pan wo kaimashita

Suzuki-san **will watch** TV at home
Suzuki-san wa ie de terebi wo mimasu

Suzuki-san **watched** TV at home
Suzuki-san wa ie de terebi wo mimashita
Step 9: Mix and match some more

watashi / [name]-san wa...

resutoran (restaurant) de mizu (water)
hoteru (hotel) wo nomimasu (drink)
sūpā (supermarket) ocha (tea)
ie (home) pan (bread)
kōen (park) sushi (sushi)
gakkō (school) sakkā (soccer)
jitensha (bicycle) karaoke (karaoke)
kuruma (car) soko (there)
basu (bus) koko (here)
hikōki (airplane) tōkyō (Tokyo)
nihon (Japan) kimasu (come)

Step 10: Turn them into questions

Turn any sentence into a question just by adding “ka”.

Tanaka-san will play soccer at the park
Tanaka-san wa kōen de sakkā wo shimasu

Will Tanaka-san play soccer at the park?
Tanaka-san wa kōen de sakkā wo shimasu ka

Sato-san went to school by bus
Satō-san wa basu de gakkō ni ikimashita

Did Sato-san go to school by bus?
Satō-san wa basu de gakkō ni ikimashita ka
That’s it!

You can now say over 500 sentences in Japanese! Now go out into the world and practice what you learned. Start now, practice lots and you’ll be amazed at how quickly you improve.

Want to learn more? Check out my book at https://8020japanese.com