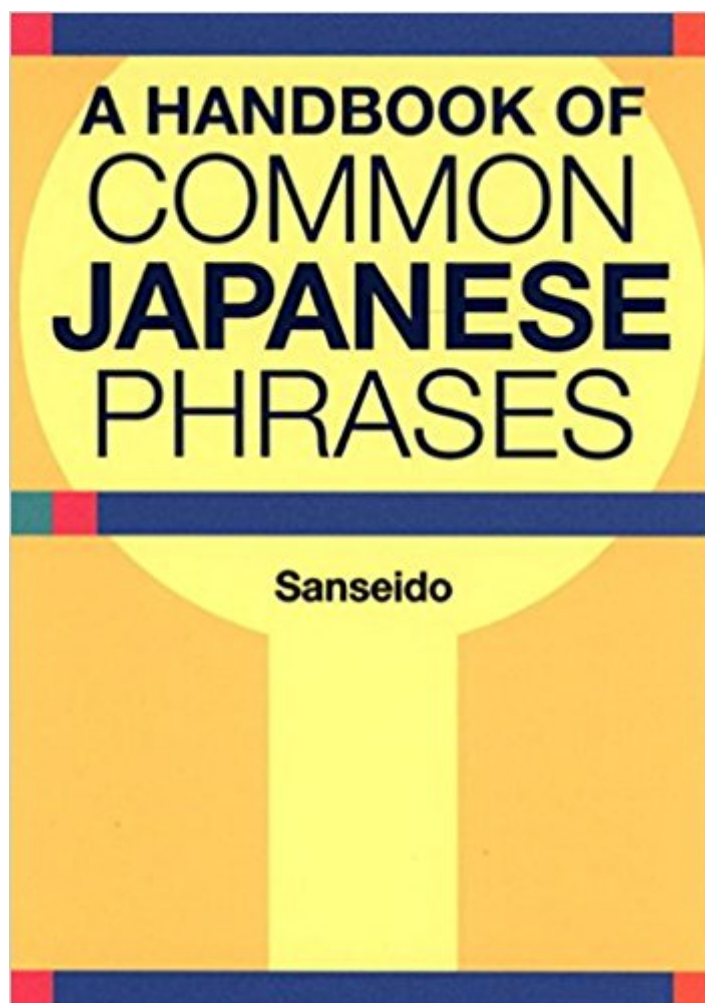


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# A Handbook Of Common Japanese Phrases



## Synopsis

Words don't exist as independent units, to be inserted into grammatical slots by a speaker exercising absolute authority over their placement. Rather, they tend to come in neatly bound packages - in fixed phrases or entire sentences - ready to communicate an idea that cannot be expressed economically in any other way. For example, "I wouldn't do that if I were you" is basically a set expression, allowing for little change. If a student of English wanted to express the thought behind this phrase, but wasn't aware that a means of doing it already existed, he or she would be forced to resort to a great deal of circumlocution before the point was made. This is exactly why common phrases are so important: they facilitate communication. Japanese, too, is rich in common phrases perfect for any number and variety of occasions. This handbook lists some 600 of them and explains when, where, and how to use them, providing alternatives for slightly varied circumstances and revealing their underlying psychology. While all this is done in an informative, practical manner, the book is also immensely entertaining and can be profitably read by anyone interested in Japanese etiquette and psychology. All in all, *A Handbook of Common Japanese Phrases* is a delight for students of Japanese at every level and anyone interested in how Japanese interact among themselves. *A Handbook of Common Japanese Phrases* is based on *Common Japanese Phrases* and *Common Japanese Business Phrases*, previously published in the *Power Japanese* series.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

SANSEIDO is a leading publisher of Japanese dictionaries and reference books. The translator,

JOHN BRENNAN, studied Japanese at the University of Chicago and at Waseda University in Tokyo, where he lived and worked for fifteen years. He now lives in Chicago.

The book itself is great, but its title leaves something to be desired. It might lead you to believe that this book is full of things such as "Where is the bathroom?" or "How do I get to such-and-such station?". No such phrases will be found here. What it does have is broad categories of social situations -- apologizing, making business calls, criticizing, giving and receiving gifts, etc. These can be tricky to handle properly in Japanese, because the customs are so different from the West. For instance, if you want to say "I did no such thing!", if you haven't read the book, you might translate it literally and say something like "Sonna koto o shinakatta yo!" -- but something like "Mi ni oboe no nai koto da" (literally "that's something I have no recollection of doing") might be more appropriate. (I'm not sure if the first phrase really is more blunt, but the point is, I'd rather trust the book than my own ideas on how to say these things.) The phrases are given in both kanji and romaji. I would have preferred kanji with furigana, myself, but I suppose using romaji helps people who have no immediate intention of learning the Japanese writing system. The table of contents lists every phrase, so it's easy to find the one you're looking for. I think maybe it'd have been even better to list only the phrase groups in the table of contents and have the complete phrase list in an appendix, but it's not a big deal. The only major flaw I see is that it doesn't seem to explain the literal meaning and grammar enough of the phrases you're using. It could be argued that, since these are fixed phrases, that's not strictly necessary. Still, I think it would be helpful to be told that, for instance, "Sumimasen de sumu to omou ka" (which it translates as "Saying you're sorry won't cut it") really means "Do you think [by saying] 'it's inexcusable' it becomes excusable?" -- it makes the phrase more memorable and exercises your knowledge of grammar. Still, somebody who knows enough grammar and who is willing to look up any unfamiliar vocabulary will probably be able to figure these things out. I'm giving this book four stars, but it's really close to five. This sort of stuff isn't covered so much in the other textbooks I have. I just don't like the deceptive title and how the literal meanings often go unexplained.

Informative introduction describing a little bit of culture and Japanese language. Easy to understand examples and explanations. Included both kanji and romaji and covers a wide variety of situations. Very useful for beginner, intermediate, and someone just wanting to know more language and culture.

This book gives a number of formulaic sentences for covering situations in the workplace or while entertaining, such as appropriate ways to congratulate someone for a promotion, express sympathy for a loss, commiserate while visiting someone in the hospital, apologize for a guest having to witness a domestic scene. Each sentence has a lengthy commentary describing its appropriate use. This would be very helpful for an advanced student living in Japan. However, beginners can't use it very well.

This is an English translation of a Japanese book intended to instruct young Japanese in appropriate language use. There are two sections, the first covers a number of general-life situations while the second is focussed on business use. It has a large number of very useful and certainly common phrases and includes guidelines on their appropriate use and delivery. Subtle differences between similar phrases are explained. These phrases are worthwhile remembering, however, there is greater variation in their use than this text might lead you to believe. I have not had occasion to use all of these phrases nor can I claim to have heard all of them in use, but where the contents of the book overlaps with my own experience it is quite accurate. HOWEVER- the section on the protocol for offering prayers for the dead is just plain wrong- (or perhaps it would be better to say that it is greatly at odds with my own experiences in such settings) and that leaves me with some concern over what other errors might be lurking in here.

Idiomatic expressions for different situations with extensive usage comments to help you on the way. This is not a phrase book for beginners. It is for somebody who has studied I suppose one year already.

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