

Japanese For Gringos Lesson 1 Greetings Introductions 2026 10 04

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Maya: Konnichiwa, and welcome to Japanese for Gringos! I'm Maya.

Devon: And I'm Devon. This is lesson one, and today we're tackling greetings and introductions, the first words out of your mouth in Japan.

Maya: And the most important thing, Devon, is that every Japanese phrase today is written for you in romaji, plain Latin letters, and I'll give you a pronunciation guide you can actually read.

Devon: Let's hear your secret weapon, Maya.

Maya: It's the flat rhythm rule. In Japanese, every syllable gets the same weight. No English stress. You don't say konniCHEEwa. You say kohn-nee-chee-wah, flat and even, like tapping a drum. Practice that and you'll sound ten times better on day one.

Devon: Alright, phrase one. Good morning. Ohayou gozaimasu. Say it like this: oh-HAH-yoh goh-zah-ee-mahss.

Maya: Oh-HAH-yoh goh-zah-ee-mahss. It means good morning, and you'll hear it everywhere before noon. Tip: the double o is a long vowel. Hold that HAH a little longer than feels natural. Ohhh-HAH-yoh.

Devon: Phrase two. Good afternoon. Konnichiwa. That's kohn-nee-chee-wah, flat and even.

Maya: This is the all-purpose hello from late morning to evening. Tip: every syllable the same length. Kohn. Nee. Chee. Wah. Clap it four times if you have to.

Devon: Phrase three. Good evening. Konbanwa. Say kohn-bahn-wah.

Maya: Just swap the middle syllable from the afternoon one. Kohn-nee-chee-wah becomes kohn-bahn-wah. Tip: the bahn rhymes with dawn. Kohn-bahn-wah.

Devon: Now you're meeting someone for the first time. Phrase four. Hajimemashite. That's hah-jee-meh-mahsh-teh.

Maya: Hajimemashite means something like nice to meet you for the very first time. Tip: say it fast and flat, don't stress the sh. Hah-jee-meh-mahsh-teh, all one breath.

Devon: Then you tell them your name. Phrase five. Watashi wa, then your name, then desu. So Maya would say: wah-TAH-shee wah Maya dehss.

Maya: Wah-TAH-shee means I, wah is a little marker that points to the topic, and dehss makes it polite. Tip: your name goes in the middle, like filling a sandwich. Wah-TAH-shee wah your name dehss.

Devon: Phrase six, the magic glue phrase. Yoroshiku onegaishimasu. Say yoh-roh-shkoo oh-neh-gah-ee-shee-mahss.

Maya: You say this right after introducing yourself. It means something like please be kind to me, or I look forward to knowing you. Tip: the shkoo is quick and quiet, almost swallowed. Yoh-roh-shkoo.

Devon: And phrase seven. Sayonara. Sah-yoh-nah-rah. Goodbye, but only for longer farewells, like leaving a city or a trip. For daily goodbyes, we'll cover those

Devon: Cultural note for today. In Japan, your greeting comes with a bow. You don't have to nail it. A small nod of the head with eye contact is plenty for a traveler.

Deep bows are for formal business. Just greet with a smile and a little bow, and you've shown respect.

Maya: And handshake tip: if a Japanese person offers a hand, shake it. If they bow, bow back a little. Follow their lead.

Devon: Before we close, our three phrase recap drill. Maya, quiz me.

Maya: How do you say good morning?

Devon: Ohayou gozaimasu. Oh-HAH-yoh goh-zah-ee-mahss.

Maya: How do you say nice to meet you for the first time?

Devon: Hajimemashite. Hah-jee-meh-mahsh-teh.

Maya: And how do you say goodbye, for a longer farewell?

Devon: Sayonara. Sah-yoh-nah-rah.

Maya: You just learned to greet Japan in the morning, afternoon, and evening, and introduce yourself. Next lesson, courtesy essentials: the words that make people love you. Konnichiwa, friends, and practice flat!

Devon: Sah-yoh-nah-rah. And remember, flat and even, like a drumbeat.