

Intrepid Travel Language Guides

Japanese Language Guide Script

Yoshiko: Good afternoon Sir, welcome to the New York Grill.

Scott: Hello. Wow, what an amazing view! Is this where Lost in Translation was filmed?

Yoshiko: Yes, in fact we have two cocktails named after the film – the L.I.T and the Sofia, would you like to try one?

Scott: Why not?! I think the Sofia sounds like me!

Yoshiko: Is this your first time in Japan?

Scott: Yes and Tokyo is blowing my mind – it is incredible, fast, furious, huge, it is a true metropolis! I've been lost about a million times already and I've only been here a few days!

Yoshiko: Even Yoshiko:s get lost, our address system is a number system rather than street names and numbers.

Scott: No wonder I can't find anything! But, I have found that I can make a reasonable go of reading out signs and maps.

Yoshiko: That is good, Japanese words are quite easy to pronounce as you say all the vowels and consonants. What are you hoping to see while you are in Tokyo?

Scott: Well, there are a few key things on the top of my list – but first I need to learn a few Yoshiko: phrases. Whenever I get to a new country I try to do this. I don't suppose you would like to help me out?

Yoshiko: Well, it is a quiet afternoon and my supervisor is not around, I can help you until other customers come in. My name is Yoshiko, in Japanese you say watashi wa yoshiko des. What is your name , onamae wa?

Scott: Fantastic - thank you! watashi wa Scott des.
I've heard lots of people say moshi moshi is this a common greeting?

Yoshiko: Hai - yes, it means hello, but it is only used on the phone. Depending on what time of day it is you can also say Good Morning ohayo gozaimas, Hello | Good Afternoon kon-nichiwa or Good Evening which is konbanwa.

Scott: So I can pretty much get by with kon-nichiwa for hello plus good afternoon and sayonara for goodbye?

Yoshiko: Hai, that is right, but you must always be respectful. Japanese society is very hierarchical and status is very important. You must show respect to someone of higher status than you.

Scott: Is that why bowing is so important?

Yoshiko: Yes, in Japan we don't shake hands, we bow. You must always bow lower than someone of a higher status than you, like an older person or a teacher.

Scott: I'm so used to sticking my hand out for a handshake, I can just see myself doing that then remembering to bow and ending up with a weird arm out bowing disaster!

Yoshiko: Don't worry, Japanese people know our language and culture are complex so as long as you show people respect you will be forgiven for making mistakes.

Scott: Ok, so on the respect and politeness front how do I say 'sorry', 'excuse me', 'please' and 'thank you'?

Yoshiko: These will help you – sumimasen is a magic word that could cover all these four meanings depending on the context and the tone of voice. Other useful words are onegai shimas for please when you order something, and aligato for thank you.

Scott: So, sumimasen onegai shimas, and thank you aligato.

Yoshiko: Hai

Scott: How do I say ok and no?

Yoshiko: Japanese don't really like to say no – saving face is very important and not being able to help someone means you lose face. You will find that Japanese won't say no outright, but if you watch their facial expressions and body language you will be able to figure out what they mean. But, for the record ok is iides yo and no is kekko des.

Scott: iides yo and kekko des

Yoshiko: Can I get you another drink?

Scott: Well, I'm pretty sure the Sofia took care of a large portion of my daily drink budget – but I'm enjoying the lesson so how about a soft drink now and maybe a sake a bit later.

Yoshiko: Of course, coke?

Scott: Yes please, rather onegai shimas. Hey, I've heard a lot about Harajuku and not just because of Gwen Stefani, I thought I'd go over there tomorrow and check it out. How do I say 'which way to'?

Yoshiko: Harajuku is lots of fun, the girls are funny to watch and enjoy having their photos taken – they call themselves CosPlay Girls. Harajuku is where all the young

funky people hang out and there are some quite wild shops there! To ask ‘which way to’ say dochira des ka and “where is” say doko des ka .

Scott: So, which way to is dochira des ka and where is doko des ka. Speaking of wild, I’ve heard you can get just about anything from vending machines here in Tokyo – the weirdest things I heard were beer, rice, toilet paper, porn, live lobsters and weirdest of all ... schoolgirl panties.

Yoshiko: Hai, Tokyo has the most vending machines of any city in the world, and you can buy just about anything including the things you mentioned. The panties caused quite an outrage and the men who started it were arrested. It is quite sad really. You will see vending machines everywhere you go and I have even heard that some tourists come here just to see them!

Scott: Now that is almost as sad as the panties!

Yoshiko: Where are you staying?

Scott: Well, I am actually treating myself and staying here for a night or two but it is too expensive for me to stay here for long – how do I say that – ‘too expensive’?

Yoshiko: Too expensive is takasugilu

Scott: Ok takasugilu. Anyway, while I’m out exploring I’m also looking for a cheaper place to stay. How do I say ‘have you a room’, ‘how much’ and ‘may I see it’?

Yoshiko: ‘Have you a room’ is oheya aitemas ka ‘How much’ is ikula deska and ‘may I see it’ is milemas ka .

Scott: oheya aitemas ka | ikula deska | milemas ka

Yoshiko: The cheapest accommodation in Tokyo are Capsule Hotels – you will get a small capsule with a tv, shared bathroom and a locker, if you are here for a bit longer you could also look into an apartment or for a totally unique experience you could try Temple Lodging, some Buddhist temples offer this like Mount Koya.

Scott: A capsule hotel seems like an interesting experience and so does a Temple Stay – I think I’ll try both of these and also maybe find an apartment as I am here for a few weeks. If I need to book a room for just one night how do I say things like ‘yesterday’, ‘today’, ‘tomorrow’ and ‘now’

Yoshiko: ‘today’ is kyo, ‘tomorrow’ is ashita, and ‘now’ is ima.

Scott: kyo, ashita and ima. Hey what if I don’t like something – how do I say ‘I don’t like this room’ or ‘I like this room’.

Yoshiko: You would say kono heya sukidewa alimasen for ‘I don’t like this room’, and kono heya suki des for ‘I like this room’.

Scott: Kono heya sukidewa alimasen | kono heya suki des. So I could say something like kono lesson suki des for I like this lesson?

Yoshiko: Hai.

Scott: Now, not just to work out what kind of enormous tip I have to leave you, but because I think I'm going to need it – can you teach me how to count to ten?

Yoshiko: Yes, you will need to tip, oh I mean learn to count! ichi ni san shi go lok shichi hachi kyu jyu

Scott: Wow – that was fast –how do I say ‘please speak more slowly’

Yoshiko: Hai, sorry, it was a little joke. You say yukkuli hanashite kudasai. And the numbers are ichi ni san shi go lok shichi hachi kyu jyu .

Scott: ichi ni san shi go lok shichi hachi kyu jyu

Yoshiko: Also, regarding money - did you know that ATM machines close at 9pm?

Scott: 9pm – not 24 hours!?! Gee, I'm glad you told me, I could have got caught very short!

Yoshiko: Have you been walking around or getting the train?

Scott: So far walking, but I will need to brave the other transport options soon enough, how do I say bus, train, taxi and boat?

Yoshiko: Bus is bas, train is densha, taxi is tak-shi and boat is booto. But remember that the trains stop after midnight and taxi's are very expensive.

Scott: So, home before midnight on the bas, densha, tak-shi and booto. Oh, I know, what about ticket?

Yoshiko: Ticket is kippu. Can I get you another drink or something to eat?

Scott: Ah Yoshiko, you are very attentive, how do I say ‘you are the most beautiful woman in the room’

Yoshiko: I am the only woman in the room!

Scott: Are you?! I hadn't noticed! And yes, a sake would be great thank you!

Yoshiko: In Japan we call sake nihon shu – sake just means an alcoholic drink. I will get you a Yoshiko: brew.

Scott: nihon shu thank you. Although Japanese are harmonious and respectful and I probably won't need to use these, just in case can you tell me how to say ‘stop thief’, ‘police’ and ‘don't shoot’

Yoshiko: I think you've been reading too much manga! ‘Stop thief’ is doloboo! ‘police’ is keisatsu and ‘don't shoot’ utsu na.

Scott: Ok, I agree that I'm looking at worst-case scenarios – but what about 'doctor' and 'hospital' what if I get sick?

Yoshiko: I hope you are insured! 'Doctor' is oisya san and 'hospital' is byoin

Scott: Happily, I'm completely covered. Now I've got one last translation I need – I get this everywhere I go as you just never know what might happen. So, can you translate 'Those drugs aren't mine'

Yoshiko: You will need more than insurance if you are caught with drugs – you say watashi no dolaggu dewa alimasen

Scott: So, watashi no dolaggu dewa arimasen

Yoshiko: Scott, I'm glad that was your last request as I can see some customers coming and will have to get back to work now.

Scott: Yoshiko, the pleasure has been all mine, I think I will stay and enjoy the views and my nihonshu for a little longer.

Yoshiko: Sayonara Scott

Scott: Sayonara Yoshiko – for now!