An Anime Fan's Guide to Learning Japanese

Why You Should Learn Japanese

Reasons You Might Want to Learn Japanese

- To get by when visiting Japan.

- To better understand Japanese culture.

- To make new friends.

- To watch anime without subtitles.

- To live and work in Japan.

- To work in translation.

- To improve your brain and help prevent dementia in later life.

PART II
Why Learning Japanese is Easier than You Might Think

Unless you think it's really easy

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Reasons People Think Japanese is Hard to Learn

- Three writing systems with thousands of characters.

- The grammar structure is totally different to English.

- Several levels of formality

Reasons Japanese isn't as hard to learn as you might think

- The writing systems make more sense when you understand the rules behind them.

- Japanese has a limited range of sounds and none are difficult for English speakers to pronounce.

- Many of the grammar rules are actually simper than English

PART III
The Building Blocks of Japanese

Hiragana
ひらがな

Hiragana

- The ABCs of Japanese

- 51 phonetic characters

- Each character represents a single sound

- Organised in blocks of five

- Learning hiragana should be one of the first things you do

How to learn hiragana

- Believe in the me that believes in you!

- Download a hiragana chart and put it somewhere you will see it often. http://www.textfugu.com/resources/hiragana-chart/

- Study three to five new characters a day

- Drill the characters you have studied whenever you get the chance

- Use a flash card app such as Memrise

Katakana
カタカナ

Katakana

- Represent the same set of sounds as hiragana

- Mostly used to sound out foreign loan words

- Similar to upper and lower case in English

- Also used for emphasis and onomatopoeia

- Hiragana and Katakana together are referred to as kana

How to learn katakana

- Repeat the same methods you used to learn hiragana.

- Learn to write your own name.

- Practise writing English words in katakana.

Vocabulary & Grammar
単語と文法

Vocabulary & Grammar

- Japanese grammar is very different to English

- Trying to literally translate sentences leads to awkward results

- Expose yourself to as much natural Japanese as possible to develop an ear for what it should sound like

Vocabulary & Grammar

- If you're self studying then audio lessons and podcasts are your friend.

- Beginner text books are a good source of basic Japanese and usually come with audio CDs. They're usually quite wooden though.

- Tae Kim's Grammar Guide http://www.guidetojapanese.org/learn/ is an excellent overview of sentence structure.

- Many people like Japanese Pod 101.

Kanji
漢字

Kanji

- Pictographic characters adapted from Chinese.

- Used to represent the meaning of words.

- 2,136 "daily use" characters required for basic adult literacy!

- Words can be made up of a single kanji, compounds containing two kanji, or combinations of kanji and hiragana.

Kanji

- Kanji are made up of "radicals", smaller components that make up a bigger picture.

- Radicals have their own meanings, when combined they represent the meaning of a character, often in an abstract way.

- Some kanji only contain a single radical and often share a meaning with that radical.

Learning Kanji

- Japanese children learn kanji by constant repetition. This is slow.

- They learn characters with simpler meanings first, not simpler characters.

- Many Japanese classes will teach kanji in this order, not expecting you to learn them.

- There are better ways to learn kanji.

Learning Kanji

- Study the radicals as well as the characters.

- Learn characters roughly in order of written complexity.

- Practise hand writing but don't mindlessly repeat the same character.

- When you learn new words try to learn how they are written at the same time.

- Focus on learning key words for a character over learning all of its readings.

- Used spaced repetition to recall characters just as you are about to forget them.
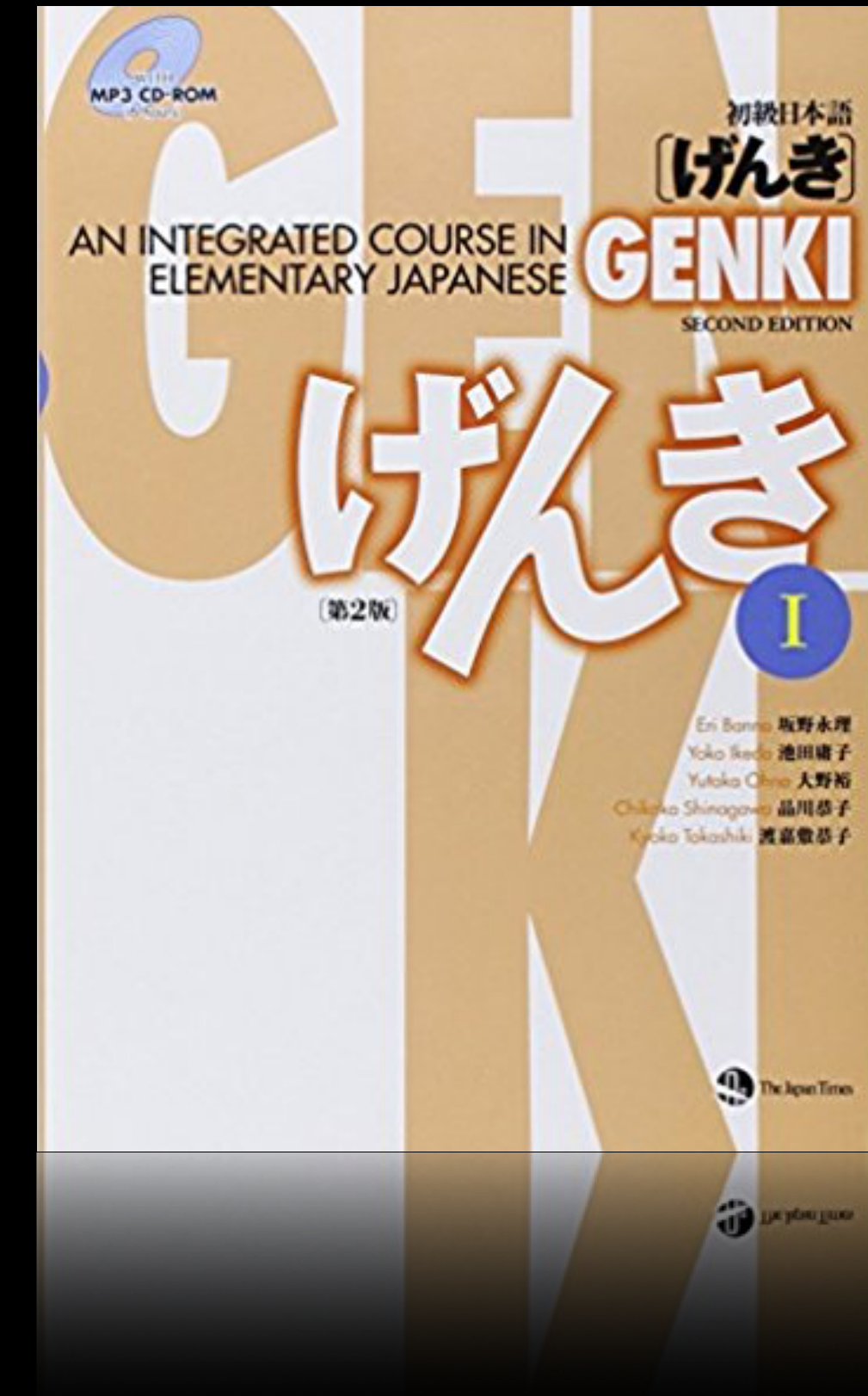
Levels of Formality

Learning Japanese from Anime

PART V

Useful Resources

Beginner Textbooks

- Genki and Japanese for Busy People are two of the best known.

- If you take a class they will probably follow one of these books.

- They are okay when you know nothing but you should aim to move on to other materials.

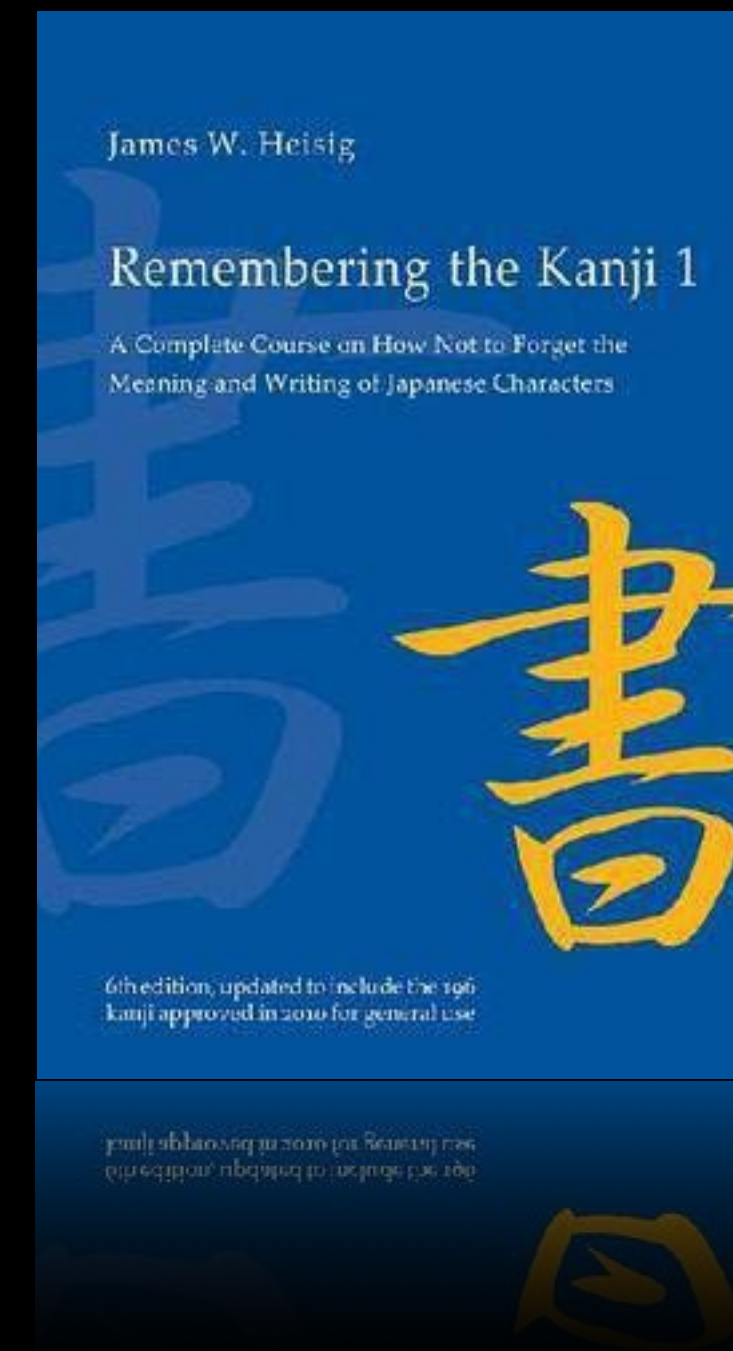- Make sure you don't use a romaji textbook.

TextFugu

- Online Japanese textbook specifically designed for self-study.

- Focuses on motivation and study techniques as well as content.

- The first few chapters are available to read for free but afterwards there's a subscription.
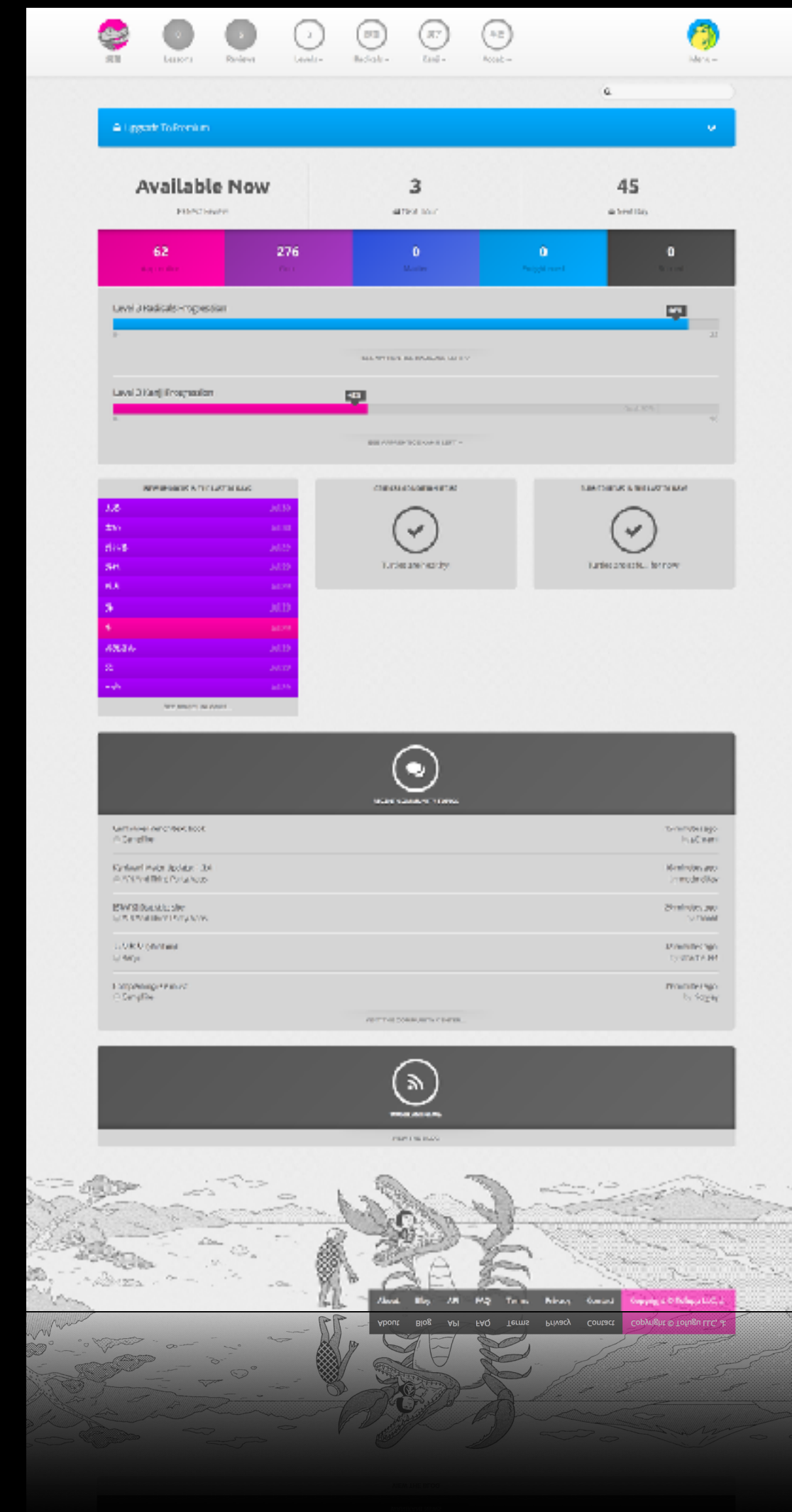
Remembering the Kanji

- Guides you through all of the radicals.

- Uses stories as mnemonic devices to recall kanji.

- Assigns a single keyword to each kanji.

- Doesn't tackle readings or vocabulary.

WaniKani

- Web app using a similar methodology to Remembering the Kanji.

- Contains radicals, kanji and vocabulary.

- Tackles meanings and readings

- Splits kanji into 50 levels (plus 10 bonus levels).

- Uses spaced repetition to quiz you at timed intervals.

- Free up to level 3, paid afterwards.

Thank You for Coming
ありがとうございました

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