

# Japanese Counter Words

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese\\_counter\\_word](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_counter_word)

In Japanese, counter words or counters (*josūshi*) (助数詞) are used along with numbers to count things, actions, and events.

In Japanese, as in Chinese and Korean, numerals cannot quantify nouns by themselves (except, in certain cases, for the numbers from one to ten; see below). For example, to express the idea "two dogs" in Japanese one must say *inu nihiki* (犬二匹), literally "dog two-small-animal"). Here *inu* 犬 means "dog", *ni* 二 is the number 2, and *hiki* 匹 is the counter for small animals. The counters are not independent words and always appear with a number before them.

Counter words are similar in function to the word "sheet" in "two sheets of paper" or "cup" in "two cups of coffee", but in Japanese, (almost) all nouns require a counter. In this sense, all Japanese nouns are mass nouns. This grammatical feature can result in situations where one is unable to express the number of a particular object in a grammatically correct way because one does not know, or cannot remember, the appropriate counting word. The problem is partially solved for the numbers from one to ten by using the traditional numbers (see below) which can be used to quantify some nouns by themselves. For example, "four apples" is *ringo yonko* (りんご四個) where *ko* (個) is the counter, but can also be expressed using the traditional numeral four as *ringo yottsu* (りんご四つ). These traditional numerals cannot be used to count all nouns however; some, including people and animals, require the proper counter.

Counters can also be intentionally misused for humorous, sarcastic, or insulting effects. For example, one might say 男一匹なのに (Otoko ippliki nano ni; "I am only one man..."). Using the counter *hiki* (匹), the counter for small animals, humorously suggests that the person is overpowered by massive obstacles.

Some of the more common counters may be used instead of less common ones. For example, 匹 *hiki* (see below) is often used for all animals, regardless of size. However, many speakers will correct themselves and use the traditionally "correct" counter, 頭 *tō*, when speaking of horses, for example.

Just as in English, different counters for the same thing can be used to convey different meanings. In English, one can say one loaf of bread or one slice of bread, and the referent is different. In Japanese, the same effect is made by saying パン一斤 *pan ikkin*, literally "bread one-loaf" versus パン一枚 *pan ichimai*, literally "bread one-flat piece".

## Table of traditional numerals

Table of Traditional Numerals			
Numeral	Japanese	Pronunciation (Rōmaji)	Pronunciation (Hiragana)
1	一つ	hitotsu	ひとつ
2	二つ	futatsu	ふたつ
3	三つ	mittsu	みっつ
4	四つ	yottsu	よっつ
5	五つ	itsutsu	いつつ
6	六つ	muttsu	むっつ
7	七つ	nanatsu	ななつ
8	八つ	yattsu	やっつ
9	九つ	kokonotsu	ここのつ
10	十	tō	とお
20	二十	hatachi (used for age)	はたち

## List of Japanese Counters

This list also includes some counters and usages that are rarely used or not widely known.

List of Japanese Counters		
Pronunciation	Japanese	Use
ba	場	Scene of a play
ban	晩	Nights (see also: ya)
ban	番	Sports matches
bi	尾	Small fish and shrimps (used in the fish trade; most people say <i>hiki</i> instead)
bu	部	Copies of a magazine or a newspaper
bun	文	Sentences
byō	秒	Seconds
chaku	着	Suits of clothing (see also: <i>mai</i> )
chō	挺	Guns, sticks of ink, palanquins, rickshaws, violins
chō	丁	Tools, scissors, saws, trousers, pistols, cakes of <i>tofu</i> , town blocks
chō	町	Town blocks
dai	代	Generations, periods, reigns
dai	台	Cars, bicycles, machines, mechanical devices, household appliances
danraku	段落	Paragraphs
do/tabi	度	Occurrences, number of times (see also: <i>kai</i> ).
fuku, puku	服	Bowls of <i>matcha</i> (powdered green tea); packets or doses of powdered medicine
fuku, puku	幅	Hanging scrolls ( <i>kakejiku</i> )
fun, pun	分	Minutes
furi	振	Swords

<i>gatsu/tsuki</i>	月	Months of the year. Month-long periods when read <i>tsuki</i> (see also: <i>kagetsu</i> )
<i>go</i>	語	Words
<i>gon/koto</i>	言	Words
<i>gu</i>	具	Suits of armour, sets of furniture
<i>gyō</i>	行	Lines of text
<i>haku</i>	泊	Nights of a stay
<i>hai</i>	杯	Cups and glasses of drink, spoonfuls, cuttlefish, octopuses, crabs, squid, abalone, boats (slang)
<i>hai</i>	敗	Losses (sports bouts)
<i>hari</i>	張	Umbrellas, parasols, tents
<i>hashira</i>	柱	Gods, memorial tablets
<i>hatsu, patsu</i>	発	Gunshots, bullets, aerial fireworks
<i>heya</i>	部屋	Rooms
<i>hiki, piki</i>	匹	Small animals, insects, fish, reptiles, amphibians
<i>hin, pin</i>	品	Parts of a meal, courses (see also: <i>shina</i> )
<i>ho, po</i>	歩	Number of (foot)steps
<i>hon, pon, bon</i>	本	Long, thin objects: rivers, roads, ties, pencils, bottles, guitars; also, metaphorically, telephone calls, movies (see also: <i>tsūwa</i> ). Although 本 also means "book", the counter for books is <i>satsu</i> .
<i>ji</i>	字	Letters, Kanji, Kana
<i>ji</i>	兒	Children. As in "father of two (children)", etc.
<i>ji</i>	時	Hours of the day
<i>jikan</i>	時間	Hour-long periods
<i>jō</i>	畳	<i>Tatami</i> mats. The Kanji 畳 is also read <i>tatami</i> and is the same one used for the mats. The room size of a <i>washitsu</i> in Japan is given as a number of mats, for example 4½ <i>jō</i>
<i>ka</i>	架	Frames

<i>kabu</i>	株	Stocks; nursery trees
<i>kagetsu</i>	ヶ月、箇月	Month-long periods (see also: <i>gatsu</i> ). 箇 is normally abbreviated using a small Katakana ケ in modern Japanese.
		Alternatively 個, Hiragana か, small Katakana カ and full-size Katakana 力 & ケ can also be seen, but only か is frequent.
<i>kakoku</i>	ヶ国、箇国	Countries
<i>kakokugo</i>	ヶ国語、箇国語	(National) languages
<i>kaku</i>	画	Strokes in Kanji
<i>kai</i>	回	Occurrences, number of times (see also: <i>do</i> )
<i>kai</i>	階	Number of floors, stories
<i>kan</i>	貫	Pieces of <i>nigiri-zushi</i>
<i>kan</i>	艦	Warships
<i>ken</i>	件	Abstract matters and cases
<i>ken</i>	軒	Houses
<i>ki</i>	機	Aircraft, machines
<i>ki</i>	基	Graves, wreaths, CPUs, reactors, elevators, dams
<i>kire</i>	切れ	Slices (of bread, cake, <i>sashimi</i> etc.)
<i>ko</i>	個、箇、个 or ケ	General measure word, used when there is no specific counter. 個 is also used for military units.
<i>ko</i>	戸	Houses (戸 means "door")
<i>kō</i>	校	Schools
<i>kō</i>	稿	Drafts of a manuscript
<i>koma</i>	齣、コマ	Frames, panels. 齣 is virtually not used nowadays.
<i>ku</i>	区	Sections, city districts
<i>ku</i>	句	<i>Haiku, senryū</i>
<i>kuchi</i>	口	(Bank) accounts, donations (口 means "opening" or "entrance")

<i>kumi</i>	組	Groups, a pair of people (twins, a husband and a wife, dancers, etc.)
<i>kerasu</i>	クラス	School classes
<i>kyaku</i>	脚	Desks, chairs, long-stemmed glasses
<i>kyaku</i>	客	Pairs of cup and saucer
<i>kyoku</i>	曲	Pieces of music
<i>kyoku</i>	局	Board game matches (chess, <i>Igo</i> , <i>Shogi</i> , <i>Mahjong</i> ); radio stations, television stations
<i>mai</i>	枚	Thin, flat objects, sheets of paper, photographs, plates(dishware), articles of clothing (see also: <i>chaku</i> )
<i>maki</i>	巻	Rolls, scrolls
<i>maku</i>	幕	Theatrical acts
<i>mei</i>	名	People (polite) (名 means "name")
<i>men</i>	面	Mirrors, boards for board games (chess, <i>Igo</i> , <i>Shogi</i> ), stages of computer games, walls of a room, tennis courts,
<i>mon</i>	門	Cannons
<i>mon</i>	問	Questions
<i>nen</i>	年	Years, school years (grades); not years of age
<i>nichi</i>	日	Days of the month (but see table of exceptions below)
<i>nin</i>	人	People (but see table of exceptions below)
<i>ninmae</i>	人前	Food portions (without exceptions, unlike <i>nin</i> above)
<i>pēji</i>	ページ、頁	Pages
<i>rin</i>	輪	Wheels, Flowers
<i>ryō</i>	両	Railway cars
<i>sai</i>	才 or 歳	Years of age
<i>sao</i>	棹	Chests of drawers, flags
<i>satsu</i>	冊	Books

<i>seki</i>	席	Seats, <i>Rakugo</i> shows, (drinking) parties
<i>seki</i>	隻	Ships
<i>shina</i>	品	Parts of a meal, courses (see also: <i>hin</i> )
<i>sha</i>	社	used for businesses, i.e. 会社 ( <i>gaisha</i> )
<i>shō</i>	勝	Wins (sports bouts)
<i>shu</i>	首	<i>Tankas</i> (small Japanese poems)
<i>shū</i>	週	Weeks
<i>shurui/shu</i>	種類 or 種	Various types of things
<i>soku</i>	足	Pairs of footwear, pairs of socks, stockings, and <i>tabis</i> .
<i>tai</i>	体	Images, person's remains
<i>tawara</i>	俵	Bags of rice
<i>teki</i>	滴	Drops of liquid
<i>ten</i>	点	Points, dots
<i>tō</i>	頭	Large animals, cattle, elephants (頭 means "head")
<i>tsū</i>	通	Letters
<i>tsūwa</i>	通話	Telephone calls (see also: <i>hon</i> )
<i>toki</i>	時	Time periods, a sixth of either day or night (in the traditional, obsolete way of telling time). See also: <i>jikan</i>
<i>tsubo</i>	坪	Commonly used unit of area equal to 3.3 square metres.
<i>wa</i>	羽	Birds, rabbits* (because of their ears); 羽 means "feather" or "wing".
<i>wa</i>	把	Bundles
<i>ya</i>	夜	Nights (see also: <i>ban</i> )
<i>zen</i>	膳	Pairs of chopsticks; bowls of rice

## Exceptions

\*Japanese Buddhist monks weren't allowed to eat any meat other than birds, but they liked rabbit meat so much that they came up with contrived evidence that rabbits are actually birds, their ears being like unusable wings. Nowadays *hiki* is the usual counter.

The traditional numbers are used by and for young children to give their ages, instead of the usual age counter *sai*.

Some counters, notably *nichi* 日 and *nin* 人, use the traditional numerals for some small numbers, usually one through three; exceptional cases for these counters are given in the table below.

Others include 月、言、品 and 度 and are usually restricted to certain phrases.

*Futatabi* (two times, another time), although normally written 再び instead of 二度, is very common though.

Counters beginning with *h~* (including *fu~*) undergo (almost) regular changes in sound, when preceded by the numerals 1, 3, 6, 8, and 10. The table below illustrates the process for *hon* 本 but the same changes apply to *fun* 分, *hai* 杯, *hiki* 匹 etc.

Exceptions				
Numeral	<i>nichi</i> 日	<i>nin</i> 人	<i>hon</i> 本	<i>kai</i> 階
1	<i>tsuitachi</i> *	<i>hitori</i>	<i>ippou</i>	<i>ikkai</i>
2	<i>futsuka</i>	<i>futari</i>		
3	<i>mikka</i>		<i>sanbon</i>	<i>sangai</i>
4	<i>yokka</i>	<i>yonin</i> ***		
5	<i>itsuka</i>			
6	<i>muika</i>		<i>roppon</i>	
7	<i>nanoka</i>	<i>shichinin</i>		
8	<i>yōka</i>		<i>happon</i>	
9	<i>kokonoka</i>			
10	<i>tōka</i>		<i>juppon/jippon</i> **	<i>jukkai/jikkai</i> **
14	<i>jūyokka</i>			
20	<i>hatsuka</i>			
24	<i>nijūyokka</i>			

\*When counting the number of days rather than days of the month, *ichinichi* is used. But *ippi* is also heard.

\*\**Jū* is replaced by either *ju-* or *ji-* (じゅっ/じっ) followed by a doubled consonant before the voiceless consonants (i.e., /t k s/); furthermore, *p* is used instead of *h*, as noted above. *Ji-* is the older form, but it has been replaced by *ju-* in spoken language by young generations.

\*\*\*In remote rural areas (ie. Northern Honshu and Eastern Hokkaido) older speakers might use *yottari*.

Note that 三階 ("third floor") can be read either *sankai* or *sangai*, while 三回 ("three times") can only be read *sankai*.

## Ordinal numbers

In general, the counter words mentioned above are cardinal numbers and in that sense, they indicate a quantity. To transform a counter word into an ordinal number that

denotes a position in a sequence, *me* (目) is added to the end of the counter. Thus "one time" would be translated as *ikkai* (一回), whereas "the first time" would be translated as *ikkai me* (一日目).

This rule is inconsistent, however, as counters without the *me* suffix are often used interchangeably with cardinal and ordinal meanings. For example, *sankai* (三階) can mean both "three floors" and "third floor".

## Period of time

To express a period of time one may add *kan* (間) to the following words:

*byō* 秒, *fun* 分, *ji* 時, *nichi* 日 (and its irregular readings aside from *tsuitachi*), *shū* 週, *kagetsu* 簡月 and *nen* 年. Usage varies depending on the word.

For example, omitting *kan* in the case of *jikan* 時間 would be a mistake, whereas *shūkan* and *shū* are both frequently used. What's more, *kagetsukan* is rarely heard due to being essentially superfluous, the *ka* already expressing the length.

# Tableau des Hiragana et Katakana

あア a	いイ i	うウ u	えエ e	おオ o	やヤ ya	ゅュ yu	よヨ yo
かカ ka	きキ ki	くク ku	けケ ke	こコ ko	きゃキャ kya	きゅキュ kyu	きょキョ kyo
さサ sa	しシ shi	すス su	せセ se	そソ so	しゃシャ sha	しゅシュ shu	しょショ sho
たタ ta	ちチ chi	つツ tsu	てテ te	とト to	ちゃチャ cha	ちゅチュ chu	ちょチョ cho
なナ na	にニ ni	ぬヌ nu	ねネ ne	のノ no	にゃニャ nya	にゅニュ nyu	によニヨ nyo
はハ ha	ひヒ hi	ふフ fu	へヘ he	ほホ ho	ひゃヒャ hya	ひゅヒュ hyu	ひょヒヨ hyo
まマ ma	みミ mi	むム mu	めメ me	もモ mo	みゃミャ mya	みゅミュ myu	みょミヨ myo
やヤ ya		ゅュ yu		よヨ yo			
らラ ra	りリ ri	るル ru	れレ re	ろロ ro	りゃりャ rya	りゅりゅ ryu	りょりょ ryo
わワ wa				をヲ o			
んン n							
がガ ga	ぎギ gi	ぐグ gu	げゲ ge	ごゴ go	ぎゃギャ gya	ぎゅギュ gyu	ぎょギョ gyo
ざザ za	じジ ji	ずズ zu	ぜゼ ze	ぞゾ zo	じゃじゃ ja	じゅじゅ ju	じょじょ jo
だダ da	ぢヂ ji	づゞ zu	でデ de	どド do			
ばバ ba	びビ bi	ぶブ bu	べベ be	ぼボ bo	びゃビャ bya	びゅビュ byu	びょビヨ byo
ぱパ pa	ぴピ pi	ぷプ pu	ペペ pe	ぽボ po	ぴゃビャ pya	ぴゅビュ pyu	ぴょビヨ pyo