

How Long Does it Take to Learn Japanese?

We know that there may be exceptional learners out there who can learn languages quickly. These people make time, set a deadline and focus all their efforts on studying to that deadline.

First, let's just talk about "adult fluency". It takes the average American 12 years in school to be considered an educated adult in English. This traditional educational module then requires an additional 2-4 years for college learning or working via on the job training to master a specialty, both professional skill as well as terminology, to function at optimum ability in a field.

In the United States alone, there are many people from many nations who all speak varying levels of English. Therefore, another way to look at this idea could be to consider time learning English. Observingly, it takes the average foreign adult studying with limited English language skills approximately one or two full years, studying English everyday (9 a.m. -- 3 p.m.) to master English as a Second Language. Broken down that means the non-American is studying 200-400 instructional hours to be functional enough to enter a local university. Typically, after college acceptance and paying 2-3 times the Indiana resident, the foreign adult student will usually still need to take ESL English as well as use an electronic dictionary throughout their years of study. Statistically, the majority of English as New Language learners are usually single and only responsible for language studying in school. Most of these international students by U.S. law and agreements with their home countries are unable to have any work distractions. This means their focus is usually on studies alone.

Another way to think about learning Japanese would be to preface the idea by contemplating the length of time it would take for you to learn any well-taught traditional art or sport that has been imported from Japan to date. Nationally, the martial arts industry recognizes that it takes the average student two to four years (depending on frequency/week) of studying in a disciplined learning system for 2-4 hours per week to master the intricacies to EARN a black belt in karate from a REPUTABLE school.

So why is it that Americans always want to learn Japanese in less time than it takes foreigners to learn English or Americans to learn traditional arts? Add to this that most students do not have only one responsibility of language learning. Most Japanese students are working professionals, with family responsibilities (however they define that) and other social or friend related activities. Schedules are busy, so the student cannot focus only on studying the Japanese language outside of class.

In truth, every student is different. Some learn fast, while others learn slower. Generally, experience teaching at KC has more than proven that developing social fluency in Japanese requires at least six (6) months instruction and practice. And when we define social fluency, we mean for the student has become fluent in daily functional or culturally appropriate Japanese.

Additionally, skill development is truly related to a student's motivation level, support structure, instructional hours and time management skill. Students can learn a language as fast as personal learning styles and efforts allow. However, all students need to set realistic, initial expectations.



Check back with us next month as well be discussing Japanese fluency in the next article. Sensei Says features responses to questions from visitor questions to our website. Have a Japan related question? Contact us!