

## LESSON NOTES

# Survival Phrases S2 #7

## I Don't Understand.

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# 7

## KANJI

1. すみません。
2. 分かりません。
3. 日本語は分かりません。

## KANA

1. すみません。
2. わかりません。
3. にほんごはわかりません。

## ROMANIZATION

1. Sumimasen.
2. Wakarimasen.
3. Nihongo wa wakarimasen.

## ENGLISH

1. Excuse me.
2. I don't understand.

CONT'D OVER

3. I don't understand Japanese.

## VOCABULARY

Kanji	Kana	Romaji	English
すみません。	すみません。	Sumimasen.	Excuse me. I'm sorry.
分かりません。	わかりません。	Wakarimasen.	I don't understand.
日本語	にほんご	Nihon-go	Japanese
日本語は分かりませ ん。	にほんごはわかりま せん。	Nihongo wa wakarimasen.	I don't understand Japanese.
スペイン語	すぺいんご	Supein-go	Spanish

## SAMPLE SENTENCES

すみません、ゆっくりお願いします。 <i>Sumimasen, Yukkuri onegai shimasu.</i> Excuse me, could you say that slowly please?	この日本語がわかりません。 <i>Kono nihongo wa wakarimasen.</i> I don't understand what this Japanese means.
日本語を話します。 <i>Nihongo wo hanashimasu.</i> I speak Japanese.	スペイン語のガイドありますか。 <i>Supein-go no gaido arimasu ka.</i> Do you have a Spanish information guide?

## GRAMMAR

### Language Tip

In Japanese, "Excuse me" is *Sumimasen*. You can use this phrase to apologize, to get someone's attention, or both. You can simultaneously apologize for the fact you don't understand and interrupt the person who might still be talking.

The phrase "I don't understand" is *Wakarimasen*. Putting the two together, you say,

*Sumimasen. Wakarimasen.* The dictionary form of the verb "to understand" or "to know" is *wakaru*. *Wakarimasen* is the polite way of expressing the negative. So *wakarimasen* means, "don't understand." In Japanese, you don't always have to specify the subject of the sentence. In this case, if you say *Wakarimasen*, it's obvious that you don't understand, so you don't need to identify the subject.

Let's build on this and say, "I don't understand Japanese." That would be *Nihongo wa wakarimasen*. The first word *Nihongo* means, "Japanese language." Typically, to say the name of a language, you say the country name - "Japan" is *nihon* - and add the syllable *go*, which stands for "language." Together it's *Nihongo*. The Spanish language would be *Supeingo*.



## CULTURAL INSIGHT

### **Sachiko's Secret: Most Japanese Understand English**

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#### **Tip #1**

Today, Sachiko reveals a truth about Japanese people you'll be relieved to hear. Most Japanese adults - unless they're over seventy and were forbidden to study English in school during World War II - have had three to ten years of English language education. (Three years in junior high, three years in senior high, and four years in college for some.) At the least, most Japanese can understand written English. It may be difficult for them to understand your

speech and answer you, but if you write a message in English, they can usually make sense of it.

If you are lost and cannot make yourself understood, just write "Where is Shibuya station?" on a scrap of paper and show it to people. Usually, they'll be able to point you in the right direction. Adults (particularly in metropolitan areas) are quite likely to read English well enough to help you.

### **Tip #2**

Try talking to children, too. Some children speak English well because many young parents send their children to private English conversation schools in an effort to make them bilingual. In upcoming lessons, you will learn how to say, "Can you speak English?" and "Can you say it again?"