

日本語

JAPANESE FOR SOCIAL LIFE

Cold Approach Breakers

日本語 ・ 声をかける

Real ways to walk up and start something — honest, situational, and playful. None of it works over a phone; all of it needs the person in front of you.

LESSON 5 OF 6

1 Just Say It 直球

The most disarming thing you can do is be honest. “Can I talk to you for a sec?” — said with a smile — beats any clever line. You don't need a reason to walk over; you are the reason.

JAPANESE	SOUNDS LIKE	ENGLISH	NOTE
すみません、話しかけてもいいですか？	<i>sumimasen, hanashikakete mo ii desu ka?</i>	Excuse me, can I talk to you?	The honest, direct open
すみません <i>sumimasen</i> excuse me 話しかけても <i>hanashikakete mo</i> even if (I) speak to you いいですか <i>ii desu ka</i> is it okay?			
ちょっと気になって	<i>chotto ki ni natte</i>	You caught my eye	Lit. “I got curious”
ちょっと <i>chotto</i> a little 気になって <i>ki ni natte</i> got curious			
言うか迷ったんですけど	<i>iu ka mayotta n desu kedo</i>	I almost didn't say anything	Disarming honesty
言うか <i>iu ka</i> whether to say 迷った <i>mayotta</i> hesitated んです <i>n desu</i> (explaining) けど <i>kedo</i> but			
笑顔が素敵ですね	<i>egao ga suteki desu ne</i>	You have a lovely smile	A real compliment
笑顔 <i>egao</i> smile が <i>ga</i> (subject)素敵 <i>suteki</i> lovely です <i>desu</i> is ね <i>ne</i> isn't it			
ナンパとかじゃなくて	<i>nanpa toka ja nakute</i>	I'm not hitting on you, but...	Playful — you kind of are
ナンパ <i>nanpa</i> hitting on とか <i>toka</i> or such じゃなくて <i>ja nakute</i> it's not, but			
一分だけいいですか？	<i>ippun dake ii desu ka?</i>	Got a minute?	Low-pressure ask
一分 <i>ippun</i> one minute だけ <i>dake</i> just いいですか <i>ii desu ka</i> is it okay?			
…です。お名前は？	<i>... desu. onamae wa?</i>	I'm ..., and you?	Trade names early
… ... (your name) です <i>desu</i> is お名前 <i>onamae</i> name は <i>wa</i> (topic)			

CONFIDENCE IS THE LINE

The words barely matter — how you say them does. Relaxed shoulders, a real smile, an unhurried voice. Say your opener like you already expect it to go well.

2 Read the Room その場で

Look around — the room hands you an opener for free. The drink in their hand, the song playing, how packed it is. Notice one thing out loud and you've already started talking.

JAPANESE	SOUNDS LIKE	ENGLISH	NOTE
ここ、いい感じですね	<i>koko, ii kanji desu ne</i>	Nice place, right?	A shared observation
ここ <i>koko</i> here いい <i>ii</i> good 感じ <i>kanji</i> feel/vibe です <i>desu</i> is ね <i>ne</i> isn't it			
いつも混んでますか?	<i>itsumo kondemasu ka?</i>	Is it always this busy?	
いつも <i>itsumo</i> always 混んでます <i>kondemasu</i> is crowded か <i>ka</i> (question)			
何飲んでるんですか?	<i>nani nonderu n desu ka?</i>	What are you drinking?	Light and curious
何 <i>nani</i> what 飲んでる <i>nonderu</i> drinking なんです <i>n desu</i> (explaining) か <i>ka</i> (question)			
それ美味しそう、何ですか?	<i>sore oishisou, nan desu ka?</i>	That looks good — what is it?	Point at their dish
それ <i>sore</i> that 美味しそう <i>oishisou</i> looks tasty 何 <i>nan</i> what です <i>desu</i> is か <i>ka</i> (question)			
いい曲ですね	<i>ii kyoku desu ne</i>	Good music, huh	
いい <i>ii</i> good 曲 <i>kyoku</i> song/track です <i>desu</i> is ね <i>ne</i> isn't it			
ここ初めてですか?	<i>koko hajimete desu ka?</i>	First time here?	
ここ <i>koko</i> here 初めて <i>hajimete</i> first time です <i>desu</i> is か <i>ka</i> (question)			
よく来るんですか?	<i>yoku kuru n desu ka?</i>	Do you come here often?	
よく <i>yoku</i> often 来る <i>kuru</i> come なんです <i>n desu</i> (explaining) か <i>ka</i> (question)			

3 By the Venue 場面別

Every place has its own natural way in. A bar has a drink, a queue has the wait, a bookshop has the book. Use what's already in front of you both and the approach feels obvious, not random.

JAPANESE	SOUNDS LIKE	ENGLISH	NOTE
一杯おごらせてください	<i>ippai ogorasete kudasai</i>	Let me buy you a drink	At a bar
一杯 <i>ippai</i> one drink おごらせて <i>ogorasete</i> let (me) treat ください <i>kudasai</i> please			
ここ、空いてますか?	<i>koko, aitemasu ka?</i>	Is this seat free?	Café or bar
ここ <i>koko</i> here 空いてます <i>aitemasu</i> is free/open か <i>ka</i> (question)			
すごい行列ですね	<i>sugoi gyouretsu desu ne</i>	This line is crazy	In a queue
すごい <i>sugoi</i> amazing/huge 行列 <i>gyouretsu</i> queue です <i>desu</i> is ね <i>ne</i> isn't it			
その本、面白いですか?	<i>sono hon, omoshiroi desu ka?</i>	Is that book any good?	Bookshop
その <i>sono</i> that 本 <i>hon</i> book 面白い <i>omoshiroi</i> interesting です <i>desu</i> is か <i>ka</i> (question)			
これ、使ってますか?	<i>kore, tsukattemasu ka?</i>	Are you using this?	At the gym
これ <i>kore</i> this 使ってます <i>tsukattemasu</i> are using か <i>ka</i> (question)			
みんなとどういう知り合い?	<i>minna to dou iu shiriai?</i>	How do you know everyone?	At a party
みんな <i>minna</i> everyone と <i>to</i> with どういう <i>dou iu</i> what kind of 知り合い <i>shiriai</i> acquaintance			
隣、いいですか?	<i>tonari, ii desu ka?</i>	Mind if I sit here?	
隣 <i>tonari</i> next to (you) いいですか <i>ii desu ka</i> is it okay?			

LET THE PLACE DO THE WORK

You don't need a clever line — you need the thing that's already in front of both of you. Name it, ask about it, react warmly to the answer. A room you share becomes a conversation.

4 Make Them Smile 軽く

A little playfulness lowers the stakes for both of you. Tease lightly, make a tiny bet, claim you two “match” — give them something fun to push back on, not just a question to answer.

JAPANESE	SOUNDS LIKE	ENGLISH	NOTE
ちょっと教えてほしいんですけど	<i>chotto oshiete hoshii n desu kedo</i>	You've got to settle something	Pulls them in
ちょっと <i>chotto</i> a little 教えて <i>oshiete</i> tell (me) ほしい <i>hoshii</i> want (you to) なんです <i>n desu</i> (explaining) けど <i>kedo</i> but			
絶対モテますよね	<i>zettai motemasu yo ne</i>	You must be popular, huh	Teasing compliment
絶対 <i>zettai</i> definitely モテます <i>motemasu</i> are popular よね <i>yo ne</i> right?			
趣味いいですね、お揃いだ	<i>shumi ii desu ne, osoroi da</i>	Good taste — we match	Find a tiny thing in common
趣味 <i>shumi</i> taste いい <i>ii</i> good です <i>desu</i> is ね <i>ne</i> isn't it お揃い <i>osoroi</i> matching だ <i>da</i> (it) is			
案内してくれませんか？	<i>annai shite kuremasen?</i>	Show me around?	Playful and bold
案内して <i>annai shite</i> guide (me) くれません <i>kuremasen</i> won't you?			
正直、ここっておすすめ？	<i>shoujiki, koko tte osusume?</i>	Honestly — is this place worth it?	Casts them as the expert
正直 <i>shoujiki</i> honestly ここ <i>koko</i> here って <i>tte</i> (topic) おすすめ <i>osusume</i> recommended?			
話しかけないと後悔しそう	<i>hanashikakenai to koukai shisou de</i>	I'd regret not saying hi	Charming and true
話しかけないと <i>hanashikakenai to</i> if (I) don't speak 後悔 <i>koukai</i> regret しそう <i>shisou de</i> seems likely, so			
あなたも地元じゃないでしょ？	<i>anata mo jimoto ja nai desho?</i>	You're not local either, right?	
あなた <i>anata</i> you も <i>mo</i> too/either 地元 <i>jimoto</i> local じゃない <i>ja nai</i> not でしょ <i>desho</i> right?			

5 Keep It Going 続ける

You got the opener out — now don't let the silence land. Have one easy follow-up ready: their name, where they're from, a soft invite. Curiosity is what keeps it alive.

JAPANESE	SOUNDS LIKE	ENGLISH	NOTE
お名前は？	<i>onamae wa?</i>	Your name?	
お名前 <i>onamae</i> name は <i>wa</i> (topic)			
この辺の人ですか？	<i>kono hen no hito desu ka?</i>	Are you from around here?	
この <i>kono</i> this 辺 <i>hen</i> area の <i>no</i> (of) 人 <i>hito</i> person です <i>desu</i> is か <i>ka</i> (question)			
お仕事は何を？	<i>oshigoto wa nani wo?</i>	What do you do?	
お仕事 <i>oshigoto</i> work/job は <i>wa</i> (topic) 何 <i>nani</i> what を <i>wo</i> (object)			
このあと予定ありますか？	<i>kono ato yotei arimasu?</i>	Got plans after this?	Soft test for time together
この <i>kono</i> this あと <i>ato</i> after 予定 <i>yotei</i> plans あります <i>arimasu</i> have?			
今度コーヒーでもどう？	<i>kondo koohii demo dou?</i>	Coffee sometime?	The light invite
今度 <i>kondo</i> sometime コーヒー <i>koohii</i> coffee でも <i>demo</i> or something どう <i>dou</i> how about?			
LINE交換しません？	<i>LINE koukan shimasen?</i>	Swap LINE?	The exchange
LINE <i>LINE</i> LINE (app) 交換 <i>koukan</i> exchange しません <i>shimasen</i> won't (we)?			
また会いたいな	<i>mata aitai na</i>	I'd love to see you again	
また <i>mata</i> again 会いたい <i>aitai</i> want to meet な <i>na</i> (wishful)			

YOU

すみません、話しかけてもいいですか？

sumimasen, hanashikakete mo ii desu ka?

Excuse me, can I say hi?

HER

あ、はい。どうぞ。

a, hai. douzo.

Oh, sure. Go ahead.

YOU

ここ、いい感じですね。よく来るんですか？

koko, ii kanji desu ne. yoku kuru n desu ka?

Nice place. Do you come here often?

HER

たまにね。

tama ni ne.

Sometimes.

YOU

じゃあ、今度コーヒーでもどう？

jaa, kondo koohii demo dou?

Then — coffee sometime?

★ One-Breath Openers ひとこと

When nerves hit, short wins. Each of these is two or three words — impossible to fumble. Say it, smile, and let their reply carry the rest.

JAPANESE	SOUNDS LIKE	ENGLISH	WHEN TO DROP IT
すみません!	<i>sumimasen!</i>	Excuse me!	The all-purpose tap on the shoulder
ちょっといいですか?	<i>chotto ii desu ka?</i>	Got a sec?	Softens whatever comes next
ちょっと <i>chotto</i> a little いいですか <i>ii desu ka</i> is it okay?			
一杯どうですか?	<i>ippai dou desu ka?</i>	Drink?	At a bar, with a smile
一杯 <i>ippai</i> one drink どうですか <i>dou desu ka</i> how about?			
ここ、空いてますか?	<i>koko, aitemasu ka?</i>	Seat free?	At a bar or café
ここ <i>koko</i> here 空いてます <i>aitemasu</i> is free/open か <i>ka</i> (question)			
いい店ですね	<i>ii mise desu ne</i>	Nice place, huh	A shared observation
いい <i>ii</i> nice 店 <i>mise</i> shop/place です <i>desu</i> is ね <i>ne</i> isn't it			
おすすめは?	<i>osusume wa?</i>	Any tips?	Casts them as the local expert
おすすめ <i>osusume</i> recommendation は <i>wa</i> (topic)			

DELIVERY BEATS VOCABULARY

A two-word question with a relaxed smile lands better than a perfect sentence said nervously. Keep your shoulders down and your tone light.

Japanese for Social Life · Lesson 5 — Cold Approach Breakers · Walk over, say one true thing, smile. The rest takes care of itself.