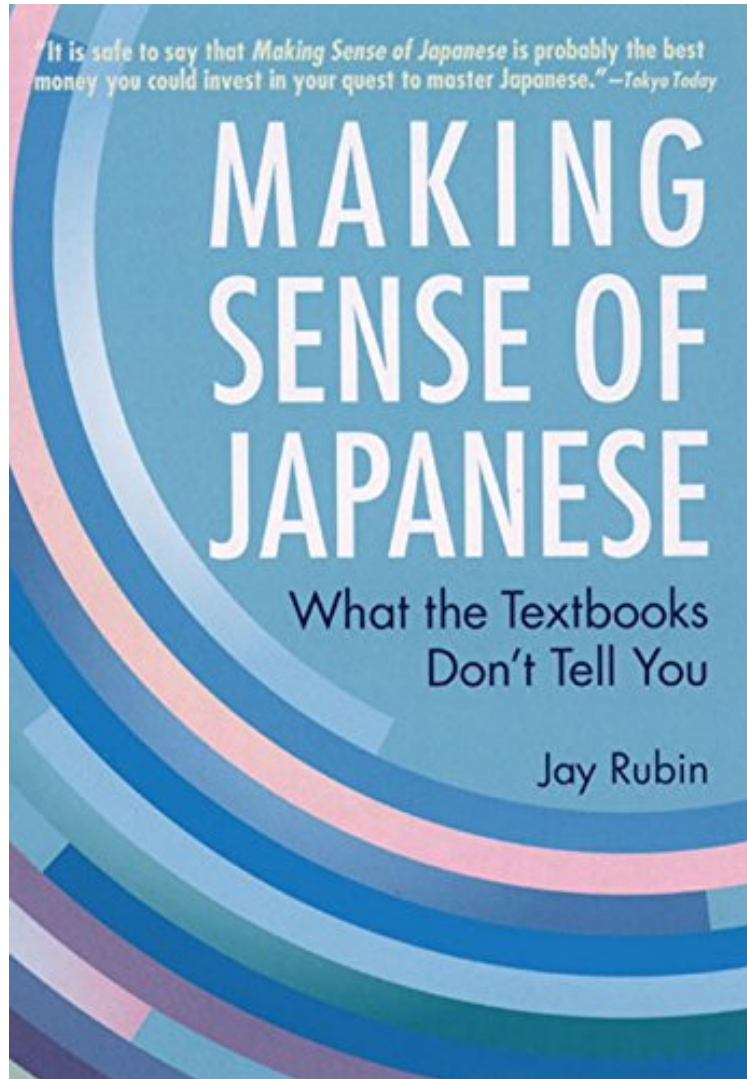


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Making Sense of Japanese: What the Textbooks Don't Tell You

Jay Rubin

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Jay Rubin : Making Sense of Japanese: What the Textbooks Don't Tell You before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Making Sense of Japanese: What the Textbooks Don't Tell You:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Studying Japanese? Buy this book!By Paul F.I started studying Japanese a decade ago. I never really put a lot of time into studying the language, and that made it very difficult to grasp certain concepts. This book makes those concepts much clearer (though I'm still confused about the positive use of hodo). I would say it's helpful no matter what your level is. Obviously certain examples will not be understood early

on, but it's a very nice reference to have once you do get to the necessary level. This is by far my best read for any language book. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. slim, clever, and very helpful. By CustomerCleverly written, and makes a number of things I had puzzled about a lot clearer (such as the habit of plunking "ndesu" at the end of everything). I found it extremely helpful, but I think it would probably be comprehensible (hence helpful) only if the reader has already invested some considerable time in studying Japanese. Give it a try; it takes on some of the eternally knotty issues such as the vanishing subject, the different verbs for "give", and several others we've all stumbled over. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Amazing so far. By E So far I've been loving this book, some concepts are a little above my Japanese level (I'm sort of a JLPT N4), but I'm learning a lot and comprehending a little about the culture, which is very important to understand a language.

Making Sense of Japanese is the fruit of one foolhardy American's thirty-year struggle to learn and teach the Language of the Infinite. Previously known as *Gone Fishin'*, this book has brought Jay Rubin more feedback than any of his literary translations or scholarly tomes, "even if," he says, "you discount the hate mail from spin-casters and the stray gill-netter." To convey his conviction that "the Japanese language is not vague," Rubin has dared to explain how some of the most challenging Japanese grammatical forms work in terms of everyday English. Reached recently at a recuperative center in the hills north of Kyoto, Rubin declared, "I'm still pretty sure that Japanese is not vague. Or at least, it's not as vague as it used to be. Probably." The notorious "subjectless sentence" of Japanese comes under close scrutiny in Part One. A sentence can't be a sentence without a subject, so even in cases where the subject seems to be lost or hiding, the author provides the tools to help you find it. Some attention is paid as well to the rest of the sentence, known technically to grammarians as "the rest of the sentence." Part Two tackles a number of expressions that have baffled students of Japanese over the decades, and concludes with Rubin's patented technique of analyzing upside-down Japanese sentences right-side up, which, he claims, is "far more restful" than the traditional way, inside-out. "The scholar," according to the great Japanese novelist Soseki Natsume, is "one who specializes in making the comprehensible incomprehensible." Despite his best scholarly efforts, Rubin seems to have done just the opposite. Previously published in the Power Japanese series under the same title and originally as *Gone Fishin'* in the same series.

"It is safe to say that Making Sense of Japanese is probably the best money you could invest in your quest to master Japanese." *Tokyo Today* "Brief, wittily written essays that gamely attempt to explain some of the more frustrating hurdles [of Japanese].... They can be read and enjoyed by students at any level." *Asahi Evening News* About the Author JAY RUBIN is a professor of Japanese literature at Harvard University, where he has employed the pedagogical techniques contained in *Making Sense of Japanese* "as infrequently as possible." He has authored *Injurious to Public Morals: Writers and the Meiji State* and *Haruki Murakami and the Music of Words*, edited *Modern Japanese Writers*, and translated Soseki Natsume's *Sanshiro* and *The Miner* and Haruki Murakami's *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, *Norwegian Wood*, and *After the Quake* (Knopf and Harvill, 2002). Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. [Following is a self-contained section from the book, minus the original macrons.] Fiddlers Three = Three Fiddlers? Old King Cole called for "his fiddlers three" mainly because they rhymed with "soul was he." If questions of rhyme and meter hadn't entered into the picture, he could just as well have called for "his three fiddlers," who, we know from the "his," were a unit of some sort. If we wanted to keep them as a unit in Japanese, however, we couldn't be quite so indifferent about word order. Old King Koroku would have *Sannin no baiorin-hiki o yobiyoseta* rather than *Baiorin-hiki o sannin yobiyoseta*. The second version would mean "He called for three fiddlers," three chosen at random rather than the self-contained string band he was used to. The normal place to put counters is after the noun in question, where it functions as an adverb telling to what extent the verb is to be performed. *Enpitsu o sanbon kudasai* means "Please give me three pencils"--any three pencils out of a larger supply. *Sanbon no enpitsu*, with the counter now modifying the noun itself, means "Please give me the three pencils." Kurosawa's movie about a group of "seven samurai" is called *Shichinin no samurai*. If someone singlehandedly killed that famous group, he would have *Shichinin no samurai o koroshita*, but if, in his wanderings, he happened to kill seven guys who were samurai, he would have *Samurai o shichinin koroshita*. Ito Sei had far less dramatic doings in mind when he wrote: *Watashi-tachi ikko shichinin no Nihon-jin wa, asa hayaku Tashikento o ta[ttā] / "Our seven-member Japanese group left Tashkent early in the morning."*