

Judo Japanese Vocabulary

Numbers

Japanese use different words for counting different types of things. Judo practices use the same numbers that the Japanese military does for exercises. Some of the words for numbers used in a different context, like judo belt ranks, are different than the ones used for exercises. These alternatives are provided in parenthesis.

ichi	one
ni	two
san	three
shi (yon)	four
go	five
roku	six
shichi (nana)	seven
hachi	eight
ku (kyu)	nine
ju	ten
ju-ichi	eleven
ju-ni	twelve
niju	twenty
hachiju-roku	eighty-six

Judo Basics

Jigoro Kano	founder of judo
seiryoku zenyo	maximum efficiency with minimal effort (first principal of judo)
jita kyoei	mutual benefit and welfare (second principal of judo)
dojo	training place
judoka	person who studies judo
sensei	teacher
sempai	higher-ranked student
kohai	lower-ranked student
-dan (<i>suffix</i>)	major (black-belt) rank
yudansha	black belt judoka
-kyu (<i>suffix</i>)	minor (white-belt) rank
mudansha	white belt judoka

Judo Class

joseki / shomen	place of honor (front wall of dojo)
tatami	mat
judogi	judo uniform
uwagi	judo jacket
zubon	judo pants
obi	belt
eri	lapel (of jacket)
seiza	kneeling
kiotsuke	attention

rei	bow
ritsurei	standing bow
zarei	kneeling bow
hajime	begin
matte	stop
sore-made	finished, time is up
tori	judoka performing a technique
uke	judoka receiving a technique
ukemi	fall
zempo kaiten ukemi	forward rolling fall
onagai-shimasu	please (work with me)
kudasai	please (do something)
domo arigato	thanks (for the practice)
arigato gozaimasu	thank you (more polite)
domo arigato gozaimasu	thank you very much (formal)
gomen nasai	sorry

Body Parts

tai	body
te	hand
ashi	foot
koshi (goshi)	hip
kata	shoulder
ude	forearm
kote	wrist
hiza	knee
momo	thigh
ashikubi	ankle
kibisu	heel
mune	chest
atama	head
kubi	neck
ago	chin

Technique

waza	technique
tachi-waza	standing technique
katame-waza	holding technique
ne-waza	ground technique
nage-waza	throwing technique
osaekomi-waza	pinning technique
shime-waza	choking technique
kansetsu-waza	joint lock technique
tokui-waza	favorite technique
renshu	practice
uchikomi	fitting in practice
keiko	trading techniques

randori	free practice
kata	form practice
zanshin	awareness
kamae	posture
maai	engagement distance
ki	spirit or vital energy
kiai	spirit shout
tai sabaki	body movement
kuzushi	unbalancing
tsukuri	fitting in
take	completion
kumi kata	gripping
ai-yotsu	similar grip (that is, right to right or left to left)
kenka-yotsu	opposing grip (that is left to right or right to left)
tsurite	lifting hand (sometimes called the power hand)
hikite	pulling hand
tsuri-komi	lifting/pulling action
mawari	turning
otoshi	drop
gaeshi (kaeshi)	reversal
sukashi	counter
sutemi	sacrifice
renraku	combination
gatame / katame	hold, or holding technique
shizentai	natural posture
jigotai	defensive posture
suriashi	walking on the balls of the feet
ayumi-ashi	alternate steps
tsugi-ashi	trailing foot steps
hidari	left
migi	right
kami	upper
mae	front
ushiro	back
yoko	side
soto	outside
uchi	inside
ura	upside-down
kuzure	modified (position)
ko- (<i>prefix</i>)	small
o- (<i>prefix</i>)	big
gari	sweep or reap
shiho	four corners
ebi	shrimp (a form of escape in newaza)

Tournaments

shiai	competition
ippon	full point (victory)
wazaari	half point
yuko	minor score
shido	minor penalty
hansoku-make	major penalty (disqualification)
osaekomi	pin
toketa	pin is broken
sonomama	freeze (i.e., do not move)
hikiwake	tie
hantei	decision
yoshi	continue
maitta	"I give up" (submission)
ippon gachi	victory by ippon
yusei gachi	victory by judges' decision
kiken gachi	victory by withdrawal / injury
sogo gachi	compound victory by points plus penalties

Pronouncing Japanese Words

The Japanese language is phonetically structured, so pronouncing words is often simpler than in English. Also, unlike many other languages, no syllable is accented: each syllable in Japanese gets the same intonation (see below). Use the following guidelines to help find the correct pronunciation:

- Each syllable in a Japanese word is one of the following:
 1. a vowel on it's own: a / e / i / o / u
 2. A consonant followed by a vowel (e.g., "ni")
 3. The syllabic "n" (e.g., "dan" is "da"- "n")
- All syllables have the same emphasis, no accent (e.g., "gatame" is "ga"- "ta"- "me", **not** "GA"- "ta"- me" / "ga"- "TA"- "me")
- Vowels always have the same pronunciation:
 1. a => "aa", like "hah"
 2. e => "eh", like "day"
 3. i => "ee", like "fee"
 4. o => "oh", like "hoe"
 5. u => "oo", like "you"

There are no diphthongs, each vowel is pronounced independently.
(e.g., "shiai" is pronounced "shi"- "a"- "i")

- A double vowel has twice the length, but is unbroken: "oo" is "o-"
- A double consonant represents pause before the syllable (e.g., "maitta" is "ma"- "i"- (pause)- "ta")
- A "i" or "u" after a soft consonant at the end of a word is typically devoiced.

Examples:

"ichi" => "each"

"kuzushi" => "ku"- "zu"- "sh_"

"masu" => "mas"

"gari" => "gah"- "ree"

"kubi" => "koo"- "bee"