

Promoting Multilingual Support for Sightseeing Destinations around Japan

Writing and Style Manual

English for

Sightseeing Destinations around Japan

Japan Tourism Agency

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Introduction

This manual is a guide for writers and editors in preparing English-language texts for signage, websites, audio guides, and printed materials about sightseeing destinations in Japan. A visitor who enjoys the experience of learning about Japanese culture, history, nature, and food may want to come to Japan again or may recommend Japan to friends.

Clear language that is easy to understand will enable visitors to appreciate each spot's unique appeal. At present, however, descriptions often do not successfully engage visitors' interest. This guide is intended to make the work of writing and editing easier by answering questions about style, tone, and the technical aspects of the texts. Writers and editors can then focus on the preparation of lively, engaging descriptions.

Part 1, "How to Produce English Texts for Sightseeing Destinations," and Part 2, "General Writing Guidelines," outline ways to design, develop, and write effective texts for international visitors and provide practical advice at each step. Part 3, "Style Guidelines," was prepared for this project. There, you will find rules for spelling, capitalization, hyphenation, formatting, and so on. These rules reflect professional standards of English editing in general and, specifically, the experience of editors working in English-language publishing about Japan over the past 50 years. We believe these are reliable rules for writing about sites throughout the country.

This manual builds on the content of existing guidelines and established international editorial publishing practices. Each section covers topics that are relevant to people creating texts for the benefit of international visitors to Japan. Users of this manual should note that it was prepared specifically for the Japan Tourism Agency's "English for Sightseeing Destinations around Japan" project (abbreviated as "project" below). For other purposes, other reference materials and opinions should be considered. This guide will continue to be improved and updated for as long as this project continues.

We hope this manual will be useful for everyone involved in the preparation of information for visitors to Japan from all over the world.

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February 2024

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PART 1: HOW TO PRODUCE ENGLISH TEXTS FOR SIGHTSEEING DESTINATIONS

Important Points

Whatever the language, it is essential that sightseeing destinations communicate their history and background to international visitors in terms that are easily understood. Providing visitors with appropriate information will help them understand and appreciate a destination's cultural heritage. Texts for international visitors prepared under the project must be grammatically and lexically correct, easy to understand, and should add to the audience's intellectual and emotional experience.

The following points are critical when producing texts for international visitors:

1. Understand the differences between Japanese and international visitors in their knowledge and perceptions of Japanese culture, landscape, history, etc.

The direct (unedited) translation of Japanese signage aimed at Japanese readers often does not transmit the desired message. Information that is easily understandable to Japanese with historical and cultural background knowledge may not be so easily grasped by visitors from overseas. Information about a site should be organized according to the interests of overseas visitors and with a view to augmenting their understanding of Japanese history and culture. Existing texts may lack such information, which must be supplied and presented in an appropriate fashion.

2. Understand the interests of overseas visitors and engage their curiosity

Having a proper grasp of what will be interesting and appealing from the perspective of overseas visitors is key to providing engaging information that will be truly useful to the reader.

3. Consider the characteristics of different media

Understand the different purposes, strengths, and weaknesses of each medium and adjust writing styles accordingly (see Part 2 Appendix for Characteristics of Different Media).

Pay attention to readability, visual coherence, and audibility. Use subtitles to break up longer texts, be consistent with paragraphing and indentation, use relatively short sentences, and avoid starting sentences with modifying clauses.

4. Secure the experienced talent needed to produce high-quality texts

Identify and acquire staff with the expertise and experience needed to write, edit, and fact-check texts (using Japanese sources) in the specific style called for by the project (see Part 2, "General Writing Guidelines," for definition). Since the basic sources of

information for this project are in Japanese, either as text or gathered verbally from local experts, the writers should have experience conducting research in Japanese. They should know Japan well from living and working there and have a deep appreciation for its culture and society. Hire staff who are familiar with writing about Japan and with the visual aspects of English text design.

Steps for Producing English Texts

The following table shows the recommended process for producing English texts. Details are provided in the text that follows the table. Through professional collaboration and expertise, this step-by-step process ensures that high-quality texts can be produced efficiently.

Process		Task	Notes
Preparation	Step 1	Assemble a production team.	Appoint experienced staff.
	Step 2	Preliminary consultation - Define the project scope and expected output. - Build cooperative relations with local site committee.	Prioritize target sites. Confirm media selections. Coordinate with local site committee to understand the site as a whole and plan site visits.
Information gathering visit	Step 3	On-site: Grasp the features and attractions of the possible target sites.	Consult local experts introduced by local site committee. Survey the available information on possible target sites.
	Step 4	After the visit: Determine target sites and attractions and establish policy for production process.	Confirm text target sites, topics, messages to be transmitted, and composition of the texts.
Writing and editing	Step 5	Writing (See Part 2 for a detailed explanation of the writing stage)	Read the <i>Writing and Style Manual</i> and follow its rules on writing. Write only information that is based on reliable facts.
	Step 6	Editing Stage 1* Substantive editing: rewrite for clarity and accessibility of information; tighten for concision; check facts and terminology based on editor's own knowledge of Japan and relevant content.	Improve understandability: omit needless words/add necessary words for clarity; ensure objectivity and a fact-centered style; recheck facts by querying writer in a back-and-forth process; query content advisor as necessary.
	Step 7	Polish the Writing and Style.	Produce text that is readable, interesting, and accurate.

*Note: The editor in charge of each set of texts is responsible for the quality of the texts *from the writing stage to final delivery*. Editing will be required at three stages: Steps 6, 12, and 14.

		-Writer revises in accordance with editing, further improves and polishes the writing. -Editor rechecks the writer's cleanup and finalizes for translation and local site check.	Writer and editor collaboration is key.
Preliminary copyediting check (optional)	Step 8	Get preliminary copyediting feedback. Option to request a partial check of texts by the supervisory copyeditor.	- Style of writing appropriate to the project. - Organization and treatment of content appropriate. - Response to specific quandaries.
Translation into Japanese	Step 9	Translate text for the benefit of local stakeholders/reviewers.	(The Japanese may not sound natural to native Japanese speakers, as it is a direct translation of the English.)
First delivery	Step 10	Text draft delivery	
Local site committee check	Step 11	Local site committee reviews and gives feedback.	Local site committee and content advisor ensure factual accuracy and content are fit for local promotion strategy.
Revision and proofreading	Step 12	Editing Stage 2: Text production company resolves issues; shows revised texts to writer.	Revise to solve issues and provide explanations for places that do not need to be changed.
Supervisory copyediting	Step 13	Supervisory copyeditors suggest edits for readability and appeal and edit for errors of grammar, consistency, facts, etc. all in accordance with the <i>Writing and Style Manual</i> .	Rewrite or revise to remedy remaining issues of quality and expression; query dubious passages, excessive detail, and other inappropriate content.
Final stage revision and proofreading	Step 14	Editing Stage 3: Confirm changes, resolve queries, proofread, check format, and clean up files.	Confirm copyeditor changes and resolve queries. Correspond with supervisory copyeditor (Step 13) if needed.
Completion	Step 15	Finalize and format texts	
Final delivery	Step 16	Deliver final texts to local site committee.	See Finalization Checklist (p. 17).

Preparation

STEP 1) Assemble an experienced production team

The text production staff should be knowledgeable about the subject material and about Japanese sightseeing spots and culture in general. They should be proficient in writing in the target language.

Professional	Role	Language Conditions	Other Qualifications
Writer	Select information from the materials and verbal information provided by the site and write original explanatory texts with the traveler’s perspective in mind. Should not simply translate the materials provided into the target language.	Mastery of English as native language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity to read Japanese source materials required. • Conversant in related fields and experienced as a writer. • Experience in promoting Japanese tourist sites for inbound visitors. • Capacity to translate Japanese accurately into English.
Editor	<p>Stage 1: Accompany the writer to the local site and work with the writer to adjust the organization, expression, style, etc., and to polish the text so that it is easy to read, informative, and engaging (Step 6).</p> <p>Stage 2: Adjust texts in response to feedback from the local site committee (Step 11).</p> <p>Stage 3: Review copyediting changes (Step 13), resolve issues, clean up files (Step 14).</p>	Mastery of English as native language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledgeable about Japanese landscape, culture, history, and society. • Capacity to read Japanese source materials required. • Experienced as an editor and conversant in related fields. • Experience in promoting Japanese tourist sites for inbound visitors.
Content Advisor(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides advice on the content of the writing to the writer and editor as an expert with specialized knowledge of the content of the sites treated by the texts. • Checks the texts created by the writer and editor to ensure the accuracy of the content and information presented: checks names of persons, descriptions of places, and glosses of Japanese terms. • If possible, accompanies the writer and editor for the on-site visit in order to ensure an accurate and in-depth grasp of the site. (Multiple content advisors may be assigned.) 	Ability to read and understand English texts and determine their accuracy	Possess specialized knowledge of the target content, as either academic (including independent scholars) or expert (author of books on the subject, local historian, art curator, educator, etc.). However, the field of cultural properties requires a high level of expertise, so selection should be based on actual experience and writing.
Copyeditor	Edits to ensure that texts follow the guidelines explained in the <i>JTA Writing and Style Manual</i> and are readable and engaging. Checks grammatical correctness, technical style, and general sense and accuracy.	Mastery of English as native language	Should be experienced in copyediting to ensure correctness, consistency, accuracy, and completeness.*
Proofreader	Checks final drafts of work done by multiple collaborators to catch errors in spelling, punctuation, missed words, etc.	Mastery of English as native language	Should be an experienced proofreader, familiar with Japan-related material.
Director	Acts as an intermediary between the local site committee and the writers and editors to facilitate effective communication.	Ability to deal with documents and communications in English and Japanese.	Should have a wealth of experience in administrative project management. Will oversee smooth communication between the site and the writers and editors.

*Reference: Editors Canada, *Professional Editorial Standards* (2016). https://www.editors.ca/sites/default/files/pes-2016-formatted-for-web_0.pdf (revised edition forthcoming 2024)

STEP 2) Preliminary consultation

Once the production team has been assembled, arrange a preliminary on-site consultation with the local site committee to discuss arrangements for gathering information. The preliminary consultation allows the opportunity to grasp the target

sites and ascertain the situation (terrain, location, etc.), requirements (fee; registration, etc.), and other conditions overseas visitors will find (e.g., wheelchair accessibility, restroom facilities, difficult or easy trails, etc.). Bringing together the members of the local site committee, the text production company team, and the content advisor facilitates the understanding and awareness needed to prepare multilingual texts. Through such coordinated information gathering, the process of writing and fact-checking should go relatively smoothly.

1. Preparations for preliminary consultation

Peruse pamphlets, booklets, websites, and other materials relating to possible target sites to gain familiarity and knowledge regarding the overall subject matter.

2. Matters to be confirmed

Media Selection

Begin by confirming the media for which the prospective texts will be used, since the content may differ depending upon whether the texts will be used for signs/panels, websites, pamphlets, audio guides, or other purposes (see Characteristics of Different Media [part 2 Appendix]).

Target sites to be prioritized

- Start with destinations international tourists already frequently visit.
- Prioritize sightseeing spots of high cultural value, such as National Treasures and Important Cultural Properties.
- Also prioritize sites and institutions that can provide comprehensive information about tourist attractions in the area, such as visitor centers and scenic viewpoints.
- Major points (such as entrances) as well as those that provide information about suggested routes.

Existing signage or other texts

- Check whether the existing [English] texts are direct translations of Japanese texts aimed at Japanese visitors.
- Check to what degree new English texts must be coordinated with the style and tone of existing [English] texts.
- Check whether there is an existing style manual used at the site.
- Coordinate with existing tourist strategies

Rather than introducing tourist attractions individually, place them in the context of the larger site as a whole.

- Emphasize the viewpoint of the overseas visitor
Help local stakeholders understand how overseas visitors will see their site and what will be of greatest interest to them.

Content advisor

Ascertain the area of specialization and experience of candidates for this role.

Arrangements for the on-site information-gathering visit

- Plan the dates and itinerary of the on-site information-gathering visit.
- Submit the proposed information-gathering itinerary to the local site committee.
- Ask the local site committee for the names of local experts who will explain the target sites.

Information Gathering Visit

STEP 3) Grasp the features and attractions of the destination/site

Gather information on the target sites

- As a rule, writers and editors will visit the target sites in person to collect information.
- Gain an understanding of the cultural value and background of a sightseeing spot. This is necessary to create accurate, informative text.
- Seek assistance from local experts and guides who can provide relevant and up-to-date information about the target sites.

Examples of resource interviewees

Field	Interviewees
Cultural properties	Facility supervisors, temple or shrine staff, curators, researchers, museum directors
Nature and landscape	Park rangers, researchers, local certified guides
Tourism	Facility supervisors, management groups, local certified guides

STEP 4) Determine target sites and attractions

Identify the prospective readers of the texts and decide on the target sites together with the local site committee.

- For targets and attractions suitable for multilingual text preparation:

The text production company will present the local site committee with the preparation policy and suggestions for new texts, taking into account the target sites and attractions observed at the on-site visit and local conditions.

- For sites and attractions to be omitted as targets for new text writing:
The text production company will present clear reasons as to why such sites and attractions are likely to be of little interest to the expected visitors from overseas and should thus be omitted from the proposed texts.

Writing and Editing

STEP 5) Writing

Texts for the sightseeing locations around Japan written under this Project must be written in natural, expository-style prose. They should read smoothly, without causing the reader to pause over difficult-to-understand terms or locutions. They should be organized in a logical, easy-to-follow sequence and use language in an engaging and concise manner.

The content need not be limited to historical, practical, or other background information but should be sure to cover aspects of the site of particular appeal to overseas visitors.

For a detailed explanation of the writing stage, see Part 2.

STEP 6) Editing Stage 1

1. Improving understandability

Editors will check the quality of the texts in terms of writing, information, and media appropriateness; suggest improvements in content, order, and style; and ensure the content is clear and easy to understand.

Tasks

- Logical order of content: Make sure scope is treated from broad to narrow; major content first, minor content later; and in chronological order. Are figures (e.g., distances, measurements), designations, etc., included in appropriate places in the text?
- Length: Select for priority content and condense to include as much content as possible in as few words as possible without sacrificing clarity.
- Sentence structure: Are the sentences straightforward and easy to take in at a glance? Edit long and run-on/complex sentences for smoother reading.

- Make every word count: Tighten the writing by deleting excess or empty words; trim out repetition; flag unnecessary detail; aim for noun- and verb-driven text.
- Is source material reliable? Can it be corroborated by other sources?
- Does the text advance the local community's promotion strategy?
- Are the facts in the text accurate? Are unfamiliar persons, animal and plant species, places, measurements, and terms identified adequately?

See also Step 15 for a checklist of important points for JTA signage texts.

2. Recheck Facts

Getting the facts right is paramount. Be sure to confirm the accuracy of the information and the way it is presented. Do the explanations use terminology appropriate to the subject matter, including the era and context? If there are discrepancies or questions about dates, identification of persons, place names, etc., be sure to consult the content advisor.

STEP 7) Polishing of the Writing and Style

Following the editing process, the writer should revise and polish the texts through careful review and consideration of editorial revisions and comments.

- Make sure the text has a smooth style (is pleasant to read).
- Read out loud to catch unnatural or confusing expressions.
- Double-check data and figures.
- Double-check names.
- Confirm notation of words and phrases (see Style Guidelines).
- Check for typographical errors.

Preliminary copyediting check

STEP 8) Request preliminary copyediting feedback (optional)

It may be desirable to have some or all of the prepared texts checked by the supervisory copyeditors in advance of the translation and local site committee check, especially in cases where the text production company has hired a new writer or editor. The supervisory copyeditor will check the style, offer examples of substantive editing, and comment on the writing and content for reference to guide the further editing of the texts (e.g., opening, readability and flow, organization of content, grammatical accuracy, adherence to Style Guidelines). This feedback is geared toward bringing the writing into compliance with the style and standards of writing desired for JTA signage texts.

Translation into Japanese

STEP 9) Translation into Japanese for the benefit of stakeholders

The texts will be translated into Japanese for the benefit of local committee members who do not read English. Care should be taken to render names and specific terms in accurate Japanese, and any issues with the accuracy of the English should be noted in the process and brought to the writer's attention. Queries from the writer and editor may be added as comments (in Japanese) in the drafts.

First delivery

STEP 10) Text draft delivery

- Text production teams provide prepared texts for showing to the responsible entities at the sites/destinations.
- Files should be in a form amenable to commenting and correcting. Use a plain, Windows/Mac platform-interchangeable page setup without complex styles.

Local site committee check

STEP 11) Local site committee review and feedback

Responsible staff at the local site committee or destination and the content advisor review the drafts to ensure factual accuracy and content-fit relating to local promotion strategy. Methods for feedback from the local site committee and content advisor currently include (1) mark-up using MS Word's comment function and/or (2) use of the JTA fact-check sheet (Excel) itemizing issues to be resolved, explanations, proposed solutions, etc. (Fact-check sheet form may be downloaded from the JTA site.)

Revision

STEP 12) Editing stage 2 (text production company resolution of issues)

The editor reviews the returned texts, works out solutions for points raised, and provides explanations to local entities for points that cannot be changed. Consult with outside supervisory copyeditors as needed to complete the texts.

The text production company editor shows revised texts to the writer for confirmation and further refinements.

Supervisory copyediting

STEP 13) Supervisory copyediting and review

Supervisory copyeditors will review texts to check for adherence to the prescribed style, readability, tone, and content and will mark grammatical errors, consistency issues, etc. Texts that clearly fall short of the writing standards for the project may be returned to the text production company for proper editing.

Final stage revision

STEP 14) Editing stage 3 (confirmation of changes, resolution of queries, proofreading, format check, cleanup of files)

Texts are returned to the text production team, where the editor should confirm the accepted changes, add further refinements, address any remaining comments from the copyeditors, check paragraphing, and clean up the files for final use.

Note: “Clean up” means resolving all queries and removing all comments; making sure there are no doubled spaces or other traces of revision in the file; checking correct use of hyphens and en dashes; formatting paragraphs to suit the media of each text, etc.

Completion

STEP 15) Finalization of texts

Place texts into required formats for submission.

Finalization checklist for review prior to submission:

- 1. Are the opening lines of each text engaging, tightly written, and informative?
- 2. Does the text read naturally and flow logically so the reader can easily follow the information?
- 3. Are unfamiliar Japanese words included judiciously? Their usage should be limited to key terms that will enhance or facilitate a first-time visitor’s experience of the destination.
- 4. Is the text written for a general, non-academic reader? Is it pleasing to read?
- 5. Is the tone objective and suitably formal, avoiding colloquialisms and “boasting” or promotional expressions?
- 6. Is the vocabulary plain and accessible to non-native readers of English?
- 7. Have facts been checked (including singular/plural distinctions, cardinal directions, identifications of figures and things mentioned, etc.)?
- 8. Have expressions that sound like translation been thoroughly edited?
- 9. Is the style consistently appropriate for its intended media (web, pamphlet, etc.)?
- 10. Are any remaining passive constructions, subordinating clause constructions, or ambiguous phrasings really necessary?

Naturally, your texts should follow the stipulations in the *Writing and Style Manual* as much as your particular situation allows. Strive to keep the writing consistent, clear, concise, and accurate.

PART 2: GENERAL WRITING GUIDELINES

(*corresponds to Step 5 in “Steps for Producing English Texts”)

Texts for this Project should be written in a plain but lively expository style, conveying information that the reader is most likely to find interesting and useful, and presenting it in a clear and concise manner. The tone and style of writing should be suitable to the medium. See Guidelines for Each Medium (below) and Part 2 Appendix for the Characteristics of Different Media. For questions about technical questions, refer to the Style Guidelines (Part 3).

Form a Clear Mental Image of the Target Reader

- Confirm the identity of this target visitor with the local site committee/representatives of the destination.
- Remember that the reader may not be a native English speaker.
- Write about subjects that are likely to appeal to that target visitor. Put yourself in the visitor's shoes. What would *you* find interesting? Research the target site for information in addition to that obtained in the on-site interview.

Convey Information Clearly and Concisely

Avoid the colloquial, chatty, or promotional style that is often used for advertising purposes in the tourist and travel industry. These texts are expected to be used for some time and to be consumed by a broad audience in terms of age, cultural background, and level of interest. They are being prepared under the auspices of the Japan Tourism Agency, a government body.

Basic Writing Style

Write in a lively but plain expository style. Make every word count. Prefer the active voice. Avoid overly complex sentences to make the language easy for a non-native English audience to read and for a translator to parse into another language. Avoid subjective language, cliched expressions, and sweeping generalizations.

Plain, Expository and Engaging Style

- Use plain language: prefer simple, well-known words even if more difficult words are more “accurate” in a technical sense.

Rather than: These tiny fish are **endemic** to the Okinawan islands.

Prefer: These tiny fish are **native** to the Okinawan islands.

- Strive for objectivity, avoiding emotive and value-driven expressions. Avoid descriptions that inject subjective sentiment.

Rather than: The sight is so **beautiful** that in 1990, the park’s cherry trees were selected as one of the “100 Best Spots for Cherry Blossoms.”

Prefer: The park is one of Japan’s “100 Best Spots for Cherry Blossoms.”

Rather than: The Mizuki Shigeru Museum is well-produced, with **pleasant** surprises at every turn.

Prefer: The Mizuki Shigeru Museum honors the spirit and career of the artist with exhibits that inform as well as surprise.

Register and Level of Formality

- Texts produced in this project are prepared under the auspices of a Japanese government agency. The writing should be in a formal register but engaging in tone, readable but not oversimplified, and informative but not promotional.
- Avoid using colloquial expressions (“X place boasts . . .,” “head for,” “the get-go,” “a hit with,” “X showcases Y,” etc.) and contractions, as they may be difficult for international readers of English.
- Watch out for overused words (actually, incredible, worthwhile, etc.) or clichés (is home to; a stone’s throw away, etc.).
- Be careful of “othering” expressions (e.g., “the Japanese,” “locals”).
- Be careful with verbs attached to inanimate objects, and do not attribute actions that only humans can do to things such as buildings and landmarks. For example, a shrine or temple can “house” or “enshrine” an object but cannot “venerate” one. Similarly, a religious center cannot “practice” a fusion of Shinto and Buddhism. Other anthropomorphisms to avoid include attributing the production of something to a method (...the only method capable of producing X).
- Avoid the use of the second person. See Part 3, “Precautions and Preferred Forms,” for details.
- “Visitors”: Avoid constructions such as “visitors can...” and “visitors may....” Exceptions are cases where instructions or warnings need to be communicated.
- Be careful with third-person pronouns. Note that although there is a movement toward gender-neutral pronouns, the use of “they” for the singular third-person remains controversial.
- Avoid sweeping generalizations, such as “Everyone loves fireworks, and the annual display at Miyajima is no exception.”

Structure and Syntax

- The opening paragraph should capture interest and draw the reader in. Spend time composing sentences in which every word counts in portraying the site vividly.
- Use natural English grammatical constructions and be sure to avoid structures that make the text sound like a translation from Japanese.
- Avoid leading with a modifying clause. The example below also illustrates some of the other points above:

Rather than: “Not previously known as a sightseeing spot, Omiya became a hit with visitors with the opening of Omiya Park in 1885.”

Prefer: Omiya became a popular sightseeing spot when Omiya Park opened in 1885.

Identifying Unfamiliar Names and Terms

- Use of Japanese words in the texts should be sparing. Only include them when an English term is insufficient or the terms are needed for enjoyment or understanding of the site. See also under “Romanization of Japanese” in Part 3 below.

Before: In fact, the town was originally known as “Seki no Jizo Juku,” with “Jizo” as part of its name. The name “Seki” comes from the Suzuka Barrier (Suzuka no Seki), the fortified checkpoint at Nishi no Oiwake that was one of three barriers erected during the Nara period (710–794) to protect the region.

After: The name “Seki” comes from the Suzuka Barrier (Suzuka no Seki), the fortified checkpoint at the west end of town that was one of three barriers erected during the Nara period (710–794) to protect the region around the imperial capital.

Before: In the eighth century, China’s Tang dynasty (618–907) was one of the most prominent political and cultural centers in Asia. Between 630 and 894, Japan sent 19 envoy ships called *kentoshi bune* to China for purposes of diplomacy, research, and trade. . . . For centuries, these envoys (*kentoshi*) returned bearing goods and ideas that profoundly impacted life in Japan.

After: In the eighth century, China’s Tang dynasty (618–907) was one of the most prominent political and cultural centers in Asia. Between 630 and 894, Japan sent 19 envoy ships to China for purposes of diplomacy, research, and trade. . . . For centuries, these envoys returned bearing goods and ideas that profoundly impacted life in Japan.

- When using a Japanese word or name, make sure to include information that will help the visitor to understand it.

hot-spring inn (*onsen ryokan*)

leading Western-style painter Kuroda Seiki (1866–1924)

Waseda, the prestigious university founded in 1882, . . .

- Watch out for “false-friend” loan words. Some *wasei eigo* examples: *tarento* (TV personality), *baiku* (motorbike), *handoru* (steering wheel), and *yoran* (tropical orchid, or “species of orchid developed in Europe,” not “Western orchid”).
- Consider using a “descriptive gloss” (e.g., *hanagatsuo* bonito flakes) to help the reader understand something specific to Japan. Use glosses found in authoritative references such as JAANUS, *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*, etc.
- When a historical person is mentioned, give their birth and death dates in parentheses and provide brief identifying information, if not otherwise explained.
Examples:
Honda Seiroku (1866–1952), park and forestry expert
poet Matsuo Basho (1644–1694)
- If the meaning of a Japanese proper noun is expressed in romanized Japanese, be sure the context clarifies it.
Example: “Sango Yuntaku-Kan Visitor Center supports the preservation of coral reefs.”

Mind the Context

Keep in mind that the standard gloss for a Japanese term or concept may not be appropriate for all cases.

Examples:

Omiyage would not be called “souvenirs” in the case of food items, as the concept of a “souvenir” is something durable and lasting.

Referring to a deity such as Kannon or Jizo as a bodhisattva of “mercy” is inappropriate as it holds connotations of Christianity. Instead, “compassion” is the better option.

Guidelines for Each Medium

Signage

- Use indented paragraphs (without an open line between paragraphs).
- The first line under a heading or after an open space should be flush left.

- Remember that the visitor will read this at the location.
- Include cultural and historical facts as well as relevant background information.
- Draw the visitor's attention to important things nearby.
- Write first about the building, statue, etc. that is right in front of the visitor. Then discuss its setting. Then add information about surrounding buildings or related sights.
- Avoid jumping back and forth in time. Put content in chronological order.

Website and digital signage

- The length will vary, but don't write too much.
- **Enter a blank line between paragraphs. No indentation.**
- **Break up long sections with subheads.**
- The introduction should be welcoming. It should give an overall idea of the site and why it is important, and then get into access and other details.
- The writing may be lively and engaging, but be careful to avoid effusiveness and hyperbole.

Printed matter

- The length will vary. What you write may be adjusted later to fit design specs.
- **Use indented paragraphs (without an open line between paragraphs).**
- **The first line under a heading or after an open space should be flush left.**
- The visitor may read this at the location, or before or after their visit.
- Cover background, points of interest, anecdotes, featured products, access information, etc.

Audio guide or Augmented Reality (AR) text

- The duration will vary, but each section (part) is likely to last less than one minute.
- Use short, straightforward sentences.
- Use macrons for Japanese words to help the narrator.
- Avoid words that might be difficult for the listener to hear or understand.
- Point out details that will draw the visitor's attention.
- Check for any description that might benefit from additional information.
- Check what you have written by reading it out loud.

Check after Writing

- Have you answered questions that a target visitor might ask?
- Have you included geographical features, historical facts, animals, plants, and other information that may be of interest to the target visitor?
- Have you presented the points in order of importance to the target visitor?
- Have you assumed any knowledge that the target visitor might lack?
- Will this information add to the target visitor's understanding of Japanese history and/or culture?
- Fact-checking:
Check and cross-check all facts and note the sources that you use.

Note: Fact-checking is to be performed by the local site committee and by the content advisor. The writer should also confirm all the information in the texts and, if any questions arise, should check with the content advisor in order to resolve the problem.

Part 2: Appendix

Characteristics of Different Media

Texts should be written expressly for use in the selected media. Writers should keep in mind how, when, and in what form the reader will encounter the information and should adjust style and content to make the text more effective.

Type of media	Target audience	Characteristics	Points to keep in mind
Promotional video	Prospective visitors	Strong visual impact	Use short and catchy phrases rather than long, descriptive sentences.
Website	Prospective and on-site visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides the overall picture of a sightseeing spot. Can be used to provide detailed information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate expected travel experiences by featuring attractive narratives and recommended touring routes. Provide a wide scope of detailed information in order to encourage prospective visitors. Information missing from signs on-site may be supplemented via QR code links.
Pamphlet	Visitors who want to know about recommended routes and get a general overview of the destination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is portable and can be taken home. Provides simple explanations of specific things along with images. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be used to supply further information not available on the on-site signage. When preparing pamphlets in multiple languages, avoid uniform content and format. Tailor each pamphlet to the needs of users in each language.
Signage	All visitors	Offers visitors information about what they are looking at.	Keep each text between 100 and 250 words as a general rule.
Audio guide	Visitors who want to listen to guidance while visiting	Facilitates visitors' understanding via speech.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep to an amount of information that can be listened to in the set time frame. Use simple words and clear expressions. Use conversational (not written) language. Position each text in the wider context of the destination.
Guided tour	Visitors who want to be accompanied by an expert guide	Helps visitors learn about the subject with explanations tailored to their interests.	Prepare to be flexible about the content and style of the guided tour, based on visitor needs.
Guidebook	Visitors seeking a deeper understanding, or repeat visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides more detailed information than a pamphlet. Is portable and can be taken home. 	Appoint experts on the subject to oversee text creation in order to provide more detailed specialist information.

Useful References

This style manual was compiled referring to the following documents. Note that the rules in the Style Guidelines in Part 3 of this manual take precedence over those recommended in the documents below.

Japan Tourism Agency (2014): *Guidelines for Improving and Enhancing Multilingual Support for the Realization of a Tourism-Oriented Country*.

<http://www.mlit.go.jp/common/001029742.pdf>

Spelling rules for non-Japanese texts

Common phrases and expressions in English, Chinese, and Korean

Design and implementation of signage

Agency for Cultural Affairs and Japan Tourist Agency (2016): *On Enhancing Tourist Information in English at Sightseeing Destinations around Japan*.

<http://www.mlit.go.jp/common/001142178.pdf>

Ministry for the Environment (2017): *Multilingual Glossary for Tourism and Natural Resource Management*. https://www.env.go.jp/nature/park/tech_standards/14_4.pdf

General terminology related to natural park management

Common phrases used for signs and instructions

Unified expressions for places, guidance phrases, and captions

Geospatial Information Authority of Japan (2016): *Notation Rules for Place Names in English*.

<http://www.gsi.go.jp/common/000138865.pdf>

Names of natural sites

Notation of addresses

Names of facilities and institutions

Dictionary by Merriam-Webster.

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/>

University of Chicago Press (2017): *The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS)*. 17th ed.

<https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>

Society of Writers, Editors, and Translators (2018): *Japan Style Sheet (JSS)*. 3rd ed.

<https://japanstylesheet.com/>

Sophia University (2018): *Monumenta Nipponica Style Sheet*.

<https://dept.sophia.ac.jp/monumenta/pdf/MN-Style-Sheet-September-2018.pdf>

Encyclopedia of Japan. 9 vols. Kodansha, 1983.

Japan: An Illustrated Encyclopedia. 1 vol. Kodansha, 1993.

JAANUS: online *Dictionary of Japanese Architectural and Art Historical Terminology*.
<http://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/>

National Institutes for Cultural Heritage: *Style Manual for English Texts: General Conventions*.
<http://doi.org/10.24484/sitereports.115465>

Agency for Cultural Affairs: *Bunka-Cho Art Platform Japan Translation Project Style Guide*.
https://contents.artplatform.go.jp/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/CACJ_translation_project_20210224.pdf

Tokyo National Museum: *Japanese to English Translation at the Tokyo National Museum: A Guide to Tombstones and other Gallery Labels*.
<https://webarchives.tnm.jp/research/details?id=2041>

Library of Congress: *Romanization Guide for Japanese*.
<https://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/romanization/japanese.pdf>

Editors Canada: *Professional Editorial Standards*.
<https://www.editors.ca/publications/professional-editorial-standards-2016>

PART 3: STYLE GUIDELINES

Dictionary and Spelling

Use the *Merriam-Webster* dictionary (print or online) for spelling and hyphenation. The dictionary also has useful charts of metric system abbreviations and other tools for writers.

This project uses US English as the designated spelling system, but if a site designates British spelling, use British spelling.

- | | |
|----------------|----------------|
| ○ center | × centre |
| ○ civilization | × civilisation |
| ○ color | × colour |
| ○ defense | × defence |
| ○ meter | × metre |

Many Japanese words have entered the English lexicon and are well established. Usually, a word that has an entry in Merriam-Webster can be treated as English; that is, it is not italicized. The following are just a few of many; be sure to check when in doubt.

anime, daimyo, kabuki, kami, manga, matcha, miso, ninjutsu, noh, samurai, shogun, shoji, sumo, sushi, tatami, tofu, tokonoma, torii, ukiyo-e

However, use your discretion and italicize Japanese words that are not widely recognized in English, especially when doing so will aid the reader in understanding the text. Japanese words in the English lexicon may be italicized if similar words in close context appear in italics.

Paragraphing

Texts should be prepared in a simple format. Use a plain font such as Times, Times New Roman, Palatino, etc. Please avoid the Century font. The text needs to be as easy to read as possible for the work of editors and checkers. A plain manuscript text also goes more smoothly into other platforms and layout-and-design software.

Be sure to turn off MS Word's auto-formatting functions, including auto-indenting, bulleting, or numbering styles.

For Signs and Printed Text

Use indented paragraphs with no open lines between paragraphs. The paragraph indent should be set as a tab of 5 mm.

Note: The first line under a heading or after an open space should be flush left.

For Digital Signage and Website Text

Use open-line paragraphing without indentation.

Note: Do not specify extra space between paragraphs in the format settings.

Romanization of Japanese

As a general rule, romanized Japanese words not in the English lexicon should be kept to a minimum. The vast majority of the target readership will have little to no familiarity with the Japanese language, and Japanese terms may disrupt the flow of reading and comprehension for such readers. There is no hard and fast rule about how many romanized words are acceptable, but in almost all cases, the fewer the better.

Deciding whether a romanized term will enhance the reader's/visitor's experience or detract from it must be done on a case-by-case basis. When such words do appear, they should serve as useful, arguably necessary, tools for understanding something about Japanese culture, history, architecture, etc. Further, their use should be limited to cases in which an English gloss does not adequately capture the meaning.

When transliterating Japanese script in English-language texts, use the Hepburn romanization system, which aligns closely with Japanese pronunciation and is widely accepted in international writing about Japan. See the charts in the *Japan Style Sheet* for spellings and for special sounds. For knotty questions of romanization, consult the supervisory copyeditors or see the Library of Congress romanization page: <https://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/romanization/japanese.pdf>

Syllabic n (ん)

Transliterate the syllabic ん as “n,” rather than “m,” before the consonant sounds “b,” “m,” or “p.” Some exceptions are widely accepted, but do endeavor to conform to this rule.

Normal

出版物 *shuppanbutsu*

Exceptions

昆布 *kombu* [anglicized word]

日本橋 Nihonbashi

天ぷら tempura [anglicized word]

記念日 *kinenbi*

新聞 *shimbun* [e.g., Asahi Shimbunsha]

Apostrophes

When the syllabic ん (n) appears before a syllable beginning with “y” or a vowel, or when a single-vowel syllable appears after a syllable containing the same vowel, an apostrophe (’) may be inserted to clarify the distinction.

Koizumi Jun’ichiro, *tan’i* [unit], *kin’en* [no smoking]; 明治の森箕面 Meiji no Mori Mino’o [Meiji Memorial Forest, Mino’o]

Doubled Consonants

The romanization of the small つ (*tsu*) usually results in a doubled consonant (につぼん Nippon). However, when つ precedes ち (*chi*), transliterate as “tch” instead of repeating the “c.” As in the case of 抹茶 (まっちゃ) matcha.

具知安 (くっちゃん) 町 Kutchan-cho, [town of] Kutchan [not Kucchan]

乙知志 (おっちし) 岬 Otchishi-misaki, Cape Otchishi

Long Vowels (Use of Macrons)

The decision about how to handle long vowels おお, おう, うう, しょう, しゅう, etc. when using romanized Japanese words in English text should be made with care and usually boils down to whether to use macron diacritical marks or not.

Under the guidance of this project, writers are advised not to use macrons in the romanization of Japanese words, including for names and places. The primary goal of these texts is considered to be the enjoyment of international visitors, most of whom are thought to have little to no prior knowledge of Japan. Texts for audio guides are an exception, and should include macrons as a guide to the narrator for correct pronunciation.

However, *macrons may be used if the stakeholder and the text production company think they are needed.* If macrons are to be used, a note should be provided at the top of the file in Japanese so that editors and designers down the line will follow that established policy. Writers who plan to make exceptions to the rule should consider the rationale carefully. Arbitrary, inconsistent, or careless use is, of course, to be avoided.

Please consider the following pros and cons:

Arguments in favor of macrons:

- Use of macrons may be considered an asset, rather than a distraction, for historical or art-related texts when pronunciation distinctions are important and visitors to a site (e.g., a museum or World Heritage site) may have expert knowledge. Macron vowels are widely used in scholarly and specialized publications about Japan and in the catalogs and commentaries of leading museums with long-established Japanese art collections (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Metropolitan Museum of Art; British Museum; Miho Museum; Kyoto National Museum).
- Knowing the accurate pronunciation of words, which macrons convey, can increase the benefit of the information provided. This helps international visitors understand the words when spoken or use the words themselves to make inquiries or talk about things they have encountered.

Arguments against macrons:

- Macrons may seem distracting to the reader.
- Typographical (font) difficulties may be encountered when setting text for signage or websites.
- Extra editorial care must be taken to use macrons consistently and with careful attention to exceptions. (See Special Cases and Anglicized Words, below).

Special Cases

The use of “oo,” “ou,” or “oh” spellings for long vowels may appear antiquated and should be reconsidered if possible. However, exceptions may be made if there is a strong preference, despite these arguments, on the part of the individual, local committee, or site for an established anglicized form (e.g., the surnames Mohri and Andoh in particular cases).

Anglicized Words (Including Internationally Known Place Names)

Do not use macrons for anglicized words (found in the *Merriam-Webster* dictionary), including well-known place names (Tokyo, Kobe, Osaka, Hokkaido, etc.).

Plurals

In general, words from Japanese used in English texts should have the same form for both singular and plural, since the plural form is the same as the singular form in

Japanese. This applies to both romanized Japanese terms and words that have entered the English lexicon. However, there may be instances where it is more natural to treat anglicized words according to the standard rules of English, and editorial discretion is advised.

Singular	Plural
shogun (anglicized)	shoguns
futon (anglicized)	futons
daimyo	daimyo
shoji (panels)	shoji

Using Romanized Japanese in English Text

Sightseeing texts should strive to explain content entirely in English. However, when Japanese words in romanized spellings are needed, they should be used in ways that add to the richness of the text without distracting or discouraging the reader. A plethora of Japanese place or era names, personal names, and terms can be daunting. Editorial judgment and intervention should be exercised to avoid the excessive appearance in each text of proper nouns, personal names, and italicized words that will be unfamiliar to the reader. (Regarding the use of italics, see below under “Italics.”)

The least obtrusive way to incorporate a romanized Japanese term is to put it in parentheses immediately following the English equivalent.

Local religious experts (*oshi*) traveled around Japan preaching...

However, circumstances may dictate other treatment to produce the most natural-sounding text. Other examples below illustrate various treatments as well as cases where having the Japanese is helpful.

- Introducing words that are interesting and useful for visitors to know in learning about Japan.

The building is known for the ingenious designs of the finger-holds (*hikite*) on the *fusuma* and other interior partitions.

The building's southeastern portico is decorated with a *shimenawa* rope marking the boundary between sacred and profane space.

- Providing words visitors are likely to encounter or hear when visiting sightseeing spots. Examples are plant names known from literary or artistic contexts for which the English gloss may not fully express the intended nuance.

Mizubasho (swamp lantern; *Lysichiton camtschatcensis* Schott) and fawn lilies (*katakuri*) bloom along the course.

A pair of *komainu*, mythical guardian figures, flank the entrance to the shrine.

- Introducing a concept, word, or term that does not have a brief equivalent in English and requires a gloss that is long and complex.

kotatsu (a table equipped with a heating device)

a *shimenawa*, a large straw rope marking the boundary between sacred and profane spaces

Plant Names

Use editorial discretion in the mention of plant names and present the information in a manner appropriate to the specific context.

- Use English plant names where possible when the reader does not need the Japanese name for adequate understanding. Consider the level of specificity appropriate for the text you are writing. Too much botanical detail can be distracting in general introductory texts. Adding Latin names for trees or plants may be extraneous in some contexts:

Avoid: The statue is made of Japanese cypress (*hinoki*); the *fusuma* panels are covered with designs of iris (*kakitsubata*; *Iris laevigata*); the chest is made of paulownia wood (*kiri*; *Paulownia tomentosa*).

Prefer: The statue is made of cypress; the *fusuma* panels are covered with designs of iris, and the chest is made of paulownia wood.

- When the Japanese name is to be included, it is preferable to conform to the following patterns. Use the Latin name if desired:

rabbit-ear iris (*kakitsubata*)

paulownia (*kiri*; *Paulownia tomentosa*)

dodan-tsutsuji (white enkianthus; *Enkianthus perulatus*); for a case when the English name may not be well known

fukujuso (Adonis plant)

- When a Japanese plant name does not have a common English name (i.e., one that can be found in English dictionaries), or when priority for the Japanese name is determined by editorial discretion, write it in italics (and, where desirable, add the Latin name in parentheses). The Latin name should always be italicized with the first letter capitalized.

kohamagiku plant (*Chrysanthemum yezoense* Maekawa)

sakaki tree (*Cleyera japonica*)

Note: If the name of the plant contains a geographical name, capitalize it when used as part of an English gloss. For treatment of cultivars, see CMOS.

Hakusan rhododendron (for *Hakusan shakuyaku* 白山芍薬)

Amur daylily (for *zenteika* 禅庭花, ゼンテイカ)

The following examples are recommended glosses for certain plants that often appear in signage texts. (See “Names of Plant Species” in Part 3 Appendix for additional glosses.)

For	Recommended glosses
葵 <i>aoi</i> (<i>futaba aoi</i>)	wild ginger; Japanese wild ginger [avoid the mistranslation “hollyhock,” which is <i>tachi-aoi</i> in Japanese]
銀杏 <i>icho</i> (Ch. <i>yinxing</i>)	ginkgo [rather than ginko]
水芭蕉 <i>mizubasho</i>	<i>mizubasho</i> (swamp lantern; <i>Lysichiton camtschatcensis</i> Schott)
女郎花 <i>ominaeshi</i>	<i>ominaeshi</i> (maidenflower; <i>Patrinia scabiosifolia</i>); <i>patrinia</i> (<i>Patrinia scabiosifolia</i>)
すすき <i>susuki</i>	silvergrass; miscanthus grass (<i>susuki</i>); eulalia grass (<i>Miscanthus sinensis</i>). [Avoid “pampas grass,” which is a different family of grasses.]

Geographical Features

Japan is a country of mountains (*yama*), mountain passes (*toge*), hills (*kyuryo*), highlands (*kogen*), plains (*heiya*), capes (*misaki*), beaches or shores (*kaigan*), open valleys (*tani*), deep ravines (*keikoku*), broad rivers (*kawa*) and streams (*ogawa, nagare*), marshes or wetlands (*shitsugen*), and so on—geographical features found in similar form in other parts of the Northern hemisphere. Although the proper names are unique, the geographical features have more universality, and English will usually suffice. The goal should be to give a name that will be understandable and accessible to the visitor.

The recommended rendering consists of the place name and the identifying geographical term. *Please use Mt. rather than Mount.*

筑波山 Tsukubasan → Mt. Tsukuba

等々力溪谷 Todoroki Keikoku → Todoroki Ravine

石見高原 Iwami Kogen → Iwami Highland

奥羽山脈 Ou Sanmyaku → Ou Mountain Range [or Ou mountain range]

白糠丘陵 Shiranuka Kyuryo → Shiranuka Hills

関東平野 Kanto Heiya → Kanto Plain

野尻湖 Nojiriko → Lake Nojiri

荒川 Arakawa → Ara River (or Arakawa River)

Names of mountains must be handled on a case-by-case basis, and sometimes keeping the suffix is unavoidable in cases when the main part of the name is one syllable (Oyama, Iiyama). Do try to avoid longer names and prefer Mt. Xxxx (dropping the -*yama* suffix).

Mountain names:

Mt. Gongendake

Mt. Kyonotake

Mt. Nanatsudake

Mt. Tadakariyama

Mt. Tetegatake

Mountain passes:

Tsurube-Otoshi Pass

Similarly, names of islands sometimes retain the suffix (*shima/jima*), and sometimes not.

Island names [ref: Goto Islands Geo Park]:

Kuroshima Island

Fukue Island

Himejima Island

Sometimes, local areas or institutions have used the romanized form of a geographic feature along with the translated geographical term for so long that the combination seems to be an English name.

Akiyoshidai Plateau (*dai* means “plateau”)

Ozegahara Marsh (*hara* means “expanse” and includes the meaning of “wetland”)

“Akiyoshi Plateau” and “Oze Marsh” would communicate the meanings adequately, but this treatment does injustice to the Japanese proper noun. While shorter names might be easier for the foreign visitor to remember, recognizing place names in the manner that they are known locally can be invaluable. How to treat such names can require careful consideration and consultation with the local stakeholders.

One approach is to omit the translated geographical term in English when not preceded by “the,” and to add the geographical term in lowercase when the term is preceded by “the.” This allows the Japanese name to remain intact without duplicating the geographic term in the proper noun, even if that term still appears as a modifier.

“Ozegahara provides a habitat for...”

“The Ozegahara marsh is known for the many species...”

Poetry

There are a number of ways to present poetry on signs and in other media. For sightseeing text manuscripts, we recommend providing the text in a simple format that will transfer easily to other platforms. Give the romanized Japanese version of poems or other texts in italics; put the English poem or gloss in roman.

Recommended format for haiku or *waka* poetry:

natsukusa ya
tsuwamono domo ga
yume no ato

The summer grasses—
For many brave warriors
The aftermath of dreams

Italics

Italics are used for various purposes, such as to indicate non-English words transcribed from the original language and to mark the titles of literary or artistic works.

Such words may also be set off by using quotation marks. Note that italics and quotation marks are never used simultaneously for this purpose (except when one of the words in a compound element is italicized; e.g., “*yuzu* house”). (Also see “Using Romanized Japanese in English Text” and “Quotation Marks”).

Proper nouns are not italicized unless they occur as part of the title of an artistic work.

Non-English Words

When Japanese words are used, they are usually set in italics. Many words of Japanese origin appear in the *Merriam-Webster* dictionary and are already part of the English lexicon (see “Dictionary” above and the *JSS* for a partial list); these do not need to be italicized. Others, though familiar to people who know Japan well, should be treated as non-English words (e.g., 雲海 *unkai*, “sea of clouds”; 暖簾 *noren*, door curtain).

Remember that the least obtrusive way to incorporate a romanized Japanese term is to put it in parentheses immediately following the English equivalent. Japanese words/phrases may be presented in various ways. The most common are (1) italicized and accompanied by a short English translation, (2) italicized (for common nouns) or cap-roman (for proper nouns) with an explanation added within the sentence, or (3) italicized with literal gloss added in parentheses.

Examples:

- (1) tea garden (*roji*) or *roji* (tea garden)
finger-holds (*hikite*)
kaki (persimmon-colored) iron glaze
kitchen (*kuri*)

- (2) Sengoku period (1467–1568) of constantly shifting alliances and rivalries among local warlords
decorative finger-hold fittings (*hikite*) of the sliding panels

- (3) *ranseki-zumi* (“random stone setting”) [describing a type of stone wall]
These parabolic stone walls are sometimes known as *ogi no kobai*, “folding fan slopes.” [If the gloss is a bit awkward, quotation marks may be used.]

These styles may be mixed to fit the context and achieve a good variety of expressions.

Titles of Literary and Artistic Works

Italicize the romanized titles of works or place them in quotes, using sentence-style capitalization. For English glosses of titles, use headline-style capitalization and do not italicize. For published English translations, italicize in headline style. (This follows the recommendations of the *Japan Style Sheet*, the *Chicago Manual of Style* (CMOS), and the *Monumenta Nipponica Style Sheet*).

Kojiki, the first written record in Japan

Natsu no owari (End of Summer) [English gloss as tentative translation of a title]

Oku no hosomichi (*Narrow Road to the Deep North*) [published translation]

Narrow Road to the Deep North (*Oku no hosomichi*) [published translation]

Language Abbreviations for Transcription

Chinese: Ch.

Japanese: Jp.

Korean: Kr.

Sanskrit: Sk.

Punctuation

Serial (Oxford) Comma

Please use the serial comma in lists of more than two items.

Tours are available in the morning, afternoon, and evening.

Quotation Marks and Apostrophes

Always use curved double (“smart”) and single (‘smart’) quotation marks, as well as apostrophes (’s). (Compare with " and ' straight quotation marks and apostrophes.)

Quotation marks may be used to set off romanized Japanese words or phrases when the text talks about Japanese words as words or letters as letters. In those cases, remove the italics.

Reference to the word “mukusa” is moreover evidence that the garden’s name was originally read “Mukusa no sono” and not “Rikugien,” the *kango* (漢語) or Chinese-style reading usually given to it today.

[From *Daimyo Gardens* by Shirahata Yozaburo, 2016, p. 124.]

It is polite to say “Itadakimasu” before beginning to eat.

Quotation Marks and Parentheses with Punctuation

Put periods and commas *inside* quotation marks; put semicolons and colons *outside* quotation marks.

The name of a shrine will often include the word “jinja,” but you will also see “taisha,” “jingu,” “gu,” and “miya.”

And now some other dishes regarded as “B-grade”: *gyoza*, *kare raisu*, and *yakisoba*.

Put final punctuation outside of parentheses (unless the entire sentence is enclosed by parentheses).

- The dessert menu includes soy-sauce ice cream (¥150 plus tax).
- × The dessert menu includes soy-sauce ice cream (¥150 plus tax.)

Colon

Be sure the colon is flush with the character before it and is followed by a space. Be careful that the character does not switch to a Japanese font and becomes a 2-byte Japanese character in the midst of English text. E.g., “see : CMOS” when it should be “see: CMOS.”

And now some other dishes regarded as “B-grade”: *gyoza*, *kare raisu*, and *yakisoba*.

Dashes: Hyphens (-), En Dashes (–), and Em Dashes (—)

Hyphens

Hyphens are used to join words together as compounds or to make the text easier to read. They can be an aid to better pronunciation of Japanese words and place names. They are also used when dividing words at the end of a line of text.

In addresses

Hyphenate administrative district, block, and house numbers. Also use hyphens to set off suffixes in place names, particularly when the suffix represents a formal geopolitical division.

5-39 Kami-Miyanomae-cho, Sakyo-ku, Kyoto

In place names

When a place name begins or ends with a region name or an affix common for a place name, such as 東 Higashi, 西 Nishi, 南 Minami, 北 Kita, 上 Kami, 中 Naka, 下 Shimo, 新 Shin, 旧 Kyu, 前 Mae, and 元 Moto, split the word with a hyphen. Capitalize the element after the hyphen.

安芸高田市 Aki-Takata

会津朝日岳 Mt. Aizu-Asahidake

西吾妻山 Mt. Nishi-Azuma

ウコタキヌプリ Mt. Ukotaki-Nupuri

Note: Some locales specify a nonhyphenated spelling (e.g., Rikuzentakata), in which case that spelling should be respected.

As a general rule, *avoid* adding City, Town, Village, etc. after a place name, as it does not read naturally (sounds like “Boston City”). These elements of addresses are administrative terms and are not a necessary part of the names in common reference. If necessary, precede in the sentence with “the city of...”, “the town of...,” etc. In the case of cities that have the same name as the prefecture, for example the city of Nagano in Nagano Prefecture, consider the context in determining the notation. *In running text*, the administrative parts (-*shi*, -*ken*, -*machi*, *aza*, -*cho*) of place names do not have to be included. *For addresses*, see above.

Some place names, such as the names of national parks, consist of a combination of two or three places, which may be connected by a hyphen (Towada-Hachimantai National Park, Fuji-Hakone-Izu National Park, etc.). Be consistent within each document.

As an aid to pronunciation

sukiya-zukuri; or *sukiya* style [style of architecture]

kabuto-zukuri; or *kabuto* style [style of roofline]

goemon-buro (cauldron bath)

In names of deities

The trend is now *away* from using hyphens in deity names, so these Style Guidelines recommend *not* using hyphens, whether for Buddhist deities or indigenous kami.

Amaterasu Omikami

Izanagi no Mikoto

Juichimen Kannon

In names of temple and shrine buildings

Names of temple and shrine buildings often contain suffixes meaning “temple” or “hall.” These should be given without hyphens, regardless of consecutive vowel spellings (e.g., Byodoin), for consistency.

Todaiji Temple

Hasedera Temple

Byodoin Temple

Shakado Hall

Heian Jingu Shrine

Matsuo Taisha Shrine

For places or objects with the particle “no”

As with names of deities, these proper nouns should be written without hyphens. The particle “no” should be lowercase.

Shiratama no To [a war memorial]

Ama no Iwato [a cave]

En dash (N dash)

The en dash (so called because it is the width of the letter N) is used for grouping values and words, as in inclusive dates (e.g., 1603–1867) or page numbers (e.g., see pp. 52–54). See also CMOS 17 (6:78–84).

Em dash (M dash)

The em dash (so called because it is the width of the letter M) is used when adding information in mid-sentence. Em dashes usually appear as a pair and enclose phrases that interrupt the flow of a sentence.

As you stroll through the cedar-lined trail—the distant “borrowed scenery” spreading before you beyond the Back Garden—a rivulet gurgles companionably at your feet.

However, this style manual recommends avoiding em-dash-enclosed sentence constructions. Em dashes do not transfer well across platforms and often garble as hyphens. This applies to text for all media, not only that for Web use.

Names of People and Entities

Names of People

As a rule, give Japanese names in customary order, surname first. Do not use all-caps to denote the surname.

Tokugawa Yoshimune

Ito Jakuchu

Exceptions may be made for persons who are widely known outside Japan by a name given in surname-last order.

Haruki Murakami
Yayoi Kusama

Japanese Names on Second Mention

As with names in general, a person first identified by their full name should be **referred to by their surname on second mention**, as follows (also see “Exceptions” below):

The garden was created in collaboration with Ishihara Kazuyuki, a Japanese landscape designer whose work is known around the world. Ishihara has won multiple gold medals at the prestigious Chelsea Flower Show held annually in London.

In 1892, his colleague Ishikawa Rikinosuke (1845–1915) visited different areas in Akita Prefecture to host fruit fairs where farmers could gather to assess each other’s apples. During these fairs, Ishikawa recorded information on the characteristics of the different apples and how they were grown.

Exceptions: There are a number of cases in which the given name of a person is customarily used on second mention.

- Historical figures
Toyotomi Hideyoshi→Hideyoshi
Sen Rikyu→Rikyu
Miyamoto Musashi→Musashi
- People called by pen names or artist names
Natsume Soseki→Soseki
Mori Ogai→Ogai
Katsushika Hokusai→Hokusai
- People of pre-Meiji times representing multiple generations of a family, such as craftspeople or merchants (who often went by a shop name and a given name only, e.g., Kinokuniya Bunzaemon)

Note: The names of historical figures are sometimes composed of a name and a title, rather than a surname and given name. Some examples to be on the watch for:

Murasaki Shikibu [*shikibu* is a court title]

Tango no Tsubone [a *tsubone* is a court lady or lady-in-waiting]

Korean and Chinese Names

When the Japanese names for Korean or Chinese historical figures are mentioned, try to also give the romanized reading of the name in the original language.

Kanroku Sojo (Kr. Kwalluk)

Ganjin (Ch. Jianzhen; 688–763)

Haku Rakuten (Ch. Bai Juyi or Letian; 772–846)

Facilities, Corporate Bodies, and Brand Names

Generally, only capitalize the first letter of each word. When the official name is rendered in all capitals, keep the designated spelling but only capitalize the first letter (Sony, not SONY).

Hakuhinkan Toy Park

Sango Yuntaku-Kan Visitor Center

Names of Schools or Styles of Art, Performing Arts, and Crafts; Cults, Movements, Schools of Thought or Faith

Painting

Yamato-e

Nihonga, or Japanese-style painting

Yoga, or Western-style painting

Nanga, or Southern School painting

Performing Arts

kabuki, or Kabuki

noh, or Noh

gagaku, or Gagaku

yoruri, or Joruri

kyogen, or Kyogen

Architectural Styles

Zenshuyo, or Zen style

Karayo, or Chinese style

Wayo, or Japanese style

Ceramic Styles [cap/roman; avoid “yaki”]

Ohi ware

Raku ware

Shino ware

Lacquerware Types [cap/roman; avoid “nuri”]

Wajima ware

lacquered wood with *makie* (sprinkled metallic powder) decoration

Other Crafts

Higo inlay (*Higo zogan*)

Schools of Thought or Faith

Kokugaku

Shugendo

Capitalization

Use capitals in the same way they are used in English (see CMOS and *Japan Style Sheet*) for place names, proper nouns (specific temple buildings, organizations, etc.), official titles, institutions, etc.

Temple Buildings

Terms like *hondo*, *kondo*, and *kodo* are common nouns for standard temple structures, but within a specific temple, they may be used as the *names* of the buildings. In those cases, they should be treated as proper nouns: Hondo, Kondo, Kodo.

Full Caps (All Caps)

The names of corporate bodies, organizations, etc. rarely need to be written in all caps unless they are acronyms or abbreviations. The “official name” may be given in full caps by the organization itself, but that style is not binding for other

contexts/publications. A company is entitled to decide its own capitalization style, but cannot dictate that style to the publications of other entities.

Prefecture

Capitalize “prefecture” and “province” in proper names: Nagano Prefecture, Awa Province. Follow CMOS when giving more than one: Nagano and Gifu Prefectures.

Dates and Historical Periods/Eras

Dates

See the “Japanese Historical Periods” chart in the Part 3 Appendix for the standard date spans used in this project. These are the dates generally used in authoritative English sources about Japan.

Follow the Common Era system

Use BCE and CE (in full rather than small caps) to maintain the religious neutrality of the text.

Jomon period (14,500–900 BCE)

Sengoku period (1467–1568)

Give inclusive dates in full digits

the warrior Minamoto no Aritsuna (1155–1186)

Kiyosu Yukiyasu (1901–1975)

Tayasu Munetake (1716–1771)

Taisho era (1912–1926)

National Treasure (1970)

Add dates for people (birth–death), eras, historical events, etc.

- When the death date is unknown, use “(b. xxxx)” or mention the general period (e.g., “nineteenth-century statesman”); or, if the period of a person whose dates are unknown is clear from the sentence context, that is sufficient.
- When the death date is unknown or the person is still living, and the time frame is not clear from the context, “(b. xxxx)” may be added.

- If the person is contemporary with our time and other dates in the sentence orient the reader in time, there is no need to add even the birth date (e.g., “The pottery style was resurrected in 1980, nearly 150 years later, by local potter Ito Hyodo”).
- For dates that are contended (e.g., Toyotomi Hideyoshi, 1536–1598 or 1537–1598), use the dates selected by the specific site or authority involved.
If a date cannot be confirmed, it is standard practice to insert a question mark:
Matsudaira Chikauji (d. 1394?). See CMOS 17 (6.68).

Historical Periods/Eras

Japanese historical periods (*jidai*) and eras (*nengo*) may not be familiar to the reader. Try to use Western dates or mention the century (centuries) or decade(s) so as to firmly orient the reader. Include the traditional Japanese dates *only* if necessary in the context.

See the “Japanese Historical Periods” chart in Part 3 Appendix for the standard date spans used in this project. See also the *Japan Style Sheet*, pp. 70–81.

Avoid: Judging by the use of nails in the structure, the Old Shimomura Family Residence was most likely constructed late in the Edo period (1603–1867). [The 264-year period is too vague to be helpful.]

Prefer: Judging by the use of nails in the structure, the Old Shimomura Family Residence was most likely constructed in the 1850s or 1860s. [Narrowed down to dates readers can grasp.]

Avoid: The business is no longer in operation but thrived throughout the Meiji era (1868–1912) and in the early years of the Showa era (1926–1989).

Prefer: The business thrived for more than seven decades from the mid-nineteenth century to the 1930s.

In this project, distinguish between *era* and *period* as follows:

- Era (*nengo*): A name given to a span of years under the traditional Japanese dating system, e.g., Genroku, Kansei, Meiji, Heisei, Reiwa.
- Period (*jidai*): Segments of history as they are generally known. In the case of Japan, these begin with the Paleolithic, Jomon, and Yayoi periods and continue to the modern and contemporary periods. Names and year ranges may vary slightly by context. For example: Tokugawa period (1603–1867), *but* art history dates for Edo period (1600–1868). (Note: Tokugawa period ends in 1867, not 1868.)

- Although Meiji is an era, it is also commonly treated as a “period” in the field of Japanese studies and in general writing on Japanese history. The same goes for Taisho, Showa, etc. (the post-1868 eras). For these, *either* “era” or “period” may be used, depending on the context.

Numbers

Spell out the numbers 1 to 9 and any number beginning a sentence

See “Numerals versus Words,” CMOS 17 (9.2–9.7), for details.

Three temples, with a total of nine buildings, once stood on this mountain.

One hundred ten candidates were accepted for the nine seats available.

Arabic numerals may be used for data information that appears within parentheses.

(1 hour, 40 minutes)

However, when running text appears within parentheses, and it happens to include a number, follow the 1 to 9 rule.)

(about five minutes by car from Akanuma)

But spell out all centuries:

The temple was founded in the late sixth century, renamed in the late seventh century, moved to Nara in the eighth century, burned down in the late fourteenth century, and rebuilt in the following century.

Use discretion, depending on the media, but prefer Arabic numerals if several numbers appear in a sentence or paragraph. Remember that the goal is to create a seamless reading experience, and specific situations may dictate deviations from these guidelines.

The stone base (*tenshudai*) for the unbuilt tower consists of two rectangles. The larger one measures 46 meters north to south, 42 meters east to west, and is 9 meters tall.

Treat ordinal numbers (numbers in a series) following the same rule

Do not use superscript for the suffixes used to render ordinal numbers (127th). Be sure to turn off the superscript autocorrect function in Word.

the sixth abbot of Daitokuji; the 127th abbot of Daitokuji
the third-largest temple in Kyoto
300th anniversary of Arita ware

Signs and Symbols

Percentages (see Chicago 17; 9.18)

Except at the beginning of a sentence, percentages are usually expressed in numerals. In nontechnical contexts, the word “percent” is generally used; in scientific and statistical copy, the symbol % is more common. In texts for this project, use “percent.”

Temperature/Degrees

Give temperatures in Arabic numerals using Celsius. Spell out “degree” whenever possible, as the symbol (°) or special character (°C) tends to garble.

The bath is 45 degrees Celsius.

However, when space dictates extreme brevity, use the degree symbol and “C”:

...when temperatures range from 15°C to 25°C at lower altitudes and from 5°C to 15°C at higher altitudes. Earlier in spring and later in autumn, temperatures can be more than 20 degrees lower than these.

Prices and Fees

Use the currency symbols ¥, \$, £.

Use Arabic numerals.

The entire estate was worth ¥8 million.

The standard fee for geisha service is ¥25,000 per hour.

attendance fee ¥700

Units of Measurement

All measurements should be written in Arabic numerals, regardless of the 1–9 rule.

Follow the metric system, which is the standard system used in Japan. Note that time is not considered a unit of measurement.

Spell out meter, centimeter, millimeter, kilogram, kilometer, hectare, etc. in titles and in running text. Abbreviate in captions and informational text. Omit periods when using abbreviations. Always insert a space after the number: “1,202 m,” not “1,202m.”

Its summit lies at an elevation of 1,159 meters, making it the second-highest peak in the area after Mt. Kami-Hiruzen (1,202 m).

When making abbreviations, keep the available space in mind (this will vary according to the type of media). Use the abbreviations listed here:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_System_of_Units

Time of Day, Hours and Minutes

Use “hours” (not hrs.) and “minutes” (not min./mins.) except in informational content for times of buses, trains, etc.

Use a.m./p.m. (with periods)

Use 6:00 a.m., not 6 a.m.

Do not use the 24-hour clock (military time; e.g., 13:00; 21:00)

Precautions and Preferred Forms

Avoid Repeated Words

Endeavor to vary expression in order to avoid a singsong effect.

The beautiful **Lake** Shikotsu, the eighth largest **lake** freshwater body in Japan, is located in a **lake** caldera formed after a massive eruption some 40,000 years ago.

Assumed Knowledge

Phrases like “X is best known for...” and “X is known as...” are dead giveaways that writing for a Japanese audience has been reused without thought for the target reader. That something is “known for” or “known as” is, of course, *not* known to the overseas visitor, and such claims are generally of little interest or value. It is better to get right into the information about a site without reference to its renown.

Rather than: This shrine is famous for granting success on entrance exams.

Prefer: Many people pray at this shrine for success on entrance exams.

Too Many “Japans”

Remember that the context in which you are writing *is* Japan, and the reader will be aware of that. The trees and flowers growing there are Japanese; “traditional crafts” are by definition Japanese. Excessive use of “Japanese,” “Japan’s,” and “Japan” is distracting and cheapens the quality of the text.

Contractions

Do not use contractions in any of the texts, including those for websites.

Second-Person Pronoun

Use the second person judiciously. “You” can be effective for engaging readers and calling their attention to something specific, but excessive use can be distracting and off-putting in some contexts.

“You” and direct address should be used with sensitivity to all kinds of readers (including the sight-impaired). Writing that is overly chummy or informal may not be the most effective.

Exceptions may be made for instructions regarding safety or cultural practice (“Remove your shoes,” “Please be respectful of these sites,” etc.).

Designations

Use the wording “designated a National Treasure” (not “designated as”). These designations need not appear in titles or at the beginning of texts.

Capitalize National Treasure, Important Cultural Property, Important Art Object, UNESCO World Heritage Site, Japan Heritage Site, etc.

The date of designation may be added if it appears useful to readers and is readily available.

Inclusive Language

Be sensitive to gender, ethnicity, faith, and other issues in your writing.

Writing about the Beneficial Effects of Onsen

Care should be taken in describing *onsen* benefits so as to distinguish scientifically corroborated information from experienced wisdom (e.g., “*is believed to cure ailments*”).

Boasts and Comparisons

Exercise caution with boasts about “biggest,” “oldest,” etc., and try to replace them with specifics (such as measurements) and substantive descriptive information.

Avoid: *Gusuku* such as Shuri Castle are great surviving monuments.

Prefer: *Gusuku* such as Shuri Castle are monuments to centuries of Ryukyu history.

Avoid: The Japanese garden has no equal in Hokkaido.

Prefer: The Japanese garden is designed especially for Hokkaido.

Avoid: Susa Jinja boasts “Seven Wonders,” including a well called Shionoi...

Prefer: Susa Jinja is known for its legendary “Seven Wonders,” including a well called Shionoi...

Glossary of Selected Terms

ato: site, ruins, remains. This should be understood as “site” in most cases. Often, all that remains of a temple or castle, for example, will be foundation stones or simply an open space. Therefore, “remains” and “ruins” would be misleading.

bakufu: shogunate; central military government

byobu: folding screen

chashitsu: tea house

chaya: teahouse, cafe

clan: This term is to be avoided. Instead, use “family” or “lineage.” “Clan” has a specific meaning in scholarly circles that does not properly align with all contexts in Japan.” Prefer “family” for the Sengoku and Edo-period daimyo and for samurai families. (See *Encyclopedia of Japan*, vol. 8 and *Kokushi daijiten*, vol. 2.)

daimonji: Daimonji Farewell Fires; “large” character fires (avoid bonfires, as the characters are lines of torches)

daimyo or daimyo lord/regional lord (not italic, as this is in the English lexicon); avoid “feudal lord”

ie: gloss as “family” or “household” (the Tokugawa family, the Matsudaira family); “house” may be used on occasion for variation

jihi (慈悲): (in Buddhism) “compassion” (avoid “mercy,” which is more suited to Christian contexts)

kemari: ancient game of football

kokudo (国道) National Route (rather than National Highway)

han: domain (preferred); avoid “feudal domain”; do not capitalize “domain”

gorintō: a five-tiered Buddhist memorial (avoid “pagoda” and “tower” as these may convey the wrong impression to the reader)

miyage: see souvenir.

mizubasho: *mizubasho* (swamp lantern; *Lysichiton camtschatcensis*)

rule, reign, govern: make the following distinctions because of the specific nature of Japanese governance: “emperor reigns,” “shogun rules,” and “daimyo governs.” The emperor **reigned** over the country, even though he exercised no actual power; the shogunate **ruled** (controlled) the entire country and assigned the daimyo lords to **govern** the domains (*han*). A daimyo may be said to have “ruled” his own domain.

ryokan inn or traditional-style inn (not “Japanese inn,” as obviously the inn is Japanese)

screen: a folding or free-standing furnishing used as a screen within a room

shogun (not Shogun): short for Sei-i-Taishogun, and is not a formal title in itself.

“Shogun” may be treated as part of the English lexicon, but note that it is a common noun often used in apposition.

shogunate (not Shogunate): English for *bakufu* (one of the military governments, such as the Kamakura or the Tokugawa)

shoji panel; shoji sliding panel (in English lexicon; not italic) [Note: not all shoji are moveable, so “shoji panel” may be more accurate in some cases.]

shukuba-machi: post town, no hyphen (not “post-town” or “post-station”)

sokushitsu: prefer consort (not “concubine”)

souvenir: gloss for *omiyage*, but not for food items

tea gathering or tea (*chanoyu*) gathering: avoid “tea ceremony”

tea house (avoid “teahouse” for *chashitsu*). Teahouse connotes cafe or *chaya*

tokonoma alcove (not italic, as it is in the English lexicon)

yaoyorozu no kami: “myriads of deities”; myriad deities, etc.

Part 3: Appendix

The charts and information provided below are not comprehensive; they are drawn from available online sources and should be considered reference material.

Please note that for the purposes of this project, the rules in the Style Guidelines in this manual take precedence. Officially designated English translations of proper nouns should be respected, e.g., National Museum of Nature and Science (国立科学博物館), Imperial Hotel (帝国ホテル), University of Tokyo (東京大学).

The sample English glosses in the charts that follow are exactly that—samples. In practice, the choice of glosses in any text should be determined by readability and context.

Romanization Charts

For transliteration of Japanese characters according to the Hepburn system, please see the charts in the appendices of the *Japan Style Sheet*, available at japanstylesheet.com.

Shrines and Temples

Names

In this project, the names of temples and shrines are notated in such a way that their Japanese names are romanized in full, including any suffix indicating the type of institution, followed by the English translation of that suffix. We believe this method helps international visitors learn the meaning and pronunciation of the names of their destinations. There are multiple ways to designate a temple or shrine in Japanese, as indicated in the chart below:

Temple: ~寺(-*ji*), ~院(-*in*)

Shrine: ~神社 (*jinja*), ~神宮 (*jingu*), ~大社 (*taisha*)

Institution type in Japanese	Romanized spelling	English translation	Notes
神社 じんじゃ	<i>jinja</i>	Shinto shrine	Although “shrine” alone may be sufficient to emphasize the fact that it is a sacred place, we recommend explaining “-jinja” as “Shinto shrine” the first time it appears in a text.
神宮 じんぐう	<i>jingu</i>	(high-ranking) Shinto shrine	<i>Jingu</i> are high-ranking shrines dedicated to the spirits of emperors or members of the imperial family and shrine names are generally expressed as XX Jingu Shrine. The distinction between <i>jingu</i> and <i>jinja</i> may be explained as deemed necessary.
天満宮 てんまんぐう	<i>tenmangu</i>	Tenmangu shrine	A Shinto shrine dedicated to Tenjin (Sugawara no Michizane).
大社 たいしゃ	<i>taisha</i>	(grand) shrine	Some large or especially prestigious shrines are called <i>taisha</i> (grand shrine).
稲荷大社 いなりたいしゃ	<i>Inari taisha</i> <i>Inari jinja</i>	Inari Taisha shrine Inari shrine	A Shinto shrine dedicated to the grain deity Inari.
寺 じ/てら	<i>ji (tera)</i>	temple	Give full romanized name and “temple” on first mention. E.g., 金閣寺 should be written Kinkakuji Temple; abbreviated to Kinkakuji on subsequent mentions. Care should be taken with names where the 寺 character is read <i>-dera</i> . E.g., 清水寺: Kiyomizudera Temple
院 いん	<i>in</i>	temple	

Notes:

- When spelling a shrine name using “jingu,” “jinja,” or “taisha,” capitalize the first letter of the institution type except when simply romanizing a piece of Japanese text.
E.g., 春日大社 Kasuga Taisha Shrine, but “Kasuga taisha no kenchiku” (part of a romanized text)
- When spelling a temple name, write it as one word *without* a hyphen before “ji” or “in.”
E.g., 平等院 Byodoin Temple

Shrine-related Terms

Name in Japanese	Romanized spelling	Sample English gloss	Notes
社殿 しゃでん	<i>shaden</i>	shrine building	When used as a proper noun: Shaden
本殿 ほんでん	<i>honden</i>	main sanctuary	When used as a proper noun: Honden
着到殿 ちやくとうでん	<i>chakutoden</i>	arrival hall	
幣殿 へいでん	<i>heiden</i>	offering hall	
拝殿 はいでん	<i>haiden</i>	worship hall	When used as a proper noun: Haiden
本社 ほんしゃ	<i>honsha</i>	main shrine	
末社 まっしゃ	<i>massha</i>	subsidiary shrine	
奥宮 おくのみや	<i>okunomiya</i>	inner shrine	
中宮祠 ちゅうぐうし	<i>chugushi</i>	<i>chugushi</i> middle shrine	
鳥居 とりい	<i>torii</i>	gate	Torii is in the English lexicon; it need not be italicized.
石段 せきだん	<i>sekidan</i>	stone step	
参道 さんどう	<i>sando</i>	approach	
手水舎 ちょうずしゃ (ちょうずや)	<i>chozusha</i> (<i>chozuya</i> , <i>temizuya</i>)	hand-washing fountain	手水鉢、ちょうずばち: water basin
灯笼 とうろう	<i>toro</i>	lantern	石灯笼、いしどうろう: stone lantern 釣灯笼、つりどうろう: hanging lantern 万灯笼、まんとうろう: lantern festival

狛犬 こまいぬ	<i>komainu</i>	Guardian figures: pairs of guardian <i>shishi</i> (legendary lions) or other animals	<i>Komainu</i> generally refers to <u>a pair</u> of stone statues guarding the entrance to a shrine. The statues are usually of <i>shishi</i> , one with its mouth open and the other (horned in the past) closed. The pair sits in front of shrines. Other pairs of guardian animals include foxes, monkeys, etc., which are often messengers of deities (guardian foxes 稲荷, in the case of <i>inari</i>).
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絵馬 えま	<i>ema</i>	votive tablet	
柄杓 ひしゃく	<i>hishaku</i>	ladle	Used for purification at shrines; used in serving tea at tea gatherings, etc.
香炉 こうろ	<i>koro</i>	incense burner	
2礼2拍手1礼 にれいにはくしゅ いちれい	<i>nirei nihakushu ichirei</i>	lit., “two bows, two claps, and final bow”	Prescribed set of actions for worshipping at a Shinto shrine
賽銭箱 さいせんばこ	<i>saisenbako</i>	offertory box	
御朱印 ごしゅいん	<i>goshuin</i>	seal	May also be translated as “shrine seal,” as opposed to “temple seal”
御朱印帳 ごしゅいんちょう	<i>goshuinchō</i>	seal book	book for collecting (shrine/temple) seals
御神輿 (神輿) おみこし(みこし)	<i>omikoshi (mikoshi)</i>	portable shrine	

List of Kami Deities (Alphabetical Order)

Name in Japanese	Romanized spelling	Sample English gloss	Note
味耜高彥根命 あじすきたかひこねのみこと	Ajisukitakahikone no Mikoto	-	

天兒屋根命 あめのこやねのみこと	Ame no Koyane no Mikoto	the god of wisdom	The term “kami” may be used instead of “god.”
天照大御神 あまてらすおおみかみ	Amaterasu Omikami	the goddess of the sun	A major deity in Shinto; considered the ancestress of the imperial family
天押雲根命 あめのおしくもねのみこと	Ame no Oshikumone no Mikoto	the god of water and purification	The term “kami” may be used instead of “god.”
経津主命 ふつぬしのみこと	Futsunushi no Mikoto	the god of swords	The term “kami” may be used instead of “god.”
比売神 ひめがみ	<i>himegami</i>	goddess; wife, daughter, or other goddess related to the main deity enshrined at a shrine	common noun
大己貴命 おおなむちのみこと	Onamuchi no Mikoto	-	
瀬織津姫 せおりつひめ	Seoritsu-hime	goddess of exorcism	The term “kami” may be used instead of “goddess.”
須佐之男命 すさのおのみこと	Susanoo no Mikoto	god of storms	Younger brother of the sun goddess Amaterasu Omikami
武甕槌命 たけみかづちのみこと	Takemikazuchi no Mikoto	the god of thunder	The term “kami” may be used instead of “god.”
田心姫命 たごりひめのみこと	Tagorihime no Mikoto	-	
豊受大御神 とようけのおおみかみ	Toyouke no Omikami	-	

Temple-related Terms

Name in Japanese	Romanized spelling	Sample English gloss	Note (All words below should be capitalized without italics when used as proper nouns.)
山門	<i>sanmon</i>	main gate	

さんもん			
仁王門 におうもん	<i>niomon</i>	gate of the guardian kings	
楼門 ろうもん	<i>romon</i>	two-story gate	
本堂 ほんどう	<i>hondo</i>	main hall	
講堂 こうどう	<i>kodo</i>	lecture hall	
観音堂 かんのんどう	<i>kannondo</i>	Kannon hall	A hall dedicated to the bodhisattva Kannon
阿弥陀堂 あみだどう	<i>amidado</i>	Amidado hall	A hall dedicated to the Amida Buddha
金堂 こんどう	<i>kondo</i>	main hall	
鐘楼 しょうろう	<i>shoro</i>	bell tower	
宿坊 しゆくぼう	<i>shukubo</i>	lodgings for pilgrims at a temple	
護摩・護摩祈祷 ごま・ごまきとう	<i>goma/goma kito</i>	Goma fire ritual	
末寺 まつじ	<i>matsuji</i>	subtemple	
総本山 そうほんざん	<i>sohonzan</i>	head temple	

Buddhist Deities

Sometimes, explanations about Buddhism contain Sanskrit words. To ensure texts are easily understandable, this project makes a point to avoid technical terms in Sanskrit in general. However, in light of the many visitors from abroad who come to Japan, the use of some Sanskrit words may be useful to achieve better understanding. Such exceptions are terms that are widely used in English, such as “bodhisattva” and the names of deities.

The historical Buddha should be referred to as Shakyamuni or Shakyamuni Buddha; avoid Shaka. When the word 仏 appears, be careful. It does not always refer to “Buddha/buddha”; it may refer to “bodhisattva” or other Buddhist deities.

Name in Japanese	Romanized spelling	Proper name	Notes (for glosses)
如来 (によらい)	Nyorai	Buddha	“buddha” is in the English lexicon; avoid Nyorai
阿弥陀如来 あみだによらい	Amida Nyorai	the Buddha Amida Amida (Amitabha) Buddha the buddha Amida (Amitabha) Amida Buddha	A celestial Buddha. Amida in Japan is a combination of the Buddha of Infinite Light (Amitabha) and the Buddha of Infinite Life (Amitayus), so caution should be exercised if adding the Sanskrit terms.
大日如来 だいにちによらい	Dainichi Nyorai	the buddha Dainichi the buddha Dainichi (Mahavairochana) Dainichi, the Cosmic Buddha Dainichi (Mahavairochana) Buddha	The supreme deity of Esoteric Buddhism
薬師如来 やくしによらい	Yakushi Nyorai	the buddha Yakushi (Bhaisajyaguru) Yakushi, the Medicine Buddha Yakushi, the Buddha of Healing	Also, Buddha of Medicine and Healing

菩薩 (ぼさつ)	bosatsu	bodhisattva	bodhisattva is in English lexicon; avoid <i>bosatsu</i>)
地藏菩薩 じぞうぼさつ	Jizo Bosatsu	the bodhisattva Jizo Jizo (Ksitigarbha) the bodhisattva Jizo (Ksitigarbha)	Guardian figure, the savior of all sentient beings; intercessor in the Buddhist hells
観音菩薩 かんのんぼさつ	Kannon Bosatsu	Kannon (Avalokiteshvara) the bodhisattva Kannon (Avalokiteshvara)	Buddhist deity Kannon, bodhisattva of compassion Avoid using “she” or “goddess.”
千手観音 せんじゅかんのん	Senju Kannon	Thousand-Armed Kannon (Avalokiteshvara)	Bodhisattva of compassion Avoid using “she” or “goddess.”
十一面観音 じゅういちめん かんのん	Juichimen Kannon	Eleven-Headed Kannon (Ekadashamukha)	Bodhisattva of compassion Avoid using “she” or “goddess.”

弥勒菩薩 みろくぼさつ	Miroku Bosatsu	the bodhisattva Miroku (Maitreya) the Buddha of the Future (Maitreya)	Bodhisattva who will arrive on earth sometime in the future to achieve complete enlightenment and save humanity
日光菩薩 にっこうぼさつ	Nikko Bosatsu	the bodhisattva Nikko	Attendant of Yakushi, the Medicine Buddha
月光菩薩 がっこうぼさつ	Gakko Bosatsu	the bodhisattva Gakko	Attendant of Yakushi, the Medicine Buddha
仁王 におう	Nio	Nio guardian figure	Temple guardian figure
権現 ごんげん	Gongen	a Buddhist deity in the form of a Shinto deity	
地藏 じぞう	<i>jizo</i> Jizo	<i>jizo</i> statue the bodhisattva Jizo	Guardian or roadside statue as principal image

明王 (みょうおう) Wisdom King, Radiant Wisdom King			
不動明王 ふどうみょうおう	Fudo Myo-o	Immovable Wisdom King	Fierce-looking deity believed to protect the faithful and to guide followers with the fierce love of a parent
愛染明王 あいぜんみょうおう	Aizen Myo-o		A wisdom king believed to control love, marriage, and household harmony

Other religion-related terms

Name in Japanese	Romanized spelling	Sample English gloss	Note
山岳信仰 さんがくしんこう	<i>sangaku shinko</i>	mountain asceticism	
修験道 しゅげんどう	Shugendo	mountain religion; mountain asceticism; religion that combines aspects of Shinto, Buddhism, Taoism, and mountain asceticism	
霊山 れいざん	<i>reizan</i>	sacred mountain sacred peak	
神仏習合 しんぶつしゅうごう	<i>shinbutsu shugo</i>	fusion of Buddhism and Shinto	

六道 ろくどう	<i>rokudo</i>	six states of existence	
陰陽 いんよう	<i>in'yo</i>	yin and yang	
御嶽 うたぎ	<i>utaki</i>	sacred site (in Okinawa)	
末法 まっぼう	<i>mappo</i>	the end of the Law latter days of the Law	

Japanese Historical Periods

時代/Political Periods		文化/Cultural Periods	
原始/Prehistoric (Genshi)			
		旧石器時代	Kyūsekki (Japanese Paleolithic), ca. 33,000–14,500 BCE
		縄文時代	Jomon, 14,500 BCE–900 BCE
		弥生時代	Yayoi, 900 BCE–300 CE
古代/Ancient (Kodai)			
大和時代	Yamato (ca. 250–late 700s)	古墳時代	Kofun (Tumulus), ca. 250–ca. late 700s
		飛鳥時代	Asuka, 552–645
		白鳳文化	Hakuho, 645–710
奈良時代	Nara (710–794)	天平文化	Tenpyo, 710–794
平安時代	Heian (794–1185)	弘仁・貞観文化	Konin-Jogan, 794–894
		藤原時代	Fujiwara, 897–1185
中世/Medieval (Chusei)			
鎌倉時代	Kamakura, 1185–1333		
建武の新政	Kenmu Restoration (1333–1336)	北山文化	Kitayama (1367–1408)
室町時代	Muromachi (Ashikaga shogunate), 1336–1573	東山文化	Higashiyama (1449–1473)
南北朝時代	Nanbokucho or “Northern and Southern” Courts (1336–1392)		
戦国時代	Sengoku (Warring States) 1467–1568		

近世/Early Modern Period (Kinsei) (Note: Avoid “premodern”)			
安土桃山時代	Azuchi-Momoyama (1568–1603)	桃山文化	Momoyama (1573–1615)
江戸時代	Edo (1603–1867)	元禄文化	Genroku (1688–1704)
		文化文政	Bunka-Bunsei (1804–1830)
近代/Modern Period (Kindai)			
明治時代	Meiji era/period (1868–1912)		
大正時代	Taisho era/period (1912–1926)		
昭和時代	(prewar) Showa era/period (1926–1945)		
現代/Contemporary Period (Gendai)			
昭和時代	(postwar) Showa era/period (1945–1989)		
平成時代	Heisei era/period (1989–2019)		
令和時代	Reiwa era/period (2019–)		

Based on: *Japan Style Sheet*. Society of Writers, Editors, and Translators, Tokyo (2018); updates at japanstyslesheet.com

Names of Plant Species

植物名（日本語）	英語表記
アカエゾマツ	<i>aka ezo matsu</i> : Sakhalin spruce
アカガシ	<i>akagashi</i> : Japanese evergreen oak
アカマツ	<i>akamatsu</i> : Japanese red pine; Korean red pine
アマモ	<i>amamo</i> : eelgrass
アオキ	<i>aoki</i> : spotted laurel (<i>Aucuba japonica</i>)
馬酔木	<i>asebi</i> : Japanese andromeda (<i>Pieris japonica</i>)
ブナ	<i>buna</i> : beech
チャーギ	<i>Chagi</i> : Buddhist pine (<i>Podocarpus macrophyllus</i>)
ダケカンバ	<i>dakekanba</i> : Erman's birch
藤	<i>fuji</i> : wisteria
月桂樹	<i>gekkeiju</i> : bay laurel
ハマボウ	<i>hamabo</i> : hibiscus
ヒゴタイ	<i>higotai</i> : globe thistle (<i>Echinops setifer</i>)
ヒジキ	<i>hijiki</i> : seaweed
ヒノキ	<i>hinoki</i> cypress: Japanese cypress
ヒサカキ	<i>hisakaki</i> : East Asian eurya
ホオノキ	<i>honoki</i> : bigleaf magnolia (<i>Magnolia obovata</i>)
イチイガシ	<i>ichiigashi</i> : red-bark oak
イタドリ	<i>itadori</i> : Japanese knotweed
ジングウツツジ	<i>jingu-tsutsuji</i> : <i>Rhododendron sanctum</i> Nakai
カエデ	<i>kaede</i> : maple
カキツバタ	<i>kakitsubata</i> : rabbit-ear iris; Japanese water iris
カシワ	<i>kashiwa</i> : Japanese emperor oak; <i>daimyo</i> oak
茅(かや)	<i>kaya</i> : grasses or reeds
ケヤキ	<i>keyaki</i> : zelkova
桐(きり)	<i>kiri</i> : paulownia
キスミレ	<i>kisumire</i> : Golden violet (<i>Viola orientalis</i>)
キタゴヨウ	<i>kitagoyo</i> : Japanese white pine
コバノミツバツツジ	<i>kobanomitsuba tsutsuji</i> : Netted azalea (<i>Rhododendron reticulatum</i>)

コナラ	<i>konara</i> : jolcham oak
高山植物	<i>kozan shokubutsu</i> : alpine plants
クヌギ	<i>kunugi</i> : sawtooth oak
クララ	<i>kurara</i> : shrubby sophora
クロマツ	<i>kuromatsu</i> : black pine
マリモ	<i>marimo</i> : moss ball; lake ball
メアカンフスマ	<i>Meakan-fusuma</i> : <i>Arenaria merckioides</i>
メアカンキンバイ	<i>Meakan-kinbai</i> : <i>Sibbaldia miyabei</i>
ミヤマキリシマ	<i>miyama kirishima</i> : Kyushu azalea (<i>Rhododendron Kiusianum</i>)
ミズナラ	<i>mizunara</i> : mizunara oak
モミ	<i>momi</i> : fir; Japanese fir
ラワンブキ	<i>Rawanbuki</i> : Giant butterbur
ササユリ	<i>sasayuri</i> : bamboo lily
シャリンバイ	<i>sharinbai</i> : Yeddo hawthorn
シラカン	<i>shirakashi</i> : bamboo-leaf oak
スダジイ	<i>sudajii</i> : chinkapin (<i>Castanopsis sieboldii</i>)
杉	<i>sugi</i> : Japanese cedar; cryptomeria
ススキ	<i>susuki</i> : silvergrass; eulalia grass; Chinese silvergrass; miscanthus grass
テングサ	<i>tengusa</i> : <i>Gelidiaceae</i> red algae
テンナンショウ	<i>tennanjo</i> : jack-in-the-pulpit
ツガ	<i>tsuga</i> : southern Japanese hemlock
ツゲ	<i>tsuge</i> : boxwood (<i>Buxus microphylla</i>)
ツワブキ	<i>tsuwabuki</i> : leopard plant
ウバメガシ	<i>ubamegashi</i> : ubame oak (<i>Quercus phillyraeoides</i>)
ヤブツバキ	<i>yabutsubaki</i> : Japanese camellia
ヤシヤブシ	<i>yashabushi</i> : Japanese green alder
ヤツシロソウ	<i>yatsushiroso</i> : clustered bellflower

Names of Animal Species

ローマ字表記	日本語名称
black woodpecker	クマゲラ
black-faced spoonbill	クロツラヘラサギ
black-tailed gull	ウミネコ
bunting	ホオジロ
chestnut tiger butterfly	アサギマダラ
common buzzard	ノスリ
cuckoo	カッコウ
fan-tailed warbler	ウグイス
finless porpoise	スナメリ
four-spot midge	ヒヌマイトトンボ
great cormorant	カワウ
grey-faced buzzard	サシバ
hatcho-tombo	ハッチョウトンボ
house martin	イワツバメ
<i>Hydrophilidae</i>	ガムシ
Japanese green woodpecker	アオゲラ
Japanese pygmy woodpecker (<i>kogera</i>)	コゲラ
Japanese serow	ニホンカモシカ
Japanese sparrow hawk	ハイタカ
Kentish plover	シロチドリ
Kerama deer	ケラマジカ
Latham's snipe	オオジシギ
loggerhead turtle	アカウミガメ
osprey	ミサゴ
rove beetle	ハネカクシ
short-eared owl	コミミズク
Siberian flying squirrel	エゾモモンガ
white-tailed eagle	オジロワシ
whooper swan	オオハクチョウ
Yezo shika deer	エゾシカ

Food-related Terminology

Japanese	Romanization	Sample English gloss	Notes
温泉饅頭	<i>onsen manju</i>	bean-jam buns sold at hot spring resorts	
笹寿司	<i>sasazushi</i>	sushi wrapped in <i>sasa</i> bamboo leaves	
流しそうめん	<i>nagashi-somen</i>	“streaming” somen noodles	
麴	<i>koji</i>	koji mold used for fermentation	
日本酒	<i>nihonshu</i>	sake (avoid “rice wine”)	Recommended not to italicize.
天然酵母	<i>tennen kobo</i>	natural yeast	
和三盆	<i>wasanbon</i>	fine-grained Japanese sugar	
和菓子	<i>wagashi</i>	traditional Japanese sweets	

Also available online, with companion article in Japanese, at https://swet.jp/columns/article/six_simple_rules_for_no_fail_texts_and_signage/_C35

Six Simple Rules for No-Fail Texts and Signage

Wordsmiths in Japan are often concerned when the English texts they produce are ready for layout and design and want to explain to their clients the pitfalls involved. To support efforts to educate clients tackling English-language layout and design, SWET has prepared this article in conjunction with a Japanese-language companion article. These articles explain six best-practice rules for formatting English texts for signs or websites. Encourage clients to refer to the [companion article](#) in Japanese and familiarize themselves with these rules to ensure readers focus on the content of a text rather than its appearance.

These rules are more or less standard in publishing of all kinds. They should be applied in conjunction with the guidelines for any given project, whether they are based on the *Chicago Manual of Style*, the *Japan Style Sheet*, the *JTA Writing and Style Manual*, or other style guide.

1) English texts must be typeset in a Western-language font environment

English letters and punctuation are all single-byte characters and should be typeset in a Western-language (Obun) font environment.

If English text prepared in a Western font environment is set in a Japanese-language font environment, it can cause some punctuation marks, quotation marks, apostrophes, and dashes (as shown in the examples below) to become double-byte characters, resulting in unsightly and awkward-looking text. “Smart” quotation marks may also be changed to “straight” quotation marks.

Correct Punctuation Marks

“For if it is rash to walk into a lion’s den unarmed, rash to navigate the Atlantic in a rowing boat, rash to stand on one foot on top of St. Paul’s, it is still more rash to go home alone with a poet.” (Virginia Woolf, *Orlando*)

Incorrect Punctuation Marks

" For if it is rash to walk into a lion 's den unarmed, rash to navigate the Atlantic in a rowing boat, rash to stand on one foot on top of St. Paul 's, it is still more rash to go home alone with a poet. " (Virginia Woolf, *Orlando*)

2) Use appropriate English-language fonts

There are two categories of English fonts: serif and sans-serif fonts. Serif fonts have decorative strokes (called serifs), and sans-serif fonts do not.

Serif fonts are easier to read in printed matter and are recommended for signage. Sans-serif fonts are frequently preferred for legibility in on-screen reading.

Some commonly-used English-language fonts:

Serif: Times New Roman, Century, Garamond, Bodoni, Book Antiqua, Baskerville
Sans-serif: Arial, Verdana, Helvetica, Futura, Optima, Tahoma

Some often-used Japanese fonts to avoid: Osaka, Hiragino Mincho, Yu Mincho, Kozuka Mincho, and MS Mincho.

3) Use proper spacing and alignment

English texts are quite commonly aligned flush left with a single space between each word. This method of setting text will be more successful for designers with less experience handling English text. Justified alignment may be desired, but without expert handling, it can result in inconsistent spacing between words, sometimes with white “rivers” showing in blocks of text, which can make the text hard to read and unattractive.

Proper Spacing and Alignment (Unjustified or Ragged-right Text):

“The habitual use of the active voice makes for forcible writing. This is true not only in narrative principally concerned with action, but in writing of any kind. Many a tame sentence of description or exposition can be made lively and emphatic by substituting a verb in the active voice for some such perfunctory expression as there is, or could be heard.” (William Strunk, *The Elements of Style*)

Improper Spacing and Alignment (Justified Text):

“The habitual use of the active voice makes for forcible writing. This is true not only in narrative principally concerned with action, but in writing of any kind. Many a tame sentence of description or exposition can be made lively and emphatic by substituting a verb in the active voice for some such perfunctory expression as there is, or could be heard.” (William Strunk, *The Elements of Style*)

4) Beware of lost formatting when copying and pasting texts

Italics, boldface, underline, and other types of font formatting are often lost when text is copied and pasted between editing platforms. Italicization, in particular, has an important function in texts about Japanese culture, as it informs the reader which words are Japanese. This distinction can be crucial, not only for pronunciation but also for comprehension (e.g., *me* [eye] vs. me, *same* [shark] vs. same, *man* [ten thousand] vs. man, etc.).

5) Make sure readers can recognize hyphens, en dashes, and em dashes, which are used for specific purposes

Hyphens, en dashes, and em dashes are distinct characters in English that serve different functions. Fonts for Asian languages often change the characters for these dashes, but using appropriate English-language fonts should resolve this problem.

After copying and pasting texts that contain hyphens, en dashes, and em dashes, always check that the characters have not become garbled.

Character	English Font Example Times New Roman (○)	Japanese Font Example MS Mincho (X)
Hyphen	-	-
En dash	–	-
Em dash	—	-

6) Use proper paragraphing style; see your main style guide for the paragraphing rules for your project

The transition to a new paragraph should always be indicated by either indenting the first line of new paragraphs or leaving space between paragraphs.

For signage and print publications, do not indent the first paragraph under a heading. Indent all following paragraphs. See the dummy text below for a visual example. The indent should be set so that it does not create too much or too little blank space.

For websites, QR code text, and other types of digital texts, the open-line method of paragraphing is often preferred. Either one full line or some extra space can be opened to ensure the separation of paragraphs is distinct.

Paragraphing for Signage and Print Publications

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Paragraphing for Websites, QR Code Text, and Other Types of Digital Texts

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No-Fail Signage Checklist

1. The font is an appropriately chosen Western-language font.
2. The text is left-aligned (ragged right).
3. Font formatting (italics, etc.) from the original text is reflected in the final text.
4. Quotation marks, commas, colons, and apostrophes are in single-byte form.
5. Hyphens, en dashes, and em dashes are the correct characters.
6. Paragraphs are indented correctly.

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Compiled by Rebekah Harmon, Lisa Wilcut,
Lynne E. Riggs, and Sakai Motoki