

List of High-Frequency Baseword Vocabulary for Japanese EFL Students

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Introduction

Could it be true that even the youngest students in Japan are already familiar with more than a third of the most useful words of English? In my research presented in the January 1999 issue of *The Internet TESL Journal*, entitled "English Loanwords in Japanese -- The Built-In Lexicon" (1999a, Daulton), I first showed how English loanwords in Japanese aid the acquisition of the English vocabulary they are based on -- "basewords." Second, I showed that more than one third of the 2000 high-frequency words of English (Nation, 1990) have become basewords. That is, the English word *sour* is easier for Japanese than the word *wicked* because *sour* has entered Japanese (as *sawaa*) and *wicked* has not. Both *sour*, a baseword, and *wicked*, a non-baseword, are high-frequency words. Following is the list of these 734 high-frequency English basewords. Their frequency is based on West's General Service List (1953), which, although aging, is thought to be the most useful collection of vocabulary by researchers like Nation (1990, p. 14). Word lists are problematic. If anything, my "List of High-Frequency Baseword Vocabulary" underestimates the actual number of loanword cognates in Japanese. I often come across loanwords in Japanese that can not be found in even current dictionaries of loanwords, such as *A Dictionary of Loanwords Usage* (1991). Furthermore, teachers involved in teaching specific subjects such as computer technology will be pleased to find that 99% of computer jargon in Japanese comes from English computer jargon (albeit "low frequency" words) (Lovejoy, 1996). Because of these types of deficiencies, teachers will find it useful to add words to my list. I have found the "List of High-Frequency Baseword Vocabulary" useful in various ways, most recently in preparing simplified reading texts for classes (see Daulton, 1999b).

List Format Explanation

Each letter of the alphabet is divided into two parts. For example, "A-1" includes the top 1000 most frequent words as determined by West (1953) that correlated to a common Japanese loanword. "A-2" includes the next 1000 most frequent English words that correlated.

| | | | |
|-------------|----------|-------------|-----------|
| A-1 | fancy | morning | secret |
| action | farm | mother | secretary |
| active | fashion | motor | see |
| address | fast | motor-cycle | sense |
| adventure | father | motorist | serious |
| after | feeling | Mrs. | service |
| agent | field | music | set |
| air | fight | musician | shoes |
| all | fighter | | short |
| apply | fighting | M-2 | shoulder |
| appointment | figure | mail | show |
| April | fine | manager | side |
| art | fire | map | sign |
| artist | first | match | simple |
| association | fish | meat | single |
| at | fit | mechanic | situation |
| attack | fitness | medical | size |
| | floor | merry | sleeping |
| A-2 | flower | message | slow |

| | | | |
|------------|------------|-------------|------------|
| accident | flight | mild | slowing |
| advice | flying | mix | smile |
| advertiser | food | model | social |
| apple | foods | moral | soft |
| arch | form | motion | sound |
| arrange | fortunate | multiple | space |
| attraction | free | mystery | speaker |
| | freedom | | special |
| B-1 | fresh | N-1 | speed |
| back | friend | name | sport |
| ball | friendly | native | spot |
| bar | friendship | near | spring |
| base | front | neck | stage |
| beauty | full-time | need | stand |
| bed | future | new | standard |
| beginner | | night | star |
| best | F-2 | no | start |
| big | faint | note | station |
| bill | fan | now | step |
| bird | fat | number | stick |
| black | fence | | still |
| blue | fever | N-2 | stock |
| book | film | neglect | story |
| boy | flag | net | straight |
| branch | flash | nice | stretching |
| broad | flavor | noise | strike |
| burn | flesh | nonsense | strong |
| business | float | nut | subject |
| buy | fond | | sugar |
| | fork | 0-1 | suggest |
| B-2 | formal | observer | summer |
| baby | frame | off | sun |
| bag | frozen | offer | support |
| baking | fruits | office | system |
| balance | fried | oil | systematic |
| band | fun | old | |
| bargain | funny | on | S-2 |
| barrel | | one | saddle |
| basket | G-1 | order | salary |
| bath | game | out | sample |
| beam | garden | outline | sauce |
| bell | gas | owner | screen |
| belt | gate | | screw |
| bind | gathers | 0-2 | search |
| birth | general | omit | self |
| blade | get | orange | sentence |
| block | gift | organ | severe |
| boil | girl | original | sharp |
| border | give | originality | sheet |
| bowl | glass | | shirt |
| brain | go | P-1 | shocking |
| bribe | gold | page | shop |
| brown | good | paint | shopping |
| brush | green | paper | shower |
| bucket | ground | part | shut |
| bus | group | part-time | signal |
| butter | guard | party | silk |
| button | | pass | skin |
| | G-2 | pay | skirt |
| C-1 | garage | payment | slide |
| call | grammar | perfect | slip |
| called | grand | permanent | slope |
| camp | greeting | permission | smooth |
| camping | grey | personal | soap |
| can | grind | personality | socks |

| | | | |
|-------------|---------------|--------------|-----------|
| captain | guest | picture | soup |
| car | guide | plain | sour |
| case | gun | plan | spare |
| catch | | plant | spoon |
| center | H-1 | play | staff |
| central | half | player | stained |
| chair | half-time | playing | stamp |
| chance | hall | point | steam |
| change | hand | political | strap |
| character | happening | poor | straw |
| chief | happy | popular | strip |
| choose | hard | position | stripe |
| claim | head | post | suit |
| class | health | poster | sweat |
| clean | heavy | power | swimming |
| cleaning | high | powerful | swing |
| clear | home | practical | |
| close | hope | press | T-1 |
| club | horse | pressure | table |
| coal | hot | private | take |
| coin | house | produce | taste |
| cold | how | producers | tear |
| college | human | product | term |
| color | | production | test |
| colorful | H-2 | program | three |
| common | hammer | proper | time |
| condition | handkerchief | proposal | title |
| connection | hit | provide | ton |
| container | hook | public | top |
| control | host | pull | total |
| corn | hotel | | touch |
| corner | hunger | P-2 | town |
| cost | hunt | pack | trade |
| cotton | | pair | train |
| count | I-1 | parent | training |
| country | ice | parking | travel |
| course | idea | paste | trouble |
| court | inch | pattern | truck |
| cover | introductions | pause | try |
| cross | iron | pearl | turn |
| cut | | pen | two |
| | I-2 | performance | typing |
| C-2 | ice | pet | typical |
| cake | ideal | photography | |
| camera | idle | pin | T-2 |
| cap | imagination | pinch | tail |
| card | industrial | pink | tap |
| cent | informal | pipe | taxi |
| ceremony | ink | pocket | tea |
| chain | instant | police | telephone |
| chalk | international | pool | tent |
| charming | | pot | thank |
| cheap | J-1 | powder | theatre |
| check | judge | pride | thick |
| cheer | just | professional | thin |
| cheese | | pump | ticket |
| Christmas | J-2 | pure | tie |
| climbing | jealousy | push | tight |
| coat | joint | puzzle | tip |
| coffee | juice | | tire |
| collar | jump | Q-1 | tobacco |
| collect | | quality | tough |
| commercial | K-1 | queen | tour |
| companion | king | question | towel |
| competition | | | tower |

| | | | |
|------------|---------------|------------|------------|
| cook | K-2 | Q-2 | toy |
| cool | key | | track |
| copy | kick | R-1 | tray |
| cork | kiss | race | trick |
| cottage | ki tchen | racing | trunk |
| cream | knock | rank | tube |
| cup | | ranki ng | tune |
| cure | L-1 | reader | |
| curtai n | lady | readi ng | U-1 |
| curve | ladies | ready | under |
| cushi on | language | reali stic | up |
| | last | reali ty | used |
| D-1 | leadershi p | reasonable | |
| dance | left | recei ve | U-2 |
| dancer | letter | recei ver | uni t |
| dark | level | record | uni versal |
| date | li brary | regul ar | |
| day | li fe | rent | V-1 |
| dead | li ght | repeat | variety |
| dealer | li mit | report | very |
| deli very | li ne | reporter | vi ctory |
| department | li p | reserve | |
| direct | li steni ng | rest | V-2 |
| directors | li ve | return | veil |
| doctor | local | ri ch | |
| dog | long | ri ght | W-1 |
| dollar | look | ri ng | water |
| door | loss | road | weak |
| double | lot | rock | weekend |
| draw | love | roll | weekly |
| dress | low | room | whi te |
| dressi ng | | rough | who |
| drive | L-2 | round | wi de |
| driver | lamp | royal | wi fe |
| drop | leg | run | wi ld |
| dry | lesson | runni ng | wi nd |
| dryer | li st | rush | wi nter |
| duty | loaf | | woman |
| | loan | R-2 | word |
| D-2 | lock | radi o | work |
| deli cate | loose | rail | world |
| di amond | loud | rail way | worst |
| dive | lucky | rain | wri ter |
| dozen | lunch | razor | |
| drum | | refresh | W-2 |
| dull | M-1 | rel i eve | wai st |
| dust | mach i ne | repai r | warm |
| | mai n | request | wax |
| E-1 | make | rescue | weak |
| ear | man | restaurant | wei ght |
| earth | manners | reti re | wheel |
| easy | mark | revi ew | whi p |
| end | market | ri bbon | whi stle |
| enjoy | marketi ng | ri ce | wi ne |
| equal | mass | ri sk | wi re |
| event | master | ri val | wool |
| exchange | mean | roast | wrappi ng |
| exerci se | meani ngl ess | rope | wreck |
| eye | measure | rubber | |
| | meeti ng | rude | X-1 |
| E-2 | member | | X-2 |
| electric | memory | S-1 | |
| engi neer | memori al | sale | Y-1 |
| entertai n | metal | sales | yes |
| essence | mi ddle | save | young |

| | | | |
|----------|---------|---------|--------|
| exciting | might | scale | Y-2 |
| extras | mile | scene | yard |
| | milk | school | yellow |
| F-1 | mineral | science | |
| face | miss | sea | |
| fair | mister | season | Z-1 |
| family | modern | seat | Z-2 |
| famous | money | second | |

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