

# Counting in Japanese – Part 1

## From Zero (0) to 99

By

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Most Dojo's worldwide practicing Japanese Martial Arts of any discipline, tend to use Japanese to some extent within their training. Often the first regular contact of the Japanese language to most individuals in a Dojo, is from the Sensei using Japanese to count. For the majority, most instruction in Japanese Martial Arts only use the numbers of 1 to 10, repeating themselves when 10 has been reached as often as necessary during the training.

Actually counting in Japanese is extremely easy and can be picked up quickly by most people of any age. In Japanese, all that is needed to learn to count from 1 to 99 are the terms for the numbers 1 to 10.

These terms and their pronunciation are shown in the table as follows, I have also included the Kanji for those interested : -

English	Japanese	Pronounce d alone	Spoken in counting	Kanji
Zero (0)	Rei *	Ray	Ray	零
One (1)	Ichi	Itchy	Itch	一
Two (2)	Ni	Knee	Nee	二
Three (3)	San	San	San	三
Four (4)	Shi or Yon **	She	She	四
Five (5)	Go	Go	Go	五
Six (6)	Roku	Row koo	Rook	六
Seven (7)	Shichi or Nana ***	She Chee	Sit ch	七
Eight (8)	Hachi	Hat chee	Hatch	八

Nine (9)	Ku or Kyu	Koo	Cue	九
Ten (10)	Ju or Jyu	Jew	Jew	十

Note exceptions : -

\* Initially there was no number or Kanji used for zero in the Japanese language, now there is, the Kanji is taken from the first ideogram used in the term for the Japanese fighter plane “Zero Fighter” used in WW2.

\*\* Generally Shi is used for the number 4 when used in single columns eg. 4, 14, 104, etc but Yon is used when 4 is the first digit in the number eg. 41, 402, etc, however at times either / or may be used.

\*\*\* Generally Shichi is used for the number 7 when used in single columns eg. 7, 17, 107, etc but Nana is used when 7 is the first digit in the number eg. 71, 702, etc, however at times either / or may be used.

Now try counting to 10 with confidence.

You just never know, one day you may find that you too are asked to count out loud for the benefit of the rest of the class, at which point being able to do so in Japanese just may make your task that much more interesting, and enjoyable.

### Counting above Ten (10)

Again, for counting above ten, the Japanese use a simple method for instance : -

Eleven (11) translates as 10 and 1 and so on.

Number	Translates	Japanese
Eleven (11)	10 and 1	Ju ichi
Twelve (12)	10 and 2	Ju ni
Thirteen (13)	10 and 3	Ju san
Fourteen (14)	10 and 4	Ju shi
Fifteen (15)	10 and 5	Ju go
Sixteen (16)	10 and 6	Ju roku
Seventeen (17)	10 and 7	Ju shichi
Eighteen (18)	10 and 8	Ju hachi
Nineteen (19)	10 and 9	Ju ku

At number twenty (20) the Japanese pronounce the numbers slightly different by saying : -

Twenty (20) translates as 2 - 10's and so on.

Number	Translates	Japanese
Twenty (20)	2 – 10's	Ni ju
Thirty (30)	3 – 10's	San ju
Forty (40)	4 – 10's	Yon ju
Fifty (50)	5 – 10's	Go ju
Sixty (60)	6 – 10's	Roku ju
Seventy (70)	7 – 10's	Nana ju
Eighty (80)	8 – 10's	Hachi ju
Ninety (90)	9 – 10's	Ku ju

Anything in between the tens is simply the tens and the single digit eg:-

Number	Translates	Japanese
21	2 – 10's and 1	Ni ju ichi
32	3 – 10's and 2	San ju ni
43	4 – 10's and 3	Yon ju san
54	5 – 10's and 4	Go ju shi
65	6 – 10's and 5	Roku ju go
76	7 – 10's and 6	Nana ju roku
87	8 – 10's and 7	Hachi ju shichi
99	9 – 10's and 9	Ku ju ku

To write any relevant number in Kanji add the singular Kanji before or after the “10” Kanji following the above rules.