INTRODUCTION
序 説

The Kodansha Kanji Learner's Dictionary answers the urgent need for an easy-to-use kanji dictionary, compact enough to be easily carried around, yet detailed enough to satisfy the practical needs of the serious learner.

Its basic goal is to give the learner a thorough understanding of how kanji are used in contemporary Japanese, by providing instant access to a wealth of useful information on the meanings, readings, and compounds for the most frequently used kanji.

A unique and valuable feature is the **core meaning,** a concise keyword that defines the most dominant meaning of each character, which is followed by in-depth meanings that clearly show how a few thousand basic building blocks are combined to form countless compound words.

Clear, complete, and accurate **character meanings,** illustrated by numerous compounds and examples, are grouped around the core meaning in a logically structured manner that allows them to be perceived as an integrated unit. In addition, guidance is provided for distinguishing between easily confused characters, such as homophones.

Another unique feature is the **System of Kanji Indexing by Patterns** (SKIP), a system that enables the user to locate characters as quickly and as accurately as in alphabetical dictionaries. Since the system can be learned in a very short time and is easy to use, this dictionary is an extremely convenient learning tool.

Modern linguistic theory has been effectively integrated with sophisticated information technology to produce a powerful tool that can be used by beginning and intermediate learners with equal ease. For the first time, learners of Japanese have at their fingertips a wealth of information on kanji that is linguistically accurate, easy to use, and carefully adapted to their practical needs.

Thanks to these and other features, this is the most useful kanji-English learner's dictionary ever compiled.

THE STUDY OF KANJI

The Japanese writing system is composed of two phonetic syllabaries, called *hiragana* and *katakana,* and thousands of Chinese characters, called *kanji.* Kanji have three basic properties: form, sound, and meaning. Many characters are of complex shape, some having more than twenty or even thirty strokes. Almost all characters may be pronounced according to their Chinese derived *on* reading, or one of several native Japanese *kun* readings, and each reading may have numerous meanings. Moreover, since many words are pronounced the same but written differently (homophones), the Japanese writing system is complex and requires considerable effort to learn.

But the effort is well worthwhile. Kanji have the ability to generate hundreds of thousands of compound words from a basic stock of a few thousand units. They form a network of interrelated parts that function as an integrated system, not as an arbitrary set of disconnected symbols. The few character dictionaries presently available fail to address systematically that most elusive, yet undoubtedly most important, aspect of kanji: their meanings, especially their meanings as word-building elements.

Although the number of Japanese language students in the world has been rising at a rapid pace, effective learning aids for truly mastering kanji have not been available. Never before has the need been so urgent for a kanji dictionary that offers a systematic solution to the special problems faced by the non-Japanese learner.

A NEW DICTIONARY APPROACH

The primary goal of **The Kodansha Kanji Learner's Dictionary** (KALD) has been set high: to create a practical tool that enables the learner to gain an *in-depth* understanding of the most frequently used kanji in contemporary Japanese.

Based on a systematic approach and a firm theoretical foundation, the new work has been designed to meet in full the specific needs of beginning and intermediate learners. We have avoided the path of least resistance taken by other works; that is, compiling lists of words and presenting only superficial information such as readings and radicals, while sidestepping the difficult task of presenting accurate character meanings.

This is the latest addition to the **Kanji Integrated Tools** (KIT), a series of dictionaries and learning aids for mastering the Japanese writing system. This dictionary is based on the first installment of the series, the NTC/Kenkyusha **New Japanese-English Character Dictionary** (NJECD), which has already become established as a standard reference work and enjoys an excellent reputation among scholars, educators, and learners of Japanese throughout the world.

This dictionary incorporates most of the features of its parent work, including core meanings, detailed character meanings, stroke order diagrams, cross-references to homophones, numerous compounds and examples, a speedy indexing system, and other features. It also includes some new features, such as core meanings for homophones, new entry characters, the most recent frequency statistics (July 1998), character codes, and color coding to show relationships between senses.

To achieve these aims, this dictionary differs from traditional kanji dictionaries in six important ways:

1. Core meanings convey the most fundamental meaning of each character.
2. In-depth character meanings are arranged in a manner that shows how they are interrelated.
3. The compounds are classified by meaning in a way that clearly shows how they are formed from their constituents.
4. The SKIP indexing system makes it easier and faster to locate entry characters.
5. The visually attractive design makes the dictionary extremely user-friendly.
6. The optimal balance has been achieved between portability and comprehensiveness.

The one feature that clearly distinguishes this dictionary—that puts it in a class of its own among kanji dictionaries—is that it was carefully designed to strike the optimal balance between two fundamentally conflicting needs: portability and comprehensiveness.

On the one hand, it provides the learner with immediate access to detailed information for more than 99% of the kanji used in Japanese newspapers; on the other hand, it is compact

and light enough to be easily carried around in one's handbag or briefcase.

These and other features distinguish this dictionary as the most in-depth kanji learner's dictionary ever compiled. This was achieved by making full use of the most recent advances in linguistic science, computational lexicography, and electronic publishing technology.

COVERAGE

This dictionary offers a detailed treatment of the meanings and functions of the most frequently used kanji in present-day Japanese, with particular emphasis on contemporary usage and newspapers. It contains 2230 main entry characters and approximately 41,000 senses for some 31,300 words, word elements, and illustrative examples.

The entries include (1) the 1945 characters in the official **Jōyō Kanji** list, which are widely used in the media and education, (2) the 285 characters in the official **Jinmei Kanji** list, used in names, and (3) 578 **cross-reference** entries. These cover more than 99% of the most frequently used characters, which is adequate for meeting the needs of the serious learner.

Our general approach in selecting **compound words** has been to include the ones most useful to the learner, based on the following criteria:

1. All compounds normally written in kanji that are listed in **Ten Thousand Graded Japanese Words** (一万語語彙分類集), published by Senmon Kyōiku Shuppan and based on the widely used **Japanese Achievement Test.**
2. High-frequency compounds based on statistics compiled by The National Language Research Institute in the official survey **A Study of Uses of Chinese Characters in Modern Newspapers.**
3. Numerous other compounds useful to intermediate and advanced learners, se-

lected on the basis of their ability to illustrate the entry character's meaning.

Character readings were selected on the basis of the following criteria:

1. All **approved readings** (those in the Jōyō Kanji list), and their derivatives when necessary, have been included.
2. **Unapproved readings** have, in principle, been excluded, except on the occasions when they are important to learners (e.g. 仏 **FUTSU**). (Why such important readings have been omitted from Jōyō Kanji is a mystery.)
3. Common **name readings** (used exclusively in proper names), as well as unapproved or rare readings frequently used in names, have been included.

In principle, the above criteria ensure that all high-frequency words and word elements important to the learner are covered. However, to keep the dictionary from getting too bulky, the following limitations were applied:

1. Only typical examples of the potentially innumerable compounds formed by affixation (e.g. 校正済 **kōseizumi** 'proofreading completed' from 校正 + 済) are given, since it is easy to infer their meanings.
2. Many nouns are turned into verbs by adding する **suru,** into adjectival nouns by adding な **na,** into adverbs by adding に **ni,** and so on. The part of speech selected was based on importance and on its ability to illustrate the entry character's meaning.

This policy is sometimes misunderstood by those who compare dictionaries on the basis of the number of words included. Let there be no misunderstanding: basically, this is a dictionary of characters, rather than of words. The primary emphasis has been on completeness in terms of quality, rather than comprehensiveness in terms of quantity; that is, to include compounds that directly contribute to an understanding of character meaning.

KANJI DICTIONARY PUBLISHING SOCIETY

The **New Japanese-English Character Dictionary** (NJECD), first published in 1990, required 66 man-years to compile. Upon publication it became a standard reference work for the study of kanji, and has been warmly supported by eminent Japanese language authorities around the world. Many scholars pointed out that the NJECD's many unique features could be utilized to offer kanji learners and researchers a full range of learning tools tailored to their needs. The NJECD thus became the first step in a series of computer-edited dictionaries and applications for the study of kanji, known as the **Kanji Integrated Tools** (KIT).

To make KIT a reality, the **Kanji Dictionary Publishing Society** (KDPS) was established in late 1993 as a part of the Institute of Modern Culture at Showa Women's University. The Society, headed by Showa Women's University President Professor Kusuo Hitomi, is directed by the Editorial Committee, which includes Japanese language education specialists such as Professor Osamu Mizutani, the President of the Society for Teaching Japanese as a Foreign Language, and other eminent Japanese language scholars. The Society is funded by the University and other organizations, such as the Toyota Foundation.

These projects have also attracted the welcome support of the Japanese government and related agencies, including former Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone, The Japan Foundation, the National Council on Educational Reform, The National Language Research Institute, the Society for Teaching Japanese as a Foreign Language, The National Language Society of Japan, and the Association for Japanese-Language Teaching.

KANJI INTEGRATED TOOLS

The data for KIT dictionaries is derived from DESK, a comprehensive database that covers every aspect of Chinese characters in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. The use of DESK and of the latest computational lexicography techniques ensures that all KIT dictionaries are tightly integrated and of consistent quality.

KIT derivatives spread over a wide range, including teaching and learning aids such as learner's dictionaries, other language editions such as kanji-German and kanji-Spanish dictionaries, CAI/CAL courseware, electronic dictionaries, and so on. To date, the following dictionaries have been published:

1.	New Japanese-English Character Dictionary	Kenkyusha	1990	Japanese market edition
2.	New Japanese-English Character Dictionary	NTC	1993	International Edition
3.	New Japanese-English Character Dictionary	Nichigai Associates	1995	Electronic Book Edition
4.	The Kodansha Kanji Learner's Dictionary	Kodansha International	1998	Learner's Edition

In the next phase, various other dictionaries, such as the pocket and German editions of this dictionary, will be published, to be followed by many other useful learning aids (see the KDPS website at www.kanji.org for details).

Through our publishing and research activities, we aim to offer a comprehensive solution to the diverse needs of learners, educators, and researchers. We invite scholars around the world to contribute to this ongoing effort.