

# JAPANESE-ENGLISH DICTIONARY OF KANJI USAGE

## 同訓使い分け和英辞典

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### Introduction

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As every learner of Japanese knows, each kanji can have one or more Chinese-derived pronunciations, called *on* readings, and a bewildering variety of native Japanese pronunciations, referred to as *kun* readings. 上, for example, has such *on* readings as **jō** and **shō** and such *kun* readings as **ue**, **kami**, **ageru**, **agaru**, **noboru**, **nobosu** and others.

A distinctive feature of Japanese is that it has numerous ***kun* homophones** (often *homophones* herein). These are native Japanese words that are pronounced the same but written differently, and that usually differ in meaning, as shown below.

上る **noboru** go up (steps, a hill)  
登る **noboru** climb, scale  
昇る **noboru** ascend, rise (up to the sky)

The ability to distinguish between the often subtle differences between such homophones is essential for mastering the Japanese writing system.

### First Homophones Dictionary

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The CJK Dictionary Institute (CJKI) is pleased to announce the completion of the **Japanese-English Dictionary of Kanji Usage**, a new type of reference work that enables intermediate and advanced learners deepen their understanding of how *kun* homophones are used in contemporary Japanese. Based on the author's world renowned **The Kodansha Kanji Dictionary** (Kodansha USA), this is the first ever bilingual dictionary of *kun* homophones.

Based on a systematic approach and in-depth research, this new work helps the serious student overcome the special problems posed by homophones in Japanese by providing complete

guidance on the differences between the vast majority of single character *kun* homophones in current use. Since homophones are a source of confusion to Japanese and non-Japanese alike, this is of great value to the student striving to gain a better understanding of Japanese texts or to write Japanese with greater precision.

## ***Kun* Homophones**

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Writing in Japanese often involves uncertainty over orthography. Although *on* homophones, such as 機構 **kiko** 'mechanism' and 帰港 **kiko** 'returning to the harbor', are very common, they are not likely to be confused since each character conveys a distinct meaning.

On the other hand, *kun* homophones are easily confused, even by native speakers. Not only can each character have many *kun* readings, but many *kun* words can be written with a bewildering variety of characters. Unlike *on* homophones, many *kun* homophones are close or even identical in meaning.

Often the differences in meaning are a source of confusion. For example, 解ける and 溶ける (**toke**ru) are interchangeable in the sense of 'melt, thaw' but not in the sense of 'come loose', which is always written 解ける. On the other hand, 柔らかい and 軟らかい (**yawaraka**i) both have identical meanings (similar to variant spellings of such English words as *judgment* and *judgement*, which are identical in meaning).

Because of these complications, students learning how to write Japanese are often at a loss when attempting to select a character for a particular context.

## **Distinctive Features**

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Based on world-renowned **The Kodansha Kanji Dictionary**, this dictionary provides various features that are useful to both learners and educators alike.

1. Over 700 usage articles bring together etymologically *kun* homophones under a single entry.
2. Thousands of compound words and examples illustrate how each homophone is used in context.
3. Covers the Jōyō Kanji, Jinmei Kanji and non- Jōyō Kanji character sets.
4. Multiple indexes for quickly locating entries by SKIP pattern, by On-Kun reading, by English meaning and by radical.

## Effective Learning Aid

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This dictionary serves as a powerful learning aid because it clearly indicates the differences and similarities between *kun* homophones. This is achieved in four ways:

1. The **English equivalents** give the precise meaning for each homophone group member.
2. **Illustrative examples** show how each homophone is used in context.
3. **Supplementary notes** sometimes provide an analysis of how individual homophones are used.
4. **Orthographic labels** indicate the degree of interchangeability between orthographic variants.

## In-depth Understanding

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Let us see how this dictionary helps the learner gain an in-depth understanding of four members of the homophone group **かえる** *kaeru*. This is a small excerpt of the full entry given below.

**変える: change, alter, convert, transform, turn into**

機械の機構が変わった <きかいのきこうがかわった>

The machine's mechanism has undergone changes [has been altered].

鉛を金に変える なまりをきんにかえる

convert lead into gold

**代わる: substitute, be substituted for (a person), take the place of**

機械が人力に代わる きかいがじんりよくにかわる

Machines take the place of human labor

BさんをAさんに代える びーさんをえーさんにかえる

substitute Mr. A for Mr. B

**換わる: be exchanged, become interchanged, be converted, change**

この機械は金に換わる <このきかいはかねにかわる>

This machine can be traded in for money

本を金に換える ほんをかねにかえる

exchange a book for money

替わる: be replaced, change places with, replace, take turns, relieve, change

機械が替わったきかいがかわった

The (old) machine was replaced (by a new one)

畳の表を替える たたみのおもてをかえる

replace the covers of old mats with new ones

As can be seen, the four members of this homophone group are conveniently brought together under a single entry. The **English equivalents**, along with the **illustrative examples**, help the learner get a deep understanding of the differences between them. By comparing the English equivalents the learner can accurately grasp the differences and similarities in shades of meaning, while the illustrative examples further clarify those differences.

Such in-depth information not only provides the learner with a better understanding of the often subtle differences between easily confused homophones, but also help him/her write with greater precision. In addition, **orthographic labels** such as "[sometimes also 唄]" show the interchangeability between orthographic variants, while occasional **supplementary notes**, such as "used esp. in reference to traditional Japanese songs," provide additional information.

歌

[also suffix]

① [sometimes also 唄] song, ballad

② Japanese poem, waka, tanka, ode, verse

唄

[usu. 歌] [also suffix] ditty, song, ballad—used esp.

in reference to traditional Japanese songs

## The CJK Dictionary Institute

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CJKI is one of the world's prime sources for CJK and Arabic dictionary data. It published learner dictionary and smartphone app, and is contributing to CJK information processing technology by providing comprehensive lexical resources.

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## かえる kaeru

### 変える

㊦2569

- ① **change, alter, convert, transform, turn into**

馬を牛に変える うまをうしにかえる  
Change a horse into a cow (by magic)

変え かえ change, changing

形と色を変える かたちといろをかえる  
change the shape and color of

鉛を金に変える なまりをきんにかえる  
convert lead into gold

観点を変える かんてんをかえる change  
one's point of view

- ② **change to a different time or place**

予定を変える よていをかえる change  
the schedule

位置を変える いちをかえる change the  
position of

- ③ **reform, revise, amend**

法律を変える ほうりつをかえる revise  
[amend] the law

### 代える

㊦0034

**substitute, use in place of, replace (something) with (another)**

馬を牛に代える うまをうしにかえる  
Substitute a horse for a cow/Use a  
horse in place of a cow

代え かえ substitute, proxy

...に代えて ...にかえて instead of..., in  
place of...

BさんをAさんに代える びーさんを  
えーさんにかえる substitute Mr. A for  
Mr. B

### 換える

㊦0716

**exchange, interchange, trade, barter, change (money), convert**

馬を牛と換える うまをうしとかえる  
Exchange a horse for a cow

換え かえ rate of exchange

本を金に換える ほんをかねにかえる  
exchange a book for money

ドルを円に換える どのをえんにかえる  
convert dollars into yen

十ドル札を換える じゅうどるさつをかえ  
る get change for a ten-dollar bill

本と時計を換える ほんときけいをかえ  
る swap a watch for a book

引き換える ひきかえる exchange,  
change, convert

一リットル百円換えて買う いちりつと  
るひゃくえんがでかう purchase at  
100 yen per liter

### 替える

㊦3457

- ① **replace (one thing or person by another), renew, change**

馬を替える うまをかえる Replace an old  
horse with a new one

替え かえ replacement, spare

畳の表を替える たたみのおもてをかえる  
replace the covers of old mats with  
new ones

塗り替える ぬりかえる repaint

取り替える とりかえる change, renew,  
replace, substitute

両替 りょうがえ money changing,  
exchange of money

- ② **change to something new (as a job or set of clothes), change over to**

商売を替える しょうばいをかえる  
change to a new business

着替える きがえる change clothes

- ③ **exchange, interchange, trade, barter, change (money), convert**

引き替える ひきかえる exchange,  
change, convert

## とける tokeru

### 解ける

㊦1913

- ① **come loose, come undone**

靴紐が解けた くつむがとけた The  
shoestrings came untied

- ② **be allayed, relent**

- ③ **be solved, be resolved, be cleared**

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| 解けない問題 とけないもんだい insoluble problem           |       |
| ④ (esp. of snow or ice) <b>melt, thaw</b>   |       |
| 雪解け ゆきどけ thawing of snow                    |       |
| <b>融ける</b>                                  | Ⓚ2303 |
| (esp. of snow or ice) <b>melt, thaw</b>     |       |
| 雪融け ゆきどけ thawing of snow                    |       |
| <b>溶ける</b>                                  | Ⓚ0816 |
| ① (pass into solution) <b>dissolve</b>      |       |
| 塩は水に溶ける しおはみずにとける                           |       |
| Salt dissolves in water                     |       |
| ② (of metals) <b>melt (up), fuse, smelt</b> |       |
| ③ (esp. of snow or ice) <b>melt, thaw</b>   |       |
| 火で溶ける ひでとける melt in the fire                |       |
| 溶け込む とけこむ melt into, fuse into              |       |
| <b>熔ける</b>                                  | Ⓚ1340 |
| (of metals) <b>melt (up), fuse, smelt</b>   |       |
| <b>鎔ける</b>                                  | Ⓚ2214 |
| (of metals) <b>melt (up), fuse, smelt</b>   |       |

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| <b>うたう utau</b>   |       |
| <b>歌う</b>   | Ⓚ2296 |
| ① <b>sing, recite</b>   |       |
| 歌い手 うたいて singer   |       |
| 歌い上げる うたいあげる sing at the top of one's voice; express one's feelings fully in a poem |       |
| ② <b>express in a poem</b>  |       |
| 神の徳を歌った歌 かみのとくをうたった   |       |
| うた poem in praise of God  |       |
| <b>謡う</b>   | Ⓚ2011 |
| <b>recite, chant (esp. from a noh drama text)</b>                                   |       |
| 謡を謡う うたいをうたう recite an <i>utai</i>  |       |
| <b>唄う</b>   | Ⓚ0477 |
| <b>recite, sing</b> —used esp. in reference to traditional Japanese songs           |       |
| <b>謳う</b>   | Ⓚ2061 |
| a (sing the joys of) <b>extol, eulogize</b>   |       |
| b <b>declare, state, express</b>  |       |
| ab 謳われる うたわれる be famous for   |       |
| b 謳い文句 うたいもんく catchphrase, promotional line   |       |