

# FEATURES OF THIS DICTIONARY

## 本字典の特徴

Below is a description of the principal features of this dictionary, with emphasis on how they are useful to the learner. See the **Introduction** on p. 17a for a discussion of dictionary aims. To derive maximum benefit from the dictionary, consult also the **Guide to the Dictionary** on p. 35a, which describes the entry format in detail and supplements the information here.

### 1 LEARNER'S DICTIONARY

The primary aim of this dictionary is to serve as an effective *learner's* dictionary, as a powerful learning aid that promotes understanding and stimulates a desire to learn. It incorporates most of the features of its parent work, the **New Japanese-English Character Dictionary**, as well as some new and unique features that enable the learner to gain an in-depth, systematic understanding of character meanings. The most important of these are described below.

#### 1.1 Core Meaning

A striking feature of this dictionary is the presentation of a **core meaning** for each entry character. This is a concise keyword that provides a clear grasp of the central or most fundamental concept that links the principal senses of a character into a single conceptual unit.

Consider **KEEP**, one of the core meanings of 留:

#### ▶ **KEEP**

- ① cause to remain in a given place or condition:
  - Ⓐ [original meaning] **KEEP in place, keep from moving, keep in position**
  - Ⓑ **KEEP in custody, detain**
  - Ⓒ **KEEP for future use, leave behind**

By grasping that the central concept represented by 留 is **KEEP**, it is immediately clear that such seemingly unrelated ideas as “pay

attention to” and “detain” are merely variants of the same basic concept. The core meaning thus *integrates* widely differing senses into a single conceptual unit.

The core meaning is useful to the learner in five ways:

1. It serves as a concise keyword that conveys the character's most fundamental meaning.
2. It acts as the central pivot that links the principal meanings of a character to each other.
3. It provides an instant grasp of the meaning and function of the character as a word-building element.
4. It helps illustrate the differences and similarities between *kun* homophones and easily confused characters.
5. It is easy to memorize, since it conveys a character's meaning as a concise **thought package**.

A brief glance at the character meanings makes the above relationships clear, thanks to the use of **RED CAPITALS** both for the core meanings and for the **core words** (words in a character meaning that match a core meaning). This is a new feature not found in any other dictionary.

The core meaning is unique to the NJECD and the **Kanji Integrated Tools (KIT)**. Since it functions as a concentrated thought package that appeals to the learner's powers of asso-

ciation, it is widely praised by students and educators as an effective learning aid.

## 1.2 In-depth Meanings

A central feature of this dictionary is the in-depth manner in which it treats meaning. Not only are the character meanings clear, complete, and accurate, but they include meanings found only in KIT dictionaries.

The principal features that contribute to clarity of meaning are:

1. The core meaning.
2. Clear and accurate character meanings.
3. The ordering of senses in a manner that shows their interrelatedness.
4. Numerous illustrative compounds.

The precisely worded character meanings are presented in a manner that shows exactly how each character is used as a word element, and how the hundreds of thousands of compound words in Japanese can be generated from a stock of a few thousand building blocks.

## 1.3 Interrelatedness

To provide the learner with a clear understanding of character meaning, the meanings are presented in a manner that shows the **interrelatedness** between individual senses. Four features achieve this aim:

1. The red **core words** make the relation between senses instantly obvious.
2. The **senses are ordered** in a manner that shows their interrelatedness.
3. The **sense division numbers** establish a logical hierarchy between character senses.
4. The **explanatory glosses** (e.g. “(of a vehicle)”) show how the senses differ from one another, while the **supplementary glosses** (e.g. “—said esp. of God”) provide additional discrimination.

Together these features help integrate the senses so that they can be perceived as a structured unit, rather than as an arbitrary list, as

shown on the right.

## 1.4 Order of Senses

Unlike traditional dictionaries, which usually order senses chronologically, this dictionary present the senses in a **cogent order that shows their interrelatedness**. The core meaning serves as the basis of organization, and the various senses are grouped around it in clusters so that they can be perceived as a logically structured, psychologically integrated unit.

留, for example, has several distinct senses, but they are clustered around the core word **KEEP** in a way that shows their differences and similarities, greatly reducing the burden of memorization. If the senses were arranged as shown in the left column below, they would appear to be an arbitrary list, rather than as a structured unit.

### Arbitrary List

- Ⓐ keep from moving
- Ⓑ detain
- Ⓒ leave behind

### Expansion from Core

- KEEP** in place
- KEEP** in custody
- KEEP** for future use

## 1.5 Degree of Importance

The **degree of importance** of each sense is indicated by typographical differences and labels for three levels of study (see p. 41a).

## 1.6 Compounds and Examples

The meanings of each character are normally illustrated by numerous high-frequency compounds that provide useful examples of each sense. All the compounds needed for the intermediate level, and numerous compounds for the advanced level, are given.

Unlike other dictionaries, the compounds are classified by meaning in a way that clearly shows how they are formed from their constituent parts, which makes it easy to infer the meanings of unlisted compounds.

A new feature of this dictionary is the **sub-sense indicators**, which are tiny letters that

show the beginning of a new subsense group in the compounds list. This makes it obvious how the entry character contributes its meaning to each compound.





## 2 READER'S DICTIONARY

The student learning how to read contemporary Japanese faces several difficulties, such as the need to identify more than 2000 characters, many of which have complex shapes, as well as the need to learn their thousands of readings and meanings. Moreover, numerous characters have multiple readings and meanings, and there is no reliable way to determine which one applies in a particular instance.

In addition to being a learner's dictionary, this dictionary also has been designed as a *reader's* dictionary. The various features described below enable the reader to locate the readings and meanings of unknown characters and compounds with little effort.

### 2.1 Efficient Indexing System

The lack of an efficient scheme for ordering kanji has long been a source of frustration to learners and native speakers alike. Looking up characters by traditional radicals, or by most alternative systems, is both laborious and unreliable.

A major feature of this dictionary, unique to KIT dictionaries, is the speed and facility with which entries can be looked up. The **System of Kanji Indexing by Patterns** (SKIP) classifies each character under four easy-to-identify geometrical patterns:  1 left-right,  2 up-down,  3 enclosure, and  4 solid. Within each group the characters are further subdivided to achieve maximum access speed.

Designed for efficiency and ease of use, SKIP enables the user to locate entries as quickly and as accurately as in alphabetical dictionaries. Since the system can be learned by beginners in a short time, many Japanese language educators consider it an important advance in

kanji lexicography, and a growing number of electronic dictionaries have implemented it as part of their retrieval systems.

### 2.2 Five Lookup Methods

To assure maximum convenience to the user, this dictionary provides a choice of five methods of looking up characters:

1. The **Pattern Index** allows characters to be quickly located from their SKIP numbers.
2. The **Scan Method** is a shortcut for locating some characters almost instantly.
3. The **On-Kun Index** lists the characters alphabetically by both their *on* and *kun* readings.
4. The **Radical Index** lists the characters by their traditional radicals.
5. The **Direct Method** allows characters to be located without using any index.


### 2.3 System of Guides

The various guides in the margins of the page have been carefully designed to facilitate the speedy location of entry characters.

### 2.4 Character Readings

Seven kinds of readings are given: principal readings, *on* readings, *kun* readings, special readings, unapproved readings, other readings, and name readings. The readings are given in romanized transcription, with parentheses indicating *okurigana* endings. Unapproved readings are given only when they are sufficiently important to learners.

### 2.5 Importance of Readings

The relative importance of readings is shown by various typographical conventions, such as distinguishing **unapproved readings** from ordinary readings by a superscript solid triangle <sup>▲</sup>, and preceding **name readings** with .

### 2.6 Character Forms and Styles

This dictionary presents three kinds of character forms and calligraphic styles, which were methodically checked by experts to ensure their accuracy. A much more detailed

treatment is given in the NJECD.

1. The **standard form** is the form given in the official **Jōyō Kanji** and **Jinmei Kanji** lists, which are widely used in the media, government, and education. All entry characters are given in the standard form.
2. The **nonstandard form** is the traditional variant used in prewar literature and in names. **Appendix 4** lists 386 variant forms, which includes important variants of Jinmei Kanji and all variants appearing in the Jōyō Kanji list.
3. The **square style** (楷書 *kaisho*), which is the standard handwritten style, appears in the last frame of the stroke order diagram.

## 2.7 Easily Confused Forms

Some characters, such as 幣 *hei* ‘currency’ and 弊 *hei* ‘evil practice’, are very similar in form but unrelated in meaning. Some of these are so similar that even native speakers tend to confuse them. Such characters are cross-referenced to each other in the NOTE section. A new feature of this dictionary is that these characters are followed by their core meanings, which aids the learner in easily grasping their differences.

## 2.8 Romanization

All character readings, headwords, and compounds are transcribed in the Hepburn system of romanization, set in easy-to-read sans serif boldface type to distinguish them from other explanatory matter. A description of the system and kana tables are given in **Appendix 3. Kana and Romanization.**

## 3 WRITER'S DICTIONARY

The student learning how to write Japanese faces several difficulties, such as the large number of characters and their complex shapes, the need to learn the correct stroke order, and the numerous homophones.

In addition to being a learner's dictionary, this dictionary has also been designed as a *writer's*

dictionary. The features that make it a convenient tool for writing are described below.

### 3.1 Stroke Order Diagrams

To write a character in the proper form, it is necessary to learn the stroke order. The **stroke order diagrams**, in which the last frame shows the full character in the standard square style, indicate the stroke order.

Thoroughly researched for accuracy, these diagrams were prepared by experts specifically for this dictionary and the NJECD. Unlike other reference works, which rely heavily on cross-referencing, the order of writing is presented stroke-by-stroke to ensure maximum convenience to the user.

### 3.2 Kun Homophones

Japanese has numerous **kun homophones**. These are *kun* words that are pronounced the same but written differently, and usually differing 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)

Although *on* homophones, such as 機構 *kikō* ‘mechanism’ and 帰港 *kikō* ‘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, many *kun* homophones are written with a bewildering variety of characters that are often close in meaning. For example, 解ける *tokeru* and 溶ける *tokeru* are interchangeable in the sense of ‘melt, thaw’ but not in the sense of ‘come loose’. Thus *kun* homophones are easily confused, even by native speakers, and pose special problems to the learner.

To help the learner overcome these problems, the **HOMOPHONES** section lists groups of *kun* homophones and their entry numbers. These act as a network of cross-references for quickly identifying and locating each member of a group from any of the others.

A new feature of this dictionary is that each homophone cross-reference is followed by its core meaning, which allows the user to immediately identify their differences without consulting the corresponding entry character.

By using the cross-references to compare the meanings and compounds for each homophone, the learner can grasp the often subtle differences between them. These meanings, which are derived from the **usage notes** of the NJECD, are based on several years of research as part of the first full-scale analysis of *kun* homophones to be presented in English.

In conclusion, the **HOMOPHONES** section helps the learner distinguish between the meanings of words pronounced alike, thereby providing a better understanding of each. It also helps the learner write with greater precision by assisting in the selection of the character most appropriate to the context.

Since the complex problems inherent in *kun* homophones have been mostly ignored by existing reference works, this feature should prove to be of great value to the student.

### 3.3 Okurigana Endings

The *kun* readings in the entry-head data include parentheses that indicate **okurigana** endings in conformity with the official rules published by the Ministry of Education. The headwords and compounds also follow these rules when applicable. Important nonstandard variations are given when necessary.

### 3.4 Stroke Counting

The ability to count strokes is necessary both for writing the characters correctly and for using character dictionaries effectively. The following information is provided:

1. The reference data box gives the **stroke-count data** for each entry character.
2. The principles of stroke counting are explained in **Appendix 2. How to Count Strokes**, along with charts to help speed up

the counting process.

3. Difficult-to-count characters are cross-referenced at common *incorrect* stroke-count locations.

## 4 OTHER FEATURES

### 4.1 Character Importance

Since this dictionary is aimed at learners, considerable effort has been made to indicate the **degree of importance** of the entry character, based on the most recent and comprehensive statistical surveys. This enables the learner to know the importance of each character, and helps the teacher compile graded lessons. The following information is provided:

1. The **frequency level** of the entry character, which divides the characters into four sub-classes, is given in the reference data box (see p. 37a for details). Levels **A** and **B**, the first 1000 characters, account for about 95% of all kanji appearing in newspapers.
2. The **frequency ranking** of the entry character is given in the reference data box. This is the relative frequency of occurrence of a character in newspapers, based on a survey of some 24 million kanji published in July 1998, just before this dictionary went to press (see p. 910 for details).
3. The **grade** indicates the **entry type** (Jōyō Kanji or Jinmei Kanji) and the school grade during which the character is taught. A grade of 1 to 6 indicates a character in the 1006 **Education Kanji** taught in the six elementary school grades.
4. **Important characters** are presented in red. This means that the character in question is either in the Education Kanji list, or is one of the 1000 most frequent characters (frequency levels **A** or **B**). Some learners may wish to concentrate on these 1183 characters in the initial stages of study.
5. Appendix 5 lists the top 1000 characters by **frequency ranking**, along with their core meanings. This is useful to both the learner and the teacher.

## 4.2 Character Codes

For the convenience of learners using computers and those needing more advanced information, the reference data box gives character codes and the NJEDC entry number.

1. The **Kuten** number is used for indexing characters in the Japanese character set standard JIS X 0208-1997. This is useful for entering kanji codes in computer systems or when consulting standards and electronic dictionaries.
2. The **Unicode** value is given for each entry character, which should be useful to computer users. This conforms to the international character standard ISO 10646, which is rapidly gaining popularity as an international character set.
3. The **NJEDC Entry Number** is convenient for looking up the entry character in the **New Japanese-English Character Dictionary**, which gives a more comprehensive treatment, including synonyms, usage notes, compound formation articles, orthographic variants, and other features.

## 4.3 System of Labels

A labeling system including status, subject, and functional labels gives information on etymology, style, function, level of formality, etc., providing practical guidance on the style and usage associated with each sense.

## 4.4 Character Functions

Each character may have various grammatical and syntactic **functions**. An important function of kanji is their role as **word elements**; that is, their ability to form numerous compound words by being combined with each other. Words can be formed by adding an **affix** (suffix or prefix) to a base, or by joining **combining forms** with each other. For example, 済 *-zumi* ‘completed’ is attached to 点検 *tenken* ‘inspection’ to yield 点検済 *tenkenzumi* ‘inspection completed’.

The functions of each character as an independent word (free form) or word element (affix or combining form) are indicated, while the meanings of independent words are clearly distinguished from those of word elements.

## 4.5 Character Etymology

This dictionary presents the following information on radicals and character etymology.

1. The reference data box gives the **radical** and **radical number** for each entry character. This aids in understanding its etymology, since radicals often function as semantic components, and is also useful for looking up characters in other dictionaries.
2. The traditional radicals of **lost-radical** characters are given in the **Radical Index**.
3. The **Quick Reference Radical Chart** gives convenient access to information on radicals, including standard and variant forms, stroke-counts, and radical names.
4. The **original meaning**, which is the first meaning associated with a character after its formation in China (rarely Japan), is often given, especially when it helps clarify the character’s meaning or helps illustrate how the senses are interrelated.
5. A description of how to use traditional radical indexes effectively.

## 4.6 User Friendliness

Another feature of this dictionary is a layout that is both visually attractive and easy to use. Typographical design with the aid of cutting-edge font technology was used to achieve a harmonious blend of font styles and weights (Adobe’s **Myriad** and **Minion** multiple master fonts for English and Heisei Mincho for Japanese). Some of the world’s leading font designers, such as Adobe’s Robert Slimbach, have contributed to this effort, which has resulted in an esthetically pleasing design that stimulates a desire to browse and to truly *enjoy* studying kanji.