

TEACHING AND TESTING

Ideas for Teaching, Learning and Practicing Kanji

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Script acquisition is an integral part of learning Japanese, and can be seen as a chore for teachers and students to struggle through. It takes up a large amount of teaching time and can be a daunting task for young people.

However, I feel that Japanese script is the most interesting part of the language, and a large number of students choose to study Japanese rather than another language because they are drawn to the characters, so I feel strongly that script should be taught and learnt with enthusiasm and enjoyment.

In teaching kanji I use a variety of games and hands on activities so that kanji practice is an activity looked forward to, almost as a treat, and can be done on Friday period 5 quite happily.

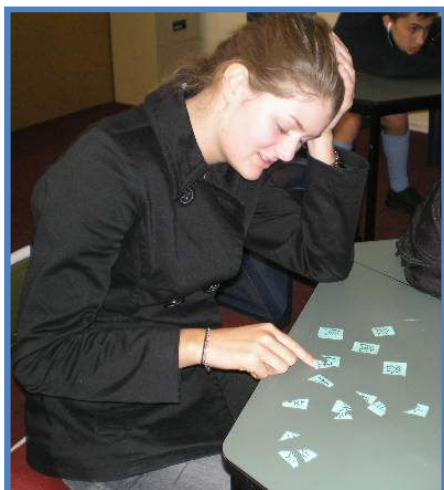
Here are some of the ideas I use:

Kanji bingo

You will all be familiar with the concept of bingo games, but one change I make to regular bingo cards is to produce the kanji in outline form so that instead of just crossing off the kanji, the student has to write it.

I think that this way is more helpful to the students, especially with new kanji, as it gives more opportunities for writing practice, in a supported situation.

切	住	乘	売
歩	書	食	買
持	見	飲	立
来	通	作	休



Kanji Jigsaws

Kanji jigsaw puzzles are easy to make. I choose about 8 kanji, print onto card, cut up into jigsaw pieces and mix them all up. Sometimes I deliberately cut around the different elements of a kanji so students can see the radicals and recognise the different parts. Other times I will cut quite randomly by cutting from the back where I can't see the kanji. This way is more difficult as it makes some parts hard to identify, especially if they can't tell which way is up! To make it easier you can underline the kanji before printing.

Kanji Categories

A good revision activity is kanji categories, where I choose about 5 categories (people, geography, colours, etc) and students write as many kanji for each group as they can, either individually or in groups. You can have teams competing against each other, set time limits, and have each group check another team's answers for mistakes.

I also mix up the groups of kanji we practice, for example although I teach most kanji in topic or theme groups, I then regroup into verbs, adjectives etc to mix up new and familiar kanji.

Kanji Sudoku

My students love to play kanji sudoku, and I make new ones regularly for them. You don't have to be restricted to numbers, you can use any 9 kanji you like, just list the kanji you are using underneath, to make it easier to keep track.

When I make these I copy an easy sudoku from the newspaper and use the "find and replace" in the edit menu on my computer to change the numbers into kanji.

I once used a data projector to project the sudoku onto the whiteboard, and a group of students worked on it together, which was very successful.

思	夕		朝	物	買		食	
		朝	言				売	
					夕			
	言			朝				夕
		物				言		
売				昼			買	
			夕					
	昼				朝	買		
	朝		昼	買	物		思	食

食 朝 昼 買 売 夕 思 物 言 う

Hint : make sure they (and you) can do a normal sudoku with numbers first, so they understand how it works.



Another activity which doesn't involve much preparation on the part of the teacher is to write a selection of kanji on the board (or have one or two students do it), line students up in 3 or 4 groups, and have the first person in each group compete to see who can put their hand on the kanji when you call it out (similar idea to karuta). Then, when all of the kanji have been rubbed out, give each group a whiteboard marker and do the same thing, but this time when you call out the kanji they have to be the first person to write it correctly to get the point for their group. This is a popular Friday afternoon activity for my combined Year 12 and 13 class, which each level can run themselves if I am working with the other group, or can include everybody to give the Year 13 students revision of kanji they learned in Year 12.

There are many other activities which are enjoyable and beneficial to teaching, learning and practising kanji. Calligraphy is always popular and well worth the investment in brushes and ink. Kinaesthetic learners will enjoy making kanji out of pipe cleaners or play dough.

Board games such as snakes and ladders or trivial pursuit can be adapted to include kanji. These can be time consuming to create but if made to last can be very worthwhile. Why not ask your students to make up some kanji learning games? You might be surprised at the inventive, effective ideas they come up with.

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