

LANGUAGE | BILINGUAL

Learn Japanese as you binge with Netflix anime series

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It has been argued that learning Japanese via anime is impossible, or at the very least ill-advised. I won't bore you with the arguments for and against (Google "learn Japanese anime" for a taster), but perhaps even the most ardent naysayer could agree that exposure to natural conversational flow can't be a bad thing for your *Nihongo* level.

And if it's anime you crave, streaming sites such as Netflix offer an ever-expanding smorgasbord of morsels to suit every appetite and palette. For those short on time, picking a series and snacking on an episode regularly may be your best bet, but where to start? After all, at time of publication Netflix was offering upward 300 anime series on its Japan service.

Here are a few possibilities for starters, selected based on factors such as style, skill level and subtitle availability.

『東京喰種 (トーキョーグール)』 (*Tōkyō Gūru, Tokyo Ghoul*) is a bit of a gore fest but has plenty of potential for learning. The show follows young Kaneki Ken, a once normal 高校生 (*kōkōsei*, high school student) turned "ghoul" and his battle for survival in the underbelly of Tokyo. Each ghoul has a 赫子 (かぐね, *kagune*), a bodily weapon used to fight other ghouls. The language is very normal and easy to follow, and like many action-packed anime, there are plenty of monologues to follow describing a battle or strategy.

The teen-angst quotient is high in this one too, with Kaneki vehemently rejecting his new lifestyle: "ぼくはそんなじゃない、僕は人間なんだ!" (*Boku wa sonna janai, boku wa ningen nanda!*, "I'm not like that, I'm a human!").

With options of Japanese and English for both dialogue and subtitles, this is a great series for those looking for somewhere easy to start and eventually level-up from. With an opening scene involving a fight between a naked cannibal woman and a man doing a good impression of Freddy the Elm Street serial killer, there is a whole bunch of twisted stuff here for lovers of horror.

『四畳半神話大系』 (*Yojōhan Shinwa Taikei*, *The Tatami Galaxy*) is a visually stunning, musically creative anime for a more advanced crowd. The narrative style is very fast-paced, so for those trying to master the soliloquy in Japanese, this is a great series for you. There are only Japanese subtitles, so this anime is full-on immersion only.

The plot is very philosophical, dealing with second chances and the call to action. Each episode starts with this theme, as 先輩 (*senpai*, upperclassman) chooses a new school club to test his luck: “そして私が選びとったのは・・・,” (*Soshite, watashi ga erabi totta no wa ...*, “And so I chose ...”). With the help of 下鴨神社の神, (*Shimogamo Jinja no Kami*, Shimogamo Shrine God), senpai is able to repeat the same actions until he finds the perfect club — and girlfriend.



(<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/p7-bilingual-a-20170606.jpg>)

Tokyo Ghoul | SUI ISHIDAN/SHUEISHA, TOKYO
GHOUL PRODUCTION COMMITTEE



(<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/p7-bilingual-b-20170606.jpg>)

The Tatami Galaxy | ILLUSTRATION BY YUSUKE
NAKAMURA ©THE TATAMI GALAXY COMMITTEE



(<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/p7-bilingual-c-20170606.jpg>).

Sword Art Online | ©REKI KAWAHARA/ASCII MEDIA WORKS/SAO PROJECT

『ソードアート・オンライン』 (*Sōdo-āto Onrain*, **Sword Art Online**) is a very popular series in Japan right now, and has just spawned a full-length movie. Set within a virtual reality video game from which no one can escape, there is plenty of drama, romance, action and tragedy. Also, if you die in the video game, you die in real life, so the stakes couldn't be higher.

Players wear helmets that take them into the world of SAO when they utter the words “リンクスタート！” (*Rinku sutāto!*, “Link start!”) The series' protagonist, Kirito Kirigaya, was a beta tester of the game. On the day of its official release, he logs in and exclaims a confident “もどってきたこの世界！” (*Modottekita kono sekai!*, “I'm back in this world!”), completely unaware of the impending dangers. With Japanese or English subtitles, this is an easy series to follow, and very entertaining to boot.



(<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/p7-bilingual-d-20170606.jpg>)

Honey and Clover | ©2005CHICA UMINO/SHUEISHA/HONEY AND CLOVER COMMITTEE.

『ハチミツとクローバー』 (*Hachimitsu to Kurōbā*, **Honey and Clover**) is a real love triangle! This anime has a very distinct cutesy style, with a soundtrack to match.

The story follows a group of art college friends and their pains and triumphs in 愛 (*ai*, love). The dialogue is a little corny, but everyone needs to be a bit cheesy sometimes, right? There are subtitles available in Japanese, so this is recommended for experienced heartbreakers.

The opening scene reflects on the main character's past, and he asks himself, “あの時僕が試したかったのはいったい何だったんだろう” (*Ano toki boku ga tameshitakatta no wa ittai nan-dattan-darō*, meaning “What on Earth did I want to try back then?”). The story that follows is a reflection of this phrase, as he embarks on a journey through past love and self-identity.

『日常』 (*Nichijō*, **Everyday**) is a laugh-a-minute antidote to the tears of “Honey and Clover.” There are no subtitles available for this series, but the slapstick comedy style doesn't really warrant them if you have some basic Japanese knowledge.

The series follows three high school girls as the distinctly out-of-the-ordinary intrudes on their everyday lives, hence the title. The language used can be a little harsh for polite young ladies, but those with friends who like to goof around will learn all sorts of useful cultural gags. For example, there's the girls' surreal variation on ジャンケンポン (*jan ken pon*, rock paper scissors) in which two characters come up with strange alternatives to the three usual options, which always ends with a laugh. There is also a 90-second-long battle to catch a sausage before it hits the ground. Although unsuccessful, Yuko,

one of the girls, states that because of the 三秒ルール (*sanbyō rūru*, the three-second rule,) the sausage is safe. Mio, her friend, replies, “なんかもういっぱいいっぱいアウトだよ。” (“*Nanka mō, ippai ippai dayo!*, “It was definitely out!”)

For those who want a break from boring, grammar-heavy lessons, this show is a hysterically fun way to learn friendly Japanese.

Regardless of taste, Netflix Japan’s anime section has got you covered. From horror to action to philosophy, there is something for everyone. Whether you are a beginner or an advanced student of the language, learning Japanese can be fun and easy with some wonderful stories and characters to guide the way.

Neflix Japan’s anime series: the full list

Although this list should be correct at time of publication, it is likely to change considerably as Netflix adds and deletes shows and features over time.

English and Japanese audio and subtitles

Cyborg 009 VS Devilman (also Korean, Portuguese and simplified Chinese subs)
Cyborg 009: Call of Justice
Fullmetal Alchemist (also Portugese, Simple Chinese and Traditional Chinese subs)
Tokyo Ghoul

English and Japanese audio

Fullmetal Alchemist Brotherhood (no subs)
Yuki Yuna is a Hero (English subs only)

English and Japanese subtitles

Gunslinger Girl
Little Witch Academia (also Portuguese, Korean, Simple Chinese and Traditional Chinese)
Peeping Life — The Perfect Edition
Peeping Life — The Perfect Emotion
Peeping Life — The Perfect Explosion
Peeping Life — The Perfect Extension
Peeping Life 5.0ch

Peeping Life: World History
She and Her Cat: Everything Flows
Sword Art Online

English subtitles only (Japanese audio)

Durarara!!
Durarara!! X2
The Irregular at Magic High School
Mushi-shi
Sword Art Online II

Japanese subtitles only

Actually, I Am ...
AJIN: Demi-Human
Amanchu!
Anne Happy
Anohana: The Flower we Saw That Day
Aqua Marin
Arpeggio of Blue Steel
Attack on Titan

Chaos;Child
Chiko, Heiress of the Phantom Thief
Code Geass: Akito the Exiled
Code Geass: Lelouch of the Rebellion
Crayon Shin-chan
Cross Ange: Rondo of Angel and Dragon
Cutie Honey

Devilman
Digimon Adventure
Digimon Universe Appli Monsters
Dinosaur King
The Disastrous Life of Saiki K.
Doraemon

Eden of the East
Elfen Lied
Erased

The Files of Young Kindaichi

Galaxy Express 999
Gegege no Kitarou
Ghost in The Shell: S.A.C 2nd Gig
Ghost in The Shell: Stand Alone Complex
Guilty Crown
Gundam Build Fighters

Hakuouki
Hanasaku Iroha
Hand Shakers
Heart Catch Pretty Cure!
Hell Teacher Nube
Honey and Clover

Kono Suba 2
Kuroko's Basketball

The Laughing Salesman
Lupin The Third Part 4

Masamune-kun's Revenge
The Mightiest Disciple Kenichi Ova
Minami Kamakura High School Girls Cycling Club
Mobile Suit Gundam
Mobile Suit Gundam 00
Mobile Suit Gundam Seed
Mobile Suit Gundam Wing
Mobile Suit Zeta Gundam
Mononoke

Nobunaga Concerto
Nodame Cantabile Finale
Nodame Cantabile The Animation

Patalliro!
Ping Pong The Animation
Planetarian: The Reverie of a Little Planet
Pocket Monsters
Prince Mackaroo: The 20th Anniversary Selection
Princess Jellyfish
Psycho Pass
Psycho Pass 2

Ristorante Paradiso

Saekano: How to Raise a Boring Girlfriend
Sagrada Reset
Sanrio Characters Pon Pon Jump
The Seven Deadly Sins
Sketchbook Full Color's

Skip Beat!
The Snack World
Star Knight Tekkaman Blade
Sugarbunnies
Sugarbunnies Chocolat!

Tales of the Abyss
The Tatami Galaxy
Tenchi Muyo! War on Geminar
Terror in Resonance
Tiger & Bunny
Tokyo Magnitude 8.0
Toradora!
Trickster
Tsugumomo

Usagi Drop
Ushio and Tora

When They Cry
Wolf Girl and Black Prince
Working!!!

Yamada-Kun and the Seven Witches
Your Lie in April
Yuru Yuri
Yuru Yuri San Hai
Yuruyuri
Yuriyuri Nachu Yachumi

No subtitles

Accel World / The Adventures of Tom Sawyer / Aikatsu / Aldnoah.Zero / And You
Thought There is Never A Girl Online / Angel Beats / Anne of Green Gables / AntiMagic
Academy 35th Test Platoon / Ao no Kanata no Forizumu / Aria / Aria the Scarlet Ammo /
Aria the Scarlet Ammo AA / Armored Trooper Votoms / Armored Trooper Votoms:
Shining Heresy / Ashita no Jo 2

Baby Steps / Baccano! / Bakemonogatari / Bakuman / Bakuman 2 / Bakuman 3 /
Basilisk / Beck: Mongolian Chop Squad / Before Green Gables / Berserk / Berusaiyu no
Bara (Rose of Versailles) / Black Butler (2008) (Kuro Shitsuji) / Black Butler (2010) /
Black Butler: Book of Circus / Black Lagoon / Blast of Tempest / Blood-C / Bokurano /
Bottom Biting Bug / Bungo

Stray Dogs / Campione! / Cardcaptor Sakura / Cat's Eye / A Certain Magical Index / A
Certain Magical Index II / Charlotte / Chibi Maruko-chan 2 / City Hunter / Conan, the
Boy in Future / A Corpse is Buried Under Sakurako's Feet / Cowboy BeBop / Cross Game

D.Gray-man / Daddy-Long-Legs / Dagashikashi / Daily Lives of High School Boys / Danganronpa 3: The End of Hope's Peak Academy / Danganronpa: The Animation / Darker Than Black / Darker Than Black: The Gemini of the Meteor / The Devil is a Part-Timer! / Devil May Cry / Dog of Flanders / Downtown Story / Dragon Ball / Dragon Ball Z

Fairy Tale / Fate/stay night / Fist of The North Star / Flone on the Marvelous Island / Flood Wars! Shokugeki no Soma / From the Apennines to the Andes / Frozen Dessert / Fullmetal Panic? Fumoffu / Fullmetal Panic / Fusen Inu Tinii / Future Diary / Fuuka

Gabriel Dropout / Gakkatsu! / Ganbare! Lulu & Lolo — The Tiny Twin Bears / Gantz / Gate / Gin Tama / Grimgar of Fantasy and Ash / Gurasu no Hanmen / Gurren Lagann

Haganai / Haganai NEXT / Haikyu!! / Haikyu 2 / Hell Girl / Hello Kitty: The Apple Forrest and the Parallel Town / Hello Kitty: The Fantasy of the Apple Forest / Hello Kitty: The Mystery of the Apple Forest / The Heroic Legend of Arslan / High School DxD / High School DxD NEW / High School DxD BorN /

ID-0 / Ikkyu-san / Infinite Stratos / Inuyasha: The Final Act / Inuyasha / Invaders of the Rokujyoma!? / Is the Order a Rabbit? Season 1 / Is the Order a Rabbit? Season 2 / Izetta: The Last Witch

JoJo's Bizarre Adventure / Joker Game / Kamisama Kiss season 1 / Kamisama Kiss season 2 / Kantai collection / Katanagatari / Katri, the Cow Girl / Keijo!!!!!!! / Kenichi: The Mightiest Disciple / Kero Kero Keroppi: Hasunoue Town / Kids on the Slope / Kill la Kill / Kingdom / Kingdom Series 2 / Kinnikuman / Knights of Sidonia / Kono Suba / Kuromukuro / Kyoukai no Rinne

Last Exile / Life in A Different World From Zero / Le Chevalier D' Eon / Legends of the Dark King: A Fist of the North Star Story / Les Miserables: Shoujo Cosette / Let's Learn with Hello Kitty / Linebarrels of Iron / Little Lord Fauntleroy / Little Princess / Little Women 1 / Little Women 2 / Log Horizon / The Lost Village / Lupin the Third Part 1 / Lupin the Third Part 2 / Lupin the Third Part 3

Magi: Adventure / of Sinbad / Magi: The Labyrinth of Magic / Magical Rising Project / Maison Ikkoku / Major 1 / Major 2 / Manga Nihon Mukashibanashi / Marginal #4 / Mazinger Z / McDull, Kung Fu Kindergarten / The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya / Mikosuri Han-Gekijou / Mob Psycho 100 / Mobile Fighter G Gundam / Monthly Girls Nozoki Kun / Moribito: Guardian of the Spirit / Mr. Osomatsu / Mr. Muscleman Second Generation 1 / Mr. Muscleman Second Generation 2 / Mukakunin de Shinkokei / Mushi-shi -Next Passage- / My 3 Daughters / My Bride Is a Mermaid / My Little Monster

Nadia, The Secret of Blue Water / Nagi-Asu: A Lull in the Sea / Nameko: Sekai No Tomodachi / Nekomonogatari -Black- / Nichijou / 91 Days / Ninja Boy Rantarou 17th series / Nisemonogatari / No Game No Life / Nodame Cantabile Paris / Non Non Biyori / Non Non Biyori Repeat / Nontan / Noragami / Noragami Aragoto

Omakase! Mirakurukyattodan / One Week Friends / Overlord

The Perrine Story / Persona4 the Animation / Persona4 the Golden Animation / Peter Pan and Wendy / Phi Brain: Puzzle of God / Planetes / Plastic Memories / Pokemon Sun and Moon / Pollyanna / Prince Mackaroo / Prince Mackaroo: The 20th Anniversary Selection /
Prison School

Ranma ½ / Rascal / Re: Life in a Different World from Zero / Romeo and the Black Brothers /
Ronja, the Robber's Daughter

Saga of Tanya the Evil / Sailor Moon / Sailor Moon Crystal / Saint Seiya: The Lost Canvas / Saki / Saki: Episode of Side A / Saki: Zenkoku-hen / Samurai 7 / School Rumble / School — Live! / Schoolgirl Strikers / Sgt. Frog / Shimajiro Hesoka / Shimajiro no Wao! / Shima Shiam Tora no Shimajiro / Slam Dunk / Sore Ike! Zukkoke Sannin Gumi / Southern Rainbow / Space Sagittarius / Spice and Wolf / Spice and Wolf II / Steins;Gate / Strike the Blood / Sugarbunnies Fleur / Supernatural: The Animation / Sushi and Beyond

Tama and Friends / Tari Tari / Terraformars / Three Leaves, Three Colors / Tico and Friends / Tokyo Ravens / Touken Ranbu: Hanamaru / The Trapp Family Story / Tsubasa: Reservoir Chronicle / The Twelve Kingdoms

Urusai Yatsura

The Vision of Escaflowne

Wasimo / Witchblade / Working!! / Working'!! 2 / World Trigger

Yokai Watch / Yona of the Dawn / Yowamushi Pedal / Yowamushi Pedal Grand Road

Zipang

KEYWORDS

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