

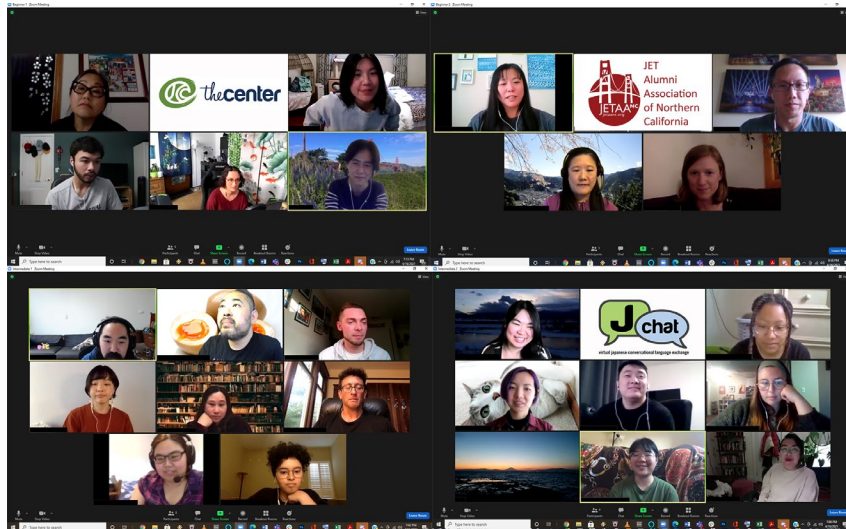


virtual japanese conversational language exchange

Hosted by the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California

Sponsored by the JET Alumni Association of Northern California

# Volunteer Small Group Facilitator Orientation Packet



# Welcome and Thank You!

Thank you very much for signing up to volunteer with us at our monthly J-Chat virtual Japanese conversational language exchange program! J-Chat would not be possible without the help of our wonderful volunteers providing direct assistance and leading our participants in their small conversation groups. We appreciate you sharing your time and your expertise with us to not only help Japanese language learners improve their conversational skills, but also to help foster deeper connection and understanding between members of our community and the people and culture of Japan. In the rest of this orientation packet we will provide you information on our program and your role as a facilitator so that we can provide an enjoyable and successful J-Chat experience for our program participants.

## Program Overview

Launched in May 2021, J-Chat is a monthly virtual program held on Zoom to provide beginning, intermediate and advanced Japanese language learners an online community-based space to practice and improve their conversational Japanese with the support of volunteer facilitators and their fellow language learners. Each monthly session will have two main components: a brief language lesson at the beginning of the session taught by our professional program instructor for beginning and intermediate level participants, followed by facilitator-led conversation groups separated by beginning, intermediate and advanced skill levels. J-Chat is in part a casual, social program and is not intended to be a comprehensive Japanese language learning course, but it can certainly supplement any language course or self-study participants might already be taking. J-Chat is hosted and coordinated by the Programs Department of the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California (JCCCNC/the Center), with generous funding from our program sponsor, the JET Alumni Association of Northern California (JETAANC).

## J-Chat Session Format

Each monthly J-Chat session will be held from 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. PST on the third Friday of each month on the Center's Zoom account. Volunteer facilitators are asked to log in 10 minutes prior to the official start time at 5:50 p.m. in case volunteers have questions for the program hosts or if the instructor has additional guidance regarding the monthly lesson for volunteer facilitators to incorporate into their small group discussions. Each session will generally follow the program schedule below:

### J-Chat Monthly Session Program Schedule

5:50 p.m.	<p>Session host(s), lesson instructor and volunteer facilitators log in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Session host to check in on volunteers for any questions</li> <li>• Lesson instructor to provide additional guidance or specific instructions (if any) to volunteer facilitators regarding lesson elements for small group conversation</li> </ul>
6:00 p.m.	Greet participants as they log in
6:05 p.m.	<p>Host begins session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Center staff and/or JETAANC representative give participants welcome remarks and a brief overview of the program schedule for the evening</li> </ul>
6:08 p.m.	<p>Language lesson presented by Dr. Lisa Hofmann-Kuroda to beginning and advanced participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Session host to introduce Dr. Hofmann-Kuroda</li> <li>• Lesson portion of the program will be recorded by the Center</li> <li>• Session host prepares assigned small breakout Zoom rooms for participant and volunteer facilitator groups</li> <li>• Advanced participants are permitted to skip the lesson if they feel their skill level exceeds the lesson material and can go straight into their assigned small group during the lesson</li> </ul>
6:25 p.m.	<p>Participants placed into assigned small conversation groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depending on the number of volunteer facilitators available, groups by skill level should ideally each be made up of 3-4 participants at most</li> <li>• Participants are allowed to change their group or skill level if requested; session host will reassign participants as needed</li> </ul>
6:30 p.m.	<p>Facilitated small group discussions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitators begin by introducing yourself, then asking group members to introduce themselves, their current city/location and their level of familiarity with Japanese</li> <li>• Facilitators can then begin conversations that include everyone in your small group, beginning with any question prompts or exercises provided in the lesson at the beginning of the session</li> <li>• If conversation groups exhaust lesson materials (most groups will), facilitators should keep the conversations going by asking additional questions or providing additional topics for participants to discuss</li> <li>• Please see the list below for suggested additional questions/topics for your groups to discuss</li> </ul>
7:55 p.m.	<p>Session closing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants reconvene in main Zoom meeting room for questions or program feedback from participants</li> <li>• Session host makes closing remarks and program announcements/reminders for participants</li> </ul>

8:00 p.m.	Session ends
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This is a general program format and schedule for each session and is subject to change.

# J-Chat Language Lessons

Each J-Chat session will open with a brief Japanese language lesson presented by Dr. Lisa Hofmann-Kuroda, using lesson materials provided to participants and volunteer facilitators in advance of the session. These lessons are primarily for the benefit of the beginning and intermediate level speakers. The lesson period will generally be about 10-15 minutes. Participants will be able to ask questions to the instructor directly in the Zoom meeting throughout the lesson. Lesson materials are developed by Dr. Hofmann-Kuroda and e-mailed to program participants prior to the session to allow them to evaluate their skill level and to prepare for the conversation session in advance if they would like. All lessons given at the beginning of J-Chat sessions will be recorded and provided to participants following the session for review.

Advanced participants may skip the lesson if they choose and go directly into their assigned small group(s). Participants are asked that they make their name and Japanese language skill level visible on the participant list on the Zoom meeting upon logging in.

Dr. Hofmann-Kuroda may have specific instructions for facilitators on how to incorporate lesson materials and topics into the small group conversations. If possible, please log into the Zoom meeting 10 minutes ahead of the start time at 5:50 p.m. to check in with the host and instructor if there are any specific instruction for the small group conversation that day. Some lessons may be focused on a theme or topic that groups will be encouraged to discuss during their small group conversations.



**About Dr. Lisa Hofmann-Kuroda**

Born in Tokyo and raised in Texas, Lisa Hofmann-Kuroda earned a BA in English from Wesleyan University and a PhD in Japanese Literature from UC Berkeley.

She writes, translates, and teaches for a living and is particularly interested in teaching Japanese to Japanese Americans and/or Japanese heritage speakers.

Follow her on Twitter @lhkuroda

# Small Breakout Conversation Groups

The majority of the time in the J-Chat session will be spent by participants and volunteer facilitators holding conversations in their assigned small conversation group Zoom breakout rooms. The session host will assign beginners and intermediate speakers into separate groups, ideally with 3-4 at most in each small group. Each small group will have at least one volunteer facilitator to guide the conversations and assist participants with vocabulary and phrases as needed. Participants and volunteer facilitators will be invited into their respective small group rooms at the conclusion of the lesson portion of the session.

Our small breakout conversation groups are meant to be kept small to provide more opportunity and time for participants to talk and build their conversational skills during their small group conversations. Participants are expected to be respectful and courteous to the other participants, volunteer facilitators and session host. In the event that a participant's behavior during the session is disruptive, please contact the session host immediately to remove them from the small group.

## Facilitator Role

Volunteer facilitators are very important for each J-Chat session to provide participants with the assistance they might need to improve, and to provide an enjoyable and supportive learning environment for their assigned small conversation group members.

### **Volunteer Facilitator Requirements:**

- Available for the entirety (2 hours) of the registered session (3<sup>rd</sup> Friday of the month, 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. PST).
- Facilitators are responsible for ensuring all small group members introduce themselves and answer or follow any exercises provided during the lessons at the beginning of the session.
- Facilitators are responsible for managing the conversation so that each participant has sufficient time during the session to practice speaking.
- Facilitators should be mindful of the language level of the participants in their small group conversations and adjust questions or topics of conversation to accommodate participant levels, but still present some level of challenge and require participants to respond in complete phrases and sentences.
- Native and business-level Japanese speakers are preferred, but anyone who is confident they can manage their small group conversation and provide language support as needed to participants may sign up to volunteer. Students who meet the required language level in both English and Japanese may also volunteer.

- Volunteer facilitators are not required to commit to volunteering every month or for a set period of time and can register to help on any of the session dates that they are available.
- If there are enough volunteer facilitators signed up for a session, small groups may have more than one volunteer assigned to them. Inexperienced facilitators who wish to have a volunteer to partner with in their small group may request to do so if the number of registered volunteer facilitators for that session allows for it.

### **Managing Your Small Conversation Group:**

- Begin the group conversation by introducing yourself, where you are located, and perhaps share something small about yourself that would be fun to know and that the other participants can also share about themselves when making their introductions (ie. favorite hobbies, tv shows, foods, etc.)
- Establish basic rules for the group that participants be respectful and polite toward each other, as well as to be mindful to share talking time during the session with the other participants.
- Encourage participants to feel free to ask to pause conversations so that they can ask the volunteer facilitator questions if they need assistance understanding the conversation or to think of the correct words or phrases to use.
- Try to ask direct questions that require full sentence responses, and encourage participants to also try asking questions to the other members of the small group to keep conversations going.
- If you notice that a participant is not getting as much time to speak, try to direct questions to that person to answer to bring them into the conversation.

### **Other Tips for Facilitators (Mostly for Intermediate and Advanced Groups):**

- Ask participants at the start how they would gauge their levels.
- Ask if they would like you to speak all in English, more English, more Japanese, or completely in Japanese.
- Call on participants by name. Ask what they would like to be called.
- Have your participants choose the next speaker or ask the next question.
- Do not nitpick their grammar. Wait until they have finished speaking to correct them.
- Only correct common mistakes, if the goal is to speak fluently.
- Don't start correcting grammar until 20-30 minutes have passed to give participants time to get comfortable speaking with their group.
- Answer your questions first to give the participants an idea of how a question may be answered. Your answer may also give them hints about what the question was if they didn't fully understand you.
- Make sure you're giving each group member an equal opportunity to speak. If this means carrying on a short conversation with a member one-on-one then do it. Try to

balance the time everyone speaks, and remember that the goal is for them to practice their speaking, not you.

- If the participants do not appear to understand a question, say it again once slowly, then start rewording it. Switching immediately to English might discourage them, so try to reword as many times as you can.

## Additional Conversation Questions

It is expected that some of the small group conversations will exhaust the lesson material well before the J-Chat session ends. If that is the case, do your best to avoid lulls in the conversation by asking questions to members of the small group to respond to. In the event that you are unable to think of questions to keep the group conversation going naturally, below is a list of suggested questions you can ask to initiate further conversation. Volunteer facilitators may also answer their own questions to the group first and then ask participants to also respond if it helps continue the discussion.

1. What was the first word you learned in Japanese?
2. When did you first hear about Japan?
3. Who first introduced you to Japan?
4. How did you become interested in Japan?
5. What is something that excites you about Japan? What are you looking forward to?
6. If you have been to Japan before, what is something you miss about Japan?
7. What was something about Japanese culture that surprised you? Why was it shocking?
8. Do you want to live in Japan? Why or why not?
9. Do you work from home? Do you like it? Why or why not?
10. Tell us about a time when you were helped as a tourist, or when you helped a tourist.
11. What is a bit of good news that puts a smile on your face?
12. What are your plans for the coming weekend? Are you doing anything fun?
13. Tell us about a favorite toy from your childhood, and what made it special to you.
14. Who is someone you admire and why?
15. Do you like animals and currently have or previously had a pet? Describe your pet if so.

# Program Contact Information

The Center's staff lead on the J-Chat program is Senior Programs Manager Haruka Roudebush. Please contact him directly if you have any additional questions regarding volunteering for the program, or if you have any issues with registering or availability. E-mail: [hroudebush@jccnc.org](mailto:hroudebush@jccnc.org) or call the Center's Programs Department at (415) 567-5505.

To contact the Executive Committee of the JET Alumni Association of Northern California, please e-mail: [ec@jetaanc.org](mailto:ec@jetaanc.org).

## About the Center

The Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California is an independent 501(c)3 nonprofit community and recreation center located in San Francisco's Japantown neighborhood. The Center is open seven days a week and serves an estimated 180,000 people annually through its classes, programs and workshops, and community events, hosting over 80 on-going classes and programs for people of all ages. Many of the programs and activities of the Center focus on Japanese and Japanese American/Nikkei culture and community, however, people of all backgrounds are welcome to participate and benefit from the Center's programs and services. Please stop by and say hello if you come to San Francisco Japantown!

For more information on in-person and virtual programs and events at the Center, feel free to contact us at [programsevents@jccnc.org](mailto:programsevents@jccnc.org), by telephone at (415) 567-5505, or visit our website at: <http://www.jccnc.org>.

## About JETAANC

The Japan Exchange & Teaching Program Alumni Association of Northern California (JETAANC) serves as a network and resource for JET Program alumni in Northern California and Nevada, and provides assistance to the JET Program and other activities that strengthen U.S.–Japan relations.

JETAANC is an all-volunteer, 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. With over 1,700 current members, JETAANC is one of the largest and most active JET alumni chapters in the world.

JETAANC was founded to assist and support JET Program participants who return to life in Northern California or Nevada. Sponsored by the Japanese government, JET alumni lived and worked in communities across Japan, supporting local English education and internationalization efforts. Through our contacts and partners, JETAANC serves as an extended network for JET alumni who wish to keep their connections with Japan and the JET Program alive. JETAANC also provides career, education, and re-entry guidance for its members. From



job search advice and educational opportunities to social and networking events, JETAANC can help provide alumni with the assistance they are looking for.

Activities range from picnics, cultural clubs and activities, and karaoke nights to career development events and training for new outbound JETs. We are also active in the many local Japan-related cultural, business, and artistic events in our area. We serve as a resource to the community in educational, cultural and international exchange activities.

JETAANC works closely with the Consulate General of Japan in San Francisco to provide assistance with year-round JET Program recruitment and promotion, annual interviews of potential participants, and training of new participants prior to departure, among many other Consulate initiatives. We provide a voice for JET alumni to the Japanese government and represent alumni interests at annual conferences in the U.S. and around the world.

For more information about JETAANC's programs and activities, visit:  
<http://www.jetaanc.org>.

## Special Thanks

The Center would like to thank the following for their contributions to making the J-Chat program possible and for their input and feedback from our program pilot session:

**Program Sponsor JET Alumni Association of Northern California**

**JETAANC Executive Committee**

**Japanese Language Instructor Dr. Lisa Hofmann-Kuroda**

**Pilot Session Volunteer Facilitators: Arisa Takahashi, Keita Ito, Junko Nagai and Naomi Oya**

**Naomi Oya (again!) for additional input and advice**



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