

Derek Tse

BS in Computer Science, Minors in Japanese Studies and Math 2021  
Junior Software Engineer at Google

I had been taking Japanese courses at UCSD almost every quarter I was here (20, 130, 135, 140, and 150C). I decided to pursue a minor in Japanese Studies when I finished taking the JAPN 135 series, and realized that I could use that towards the minor as a non-language requirement.

I come from a very large department (Computer Science, and formerly Math), in which there are maybe thousands of us. With this many students, the interactions between people in the department (student to student, or student to faculty) are very limited. In contrast, Japanese Studies is a much smaller department. Once you reach a certain point, you more or less know most of your fellow students. For this, I am very fond of how tight-knitted Japanese Studies is.

I don't have a clear favorite, but I like the upper division Japanese courses better than the lower division counterparts. In the 10 and 20 series, you may be asked to describe your everyday activities or your favorite music artist. When you have the basic tools to learn Japanese, you gain access to the more thought-provoking topics that upper division Japanese courses have to offer - things that you could possibly learn from any humanities college course. For a hands-on learning experience, I highly recommend JAPN 135.

I have spoken with a handful of Googlers who are / were working from the Tokyo office. If you're a software engineer in an American tech company, knowing Japanese is more of a nicety than a requirement. That said, you will obviously need to know some Japanese to be able to live there.

I began studying Japanese in high school. Like many that were drawn to learning Japanese, I love Japanese music, anime, and video games. Thus, even before entering college, studying Japanese had always been a personal goal. Even though I've never been to Japan before (due to a myriad of unfortunate conflicts and COVID), I continue to strive to use Japanese in my life everyday in small ways, such as reading the news, playing games, chatting with other Japanese people, or even doing some online shopping on sites such as Rakuten.

If you are interested in learning more Japanese, you have come to the right place. Here in San Diego, we have a sizable Japanese-American community. We also have two wonderful student organizations that attract Japanese learners. If you're looking to practice your Japanese speaking, your Japanese professors will always be here for you during their office hours even if you're not currently taking any Japanese classes. In addition to that, JSA holds weekly language tables.

UCSD is a wonderful place to learn Japanese and get into Japanese Studies, and I hope you also enjoy your time here just as I did.