10 JAPANESE EMAIL MISTAKES

that make Japanese companies go quiet – and how to fix each one



All examples are fictional. Tone depends on the relationship and the purpose.

START Why this guide exists



Your Japanese can be grammatically correct and still sound like an order, a joke or a complaint. Japanese companies rarely tell you. They just reply later — or never. Here are the 10 mistakes we see most.

MISTAKE 01 A request that sounds like an instruction



The situation: You are asking a new business contact to send material today. The deadline matters, but you have not agreed on it yet.

✕ BEFORE

今日、資料を送ってください。

“Please send the material today.”

How it sounds: This is grammatical, but a direct request can feel like an instruction when the relationship is new. The recipient has little room to discuss the timing.

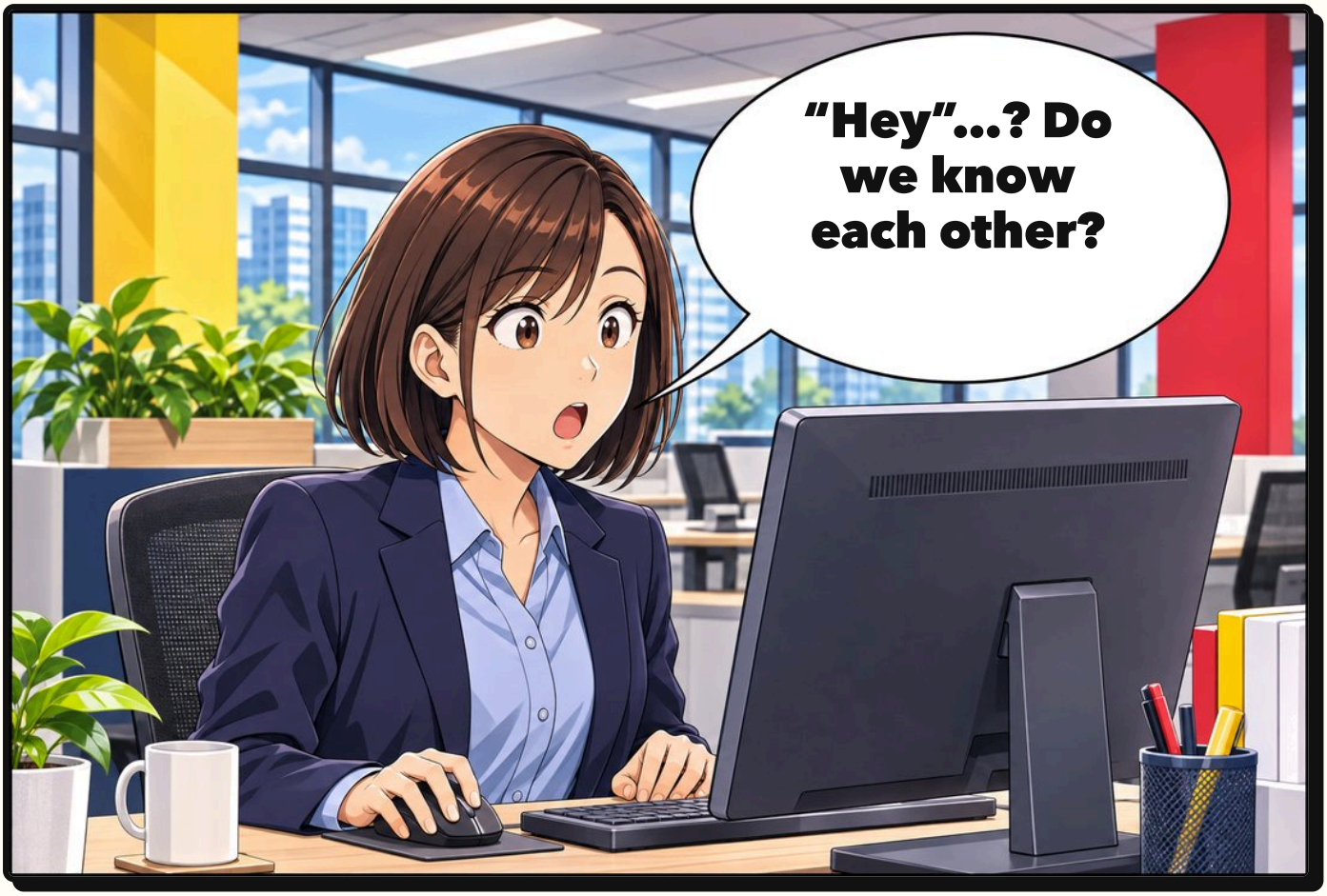
✓ AFTER

本日中に資料をお送りいただけますか。

“Could you send the material by the end of today?”

QUICK FIX Turn the instruction into a question. For an urgent request, also explain why and ask whether the deadline is workable.

MISTAKE 02 A greeting that assumes you are already friends



The situation: This is your first email to a company's general inquiry address. You do not know the recipient's name.

✕ BEFORE

やあ、担当者さん。

“Hey, person in charge.”

How it sounds: A literal casual greeting can sound overly familiar in a first business email. The vague form of address can also feel careless.

✓ AFTER

ご担当者様
初めてご連絡いたします。

“To the person in charge: This is my first time contacting you.”

QUICK FIX Use a professional opening, then identify yourself and explain your reason for writing. If you know the person's name, address them by name instead.

MISTAKE 03 Respectful language pointed at yourself



The situation: You are telling a customer that you will look at the document they sent.

✕ BEFORE

私がご覧になります。

"I will look at it. (The respectful form is applied to me.)"

How it sounds: The verb form elevates the person doing the looking. Using it for yourself reverses the intended direction of respect.

✓ AFTER

私が拝見します。

"I will take a look. (A humble form for my own action.)"

QUICK FIX Before choosing an honorific, ask who is doing the action. Longer or more formal wording is not automatically more appropriate.

MISTAKE 04 A reminder that leads with blame



The situation: You are following up on a routine email. There is no agreed deadline or immediate emergency.

✕ BEFORE

まだ返事がありません。すぐ返信してください。

"You still have not replied. Reply immediately."

How it sounds: This opening can sound accusatory. It assumes the other person is at fault before checking whether they received or reviewed the message.

✓ AFTER

先日お送りした件について、ご確認いただけましたでしょうか。

"Have you had a chance to review the matter I sent the other day?"

QUICK FIX Reference the original topic or date. If a response is genuinely urgent, give a clear deadline and the reason; do not hide urgency behind vague politeness.

MISTAKE 05 An apology translated word for word



The situation: You are replying late to a customer and want to acknowledge the delay.

✕ BEFORE

遅れて悪いです。

“I am bad for being late. (An awkward literal apology.)”

How it sounds: The wording sounds unnatural in this context and leaves the delay unspecified. A familiar apology pattern makes the message easier to understand.

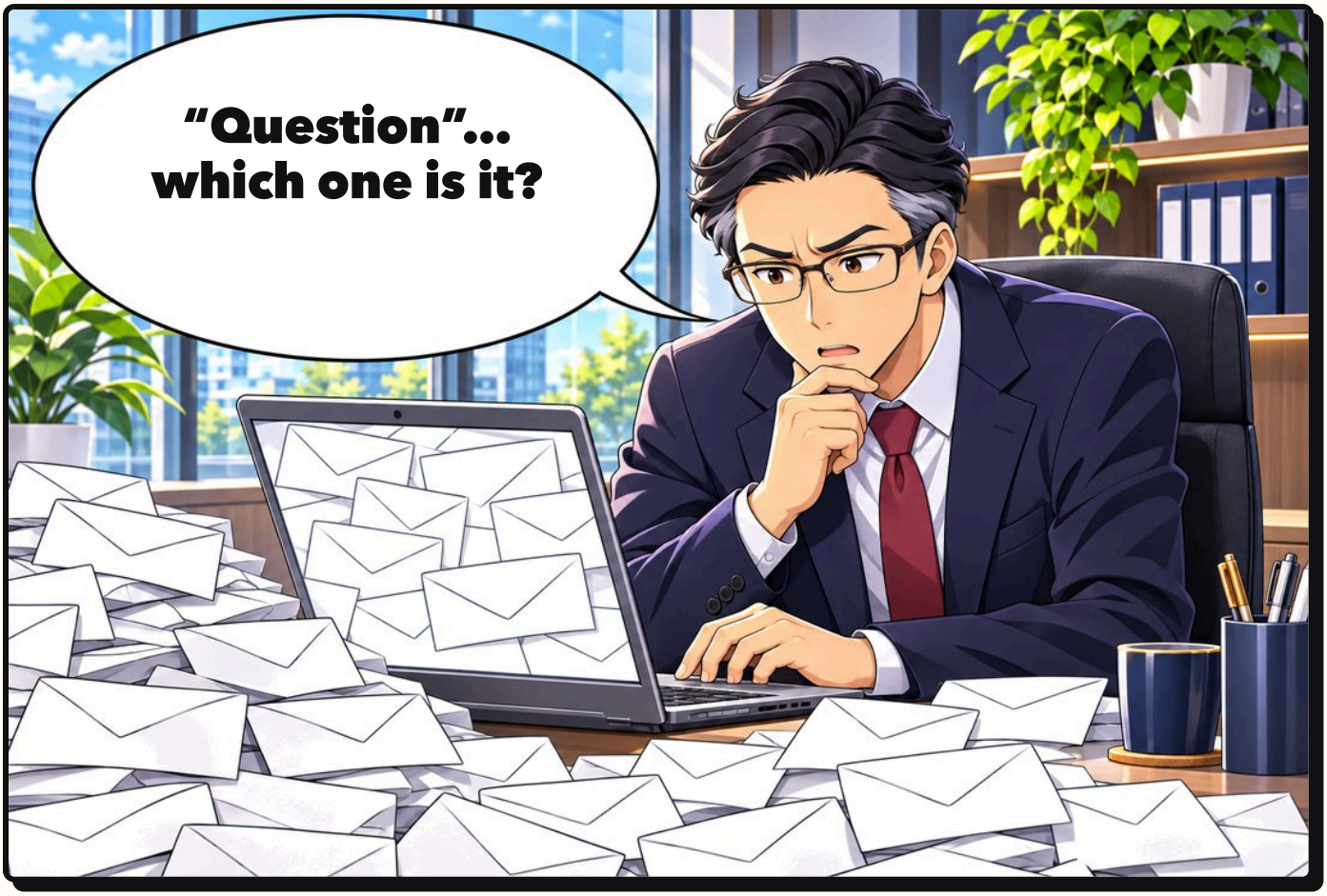
✓ AFTER

返信が遅くなり、申し訳ございません。

“I apologize for the delay in replying.”

QUICK FIX Name what was delayed. Then answer the question or explain the next step; an apology should not replace the useful part of the email.

MISTAKE 06 A subject line with no useful topic



The situation: You are asking about a Japanese-language app review before introducing the app to a business.

✕ BEFORE

質問

“Question”

How it sounds: The reader cannot tell what the email is about without opening it. A generic subject is also harder to find later.

✓ AFTER

導入相談：日本語版アプリの確認について

“Implementation inquiry: Review of the Japanese-language app”

QUICK FIX Include the purpose and the specific topic. This is a clarity fix, not a special honorific rule.

MISTAKE 07 An attachment with no next step



The situation: You are sending a draft estimate and would like the recipient to check it.

✕ BEFORE

見積書です。

“Here is the estimate.”

How it sounds: The recipient may not know whether to approve it, review it, or simply keep it for reference. The problem is the missing action, not just the short sentence.

✓ AFTER

見積書を添付いたします。内容をご確認いただけますか。

“I have attached the estimate. Could you review its contents?”

QUICK FIX State what the file is and what you want the reader to do. Confirm the correct file is attached before sending.

MISTAKE 08 A reply that does not confirm the plan



The situation: A business contact has proposed an online meeting for December 3 at 10:00 a.m. Japan time, and you can attend. This is a fictional date.

✕ BEFORE

OKです。

"OK."

How it sounds: A short OK may be fine with close colleagues. With a new external contact, it can feel casual and does not confirm which time you understood.

✓ AFTER

承知いたしました。12月3日10時（日本時間）より、よろしくお願いいたします。

"Understood. I look forward to our meeting on December 3 at 10:00 a.m. Japan time."

QUICK FIX Confirm the actual detail, not just receipt of the email. State the time zone when people are in different countries.

MISTAKE 09 A deadline that only makes sense to the sender



The situation: You need comments by December 4 at 5:00 p.m. Japan time to revise a document. The date is fictional and must be replaced for real use.

✕ BEFORE

金曜日までにお願いします。

“Please do it by Friday.”

How it sounds: Which Friday, which time zone, and what time of day? A polite sentence can still create practical uncertainty for an overseas team.

✓ AFTER

修正作業のため、12月4日17時（日本時間）までにご意見をいただけますか。

“To allow time for revisions, could you send your comments by December 4 at 5:00 p.m. Japan time?”

QUICK FIX Give the date, time, time zone, and reason. If the deadline has not been agreed, ask whether it is feasible.

MISTAKE 10 A closing that assumes a positive answer



The situation: You are inviting a company to consider a proposal. They have not agreed, and you are open to questions or objections.

✕ **BEFORE**

良い返事を待っています。

"I am waiting for a good answer."

How it sounds: The literal wording can sound as if only a positive response is welcome. It may put unnecessary pressure on someone who is still evaluating the proposal.

✓ **AFTER**

ご検討いただけますと幸いです。ご不明な点がございましたら、お知らせください。

"I would appreciate your consideration. Please let me know if anything is unclear."

QUICK FIX Close with the action you are asking for, without assuming acceptance. For a required decision, state a clear response deadline separately.

BEFORE YOU SEND 4 quick checks

- ✓ Who is the reader, and how well do you know them?
- ✓ Is it clear who does what, and by when?
- ✓ Are names, dates, time zones and attachments correct?
- ✓ Does the formality fit the relationship?



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