

How to play Japanese!

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HOW TO...



Play Ja

Importing games is great. You get the latest N64 releases, sometimes up to twelve months before they hit British shores. And then you realise you can't understand a bally word...

So, how do you remedy this problem? Well, actually, there are several courses of action: (a) you can be of Japanese origin; (b) you can enroll in a Japanese language course at your local college; (c) you can wait for the American release; or (d) you can search out an easy-to-use guide to Japanese video gaming.

Fine, then. But, like someone said in Neighbours once, "Where in damnation do I get hold of one?" Well, hold this copy of N64 to your ear and you'll be able to traverse the easiest, most comprehensive guide to understanding Japanese video games anywhere in the world. Read on, kodomora...

START and OPTIONS

In most games – Japanese or otherwise – the very first pickings will be a Start/Options screen from which you can choose to Start or, erm, go to the... um... Options. Oh.

Starting a game shouldn't be too hard for anyone familiar with the processes of using their fingers, but an Options menu may take some getting used to. Further sub-menus contained therein will vary depending on what kind of game you're playing. Football games, for example, delve deeper into the processes of match length, weather, off-sides and so on, whereas something like Mario Kart has hardly any specific options at all and more readily relies on choices in things like courses, players and race speed. So, if you're wanting to chop and change, you'll need to know the difference:



START
In this case "game start"

OPTIONS

SAVING and LOADING DATA

If the all-too-common nightmare of accidentally wiping level-loads of data from your recently acquired memory pack haunts you while traipsing through Saving and Loading screens in English-speaking games, be especially wary of the minefields that are the Japanese versions.

Understanding Japanese data options is, perhaps, the most important part of any import game especially if the game in question has no battery back-up and, therefore, relies totally on your filling of the pad's designated card slot. Look out for the "Data Load" or "Save Game" screens – some of which will carry an English monicker – and then follow our quick A-Z...



CONTROLLER PAK
The extra characters mean "Searching". Don't forget that Japanese N64s will also give you a Controller Pak management screen if you keep 'Start' pressed when you turn on a game.



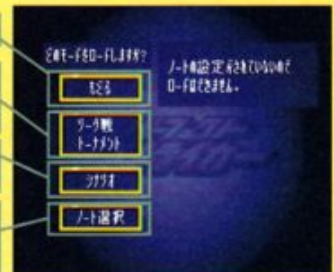
DATA LOAD

EXIT

LOAD TOURNAMENT
This is obviously only applicable to Perfect Striker.

LOAD SCENARIO
This too is Perfect Striker only.

SELECT NOTE
An odd term for basically selecting a slot from the Pak.



panese!

Understand those Import Games

SOUND

Everyone likes a bit of ear-candy, and most games give you the chance to amply satisfy your sonic needs. However, fiddling copiously with the given options is a relative breeze compared to finding the actual Sound options in amongst, frankly, frightening amounts of Japanese text.

Once located, your Sound menu is likely to offer you the choice between Stereo and Mono, the level of Sound Effects and the Volume. Look out for deceiving menu items, though, like Japanese *Pilotwings'* BGM (Background Music) option which, although ultimately obvious, throws you a little to begin with. Indeed, many Japanese offerings opt for English as opposed to their native language due to its 'coolness' in Japan, so when a menu item is labelled "Sound", it does actually *mean* sound, not "Erase Data" or "Quit Game"...

STEREO

Although written in Japanese, when translated, the sound of these characters actually reads 'SU-TE-RE-O': Stereo.

VOLUME



EXIT

This usually means return to the previous menu...

SOUND EFFECTS

Many games nowadays give you the option to tweak the soundtrack (BGM in *Pilotwings'* case) and the sound effects separately.

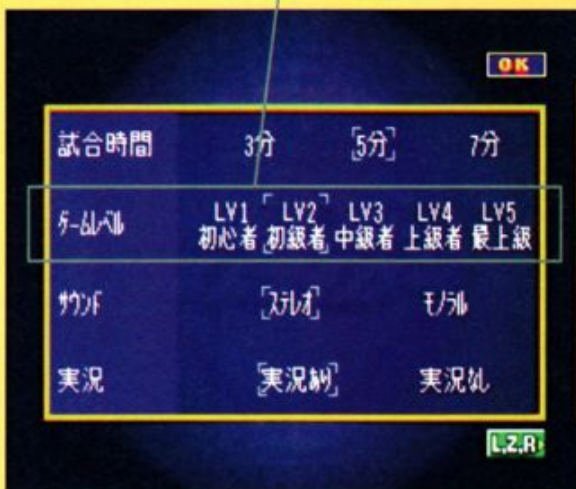
DIFFICULTY

Games like *Perfect Striker* are positively crying out for some difficulty tweakage, and knowing whether you're upping or lowering proceedings is, of course, vital. The actual names given to each individual difficulty setting will undoubtedly vary depending on what game you're playing but, as a general rule, most will opt for the traditionally safe Easy, Medium and Hard.

However, variations such as Novice, Beginner, Expert and Advanced are creeping into many a title, so it's worth using your eyes and brain to figure out which one's which. Having said that, though, it's really only when developers start to come under the influence of *Doom* that things start to get complicated. If you thought the hilarious "I own *Doom*" or "Watch me Die" was confusing enough in English, then in Japanese you'll last about as long as Keith Floyd in *Threshers*.

GAME LEVEL

This is the bar we're interested in. The characters on the far left read phonetically GAA-MU-RE-BI-RU, which after some careful thought comes out as 'game level'. The following characters are (from left to right) NOVICE, BEGINNER, MEDIUM, ADVANCED and EXPERT (hence LV1 to 5).



TO BE CONTINUED... Next month! A new column on understanding Japanese text.