

I was talking with a friend recently about a lesson that she taught in her adult conversation class about pet peeves. Do you know what a pet peeve is? It's a specific behavior that causes an individual to get easily frustrated. For example, one of my pet peeves is when native English-speakers make simple grammatical errors. If someone writes "please bring your book's" instead of "please bring your books," I get very irritated. It's something that everyone should have learned in elementary school! Of course it doesn't bother me for people who are learning English as a second language.

A lot of North American people are very open about their pet peeves. We often tell each other, "Oh, please don't do that, it's a huge pet peeve of mine." My friend told me that the people in her class had a hard time understanding the concept because they don't have the same idea in Japanese. It took the students in her class a long time to identify the things that annoy them about other people. Have you ever thought of telling someone openly about something they do that annoys you? One person in her class said that her pet peeve was when her boss emptied her trash can every day. He would empty it several times a day—anytime she stepped away from her desk—and it drove her crazy! She admitted that after about a year, she asked her boss not to do that anymore, but that it was very difficult to do! I was very impressed that she eventually expressed her opinion.

What do you think about the idea of a pet peeve? Can you identify the things that annoy you about other people quickly? Do you think that the idea of a pet peeve is very uncommon in Japan? In America, people almost never hesitate to tell other people when they are annoyed or irritated. In some ways, I think it's a good thing to be honest with other people. In Japan, I often used to worry that I was annoying people around me because I don't know all the social norms. But now I am used to the way people act here, and I like the fact that people aren't always complaining. Sometimes it's annoying in America when people are TOO honest about the way they feel when they get annoyed, and expect the people around them to change.

I'm going home next Wednesday so I'll be away from the office for a few weeks. We'll see if I remember a lot of pet peeves about people from home or if I'll feel anxious to come back to the life in Japan that I have gotten so used to in the last two years. See you in December!