

## わかる and 知る<sup>し</sup>

While **わかる** means to *figure out the content of something or to be clear or to be understandable*, **知る** means to *find out something or to become acquainted with something or someone*.

スペイン語がわかりますか。

Do you understand Spanish?

スペイン語を知<sup>し</sup>っていますか。

Do you know Spanish?

**知る**, with its basic meaning of *to find out or to become acquainted*, is translated as *know* when it appears in its **-ている** form (lit., *is in the state of having found out or having become acquainted*). This is why you use **知っている** for knowing people and being familiar with places and ideas.

-カワムラさんの住<sup>じゅうしょ</sup>所<sup>し</sup>を知っていますか。

Do you know Mr. Kawamura's address?

-いいえ、知<sup>し</sup>りません。でも、調<sup>しら</sup>べれば、わかりますよ。

No, I don't. But I'll know (*lit.*, it will be clear) if I check it.

Both **わかりません** and **知りません** can be used for *I don't know*, but the nuance is quite different. **知りません** can imply *I don't know and have no reason to*, so it can sound a bit rude if the question is one that you could be expected to know the answer to. That is why, when you ask a store clerk a question about the merchandise, he or she answers with **わかりませんね** instead of **知りません**. (The **ね** makes it clear that the meaning is *I don't know*, not *I don't understand you*.)

In fact, saying **知らない** directly to another person's face is a way of saying *I disapprove of what you are doing and want nothing to do with you*. Furthermore, since **知る** refers to finding out something that you didn't have any reason to know, it sounds odd to use **知りません** in reference to something concerning yourself, such as your own future plans or your own wants.

However, **知りません** is a perfectly acceptable response when you don't know a person, are unfamiliar with a place or idea, or have no expertise in a certain subject area.