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# TOM TOM ENGLISH



## Be like an Osaka Aunty

### VOCABULARY

#### Odious =

Extremely unpleasant;  
repulsive

#### Spurious =

False, fake, pretending  
to be something else

#### Bate-and-switch =

Advertising something  
that seems to be a  
bargain, with the  
attention of switching  
to an inferior product  
later

#### Scam =

A dishonest scheme or  
plan to defraud  
someone

### Read the article overleaf and discuss these questions:

1. Why do you think cases of fraud are increasing?
2. What can the government do to reduce these kind of scams?
3. Why do you think these scams are less successful in Osaka? Do you agree with the article? Why? Why not?
4. Have you ever been the victim of a scam? What happened? Could you have done anything to avoid it?
5. Do you know anyone who has been the victim of a scam? What happened?
6. Do you have elderly relatives? If so, do you or they take any precautions to prevent them from being victims of fraud? What do you or they do?

### VOCABULARY

#### Nefarious =

Something wicked or  
evil

#### Vernacular =

The language or dialect  
spoken by ordinary  
people in a particular  
area

#### Right off the bat =

Immediately, straight  
away, at the beginning

#### Circumspect =

Wary, careful, unwilling  
to take risks

#### Emulate =

Copy, imitate

Despite the authorities' efforts to put people on their guard against the **odious** "It's me, send money" and other forms of fraud, the number of reported incidents last year rose by 13% over 2014, to 12,762 cases. Losses were calculated at 39 billion yen.

Broken down by type, the known incidents went up by 5% for "it's me, send money" schemes; 30% for **spurious** invoice demands; and 23% for **bait-and-switch scams** involving tax rebates.

Considering the extensive reporting in the media of such incidents, marvels Nikkan Gendai (April 23), it's something of a wonder that the number of cases keeps growing. This is in part a testimony to wily crooks' ability to keep coming up with original types of confidence schemes. Once, all it took was a hushed voice over the telephone, pretending to be a son or grandson, and urgently asking for money to keep the police or court at bay. These are still common; but now those considerate, cooperative criminals are even willing to come to their elderly victims' homes to receive the cash—or an ATM card giving them access to the victims' accounts. One of the fastest-growing types of schemes is the tricking of people into using parcel delivery services to send payment for billed items that they never ordered.

As a proactive measure to protect oneself from becoming victimized by one of these **nefarious** schemes, Nikkan Gendai says nothing beats emulating the conversational style of an "Osaka auntie." Why Osaka? If one looks at the prefectures where reported cases of fraud are most common, the top three are Tokyo, Saitama and Okayama. Osaka, at 43rd, ranks close to the bottom. One likely reason for this is the way Osaka people typically engage others, including over the telephone. For details, the tabloid turned to a book titled "The Osaka Obasan

Strikes Back," authored by Sachiko Minamoto, who says she was born "right in the middle of Osaka."

"If the caller begins by saying 'Ore dakedo' (it's me), such women tend to be immediately put on their guard, demanding confirmation by asking, 'What do you mean by ME? None of my kids are an 'ore.'" If the caller speaks using standard Japanese instead of Osaka dialect, moreover, it'll almost certainly raise suspicions. "Homma ni Takeshi?" (Takeshi, is it really you?) she'll ask in the local **vernacular**, insisting on some sort of proof before continuing the conversation.

"In the old days, discussion of money wasn't treated as a taboo among Osakans," author Minamoto notes. "For instance, if you saw a person clad in a nice garment, there was nothing wrong with asking 'Nanbo shitan?' (how much did you pay for it?). Or if a person changed residence, you could ask him, 'Yachin nanbo?' (how much rent are you paying?). Osakans have got the kind of culture where they can negotiate with a realtor and even ask for a discount on the rent for an apartment. So the subject of money tends to come up **right off the bat**, and they don't automatically agree with someone else's terms."

Minamoto also points out such ladies' contrary nature. Ask for the money to be sent via bank transfer and she'll counter, "That's too troublesome. Why don't you come and get it yourself?" In other words, while she may be perfectly willing to have others make additional efforts, she's twice as **circumspect** when it comes to laying out her own money.

"That's an attitude everyone ought to **emulate**," Minamoto says.