

# Japanese- Language Proficiency Test

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## 日本語能力試験

JLPT Japanese-Language  
Proficiency  
Test

Guide to the Japanese-Language  
Proficiency Test (JLPT)  
in the United States

# What is the Japanese-Language Proficiency Test?

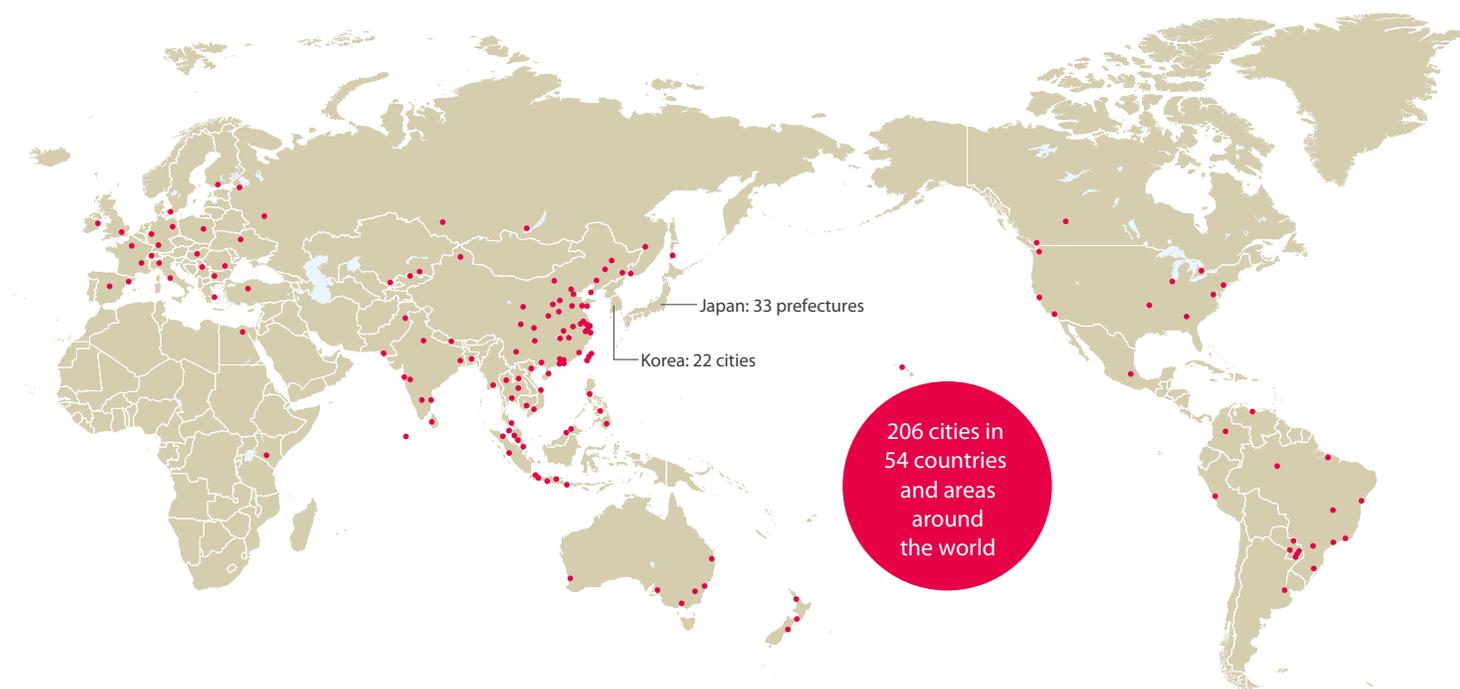
## The largest Japanese-language test in the world

The JLPT is a test for non-native speakers of Japanese which evaluates and certifies their Japanese-language proficiency. The test is simultaneously conducted once a year in the United States.

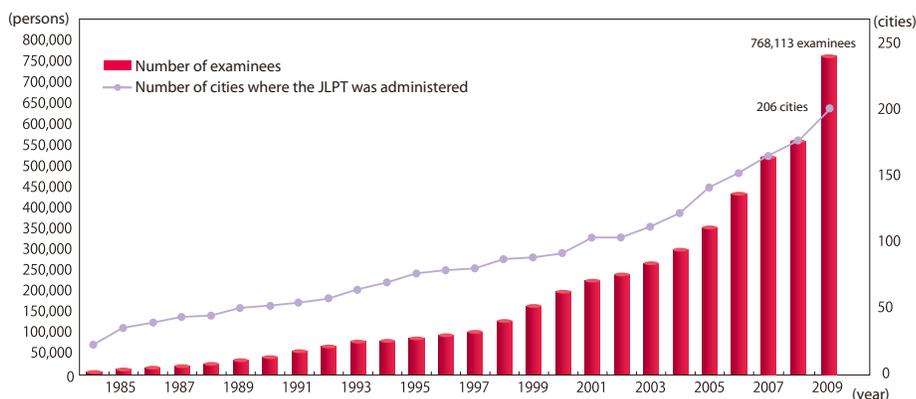
The JLPT began in 1984. While at the beginning just 7,000 people applied to take the test in 15 countries and areas worldwide, by 2009 the number of examinees had risen to as many as 770,000 in 54 countries and areas around the world. Currently, it is the largest Japanese-language test in the world.

● Cities where the JLPT was administered (December test in 2009)

● Cities where the JLPT was administered



● Number of examinees and cities where the JLPT was administered

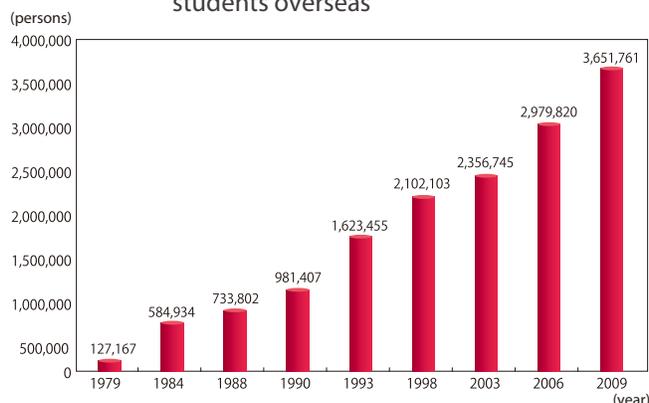


## Serves a variety of purposes

According to the Survey of Overseas Organizations Involved in Japanese-Language Education conducted by the Japan Foundation every three years, the number of students studying Japanese outside of Japan grew from 127,000 in 1979 to 3.65 million in 2009.

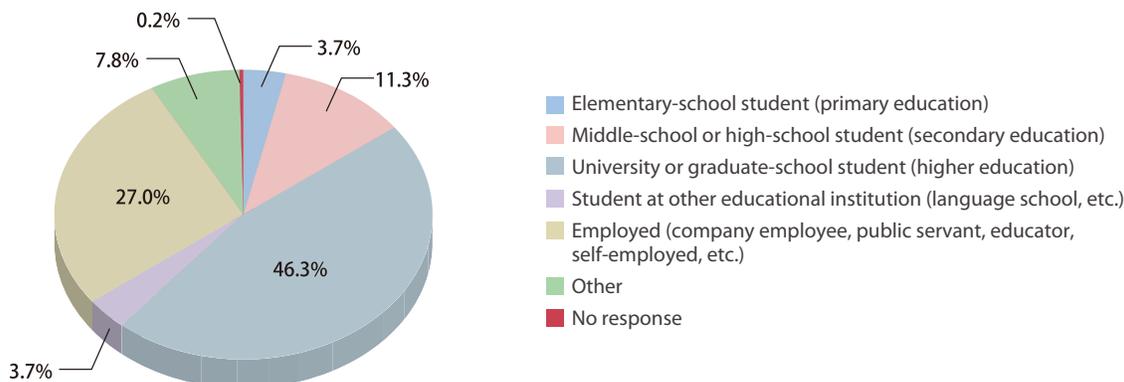
Along with the increase in students, the number of JLPT examinees has increased. Today, people of various ages, from elementary school students to working individuals, take the JLPT. In addition, the JLPT is used not only to measure ability but also for a variety of purposes, including employment screening and evaluation for pay raises and promotions as well as to recognize qualifications.

### ● Number of Japanese-language students overseas

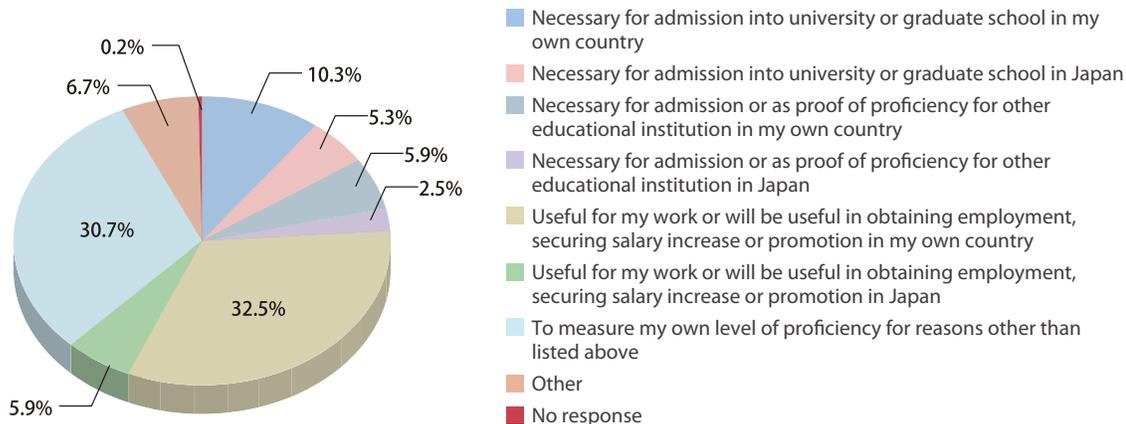


Source: Survey of Overseas Organizations Involved in Japanese-Language Education, the Japan Foundation (provisional figures)

### ● Breakdown of examinees



### ● Reasons for taking the JLPT



\* Respondents: Overseas examinees taking the December test in 2009 (valid samples: N=423,961) in 170 cities in 52 countries where the Japan Foundation administered the JLPT.

# Characteristics of the New JLPT

## The new JLPT started in 2010.

Over the course of the JLPT's nearly three decades of history, the number of Japanese-language students has increased and their reasons for studying and using Japanese have become more diverse. In December 2010, the JLPT was revised to meet this changing environment. The new JLPT (new test) incorporates those revisions while inheriting content from the previous test (old test).

## Three key points of the new JLPT

POINT

1

### Increased focus on communicative competence

The new test emphasizes not only (1) **knowledge of Japanese-language vocabulary and grammar** but also the (2) **ability to use the knowledge in actual communication**. Thus, it measures (1) through the Language Knowledge (Vocabulary/Grammar) test section and (2) through the Reading and Listening test sections. The new test comprehensively measures communicative competence in Japanese through a combined assessment of these sections.

\* As with the old test, the new test is a multiple-choice exam that is scored by computer. There is no test section where applicants' speaking or writing abilities are directly evaluated.

POINT

2

### Five levels offered; examinees can select the right level

The new test offers five levels (N1, N2, N3, N4, N5). Each level has different test items in order to measure each examinee's Japanese-language proficiency as accurately as possible.

The old test offered four levels (Level 1, Level 2, Level 3, Level 4). The new test adds one new level that falls between Levels 2 and 3 in the old test; with a total of five levels, the new test allows examinees to select the level that is right for them.

### ● Summary of linguistic competence required for each level & corresponding levels of new and old tests

Level	Summary of linguistic competence required for each level	Corresponding levels of new and old tests
N1	The ability to understand Japanese used in a variety of circumstances.	Approximately the same level as the old Level 1 test, but designed to measure slightly more advanced abilities.
N2	The ability to understand Japanese used in everyday situations, and in a variety of circumstances to a certain degree.	Approximately the same level as the old Level 2 test.
N3	The ability to understand Japanese used in everyday situations to a certain degree.	Positioned at a level bridging the old Level 2 and Level 3 tests. <b>Newly established</b>
N4	The ability to understand basic Japanese.	Approximately the same level as the old Level 3 test.
N5	The ability to understand some basic Japanese.	Approximately the same level as the old Level 4 test.

↑  
difficult

easy

**POINT**  
**3**

## More accurately measures Japanese-language competence

The new test adopted a new scoring method to more accurately reflect examinees' Japanese-language competence in scores. Scores are calculated as "scaled" scores instead of raw scores.

Scores in the old test were raw scores calculated by the number of questions answered correctly. It is inevitable that the level of difficulty of the test changes slightly from session to session no matter how carefully questions are designed. Depending on test difficulty, this sometimes results in different scores for the same competency when raw scores are used.

With scaled scores of the new test, how individual examinees answer particular questions (which questions are answered correctly and incorrectly) is reviewed and scores are calculated based on scales for each level. The same scale is always used for the same-level test. Therefore, regardless of difficulty of tests at different times, examinees with the same proficiency have the same score.

As outlined here, scaled scores can more accurately and fairly indicate Japanese-language competence at the time of tests.

### Score report

Examinees receive a Score Report that shows pass or fail, scores of scoring sections and total score (scaled scores) as well as reference information. (See Page 5 for scoring sections.)

The reference information indicates the percentages of correct responses\* for each component (ex. Vocabulary and Grammar) according to three levels, A, B and C, when a scoring section has multiple components (ex. Language Knowledge [Vocabulary/ Grammar]). This allows examinees to learn how well they performed in each component and plan for their future Japanese-language study.

\* The percentage of correct responses is the ratio of correctly answered questions to the total number of questions in each component. The reference information indicates "the number of questions answered correctly," which differs from scaled scores. It is not used to determine pass or fail.

Score report (Sample: For N1-N3)



### Criteria

- A: Number of correct responses is 67% or higher
- B: Number of correct responses is between 34% and 66%
- C: Number of correct responses is less than 34%

### Scoring sections (scaled scores)

- N1, N2, N3.....Language Knowledge (Vocabulary/Grammar)
- N4, N5.....Language Knowledge (Vocabulary/Grammar) • Reading

- ➔ "Vocabulary" and "Grammar"
- ➔ "Vocabulary," "Grammar" and "Reading"

### Reference information (percentages of correct responses)

# Test Composition and Linguistic Competence Required for Each Level

## Test sections and test times, scoring sections and range of scores

Test sections at the time of tests are shown in the “Test sections and test times” table at left.

Scoring sections in test results are shown in the “Scoring sections and range of scores” table at right.

### ● Test sections and test times

### ● Scoring sections and range of scores

Level	Test sections	Test times		Scoring sections	Range of scores (scaled scores)
N1	Language Knowledge (Vocabulary/Grammar) · Reading	110 min		Language Knowledge (Vocabulary/Grammar)	0 – 60 points
	Listening	60 min		Reading	0 – 60 points
	Listening	60 min	Listening	0 – 60 points	
N2	Language Knowledge (Vocabulary/Grammar) · Reading	105 min		Language Knowledge (Vocabulary/Grammar)	0 – 60 points
	Listening	50 min		Reading	0 – 60 points
	Listening	50 min	Listening	0 – 60 points	
N3	Language Knowledge (Vocabulary)	30 min		Language Knowledge (Vocabulary/Grammar)	0 – 60 points
	Language Knowledge (Grammar) · Reading	70 min		Reading	0 – 60 points
	Listening	40 min		Listening	0 – 60 points
N4	Language Knowledge (Vocabulary)	30 min		Language Knowledge (Vocabulary/Grammar) · Reading	0 – 120 points
	Language Knowledge (Grammar) · Reading	60 min			
	Listening	35 min		Listening	0 – 60 points
N5	Language Knowledge (Vocabulary)	25 min		Language Knowledge (Vocabulary/Grammar) · Reading	0 – 120 points
	Language Knowledge (Grammar) · Reading	50 min			
	Listening	30 min		Listening	0 – 60 points

Please compare the two tables from left to right to see how test sections and scoring sections correspond.

With N1 and N2, one test section, “Language Knowledge (Vocabulary/Grammar) · Reading,” is divided into two scoring sections, “Language Knowledge (Vocabulary/Grammar)” and “Reading.”

With N3, two test sections, “Language Knowledge (Vocabulary)” and “Language Knowledge (Grammar) · Reading,” are restructured as two scoring sections, “Language Knowledge (Vocabulary/Grammar)” and “Reading.”

With N4 and N5, two test sections, “Language Knowledge (Vocabulary)” and “Language Knowledge (Grammar) · Reading,” are combined as one scoring section, “Language Knowledge (Vocabulary/Grammar) · Reading.”

With all levels, the “Listening” test section and scoring section are identical.

These differences by level are to ensure a more accurate measurement of an examinee’s Japanese-language competence according to the characteristics of individual study stages.

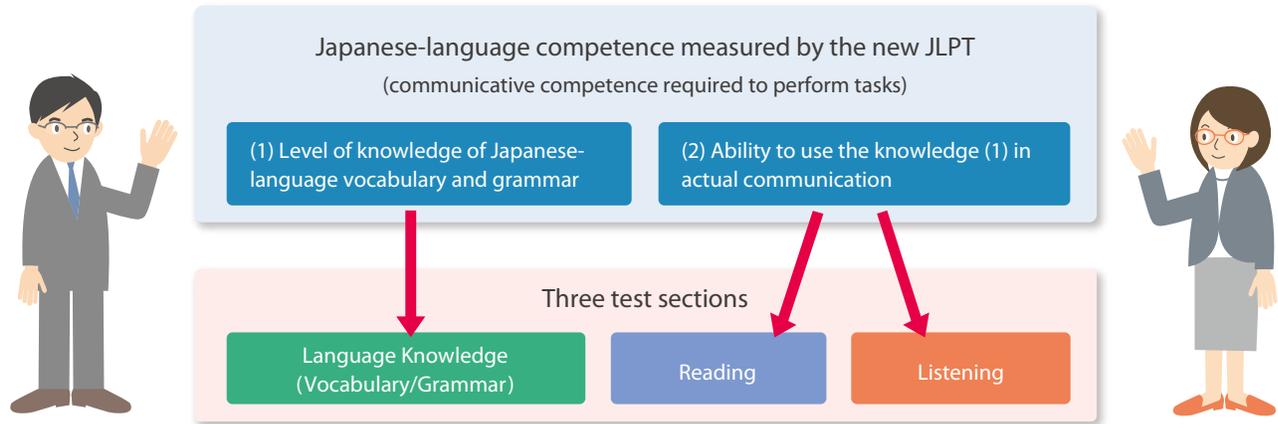
## Summary of linguistic competence required for each level

The table below shows the summary of the linguistic competence required for each level. This table outlines what is expected of examinees for each level of the new JLPT in terms of Reading and Listening. The linguistic knowledge needed to execute the behaviors described will be required by the examinees to pass their respective levels.

Level	Summary of linguistic competence required for each level
N1	<p>The ability to understand Japanese used in a variety of circumstances.</p> <p><b>Reading</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One is able to read writings with logical complexity and/or abstract writings on a variety of topics, such as newspaper editorials and critiques, and comprehend both their structures and contents.</li> <li>• One is also able to read written materials with profound contents on various topics and follow their narratives as well as understand the intent of the writers comprehensively.</li> </ul> <p><b>Listening</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One is able to comprehend orally presented materials such as coherent conversations, news reports, and lectures, spoken at natural speed in a broad variety of settings, and is able to follow their ideas and comprehend their contents comprehensively. One is also able to understand the details of the presented materials such as the relationships among the people involved, the logical structures, and the essential points.</li> </ul>
N2	<p>The ability to understand Japanese used in everyday situations, and in a variety of circumstances to a certain degree.</p> <p><b>Reading</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One is able to read materials written clearly on a variety of topics, such as articles and commentaries in newspapers and magazines as well as simple critiques, and comprehend their contents.</li> <li>• One is also able to read written materials on general topics and follow their narratives as well as understand the intent of the writers.</li> </ul> <p><b>Listening</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One is able to comprehend orally presented materials such as coherent conversations and news reports, spoken at nearly natural speed in everyday situations as well as in a variety of settings, and is able to follow their ideas and comprehend their contents. One is also able to understand the relationships among the people involved and the essential points of the presented materials.</li> </ul>
N3	<p>The ability to understand Japanese used in everyday situations to a certain degree.</p> <p><b>Reading</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One is able to read and understand written materials with specific contents concerning everyday topics.</li> <li>• One is also able to grasp summary information such as newspaper headlines.</li> <li>• In addition, one is also able to read slightly difficult writings encountered in everyday situations and understand the main points of the content if some alternative phrases are available to aid one's understanding.</li> </ul> <p><b>Listening</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One is able to listen and comprehend coherent conversations in everyday situations, spoken at near-natural speed, and is generally able to follow their contents as well as grasp the relationships among the people involved.</li> </ul>
N4	<p>The ability to understand basic Japanese.</p> <p><b>Reading</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One is able to read and understand passages on familiar daily topics written in basic vocabulary and kanji.</li> </ul> <p><b>Listening</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One is able to listen and comprehend conversations encountered in daily life and generally follow their contents, provided that they are spoken slowly.</li> </ul>
N5	<p>The ability to understand some basic Japanese.</p> <p><b>Reading</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One is able to read and understand typical expressions and sentences written in hiragana, katakana, and basic kanji.</li> </ul> <p><b>Listening</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One is able to listen and comprehend conversations about topics regularly encountered in daily life and classroom situations, and is able to pick up necessary information from short conversations spoken slowly.</li> </ul>

## New JLPT Test Item Examples

The new test measures an examinee's level of knowledge of Japanese-language vocabulary and grammar as the Language Knowledge (Vocabulary/Grammar) test section and his or her ability to use that knowledge in actual communication as the Reading and Listening test sections.



The new test measures examinees' "communicative competence required to perform tasks." For this purpose, all test item formats of the old test were reviewed and revisions were made. Test item formats of the new test include those directly inherited from the old test, those incorporating partial changes and those newly adopted starting with the new test. Below, test item examples mainly of new format items are described.

Language Knowledge (Vocabulary/Grammar)

Vocabulary

Level: N3  
Test item type: Usage

問題 つぎのことばの使い方として最もよいものを、1・2・3・4から一つえらびなさい。

- かわいがる
- 1 山田さんは子どもをとともかわいがっています。
  - 2 あの人は親をとともかわいがっています。
  - 3 田中さんは、いただいた時計をとともかわいがっています。
  - 4 あの人は自分の家をとともかわいがっています。



Test item on determining accurate use of a word in a sentence. Test item also found in the old test.



[Answer: 1]

Language Knowledge (Vocabulary/Grammar)

Grammar

Level: N2  
Test item type: Text grammar

問題 次の文章を読んで、文章全体の内容を考えて、からの中に入る最もよいものを、1・2・3・4から一つ選びなさい。

街にはおもちゃがあふれています。贈り物におもちゃを買おうと思っても、おもちゃ屋に並ぶ多種多様なおもちゃの前でどれを選んだらいいか迷ってしまったという方もいるかもしれません。

そこで、ある団体が、おもちゃを選ぶ時の参考にしてもらおうと、毎年、の中から優良なおもちゃ、「グッド・トイ」を選定しています。お店で見てすぐにわかるように、選定されたグッド・トイにはので、おもちゃを買うときにも参考になります。

グッド・トイ、「遊び力」を引き出してくれるものだそうです。「遊び力」というのは、見る力、聞く力、感じる力、コミュニケーションする力、夢見る力。人が生きていくのに必要な力のことです。

グッド・トイの選考では、まず推薦されたおもちゃをいろいろな年代の人に実際に遊んでてもらい、専門家が遊ばれ方を見て評価をします。その後も様々な視点から何度も検討を重ねてグッド・トイは選定されています。

おもちゃというと、ただ子どもが遊ぶためだけのものだと。塾や参考書は熱心に選んでも、おもちゃを真剣に選ぶという方はあまり多くないのではないでしょうか。おもちゃには大きな力を持つものがあります。次におもちゃを選ぶ時は、グッド・トイのように、生きる力を引き出してくれるものを探してみたいかがでしょうか。

- 1 1 たくさんの贈り物      2 選んだ贈り物      3 数あるおもちゃ      4 迷ったおもちゃ

- 2 1 グッド・トイマークがつけられていきました      2 グッド・トイマークがつけられています  
3 グッド・トイマークをつけておきました      4 グッド・トイマークをつけてみます

- 3 1 が      2 に      3 とか      4 とは

- 4 1 考えられつつあります      2 考えられがちです  
3 考えられてはいません      4 考えられなければいけません

- 5 1 しかし      2 それどころか  
3 すなわち      4 さらに

**!** Test item on sentence composition while taking overall text flow into consideration. Instead of focusing only on  or the particular sentence, sentences before and after the sentence and overall text need to be carefully read to answer. New test item.



[Answer: 1]3 [2]2 [3]4 [4]2 [5]1

Reading Level: N1  
Test item type: Integrated comprehension

問題 次のAとBはそれぞれ別の新聞のコラムである。AとBの両方を読んで、後の問いに対する答えとして最もよいものを、1・2・3・4から一つ選びなさい。

**A**

国語辞典『大言典』の第四版が発売された。十年前の改訂（注）以降の社会や生活の移り変わりを反映した言葉約一万項目が新たに追加されたという。収録語数は総計二十四万件余りと、同種の辞書の中では最多を誇る。

出版社によると、新たに盛り込まれたのは「逆切れ」など世相を反映した語の他、「イケメン」「ラブラブ」といった若者言葉など。「逆切れ」については「怒られた人が反対に怒り出してしまうこと」と書かれている。また、「イケメン」は「かっこいい男性」と説明。「ラブラブ」については「互いに愛し合っていて仲がよい様子」と説明されている。

今回採用された新語のうちカタカナ語が実に四割近くを占めた。長年改訂に携わっている担当者一人は「選定の過程では、私自身もわからない言葉がいくつもあり判断に困った。若者には常識なんですよけど」と話していた。

（中央経政新聞）

- 1 AとBのどちらの記事にも触れられている内容はどれか。
- 1 新たに盛り込まれた語の意味
  - 2 選定する時検討された語の数
  - 3 今回新たに収録された語の数
  - 4 今回不採用だった語の具体例
- 2 この辞書が多くの新語を取り入れたことについて、Aの筆者とBの筆者はどのような立場をとっているか。
- 1 AもBも、ともに明確にしている。
  - 2 AもBも、ともに批判的である。
  - 3 Aは批判的であるが、Bは明確にしている。
  - 4 Aは明確にしているが、Bは批判的である。

**B**

全面改訂された『大言典』第四版では、マスメディアやインターネットなどから収集した約十萬語のうち、一時の流行にとどまらず、人々の間に定着したと認められる新語を厳選。「ラブラブ」「イケメン」など約一万語が新たに増えたぞうだ。

時代の流れに即した新感覚の辞書と言えは響きはいいが、宣伝のための話題作り以上のものがあるだろうか。流行ともしよせん一時のもの。いずれ消えゆくものは自然に忘れ去られるまで放っておけばよい。

それゆえ、「家電（いえん）」「自宅の電話番号」「クールビズ（＝夏のビジネス用の服装）」などは、「一時的な流行や狭い範囲だけで使われている」として採用が見送られたのは賢明であろう。

（毎朝日報）

**!** Test item on reading while comparing and matching multiple texts in order to understand. New test item.



[Answer: 1]3 [2]4

(注1) 改訂：本や辞書を直して新しく出版すること

Listening Level: N4  
Test item type: Utterance expressions

問題 このもんだいでは、えを見ながらしつもんをきいてください。➡(やじるし)の人は何と言いますか。1から3の中から、いちばんいいものを一つえらんでください。



(Script)  
仕事が終わって帰ります。何と言いますか。

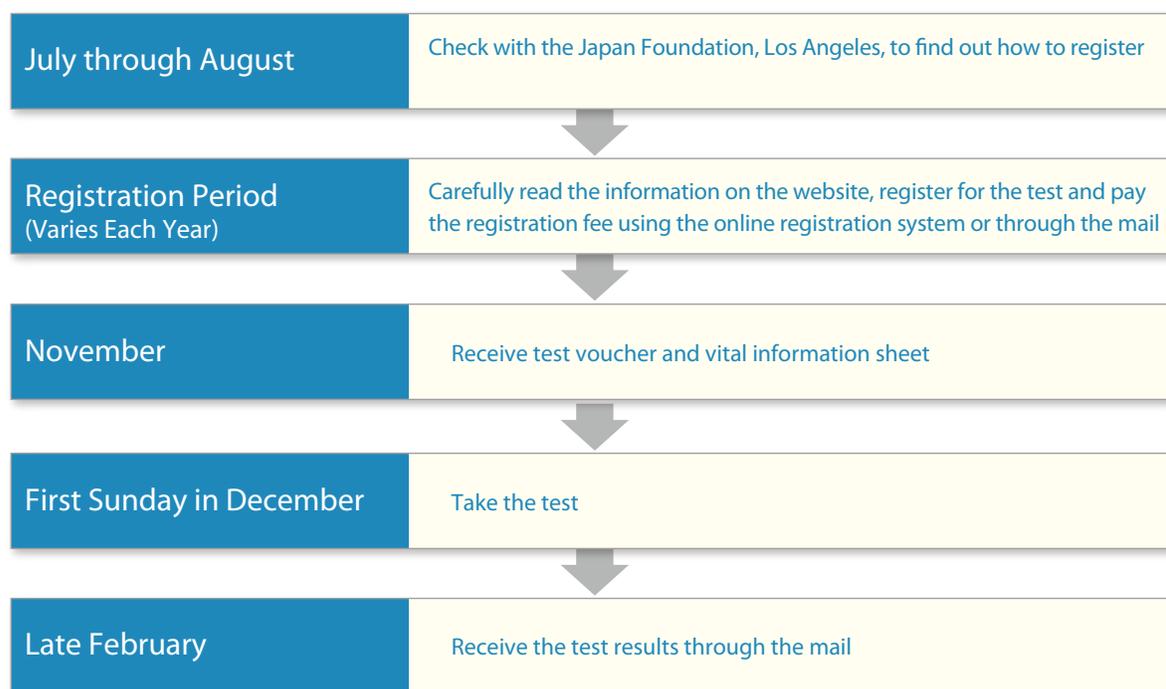
- 1 お邪魔します。
- 2 お大事に。
- 3 お先に失礼します。

**!** Test item on determining the appropriate response of the person indicated with an arrow (➡) in a particular situation. While looking at an illustration, explanation and questions must be listened to carefully in order to grasp the situation. New test item.



[Answer: 3]

## Test Registration Process: Taking in the United States



## FAQ

Q1

Are any special qualifications needed to take the JLPT?

The JLPT is open to all non-native Japanese speakers. There are no age restrictions for the JLPT.

Q2

When will the JLPT be held?

Once a year on the first Sunday in December.

Please check the Japan Foundation, Los Angeles Website ([www.jflalc.org](http://www.jflalc.org)) for more information.

Q3

At the time of registration, I will not be in the country/area where I want to take the test. What should I do?

You can register online as long as you have a valid credit card.

**Q4** How should I decide on which test level to take?

Please see the summary of linguistic competence required for each level on Page 6 and corresponding levels of new and old tests on Page 3.

**Q5** How is pass or fail determined?

In order to pass the JLPT, (1) the total score needs to be at or above the point required for passing (overall pass mark) and (2) the scores of each scoring section need to be at or above the minimum point required for passing (sectional pass mark). If there is even one scoring section where the score is below the sectional pass mark, examinees are determined to have failed, no matter how high the total score he/she might have.

Overall pass marks and sectional pass marks for each level are shown in the table below. (N1, N2 and N3 have three scoring sections each: (1) Language Knowledge (Vocabulary/Grammar), (2) Reading, and (3) Listening. N4 and N5 have two scoring sections each: (1) Language Knowledge (Vocabulary/Grammar) • Reading, and (2) Listening.)

Level	Total score		Scores by scoring section							
			Language Knowledge (Vocabulary/Grammar)		Reading		Language Knowledge (Vocabulary/Grammar) • Reading		Listening	
	Range of scores	Overall pass marks	Range of scores	Sectional pass marks	Range of scores	Sectional pass marks	Range of scores	Sectional pass marks	Range of scores	Sectional pass marks
<b>N1</b>	0 – 180 points	100 points	0 – 60 points	19 points	0 – 60 points	19 points	—	—	0 – 60 points	19 points
<b>N2</b>	0 – 180 points	90 points	0 – 60 points	19 points	0 – 60 points	19 points	—	—	0 – 60 points	19 points
<b>N3</b>	0 – 180 points	95 points	0 – 60 points	19 points	0 – 60 points	19 points	—	—	0 – 60 points	19 points
<b>N4</b>	0 – 180 points	90 points	—	—	—	—	0 – 120 points	38 points	0 – 60 points	19 points
<b>N5</b>	0 – 180 points	80 points	—	—	—	—	0 – 120 points	38 points	0 – 60 points	19 points

**Q6** When and how will I receive my test results?

All examinees will receive their own Score Report. Successful examinees will receive a Certificate of Proficiency. These will be sent out using USPS first class mail at the end of February or early March. If you do not receive your report by the end of March, please contact AATJ.

## Book Information

New Japanese-Language Proficiency Test Guidebook: An Executive Summary and Sample Questions for N1, N2 and N3

● B5, 129 pages, 1 CD included

Price: 900yen (+tax)  
 Publisher: Bonjinsha Inc.  
 ISBN: 978-4-89358-734-3



New Japanese-Language Proficiency Test Guidebook: An Executive Summary and Sample Questions for N4 and N5

● B5, 87 pages, 1 CD included

Price: 800yen (+tax)  
 Publisher: Bonjinsha Inc.  
 ISBN: 978-4-89358-735-0



# The Japanese-Language Proficiency Test In The United States

Test date: First Sunday in December

Levels offered: Five levels from N1 to N5

Apply early!

The application deadline is approximately two months before the test date. For details including application method and deadline, please check with the American Association of Teachers of Japanese (AATJ) at [www.aatj.org/jlpt](http://www.aatj.org/jlpt).

Latest test information is available here!



## JLPT USA Website

The American Association of Teachers of Japanese is in charge of organizing the Japanese Language Proficiency Test in the United States. Our website offers a great deal of information about the test including test registration process, test sites, as well as cost. If you are interested in taking the JLPT, please check out our website to find out more information.

Note: Information will be posted as it becomes available.

<http://www.aatj.org/jlpt>

Test Guide (including Application Form) is available at the AATJ office:

**AATJ-JLPT**  
**University of Colorado**  
**Campus Box 366**  
**Boulder, CO 80309-0366**  
**Tel: 303-492-5487**  
**Fax: 303-492-5856**  
**Email: [jlpt@aatj.org](mailto:jlpt@aatj.org)**