



# New Japanese-Language Proficiency Test Guidebook

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## Executive Summary

July, 2009

## 1 Overview of the new test

The Japanese-Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) has been offered by the Japan Foundation and Japan Educational Exchanges and Services (JEES) since 1984 as a reliable means to evaluate and certify the Japanese proficiency of non-native speakers. In 2008, there were as many as 560,000 examinees throughout the world.

Over time, test applicants became diversified, and use of JLPT results has expanded to include employment screening and evaluation for promotions and pay raises. Many outstanding suggestions for improvement were also submitted by a wide variety of individuals around the world.

To ensure the continuing relevancy and accuracy of the JLPT, the Japan Foundation and Japan Educational Exchanges and Services will introduce a revised version of the test in 2010. This new test will take full advantage of the most advanced research in Japanese pedagogy and testing theory, and reflects the vast wealth of data accumulated since the original JLPT was launched over 20 years ago.

## 2 Points of revision

### (1) Revised to measure communicative competence required to perform tasks.

Emphasizing both practical Japanese communicative competence and knowledge of the Japanese language, this test measures language knowledge which includes vocabulary and grammar, and the competence required to perform communicative tasks using such language knowledge.

\*Answers will be machine-scored as in the current test. Note that the new JLPT will not include sections to measure speaking or writing proficiencies directly.

### (2) Revised to increase the number of levels from 4 to 5.

The new test increases the number of test levels from 4 (Level 1, Level 2, Level 3 and Level 4) to 5 (**N1, N2, N3, N4 and N5**). The table below shows the corresponding levels of the new test to that of the current test.

<b>N1</b>	Approximately the same level as the current Level 1 test, but designed to measure slightly more advanced abilities.
<b>N2</b>	Approximately the same level as the current Level 2 test.
<b>N3</b>	Positioned at a level bridging the current Level 2 and Level 3 tests. <b>(Newly established)</b>
<b>N4</b>	Approximately the same level as the current Level 3 test.
<b>N5</b>	Approximately the same level as the current Level 4 test.

“**N**” stands for both “**N**ihongo” and “**N**ew”.

**(3) Revised to achieve score equating.**

Despite the best attempts to assure consistency, it is inevitable that the level of difficulty of the test will differ slightly from session to session because different test items are used. In order to minimize the impact of such differences on test scores and maintain the highest degree of fairness, scores for the new JLPT will be equated from session to session within the same level.

**(4) Revised to provide a Japanese-Language Proficiency Test Can-do List (tentative).**

The new JLPT provides a “Japanese-Language Proficiency Test Can-do List” (tentative), a list of Japanese language activities which successful examinees THINK they can do, obtained and presented through a survey.

A Can-do List will be presented to help examinees and others better understand the test results in terms of practical language use.

The table below is an example of the list of activities currently being developed.

**■ Sample, Japanese-Language Proficiency Test Can-do List (tentative)**

<b>Listening</b>	I can understand the general content when I hear announcements at school, at work or in public places.
<b>Speaking</b>	I can speak in detail of my hopes and experience at interviews such as for a job or a part-time job.
<b>Reading</b>	I can understand the content of newspaper or magazine articles about the interesting topics.
<b>Writing</b>	I can write letters or emails to express my emotions such as appreciation or apology.

\*The test level(s) corresponding to the samples above are not shown because descriptions are currently under development.

## **3 A Summary of Linguistic Competence Required for Each Level**

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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	A Summary of Linguistic Competence Required for Each Level
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg); font-weight: bold; margin-right: 10px;">difficult</div> <div style="font-size: 40px; font-weight: bold; margin-right: 10px;">↑</div> </div> <p style="font-weight: bold; font-size: 24px;">N1</p>	<p><b>The ability to understand Japanese used in a variety of circumstances.</b></p> <p><b>Reading</b> · 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.</p> <p>· 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.</p> <p><b>Listening</b> · 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.</p>
<p style="font-weight: bold; font-size: 24px;">N2</p>	<p><b>The ability to understand Japanese used in everyday situations, and in a variety of circumstances to a certain degree.</b></p> <p><b>Reading</b> · 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.</p> <p>· One is also able to read written materials on general topics and follow their narratives as well as understand the intent of the writers.</p> <p><b>Listening</b> · 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.</p>
<p style="font-weight: bold; font-size: 24px;">N3</p>	<p><b>The ability to understand Japanese used in everyday situations to a certain degree.</b></p> <p><b>Reading</b> · One is able to read and understand written materials with specific contents concerning everyday topics.</p> <p>· One is also able to grasp summary information such as newspaper headlines.</p> <p>· 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.</p> <p><b>Listening</b> · 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.</p>
<p style="font-weight: bold; font-size: 24px;">N4</p>	<p><b>The ability to understand basic Japanese.</b></p> <p><b>Reading</b> · One is able to read and understand passages on familiar daily topics written in basic vocabulary and <i>kanji</i>.</p> <p><b>Listening</b> · One is able to listen and comprehend conversations encountered in daily life and generally follow their contents, provided that they are spoken slowly.</p>
<p style="font-weight: bold; font-size: 24px;">N5</p>	<p><b>The ability to understand some basic Japanese.</b></p> <p><b>Reading</b> · One is able to read and understand typical expressions and sentences written in <i>hiragana</i>, <i>katakana</i>, and basic <i>kanji</i>.</p> <p><b>Listening</b> · 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.</p>

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## 4 Test sections and Test time

The table below shows the Test sections and the times allotted for each section.

Level	Test sections <Test time>		
<b>N1</b>	Language Knowledge (Vocabulary/Grammar) · Reading <110min>		Listening <60min>
<b>N2</b>	Language Knowledge (Vocabulary/Grammar) · Reading <105min>		Listening <50min>
<b>N3</b>	Language Knowledge (Vocabulary) <30min>	Language Knowledge (Grammar) · Reading <70min>	Listening <40min>
<b>N4</b>	Language Knowledge (Vocabulary) <30min>	Language Knowledge (Grammar) · Reading <60min>	Listening <35min>
<b>N5</b>	Language Knowledge (Vocabulary) <25min>	Language Knowledge (Grammar) · Reading <50min>	Listening <30min>

\*The time allotted for each section may change. The time allotted for the Listening section may differ slightly according to the length of the recorded materials.

Levels **N1** and **N2** have TWO test sections each: (1) Language Knowledge (Vocabulary/Grammar) and Reading, and (2) Listening.

Levels **N3**, **N4** and **N5** have THREE test sections each: (1) Language Knowledge (Vocabulary), (2) Language Knowledge (Grammar) and Reading, and (3) Listening.

## 5 Test results

### (1) Test results

The table below shows the Scoring Sections and range of scores.

Level	Scoring Sections	Range of scores
<b>N1</b>	Language Knowledge (Vocabulary/Grammar)	0 ~ 60
	Reading	0 ~ 60
	Listening	0 ~ 60
	Total Score	0 ~ 180
<b>N2</b>	Language Knowledge (Vocabulary/Grammar)	0 ~ 60
	Reading	0 ~ 60
	Listening	0 ~ 60
	Total Score	0 ~ 180
<b>N3</b>	Language Knowledge (Vocabulary/Grammar)	0 ~ 60
	Reading	0 ~ 60
	Listening	0 ~ 60
	Total Score	0 ~ 180
<b>N4</b>	Language Knowledge (Vocabulary/Grammar) · Reading	0 ~ 120
	Listening	0 ~ 60
	Total Score	0 ~ 180
<b>N5</b>	Language Knowledge (Vocabulary/Grammar) · Reading	0 ~ 120
	Listening	0 ~ 60
	Total Score	0 ~ 180

Levels **N1**, **N2** and **N3** have THREE scoring sections each: (1) Language Knowledge (Vocabulary/Grammar), (2) Reading, and (3) Listening.

Levels **N4** and **N5** have TWO scoring sections each: (1) Language Knowledge (Vocabulary/Grammar) and Reading, and (2) Listening.

## (2) Pass or fail

The requirements for passing have changed so that examinees must now exceed the minimum acceptable score for both the total as well as each scoring section. Failure to exceed the minimum acceptable score in any scoring sections will result in a fail for the entire test, even if your total score is above the minimum acceptable score. The purpose of setting a minimum acceptable score for each scoring section is to assess the comprehensive proficiency.

The minimum acceptable score for passing both the total score and each scoring section will be announced in 2010.

## (3) Score report

As in the sample below, the score report will show (1) scores for each section, (2) total score, and (3) reference information. The reference information is provided as a guide for the examinee's future Japanese study, and is NOT intended to determine pass or fail.

### ■ Example: A sample of an examinee's N3 test results

\*The sample format shown below may change.

Scores by scoring section				Total score
Language Knowledge (Vocabulary/Grammar)	Reading	Listening		
50 / 60	30 / 60	40 / 60	120 / 180	

① { } ② { }

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Reference information*	
Vocabulary	Grammar
<b>A</b>	<b>C</b>

③ { }

**A** : Good (The number of correct responses is 67% or higher)

**B** : Fair (The number of correct responses is between 34% and 66%)

**C** : Poor (The number of correct responses is less than 34%)

\*The sample reference information for Language Knowledge (Vocabulary/Grammar) shows that Vocabulary has been rated A (the number of correct responses is 67% or higher), which is Good, and that Grammar has been rated C (the number of correct responses is less than 34%), which is Poor. This score report indicates that the sample examinee did well in vocabulary, but would benefit from more grammar study.

## 6 Composition of Test Items

The table below shows the composition and approximate number of test items for each level.

Please refer to “New Japanese-Language Proficiency Test Sample Questions” for the form and content of each test item.

Test section		Type of test items	Number of test items				
			N1	N2	N3	N4	N5
Language Knowledge · Reading	Vocabulary	Kanji reading	6	5	8	9	12
		Orthography	—	5	6	6	8
		Word formation	—	5	—	—	—
		Contextually-defined expressions	7	7	11	10	10
		Paraphrases	6	5	5	5	5
		Usage	6	5	5	5	—
	<b>Total number of test items</b>		<b>25</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>
	Grammar	Sentential grammar 1 (Selecting grammar form)	10	12	13	15	16
		Sentential grammar 2 (Sentence composition)	5	5	5	5	5
		Text grammar	5	5	5	5	5
	<b>Total number of test items</b>		<b>20</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>
	Reading*	Comprehension (Short passages)	4	5	4	4	3
		Comprehension (Mid-size passages)	9	9	6	4	2
		Comprehension (Long passages)	4	—	4	—	—
		Integrated comprehension	3	2	—	—	—
		Thematic comprehension (Long passages)	4	3	—	—	—
		Information retrieval	2	2	2	2	1
	<b>Total number of test items</b>		<b>26</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>
	Listening	Task-based comprehension	6	5	6	8	7
		Point comprehension	7	6	6	7	6
		Summary comprehension	6	5	3	—	—
		Utterance Expressions	—	—	4	5	5
		Quick response	14	12	9	8	6
		Integrated comprehension	4	4	—	—	—
	<b>Total number of test items</b>		<b>37</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>24</b>

\*The table above shows the approximate number of test items in each section of the test. The actual number may vary slightly from session to session. The number of test items shown above may also change.

\*The reading section may contain more than one test item per passage.



## 7 Frequently Asked Questions

### ◆ About the new test

**Q1** How often is the new test going to be administered?

**A1** Twice yearly, in July and December.

However, certain countries/areas will not be offering the July test. Details will be posted on the Japan Foundation website at <http://www.jlpt.jp/e/>

**Q2** Have the dates of the new tests already been determined?

**A2** They will be administered on the Sunday of early July and early December each year.

**Q3** Where can we take the new test?

**A3** If you are planning to take the test in Japan, see the Japan Educational Exchanges and Services (JEES)'s website at <http://www.jees.or.jp/jlpt/>.

If you are planning to take the test outside Japan, you can check the cities where the test will be offered by visiting the Japan Foundation's website at <http://www.jlpt.jp/e/> and clicking "Information" → "Local Host Institutions of JLPT" → "List."

In addition, if you are planning to take the test in Taiwan, see the Interchange Association's website at <http://www.koryu.or.jp>

### ◆ About the test items

**Q4** Is a "Previous year test items booklet" going to be available for the new test as it has been for the current test?

**A4** There are no plans to publish collections of complete copies of tests administered in past years.

The "New Japanese-Language Proficiency Test Sample Questions" would be an excellent resource for practice, as the form and content of each test item are presented just like they are on the actual test.

A new collection of sample questions will be available in 2012 which includes test items taken from actual tests conducted in 2010 and 2011. It will have the same number of test items as the actual tests. After that, a workbook will be published periodically, consisting of past conducted test items.

**Q5** Language Knowledge(Vocabulary/Grammar) and Reading are included in the same test section in levels **N1** and **N2**. Nonetheless, why has Language Knowledge and Reading been separated into different test sections in levels **N3**, **N4**, and **N5**, such as "Language Knowledge(Vocabulary)" and "Language Knowledge(Grammar) and Reading"?

**A5** Because there are fewer test items in vocabulary and grammar that can be included in levels **N3**, **N4** and **N5**, placing Language Knowledge (Vocabulary/Grammar) and Reading in the same section may inadvertently provide hints for answers.

**Q6** Will the new JLPT include test items that require knowledge about Japanese culture?

**A6** While the JLPT does include some cultural content, there are no test items that require prior knowledge about Japanese culture.

#### ◆ About the list of vocabulary, *kanji*, and grammar

**Q7** Is anything like the currently available "Test Content Specifications" going to be published for the new test?

**A7** The "Test Content Specifications" which includes the lists of vocabulary, *kanji*, and grammar are not going to be published for the new test.

**Q8** Why aren't the "Test Content Specifications" going to be published?

**A8** The goal of learning Japanese is not to memorize vocabulary, *kanji*, and grammar, but to become capable of using them as a means of communication. The new test is to measure both "Japanese language knowledge, including vocabulary and grammar," and "the competence required to perform communicative tasks using language knowledge." Therefore, we determined that it is not appropriate to publish "Test Content Specifications" which includes the lists of vocabulary, *kanji*, and grammar.

**Q9** Is there an alternative to the "Test Content Specifications" that can be used by those who want to prepare for the test?

**A9** Please refer to "A Summary of the Linguistic Competence Required for Each Level" (page 3), "Composition of Test Items" (page 7), and the sample questions in the "New Japanese-Language Proficiency Test Sample Questions". Since the new test levels correspond to the current test levels (page 1), past test items of the current test and also its "Test Content Specifications" will be helpful.

## ◆ About the test results

**Q10** Can we compare the scores of the new test and the current test?

**A10** Since the content of the new test and the scoring method are different from the current test, the scores from the new test cannot be compared to those of the current test.

**Q11** Why are the test scores for Language Knowledge (Vocabulary/Grammar) and Reading listed separately in the score report for levels **N1**, **N2** and **N3** but listed as a combined score in levels **N4** and **N5**?

**A11** We have determined that combining Language Knowledge (Vocabulary/Grammar) and Reading is appropriate for **N4** and **N5**, as the required proficiencies for these two sections overlap considerably at these basic levels.

**Q12** Where can I get more information about the new test?

**A12** Please visit the official JLPT website at <http://www.jlpt.jp/e/> for more information and updates.

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- Note) In addition to this “New Japanese-Language Proficiency Test Guidebook –Executive Summary”, please see the original version of “New Japanese-Language Proficiency Test Guidebook” and “New Japanese-Language Proficiency Test Sample Questions”, which can be downloaded from the official JLPT website at <http://www.jlpt.jp/>
  - Note) Please feel free to contact us at [jlptinfo@jpf.go.jp](mailto:jlptinfo@jpf.go.jp) with your inquiries or comments about this Executive Summary.
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