

# JAPANESE LANGUAGE

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<p><b>Paper 8281/01</b> <b>Speaking</b></p>
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## **Key messages**

- The majority of candidates had prepared their presentations well, incorporating factual information about Japan and its culture.
- Candidates were able to speak using a range of grammar and vocabulary accurately; fluency could still be improved.
- Candidates were able to answer questions on a variety of topics.
- Candidates need to be encouraged to develop their answers and say as much as they can for every question.
- Candidates should take every opportunity to speak with native speakers, to develop a strong ‘feel’ for the language.
- Candidates need to be able to ask questions which arise naturally as part of the conversation.

## **General comments**

Candidates were generally well prepared for their presentations, although some candidates found it difficult to cope with the follow up questions and sometimes struggled to supply additional factual material when needed. Candidates are advised that when they choose their topic, they should consider how the subsequent conversation might develop, thinking of possible questions that the examiner could ask to ensure that the topic has enough scope for an extended discussion.

Candidates were usually able to respond to the examiner’s questions, but need to be encouraged to add more detail and offer more information voluntarily. Candidates should be encouraged to develop the ability to ask questions naturally as part of the conversation, but if they do not include a question during the topic conversation or general conversation, examiners must prompt them to do so.

## **Comments on specific questions**

### ***Section 1: Presentation***

Most candidates had prepared a presentation which was relevant to the culture of Japan. In the best cases the candidate had clearly chosen a topic that was of personal interest, and had made an effort not only to research it, but also to take a specific perspective and offer a personal opinion on it. Some candidates had written such complicated presentations with long sentences and complex vocabulary that they were unable to deliver it with fluency and confidence. Candidates should be encouraged to prepare a presentation that is within their ability to deliver confidently.

### ***Section 2: Topic Conversation***

The performance in the follow up discussion varied widely. At the weakest end, some candidates were unable to offer much more information than they had already given in the presentation. Other candidates, however, were able to give further information in response to the examiner’s questions, and engage in discussion. Candidates need to remember to not only respond to the examiner’s questions, but also to try to push themselves to use the best vocabulary and grammatical structures they can.

**Section 3: General Conversation**

Candidates generally engaged well with the examiner in this section and were able to answer questions on different topics. Some examiners showed great skill in differentiating the questions according to the candidate's ability. It is appropriate to ask the very weakest candidates about their hobbies and families, because the main aim is to engage the candidates in conversation and keep them speaking for as long as possible. With stronger candidates, however, if these kinds of 'easy' topics are used as an opening question to put candidates at ease and enable them to make a confident start, examiners should ensure that they go on to ask more challenging questions in which candidates have to give points of view, state and justify their opinions.

# JAPANESE LANGUAGE

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Paper 8281/02  
Reading and Writing

## Key messages

- **Question 1:** choose the word (or words) from the options given with the closest meaning to the one identified in the text/question;
- **Question 2:** make a sentence which includes the grammatical structure given in the question; this should be a sentence created by the candidate and not copied from the text;
- **Question 3 and Question 4:** candidates should formulate the answers in their own words without excessive copying from the text;
- **Question 5:** write within the word limit. In part (b) candidates should express their own ideas rather than repeating ideas from the two texts;
- **Language:** when preparing for the examination, revise the basic grammar, structures and kanji list.

## General comments

Most candidates seemed well-prepared for the examination; they engaged with the paper and attempted all the questions. The full range of performance was seen. Those candidates who read both the instructions and the passages thoroughly were able to understand the requirements of each question and could therefore respond appropriately.

Most candidates showed that they had understood the passages, which this year included topics on how a football club had made adaptations for spectators with sensory processing issues and the theme of having pride in your identity.

As in previous years, candidates continue to rely on copying from the original reading passages when answering **Question 5(a)** rather than generating their own language, which has a negative impact on the award of the mark for quality of language. In order to be awarded marks for quality of language, examiners need to see examples of language that has been generated by the candidate. Candidates should therefore not copy large sections of language directly from the text but should rephrase the ideas or produce their own words in grammatically correct Japanese.

In **Question 5(b)** candidates needed to describe or explain how they could ensure an event was available to everyone; the strongest responses identified areas such as accessibility and inclusion, picking up on the themes from the passages. These key themes were not always included in responses and some answers did not meet the requirements of the question, which meant that only a few candidates gained all the available marks. Time management is an important aspect of exam technique and candidates need to ensure that they leave sufficient time to respond to the Writing tasks in **Question 5**. There were several examples again this year which showed evidence that candidates had not left themselves time to complete the final task.

Many candidates showed their knowledge of the AS Level kanji and produced response which displayed a confident use of written Japanese. Weaker responses were characterised by substantial use of hiragana with only a small number of kanji, or by incorrectly spelled words in katakana or frequent grammatical mistakes.

Candidates should ensure their answers are written as neatly as possible; illegible scripts remain a problem, either due to messy crossed-out answers, or poor handwriting.

## Comments on specific questions

### Passage One

#### Question 1

The purpose of this exercise is to identify the meaning of 5 items of vocabulary from the text. Very few candidates received full marks; the majority of candidates managed to score 3–4 marks this year again. Candidates coped well with **Questions 1(b), (c) and (e)**. **Question 1(d)** was found to be the most challenging question, followed by **1(a)**.

#### Question 2

Many candidates created sentences which used several kanji and most scored 3 marks for this question. Candidates should not use the same verb/adjective from the passage in their answers for this question, nor should they merely copy the sentence from the passage which contains the tested grammar point – this is stated in the rubric. Most candidates were aware of this, but those who did not produce their own examples could not be awarded the mark.

All candidates need to focus on writing an accurate sentence using appropriate grammar. It is essential for candidates to learn basic verb formation. Higher-scoring candidates seemed well-prepared for this exercise and were able to show their knowledge of AS Level grammar and vocabulary. Both polite form and plain form writing are accepted in this question.

Candidates are advised to keep their answers short in this question. Candidates must read the passage carefully taking note of where the structure comes from so that they understand and replicate the correct usage. A mark cannot be given if the structure does not use the required grammar, even if the right verb is used. The meaning of the sentence produced must make sense in Japanese, it is not enough just for the sentence to be grammatically correct. Candidates should check their answers carefully to avoid spelling mistakes, such as hard sounds or kanji with the same reading but different meaning. Both polite form and plain form writing are accepted in this question.

- (i) e.g. ピアノを弾いている人は先生です。(Noun modification/Relative clause)  
In this exercise, candidates had to recognise that they needed to produce a sentence which included a noun modification or relative clause. Some responses used *こと* like *料理を作ること* or *影響を与えること* which were not credit worthy. Where responses did not score, it was usually because they did not meet the requirements of the question, e.g. an adjective + noun sentence. A few candidates produced sentences such as *この文章をしている友達があります*, which did not make any sense. Candidates need to be aware that the sentences they produce must make sense in Japanese as well as being grammatically correct.
- (ii) e.g. これは低くしてある机です。  
Many candidates used the opposite of *暗い* and wrote a sentence which mirrored the example in the passage. Common errors included spelling mistakes like *明るく* or *明く* or mistakes forming the te-form such as *買っています*. It was evident that some candidates did not know what *～てある* meant, and therefore wrote a present continuous sentence, which did not meet the requirements.
- (iii) e.g. 雨が降るとき (雨のとき/ひまなとき) 家にいます。  
This question was performed well amongst candidates, and many interesting sentences were produced using the required grammar. There were a few instances where candidates could not be credited due to careless mistakes in their answers, like *雨が降 れるとき*、*飛行機飛べるとき*、*試験とき* which is a reminder of the importance of checking through answers at the end.
- (iv) e.g. テニスをするのが好きです。/教えたのが山田さんです。  
Many candidates succeeded in producing a correct sentence using the grammar appropriately with plain verb forms. Some candidates made a mistake with the subject and verb agreement or used a wrong particle such as *廊下に走るのはあぶない*.

- (v) e.g. 将来政治家になるだろう。

For this question, the strongest candidates recognised they needed to use plain form for でしょう and produced correct sentences as a result.

### Question 3

In **Question 3** and **4**, candidates need to show clear evidence of understanding. It is expected that candidates will rephrase the passage to express answers in their own words; if answers are lifted directly from the passages this is reflected in the Quality of Language mark awarded, which is based on the language generated by the candidate themselves. The majority of candidates responded well and most answers were presented clearly. Weaker candidates tended to rely heavily on lifting language unchanged from the passages, which does not always show genuine understanding. The best answers were those which showed evidence of careful reading and where candidates had included the key words or concepts needed to answer the question asked.

It is not necessary for candidates to use the polite form in their answers; answers can be written in the plain form and kanji should be included where possible and written correctly.

Illegible answers remain a problem. Candidates are reminded to write neatly and clearly to ensure that examiners can decipher what they are trying to express. If candidates find it necessary to write more than that which will fit into the space provided, they should indicate where the remainder of the answer is located.

- (a) Many candidates gained 1 or 2 marks for this question. Higher scoring candidates successfully focussed on what the question required, responded appropriately, and were able to discard extraneous information. e.g. 人間の体も違うように脳 もいろいろ違う。
- (b) This 4-mark question asked candidates to supply details from the text showing how the room had been prepared for the children on the tour. These 4 points were distributed throughout the second paragraph and candidates needed to carefully select the relevant details. Most candidates received 1 or 2 marks. Weaker responses copied heavily from the reading passage and as a result, mentioned irrelevant information in their answers like がんばれとチームを応援していた。
- (c) Many candidates succeeded in responding to this question well. Others struggled to produce correct answers, writing responses such as ぼくもかっこいいスポーツ選手になりたい or 地元のチームを見に行きたい or not completing their answers. A few candidates made simple mistakes like 小林選手を見ること or 写真を撮ること and needed to pay more careful attention. Candidates need to learn to paraphrase in order to gain marks for quality of language.
- (d) Most candidates achieved 1 or 2 marks for this question and some successfully rephrased answers into their own words. Once again some candidates merely copied sections from the reading passage such as 行く前少し不安になった or ひろし君は知らないところ に行くといつも泣き出すことだった which did not respond to the question and showed a lack of understanding.
- (e) Most candidates received 1 or 2 marks for this 3-mark question. Candidates needed to read the final paragraph and identify the relevant points according to what the person from City Hall said. Responses which took a scattergun approach, copying chunks from the text were not successful as they did not show understanding of either the question or the passage.

### Passage Two

#### Question 4

The majority of candidates were able to respond to all the questions and answered in their own words. This year there were more examples of candidates omitting some questions or of not being able to respond to the questions fully, showing that they had not understood some aspects of the reading passage.

It is essential that candidates read the passage thoroughly and then read each question carefully in order to ensure their answers are appropriate. Candidates must rephrase their answers as much as possible rather than lift their answers from the passage directly because if they do this, they cannot be awarded fully for the Quality of Language. Candidates should be reminded of how to present their answers so that they are linked properly, where necessary. Many candidates used the て form incorrectly, and some even used と to link

whole phrases. It is strongly recommended for all candidates to check their answers carefully to avoid simple errors such as spelling mistakes.

- (a) This question was generally performed well and most candidates were awarded 1 or 2 marks out of a possible 3. Common incorrect answers given were 歌や踊り or 伝統的な食べ物 which suggests those candidates did not understand that they needed to identify the *results* or *outcomes* of the festival. Candidates need to make sure they find the key word in the question to ensure their answers are relevant.
- (b) This question was handled confidently by most candidates, with many gaining full marks or 1 mark.
- (c) This question was generally well-performed by many candidates and most managed to gain at least 1 mark. Weaker responses often mentioned 親がアイヌ文化を誇ることからわかる which related to his parents and was therefore not relevant.
- (d) Only the minority of candidates managed to gain all 3 available marks for this question. The text states that the group studied the history of the Ainu people, but many candidates provided answers which were ambiguous, as they just stated 'history' without saying specifically that it was the history of the Ainu, or wrote グループの歴史について学ぶ which could not be credited.
- (e) The majority of candidates received the full 3 marks, successfully identifying the rights the Maori people have gained in recent years. It was noticeable that responses to this question were often lifted directly from the passage without rephrasing, which led to the inclusion of unnecessary details. Some candidates wrote ニュージーランドの経験を持っている which was irrelevant to the question asked.
- (f) Candidates needed to rephrase the language of the text in order to produce a correct answer to this question – direct lifting would not work here. Many candidates attempted this and some produced full, correct answers. Others continued to lift whole sentences from the passage and as a result included irrelevant information which could not be credited.

### Question 5

Generally, most candidates performed well and produced some well-written work in this summary-writing section.

Good examination technique is extremely important in this question and can often make a significant difference to the marks allocated. Candidates need to be aware that they must provide 10 distinct points from both passages according to the question asked for **part (a)** and talk about their opinions or ideas in **part (b)**, all within the word limit of 280 characters. Some candidates used up all the character space answering part **(a)** and did not respond to **(b)**.

Candidates should be reminded to follow the word limit and should learn how to use 原稿用紙. It was unnecessary for candidates to write vertically. Candidates should endeavour to write clearly and neatly so that all answers are legible.

- (a) A mixed performance was seen in this summary task, in which candidates were asked to use the information and ideas from both passages to write about creating a society in which it is easy and comfortable for everyone to live. Some candidates produced thoughtful responses about the problems that people face if they are physically disabled, neurodiverse or belong to a minority group. In some cases, such responses did not draw on the information provided in the passages, but used personal knowledge instead, which could not be credited. As this is a summary task, it is important that responses use and reflect the ideas provided in the passages.

This year there was a strong tendency towards copying from the passages; candidates should be reminded and encouraged to use their own words. The most successful responses were those which rephrased the ideas and drew out key elements in concise language. Lifted responses were frequently very long and meant that there was not room to include 10 points in the character limit

Responses should aim to include information from both passages. Most candidates picked out elements from Passage one, with only the stronger candidates drawing from both passages in a more balanced way.

- (b) This year quite few candidates did not manage to tackle this exercise, which may be a time management issue. Candidates both borrowed aspects from the passages and included their own ideas when writing about ways in which an event could be made accessible to all. Lots of interesting ideas were put forward by candidates including: using several languages on posters or handouts, looking after small children, providing vegetarian/vegan food, making paths wide with level surfaces and so on. Those who managed to produce such ideas also used appropriate and varied vocabulary, such as バリアフリーの道、無料、子ども専用エリア、肉のない食べ物を用意. Some candidates had not taken on board that the event was to be held in a park, and so mention of providing a soundproof or lightproof room did not entirely fit the context.

Stronger candidates managed to express and explain their ideas very well using appropriate AS level grammar.

### Quality of Language

The quality of language ranged from a very high level to a very basic level, with some candidates finding it challenging to structure their ideas grammatically and to communicate in their own words in written Japanese at the level. There were mistakes with particles, and this caused difficulty in understanding what candidates were trying to say, or it changed the meaning of the sentence from what they wanted to say. Candidates should pay attention to the polite form and the plain form as sometime these were mixed in sentences.

Candidates should aim to use kanji from the defined content in order to show their kanji skills rather than just using hiragana. Stronger candidates used a variety of kanji words in their writing beautifully. Generally speaking, candidates succeeded in producing a well-structured essay in this question.



# JAPANESE LANGUAGE

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**Paper 8281/03**  
**Essay**

## **Key messages**

- Candidates need to specifically address the question that is posed on the examination paper, and not just write on the general theme.
- Candidates should demonstrate that they are able to use a range of more complex grammatical structures accurately.
- Candidates should make sure that they write Japanese kanji, and not Chinese characters as written in other countries.
- Candidates should write an introduction and conclusion to their essay. Essays should be structured using logical paragraphs.
- Candidates should not mix polite form and plain form.

## **General comments**

There was a huge variation in the candidates' level of performance. The strongest candidates were able to respond to the specific question posed in the examination paper, giving reasons for and against as appropriate and clearly stating their own conclusion; they could use a wide variety of vocabulary, kanji and grammatical structures with a reasonable degree of accuracy. At the weaker end, some candidates did not address the question on the examination paper and put down what appeared to be pre-learnt material; other candidates could only produce very simple sentences; still others wrote mainly in Chinese with only the occasional hiragana or です included.

### **Question 1 家族**

This question asked about the candidates' view on the nuclear family versus the extended family. The word 'nuclear family' was glossed in the question, but despite this, quite a few essays were very confused; some, for example argued that 'a nuclear family is better because there are lots of people living in the house, and if a teenager has a disagreement with their parents, they can turn to their grandparents for advice.' Other candidates limited the scope of their responses and only wrote about their own family – such responses needed to take a more objective standpoint to reach the higher marking bands.

### **Question 2 法と秩序**

This question was about cyber bullying. This question was not chosen by many candidates, but those who answered it did so reasonably well. Some agreed with the proposition that use of social media by children should be restricted whilst others disagreed. In both cases the majority of candidates were able to state their case, justify their viewpoint and give examples.

### **Question 3 旅行と観光**

This question was about allowing tourists ignore cultural conventions and to take baths with their swimming costumes on, or go into rooms with their shoes on, in order to promote tourism to Japan. This question was quite popular and a mixed performance was seen. Weaker responses often needed to address the question more directly, as some responses were very general, merely introducing tourist spots of Japan rather than focussing on the cultural aspect of the question. Others wrote narrative pieces about tourists who accidentally went into rooms with their shoes on etc. The best responses took a more objective standpoint and fully answered the question.



**Question 4** ぎじゅつの発達

The proposition in the question stated that ‘Human beings nowadays can’t do anything without the internet.’ Some candidates misunderstood the question word + も + negative sentence pattern and so did not address the question correctly. The most convincing responses came from candidates who used the argument that ‘human beings lived perfectly well without the internet until a couple of decades ago’.

**Question 5** 公害

This question asked about food waste. Whilst it was not chosen by many, those who chose it generally responded well. Most candidates were able to argue convincingly about the role tax plays in the decisions consumers make. Candidates were found on both sides of the argument: some argued that increasing tax on food would cut food waste, whilst others argued that it would have no effect on consumer behaviour.