

JAPANESE LANGUAGE

Paper 8281/01

Speaking

Key messages

This component is made up of three sections and to perform well candidates need to:

- make a formal presentation on a topic clearly related to a Japanese context
- take part in a discussion of issues arising from the presentation
- discuss issues of a more general nature at an appropriate level

The use of Japanese should be generally accurate and of a suitably advanced nature, as well as showing a good use of idiom and appropriate vocabulary. Interaction with the examiner is an important criterion in the conversations. Candidates must ensure that they ask questions of the examiner in both the Topic and General Conversation sections in order to access the marks available for Seeking Information and Opinions.

General comments

Candidates achieved a very high standard this year, and showed their competence in spoken Japanese. The speaking examination was well-conducted in most Centres, which allowed candidates to perform to the best of their ability. The strongest candidates had natural and fluent conversations with the Examiner, and in some cases managed to lead the conversation in the direction they wanted to take it.

It is important for candidates to remember to ask questions of the Examiner in the Topic and General Conversation sections. Five marks are available for *Seeking Information and Opinions* in each conversation section, and these cannot be awarded unless there is evidence that candidates know how to formulate questions and use different interrogative forms. Examiners are reminded that if candidates have not asked any questions by the end of the conversation sections, they must prompt by saying, 'Do you have any questions to ask of me?'

Most Examiners were aware of the need to cover two or three topic areas in the General Conversation. These should be covered in some depth, to give candidates the opportunity to show their knowledge of the topic under discussion, and to allow them to use the range of structures and breadth of vocabulary expected at this level. Examiners should take care not to repeat topics in the General Conversation that have already been discussed as part of the Topic Conversation.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1: Presentation

Candidates chose a variety of interesting and appropriate topic areas for their presentation, including subjects such as *Urban Life and Life in the Countryside* and *Stresses Encountered by People in Japan*. Candidates were clearly well-prepared for this part of the Speaking Test, and succeeded in showing their knowledge of their chosen topic. Candidates should remember that there is a requirement for presentations to demonstrate their knowledge of the contemporary society or cultural heritage of a country where the target language is spoken. A few candidates did this very well, and chose more ambitious topics including *Old and New Japanese Customs*. Many candidates were able to express their opinions and ideas, manipulating advanced grammar and using a wide range of topic specific vocabulary.

Section 2: Topic conversation

Conversations which flowed smoothly in this part tended to arise from well-chosen topic presentations in which the candidate showed a genuine interest and which had enough scope for wider discussion. When candidates are choosing the topic for their presentation, they must remember that they will be expected to talk more widely on the subject in this conversation section. If candidates cannot think of six or more possible questions that might develop from their presentation, the topic is unlikely to be a fruitful source of discussion.

Examiners are encouraged to use open-ended questions in order to enable candidates to give extended responses and talk about their opinions and ideas.

At the end of this section, examiners should let the candidate know that they are now moving from the Topic Conversation section to the General Conversation.

Section 3: General conversation

Overall, most candidates performed very well in this section, with stronger candidates holding a productive discussion giving their opinions and ideas freely, and using a range of vocabulary and structures. Sympathetic examining enabled weaker candidates to perform to the best of their ability.

JAPANESE LANGUAGE

Paper 8281/02
Reading and Writing

Key messages

In order to do well in this examination, candidates should:

- read the whole paper carefully before answering the questions
- follow the instructions in the rubrics carefully
- try to write their responses in their own words, as far as possible
- focus on the question set
- make sure that their responses stay within the prescribed character limits

General comments

A strong performance was seen this year, with most candidates showing their thorough understanding of the reading passages by expressing their responses in their own words.

Candidates are reminded to take care in the use of particles, as a number of mistakes were noticed in the use of particles this year.

Candidates are also reminded of the importance of submitting legible scripts. Space is provided on the question paper for candidates to write their answers. If a candidate makes a mistake and writes their answer outside of the answer space, or on additional paper, they should indicate that they have done this so that it is clear to the examiner marking the script.

Answers to the reading comprehension questions must be answered using information provided in the reading passages. Candidates cannot be credited for giving information from their personal experience or knowledge.

Comments on specific questions

Passage One

Question 1

This question was generally well-answered. Most candidates were able to find the correct answer for **(a)**. The most common mistake was seen in response to **Question (b)** where several candidates chose 1 “病気になること”. Some candidates also had difficulty with **Question (c)**, giving 2 as an answer: “食べること”.

Please ensure that candidates read the instructions before they start answering the questions.

Question 2

Most candidates were able to produce an appropriate sentence using the required grammar. The most successful responses were kept short, which helped candidates to write accurately. Candidates who attempted to write longer, more complex sentences often introduced errors into their writing. It is important for candidates to understand how the grammar is used in the passage in order to correctly make their own sentences in this exercise.

- (a) e.g. 日本語もかんこく語もわかります。
Almost all candidates managed to produce a correct sentence.
- (b) e.g. 日本人のように話します。
This proved to be the most challenging for candidates. Most candidates managed to write a sentence which used the grammar correctly, but in several cases the sentence that had been written did not make sense, for example, スキーのように毎日れんしゅうしています。 / けんこうのように運動します。
- (c) e.g. 日曜日にしかひまがありません。
Several candidates did not attempt this question. Candidates needed to formulate a negative sentence, and not all managed this.
- (d) e.g. 電車にのるとき、きっぷを買います。
Most candidates produced a correct sentence. Some candidates wrote their sentence using the dictionary form, た form or the て form, whilst only a few tried to use the ない form. Candidates are encouraged to construct plain form sentences to avoid such mistakes.
- (e) e.g. 料理のばんぐみとかよく見ます。
A range of performance was seen in response to this question and some very good sentences were created. However, several candidates encountered difficulty when constructing a sentence here, and many produced incomprehensible language.

Question 3

The majority of candidates attempted to respond to this question in their own words, and most performed well. Most candidates managed to show that they had understood the passage thoroughly.

Candidates are reminded of the importance of reading each question carefully before answering in order to ensure that they give full and accurate responses. Candidates should be aware that the number of marks given in brackets () at the end of each question or part question is an indication of the number of separate points candidates need to make. For example, a question worth 2 marks requires 2 distinct points to be made.

- (a) Many candidates received full marks for this question. Some candidates needed to make reference to *television* to be awarded both marks. It was noticeable this year that several candidates gave answers that were derived from general knowledge rather than from information given in the passage. Marks can only be awarded where candidates have shown understanding of the passage printed on the question paper.
- (b) In general, candidates found this question to be challenging, with many writing:
53%の人がけんこうだと思っています。
- (c) The majority of candidates answered this question correctly. In cases where candidates were only awarded two marks, they commonly needed to mention either *healthy mind* or *good daily life* to gain the third mark.
- (d) This was the least well-answered question. Many candidates referred to the information from doctors in their answer. Other incorrect answers given were *no internet*, *information from elderly people*, and *conversation with others* and so on.
- (e) The majority of candidates received one mark for this exercise. They also needed to mention that elderly people may not be confident in using the internet. Several candidates wrote answers using the wrong grammar, e.g. 年をとった人たちはあまりインターネットを使われていません。

- (f) Many candidates responded correctly to this question. Candidates needed to mention two reasons in their answer, and not all candidates managed this; *balanced diet* or *appropriate exercise* were often omitted.

Passage Two

Question 4

- (a) Many candidates scored full marks. The common mistake was バランスの食事をする事 which could not be credited.
- (b) Candidates are reminded to read the question carefully. Several candidates wrote メタボやふとりすぎの問題, which did not answer the question. A few candidates also gave the following incorrect response: ルックスや社会に受け入れられること.
- (c) The majority of candidates answered this question correctly.
- (d) A number of candidates wrote the answer to **Question (e)** in the response space for **(d)**. Candidates must take care when reading the questions. Some candidates gave やせる/メタボで病気になる人をへらす as an answer, which could not be credited.
- (e) This question proved to be challenging, and some responses showed that candidates had not fully understood the question. Several candidates answered with いしゃやせんもんかがさんせいしない.
- (f) Question **(i)** was answered correctly by most. Only a few candidates answered using their own ideas, such as 食べる前にカロリーをけいさんする/食べ物がふえている.
- (g) A variety of incorrect answers was seen in response to this question, including:
社員の人数を25%以下にする /年に一回けんこうチェックをする/社員はふとりすぎになる.
- (h) This question was omitted by a few candidates, but those who gave a response, in general, answered correctly.

Question 5

In general, candidates answered this question well, showing their ability to write clearly in Japanese, and to manipulate and use AS level grammar confidently. They expressed their opinions and managed to show what they had understood from the passages. A high standard was achieved by many candidates.

Candidates were able to pick up some interesting points regarding how healthy Japanese people are in general, as well as points covering the serious issues about health in Japan expressed in the passages.

Many candidates were also able to show their knowledge of the kanji syllabus in their answers. Candidates are reminded of the need to use kanji accurately, as 結婚 was used instead of 健康 in a few cases.

Candidates are reminded that they need to refer to the information in the reading passages and must state 10 clear points in order to be awarded the maximum 10 marks for part **(a)**. Part of this exercise is to show an ability to summarise, and so it is important that the points are presented clearly and succinctly.

Most candidates were aware of the need to adhere to the character limit set in the question, but some exceeded this. Anything in excess of 280 characters is disregarded by Examiners, and in extreme cases this can lead to no marks being awarded for **part (b)**.

- (a) Most candidates managed to extract 10 distinct points from both reading passages within the character limit. Candidates need to be aware that they cannot be credited for including information taken from their own general knowledge. All points must be taken from the reading passages.

- (b) Some interesting responses were given, containing various examples including discussion of candidates' healthy eating habits, and the idea of the Japanese diet being influenced by the Western diet in recent years. The best answers also included a discussion on exercise. Candidates are reminded that it is important to express their ideas and opinions in this part of the exercise. The majority of candidates showed that they were able to express themselves using well-structured sentences and a variety of grammar and vocabulary appropriate for AS Japanese.

JAPANESE LANGUAGE

Paper 8281/03

Essay

Key messages

In order to perform well in this paper, candidates should:

- read the question carefully and select the title with which they feel most comfortable.
- write a relevant, informed response that is well illustrated and coherently structured, careful planning should help to achieve this.
- ensure effective use of the target language, placing emphasis on accuracy and displaying a suitably advanced, mature writing style, as well as demonstrate a good use of Kanji and appropriate topic-related vocabulary.
- use the structures which show some evidence of complexity in a style which is easy to follow.

General comments

In general terms the majority of candidates performed well, showing their competence in the target language. Well-organised, relevant and linguistically well-written essays were very much in evidence. Weaker responses tended to drift away from the question and included unrelated thoughts and opinions. Stronger responses managed to combine a good structure with appropriate language and thoughts were backed up with evidence, examples or references.

There was a huge range of responses, ranging from thoughtful, well-structured essays to those where the candidate struggled for ideas and the means to express them. There were a number of good answers which demonstrated a balanced approach and clear organisation combined with a wide range of expressions, complex grammatical structures and idioms. However, some responses lacked originality or failed to structure the arguments coherently and meandered away from the set question. It is vital that candidates read the questions carefully and answer the question set, not merely refer to a topic area.

The stronger candidates produced fluent and coherent essays, and focused on the precise requirements of the question. Within the allocated numbers of characters, they planned the essay well, and drew on their personal experiences to produce original essays. As a result, their essays were very convincing and also interesting to read.

Lower scoring essays were characterised by answers which only addressed the broader topic and lacked specificity. A short plan outlining the argument to be used, with points for and against the topic, would give candidates a chance to create a more logical and balanced answer.

It appeared the accuracy of language had dropped slightly this year and this affected marks allocated for Language. Candidates are always advised to leave some time at the end of the examination to check for careless language mistakes.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 人間関係^{かんけい}

This question was chosen by a good number of candidates. Most candidates raised the fact that women nowadays are more independent compared to those in the past, and therefore their attitude towards marriage has also changed. Some candidates also mentioned that men also becoming more independent, as modern appliances made household chores easier. These two points were commonly used as reasons why not everyone wants to get married nowadays. However, the majority of candidates still supported the idea of a traditional marriage. Most candidates pointed to the need for support from a partner as they became older or suffered from an illness as a positive reason for marriage. It was interesting to see that shared happiness is still considered as important in modern society, as it was in the past. The range of vocabulary used in essays was very impressive, as was candidates' ability to express themselves in the target language.

Question 2 都会といなかの生活^{せいかつ}

This topic was the second most popular on this paper. There were a few thoughtful responses about how young people could be encouraged to stay in their rural homes. The most common suggestions were that governments should provide financial support or provide more facilities in rural communities. There was clear evidence that candidates had been well-prepared for this topic. 過疎問題 comes under the realms of this topic and the knowledge and awareness of these problems that candidates had gained were used to good effect in their essays. However, in a few cases it was obvious that parts of the essay were referring to pieces of work that had been written previously and committed to memory. Candidates should be dissuaded from doing this; in order to achieve the highest marks, their essays must refer to the exact question asked, and not just the broad topic area.

Question 3 自由時間^{じゆう}

This was the most popular question. Many activities were listed for the part of the question about how candidates spent their free time. Popular activities included reading books, talking with friends and family, watching TV/films, listening to music and playing sports. Some candidates, however, placed too much emphasis on this part, and went into too much detail about their favourite activities, which was sometimes irrelevant. This often led to less convincing arguments being given for the main part of the question, which was “自由時間を楽しむことは、大切だと思います それはどうしてですか。” Candidates should be reminded that they must read the question carefully and cover *all* the points in the title in order to achieve high marks.

Question 4 戦争と平和^{せんそう へいわ}

This was the least popular topic, although those who answered it seemed well prepared and presented their arguments effectively using their knowledge. There was clear evidence that candidates had researched and studied in depth for this topic. Therefore despite the question set being focused on 兵役制度, (which is no longer compulsory in most countries), candidates produced well-structured and thoughtful essays.

Question 5 公害^{こうがい}

Relatively few candidates chose this essay topic. Most candidates used their own experience effectively to support their opinions. They pointed out that some form of regulation or legislation needs to be established in order to prevent noise pollution. Another suggestion mentioned by several candidates to solve this problem involved educating young people to change their behaviour. On the whole, the essays on this topic were interesting and well-structured, with some relevant factual points.