



The Japanese Taster for Schools (JTS) Programme

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for Volunteers

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1. About the Programme

- **How does the programme work?**

Schools that want a Japanese taster first contact the Japan Foundation. When we have confirmed the basic details of the visit with the school, we then email the volunteers who live in the same region as the school (if we cannot find anyone in that region to do the taster, we then email the whole JTS network). If you want to do the taster, you should email the Japan Foundation as soon as you can. Once we have decided we would like you to do the taster, we then give you the school's contact details, and ask you to contact the school directly to make the final arrangements. You are then responsible for planning the content of the taster, finalising the timetable with the teacher, and planning your transport. You should send your lesson plan approximately one week before the taster to the Japan Foundation for a quick review.

After the taster, the Japan Foundation will ask you to complete an evaluation form to let us know how the taster went.

- **What kind of schools request JTS visits?**

Usually, JTS volunteers will visit primary schools (ages 4-11), secondary schools (ages 11-16) and sixth form colleges (ages 16-19). They will usually be schools that teach no Japanese at all, and there will be no Japanese speakers at the school – most UK schools do not teach any Japanese. However, the school is requesting the taster because they are interested in Japanese (often the volunteer is requested as a special guest for a "Japan Day"), and very often they are looking into starting a Japanese language class or club.

Occasionally, volunteers may visit a school that has a Japanese-speaking teacher, or some Japanese-speaking pupils (either pupils with Japanese parents or pupils studying Japanese as a hobby). They may also visit a school that teaches Mandarin Chinese, which is now an increasingly popular subject in UK schools. In this case, the pupils may already be familiar with kanji characters.

Volunteers may also be requested to visit other kinds of institutions, or even participate in special Language Days involving several schools.

The types of schools and visits requested by JTS are quite varied, and no two experiences are the same!

You can read about past JTS tasters [here](#).

- **What experience / qualifications are needed to be a JTS member?**

You do not need any qualifications or experience at all to be a JTS member. In fact, the JTS programme can be a great way to start building teaching experience.

However, to be a JTS volunteer, you will need:

1. To be able to speak fluent or native-level Japanese (approximately N2 of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test or higher); schools are told that the volunteer will be a fluent Japanese speaker who may or may not be native.
2. To be able to speak basic English (so that you can communicate adequately with the school and the pupils)
3. To be interested and enthusiastic about teaching Japanese language and culture.

- **What training does the Japan Foundation offer for JTS volunteers?**

We hold training days for volunteers 3-4 times a year, at the Japan Foundation London. Our regular training days at our London office are a great opportunity to meet other volunteers, get teaching ideas, and ask any questions you may have. We ask our volunteers to attend at least one training day before making a school visit (although we understand that it can be difficult for volunteers outside London to attend), in order to get a full understanding of the JTS Programme. Volunteers who attend four sessions will receive an attendance certificate and free gifts from the Japan Foundation.

You are also welcome to contact our Japanese Language Advisor, [Hiroko Tanaka](#), and the JTS programme administrator, [Megan Balanck](#), if you have any questions at all about the programme.

Finally, the Japan Foundation holds many other Japanese Language Education events throughout the year which may be of interest to volunteers who are looking into teaching Japanese. These events are all featured on our [website](#), in our [monthly e-bulletin](#), and our [JLE-UK e-discussion group](#).

- **Can I become a member if I live outside of the UK or Ireland?**

Unfortunately not. Currently, only those resident in the UK or Ireland are eligible to join the JTS programme.

2. Visiting schools

- **How does the Japan Foundation decide which volunteers do the taster?**

We often receive more responses to a school visit request than there are places available, which means that unfortunately not all volunteers who request to visit a particular school will be able to go. In general, we prioritise volunteers who live closest to the school, who have attended our training days, who have not yet had an opportunity to visit a school and who reply the quickest to the visit request.

If you are not picked for a particular taster, please don't be disheartened! We encourage you to keep on applying for visits that you want to do. We also try to take into account the enthusiasm of the volunteer, so if you keep applying for visits, you are more likely to be chosen in the end.

- **What happens when a school requests more than one volunteer?**

Sometimes, schools will request several volunteers – either to teach together, or to teach concurrent sessions separately.

In either case, the Japan Foundation will put both volunteers in contact with each other so you can plan the taster together, which means we will share your email address with the other volunteer (this is the only time that the Japan Foundation will ever give your email address to someone else).

We will also select one of the volunteers to be the “leader” for the taster (generally, the more experienced volunteer). The “leader” will be responsible for contacting the school to arrange the taster on behalf of all the volunteers. This is to prevent any confusion arising from the school being contacted by multiple volunteers. The “leader” should Carbon Copy (CC) in all other volunteers involved in the taster when emailing the school, so everyone knows the arrangements.

If the volunteers wish to meet in person to discuss the taster and plan it together, the Japan Foundation can provide facilities for doing this – just let us know so we can book a room for you.

- **Will I get paid for visiting schools on the JTS Programme?**

As JTS is a volunteer programme, schools are not obliged to pay you for performing the taster. Despite this, we hope that volunteers will benefit from the experience of working in a school and by building a network of useful contacts. Several volunteers have reported finding a job thanks to their participation in JTS.

Occasionally, schools do offer a donation or a gift to volunteers as a gesture of gratitude, but these cases are in the minority.

Please note that all schools must cover your travel expenses, but you are responsible for planning your travel and keeping receipts to claim the expenses.

Please also note that most schools are usually happy to provide lunch (but this is not obligatory so please check with the school first).

- **How often will I visit schools on JTS?**

This is not an easy question to answer! Some volunteers have visited over 20 schools during their time on JTS, while others have never visited a school.

JTS is as big a time commitment as you want it to be - you are never obliged to do a school visit. In 2012, we received bookings from 53 schools, and 32 volunteers in total made visits. A large proportion of schools that request visits are in London and the South East, but we are getting increasing demands from schools elsewhere.

- **How do I plan a taster?**

When you apply to do a visit, you will be sent a [Checklist](#), a Lesson Plan document and a [Material Confirmation](#) form that you can use to help you plan the taster. Things that you will need to think about include how you will get to and from the school, the schedule of the day, how many pupils you will teach, who your contact teacher(s) will be, what resources you will need and of course the content of the lesson itself. This is all outlined in greater detail in the Checklist.

- **What sort of things can I teach in the taster?**

In general, volunteers are given quite a lot of freedom over the content of their lessons – the most important thing is to make the pupils (and teachers) enthusiastic about Japanese language!

The majority of taster sessions usually cover basic Japanese greetings (such as こんにちは、さようなら etc.), useful Japanese phrases (ありがとう、すみません etc.) and the Japanese numbers 1-10. Some volunteers also teach self-introductions, basic hiragana, katakana and kanji, colours, animal noises and so on. You should always bear in mind the age of the pupils and length of the session when planning. You can use PowerPoint presentations, songs, flashcards, games or anything else you think the pupils will find fun and memorable.

You are also welcome to teach basic facts about Japan (geography, daily life etc) and aspects of Japanese culture (origami, kimono etc.), but please note that the majority of the taster (60% or more) should focus on Japanese

language. This is because there are already many other programmes for schools for introducing Japanese culture, but not so many dedicated to language.

We ask all volunteers to submit a lesson plan prior to their taster, so our professional Japanese Language Advisor can check to make sure your lesson plan is appropriate.

You are definitely encouraged to come to a JTS Training Day, as this is the best way to get ideas about what to teach, and how to teach it.

You can also read about previous taster sessions on our website [here](#), to get some ideas.

If you are not sure what to teach, you are encouraged to [ask the Japan Foundation](#) for advice.

- **What resources can the Japan Foundation provide to help with the taster?**

Lots! We can provide ready-made PowerPoints, flashcards, kana charts, and other teaching aids – [just ask](#)!

We also have a collection of interesting Japanese cultural items to enhance your taster, including happi, kimono, Japanese newspaper for origami and many more.

When you are scheduled to perform a taster, you can apply for temporary full membership of [our Japan Foundation library](#), which means that you will be able to borrow books and other resources for the taster.

Finally, we also have a large collection of [online resources](#) that can be helpful for tasters. [Ready Steady NihonGO](#) and [Erin's Challenge](#) are particularly popular for volunteers, as they are quite easy to use and very suitable for beginner-level school pupils.

- **I want to visit a particular school in my local area. What should I do?**

If you want to visit particular schools in your local area, you can refer that school to the Japan Foundation via [Suggest a School](#).

We will ask you to complete a Suggest a School form with basic details about the school (the more information you can supply us, the better chance you have of getting requested by the school). Japan Foundation will then send an information pack to the school, and inform them that you are in the area and interested in doing a language taster for them. If interested, the school returns application, and Japan Foundation contacts you. Finally, you contact school to make arrangements.

Please note that it may be some time before you hear from the school. Please also note that the school may decide not to hold a Japanese taster.

[Click here](#) for more information about Suggest a School.

- **I am an inexperienced volunteer and I'm nervous about visiting a school. Can I accompany another volunteer visiting a school as an "observer?"**

This is sometimes possible. The best way to try and arrange this is to contact us and request to do so if you see a particular interest that attracts your attention. We will need the consent of both the school and the other volunteer(s) running the taster before we can confirm that you may observe the visit. We encourage observers to provide assistance to the volunteer running the taster, even by doing simple things such as handing out worksheets.

If you visit the school as an “observer,” please note that the school will not be asked to cover your travel expenses.

- **How do I claim travel expenses?**

Please confirm this directly with the school you will be working for, as each school has their own system. You will be expected to bring evidence of your travel expenses (receipts, tickets etc.), and you may not be able to claim them if you do not have this evidence.

- **Will I need to have a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check?**

According to the current law, volunteers visiting a school on a one-off basis **do not** require a DBS check (previously known as a CRB check), provided they are supervised by a member of school staff at all times when they are with the pupils. More information is available [here](#).

If you are scheduled to visit a school and they ask about DBS checks, please [contact the Japan Foundation](#).

- **I’m not sure if I am allowed to do voluntary work according to my visa regulations. Can you advise?**

Unfortunately, the Japan Foundation cannot advise on issues relating to visas. Please contact the [UK Border Agency](#) regarding visa issues.

- **What should I do if the pupils misbehave during my taster?**

Luckily, behaviour is not usually an issue during JTS tasters, as the pupils are usually thrilled to see the volunteer and are very enthusiastic about learning Japanese.

However, sometimes pupils do misbehave, in which case it is the responsibility of the teacher supervising your lesson to deal with them accordingly – the volunteer is not expected to enforce discipline.

- **I am not comfortable with what a school is asking me to do (for example, they are asking me to teach too many sessions, or too many pupils in one session, or make sudden changes to the day’s schedule etc.) What should I do?**

We want the volunteer to benefit from the taster as much as the school, and to have an enjoyable and rewarding experience. Therefore, if a school is asking you to do something that you feel is unreasonable, you are not obliged to follow their request – you are a volunteer, after all. If you are unhappy with the situation at any time, please let the Japan Foundation know.

Schools that book a taster are all sent guidelines stating that they should not ask a volunteer to teach more than 180 minutes per day, and no more than 30 students in one session. If the school asks you to do so, please [let the Japan Foundation know](#) so we can remind them of the rules. Of course, if you *want* to teach more than 180 minutes, you are welcome to do so!

Please note that schools should *never* ask you to teach unsupervised.

3. After the visit

- **Can I visit the same school again if they request it?**

Yes! If you have enjoyed holding the JTS taster, we encourage you to stay in contact with the school. However, we ask you to make all further arrangements with the school independently of JTS, without contacting the Japan Foundation, as JTS visits are designed to be one-off. This means that you have the right to organise subsequent tasters according to your own terms, including payment terms.

However, if the school is thinking about starting regular Japanese language lessons, we encourage you to [let the Japan Foundation know](#), as we can help to support the school by providing funding, resources, training and advice.

- **I really want to become a professional Japanese teacher. What advice can you give?**

That's great! We have a whole section on the main FAQ section of our website especially for prospective Japanese teachers – [click here](#) for more.

The JTS Programme can be a fantastic way to begin your career as a Japanese teacher, as it will not only give you real-life, hands-on experience of teaching Japanese in a UK school, but also help you to build valuable contacts within the teaching profession. Several of our volunteers have gone on to become Japanese teachers after volunteering for JTS – some of whom at the very school where they first volunteered!

Do you still have questions? Please email info.language@jpf.go.jp for further advice.