

35th National
J★PAN B●WL®
Competition Guide



THE JAPAN-AMERICA SOCIETY
OF WASHINGTON DC

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35th National

J★PAN B●WL

QUICK
START
GUIDE

The Japan-America Society of Washington DC (JASWDC) is pleased to announce the dates & venue for the 35th National Japan Bowl®:

DATES: April 23rd and 24th, 2027

VENUE: Edwin O. Reischauer Center for East Asian Studies
Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced
International Studies (SAIS)
555 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20001

IMPORTANT DATES AND DEADLINES

Nov 2, 2026	Registration Opens!
Jan 31, 2027	Registration Deadline (including document submission and payment)
Apr 23-24, 2027	35th National Japan Bowl

INFO SESSIONS

Join an info session to learn about Japan Bowl or ask questions!

Pre-registration required.

Sept 30, Nov 11, or Jan 13*
7:00-8:00pm EST via Zoom

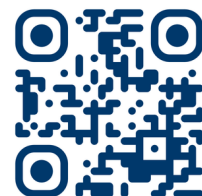
*Any changes to these dates or times will be published on the Japan Bowl website.

FEES OVERVIEW

Team Fee: \$200

Observer Fee: \$75

MORE INFO



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THE NATIONAL JAPAN BOWL COMPETITION GUIDE

The Competition Guide is designed to help students and teachers form teams and prepare for the competition. It includes:

- Competitor eligibility rules,
- General information about format, content, and rules of the National Japan Bowl competition, and
- Registration guidelines.

For information on this year's competition topics, please access the **Japan Bowl Team Study Guide** on the Japan Bowl website.

JAPAN BOWL ONLINE

We encourage all students, teachers, and chaperones to bookmark the Japan Bowl website, **japanbowl.org**, and check it regularly. This is where we'll post any changes in or further information about the venue, schedule, hotel, Study Guide, or Competition Guide.

And on the afternoon of Saturday, April 24, this is also where you'll learn which National Japan Bowl teams are the finalists advancing to the Championship Round!

We also encourage you to follow the Japan Bowl on **Instagram @japanbowl** for updates, reminders, and behind-the-scenes highlights throughout the competition season.



CHANGE LOG

What's New at the 2027 National Japan Bowl

p16

The format of the Championships' Individual Round has been adjusted; please review the new format carefully.

p19

The competition rules have been updated to clarify the responsibilities of all attendees.



More information about the Japan Bowl, including other activities and opportunities held during the two-day event, can be found on the Japan Bowl website, japanbowl.org.



THE JAPAN-AMERICA SOCIETY
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J★PAN B●WL

INTRODUCTION TO THE NATIONAL JAPAN BOWL

The Japan Bowl® is a Japanese language quiz-bowl competition created in 1992 by the Japan-America Society of Washington DC (JASWDC) for high school students studying Japanese. Each spring, teams from across the United States gather in Washington DC to test their knowledge of Japanese language, culture, history, and society. Now in its 35th year, the National Japan Bowl is recognized as the premiere competition for high-school students studying Japanese.

From its inception, the Japan Bowl has emphasized practical communication skills and real-world knowledge. It challenges students to go beyond the textbook, encouraging them to engage deeply with the language, culture, society, and history of Japan.

Beyond the competition, students are encouraged to join cultural workshops, explore study opportunities at U.S. and Japanese universities, and meet peers who share their passion for the Japanese language and culture. The Japan Bowl also provides a professional community for teachers of Japanese, who are invited to observe competition rounds and participate in networking events with fellow educators.

The JASWDC launched the Japan Bowl in 1992 as a local competition for Washington DC area high schools. Within a few years, students from all over the U.S. were participating. At the same time, the JASWDC began working with organizations in other regions to establish regional branches of the competition. Iterations of the Japan Bowl have also been held globally in place such as Poland, Mexico, Canada, and France. In 2017, the competition was adapted as the Junior Japan Bowl, which now serves grades 1-8, and in 2018, the first America Bowl was held in Japan.

Over the years, The National Japan Bowl has enjoyed support and guidance from the United States-Japan Foundation; the Embassy of Japan in Washington DC; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan; the Japan Foundation; the American Association of Teachers of Japanese; universities in Japan and the United States; members of the Japan Commerce Association of Washington DC; and other foundations and private donors.

GOALS OF THE JAPAN BOWL

- To encourage students to study Japanese in high school and to maintain their connection to Japan after they graduate
- To enable students to meet peers who share their passion for Japan's language and culture
- To give students the chance to engage with Japanese culture beyond the classroom boundaries
- To bring together stakeholders from government, non-profits, business, and academia who share an interest in promoting Japanese language education and fostering “the next generation” of U.S.-Japan relations
- To support Japanese language education in U.S. school communities



ELIGIBILITY

COMPETITOR ELIGIBILITY

The National Japan Bowl is open to full-time high school students who are currently enrolled in a Japanese language class of Level II or beyond in the United States.

If Japanese is not offered at a student's high school or if a student is home-schooled, and the student is taking Japanese classes for academic credit, whether online or in person, the student may be eligible to compete in the National Japan Bowl.*

Competing in a Regional Japan Bowl is NOT required to participate in the National Japan Bowl. Alternatively, students who do compete at a Regional Japan Bowl or similar competition, regardless of the competition results, are also welcome to participate in the National Japan Bowl.

Teams from Mexico and Canada may also join the National Japan Bowl, provided they meet the same eligibility criteria as U.S. teams and students.

*Teams from Mexico and Canada are not eligible for the championship winners' trip.

The following rules about Japanese language education and experience govern the eligibility of each team member. Students are **NOT eligible** to compete if:

- They are a native speaker of Japanese or use Japanese at home to converse with family members
- They have studied Japanese language and culture in Japan for a cumulative three months outside of their high school curriculum
- They have participated in a homestay experience or have lived in Japan for over three months cumulatively

Eligibility can be determined on a case-by-case basis and any questions about eligibility should be directed to the Japan Bowl Team at japanbowl@jaswdc.org.*

**Please contact the Japan Bowl Team to discuss your eligibility. You will be asked to provide additional information about the program, and a final decision on eligibility will be made by the Japan Bowl Program Director.*



TEAM COMPOSITION

Teams can be formed in different ways, whether it is getting a group of friends together or holding try-outs at one's school. Regardless of how they are formed, the teams must be **at least two students and no more than three students**.

Teams will compete in one of three levels. These levels are based on the course level, not the number of years that a student has studied Japanese in high school.

The three levels at the National Japan Bowl are:

- LEVEL II** Students enrolled in second year high school-level Japanese language study
- LEVEL III** Students enrolled in third year high school-level Japanese language study
- LEVEL IV** Students enrolled in fourth or fifth year high school-level Japanese language study or in AP Japanese

Schools may only send one team per level to compete at the National Japan Bowl. Students may not participate at a level lower than the course level they take at school. Students may also not participate in Japan Bowl at the same level more than once.

JASWDC does not offer participant matching to form teams.



REGISTRATION & DEADLINES

REGISTRATION TIMELINE OVERVIEW

Registration opens: **November 2, 2026**

Registration closes: **January 31, 2027**

CHAPERONES

All students, whether on a competing team or attending as an observer, must be accompanied by at least one adult chaperone who is 21 years of age or older.

If a school is sending more than one team, one chaperone may accompany all teams (one team per level, up to three teams). A school may bring up to three chaperones.

Even though chaperones do not have to be Japanese language teachers, we strongly suggest that at least one Japanese language teacher accompany the students to the competition.

Chaperones will be asked to present a valid government-issued photo ID such as a driver's license or passport at event check-in.

Chaperones must be present with their students at the venue for the entire duration of the National Japan Bowl. Students who attend the competition without a chaperone present will not be allowed to participate in the competition.

All registered chaperones are invited to participate in meals and will receive a National Japan Bowl t-shirt.



OBSERVING THE COMPETITION

The Championship Round is open to the general public; please note that seating is limited, and entry may be restricted once the venue is full. To observe the Preliminary Rounds, advance registration and payment of the associated fees are required.

All registered observers are invited to participate in meals and will receive a National Japan Bowl t-shirt.

STUDENT OBSERVERS

Any high school student is invited to watch the competition as an official student observer whether or not they study Japanese formally or their school has sent an official team. Student observers cannot compete, but they will be invited to participate in cultural activities and workshops for students at the Japan Bowl.

All Student Observers must:

1. sign and adhere to the National Japan Bowl Code of Conduct and Participant Agreement Form,
2. abide by the dress code set forth for all students, and
3. be accompanied by a chaperone aged 21 or older.

This chaperone may be a teacher attending from their school with competing teammates. Student Observers should also submit a Parent/Guardian Consent Form.

Student Observers are not eligible for the Japan Bowl winners' trip.

ADULT OBSERVERS

Family members and friends are also invited to join students at the National Japan Bowl as observers. Any non-high school student over the age of 18 who wishes to participate in the National Japan Bowl as an adult observer must submit an observer registration form.

**See Competition Rules for more details.*



REGISTERING FOR THE COMPETITION

Registration for the National Japan Bowl will start on Monday, **November 2**, 2026, and remain open until Sunday, **January 31**, 2027. Registration will be completed online and all of the relevant links will be available on the Japan Bowl website, japanbowl.org.

COMPETING TEAM REGISTRATION

The teacher or lead chaperone will be responsible for completing the registration process for their competing team(s). They will be expected to submit information about their school and students as well as pay all team fees and any additional chaperone fees as applicable.

A complete Japan Bowl registration will include:

1. Completed Teacher/Lead Chaperone Registration Form,
2. Completed Additional Chaperone Registration Form(s), if applicable,
3. Submission of all required documents, and
4. Payment of team fees and any additional chaperone fees as applicable.

Teachers or lead chaperones must submit a Teacher/Lead Chaperone Registration Form before any other chaperones can be registered for the competition.

OBSERVER REGISTRATION

Both student and adult observers will be responsible for completing their own registration form and paying the associated fee.

A complete observer registration will include:

1. Completed Observer Registration Form,
2. Submission of all required documents, and
3. Payment of the associated fee.



GENERAL REGISTRATION PROCESSES

Participants should not mail any physical documents to the JASWDC office unless prompted.

All registration documents must be submitted online by Sunday, **January 31, 2027** to be considered complete.

If you have any questions about how to register, please do not hesitate to contact us at japanbowl@jaswdc.org or (202) 833-2210 so that we can assist you with your registration.

SCHEDULE OF FEES

Observer	\$75 per Observer
Team	\$200 per Team

This fee covers a team of either two or three students, and one chaperone.

Competitors, chaperones, and observers may all pay the associated registration fees using a credit card or by check.

Please ensure payment is received by Sunday, **January 31, 2027** to complete your registration.



COMPETITION OVERVIEW

EVENT FORMAT

PRELIMINARY ROUNDS

The National Japan Bowl competition begins with three Preliminary Rounds. The Preliminary Rounds consist of 80 questions in total.

Levels II, III, and IV are seated in separate rooms. Each team will be given pens, scratch paper, and the official Japan Bowl answer sheet.

Moderators will read the questions in English or in Japanese, as appropriate. The English portions will not be repeated, but the Japanese-language portions will be read twice. Accompanying PowerPoint slides will provide visual cues.

Students will have 30 seconds to answer each question, unless otherwise noted. Moderators will give a 10-second warning before moving on to the next question. Students may go back to earlier questions at any point within the round until after the final question has been read and its response time has ended. At that point, the moderator will say 'STOP.'

All Levels will include short written response questions that require students to write one to two sentences in Japanese. For these questions, students will be given 60 seconds to answer.

In addition, Levels III and IV will include long written response questions that require students to write longer answers in Japanese. For these questions, students will be given 90 seconds.

After each round, students will change tables to give teams an equal chance to be closer to the front of the room.

The preliminary rounds will be followed by an Answer Review session, in which moderators will go over the answers to the questions.

Preliminary rounds are closed to the general public. Only those pre-registered as observers will be admitted to observe a preliminary round.

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND

The scores from the preliminary rounds are combined to determine the top five teams at each level. The top three finalist teams are announced after judging is completed for Preliminary Round 3. These top three teams are invited to compete on stage for the National Japan Bowl Championship Round.

If any qualifying team is not present at the time of announcement, the next runner-up team will replace the missing team. Scores from the Preliminary Rounds will not be carried over to the Championship Round.

FORMAT

The National Japan Bowl Championship Round takes place on stage before a live audience. Unlike other rounds of the competition, this one is open to the public as well as all other competitors and observers.*

First, students will deliver an introduction to the audience and judges in the form of a short “Team Shōkai.” They will then participate in three rounds: the Team Round, Individual Round, and Toss-Up Round. During these rounds, students will be asked to answer questions in a few different ways, but questions, whether in English or Japanese, will ONLY be read once. Like in the Preliminary Rounds, accompanying PowerPoint slides will provide visual cues, with noted exceptions.

TEAM SHŌKAI (INTRODUCTION)

The Team Shōkai is a public speaking opportunity for a group of students to show off their oral presentation skills. Each Japan Bowl team will prepare a quick team introduction, with members taking turns and speaking for 30 seconds each in Japanese.

Prior to the competition, ALL Japan Bowl students must submit a Team Shōkai. You never know what might happen at the National Japan Bowl so it is best to be prepared. The topic for the Shōkai may vary each year, and instructions will be released as *shukudai* (homework) ahead of the competition.

*Seating for the Championship Round is limited, and entry may be restricted once the venue is full.



TEAM ROUND

During the Team Round, all three teams will hear the question at the same time and be asked to show their answers written on a white board. Answers are judged live by Championship Round judges. If the team's answer is too difficult for the judges to read, the question may be marked as incorrect.

Students are allowed to confer with their teammates during this round.

INDIVIDUAL ROUND

In the Individual Round, each student will have the opportunity to demonstrate their Japanese skills independently in front of a special live “maru-batsu” (OX) panel of native Japanese speakers.

NEW for the 35th NATIONAL JAPAN BOWL

Champions will have an additional opportunity to put their Japanese skills to work by incorporating a randomly assigned kanji into their response.

At the beginning of the round, each student will be randomly assigned one testing item and one kanji from the Basic Kanji lists in the 35th National Japan Bowl Team Study Guide at the appropriate level. Students will have 30 seconds to formulate their response, which must consist of one to two sentences that appropriately use both the assigned testing item and the assigned kanji in context.

The testing items are:

- Level II: a *giseigo* or *gitaigo*
- Level III: an idiom
- Level IV: a proverb

The maru-batsu panel will evaluate the student's overall use of both the assigned testing item and kanji. Students will earn one point for each maru (○) they receive from the judges. Each batsu (X) represents no point.

Students are not allowed to confer with their teammates during this Round.

TOSS-UP ROUND

During the final round of the Championship Round, each student must use a handheld buzzer to “buzz in” before answering a question. Students may buzz in at any point during the question, but they are not allowed to confer with their teammates before answering. Incorrect, early buzz-in answers will be penalized. Only one student per team may answer a question for their team, so if the answer is incorrect, another student from that team may NOT buzz in to answer again. If a student buzzes in before a question can be read completely, they must answer the question before it is read completely.

During this round, students may also encounter Bonus Questions. If a team gets a question correct, they may have the chance to answer an attached bonus question. Students ARE allowed to confer to answer the bonus question and will have 30 seconds to do so.

CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND TIE-BREAKERS

Tie-breakers may occur only at the end of the Toss-Up Round. If a tie is declared, a series of three toss-up questions will be asked to the two teams between which the tie is held. Unlike regular and bonus Toss-Up Questions, there will be no PowerPoint slides for the tie-breaker questions.

ANSWER ICONS

Throughout the competition, in both the Preliminary and Championship Rounds, icons will appear on the question slides to indicate the required format for each answer. Competitors must follow the format shown by the icon when providing their response.

Failure to provide an answer in the required format may result in the response being marked incorrect, even if the content of the answer is otherwise correct.

The table below shows all of the answer icons used by the Japan Bowl and the corresponding format they represent. Examples of these icons in use can be found in the Sample Questions section of this guide.

Answer Icons	
EN	English
JP	Any combination of Japanese (hiragana, katakana, and/or kanji - NOT romaji)
ひら	Hiragana only
カナ	Katakana only
漢	Kanji only
RO	Romaji only
ABC	Multiple choice
123	Arabic numerals

COMPETITION RULES

GENERAL COMPETITION RULES

All registered participants - including competitors, chaperones, and observers - must arrive and check in during the designated check-in time on the first day of the competition and are expected to remain for all scheduled events throughout the two-day competition. Exceptions may be granted in cases of emergency or with prior approval from JASWDC.

Once a Preliminary Round or Championship Round has begun, students and observers may not leave the room at any point during the round and must remain seated. Those who do leave the room will not be allowed to reenter.

Students are permitted to discuss questions with their teammates during the Rounds, with noted exceptions, but should do so quietly as to not disrupt other teams or accidentally give away an answer.

The National Japan Bowl follows College Board rules, particularly that all personal belongings must be kept on the floor and out of sight, and all watches, cellphones, and electronic devices must be turned off and stowed securely throughout the rounds, including during the Answer Review. This applies to all participants, including competitors, chaperones, and observers.

During the Preliminary Rounds, only Student Observers will be offered a sample answer sheet to fill out and follow along during the Round. At the end of each Round, these sheets will be collected at the same time as the competitors' answer sheets.

Unlike in previous years, at the 35th National Japan Bowl, Chaperones and Adult Observers will not receive a sample answer sheet and may not take notes by any means at any point during the Preliminary Rounds or Answer Reviews.

Teachers and students are permitted to discuss the questions and their answers after a round is complete. However, under no circumstance should ANYONE – student, teacher, or otherwise – make any of the questions or answers known to the public via electronic network or any other means.

COMPLETE AND PARTIAL CREDIT ANSWERS

Each of the preliminary rounds' 80 questions is worth 2 points, unless otherwise noted. The questions must be answered according to the instructions given in the question.

Some questions have only one accepted answer. It should adhere to the answer icons and be as specific and complete as possible. For example, if the correct answer is "black motorbike," an answer of "bike" will not be accepted.

Judges will give partial credit on some questions. For example, a team might receive partial credit for answering either "black" or "motorbike." But either way, "bike" is too unspecific and will not be accepted. Be as specific as possible so your answers have a chance for full credit.

PARTICIPANT SUBSTITUTIONS

To request a substitution of a student or chaperone who is unable to attend the competition, please send a request in writing to the Japan Bowl Team at japanbowl@jaswdc.org. Substitutions are permitted for submission up to two weeks before the competition.



GROUND S FOR DISQUALIFICATION

Following are the possible grounds for disqualification from the competition. JASWDC has the sole right to determine, in its own judgment, whether any action, included in the list below or otherwise, requires disqualification.

1. Challenging or showing lack of respect to National Japan Bowl officials, staff, or volunteers.
2. Inappropriate dress.
3. Use of offensive language (verbal or otherwise).
4. Substantial violation of the rules of the venue or the hotel.
5. Misrepresentations and/or other irregularities on an application form which become apparent at the time of registration, during the competition, or afterwards.
6. Cheating or dishonesty.
7. Violation of the National Japan Bowl rules about photographic equipment and electronic devices, including smart watches and glasses, that are capable of recording, photographing, or transmitting.
8. Copying, reproducing, or distributing competition questions or answers in any form at any time.

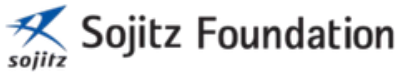
These rules apply to all National Japan Bowl attendees, including competitors, chaperones, and observers. Any violation may result in the disqualification of the student or team(s) associated with the person(s) involved. If a team or student is disqualified, their score may be invalidated and any awards or recognition given to that team must be forfeited.

Depending on the severity of the infringement, JASWDC also may prohibit the student(s) concerned, the entire team, and/or the school from participating in the National Japan Bowl at any Level in the following year and/or, if applicable, participating in the Japan Bowl Winners' Trip. We therefore ask students, parents/guardians, and teachers to encourage appropriate behavior, in order to ensure that there are no misunderstandings.



34th National Japan Bowl

SPONSORS



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The 34th National Japan Bowl, held in April 2026, was made possible by generous grants from the above organizations, in addition to support from the below sponsors:

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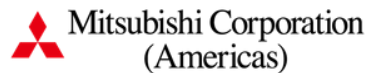
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CONTACT INFORMATION



Please direct all inquiries about the competition format and rules to the Japan Bowl Team at japanbowl@jaswdc.org.



[@japanbowl](https://www.instagram.com/japanbowl)



japanbowl.org



japanbowl@jaswdc.org



THE JAPAN-AMERICA SOCIETY
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Drawing on the unique resources of the nation's capital and our long history, the Japan-America Society of Washington DC (JASWDC) promotes friendship and understanding between Americans and Japanese through diverse programming that spans the educational, cultural, business, and policy spheres.



[@jaswdc](https://www.instagram.com/jaswdc)



jaswdc.org



info@jaswdc.org

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For more information, visit

JAPANBOWL.ORG

or email japanbowl@jaswdc.org

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