

Examiners' Report

June 2015

GCSE Japanese 5JA04 01

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Introduction

The 2015 paper was broadly similar to that of previous years, and caused candidates no particular difficulty. It was pleasing to see that the vast majority of candidates (including the weakest candidates) made an effort to write at least two or three sentences for both the long answer and the short answer questions.

Question 1 (a)

This question asked for a recommendation of a website. Despite the question asking about a Japanese cultural website, many candidates failed to use the opportunity to write about aspects of Japanese culture they knew. The transcription of the word "website" into katakana was also often problematic. Sometimes candidates just repeated the same information for both the bullet points - i.e. wrote that "the website has lots of manga" as a description, and then said "I like it because it has lots of manga" as the reason why they liked the website.

This is an example of work by a weaker candidate, who has looked up a lot of words in a dictionary.

Answer space for Section A (short writing task)

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ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

The communication and content would have been given in the 3/4 bracket, mainly for the amount written and the attempt made to say something relevant to the question. The first sentence is understandable if "back translated" into English, and the second sentence is also comprehensible with effort. This candidate clearly knows the sentence structure " **は おもしろいです。" and would have been better writing lots of simple sentences such as " **は おもしろいです。" " **がすきです。" " **は **です。" under their own steam, rather than relying on the dictionary. Knowledge and application of language = 2.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Be very careful about using the dictionary - just copying out words you find in the dictionary doesn't usually make correct Japanese. Remember that you will need to put the words in the right order with the right particles, and that adjectives and verbs may need changing from the form you find them in the dictionary.

Question 1 (b)

This question asked for details about transport in the candidate's city, and was not very popular. Most candidates were unable to write a paragraph describing the different methods of transport available, and this bullet point, when attempted, tended to be just a list. The majority were stronger on saying which method of transport they would recommend and why, although again sometimes they contradicted themselves between the beginning of the piece and the end of the piece.

This response demonstrates good use of a couple of more complex grammatical structures, including a comparative and getting the "because" clauses the right way round. For this reason, it was given a 7 for knowledge and application of language.

Answer space for Section A (short writing task)

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ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

The candidate would have benefitted from organising their work better. The question asked, "What transport is available in your city?" and the piece would have been better had there been an explicit answer e.g. "In Basingstoke we have buses, trains and cars" as the second sentence. As it is, the answer to the question is implicitly there (since all these forms of transport are mentioned), but it is not explicitly there, which means the examiner has to work hard to go and find the answer. Similarly, the very last sentence, (about why the candidate dislikes cars) would have been better immediately preceding the sentence that states the candidate prefers buses and trains over cars.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Make sure you include kanji. This candidate should have been able to write ちいさい、くるま、すき、みぎ、たかい and まいにち in kanji, which is why it was given the lower mark rather than the higher mark in the band for knowledge and application of language.

Question 1 (c)

This question required candidates to write about things they were selling at the school fete. The translation of "fete" proved very problematic, with many interesting variations being lifted from the dictionary. Candidates were, however, generally good at describing their goods and saying why everyone should buy them.

There are an increasing number of entries which are similar to this piece of work.

Answer space for Section A (short writing task) - (continued)

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Examiner Comments

Obviously the examiners have no idea of the background (linguistic or otherwise) of each candidate, but this may be quite a young candidate who has some background in hearing Japanese spoken, but has not yet developed strong writing skills. This is because the "tame ni" and relative clause on the 2nd page are extremely unlikely to be known by taught candidates. On the other hand, there are quite significant errors in basic transcription.



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Examiner Tip

Do think very carefully before entering candidates who may have some knowledge of spoken Japanese, but who are too young to cope with understanding the requirements of the examination questions, and who have not developed mature writing skills.

Question 1 (d)

This question about sport was the most popular by a fair margin. Most candidates were able to write about a sport they enjoy, but were weaker on saying why sport is important, presumably because the language required to express this idea is more complex. Some candidates tried to write about 2 or 3 sports which made the detail thin; they would have been better writing in detail about "a sport you enjoy" as requested in the question. Some candidates were unable to write "sports" correctly in katakana.

This candidate is writing on topic, and has tried to incorporate ideas to address the bullet points.

Answer space for Section A (short writing task) – (continued)

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Examiner Comments

The idea of enjoying sport comes up twice, and these could have been better arranged into one clear paragraph on why sport is important. The candidate does have three ideas about why sport is important (たのしい、すごい、けんこう), but these are not presented as one coherent whole. Similarly the idea of running comes up in the middle of the first page and again at the end. The candidate would have benefitted from planning their essay before they started writing, to make sure all similar ideas are linked and logically presented. The communication and content, and knowledge and application of language were both given 7, "Detailed response but pedestrian" and "Some attempt to use ambitious structures."



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Examiner Tip

Do write some kanji. Do choose easy to write Japanese or English names for your friends, so that you don't have to break into English.

This clip has been included as an example of a candidate who was given full marks for both marking criteria.

まず、かしの公園へ来月、私は日本へスポーツ
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Answer space for Section A (short writing task) - (continued)

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Examiner Comments

The candidate has done very well to incorporate so many complex grammatical structures that they have been taught, whilst not losing focus on the bullet points that they are addressing. Very few candidates manage to pull this off - sometimes they write in detail about the bullet points but forget to use more advanced grammar, and sometimes they are so concerned about including complex grammar that they forget to cover the content required.



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Examiner Tip

If you can, try to write lots and expand each bullet point to cover about a page, as this candidate has done.

Question 2 (a)

This question, about going on holiday with friends rather than family, was extremely popular. Generally candidates were good at writing about the activities they did on holiday, but were weaker at describing the place they went to, often simply naming it. They were also often unable to say why they enjoyed the holiday with friends, and simply stated 楽しかったです。

This script has been included to be compared with the next script.

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Answer space for Section B (longer writing task)

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Examiner Comments

In both cases the quality of language is broadly similar, (the candidate can write basic sentences using the **ます** form of the verb reasonably well, but does not use much more advanced grammar. However, this candidate has written only 1 page and has only given a very basic description, (Tokyo is a bright place) for the first bullet point, a couple of details, (but not expanded) for the second bullet point, and nothing for the third bullet point, (why you enjoyed your first holiday with friends). The communication and content mark therefore came out as an 8, "there may be omissions" and "begins to expand ideas".



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Examiner Tip

Make sure you write as many details as you can about each bullet point. It will help you to put each bullet point in a separate paragraph, and to aim to write roughly a page for each bullet point.

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Examiner Comments

Although in both cases the quality of language is broadly similar (although this candidate is using the past tense of 'i' adjectives, which the previous candidate did not), this candidate scored 13 "Very detailed and fully relevant response to the stimulus" for communication and content. In terms of the first bullet point (description of the place) there are details that Berlin has lots of museums, that Berlin has lots of big buildings and that the weather is hot. In terms of the second bullet point, details are given about going to restaurants, swimming and going to see a band. The best part is probably the third bullet point - the language isn't the strongest, and it's not clear whether he doesn't have a family (ありません) or doesn't meet his family (あいません), but nevertheless, combined with the next sentence about having freedom, the point the candidate is trying to make is clear.



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Examiner Tip

Think about what the question is asking, have an original idea or two, and try to communicate these in Japanese, even if you feel hampered by the lack of more advanced language that you would ideally like to use.

This candidate was given nearly full marks.

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| ま | ン | て | 。 | べ | す | が | た | 。 | 務 | ま | 。 | 館 |
| し | で | 見 | 。 | た | が | あ | こ | 。 | に | し | 。 | に |
| た | あ | たい | 。 | こと | 私 | り | が | 。 | あ | た | 。 | 行 |
| 。 | し | 。 | 。 | が | 私 | ま | あ | 。 | り | け | 。 | ち |
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| 。 | て | 。 | 。 | り | な | 。 | い | 。 | した | た | 。 | じ |
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| さ | き | て | し | す | ん | 前 | ラ | し | 友 | も | き | |
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| か | あ | ん | 。 | ら | 元 | た | ー | っ | ち | よ | し | |
| で | る | た | だ | す | 気 | い | と | た | と | う | た | |
| じ | 田 | こ | い | ば | で | ち | と | で | 行 | す | 。 | 年 |
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| の | き | す | 家 | け | せ | 。 | ま | ホ | し | き | へ | 月 |



ResultsPlus

Examiner Comments

The candidate has done very well on the second bullet point (details of activities you did), which was fairly typical of most of the responses. The candidate has also addressed the third bullet point (reasons why they enjoyed their first holiday with friends), although another sentence or two on this point would have been good. The first bullet point (description) is also there, although is scattered in two places (partly describing the house on the first page and partly describing the park on the second page). Since the topic of "a Japanese house" is likely to have been covered in class, it is a shame that the candidate did not think to write a couple more sentences describing their home-stay family's house.

The range of more difficult grammatical structures is excellent, including a たりたり sentence, a てみます, a ことがあります, a comparative, a つもりです and an opinion.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Tip

It is important to write in paragraphs.

This is the work of an extremely weak candidate.

karuuni wa okusen to deasanto ojitsen to okassen to omi
 uatashi wa Subarashi teki uatashi temedachi
 no ue ni Shukujitsu. waen went to Japan



I have tried my best sorry
 It's not good but I
 tried super hard
 I am great at other
 subjects eg math/english
 but not this sorry.
 thank you sorry for wasting
 your time
 marking
 have a good day :)

Start here

Answer space for Section B (longer writing task)

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| | | | | | | | く | わ | し | か | あ | エ |
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| | | | | | | | じ | し | す | ん | さん | ん |
| | | | | | | | ニ | と | は | と | ん | EL |
| | | | | | | | ホ | も | ら | あ | と | た |
| | | | | | | | こ | た | ら | に | あ | は |
| | | | | | | | | ち | し | わ | じ | あ |
| | | | | | | | | の | と | さん | じ | と |
| | | | | | | | | う | き | ん | さ | - |



ResultsPlus
 Examiner Comments

This piece was given 2 for communication and content (the family members and friend's house are comprehensible), and 1 each for knowledge and application of language and accuracy: the latter marks mainly reflect the very small amount actually written.



ResultsPlus
 Examiner Tip

Make sure you write something - however hard you are finding the exam. The examiners will look to give you credit for what you can do, and what you have written.

This is an example of a candidate whose language is relatively weak, but who has nevertheless tried really hard to write something relevant to the question. There are hardly any dictionary induced mistakes either.

Start here

Answer space for Section B (longer writing task)

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
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| で | こ | ら | し | た | し | ト | び | 子 | た | ト | た | の |
| す | こ | 女 | た | り | る | は | し | き | た | に | 。 | |
| 。 | 。 | き | あ | と | い | | い | で | の | 行 | 。 | ジ |
| | 。 | で | め | 食 | か | 大 | で | し | し | ま | も | ズ |
| | で | す | は | で | た | き | す | た | か | し | た | エ |
| | も | 。 | お | た | で | い | 。 | 。 | た | た | ち | ラ |
| | ち | ジ | い | り | し | で | | 父 | で | 。 | と | ン |
| | 。 | ズ | し | の | た | す | ジ | と | す | 。 | ツ | ト |
| | と | ニ | い | あ | 。 | か | ズ | 母 | か | も | ズ | は |
| | ニ | は | で | め | あ | ら | ニ | は | ら | た | ニ | 行 |
| | は | き | す | し | そ | お | ラ | | | ち | ラ | ま |



ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

This candidate has tried to address the question - they have tried to describe Disneyland (big and beautiful), given details of an activity (ate sweets, played) and why they enjoyed their holiday with friends (because Mum and Dad are strict). The piece would have been improved if these had been set out in separate paragraphs. It may also have encouraged the candidate to write more, since they may have realised how little they had written on any one bullet point and look to expand on this.

In terms of language, the candidate has clearly been taught more advanced structures such as the たり たり structure and how to give a reason. Given that the accuracy of the language they produce is low (3 marks), they may have been better concentrating on getting their basic ます, ました sentences correct, rather than trying to learn more advanced structures which they could not pull off successfully. Knowledge and application of language = 4; limited range of vocabulary and structures; predominantly uses short sentences.



ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

Make sure you don't split one kanji over two boxes - as has happened in the 5th line of this piece, with the kanji for "すき".

Question 2 (b)

This question required candidates to write about a film they had seen at the cinema or a DVD they had watched at home. Most candidates were able to give a description of the film or DVD they watched, but did not give sufficient details about whether they had ended up at the cinema or at home. Similarly, not all of the candidates made an effort to give reasons why they prefer the cinema or a DVD at home, although when they did remember to write about this bullet point, they often did so successfully.

This candidate has successfully written about the last bullet point, (reasons why you prefer the cinema or a DVD at home) and has given some description of the film they watched, (second bullet point). However, there is very little on the first bullet point, (details about whether you actually ended up at the cinema or at home). The communication and content mark would therefore be no more than 9, (may be some omissions) or 10, (may be minor omissions).

Answer space for Section B (longer writing task) – (continued)

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| | で | 。 | | 長 | 見 | 大 | し | 。 | が | る | A | 書 |
| | あ | う | | 食 | ま | 好 | た | | は | 。 | C | 館 |
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| | | を | | し | ッ | 。 | え | ガ | か | 。 | た | N |
| | | | | | プ | え | い | が | し | ご | 。 | I |

CCT-53 TAN WHITE CATS

Plan

Home vs cinema

~~Last week~~

yesterday → cinema

tomorrow → Home

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---------------|---|---|---|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|
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| た | 、 | 昨日 | と | 母 | か | が | 食 | 館 | ら | 映 | 家 | 身 |
| 。 | 有 | 昨日 | さ | は | し | 好 | べ | を | 。 | 画 | よ | い |
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| 画 | 館 | 昨日 | さ | ひ | ひ | あ | 好 | プ | | し | す | 映 |
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ResultsPlus

Examiner Comments

The candidate has done very well to write in logical paragraphs (although the start of each paragraph should be indented by one square). The candidate has used a very good range of grammatical structures, including a comparative, a reason, a *ことが好きです*, and a *たり たり* sentence, although there are also some errors. It was given full marks for knowledge and application of language, and 4 marks for accuracy.



ResultsPlus

Examiner Tip

Remember to answer each of the bullet points.

Question 2 (c)

This question was not very popular. The majority of candidates who chose this question were unable to write about a part time job they were thinking of doing now, and wrote about the job they wanted to do in the future. On the other hand, they did manage to discuss whether part time jobs for high school students were advantageous or disadvantageous, even though they were restricted by only knowing GCSE level grammatical structures.

This is only part of a response, but illustrates how a candidate who is not using language very fluently and confidently, can nevertheless make a reasonable attempt at answering the bullet points.

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| を | 大 | 。 | し | に | か | で | ら | い | い | で | っ | ん |
| し | 学 | イ | た | に | ら | あ | 。 | た | で | あ | こ | ま |
| た | に | 夕 | 。 | に | 。 | 。 | わ | の | あ | 。 | う | よ |
| い | い | リ | 父 | に | あ | も | た | し | 。 | ア | で | あ |
| で | く | ア | と | イ | あ | ら | し | か | お | ル | わ | る |
| あ | ま | か | 母 | 夕 | あ | う | は | っ | も | バ | く | っ |
| 。 | い | た | と | リ | 三 | は | し | た | し | イ | る | も |
| あ | に | す | い | ア | さ | お | こ | り | ろ | ト | ら | り |
| 大 | り | き | ま | に | い | か | と | し | か | あ | を | で |
| 学 | よ | で | ま | い | の | ね | か | ま | っ | る | し | あ。 |



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

Although the end of the page about travelling to Italy is irrelevant, the middle 5 lines show a clear attempt at answering the bullet point about why you think it is (or isn't) important for high school students to have a part time job. Communication and Content = 9, "comprehensible overall", "relevant information is conveyed", "evidence of ability to go beyond minimal response".



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Make sure you answer each of the bullet points. Getting the ideas across using basic sentences is fine - this is GCSE, so you won't have the grammatical knowledge to say precisely what you want to say if you were writing in English.

Question 2 (d)

This question required candidates to write about a sports match, but often they found this difficult and just wrote about sports in general. In particular, they struggled to include details of a memorable incident or a memorable player from the match.

This is an example of a mid-level candidate, who is trying really hard both on content and language, but doesn't quite bring off the range of grammar or ideas expected of a top-level candidate.

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| す | き | は | い | 又 | イ | に | あ | は | 番 | で | 好 | 。 |
| る | で | は | ま | の | ソ | す | か | ナ | 好 | す | き | で |
| こ | す | テ | す | の | ガ | ん | ら | ダ | き | 。 | な | も |
| と | カ | ニ | 。 | せ | 好 | で | 。 | ル | な | | ス | 、 |
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| 上 | ら | の | | し | で | ま | ダ | あ | ニ | | ー | は |
| 手 | 私 | し | | ヶ | す | す | ル | 。 | ス | | ツ | 弟 |
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| 。 | ニ | が | | い | は | は | ペ | サ | ん | | ツ | も |
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| た | 弟 | て | 時 | た | 。 | 私 | も | ル | の | 元 | 田 | 月 |
| 。 | さん | 、 | ま | 。 | 、 | は | し | と | し | 気 | さ | + |
| テ | ん | あ | で | 。 | テ | ロ | ろ | ム | あ | で | ん | 一 |
| ニ | と | も | 見 | 。 | ニ | フ | い | ラ | い | す | へ | 日 |
| ス | 母 | し | ま | い | ス | ソ | し | 一 | を | が | 、 | 木 |
| が | さん | る | し | は | の | ド | あ | イ | 見 | 。 | こ | 曜 |
| 好 | ん | い | た | 三 | あ | ガ | い | を | ま | 先 | ん | 日 |
| き | に | で | 。 | 時 | い | ロ | で | し | し | 週 | に | 。 |
| で | 行 | す | た | が | を | ス | す | ま | た | に | ち | |
| す | き | 。 | の | ら | 見 | に | 。 | し | 。 | テ | は | |
| が | ま | 私 | し | 、 | ま | 行 | | た | ナ | ニ | 。 | |



ResultsPlus
Examiner Comments

The basic sentence structure is robust, with the verb at the end and a fair number of particles correct. The candidate is clearly familiar with the 'te' form, but not with any more advanced structures using the plain form of the verb. The から has been used correctly when it has been left at the end of a sentence, but not when the candidate has attempted to incorporate it into a compound sentence. The knowledge and application of language was given a 7 (good variety of vocabulary and structures), but not the top 9-10 band (wide range of vocabulary and structures, including some complex).



ResultsPlus
Examiner Tip

The candidate has mentioned each of the three bullet points, although the first and third bullet points (description of the match and reasons why you enjoyed the match) are quite basic. In terms of classroom instruction, this candidate would probably gain more marks most efficiently by being helped to expand their ideas and content, rather than by being taught more grammatical structures. There are signs of this in the second paragraph - "I like Nadal, he is handsome, he lives in Spain" - but even with basic language the candidate could probably have said "He is good at tennis. He often plays in matches. Last year he played at Wimbledon." etc.

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- Answer the bullet points, writing a paragraph on each. Try to make each paragraph roughly equal in length: don't write a huge deal about one bullet point and hardly anything about another.
- Don't start by writing half a page introducing yourself: it is not necessary.
- Learn how to write descriptions (of people and places) in addition to narration.
- It is acceptable to memorize chunks of language and reproduced these in the exam - indeed, this is a good language learning strategy, but this should not be the whole essay. If candidates write a totally pre-learnt essay, they are unlikely to score well on the communication and content criterion. If they wish to memorize some good chunks of language, this is much more useful for the GCSE if done at the sentence level - e.g. have a good sentence or two of description of a person, of a favourite sport, of a place, of an afternoon activity etc.
- Remember that a "たり たり" sentence needs to end in some form of the verb します
- Use genko yoshi correctly.
- Write kanji at an appropriate level for GCSE. The number and quality of kanji is assessed globally under the "knowledge and application of language" criterion, where it may make 1 or possibly 2 marks difference.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

Ofqual



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government



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