

READING

LISTENING

The EIKEN Can-do List

● English Translation ●

SPEAKING

WRITING



▶ About the EIKEN Can-do List	4
▶ About the EIKEN tests	5
▶ The EIKEN Can-do List	
Grade 1	
Reading, Listening	6
Speaking, Writing	7
Grade Pre-1	
Reading, Listening	8
Speaking, Writing	9
Grade 2	
Reading, Listening	10
Speaking, Writing	11
Grade Pre-2	
Reading, Listening	12
Speaking, Writing	13
Grade 3	
Reading, Listening	14
Speaking, Writing	15
Grade 4	
Reading, Listening	16
Speaking, Writing	17
Grade 5	
Reading, Listening	18
Speaking, Writing	19

About the EIKEN Can-do List

Overview

This is an English translation of the EIKEN Can-do List. The original list is the product of a large-scale research project conducted over three years by the Society for Testing English Proficiency (STEP) and was published in Japanese in September 2006. The EIKEN Can-do project used self-assessment questionnaires to create a comprehensive snapshot of what EIKEN test takers believe they can accomplish in English in real-life situations. Over 20,000 test takers who had recently passed one of the seven levels of the EIKEN tests responded to the survey. The original questionnaires were written and administered in the learners' native language, Japanese.

Purpose and Structure

The list provides can-do statements describing the ability to use language in each of the four major skill areas—reading, listening, speaking, writing—for each of the seven EIKEN grades. It is important to remember that the project was designed to elicit information from test takers about what they believe they can do in English outside the testing situation. Therefore being able to perform language activities included on the list for a particular grade does not guarantee that a person would be able to pass that grade of the EIKEN test. The very large sample size and rigorous analyses carried out on the survey data make the list a robust and informative source of information on what the majority of typical test takers who have passed a specific grade feel they are able to accomplish in English in real-life language use situations.

The primary aim of the EIKEN Can-do List is to help test users gain a better understanding of the levels of language ability targeted by the EIKEN tests. For this reason it is designed to be accessible to a variety of test users and is written in everyday, non-specialist language familiar to as wide a range of learners as possible. While the primary focus remains EIKEN test takers, the list also aims to contribute to a better understanding of typical language learners in Japan. By providing an empirically based snapshot of what a large and diverse sample of EIKEN test takers believe they can do with English, STEP also hopes to provide information with which educators and researchers can achieve a better understanding of Japanese learners of English in general.

About the EIKEN tests

Overview

The EIKEN tests are a seven-level suite of tests produced and administered by the Society for Testing English Proficiency (STEP). Established in 1963 in cooperation with the Japanese Education Ministry, STEP is a nonprofit foundation committed to making a positive contribution to English learning and teaching in Japan through the provision of objective measures of English language proficiency. The seven levels of EIKEN are called “grades” and range from Grade 5 (beginner) to Grade 1 (advanced), with two bridging levels (Grades Pre-1 and Pre-2). The Grades are designed to provide well-defined steps that can act as both motivational goals and concrete measures of English ability. Each grade is administered as a separate pass/fail certification test. For Grades 3 through 1, the test is administered in two stages, with test takers who pass the first-stage written test required to sit and pass a face-to-face speaking test in order to achieve certification at that level.

EIKEN Grade	Level	Recognition / Use as Benchmarks
Grade 1 Grade Pre-1	Advanced ↑	Recognized for international admissions to graduate and undergraduate programs
Grade 2 Grade Pre-2	↓	Grades 2 and Pre-2 are MEXT* benchmarks for high school graduates
Grade 3 Grade 4 Grade 5	Beginner ↓	Grade 3 is a MEXT* benchmark for junior high school graduates

*Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology

More Information

More information on the EIKEN tests, including examples of past tests and a list of institutes which recognize the EIKEN tests for international admissions, is available on the following websites:

English: www.stepeiken.org

Japanese: www.eiken.or.jp

Grade 1

Reading

Can understand a wide variety of texts from a range of social, professional, and educational situations.

Can understand magazine articles on social, economic, and cultural topics (e.g. TIME, Newsweek).

Can understand works of literature (e.g. novels).

Can find necessary information when reading factual material and annual reports, etc. (e.g. work reports, reports including statistical data).

Can understand documents and application materials necessary for studying or living abroad, etc.

Listening

Can understand a wide variety of content from a range of social, professional, and educational situations.

Can understand lengthy talks and monologues on a wide range of topics and issues (e.g. speeches and lectures for general educational purposes).

Can understand talks and monologues on contemporary social issues (e.g. lectures on environmental problems).

Can understand the content of discussions when participating in meetings (e.g. meetings to plan for events, meetings at work).

Can understand TV and radio news items concerning political and economic topics.

Can understand a wide variety of movies and TV dramas.

★ *The statements in bold at the head of each skill section are summaries of the significant features of the can-do statements calibrated to that level for that skill. The summary statements themselves were not included in the questionnaire surveys.*

★ *Each level of the EIKEN Can-do List can be assumed to include the can-do statements in each of the levels below it.*

Grade 1

Speaking

Can take part in interaction on a wide variety of topics relevant to a range of social, professional, and educational situations.

Can ask questions and express opinions about contemporary social issues and current affairs.

Can exchange opinions and make comments when participating in meetings (e.g. meetings to plan for events, meetings at work).

Can negotiate over the telephone concerning a wide range of topics (e.g. making changes to schedules, negotiating prices).

Can use polite expressions and casual expressions appropriately according to the other participants in a conversation and the situation.

Writing

Can write at length about topics relevant to a range of social, professional, and educational situations.

Can write at length expressing opinions about contemporary social issues (e.g. environmental problems).

Can write at length about his/her own work or research (e.g. in reports on work or study projects, workplace manuals).

Can write a formal letter of complaint about products or services (e.g. about damaged products or unsatisfactory service).

Can write summaries of magazine and newspaper articles concerning contemporary social issues (e.g. editorials and feature articles).

Can take notes to record the main points raised during lectures and meetings.

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Grade Pre-1

Reading

Can understand texts from a range of social, professional, and educational situations.

Can read different kinds of texts appropriately, adapting reading style according to the type of text and purpose of reading (e.g. quickly skimming a newspaper, reading a critical essay in detail, reading a novel for pleasure).

Can understand articles on current events in English newspapers (e.g. the Japan Times, the Daily Yomiuri, the New York Times).

Can understand the main points of lengthy texts (e.g. required readings and materials for lectures and training courses).

Can understand letters and e-mails concerning his/her work (e.g. meeting schedules, the details of business transactions).

Can understand instruction manuals for products (e.g. electrical appliances).

Listening

Can understand content from a range of social, professional, and educational situations.

Can understand lengthy talks and monologues about topics that he/she is interested in (e.g. speeches, lectures).

Can understand the main points when listening to TV and radio news programs.

Can understand explanations given by guides at tourist spots and museums, etc.

Can understand simple instructions and explanations given at public facilities and educational institutions (e.g. rules for using facilities, how to use a membership card).

Can understand instructions and announcements when taking flights and using public transportation (e.g. instructions for changing trains, announcements explaining delays).

Can understand the content of orders or inquiries over the telephone, provided that they are related to his/her work or field of expertise.

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Grade Pre-1

Speaking

Can make explanations and express his/her opinions about topics relevant to a range of social, professional, and educational situations.

Can speak at length about topics that he/she has researched (e.g. presenting the results of a research assignment, giving a presentation at work).

Can ask questions and express opinions about the content of lectures and presentations, etc., concerning his/her work or field of expertise.

Can make a complaint about products or services (e.g. about damaged products or unsatisfactory service).

Can handle routine tasks and transactions at public facilities (e.g. sending a letter at a post office, borrowing books from a library).

Can describe his/her state of health when visiting the doctor, etc.

Can handle tasks and transactions on the telephone, provided that they are of a routine nature (e.g. making an appointment at the dentist or hair salon).

Can describe the plots of books he/she has read or films he/she has seen.

Writing

Can write at length about topics from everyday life and topics relevant to some social, professional, and educational situations.

Can write explanations of things that he/she is interested in (e.g. simple recipes, instructions for using appliances).

Can write a summary of things that he/she has heard or read and is interested in (e.g. the contents of a lecture, an article from a magazine or newspaper).

Can express his/her own ideas and opinions about familiar topics related to everyday life (e.g. diet and health).

Can write simple texts introducing elements of Japanese culture (e.g. food, national holidays, festivals).

Can describe what he/she would like to do and explain why (e.g. explain why he/she would like to study abroad or be employed by a certain company).

Can write simple responses to orders or inquiries, provided that they are related to his/her work or field of expertise.

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Grade 2

Reading

Can understand lengthy expository texts and find necessary information in texts of a practical nature.

Can understand expository texts written for a general audience (e.g. guidebooks for travelers).

Can understand practical texts describing how to do things (e.g. cookbooks, gardening books).

Can understand articles about topics that he/she is interested in when published in English newspapers which use footnotes and Japanese explanations (e.g. the Shukan ST, Asahi WEEKLY).

Can understand the main points of lengthy texts, provided the content is simple (e.g. required readings and materials for lectures and training courses).

Can understand simple advertising flyers and pamphlets (e.g. product pricelists, information about sales).

Can identify within a paragraph the topic sentence (conveying the main idea of the paragraph) and the supporting sentence (supporting the topic sentence by providing concrete examples, etc.).

Listening

Can understand information and explanations relevant to everyday life and understand the content of extended speech.

Can understand information about familiar topics related to everyday life (e.g. information about sales, information about local events).

Can understand classes and training courses conducted in English, provided that the content is simple (e.g. introducing foreign cultures and lifestyles in foreign countries).

Can understand important information when listening to public announcements (e.g. announcements paging people, information at events).

Can understand simple explanations given by salesclerks when shopping (e.g. information about product sizes, discounts, whether a product is out of stock).

Can understand a simple description or explanation of the speaker's school or workplace (e.g. the location, number of students/employees, special features).

Can understand the content of weather forecasts (e.g. high and low temperatures / explanations such as "Sunny, becoming cloudy later.").

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Grade 2

Speaking

Can describe everyday experiences and convey his/her needs and requirements.

Can explain familiar situations that occur in everyday life (e.g. explaining reasons for being late or absent).

Can describe memorable experiences (e.g. trips, special events).

Can give a simple description of his/her own school or workplace (e.g. the location, number of students/employees, special features).

Can give simple directions (e.g. “Go straight and turn left at the next corner.”).

Can explain what he/she is looking for to a salesclerk when shopping, describe his/her preferences, and ask simple questions (e.g. concerning color, size, price).

Can give simple messages (e.g. “Tell Jane to call me back.” / “Tell John I can’t go to the meeting today.”).

Writing

Can write texts of some length about topics from everyday life.

Can describe the details of memorable experiences (e.g. school events, trips).

Can write a simple description introducing his/her own school or workplace.

Can write a simple description introducing the area in which he/she lives.

Can describe his/her impressions of books he/she has read or films he/she has seen.

Can write letters and e-mails of some length (e.g. describing recent news and events to a homestay host family or friend).

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Grade Pre-2

Reading

Can find information on graphs and tables and understand simple expository texts.

Can understand simple expository texts (e.g. learning materials introducing the lifestyles in foreign countries and foreign cultures).

Can understand notices and instructions at public facilities, etc. (e.g. rules for using a venue).

Can find necessary information on graphs and tables (e.g. graphs reporting the results of various kinds of surveys).

Can find information such as destination and arrival time when looking at timetables.

Listening

Can understand topics from everyday life and simple explanations and instructions.

Can understand talks and monologues about topics that he/she is interested in (e.g. things related to his/her hobbies, music and sports that he/she likes).

Can understand the content of simple talks and monologues about familiar topics related to everyday life (e.g. school, club activities, talking about the weekend).

Can understand instructions given by a teacher during classes or training sessions (e.g. "Answer the question on page 27." / "Give some examples of...").

Can understand simple announcements (e.g. meeting place, arrival and departure times for transportation).

Can understand simple directions (e.g. "Go straight and turn left at the next corner.").

Can understand a speaker on the telephone, provided the content is simple (e.g. agreeing when to meet, taking short messages).

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Grade Pre-2

Speaking

Can handle routine tasks from everyday life and express his/her ideas about topics that he/she is interested in.

Can express his/her ideas about things that he/she is interested in (e.g. sports he/she likes, things related to his/her hobbies).

Can talk about dreams and ambitions for his/her future (e.g. countries that he/she would like to visit, the career he/she would like to pursue).

Can express his/her emotions (e.g. happy, sad, lonely).

Can make simple plans to meet (e.g. meeting place and time).

Can order at a fast-food restaurant when looking at a menu (e.g. names of food and drink items, size).

Can respond on the telephone by using simple expressions and set phrases (e.g. "Please wait a moment." / "Hold on." / "Speaking.").

Writing

Can write simple texts about things that he/she is interested in.

Can write about his/her dreams and ambitions for his/her future (e.g. countries he/she would like to visit, the career he/she would like to pursue).

Can write simple texts describing his/her favorite things or familiar items (e.g. a pet, favorite book).

Can write short letters and e-mails (e.g. a simple letter to a friend or pen pal).

Can write a simple notice (e.g. the date, time, and place of a party, the program for a school festival).

Can write simple plans on a calendar or in a personal planner or schedule book (e.g. "Meet Yoko at the station at ten." / "Go shopping with Jill.").

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Grade 3

Reading

Can understand simple stories and texts about familiar things.

Can understand simple texts about topics that he/she is interested in.

Can understand texts about familiar topics related to everyday life (e.g. sports, music).

Can understand short, simple stories (e.g. simple biographies, fairytales).

Can read simple reading materials that include footnotes and explanations in Japanese (e.g. school reading materials, stories written for learners).

Can find streets, shops, and hospitals, etc., on simple maps written in English.

Listening

Can understand instructions and talks and monologues about familiar things, provided that the speaker speaks slowly.

Can understand talks and monologues about topics that he/she is interested in, provided that the speaker speaks slowly and/or repeats sections (e.g. things related to his/her hobbies, music and sports that he/she likes).

Can understand the content of simple talks and monologues about familiar topics related to everyday life, provided that the speaker speaks slowly and/or repeats sections (e.g. school, club activities, talking about the weekend).

Can understand simple announcements, provided that the speaker speaks slowly and/or repeats sections (e.g. meeting place, arrival and departure times for transportation).

Can understand simple directions, provided that the speaker speaks slowly and/or repeats sections (e.g. "Go straight and turn left at the next corner.").

Can understand words that are linked when pronounced in connected speech, provided that they are commonly used expressions (e.g. "Come in." as "C'min." / "Don't you?" as "Doncha?")

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Grade 3

Speaking

Can take part in simple interaction about familiar things and talk about himself/herself.

Can talk briefly about something that he/she is interested in (e.g. his/her hobbies, club activities).

Can say what he/she likes and dislikes and explain in simple terms why (e.g. animals, food, sports).

Can describe routine actions from everyday life (e.g. "I got up at seven." / "I ate some bread for breakfast.").

Can describe simple plans (e.g. "I'm going to meet my friends.").

Can make simple requests (e.g. "Can you open the window, please?").

Can make invitations to familiar places and events (e.g. "Let's go to a movie tonight.").

Can use simple fillers, interjections, and responses in conversation (e.g. "I see." / "Really?").

Writing

Can write simple texts about himself/herself.

Can write a simple self-introduction (e.g. name, where he/she lives, family).

Can write about his/her hobbies or interests.

Can write what he/she likes and dislikes and explain why (e.g. food, sports, music).

Can write a short diary entry (from one to three sentences).

Can write simple cards and postcards (e.g. birthday cards, postcards sent while on vacation).

Can write short messages (e.g. "Ken called at 3 p.m.").

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Grade 4

Reading

Can understand simple texts, signs, and notices.

Can understand short letters and e-mails (e.g. introducing the writer's family, about memories of a trip).

Can understand simple stories that include illustrations or photographs (e.g. picture books for children).

Can understand sentences describing familiar activities from everyday life (e.g. "Ken went to the park and played soccer with his friends.").

Can understand simple signs and notices in public facilities (e.g. "No Smoking," / "Closed" / "No Dogs").

Can understand simple English menus (e.g. in a fast-food restaurant).

Can understand the information in an invitation to a party, etc. (e.g. date, time, place).

Listening

Can understand simply constructed sentences and simple instructions.

Can understand the information in a simple self-introduction (e.g. the speaker's name, where the speaker lives, about the speaker's family).

Can understand the content of simply constructed sentences (e.g. "I like dogs, but she likes cats.").

Can understand the meaning of simple instructions (e.g. "Open your textbook." / "Close the door, please.").

Can understand descriptions of the location of people and things (e.g. "The book is on the TV.").

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Grade 4

Speaking

Can produce speech and ask questions using simply constructed sentences.

Can give a simple self-introduction (e.g. name, where he/she lives, about his/her family).

Can ask simple questions (e.g. the time, someone's likes, name).

Can ask for repetition when he/she does not understand what the speaker says (e.g. "Pardon?" / "Could you speak more slowly?").

Can say dates and days of the week.

Writing

Can write simply constructed sentences and messages.

Can write sentences using English word order, provided that the sentences are short (e.g. "I went to the park yesterday.").

Can write short messages by putting words and phrases together (e.g. "birthday party at 6 p.m.").

Can write sentences joining clauses with conjunctions (e.g. and, but, so, when, because).

Can write dates and days of the week.

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Grade 5

Reading

Can recognize the letters of the alphabet and punctuation marks, and can understand basic English words, phrases, and sentences.

Can read the alphabet (A to Z).

Can recognize both upper case and lower case letters of the alphabet (e.g. A and a, F and f).

Can understand the meaning of periods (.), question marks (?), quotation marks (“...”), and exclamation marks (!).

Can understand familiar words from everyday life (e.g. dog, eat, happy).

Can understand basic sentences describing familiar activities from everyday life (e.g. “I play tennis every day.”).

Listening

Can understand basic English words and phrases and set expressions.

Can understand which letter was referred to when the letters of the alphabet are spoken aloud (e.g. in the spelling of people’s names).

Can understand the meaning of familiar words from everyday life (e.g. dog, eat, happy).

Can recognize dates and days of the week.

Can recognize numbers used in familiar ways for everyday purposes (e.g. telephone numbers, the time, a person’s age).

Can understand everyday greetings (e.g. “How are you?” / “Nice to meet you.”).

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Grade 5

Speaking

Can use basic English words and phrases and set expressions.

Can pronounce the names of the letters of the alphabet (A to Z).

Can pronounce familiar words from everyday life (e.g. dog, eat, happy).

Can express numbers used in familiar ways for everyday purposes (e.g. telephone numbers, the time).

Can exchange simple greetings (e.g. “Good morning.” / “Good night.”).

Can apologize and express thanks (e.g. “I’m sorry.” / “Thank you.”).

Can answer yes/no questions about familiar topics from everyday life (e.g. about likes and dislikes).

Writing

Can write the letters of the alphabet and basic English words and use punctuation marks.

Can print the letters of the alphabet (ABC...XYZ).

Can use upper case letters, lower case letters, and punctuation marks correctly (e.g. A/a, ?, !).

Can write his/her own name.

Can write familiar words from everyday life (e.g. dog, eat, happy).

Can write numbers as English words (e.g. five, eleven).

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