

GOALS & CHARACTERISTICS OF THE Jr. STEP TEST

◇ GOALS OF THE Jr. STEP TEST

Our objective is to support English education for children through test development. We hope to foster children who:

- are familiar with and have an interest in the English language.
- enjoy actively taking part in English communication.
- are aware that English can be used as a tool for communication with people from all over the world.
- understand various lifestyles and cultures around the world, and strive to become internationally minded individuals with a broad outlook on life.

The Jr. STEP Test aims to promote these goals and support children who are learning English.

◇ CHARACTERISTICS OF THE Jr. STEP TEST

◆ LISTEN & CHOOSE

The goal of the Jr. STEP Test is to determine the examinee's listening ability, which is said to be essential for children in the early stages of learning. In most sections, the examinees listen to English vocabulary/phrases, dialogs or sentences, and then choose the illustration (answer) that corresponds to what they have heard. SILVER and GOLD grades contain sections in which the answer choices are not illustrations but are written out as a bridge to further studies.

◆ SCORING

The Jr. STEP Test attaches importance to the examinee experiencing feelings of joy and accomplishment by taking the test and therefore becoming more motivated to learn. Because the test is not pass/fail but scored by percentage, the children's motivation will not be hindered by any feeling of failure. Examinees may use this information to decide which grade to apply for next time.

◆ A VARIETY OF TEST FORMATS

The Jr. STEP Test has three grades, which are divided according to level of difficulty. The vocabulary and expressions chosen for the test are based on the Jr. STEP Test's own syllabus, in which English words and phrases are classified into different grades. The topics and settings of the questions are based on situations that children are familiar with. Some test formats will require examinees to use their imagination and inference skills.

◆ COLORFUL ILLUSTRATIONS

All pages of the Jr. STEP Test booklets are printed in color. This not only projects a bright and fun image, but also makes it easier for the examinee to understand the situation (the people, background, etc.) in the illustrations.

◆ A SUBJECTIVE TEST SECTION: "THE CHALLENGE CORNER"

Children have a strong interest in self-expression. The Jr. STEP Test has developed a subjective section called "The challenge corner." This new format motivates children to "actively" take part in the test.

◆ LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY IN ACCORDANCE WITH ENGLISH ACTIVITIES IN JAPANESE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS (BRONZE)

Some of the objectives of introducing English education into elementary schools are to build international understanding, to foster communication skills, to internalize English sounds and to teach English language that is familiar to children's daily lives. The Jr. STEP Test takes these objectives into consideration when developing the test, especially for the BRONZE level. This grade consists of very basic content and simple formats so that elementary school students who are new to English can easily take the test.

◆ OBJECTIVE SCORE DATA COMPILED FROM NATIONWIDE TEST

The Jr. STEP Test is taken by children who study English in different environments. The test is administrated nationwide, thus the score data compiled from these tests is highly objective. Each personal Report Card shows the child's score relative to other examinees of the same age and who have been studying English for the same number of years. Report Cards also give an easy to understand explanation of the score and advice about studying English.

○3 GRADES & GUIDELINES

◇THREE GRADES – STANDARDS BASED ON CHILDREN’S DEVELOPMENT

BRONZE			
Number of questions (sections)	40 questions (7 sections)	Test duration	approximately 30 minutes
Achievement goals	1. To be familiarized with English sounds and rhythm 2. To listen to and comprehend words, phrases and expressions necessary for basic communication		
Aim of questions (areas of testing)	Vocabulary & Phrases	<input type="radio"/>	Understanding nouns, adjectives and verbs in fixed expressions and basic sentences
	Dialogs	<input type="radio"/>	Understanding basic conversations with one exchange, using greetings and verbs
	Sentences	<input type="radio"/>	Understanding basic sentences (one to three sentences)
	Reading	—	None
Main topics and settings	Everyday life (at home or school) including interaction with family, friends and teachers, routine daily activities, topics of interest to children, etc.		
Examples of language content	Word categories	food, animals, colors, time, weather, numbers, body parts, transportation, basic manners in daily life, etc.	
	Word functions	confirming, introducing, agreeing, greeting, describing likes and dislikes, expressing gratitude, requesting etc.	

SILVER

* The topics and language content of SILVER expand on the BRONZE level

Number of questions (sections)	45 questions (9 sections)	Test duration	approximately 35 minutes			
Achievement goals	1. To listen to and to comprehend basic vocabulary/phrases and expressions related to everyday occurrences and to produce simple responses					
	2. To comprehend information in basic conversations and sentences					
	* to promote interest in the connections between written letters and sounds					
Aim of questions (areas of testing)	Vocabulary & Phrases	<input type="radio"/>	Understanding prepositions in fixed expressions and basic sentences. Understanding nouns, adjectives and verbs in various sentence types. Understanding words from within the same category			
	Dialogs	<input type="radio"/>	Choosing a correct response, understanding two or three short sentence exchanges			
	Sentences	<input type="radio"/>	Understanding two to three easy, short sentences. Understanding and responding to negative and interrogative sentences			
	Reading	<input type="radio"/>	Recognizing the connection between written letters and their sounds, exposure to simple, short words in written form			
Main topics and settings	Familiar social (regional) life, interactions with new people and with people from other countries, school studies, extracurricular activities, general knowledge of matters related to a child's life, etc.					
Examples of language content	Word categories	hobbies, sports, leisure, shops, public facilities, school facilities and supplies, events, club activities, things in the neighborhood, words that describe quality and condition of something, play activities, etc.				
	Word functions	expressing desire, responsibility, ability, intention, choice, emotions, suggesting, answering phone, etc.				

GOLD		* The topics and language content of GOLD expand on the SILVER level		
Number of questions (sections)	50 questions (9 sections)	Test duration	approximately 45 minutes	
Achievement goals	<p>1. To listen and to comprehend vocabulary/phrases and expressions related to familiar daily-life situations, and to produce questions and responses appropriate to the topic</p> <p>2. To comprehend information in conversations and sentences, and to grasp the main idea of the situation</p> <p>* to read familiar words/phrases and short sentences</p>			
Aim of questions (areas of testing)	Vocabulary & Phrases	<input type="radio"/>	Understanding words and phrases in various sentence types	
	Dialogs	<input type="radio"/>	Understanding simple conversations of more than three exchanges	
	Sentences	<input type="radio"/>	Understanding more than three sentences that are linked, responding to and forming 5 Wh- and How questions	
	Reading	<input type="radio"/>	Recognizing basic words/phrases and exposure to simple sentences in written form	
Main topics and settings	Familiar topics, events and culture of Japan and foreign countries, overseas travel, social activities, volunteer activities, dreams and future ambitions, stories, fiction, and solving problems, etc.			
Examples of language content	Word categories	Words related to degree and quantity, occupations, things necessary during travel or living abroad, the natural environment, familiar social life, Japanese and foreign culture, etc.		
	Word functions	describing personal impressions, giving examples, describing ideas and expectations, exchanging opinions, etc.		

◇ GUIDELINES FOR CHOOSING WHICH GRADE TO TAKE

◆ GUIDELINES FOR CHOOSING WHICH GRADE TO TAKE BASED ON THE CHILD'S LEARNING EXPERIENCE

CHILD'S LEARNING EXPERIENCE	BRONZE	SILVER	GOLD
The Jr. STEP Test	Children who are taking the Jr. STEP Test for the first time	Children who have received more than 80% of the total points possible in BRONZE	Children who have received more than 80% of the total points possible in SILVER
English conversation school	6 months to more than 1 year	1 year to more than 2 years	2 years to more than 3 years
Elementary school	1.5 years to more than 2 years	2.5 years to more than 3.5 years	4 years to more than 5 years
Learning the alphabet	None	1 year to more than 2 years	2.5 years to more than 3 years
Others	Children not yet enrolled in school but have learned English at home	-	-

◆ GUIDELINES FOR CHOOSING WHICH GRADE TO TAKE BASED ON THE CHILD'S LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

MAIN LEARNING PLACE	LEARNING SITUATION	First Test	Subsequent Tests
Elementary school	Children exposed to English for their first time in elementary school, with approximately 10 classroom hours per year for 3 years or more.	BRONZE	→ BRONZE
	Children studying according to elementary school curriculum, mainly through phonetic method focused on songs and games.		
	Children who want to increase their motivation to study English or to understand the pleasure of studying English.		
	Children who have an English learning experience of 2 to 3 years or more, but have no experience learning the alphabet.	BRONZE	→ SILVER
	Children with an English learning experience of 3 years or more with approximately 35 classroom hours per year (and can recognize the letters of the alphabet).		
	Children who have received more than 80% of the total points possible in BRONZE and would like to challenge themselves to the next step (and can recognize the letters of the alphabet).		
English conversation school/home	Children who are studying phonetically and have no experience learning the alphabet.	BRONZE	→ BRONZE
	Children who know the alphabet but have no experience reading words or sentences.	BRONZE SILVER	→ SILVER
	Children who have taken BRONZE or SILVER or GOLD and want to measure their achievement after a few months of study.	BRONZE SILVER GOLD	→ BRONZE → SILVER → GOLD
	Children below 6 years old, who are not yet enrolled in elementary school, and spend their daily life among family or friends in their home or neighborhood.	BRONZE	→ BRONZE → SILVER
	Children who have received more than 80% of the total points possible in SILVER and can listen to and understand rather long sentences and conversations or can read words and short sentences.	SILVER	→ GOLD
	Children who have received more than 80% of the total points possible in SILVER and have put more emphasis on reading words and sentences rather than listening to long sentences and conversations.	SILVER	→ EIKEN Grade 5
	Children who have received more than 80% of the total points possible in GOLD and are studying to learn words and sentences. Children who want to test their ability without being discouraged by the pass/fail line.	GOLD	→ EIKEN Grade 5

○ MOTIVATING & RELIABLE FEEDBACK

◇ REPORT CARD

The child and parent can enjoy checking the examinee's progress with this highly visual Report Card, which includes a report on performance and advice about studying.

◆ "STEP ZONE"

"STEP ZONE" indicates where the examinee scored on successive tests as the child makes his/her way towards the 80% "correct answers" zone in each grade. It can be used as to decide whether a child can "proceed to the next grade" or try the same grade again, and helps the child focus on the goals of taking the next test as well as future study.

◆ HINTS FROM JUNIALPHA

Junialpha is the name of the Jr. STEP Test's companion character. On each report, Junny (his "pet" name) will introduce cultural differences between Japan and other countries, easy English expressions and interesting "trivia".

◆ TAKE THE NEXT STEP

This section provides general comments about the child's test's results. For example, there will be advice about what areas the child should pay special attention to when taking the same grade again, or if the child achieved 80% or more, what points to be careful about when advancing to the next grade. The report intends to praise the child for his/her accomplishment, promote motivation and enthusiasm to continue learning English, and foster the joy of learning English.

◆ CHECK YOUR ANSWERS

Both the correct answer and the examinee's answer will be shown for each question. Comments will also be made about the child's subjective answers on "The challenge corner", the section of the test that asks about the child's opinions and impressions. There are no right or wrong answers in this section nor is it scored, but the children will be able to know how their "opinion" was taken.

◆ AIM OF QUESTIONS AND COMPREHENSION

A detailed report is given for each of the four areas of testing: vocabulary/phrases, dialogs, sentences, and reading. The report will indicate which area each question emphasizes and the comprehension level of each examinee. The report will also show the national average for the scores of examinees of the same age and learning experience.

◇ CERTIFICATE

A CERTIFICATE will be issued to all examinees. This CERTIFICATE is written in English and a GOLD, SILVER or BRONZE medal sticker will be enclosed so that the examinee can put it on the CERTIFICATE. Many teachers report that “the CERTIFICATE encourages the students” and “I enjoy seeing the children’s smile as I hand out the CERTIFICATES to each of them and read the English statements written on the CERTIFICATES.”

◇ GROUP REPORT CARD

◆ GROUP RESULTS

The list shows the results for all the examinees in your group. If an examinee has taken the Jr. STEP Test in the past, scores for the past three tests will be indicated. Scores for each of the four testing fields will be listed, which will enable you to compare the strengths and weaknesses of an examinee. The report will also suggest which grade each student should take the next time.

◆ INDIVIDUAL RESULTS

The list will indicate the percent of correct answers for each question. Each section of the test will have a specific explanation of which area (vocabulary/phrases, dialogs, sentences or reading) was emphasized. National scores will also be indicated for each question. It may be used to compare where the group stands on a national level.

◆ GROUP PERFORMANCE

Data of examinees and average scores by age, experience in studying English and prefecture will be displayed in charts and graphs.

◇ THE Jr. STEP TEST “PERFECT SCORE AWARD”

◆ PERFECT SCORE AWARD

From 2008, Jr. STEP Test will present examinees who achieved a perfect score of 100% on the BRONZE, SILVER or GOLD with the “Perfect Score Award” (does not include examinees of the Jr. STEP Online Test, although all registered examinees receive the Jr. STEP Test CERTIFICATE.). The purpose of the “Perfect Score Award” is to raise the incentive for learning English and thereby increase familiarity with English, rouse curiosity about English and enjoy positive communication in English. The concept of the “Perfect Score Award” came from comments by parents and educators who wanted to “encourage children to study harder in order to do their best. It is our hope that the “Perfect Score Award” gives children the incentive to learn more when studying for the Jr. STEP Test.

○ OPERATING PROCEDURES (THE PAPER TEST)

◇ Test dates in the 2009 – 2010 school year

Summer session	Registration	May 1 (Fri) – June 5 (Fri) (applications must be received during this period)	
	Test	June 22 (Mon) – June 28 (Sun)	June 28 (Sun)
Fall session	Registration	Sept. 1 (Tue) – Oct. 9 (Fri) (applications must be received during this period)	
	Test	Oct. 26 (Mon) – Nov. 1 (Sun)	Nov. 1 (Sun)
Winter session	Registration	Dec. 1, 2009 (Tue) – Jan. 15, 2010 (Fri) (applications must be received during this period)	
	Test	Feb. 1, 2010 (Mon) – Feb. 7, 2010 (Sun)	Feb. 7, 2010 (Sun)
Duration of test	BRONZE: approximately 30 minutes / SILVER: approximately 35 minutes / GOLD: approximately 45 minutes		
Test fees (includes tax)	BRONZE: 2,000 yen / SILVER: 2,200 yen / GOLD: 2,400 yen		
Test sites	A site / location determined by the representative of each individual group or organization	A site directly administered by STEP; they are in Tokyo, Nagoya, and Osaka	
Test administration	Administered by the representative of the group (administration date and time will be designated by the representative during the period of the specified seven days)	Test will be administered before noon by STEP. Assembly times for each grade will be notified at the time of application.	
Qualifications	1. Group registered with STEP	1. Individuals who are enrolled in elementary school or above	
	2. Must have 5 or more applicants	2. Must take exam as an individual and not as a group	
	3. No given qualifications for examinees		
	* For both test sites, examinees may take 2 adjacent grades.		
Required documents	1. Application for group test site	1. Application for public test site	
	2. Application fee	2. Application fee (postal money order)	
		(Application form will be sent on request; send completed form and money order to STEP by mail.)	
Notification of results	1. CERTIFICATES for each individual examinee at their test site	1. A CERTIFICATE	
	2. Report Cards for each individual examinee at their test site	2. A Report Card	
	3. A Group Report Card		
	* For both test sites, results will be delivered approximately one month after the test.		

◇ GROUP TEST SITE

◆ TEST ADMINISTRATION

Multiple groups may jointly administer an exam. Furthermore, children not belonging to a certain group may join the group exam. In any case, the representative of the group must take all responsibility of administering the test and handling of fees.

◆ RULES FOR ADMINISTRATING THE Jr. STEP TEST

1. Strict observance of the test week period
2. Preparation of proper test site
3. Fair administration of the test
4. Safe-keeping of test booklets / prevention of information leakage
5. Protection of confidential data (personal data/score of examinees)
6. Prompt and accurate feedback to examinees

◆ PROCEDURES FOR GROUP REGISTRATION

Please contact the Jr. STEP Test Information Center (tel. 03-3266-6463) for any questions (in Japanese).

* Please be advised that the information given by the Jr. STEP Test Information Center and all printed matters are in Japanese.

1. Request “application for group registration” by fax or post card.
2. An application will be sent to the requested address.
3. Complete and submit application form before the deadline presented below.
4. Processing of application
5. “Group number” will be issued to authorized groups, and a “Registered for Group Test Site” sticker will be sent.
6. From then on, application forms will be sent automatically for every session.

Deadline for group registration in 2009

Summer session: May 26

Fall session: Sept. 29

Winter session: Jan. 5, 2010

◆ HOW TO REGISTER

1. Applications must be received by mail. Applications by fax or telephone cannot be accepted.
2. Additional applications or changes of grade level may be made before the application period ends.

*Application forms will be sent to registered groups every time the test is administered. When in need of more application forms, please contact STEP.

◆ PAYMENT

1. Please pay test fee by postal money order or bank transfer at the time of application.
2. Write your “Jr. STEP Test group number” before the name of the payee.

Postal transfer: Please use the sheet enclosed in the application form
Account Number - 00190-7-594504

Name of Account - (財)日本英語検定協会 (Nihon Eigo Kentei Kyokai)

Bank transfer: Mitsubishi Tokyo UFJ Bank Kanda Branch

Account Number (checking account) 316455

Name of Account - (財)日本英語検定協会 (Nihon Eigo Kentei Kyokai)

◆ TEST FEE DEDUCTION

A group of ten or more examinees may deduct “fee for group test site administration” from the total amount of the test fee. A calculation sheet will be enclosed in your application form.

◆ SUMMARY OF OVERALL PROCESS FOR GROUP TEST SITES

1. Group registration - contact the Jr. STEP Test Information Center for group registration forms or download it from our website- please be careful to meet the deadline written above.
2. Application forms will be sent - you will receive an application form every time the exam is administered. Please request new forms if you need more.
3. Send in application forms - please pay the complete fee when sending in application forms. Test papers will not be sent if payment is not completed. Notify examinees of your group of exam time and date.
4. Receive test papers - Test papers will be sent at least 3 days prior to the exam. Please make sure to store it in a secure place. Please be aware that packages may be delivered while you are out. In that case, a notice will be left by the shopping service. Please contact the shipping service directly.
5. Administer the exam -according to the manual, during the specified week.
6. Send back the test booklets - send back test booklets before the specified deadline. Issuing of Report Cards will be delayed if test booklets are not sent back promptly.
7. Results - Report Cards, CERTIFICATES and Group Report Card will be sent to the representative of the group approximately one month after the exam. Please hand the Report Cards to each examinee promptly.

○ Q & A

◇ What is the history of the Jr. STEP Test?

Answer: The Jr. STEP Test was developed in 1994 by The Society for Testing English Proficiency. The first Jr. STEP Test was administered in January 1994. Initially, the test was administered to registered groups only, but in 2001, the test was administered at public test sites due to the growing demand of individual English learners. Presently, there are public test sites in Tokyo, Nagoya, and Osaka. It is administered 3 times annually, usually in February, June, and October. As of 2008, the number of students who have taken the test totaled 1,103,714. On our 10th anniversary, which was in 2003, substantial modification was made to the Jr. STEP Test with the objective to develop a “more fun, appropriate and easy-to-take test”. The names of the grades were changed from 3rd, 2nd and 1st grade to BRONZE, SILVER and GOLD as well. An increasing number of elementary schools are now utilizing the Jr. STEP Test as “a subjective assessment program” or “motivation for learning” amidst the introduction to English activities in the elementary school curriculum since 2002.

◇ Is the Jr. STEP Test related to STEP EIKEN?

Answer: The Jr. STEP Test and EIKEN are different tests. For example, the introductory level in EIKEN is the Grade 5 test. It consists of basic junior high school level questions, corresponding to English curriculum provided in junior high schools. Listening comprehension formulates 50% of the score, and the other 50% tests grammar, reading comprehension and sentence formation. Reading skills are essential to answer the questions. The method of testing and its areas of testing differ, but they are similar in that they both measure English communication competence.

◇ Will taking the Jr. STEP Test boost the examinee's English skills?

Answer: The Jr. STEP Test is a “fostering-style” test. Therefore, one of the goals of the test is to not become highly-skilled in English but to motivate children to enjoy English. The Jr. STEP Test has no pass/fail line, but it encourages examinees to go to the next grade (goal) by issuing English CERTIFICATES to every examinee, giving praise and advice, focusing on appropriate listening comprehension, using illustrations and so on so that children can take the test enthusiastically without attaching a score to it. The Jr. STEP Test will motivate English learners and will also serve as motivation for future English learning.

◇ Can children take the same grade of the Jr. STEP Test twice?

Answer: Yes. The Jr. STEP Test consists of different questions each time, and vocabulary and expressions are kept at a consistent level for every test. Therefore, examinees can take the same grade over again, but the test will be different every time. We began development of the Jr. STEP Test keeping in mind methods for motivating children wanting to learn English. The test consists of full-color illustrations, quizzes and games so that children will “have fun”, feel a desire to learn more English and to want to take the test again. We feel that the structure of the Jr. STEP Test, which is to solve interesting problems and provide children with sense of accomplishment, is an effective way to maintain children's curiosity in learning English.