

THE 2026

OHIO JAPAN BOWL

HANDBOOK

ORGANIZED BY



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About the Japan Bowl

The Japan Bowl® is a Japanese language and culture competition created by the Japan-America Society of Washington DC in 1992. The Japan Bowl tests the achievements of Japanese learners throughout the US and other countries. The Japan Bowl in the United States focuses on high school students.

What makes the Japan Bowl unique is that it goes beyond language and asks students about their knowledge of Japanese culture, society, daily life, history, geography, and current events. Participants compete as members of 2-person or 3-person teams, based on how many years they have studied Japanese in secondary schools.

The Japan Bowl is not an exam; it uses a “quiz bowl” format. Students hear – and don’t read — the questions, though some questions require students to read materials written in Japanese. They are given a timeframe, usually 30 seconds, within which to respond. The questions are asked in both Japanese and English and answered in a variety of ways.

The Japan Bowl was first held as a local competition for high schools in the Washington DC area. Within a few years, high schools from other parts of the nation joined the competition in Washington, and it became the “National Japan Bowl.” In addition to the National Japan Bowl in Washington DC, there are Japan quiz bowl competitions throughout the United States. Beyond the Ohio Japan Bowl, there official Japan Bowl competitions are held in such states as Illinois, Wisconsin, Utah, and California.

The Japan Bowl seeks to motivate students to higher levels of academic achievement. It strives to impart the kind of real-world communications skills and cultural knowledge that will help students in their high school years and beyond. Most Japan Bowl participants say they plan to continue to study Japanese during their college years, and almost all hope to study abroad in Japan.

Japan Bowl participants say they hope to have a “Japan connection” in their adult lives, whether in business, academia, the arts, or public service. No matter which profession they choose, the knowledge and skills they acquired as Japan Bowl competitors will help them become future leaders in the US relationship with Japan.

For more information, visit <http://www.japanbowl.org>.

About the Ohio Japan Bowl

The Ohio Japan Bowl is being organized by the Japan-America Society of Central Ohio (JASCO) in cooperation with the Japan-America Society of Washington DC, and the Ohio Association of Teachers of Japanese. Winning teams in the Ohio Japan Bowl are eligible to participate in the National Japan Bowl.

2026 Ohio Japan Bowl Information

DATE & TIME	Saturday, February 14, 2026, 9:30 AM – 4:00 PM
LOCATION	Marysville Early College High School, 833 N Maple St. Marysville, Oh 43040
DEADLINE	Team Applications must be submitted by teachers through the online form by Friday, January 9, 2026. <i><u>*Late applications will not be considered.</u></i> Student registration form must be submitted by all participating individuals, including observer students, through the online form by Friday, January 16th.
APPLICATION MATERIALS	Team Applications must be submitted by <u>teachers</u>. Schools may register multiple teams. There is an application fee of \$30 per team for the 2026 Ohio Japan Bowl. This fee must be collected by the teacher. Payments are expected at the time of online team application submission. <u>Team Application Form</u> In addition to the team applications, all participating individuals, including team member students and observer students must complete the registration form. <u>Students Registration Form</u> This year, lunch will be provided to students and teachers at a cost of \$12 each. Lunch orders can be placed as part of the registration (for teachers through the team application and for students through the student registration form).

Substitution of Students after Team Application

After teams have been notified of their acceptance and registration, substitutions will be permitted only with a valid reason, such as illness and death in the family, and must be communicated with JASCO no later than 24 hours before the beginning of the Japan Bowl competition. All substitutes must meet the same eligibility requirements, with the Student Registration Forms being submitted to JASCO for review. No substitution may be permitted on the day of the competition.

Absence of a Team Member

Teams must have a minimum of two members. In the case of emergency, a team that has registered as a three-student team is permitted to compete as a two-member team. One-person teams are not permitted.

Participation in the Ohio Japan Bowl

Participation Levels

The 2026 Ohio Japan Bowl is open to full-time students currently enrolled in second and third-level Japanese language classes in a high school in Ohio, and will feature three levels of competition:

- Level II, for students enrolled in Japanese 2 or an equivalent class
- Level III, for students enrolled in Japanese 3 or an equivalent class
- Level IV, for students enrolled in Japanese 4 or an equivalent class
 - AP Japanese students are eligible to participate in Level IV. If they previously participated in Level IV because their school offers both Japanese 4 and AP Japanese, please contact JASCO at info@jascentralohio.org to determine eligibility.

Please note that the participation level is based on the Japanese language course level, and not the student's school level. For example, a high school junior who began Japanese language study in junior high school might be studying at a level IV equivalent (such as Japanese 4 or AP Japanese) and therefore would NOT be eligible to participate in Level III of the Ohio Japan Bowl. However, a sophomore or senior enrolled in third year high-school level Japanese language study are eligible to participate in the Ohio Japan Bowl at Level III.

Please see the Eligibility Guidelines section on the following page for additional eligibility information.

Eligibility

Team Formation Guidelines

- A. All team members must be studying Japanese at the same level at the same high school.
 - a. Students do not need to be in the same class section.
- B. A team must consist of two or three students. One student is not a team. We strongly encourage schools to form teams of three students.
- C. There is no limit to the number of teams that may be sent by one school.
 - a. However, a student cannot be a member of more than one team.

Student Eligibility

To be eligible to participate in the Ohio Japan Bowl, a student must:

- Be 15 years or older at the time of the Ohio Japan Bowl (February 14, 2026)
- Be a student at an Ohio High School
- Be currently enrolled in a second-, third-, or fourth-level high school Japanese language program
- Be committed to attending the Ohio Japan Bowl in person on Saturday, February 14, 2026
- Be committed to attending the National Japan Bowl in Washington, DC in the given year, if their team is the 1st place winner in their category. In 2026, the National Japan Bowl will be held April 17–18.

Please note that students who grew up in a primarily Japanese-speaking environment (family or school) may not participate. Please see the FAQ below for more details.

Consent

By participating in the 2026 Ohio Japan Bowl, participants consent to having the audio, video, or photographic renderings of their appearances at the 2026 Ohio Japan Bowl be used by JASCO for the purpose of its promotion of this and related other JASCO activities without any compensation.

If you have any questions about student eligibility, please contact JASCO at info@jascentralohio.org

About the Preliminary and Finals Rounds

At the Ohio Japan Bowl, there will be one Preliminary Round in the morning and one Finals Round in the afternoon for each level.

Preliminary Round

1. Teams are separated into different rooms by their levels.
2. In each level, fifty questions are presented, read by English- and Japanese-speaking moderators.
3. The questions cover both language and non-language topics. They are asked and answered in a variety of ways. The questions also vary in difficulty.
4. Visuals for all questions are projected onto a large screen.
5. Each team records the answers on an answer sheet. Only one sheet is required per team.
 - a. These sheets will be graded by a judging panel following the conclusion of the Preliminary Round.
6. The top three-scoring teams will advance to compete in the Finals Rounds.
 - a. In the case that there are not more than three teams in a level, all teams will participate in the Finals Round.
 - b. A tie-breaker session may be held during lunch break, if needed.

Finals Round

1. The Finals Round will be conducted using a “live” quiz show format with a buzzer system. The three winning teams in the three levels take turns—Level II first, followed by Level III and Level IV—to compete in front of a live audience.
2. There will be three types of questions:
 - a. Team Questions – The answers to team questions are written, and the questions usually involve team collaboration and problem-solving to respond.
 - b. Individual Questions – Two students on each team, chosen by a random drawing, will each be asked one question. If there are only two students on the team, both students must answer a question.
 - c. Toss-Up Questions – Teams use buzzers to indicate their readiness to answer the question. The moderator will call on the team that rang the buzzer first to answer the question.
3. The team with the most points in each level at the end of the Finals Round will be declared the winner. In the case of a tie, a special bonus competition will take place to determine the winner.

More specifics about the Questions and Round format can be found in the National Japan Bowl Competition Guide accessible at <https://japanbowl.org/34th-national-japan-bowl/>

Awards

First Place	The first-place team in each level in the Finals Round will receive a trophy. The best-performing team from all levels in the Finals Round will receive support for its members and one chaperon to travel to Washington DC to participate in the 34th National Japan Bowl competition April 17-18, 2026.
Second Place	Each member of the second-place teams will receive a gift certificate.

FAQ

Questions about eligibility

Q: I have not taken any formal courses in Japanese. Can I apply?

A: No. You must be enrolled in a Japanese class at your school.

Q: I grew up in a bilingual household, where I speak only English with my father and mostly Japanese with my mother. Am I eligible?

A: No. If you are multi-lingual including Japanese because of your upbringing, you are not eligible.

Q: We use mostly English at home, but I've spent several summers with my relatives in Japan who only use Japanese. Am I eligible?

A: It depends. Remember that this quiz bowl is intended for those who have developed their ability to speak Japanese through classroom study. If you feel that you can speak Japanese well because of your summers with your relatives in Japan, you should not apply. If you had to take courses, work with a teacher, or study with a book or online materials to function in spoken Japanese, you should consider yourself eligible.

Other Questions

Q: One of the three members of a team had to drop out on the day of the contest for health reasons. Can the team still play with the two remaining members?

A: Yes. So long as the team has the minimum number of two members, it can still enter the contest.

Q: If a member has to drop out for health reasons on the day of the contest, can a substitution be made?

A: No. No substitutions are allowed on the day of the contest.

Q: I have a condition that requires a device (e.g., hearing aids, a speaker) to communicate. May I use it?

A: Yes, JASCO is committed to being inclusive of all eligible contestants.

Contact

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact JASCO at info@jascentralohio.org.