

# OHIO JAPANESE SPEECH CONTEST

## 2026 Handbook



ORGANIZED BY



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## Introduction

The Japan-America Society of Central Ohio (JASCO) is pleased to announce that the 2026 Ohio Japanese Speech Contest finals will be held on **Saturday, March 21, 2026**, at the Ohio State University in Columbus , OH. This handbook's purpose is to help contestants and instructors better understand and prepare for the Speech Contest.

Since 1999, JASCO has been hosting the annual Ohio Japanese Speech Contest to promote Japanese language learning in the state of Ohio. The Contest showcases achievement in Japanese language learning and presents ideas and experiences that promote JASCO's mission, that is to enrich lives by bringing Ohio's Japanese and American communities together.

The 2026 Ohio Japanese Speech Contest will have **a single open category**. Two top speeches will be recognized with the competition awards. In addition, special awards may also be given in such categories as College, High School, and Best Pronunciation.

Participants of the finals will perform from memory an original speech of their own creation in front of a panel of judges and audience. Following the speech, the panel of judges will ask questions related to the speech. The Q&A portion is conducted in Japanese as well.

## Application Information

### Eligibility

To be eligible to participate in the 2026 Ohio Japanese Speech Contest, one must:

- Be 15 years or older at the time of the finals (March 21, 2026)
- Have learned to speak Japanese through an intentional study
- Have lived in the state of Ohio for at least 24 months, although not necessarily consecutively
- Have never won the top prize at any previous JASCO Japanese Speech Contests
- Be committed to participate in the finals in person at the Ohio State University

*\*Participants who are minors must be accompanied by a teacher, parent, guardian, or other authorized chaperone.*

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

### Consent

By participating in the finals, finalists consent to having the audio, video, or photographic renderings of their speeches and other appearances at the Speech Contest on March 21, 2026 be used by JASCO at its discretion for the purpose of its promotion of this and related other JASCO activities without any compensation.

If you have any questions about your eligibility, please contact JASCO at [info@jascentralohio.org](mailto:info@jascentralohio.org).

## 2026 Ohio Japanese Speech Contest Application Process

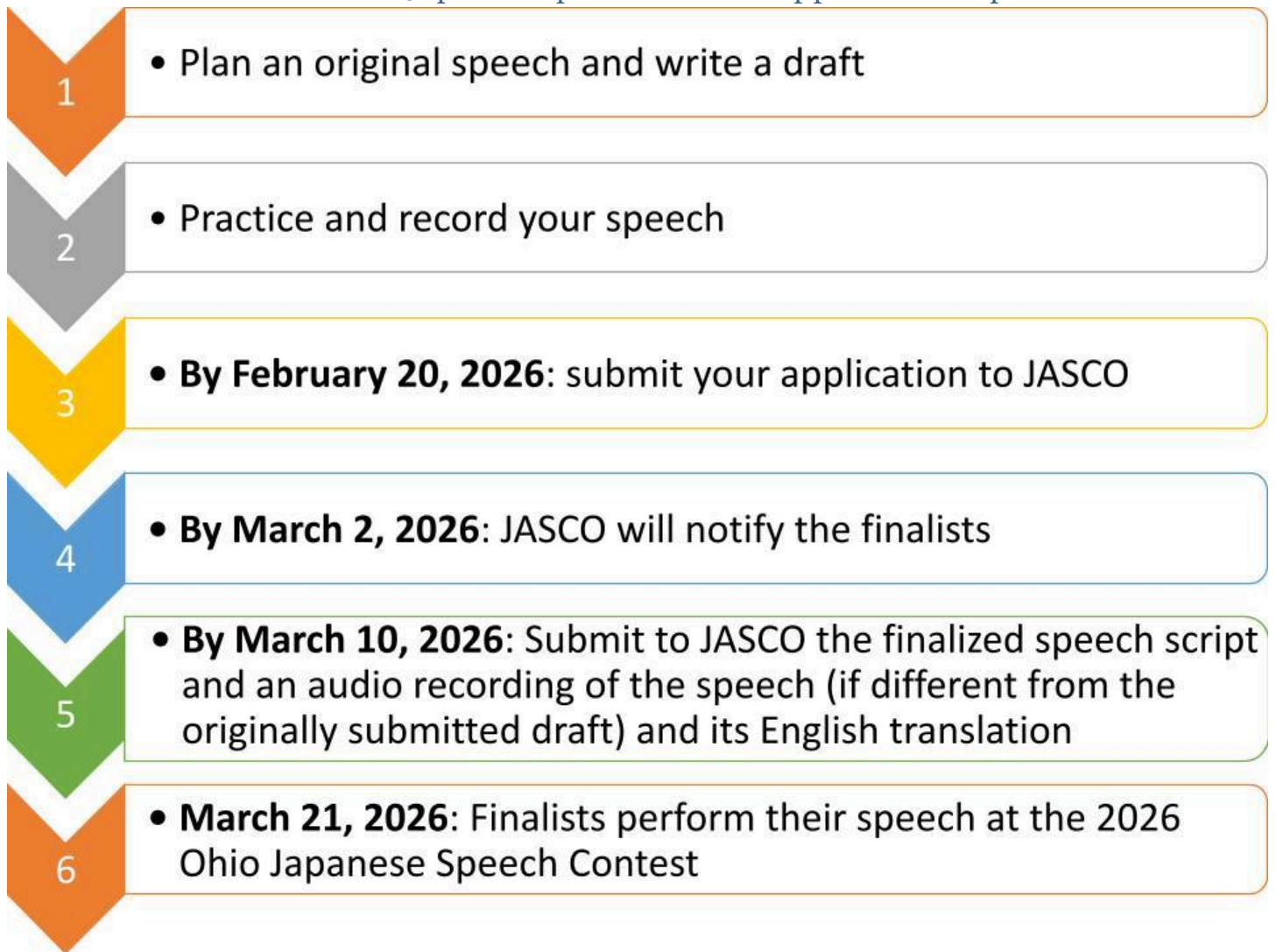
Please see the following table that summarizes the basic information about the application process:

<b>APPLICATION DEADLINE</b>	<b>Applications</b> must be <b>submitted via the form below by Friday, February 20, 2026, at 11:59 pm.</b> <i>*Late applications will not be considered.</i>
<b>APPLICATION MATERIALS TO SUBMIT</b>	<p><b>Please submit the following <u>3</u> items via Application Form below.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A completed <a href="#">Application Form</a></li> <li>2. A written draft of your original Japanese speech, handwritten or typed</li> <li>3. An audio recording of your original speech</li> </ol>
<b>SPEECH TOPIC</b>	The speech topic and content are open to the extent that the content promotes JASCO's mission to bring Ohio's Japanese and American communities together.
<b>SPEECH CONTENT</b>	The speech must be original and created by the speaker and between 2 and 3 minutes in length.

<b>Finalist SCRIPT DEADLINE</b>	<b>Finalists</b> must submit the following items by <b>Tuesday, March 10, 2026, at 11:59 pm.</b> Failure to submit the required materials by the deadline will result in disqualification.
<b>WHAT TO SUBMIT</b>	<p>Please submit the following items via <a href="#">Submission Form</a>.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. An English translation of your speech script</li> <li>2. The full finalized script of your speech, if different from the originally submitted draft, handwritten or typed</li> <li>3. An audio recording of your speech, if different from the originally submitted recording</li> </ol>
<b>FINALS SPEECH PERFORMANCE</b>	Speakers must deliver their speeches from memory. They cannot read from a paper or the screen. They may rely on notes.

The chart on the **following** page outlines the application steps for the 2026 Ohio Japanese Speech Contest.

## 2026 Ohio Japanese Speech Contest Application Steps



## Selection Criteria

### Selection of Finalists

Finalists will be selected based on the following considerations.

1. The Japanese of the speech and its audio are intelligible.
2. The speech suggests that the speech carries a message that promotes JASCO's mission, to enrich lives by bringing Ohio's Japanese and American communities together.
3. The speech content is original, free from discriminatory ideas or promotion of commercial goods or services, political views, or religion.

### Selection of Winners at the Finals on the Day of the Contest

The prize winners at the finals are selected based on the following considerations.

Speeches are expected to:

1. Carry a message that promotes JASCO's mission to bringing Ohio's Japanese and American communities together;

2. Be effective in conveying the message (e.g., delivery, pacing, organization, choice of expression);
3. Offer original content. Any material (contents or expressions) that has been borrowed from others must be properly credited within the speech.
4. Not promote discriminatory ideas or advertise any commercial goods or services or any political views or religion;
5. Be delivered in Japanese;
6. Be performed from memory;
7. Last between 2 to 3 minutes in length; and
8. Be engaging.

In addition,

9. Speech performances may contain live musical, theatrical, or special skill performance by the speaker. Such performance may not last longer than 30 seconds and may not include any instruments, devices, or slides.
10. Questions from the judges during the Q&A period are answered clearly in a suitable manner.

## FAQ

### Questions about eligibility

**Q: I'm a high school student. Am I eligible?**

A: Yes, so long as you clear the eligibility requirements, which includes the age (15 or above at the time of the finals).

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

A: Yes. It doesn't matter how you learned your Japanese, so long as you have learned to speak Japanese through an intended study and as a non-primary language.

**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 speech contest is intended for those who have developed their ability to speak Japanese through 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 any materials with the intention to learn to function in spoken Japanese, you should consider yourself eligible.

**Q: I lived in Ohio for 5 years but have been living in another state for the last 4 years. Am I eligible?**

A: Yes. You do not have to be living in Ohio at the time of the application or the finals, so long as you have lived in Ohio for a total of two years or longer.

**Q: I won 1<sup>st</sup> prize in one of the high school (or the college) categories when the JASCO speech contest used to have separate categories for high school and college students. Am I eligible?**

A: No. You are not eligible..

Q: Does my speech script have to be hand-written?

A: No. Your text document can be handwritten or typed.

### Questions about the finals

Q: Who will be judging my speech at the finals?

A: We will have a panel of judges who will also ask you a few questions in Japanese after your speech.

Q: Who will ask the questions during the Q&A after the speech? How much will my answers count?

A: The panel of judges will ask in Japanese a few questions related to your speech. You are expected to respond to these questions in Japanese. Your speech is always the primary consideration.

Q: Do I have to memorize my speech?

A: Yes, you should perform your speech from memory. Notes or presentation slides are not allowed.

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

A: Yes, JASCO is committed to being inclusive of all eligible contestants. Please let us know in advance to ensure appropriate preparation.

Q: Will the finals only be in person?

A: Yes, you must be available to attend the finals in person in order to qualify for the finals.

Q: I don't want to be on any social media. Does that mean I cannot participate in the finals?

A: That is right. All participants in the JASCO Speech Contest are requested to consent to have their performances, images, and names be used by JASCO at its discretion for the purpose of promoting the Speech Contest and other related activities of JASCO.

## Contact

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact JASCO at [info@jascentralohio.org](mailto:info@jascentralohio.org).