



HEC Abbreviated Guide for 2021

What is HEC?

The Hokkaido English Challenge (HEC) is an English competition for students in Hokkaido. HEC was established by participants of the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme in 1994 as a means of motivating students to improve their oral communication skills. It was intended that by interacting with ALTs, the students' confidence and language proficiency would improve. HEC gives ALTs the chance to become instrumental in their students' progress and gives both students and ALTs a goal to work towards as a team.

Due to the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic, we will **NOT** be hosting an English summer camp. We will **NOT** be awarding a homestay experience to the grand prize winner.

The challenge has four divisions: first and second year junior (JHS) and first and second year senior high school (SHS). Entry of second years is currently planned to be limited to HEC 2020-2021 year only, to compensate for the current 2nd year students who applied last year when the camp was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Current second year students can still apply this year even if they didn't apply last year. Registration is open to **ANY** first and second year junior and senior high students.

The challenge consists of a 30-minute test based on the national syllabus, which is administered and recorded by the contestant's Assistant Language Teacher (ALT). The video is sent to judges for evaluation and the results will be announced in late May. The test's emphasis is on communicative ability. Entrants are awarded points for 1) showing creativity with their acquired English, 2) their ability to express thoughts clearly and 3) how well they cope with unfamiliar vocabulary and grammar.

Test prizes rely heavily upon entry fees, donations and fundraisers. The support garnered from the Hokkaido Association for Japan Exchange and Teaching (HAJET) and Hokkaido's ALTs enables HEC to hold this speaking competition.

Why Should You Get Involved?

Many ALTs report an increase in their students' interest and enthusiasm for English as well as a marked difference in students' language skills as a result of their participation in HEC. Every student who enters can become more comfortable speaking English and feel a sense of pride in having risen to the challenge.

Is My English Good Enough?

Of course! Every year HEC receives test videos from students who vary widely in their English ability. Some have practiced long and hard in preparation, others have only met with their ALT once or twice to prepare. Typically, the upper tier of senior high school winners can communicate in English relatively easily. The lower tier are usually able to understand intermediate spoken English but may be slower in responding or find it more difficult to respond naturally. Both levels are sufficient for entering HEC.

Likewise, the top junior high winners are usually able to express themselves using the grammar and vocabulary they have learnt. They are able to construct sentences with some creativity as well as to ask and respond to simple questions and instructions. The lower placed winners will understand questions and instructions but may have more difficulty responding or finding the right words.

Students who demonstrate an ease and enthusiasm in communicating but may not have the ability to express themselves can still be given the chance to practice English with the speaking test. Our aim is to encourage and motivate students to speak English and to help nurture their oral communication skills. Furthermore, for many students, simply spending time with their ALT and having a chance to improve their English creatively is an amazing opportunity.

The Test

The test is based on the grammar and vocabulary in the year's English studies provided in the Ministry of Education's syllabus. Held in March, the test lasts about 30 minutes long and is done in front of a video camera. The ALT or native English speaker administers the test in the presence of a Japanese teacher of English (JTE) or another Japanese teacher who acts as a witness. Once the recording is complete, the video is sent to the assigned judges who determine which students go through to the final round. Head judges then select the overall winners and rank the top scoring students. The results are announced at the end of May. Preparation for the test is at the discretion of the ALT or native English speaker and student. It can range from months of one-on-one tutoring to group conversation practice during the lunch break.

* Participation of ALTs and their corresponding Board of Education may vary depending on the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions.

Prizes

Junior High School Division				Senior High School Division			
First Year		Second Year		First Year		Second Year	
1st Place	English related prizes of the student's choice (up to ¥30,000)	1st Place	English related prizes of the student's choice (up to ¥30,000)	1st Place	English related prizes of the student's choice (up to ¥30,000)	1st Place	English related prizes of the student's choice (up to ¥30,000)
2nd Place	English related prizes of the student's choice (up to ¥15,000)	2nd Place	English related prizes of the student's choice (up to ¥15,000)	2nd Place	English related prizes of the student's choice (up to ¥15,000)	2nd Place	English related prizes of the student's choice (up to ¥15,000)
3rd Place	English related prizes of the student's choice (up to ¥7,500)	3rd Place	English related prizes of the student's choice (up to ¥7,500)	3rd Place	English related prizes of the student's choice (up to ¥7,500)	3rd Place	English related prizes of the student's choice (up to ¥7,500)
<p>All participants receive a certificate of recognition. All prize winners will receive a separate certificate in recognition of their achievements.</p>							

Rules of Eligibility

A maximum of 10 students can enter in each division with a **total of 15 students per school**. A maximum of 3 students from any one junior high and senior high school may be awarded a prize. The school limits apply regardless of the number of ALTs at the school. There is no limit to the total number of students an ALT or native English speaker can enter. There is no limit to the number of students who can enter from a single city or town.

1. Student(s) must attend a junior or senior high school in the prefecture of Hokkaido.
2. Student(s) must be in his/her first year or second year of either junior or senior high school at the time of registration.
3. Student(s) must have never spent more than three consecutive weeks in an English speaking country. This not only includes a country where English is the official language, but also countries or regions where English is often used in public as a practical means

of communication.

4. Student(s) must not attend core subject classes in an English immersion setting.
5. Student(s) must not reside in a household where English is a primary means of communication.

**** If you have any questions regarding your eligibility,
please contact the HEC Director at hec@hajet.org. ****

Entry Fees

The cost of entering HEC is ¥2000 per student.

Entrance fees may be covered by either the parents or by the school. It is more common for parents to cover the cost, but sometimes schools or boards of education may be willing to do so. Please refer to the **Letter Packs** PDF on <https://hec.hajet.org/information/> and inform your board of education, schools, and JTEs before distributing posters and letters to students.

Registration

Registration should be completed as far in advance as possible using the HEC website (hec.hajet.org) or by following this link: <https://bit.ly/HEC-2021-TestRegistration>. Registration can start at any point once the forms become available (December 7, 2020) up until the registration deadline (February 12, 2021).

December 7th

- Registration opens

December-January

- Register your students.
- Begin practicing.
- Decide whether you will continue practicing throughout the holiday or resume after the school term starts.

December-February

- Email and complete your entry fees and registration forms to HEC by February 12th, 2021.

March

- Administer the test and send in your video by March 31st, 2021.

May

- Results will be announced by May 31st, 2021.

June

- Certificates and are distributed.

July

- Prizes are distributed.

If you have any questions, comments or concerns about HEC please do not hesitate to contact Queena Xu, the HEC Director at hec@hajet.org.

If you have questions about the test or test registration, please contact Casey-Lyne Lodge, the HEC Test Coordinator at test.hec@hajet.org

Additional information and documents can be found on the HEC website:
<http://www.hec.hajet.org>.

Last updated December 11th, 2020