



HEC Abbreviated Guide for 2026

For in-depth information, please visit

hec.hajet.org/information

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.

In 2026, the top winners will be invited to the HEC English summer camp. The top three winners will also receive a specific value in English-related prizes. The grand prize winner will receive 15,000, the second will receive 10,000 yen, and the third will receive 5,000 yen.

The challenge has two divisions: first year junior school (JHS) and first year senior high school (SHS). Registration is open to **ANY first year junior and senior high students in Hokkaido**.

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 enable HEC to hold this speaking competition.

Why Get Involved?

HEC is often praised as the most rewarding experience an English teaching assistant can have and many ALTs choose to be involved year after year. This involvement has resulted in great successes for HEC since its conception. Involvement at any stage of the programme builds an ALT's professional experience and improves confidence in their English teaching abilities. ALTs often report an increase in their students' interest and enthusiasm for English upon participating in HEC, as well as a marked difference in students' language skills. Students who enter become more comfortable speaking English and feel a sense of pride in having risen to the challenge.

Are My Students Qualified?

Of course! Every year HEC receives test videos from students who vary widely in their English ability. In preparation, some have practiced long and hard, while others have only met with their ALT once or twice to prepare. ALTs new to HEC are often unsure whether their students have sufficient communicative abilities to enter but that shouldn't stop you from offering your students the opportunity.

Typically, the upper tier of senior high school winners can communicate in English relatively easily. The lower tier is usually able to understand intermediate spoken English but may be slower in responding and/or may find it more difficult to respond naturally. Either way, both levels are sufficient for entering the HEC test, and both have a chance of attending the HEC summer camp.

HEC recommends that ALTs allow interested students to enter the competition even if there are concerns about the student's level. 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 some time individually or in a small group with their ALT is an amazing opportunity. At the very least, your student(s) will still get a rather inexpensive, fun eikaiwa-like lesson(s) from you.

Prizes

Junior High School Division		Senior High School Division	
First Year		First Year	
1st Place	English related prizes of the student's choice (up to ¥15,000)	1st 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 ¥10,000)	2nd Place	English related prizes of the student's choice (up to ¥10,000)
3rd Place	English related prizes of the student's choice (up to ¥5,000)	3rd Place	English related prizes of the student's choice (up to ¥5,000)
All participants receive a certificate of recognition. All prize winners will receive a separate certificate in recognition of their achievements.			

Rules of Eligibility

Please be sure you have understood the following rules of eligibility before entering students:

- Student(s) must attend a junior or senior high school in the prefecture of Hokkaido.
- Student(s) must be in their first year of either junior or senior high school at time of registration.
- 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 primary language, but also countries or regions where English is often used in public as a practical means of communication.
- Student(s) must not attend/have attended core subject classes in an English immersion setting.
- Student(s) must not reside in a household where English is/was a primary means of communication.
- The test must be conducted by a Hokkaido ALT. However, the ALT does not have to be one who normally visits the school of the student.
- As opposed to previous years any number of students from a given school are able to apply. However, we suggest that you keep it to a manageable number. (Previously only 10 students from a given school were allowed to take the test)
- A maximum of 5 students from any one junior high and senior high school will be awarded a prize (including a camp placement).
- There is no limit to the **total** number of students an ALT can enter. There is no limit to the number of students who can be entered from a single city or town.

****If you have any questions regarding the eligibility of a student, please contact the HEC Director, Deena Spivak, at hajet.hec.director@gmail.com. Students will acknowledge they meet all requirements of eligibility at the time they take the test. **If HEC gains knowledge that a student has wrongfully informed HEC in any way prior to that student taking the test, HEC reserves the right to cancel said student's score without refund and revoke any prize he or she may have won.******

Entry Fees

The cost of entering HEC is **¥2000 per student**. The cost is subject to change between now and the opening of registration at the discretion of the HEC Director.

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 cover the cost.

The 'HEC Letter Pack' will provide letters explaining HEC in Japanese. Please inform your

board of education, schools, and JTEs **before** distributing posters and letters to students. There will be letters that can be given to parents to request entrance fees as well as letters suited for schools. The letter pack can be found here: hec.hajet.org/information/. All proceeds from entrance fees go directly to help fund the HEC prizes. **Entrance fees are non-refundable.**

Note: The fee is the same for every participant regardless of the number of entries.

HEC Scholarship & Fee Waiver

HEC offers a fee waiver for select students who would not be able to participate otherwise. Previously, there were concerns that some talented and deserving students had not been able to participate in HEC because the entry fee was too high. For this reason, a special fee waiver is available to such students. To qualify for the waiver, a student should be identified by both the ALT and JTE as a particularly enthusiastic student. The student must also require such financial assistance. The JTE or homeroom teacher may have a good idea as to which students come from a family that may not be able to afford the full entry fee. Please keep in mind that HEC depends on entry fees to operate, so this fee waiver should not be announced publicly to an entire class. This waiver may be offered to only one student per school. The waiver must be approved ahead of time by the HEC Coordinator and approval is not guaranteed.

Registration

*Registration Period: December 1st, 2025
to February 13th, 2026*

Registration should be completed as far in advance as possible using the HEC test registration link available on the HEC website. It can often take time to present the idea of HEC to your school, parents, and students. In addition, students may take a while to return permission forms. Preparations for HEC can be started at any point, however, the sooner you start the more prepared your students will be. That being said, there is no real pressure to register or to begin preparing before you and/or your students are ready. Registration can start at any point once the permission forms become available (December 1st, 2025) up until the registration deadline (February 13th, 2026). *More information about deadlines can be found later in the Advice and Guidelines section.*

Submission Address

The Registration process comes in two parts. First, please present a Paper Registration Form to your students. These forms can be found on hec.hajet.org/information/.

After your student(s) complete the Paper Registration Form, the ALT must input the information into the Online Registration Form: [HEC 2025 Student Registration 生徒申し込み \(Responses\)](#). A scanned copy of the Paper Registration form must also be submitted as part of the Online Registration process. Please email a clear scan/photo of this ENTIRE Paper Form to hajet.hec.test@gmail.com. **Online forms submitted without a copy of the signed form will be deemed as incomplete and no confirmation of registration will be sent.**

If for some reason you are unable to complete online registration, contact the HEC Test Committee Chairs, Emma Buchel and Kya Richardson at hajet.hec.test@gmail.com. Please finish completion of the Paper Registration Form, and then scan and email **only** the Paper Registration Form to hajet.hec.test@gmail.com. It must be received by **Friday, February 13th, 2026**. Registration forms will be made available by December 1st, 2025. Your students cannot be entered into HEC until both the entry fee and permission forms have been received. In some cases, late entries may be accepted if approved by the HEC Director.

Payment Information

Please pay entry fees by electronic money transfer. There are two types of possible transfers. One is done at a post office (送金/*soukin*) and the other is done at any bank (振込/*furikomi*). Both types of transfers can be completed at an ATM. While many ATMs do have the option of displaying English, it is often incomplete or incorrect when dealing with transactions beyond simple deposits and withdrawals. For this reason, it is recommended that you complete the transfer using the Japanese labels. If you provide the bank account information below, Japan Post staff should be able to assist you.

Post Office Money Transfers (送金/soukin) Post Office money transfers can be completed at the ATM or possibly at the counter by filling out an appropriate form. Some post offices may not offer English forms or may not have any forms and require that the process be completed at the ATM.

Please use the following directions to send money using a form at the post

office: ➤ Ask for a furikomi form.

➤ Write in the HEC account number: 19040-12690631.

➤ 記号 19040

➤ 番号 12690631

➤ Write in the HEC account name: ホッカイドウイングリッシュチャレンジ

➤ Write your name.

➤ Write how much you are paying.

➤ Write your phone number.

HEC Account Details for Transfers from a Post Office ATM

ACCOUNT NUMBER: 19040-12690631

ACCOUNT NAME: ホッカイドウイングリッシュチャレンジ

Regular Bank Transfers (振込/furikomi)

At most banks you will have the option of sending money directly from your account or using cash. Please deposit the entry fees into your account first and then make the transfer directly from your account. This way the source of the transfer can be verified easily. The procedure for transferring money varies from bank to bank. Any bank staff member should be able to assist you at the ATM using the account information provided below.

Bank: ゆうちょ銀行 (Post Office Bank)

Account Number (口座番号): 1269063

Branch Number (店番): 908

Branch Name (店名): 九〇八(キュウゼロハチ)

Account Type: 普通預金

Direct exchange

You may also give the money directly to the HEC Director (Deena Spivak) or the HEC Test Committee Co-Chairs (Emma Buchel & Kya Richardson) if you are able to arrange a pickup.

HEC Checklist and Timeline

☐ **December 1st, 2025**

- ☐ 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 13th, 2026.**

☐ **March**

- ☐ Administer the test and upload your video to the Google classroom by March 31st, 2026.

☐ **May**

- ☐ Results will be announced by May 29th, 2026.

☐ **June**

- ☐ Certificates are distributed.

❑ **July**

❑ Prizes are distributed.

If you have any questions, comments or concerns about HEC please do not hesitate to contact Deena Spivak, the HEC Director, at hajet.hec.director@gmail.com, or Ashley St Charles, the HEC Co-Director, at hajet.hec.codirector@gmail.com

If you have questions about the test or test registration, please contact Emma Buchel & Kya Richardson, the HEC Test Committee Co-Chairs, at hajet.hec.test@gmail.com

Additional information and documents can be found on the HEC website: hec.hajet.org

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