

JLPT N5 KANJI

Nature Elements Kanji

This includes everything from 山 (yama, mountain) to 川 (kawa, river). These are kanji that represent something that exists in nature. A lot of these kanji look very much like the thing they represent. 山 looks like a mountain, 川 looks like a river, and 木 looks like a tree. Of course, 空 doesn't really look like air, but you can imagine a little guy jumping on a spring into the air. The 工 is the spring and the top part is the little guy.

山 川 天 日 空 月 木 水 火 魚 生 氣 雨 金 電 花

Directions and Locations

These can be a little bit more difficult to be honest. For example, 北 doesn't look much like north at all. There are definitely some mnemonics that can come in handy here when you practice. I also put 後 and 前 in this group as well even though they can be used for time. I also put some common locations into this category as well.

上 下 中 北 外 右 左 西 東 先 前 南 後 間 校 国 店 社 道 駅

Humans

This is a bit of a stretch for some of these kanji, but I think you can group all the family kanji together with body parts and tools (like 車). All of these kanji basically involve humans in some way. For example, you can include 女 (onna, woman) and 男 (otoko, man) because they are only used with humans. There are actually different, much more complicated kanji used for the sex of plants and animals.

人 女 男 父 母 子 友 名 目 耳 足 語 本 車

Numbers and Time

The first few numbers are pretty easy (一, 二, 三), but then it gets a lot more complicated after that. Keep in mind that the first 10 numbers are hardly used. You will see them in fancy Japanese restaurants or other places like some shops that sell omiyage (edible souvenirs Japanese give to co-workers or family). 千 and 万 tend to show up at ATMs and some stores more often though.

一 二 三 四 五 六 七 八 九 十 百 千 万 円 午 今 半 年 毎 時 週

Adjectives

No language would be complete without some adjectives to add color to what you are saying. The N5 kanji doesn't give you too much to work with, but you have the basics, big and small, long but not short (短), old and new, and mysteriously, only the color white.

大 小 長 高 多 少 新 古 白

Actions

The final category is actions, which again cover a lot of the basic actions you do on a daily basis – entering (a place), leaving (a place), eating, drinking, buying, coming, going, etc... I also think 何 (nani, what) belongs to this group as well, because you will probably want to ask about what someone is reading, eating, etc..

入 出 行 来 休 食 飲 学 書 言 読 話 買 立 見 聞 何

JLPT N4 KANJI

Adjectives

You have a lot more adjectives at this level. For example, there are a lot of the common colors, and feelings that you can use to express yourself more. You can talk about the weight of something (軽^{かる}い, light) strength (強^{つよ}い, strong, 弱^{やわ}い, weak), and distance (近^{ちか}い, close 遠^{とお}い, far).

同 広 弱 強 悪 早 明 暑 暗 楽 短 自 重 赤 軽 近 遠 青 黒 特

Art

Okay, so not all of these kanji are directly related to art, but most have to do with creating something. With the following kanji, you can talk about things like drawings (図^ず, map or drawing), colors (色^{いろ}), and characters (字^じ). Keep in mind ‘colors’ can sometimes take on the meaning of attractive. For instance, 色^{いろ}っぽい can mean attractive or sexy.

図 字 文 映 写 歌 画 紙 色

Daily Life

Of course at this lower level of the test, you will be doing a lot of talking about daily life. Using these kanji you can open things (開^あく), cut things (切^きる), and use things (使^{つか}う). There are also some more general use kanji like 事^{こと} (thing, generally figurative), 物^{もの} (thing, generally more concrete), and 質^{しつ} (quality). These are used in a variety of compounds like 食^たべ^{もの}物 (food), 仕^しごと (work), or 質^{しつ}問^{もん} (question).

乗 切 事 住 使 合 帰 始 引 持 有 服 止 歩 洗 集 開 走 起 質
台 物 着

Family

At the N5 level, you were introduced to a lot of the common family kanji, like 母 and 父. At the N4 level, you will be able to expand your ability to write about other family members like your brothers (弟^{おとうと}, 兄^{あに}), your sisters (妹^{いもうと}, 姉^{あね}), as well as your parents (親^{おや}).

兄 妹 姉 弟 族 親

Thoughts and Feelings

You will finally be able to write about thinking (思^{おも}う) and considering (考^{かんが}える) as well as what you like (好^すき). There is also figurative heart (心^{こころ}), which can also be used to talk about your figurative mind. In English, we might say “heart and mind” as in “winning the hearts and minds of the people”. However, in Japanese these two concepts are covered with one word – 心^{こころ}.

好 心 思 意 正 考

Food

Are you hungry? You can finally write about beef (牛^{ぎゅう}) or other kinds of meat (肉^{にく}). There are also vegetables (菜^{さい}) and the general words for food (飯^{めし}), which often just means rice. You can also grab some tea (茶^{ちや}) to drink. お茶^{ちや} by itself, typically means green tea, whereas other kinds of tea add something to the front like Oolong tea – ウーロン茶^{ちや}.

味 牛 肉 茶 菜 飯

Humans

Most of you reading this are probably human, so you'll probably want to talk about yourself. You can finally write I (私^{わたし}) at the N4 level, as well as talk about some handy body parts like neck (首^{くび}), head (頭^{あたま}), and body (体^{からだ}), which can also be used to talk about forms in general. You can also write about your house (家^{いえ}) and your dog (犬^{いぬ}).

太 声 家 体 死 民 犬 病 私 頭 顔 首

Movement

This is a pretty general category that covers everything from actually moving (動^{うご}く) to the counter for flights that is also used to refer to mail and packages (便^{びん}). You can also depart (発^{はつ}), send things off (送^{おく}る), make progress (進^{すす}む), transport something (運^{はこ}ぶ), and commute to work (通^{かよ}う). Notice that those last 4 kanji use the same kanji to the left. In general, a lot of 'motion' kanji use this radical. But, be careful 運^{うん} can also mean luck.

便 旅 発 転 送 通 進 運 別 動

Nature

Most of the fundamental nature kanji was covered at the N5 level like weather. But, you still see a few of the more complicated kanji. For example, the material silver (銀^{ぎん}), which is used in the compound for bank (銀行^{ぎんこう}). You have wind (風^{かぜ}) as well as more elemental kanji like power, strength (力^{ちから}) and light (光^{ひかり}).

光 銀 野 音 風 鳥 力

Numbers

N4 doesn't introduce any new kanji for numbers. Most of them are covered at the N5 level. But, the useful 'than' kanji is introduced. This is used in compounds like 以上^{いじょう} (and up, over) and 以下^{いか} (and under). Notice that these compounds include the number, so 6 以上^{いじょう} refers to numbers 6 and higher. The exception is 以外^{いがい} (except). You can also borrow (貸^かす) and lend (借^かりる) at this level.

以 低 借 貸

Places

There are numerous new kanji introduced at this level for places. You have urban places like 市 (city), 区 (district), 京 (capital), 町 (town), and 村 (village). There are some rural places like 森 (forest), 林 (woods), 田 (rice field), and 海 (sea). There are also places inside, like 室 (room), and two kanji for halls 館 (large building) and 堂 (hall). You can also talk about districts like prefectures (県), or divisions (部).

京 堂 場 区 市 屋 地 室 所 村 林 森 池 洋 海 漠 町 田 界 県
都 門 院 館

Prefixes and Suffixes

Finally at the N4 level, you learn non and un~ – 不. This is a handy kanji that gets put in front of some compounds to negate them. For example, 不全. 全 means whole or complete. Put 不 in front of it and you get not complete. Another handy prefix is 真 (true, reality). It shows up in compounds like photograph (写真), lit. reflection, true. But you can use it to mean pure or totally like 真っ暗 (totally black), or 真ん中 (true center).

不 主 真 方 者

Time

At this level, you can write about the seasons – spring (春), summer (夏), fall (秋), and winter (冬). Also, you can write about the past – 去. Or you can write about how many times you do something – 回 and 度. What's the difference? 回 is used for things with clear beginnings and endings like chin-ups, championships, or button presses. 度 is used more for things without clear beginnings or endings, like lives or conversations. And you also get a few more handy times of day like night (夕) and morning (朝).

去 回 元 冬 夏 代 世 夕 夜 寒 度 待 急 春 昼 曜 朝 秋 終

School

You can now teach (教える) someone something. Also, it's important to learn (習う) and take tests (試験). It is also important to answer (答える) problems (問題), and do research (研究).

教 医 知 理 研 究 答 問 題 習 英 薬 試 説 験 勉

Work

Almost everybody has to work (働く). You might have to make something (作る) like a product (品). Or maybe you sell (売る) or you build buildings (建てる). Whatever you produce (産), I'm sure it has a use (用).

仕 作 品 働 員 工 売 建 料 業 注 用 産 計