

The background of the entire page is a soft-focus photograph of cherry blossoms in full bloom. The flowers are a pale pink color with visible yellow stamens. The branches are thin and dark, creating a delicate pattern against the light background. The overall mood is serene and natural.

SOP Writing Guide

A step-by-step guide to writing
your JET Program statement of
purpose

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The Statement of Purpose

Before you begin writing, please read over the entire SOP writing section.

“Describe your **motivation** and **qualifications** for participating on the JET Program.”

Yes, that is technically the only prompt for writing the SOP. If you can answer this question within 2-pages, you’ll surely get an interview. However, this is only the start of your writing journey. This is not word-for-word on the official application, but this is “the prompt” for every aspiring JET. It’s a bit vague and it can be overwhelming but don’t fear, there is no wrong way to answer unless you go off topic.

Program Goals

“Aiming primarily to promote **grassroots internationalisation** at the *local level*, the JET Programme invites young college graduates from around the world to participate in internationalisation initiatives and be involved in *foreign language education* at Japan’s local government offices, Boards of Education, elementary schools, junior high schools, and senior high schools.” – Source: <http://jetprogramme.org/en/about-jet/>

Consider what “grass-roots internationalization” means in context to you working/participating in local communities in Japan. Imagine yourself in Japan with the local community you could be working in and contributing to, then apply this to your paper.



Remember, your SOP should describe the following:

- “Why do you wish to go to Japan and participate in the JET Program and why you are interested in the position for which you are applying (ALT or CIR).”
- “What effect do you hope to have on the Japanese community and internationally because of your participation in the JET Program?”
- “What applicable experiences, professional skills, relevant interests and personal qualities do you have? How do you feel these will be useful to you as an ALT?”
- “What do you hope to gain, both personally and professionally, from your JET experience if you are selected, and how participation will assist you in your future goals?”

- **What will you bring to the program?**
 - Show off your unique talents or skills.
For example: “I will utilize my five years of tutoring experience to help children understand and enjoy English through activities that practice speaking.”
- **What makes you a “unique” applicant?**
 - What makes you stand out against the other applicants?
For example: “My family is multicultural because we speak two languages, English and Spanish.”
- **How will you benefit the program?**
 - What are some ways you can assist the program?
For example:” Since I studied abroad in the UK for one year, I can bring my cross-cultural experiences about British and US cuisine differences to share with my students and improve the international relations among multiple countries.”
- **How will you benefit *from* the program?**
 - What can you take away from this experience for your next career?
For example:” I believe on JET that I can learn how to become a proper teacher and take this experience to graduate school for early childhood education.”
- **What will you do after JET?**
 - How will it impact your future?
For example:” I plan to attend university after completing JET and achieve higher education in foreign policy.”

You can answer these questions anyway you please. I introduce them first because it gets you into thinking about “yourself” and “your relationship” with the program. FYI – JET comes first and then you. Your answers should NOT be about, “me, me, me, meeeee!”

Also, it’s important to remember that Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme is NOT about money, but it’s about your aim to “**promote grassroots internationalization.**” The program is about exchange and teaching rather than a paid job or long-term career. Think of it as studying abroad, but you get paid to be a student in a foreign country.

The JET Programme is about making a difference and not about making a paycheck.

Below is pulled directly from the JET Program USA [Application FAQs Section](#):

- Will you bring your interest in playing video games and shopping for trinkets, or will you bring your love for learning languages and tackling new experiences?
- What are the most important ideas and soft skills you can bring to the program?

I love pop culture, but those aren't valid things to talk about in the SOP. Maybe in the interview with ways you'll interest school children. I know you may have many valid reasons for these interests, but this stuff you can do anytime inside or outside Japan. These are hobbies that you can do on your own time, not on JET time at school. Your paper should talk about the skills you have that will make a difference in the classroom and encouraging youth to learn English.

Remember, when you work for the JET program, you are an AMBASSADOR for your country.

Your duty is to sell your CULTURE and LANGUAGE abroad. Promote aspects that Japanese people might not necessarily know about.

For example:

- What are the differences between Japanese New Year and your country's?
- What makes your state/providence/hometown special?
- What rich history does your home have that will excite your future students?
- What makes your family and friends special?
- What unique rituals or traditions do you normally practice at home?
- What languages can you speak besides English and Japanese?
- What unique qualities will be worth writing about in your paper or mentioning in an interview?

Stand out against other applicants, be yourself, and do not lie!

The above questions are important to consider. The most important part of the application is "What will you bring to the JET Programme?"

You will always be asked this (100% interview question). You should consider what is important and what is not important. Your goal is to be an ambassador in Japan for your country. JET appreciates these kinds of applicants.

B: Are you flexible?

Flexibility is an important quality for participants in the program.

JET loves flexible teachers who are willing to do what it takes to succeed or go out of their comfort

- You want to become a great alumnus and start a new chapter in your hometown.
- You want to pay off some student debt or save for graduate school.
 - *If you plan to save money, don't talk about it, but discuss where you will go to school and what you will do after finishing the program.*
- What positive future outcomes will the program have on you, your friends, and your family?
 - *This is your chance to discuss life after living abroad. What can take advantage of while living abroad. JET loves and wants to know about your future.*

Step 4: Assembly

First, look back over [Step 2](#) to make sure you are following paragraph and paper format. Next, it's essential that your paper is in **CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER**. Yes, your paper needs to have a proper timeline from start to finish.

- Introduction – personal story and why JET
- Body – 3 paragraphs
 - First, the skills you bring to the program.
 - Second, what you will do as an ALT to benefit community.
 - Third, how you'll benefit from JET.
- Conclusion – plans after JET and wrap everything up.

Your introduction is about your life beginning/intro into Japanese culture and the program. Next, your body goes into the skills you have; how you'll use those skills; and how you'll benefit from the program. Finally, your plans after finishing JET, which ties in with the goals you hope to achieve.

“Balancing” your Writing

You should have outlined your paper and chosen your contents, now it is time to put it all together for your application. The contents of your paper should be evenly distributed throughout. I.e. half of your paper shouldn't be one paragraph, and your paper shouldn't be on only on one topic. If you written about traveling around Kyoto for a couple of paragraphs, you should start rewriting and looking at where you went off topic. You should NOT have exceedingly long paragraphs and ambiguous stories.

Your paper should have one main theme, why you want to be an ALT, with sub themes like working, skills, future, etc. Also, it should not be written like an academic paper but as a personal story that tells the reader you are ready for the job and what you have to offer.

Advice - Keep it simple stupid (KISS). Your paper will be looked over in a matter of minutes. It needs to be coherent, entertaining and informative.

I utilized a small portion of my first SOP, second paragraph; however, I really went above and beyond to show what I had learned while teaching in Japan. Remember, I had only been teaching for 2 months before submitting my application. By the time I had my interview, it was 4 months later, so I had tons of experience to surprise the interviews with. Remember, your paper can tell the reviewers that you are currently growing, but you might need to demonstrate that in the interview later.

Always show how much you have grown when reapplying.

Passing off the baton to my vice principal in the 200-meter relay on Sport's Day at Niwashiroadai Junior High School was an unforgettable moment as an Assistant Language Teacher in Japan. Currently, I have the pleasure of working for Interac as an ALT until March 2013. For my next goal, I am determined to bring my skills to the JET Program as an ALT in elementary and special needs classes, based on my recent experiences as an ALT and former English grammar tutor. In JET, I will continue to act as a global ambassador by sharing my passion for culture and teaching while moving forward with my professional career goals.

After graduating in HCC 2008, I worked there as a preparatory writing tutor in the Prep Writing Lab. My primary duty was aiding students, specifically international students, in mastering proper grammar techniques. I enjoyed helping students because it gave me an insight into diverse cultures and countries from the students' perspective. My obligation was not only tutoring, but I attended prep writing classes to receive feedback in providing new supplementary lab materials. These skills have benefited me as an ALT because I have tailored them to producing lessons, working with teachers, and reassuring students that learning English is fun. With JET, I will continue to grow and foster my recent ALT experiences to further advance English instructions in the classroom.

From August 2012, till now, I received exceptional and ongoing training from the local Board of Education and Interac which focused on formulating lessons, team teaching, and accessing classes as an ALT. With the Japanese Ministry of Education Principles, I learned how to produce lessons that encouraged the use of English. For example, I created a fast-food menu with dialog, pictures, and money to teach students about ordering in a restaurant. By reading the script and presenting the props with the Japanese Teacher of English, the students were able to understand English without being discouraged. With careful consideration of the student's responses and JTE feedback, I learned how to revise lessons to better suit the students' English abilities. With the JET Program, I will continue to build upon the MEXT principles and evaluate lessons thoroughly for teaching in elementary and special needs classes.

For my next phase, I strongly desire to educate in elementary and special needs classes. Elementary is significant because children develop vital cognitive learning abilities at this age. When cooperating with students through sharing my American culture, such as holidays with props and games, children are likely to remember the foundations for speaking, reading, and writing in English through interaction. When working with disabled students, however, the ALT must show an extraordinary level of compassion since the students' needs will differ. For example, when I work with special needs students at Niwashiroadai JHS, I adjust my content and games to suit their learning

The opener is where you need to make a memorable impression. A bad opener could spell disaster for the rest of your paper. Think about some of the best books you've ever read. If the opening was bad, would you have finished or skipped the book?

2. Surprise Your Reader with the First Line

State a fact about yourself that will grab the reader's attention. A personal story to introduce yourself and show your character. It should be related to Japan, Japanese culture and or JET. Draw their attention to you and not someone else. Remember, your SOP is about you! Think about what you want to convey in only one sentence. Attempt to brainstorm something great and unique. Don't worry if it doesn't sound right the first time, you can always work on it later and ask others for help.

One-line samples:

- Last September, as I strolled down the streets of Kyoto to see the iconic Kiyomizudera temple, I was still amazed that I was in Japan.
- Passing off the baton to my vice principal in the 200-meter relay on Sport's Day at Niwashirodai Junior High School was an unforgettable moment as an Assistant Language Teacher in Japan.
- My interest in East Asian culture was ignited by my high school Japanese language class.
- My interest in Japan stems from an experience in middle school where I had the pleasure of hosting Japanese exchange students.
- The first time I experienced the Japanese language was at Asia Fest in my hometown of Orlando, Florida.
- When I first traveled to Japan in 2019, I was mesmerized by all the rice patty fields and traditional houses near Narita International Airport.
- My experience as a student at Osaka University moved me to attempt a teaching career in Japan.
- I left after completing my master's in tourism and hospitality at APU to work in Seattle, Washington; however, I later realized that my passion was only possible in Japan.
- My JET experience from 2013-2017 in Kumamoto Prefecture cannot be replicated, and neither can my time as a graduate student in Oita; however, my goals are to promote local tourism in Japan through tours and social media.
- As I sat in front of Yokohama Station, I was admittedly nervous because I needed to return to my hotel for dinner with my roommate.
- I was just ten years old when I moved to the United States from the Philippines.
- "Memoirs of a Geisha," by Arthur Golden, ignited my interest in Japan during one summer day in college.
- I first became interested in Japan in high school when I needed a language requirement, so I decided to take Japanese; however, I did not expect to fall in love with the language and culture.
- I became interested in Japanese culture in the fourth grade when my teacher did a lesson in Japan.

3. Details after the Opening Line

After that attention-grabbing line, you need to write some details about that experience. Discuss in 1-2 sentences about it and how it guided you to apply to the JET Program. Narrow down the details and be concise to your reader. Doing this will ensure they know why you are interested in the program.

2012 SOP Opening

Opening line - (Passing off the baton to my vice principal in the 200-meter relay on Sport's Day at Niwashirodai Junior High School was an unforgettable moment as an Assistant Language Teacher in Japan.) **Details** - Now, I have the pleasure of working for Interac as an ALT until March 2013. For my next goal, I am determined to bring my skills to the JET Program as an ALT in elementary and special needs classes, based on my recent experiences as an ALT and former English grammar tutor.

The next 2 lines are about my past experiences and what I want to do on JET with my skills. Every applicant is different so don't compare yourself to me or others. Focus on what you have and can bring to the program. Your writing won't be perfect, just remember to revise and be conscious of your space (opening paragraphs should only be around 5 sentences).

Your introduction is a max of 5 sentences.

4. Transitioning to your first body paragraph

The final line in your SOP introduction should be a transition to help the reader understand what your plans are and hint about your future goals. You want the reader to know what to expect in the coming paragraphs.

2011 SOP Opening - Transition Line

...With this position, I can fuel my understanding of the Japanese culture and language while giving back to the community through English teaching and seeking my professional goals.

2012 SOP Opening - Transition Line

...In JET, I will continue to act as a global ambassador by sharing my passion for culture and teaching while moving forward with my professional career goals.

JET Program Timeline

Below is the official timeline for the JET Program cycle for 2024 and 2025. This cycle applies to US candidates, but the cycle is similar from country to country. From the time the application opens, there is around 2 months to submit. The entire recruitment cycle is around 1 year. JET has always carried out this timeline so don't expect it to change 20 years from now.

TIMELINE (2024)

- Application Available: **Monday, September 25, 2023**
- Application Deadline: **Friday, November 17, 2023, at 11:59pm HST**
- Interviews: **Late January – Early February 2024**
- Announcement of Results: **March-April 2024**
- Notification of Placement: **May 2024**
- Orientation and Preparation: **June – July 2024**
- Departures: **July/August 2024**

ROUGH TIMELINE (2025)

- Application Available: **September 2024**
- Application Deadline: **November 2024**
- Interviews: **Late January – Early February 2025**
- Announcement of Results: **March-April 2025**
- Notification of Placement: **May 2025**
- Orientation and Preparation: **June – July 2025**
- Departures: **July/August 2025**

Source: <https://jetprogramusa.org/application-departure/>

Glossary

- JET Programme – Japan Exchange and Teaching Program
- ALT – assistant language teacher
- JTE – Japanese teacher of English
- CIR – Coordinator for International Relations
- JLPT – Japanese Language Proficiency Test