

## Testing

### When do you start the conversation tests ?

This depends on the size of the class. If there is enough time left over, and its only a small class (up to 15-20 students), I might give everyone a short conversation test of one or two questions and answers, just so they can get a small sense of achievement in the first class. Usually though I will announce that conversation tests will be starting the following class. I split the class into two, and say that one of these groups will be tested next week, without saying which one.

In a class of 28 there are 14 in each group, which is a good manageable number. I am experimenting with ways that groups can be remembered (the groups will stay the same throughout the term, so that all students get an equal number of conversation tests). One of these is to photocopy the Progress Sheets onto two different colours of cardboard and distribute an equal number of each colour. This way you have say a 'pink group' and a 'blue group', and you can simply announce 'Today I'll be testing the pink group'. Once students know that from next week the tests (and marks) will be coming, they start to think about it, and some students even prepare by pre-reading the material. This is something I've never had before at a Japanese university.

Other IM teachers have much larger classes than me (up to 50 students !), and so to manage their tests they have students sign up for tests. **How do you do that, Bruno ?**

**Bruno :** Well, I circulate a paper with a table such as this one :

**CONVERSATION TESTS for May 15th**

Time	Names (romaji)
10 :00 – 10 :04	
10 :05 – 10 :09	
10 :10 – 10 :14	
10 :15 – 10 :19	
10 :20 – 10 :24	
10 :25 – 10 :29	
	Total : 2 x 6 = 12 students

**CONVERSATION TESTS for May 22nd**

Time	Names (romaji)
10 :00 – 10 :04	
10 :05 – 10 :09	
10 :10 – 10 :14	
10 :15 – 10 :19	
10 :20 – 10 :24	
10 :25 – 10 :29	
	Total : 2 x 6 = 12 students

- This is a case where a class has 24 students. I always choose to test half of the class every week, so if I had more students I would just start testing earlier, by 5 minutes increments, or I would shorten the test time.
- Let students choose when they do the test (next week or the following, at what time). At least, the first ones (the ones who get the test registration paper first) can choose, and the students after have less choice, but you can start circulating the test registration paper from the other side of the classroom the next time. They will naturally start thinking a lot and consulting between each other, so you have to speed up the process (*Hayaku kimete kudasai, mo jikan ga nai*).
- On the table shown above, I chose to start my first test at 10 :00 because I have a lot of experience of doing that and I am confident I can keep my schedule. For someone starting in the IM, it would be advisable to start earlier, to allow for some confusion to naturally happen (as it did with me until I got the hang of it). Two things help : (1) reminding students to come quickly when their names are called, and to be ready at any time to be called, (2) having a watch next to the registration paper and keep strictly to the times written. Of course, the 'testing area' should be prepared during some pair practice time, because that takes a few minutes, depending on the physical setting of the class. I try and set up two tables and 3 chairs at the back of the class, near a window if possible.