

ANSWER to Question # 18: Answer 1 is correct.

The てから (TE KARA) construction can be used to mean “AFTER.” It combines the te or de form of a verb with から (kara) to indicate that one activity follows another. For example, 運動をしてからシャワーを浴びます (undou wo shite kara, shawaa wo abimasu) = “after I exercise, I take a shower.”

In addition, the てから (te kara) construction can be used to mean “SINCE.” For example, 運動を始めてから元気になりました (undou wo hajimete kara, genki ni narimashita) = “since I started exercising, health developed.”

Therefore, ANSWER # 1 IS CORRECT.

後で (ATO DE) is another way to say “AFTER.” For example, 運動をした後でシャワーを浴びます (undou wo shita ato de, shawaa wo abimasu) = “after I exercised, I take a shower.”

[Note that you must use the PAST tense of the verb that precedes 後で (ato de), even if you are talking about doing something in the future, or in general. The following sentence is NOT correct: 運動をする後でシャワーを浴びます (undou wo suru ato de, shawaa wo abimasu).]

後で (ato de) can also mean “LATER.” For example, また後で来ます (mata ato de kimasu) = “I will come again later.”

However, 後で (ato de) CANNOT be used to mean “SINCE.” Therefore, ANSWER # 2 IS INCORRECT.

[By the way, 後に (ATO NI) is often used instead of 後で (ATO DE), whether the intended meaning is “after” or “later.” My Japanese consultants tell me that sometimes one form is preferred to the other. For example, 後ですて下さい (ato de shite kudasai) = “please do it later” is more emphatic and demanding than 後にして下さい (ato ni shite kudasai) = “please do it later.”

However, these consultants go on to say that the criteria for when to use 後に (ato ni) and 後で (ato de) are subtle and not easily explained. Therefore, I think it may be best for students of Japanese to assume that, generally speaking, the two terms are interchangeable.]

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Question # 18: “Since”

You want to say, “Since you came to Japan, how many years will become?” (meaning, “how many years have passed?”)

Which of the following 2 Japanese sentences is correct?

1. 日本に来てから何年になりますか (nihon ni kite kara nan nen ni narimasu ka).
2. 日本に来た後で何年になりますか (nihon ni kita ato de nan nen ni narimasu ka).