

Answer to Question # 19: Answers 1, 2 & 3 are correct.

You can give someone PERMISSION to do something by using the **ても (TEMO)** or **でも (DEMO)** form. To do this, combine the te or de form of a verb with either **いい (ii)** = “good,” **よろしい (yoroshii)** = “good” or **かまいません (kamaimasen)** = “it doesn’t matter.” Use **よろしい (yoroshii)** when you want to be very polite.

For example, **飲んでもいいです (nonde mo ii desu)** = “it’s OK to drink.” **入ってもよろしいです (haitte mo yoroshii desu)** = “it’s fine to enter.” **食べてもかまいません (tabete mo kamaimasen)** = “it doesn’t matter if you eat.”

In the same way, you can give someone PERMISSION NOT to do something by combining the NEGATIVE te or de form of a verb with **ても (temo)**, followed by **いい (ii)**, **よろしい (yoroshii)** or **かまいません (kamaimasen)**. To form the negative te or de form of a verb, start with the plain speech negative form of the verb, remove the final “i” and add **くて (kute)**.

For example, to form the negative te form of **行く (iku)** = “go,” start with **行かない (ikanai)** = “will not go,” remove the final “i” and add **くて (kute)**. The result is **行かなくて (ikanakute)**. If you add **てもいい (temo ii)**, you get **行かなくてもいい (ikanakutemo ii)** = “you don’t have to go.”

Therefore, ANSWER # 1 IS CORRECT. [The **です (desu)** at the end is optional. Also, in casual speech, **も (mo)** can be omitted. For example, **行かなくていいです (ikanakute ii desu)** is also correct.]

You may recall that, in the Answer to Question 13, we discussed THREE CONDITIONAL FORMS, meaning three ways to say “if” in Japanese. They are the **ば (BA)**, **たら (TARA)**, and **と (TO)** forms. These forms are used in Answers 4, 5 and 6.

Before getting to those forms, there is a FOURTH CONDITIONAL FORM, **なら (NARA)**, that can be used to mean “if.” **なら (nara)** is often translated as “in case.” It is used after a noun, an adjective or a plain speech verb. **なら (nara)** functions much like the topic marker **は (wa)** but implies a greater emphasis.

Answer # 2 uses **なら (nara)** after a plain speech verb. Since **なら (nara)** means “if,” one might think that **行かないならいいです (ikanai nara ii desu)** would mean “if you don’t go, it’s good” or “in case you don’t go, it’s OK.”

However, my Japanese consultants tell me that, in colloquial speech, 行かない (ikanai) is roughly equivalent to 行きたくない (ikitakunai) = “don’t want to go.” With this in mind, 行かないならいいです (ikanai nara ii desu) really means “in case you don’t want to go, it’s OK.”

Therefore, although ANSWER # 2 is basically CORRECT, it doesn’t express the exact meaning we’re looking for.

You may recall that, in the Answer to Question 10, we discussed five idiomatic meanings of こと (koto). One of them was ことはない (koto wa nai) or ことはありません (koto wa arimasen). When this phrase is used after a plain speech non-past verb, it means “it isn’t necessary.”

Answer # 3 is an example of the correct use of ことはありません (koto wa arimasen). Therefore, ANSWER # 3 IS ALSO CORRECT.

Now let’s take a moment to discuss the ば (ba) form. To make the conditional form of an i adjective, using the ば (ba) form, remove the final “i” and add ければ (kereba). For example, おいしい (oishii) is an i adjective meaning “delicious.” When you want to say “if it’s delicious,” first remove the final “i” from おいしい (oishii). Now add ければ (kereba), and you get おいしければ (oishikereba) = “if it’s delicious.” Then you can say something like おいしければ食べます (oishikereba tabemasu) = “if it’s delicious, I will eat it.”

Since ない (nai), meaning “doesn’t exist,” is inflected like an i adjective, it can also be used with ければ (kereba). When you want to say “if it doesn’t exist,” remove the final “i” from ない (nai) and add ければ (kereba). The result is なければ (nakereba) = “if it doesn’t exist.”

With this in mind, the 4th answer, 行かなければいいです (ikanakereba ii desu) appears to be saying “if you don’t go, it’s OK” or “you don’t have to go.” However, my consultants point out that the word いい (ii) sometimes means “OK,” meaning that it can be used to give PERMISSION, but sometimes it means “good” (or “better”), meaning that it can be used to make a RECOMMENDATION.

To my consultants, the 4th answer appears to be a recommendation, as in “I wish you wouldn’t go.” This would be clearer if we changed the word です (desu) to のに (noni) = “if only.” Then the 4th answer would read 行かなければいいのに (ikanakereba ii noni) = “if you don’t go, it’s good, if only,” or “I wish you wouldn’t go.”

Therefore, ANSWER # 4 IS INCORRECT.

Answer # 5 uses the たら (tara) form to say “if,” and at first glance it seems to be correct. However, to my consultants, it appears to be a recommendation and actually means “if you hadn’t gone, it would have been good.” Again this would be clearer if we substituted のに (noni) for です (desu). The result is 行かなかっただいいのに (ikanakattara ii noni) = “if you hadn’t gone, good, if only” or “I wish you hadn’t gone.”

Therefore, ANSWER # 5 IS INCORRECT.

Finally, Answer # 6 uses と (to) to say “if,” and it also looks correct on its face. Unfortunately, my consultants tell me that this answer too, like Answer 4, seems to be a recommendation, meaning “I wish you wouldn’t go.” Again, this becomes more clear if we substitute のに (noni) for です (desu). The resulting sentence, 行かないといいのに (ikanai to ii noni) means “if you don’t go, good, if only” or “I wish you wouldn’t go.”

Therefore, ANSWER # 6 IS ALSO INCORRECT.

.....

Question # 19: “You don’t have to”

You want to say, “You don’t have to go.” Which of the following 6 Japanese sentences is correct?

1. 行かなくてもいいです (ikanakutemo ii desu).
2. 行かないならいいです (ikanai nara ii desu).
3. 行くことはありません (iku koto wa arimasen).
4. 行かなければいいです (ikanakereba ii desu).
5. 行かなかっただいいです (ikanakattara ii desu).
6. 行かないといいです (ikanai to ii desu).