

Answer to Question # 24: Answer 3 is correct.

In English, when we experience something and want to report it, we are likely to use sentences with TRANSITIVE verbs, such as “I see it” or “I hear it.” By contrast, in the Japanese language, there is a strong tendency to describe events by using INTRANSITIVE verbs, suggesting that the events occur spontaneously, rather than as a result of an active agent.

Here are two examples of Japanese INTRANSITIVE verbs: 見える (MIERU) = “to be visible” and 聞こえる (KIKOERU) = “to be audible.” Instead of saying, “I see the station,” a Japanese person would say 駅が見えます (eki ga miemasu) = “the station is visible.” Instead of saying “I hear music,” a Japanese person would say 音楽が聞こえます (ongaku ga kikoemasu) = “music is audible.”

With this in mind, the first answer, 音を聞きます (oto wo kikimasu), means “I listen to sound,” as though you INTENDED to listen to it. Therefore, ANSWER # 1 is INCORRECT.

The second answer, 音を聞いています (oto wo kiite imasu), means “I am listening to sound,” again as though you intended to listen to it. Therefore, ANSWER # 2 is INCORRECT.

The third answer, 音が聞こえます (oto ga kikoemasu), means “sound is audible.” This is what a Japanese person would be mostly likely to say. Therefore, ANSWER # 3 is CORRECT.

The fourth answer, 音が聞こえています (oto ga kikoete imasu), means “sound is being audible,” and it could be translated “I am hearing a sound.” Like Answer 2, it suggests that you are intending to listen to the sound, and it is not what a Japanese person would say in the situation described by the question. Therefore, ANSWER # 4 is INCORRECT.

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Question 24. “Reporting an Experience”

You hear a noise coming from outside your apartment. You want to say, “I hear a sound.”

Which of the following 4 Japanese sentences is correct?

1. 音を聞きます (oto wo kikimasu).
2. 音を聞いています (oto wo kiite imasu).
3. 音が聞こえます (oto ga kikoemasu).

4. 音が聞こえています (oto ga kikoete imasu).