

Answer to question # 26: Answer 1 is correct.

Earlier, in Question 9, “Ni vs. De before Verbs,” we asked whether one should use に (NI) or で (DE) before verbs in Japanese. In the answer, we pointed out that に (NI) is generally used with “INACTIVE” verbs like います (imasu) and あります (arimasu), except in cases where an EVENT (such as a party or a meeting) is said to exist. If one wants to say that an EVENT exists, one uses で (DE) before あります (arimasu).

We also pointed out that で (DE) is generally used with “ACTIVE” verbs. However, there are a number of relatively “inactive” verbs that can be used with EITHER に (ni) or で (de), depending on what you mean to say. Such verbs include 寝る (neru) = “sleep,” できる (dekiru) = “be able to” or “be finished,” 捨てる (suteru) = “throw away,” 落ちる (ochiru) = “fall,” 止まる (tomaru) = “stop, intransitive,” 止める (tomeru) = “stop, transitive,” 座る (suwaru) = “sit” and 立つ (tatsu) = “stand.”

In addition, there is ANOTHER VERB that we didn’t discuss in Answer 9: the copula です (DESU) [or だ (DA)]. Should we use です (desu) [or だ (da)] with に (ni), or should we use です (desu) [or だ (da)] with で (de)?

The answer is that です (DESU) [or だ (DA)] should be used with で (DE), as though it were an active verb, when で (DE) means “of,” as it does here. When linking concepts like “famous” and “summer” to a place, Japanese people don’t use に (ni), meaning “in.” For example, one can say オーストラリアでは夏です (oosutoraria de wa natsu desu) = “as for OF Australia, it’s summer,” but one may NOT say オーストラリアには夏です (oosutoraria ni wa natsu desu) = “as for IN Australia, it’s summer.”

On the other hand, when talking about quantities of people etc., either に (ni) or で (de) may be used with です (desu). For example, わたしのクラスには旅行の好きな人が多いです (watashi no kurasu ni wa, ryokou no suki na hito ga ooi desu) = “as for IN my class, travel-liking people are numerous.” In this sentence, に (ni) is correct, but で (de) could also be used, depending on what you want to say. クラスには (kurasu ni wa) means “IN the class,” while クラスでは (kurasu de wa) means “OF the class.” The difference in meaning between these two phrases is insignificant in this case.

Therefore, ANSWER # 1 is CORRECT, since it means “OF Japan, they’re famous...”

In contrast, ANSWER # 2 is INCORRECT, since it means “IN Japan, they’re famous...,” and this doesn’t make sense in Japanese.

By the way, in case you're wondering, the particle は (WA) is MANDATORY in the sentences above (and in the correct answer to this question). If you omit this particle and just say, for example, オーストラリアで夏です (oosutoraria de natsu desu) = "in Australia, it's summer," your sentence will sound awkward to a Japanese person.

The reason is that the particle は (wa) is needed to show CONTRAST. A Japanese person will assume that, if you're saying it's summer in Australia, you must be intending to contrast Australia with other places where it isn't summer. If you fail to use は (wa), your sentence will sound wrong. For more information on this topic, please download the "Ga vs. Wa" document at <http://www.japaneseaudiolessons.com/download-japanese-lessons/>.

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Question 26. "Ni vs. De before Desu"

You want to say, "They're famous in Japan, but they aren't famous in America."

Which of the following 2 Japanese sentences is correct?

1. 日本では有名ですがアメリカでは有名じゃありません (nihon de wa yuumei desu ga, amerika de wa yuumei ja arimasen).
2. 日本には有名ですがアメリカには有名じゃありません (nihon ni wa yuumei desu ga, amerika ni wa yuumei ja arimasen).