

Answer to Question # 34. Answers 1, 4, 5 and 8 are correct.

In Japanese, the phrase じゃない (JA NAI) = じゃありません (ja arimasen) = “something is not something else.” For example, 椅子じゃない (isu ja nai) = 椅子じゃありません (isu ja arimasen) = “it isn’t a chair.”

This phrase can be contrasted with the similar phrase はない (WA NAI) = はありません (wa arimasen) = “something doesn’t exist.” For example, 椅子はない (isu wa nai) = 椅子はありません (isu wa arimasen) = “there isn’t a chair” or “there aren’t any chairs.”

The PAST form of the phrase じゃない (ja nai) is じゃなかった (ja nakatta), and the past form of the phrase じゃありません (ja arimasen) is じゃありませんでした (ja arimasen deshita). These phrases both mean “it wasn’t something else.” For example, 椅子じゃなかった (isu ja nakatta) = 椅子じゃありませんでした (isu ja arimasen deshita) = “it wasn’t a chair.”

In addition, じゃなかった (ja nakatta) [but NOT じゃありませんでした (ja arimasen deshita)] has another IDIOMATIC meaning: “I shouldn’t have done something.” To form a sentence with this meaning, make a non-past plain speech NOUN PHRASE by USING ん (‘N) and combine this phrase with じゃなかった (JA NAKATTA). For example, take the phrase 東京に行く (toukyou ni iku) = “I will go to Tokyo” or “I go to Tokyo.” This is NON-PAST (meaning it’s in the present or future tense) and PLAIN SPEECH [meaning its verb 行く (iku) is in the plain speech form].

To turn the sentence 東京に行く (toukyou ni iku) into a NOUN PHRASE, you ordinarily have three choices: 1) add ん (‘n) to the verb, 2) add の (no) to the verb, or 3) add こと (koto) to the verb. However, the second and third options cannot be used with じゃなかった (ja nakatta) if you want to say “I shouldn’t have.”

With this in mind, ANSWER # 1 is CORRECT, since it makes a noun phrase by adding ん (‘n) to 東京に行く (toukyou ni iku). It can be translated literally as “the go-to-Tokyo thing was not,” but the idiomatic meaning is “I shouldn’t have gone to Tokyo.”

ANSWERS # 2 and # 3 are INCORRECT, since they do not form a noun phrase by adding ん (‘n).

ANSWERS # 4 and 5 illustrate a different way of saying “I shouldn’t have gone to Tokyo,” using the えば eba and たら tara verb forms to say “if.” They can both be translated “If I do not go to Tokyo, it was good.”

ANSWERS # 4 and # 5 are CORRECT.

ANSWER # 6 uses なら(nara), meaning “in the case,” to express the idea “In the case that I do not go to Tokyo, it was good.” Although this is OK grammatically, it sounds AWKWARD to use なら(nara) to express regret.

Therefore, ANSWER # 6 is INCORRECT.

ANSWER # 7 uses と (to) to mean “if” and could be translated “If I do not go to Tokyo, it was good.” However, と (to) may NOT be combined with よかった (yokatta) to express regret.

Therefore, ANSWER # 7 is INCORRECT.

ANSWER # 8 uses the suffix べき (-beki) which, when used after a plain speech verb, means “should” or “must.”

ANSWER # 8 is CORRECT.

By the way, if you want to review how to say “I SHOULD have gone to Tokyo,” please see Question 21, “Expressing Regret.”

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Question 34. “I shouldn’t have.”

You want to say, “I shouldn’t have gone to Tokyo.”

Which of the following 8 Japanese sentences are correct?

1. 東京に行くんじゃなかった。(toukyou ni ikun ja nakatta)
2. 東京に行くのじゃなかった。(toukyou ni iku no ja nakatta)
3. 東京に行くじゃなかった。(toukyou ni iku ja nakatta)
4. 東京に行かなければよかった。(toukyou ni ikanakereba yokatta)
5. 東京に行かなかつたらよかった。(toukyou ni ikanakattara yokatta)
6. 東京に行かなかつたならよかった。(toukyou ni ikanakatta nara yokatta)

7. 東京に行かなかったとよかった。(toukyou ni ikanakatta to yokatta)

8. 東京に行くべきじゃなかった。(toukyou ni iku beki ja nakatta)