

Answer to Question # 7: Answers 1 & 4 are correct.

Answer: 近い (chikai) = “close” (or “near”) is an i adjective. To make the adverbial form of an i adjective, you remove the final i and add ku. So the adverbial form of 近い (chikai) is 近く (chikaku).

Using another adverb-adjective pair as an example, 早く (hayaku) = “quickly” is an adverb derived from the i adjective 早い (hayai) = “fast.” 早く歩きます (hayaku arukimasu) = “I will walk quickly.”

However, as you may have noticed, there is something unusual about 近く (chikaku). It is frequently used in places where you would not expect an adverb to be. For example, someone will say 家の近くに店があります (uchi no chikaku ni mise ga arimasu) = “close to the home, there is a store.” If you translate this sentence literally, it sounds like they’re saying, “at the home’s closely, there is a store,” which doesn’t make much sense in English.

It turns out that 近く (chikaku) plays two different roles. It functions as an adverb some of the time. For example, 二時間近くかかります (nijikan chikaku kakarimasu) = “it takes nearly two hours.” In this sentence, 近く (chikaku) means “nearly,” and it is clearly an adverb.

On the other hand, 近く (chikaku) also functions as the preposition “close to,” if Japanese can be said to have prepositions (see the answer to Question # 6 above). In her excellent book on Japanese Grammar, Senko K. Maynard refers to 近く (chikaku) as a “locative expression.” Other locative expressions include 前 (mae) = “in front of,” 後ろ (ushiro) = “behind,” 上 (ue) = “above,” and so forth.

Of course, 遠い (tooi) = “far” is the opposite of 近い (chikai) = “close.” The adverbial form of 遠い (tooi) is 遠く (tooku). But 遠く (tooku), unlike 近く (chikaku), does not function as a locative expression. 遠く (tooku) is only an adverb. You can say 家の近くに店があります (uchi no chikaku ni mise ga arimasu) = “at close to the house, there is a store,” but you cannot say 家の遠くに店があります (uchi no tooku ni mise ga arimasu) = “at far from the house, there is a store.” Instead you must say 家から遠い所に店があります (uchi kara tooi tokoro ni mise ga arimasu) = “from the house, at a far place, there is a store.”

Getting back to our question,

Answer # 1 is CORRECT. It can be translated as, “to Kyoto it’s close.”

Answer # 2 is incorrect. It can be translated as, “it’s Kyoto’s close” which doesn’t make sense in English or Japanese.

Answer # 3 is incorrect. It can be translated as, “to Kyoto it’s closely” or “to Kyoto it’s close to,” if you interpret 近く (chikaku) as a locative expression. Neither of these works in Japanese.

Answer # 4 is CORRECT, since it uses 近く (chikaku) as a locative expression. It can be translated “it’s Kyoto’s close to” or “it’s close to Kyoto.”

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Question # 7: "Chikai and Chikaku"

You are telling your friend about an interesting museum you visited. You want to say “it’s close to Kyoto.”

Which of the following 4 Japanese sentences is correct?

1. 京都に近いです。(kyouto ni chikai desu)
2. 京都の近いです。(kyouto no chikai desu)
3. 京都に近くです。(kyouto ni chikaku desu)
4. 京都の近くです。(kyouto no chikaku desu)