SAKURAPASS PUBLICATION • VOLUME 1 • 2026–2027 MASTER WORKBOOK EDITION • FREE SAMPLE PREVIEW

VERIFIED AS-OF: 2026-10-28

VOLUME 1 • 8-MODULE MASTER WORKBOOK • FREE SAMPLE CHAPTER

The SakuraPass Japan Job & Work Visa Playbook

The Complete Step-by-Step Guide & Workbook for Southeast Asians: 19-Sector SSW(i) & 11-Sector SSW(ii) Deep Dives, Sector Kanji Glossaries, JFT-Basic A2.2 Study Plans, Rirekisho & Shokumukeirekisho Templates, 25 Interview Q&As, Scam-Check Worksheets & Exit Clearances

KEY TOOLS, FRAMEWORKS & TEMPLATES INSIDE THE FULL EDITION:

- ✓ Pathway Decision Tree & Regional Take-Home Yen Savings Calculator (Tokyo vs. Chubu/Kyushu)
- ✓ Deep-Dive Briefings & Workplace Kanji Glossaries for the Top 10 SSW Industries
- ✓ Copy-and-Fill Rirekisho + Shokumukeirekisho CV Templates & 5 Industry Self-PR Scripts
- ✓ The 25-Question Japanese Job Interview Master Script Book (JP + Romaji + English + Psychology)
- ✓ Contract Audit Worksheet, PH (DMW/OEC), VN (DOLAB) & ID (BP2MI) Annexes + 12-Week Study Tracker

SakuraPass Research & Advisory Team
Mandatory Reform Review: 2027-01-28 (Pre-2027-04-01 ESD/B1 Reforms)

Official Portal & Full Workbook Access:
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Book 1: The SakuraPass Japan Job & Work Visa Playbook

Research Cut-Off & Verification Date: October 28, 2026 **Mandatory Pre-Reform Update Scheduled:** Before April 1, 2027 **Target Audience:** Southeast Asian workers and professionals (Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, and across ASEAN) preparing to secure legal employment in Japan.

> **Important Legal Disclaimer:**
> Immigration rules in Japan vary by status of residence, industrial field, job category, nationality, sending-country procedure, and consulate. This Playbook provides general operational information verified against official Japanese government publications (ISA, MOFA, MHLW, OTIT, and Japan Foundation) as of **2026-10-28**. It is not individualized legal advice or a guarantee of eligibility, exam passage, visa issuance, landing permission, or permanent residence. Always check the linked official source and your local Japanese embassy, consulate, or sending-country labor ministry before paying fees or signing contracts.

Module 1: The 2026–2027 Reality Check, Pathway Decision Tree & Take-Home Pay Calculator

1.1 Why Most Online Advice About Working in Japan Is Dangerously Outdated

If you search social media or ask unlicensed brokers how to work in Japan, you will hear rules that expired years ago. Relying on outdated information leads to wasted exam fees, rejected applications, and predatory debt. Here are the **seven critical regulatory facts** in force at our **2026-10-28** research cut-off:

1. **SSW(i) Now Covers 19 Industrial Fields (Not 14 or 16):** The Specified Skilled Worker (i) (*Tokutei Ginō 1-gō*) status covers **19 specified industrial fields**, and SSW(ii) (*Tokutei Ginō 2-gō*) covers **11 fields** (with a sub-category restriction inside Industrial Product Manufacturing). *(Source: ISA Operating Guidelines, updated 2026-10-19)*
2. **Food Service SSW(i) Is Temporarily Suspended for New Entrants (Since April 13, 2026):** Because the Food Service sector approached its acceptance cap, applications for new Certificates of Eligibility (COEs) or status changes into Food Service SSW(i) received on or after **2026-04-13** are suspended, with narrow exceptions for existing Food Service SSW(i) workers changing employers and specified Technical Intern Training transitions. Extensions for current Food Service workers continue normally. *(Source: ISA Food Service Cap Operation, 2026-03-27)*
3. **SSW(i) Stay Grants Are Up to 3 Years Per Grant (5 Years Total):** Current SSW(i) periods of stay are individually designated for **up to three years per grant**, within the normal five-year cumulative limit. SSW(ii) grants are three years, two years, one year, or six months and can be renewed indefinitely without a total cap. *(Source: ISA SSW Q&A, Q28)*
4. **JFT-Basic Scoring Split in August 2026 (You Must Score A2.2 = 200–250):** Since August 2026, the Japan Foundation Test for Basic Japanese (JFT-Basic) reports **A1 (145–174)**, **A2.1 (175–199)**, and **A2.2 (200–250)**. Only **A2.2 (200–250)** satisfies the standard SSW(i) JFT-Basic threshold; A2.1 is not sufficient. *(Source: Japan Foundation JFT-Basic)*
5. **Employment for Skill Development (ESD / 育成就労) Starts on April 1, 2027:** ESD is enacted in law to replace Technical Intern Training, but **it is not a current entry route** in 2026. Never pay an agent claiming they can process an ESD visa before April 1, 2027. *(Source: ISA ESD Q&A, Q1–Q7)*
6. **SSW(ii) Will Require B1 Japanese From April 1, 2027:** New SSW(ii) COE applications filed from **2027-04-01** will require CEFR **B1-equivalent Japanese** (JLPT N3 level). Treatment of in-Japan status change and renewal applications was still under review when ISA published its notice on 2026-09-30. *(Source: ISA B1 Implementation Notice)*
7. **Revised Permanent Residence (PR) Guideline (Published Oct 1, 2026, Effective April 1, 2027):** The updated PR guideline applies to applications from **2027-04-01** (with some public-charge/income provisions affecting pending cases). It adds explicit requirements including **B1 Japanese** and **understanding of Japanese systems and social rules**, while maintaining that SSW(i) and TITP do not count toward the 5-year eligible work-status requirement. *(Source: ISA Revised PR Guideline)*

1.2 Essential Terminology: Why "Visa" and "Status of Residence" Are Not the Same

Understanding these six legal terms protects you from misunderstanding embassy instructions or agency promises:

Legal Term	Japanese Term	Issuing Authority	What It Actually Means for You
Status of Residence	在留資格 (*Zairyū Shikaku*)	Immigration Services Agency (ISA)	Your legal work category in Japan (e.g., *Specified Skilled Worker (i)*, *Engineer/Specialist in Humanities/International Services*).
Period of Stay	在留期間 (*Zairyū Kikan*)	ISA	The exact time you are allowed to reside and work under that status. It is **not** determined by your employment contract length.
Certificate of Eligibility (COE)	在留資格認定証明書	Regional Immigration Bureau (ISA)	Pre-clearance document applied for in Japan by your employer/proxy certifying your job and qualifications fit the status. Required for standard overseas SSW visa applications, but **does not guarantee visa issuance**.
Visa	査証 (*Sashō*)	Japanese Embassy / Consulate (MOFA)	The sticker placed in your passport overseas allowing you to travel to a Japanese port of entry and request landing permission.
Landing Permission	上陸許可 (*Jōriku Kyoka*)	Immigration Inspector at Airport/Seaport	The actual legal grant of your Status of Residence and Period of Stay when you arrive at the border.
Residence Card	在留カード (*Zairyū Kādo*)	ISA	Your official ID card in Japan recording your identity, address, status, period of stay, and work permission. Must be carried at all times. (Optional combined My Number Residence Card designs began on **2026-06-14**.)

(Official references: MOFA Working Visa & COE Explanation, MOFA Visa vs. Status Overview, ISA Residence Card Guide)

1.3 The Pathway Decision Tree: Which Route Should You Choose?

Before booking an exam, answer these four questions to pick your optimal visa pathway:

- **Question 1: Do you hold a 4-year University Bachelor's Degree (or 10+ years of specialized professional experience)?**
- **YES:** Look at **Engineer / Specialist in Humanities / International Services* (Gijinkoku)** FIRST before SSW(i). Why?
- No 5-year maximum stay limit (renewable indefinitely).
- You can bring your spouse and children immediately on Dependent (*Kazoku Taizai*) visas.
- Every year counts directly toward the 5-year work-status requirement for Permanent Residence.
- *Caveat:* Your actual job duties in Japan must be genuinely professional/technical (e.g., CAD/mechanical engineer, IT developer, interpreter, overseas sales/marketing)—not repetitive factory line or kitchen labor. Also note: from **2026-04-15**, Category 3/4 applicants mainly performing language-based interpersonal work must prove **CEFR B2** in the language used. *(Source: ISA Gijinkoku Status Page)*

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- **NO (High School, Vocational Diploma, Associate Degree, or unrelated degree for hands-on roles):** Proceed to **Question 2**.
- **Question 2: Are you already work-ready (or willing to study 60–90 days to pass JFT-Basic A2.2 / JLPT N4 + a computer-based Sector Skills Test)?**
- **YES:** Target **Specified Skilled Worker (i) — SSW(i)**. You do **not** need a university degree, you earn equal pay to Japanese coworkers, and you can apply directly from overseas once you pass the two exams and secure an employer contract.
- **NO (You want on-the-job training from zero skills):** Proceed to **Question 3**.
- **Question 3: Did you already complete Technical Intern Training Stage 2 — TITP(ii) (at least 2 years and 10 months) in Japan?**
- **YES:** You generally qualify for a **Japanese test exemption** when moving to SSW(i). If your intended SSW(i) job category matches your TITP(ii) occupation, you are **also exempt from the SSW(i) skills test**. If you switch to a different SSW industry, your Japanese exemption remains, but you must pass the new sector's SSW skills test. *(Note: From **2027-04-01**, legacy trainees whose training predates the Technical Intern Training Act must pass both skills and Japanese tests.)*
- **NO:** At the October 2026 cut-off, only current **Technical Intern Training (TITP)** exists for entry-level trainees; the new **Employment for Skill Development (ESD)** system opens on **2027-04-01**. In almost all cases, studying 60–90 days to enter directly on **SSW(i)** gives you far better mobility and worker rights than entering on TITP.

1.4 Master Comparison of All Major Japan Work Pathways

Pathway	Best Suited To	Main Entry Requirement	Normal Duration	Family Accompaniment	Employer Mobility
SSW(i)	Work-ready people in 19 specified fields	Sector skills test + JFT-Basic A2.2 / JLPT N4+ (or TITP(ii) exemption); full-time contract & support plan	Individually designated grants (up to 3 yrs/grant); **5 years total**	**Generally no**	Possible, but **Change of Status Permission** is required before starting at the new employer/field
SSW(ii)	Proficient supervisors/specialists in 11 fields	Advanced sector exam + supervisory/guidance experience over full-time staff (plus B1 Japanese for new COEs from 2027-04-01)	3 yrs, 2 yrs, 1 yr, or 6 mos; **renewable indefinitely**	**Yes** (Spouse and children via Dependent status)	Possible with the required permission
Technical Intern Training (TITP)	Trainees acquiring skills to transfer home	Approved training plan via Supervising Organization and sending agency	Up to **5 years** across stages (i)–(iii)	**Generally no**	Highly restricted; transfers only in unavoidable circumstances (e.g., abuse, bankruptcy)
ESD (From 2027-04-01)	Workers developing to SSW(i) level over 3 years	Accredited ESD plan; A1 Japanese test or specified course; bilateral MOC country	Normally **3 years** (+ up to 1 yr for failed exam retake)	**Generally no**	Conditional transfer within same job category after 1–2 year field restriction + skill/Japanese benchmarks
Engineer / Humanities / Int'l Services	University grads or 10-yr specialists in professional roles	Japanese corporate contract + relevant degree/experience + genuine professional duties	5 yrs, 3 yrs, 1 yr, or 3 mos (**unlimited renewals**)	**Yes** (Dependent status)	Allowed within authorized activity with ISA contract notification within 14 days
Skilled Labour	Foreign-cuisine chefs, pilots, sports instructors, craftspeople	Japanese contract + occupation-specific years of experience (e.g., 10 yrs for chefs, or 5 yrs under Thai EPA rules)	5 yrs, 3 yrs, 1 yr, or 3 mos	**Yes**	Allowed within authorized activity
Intra-company Transferee	Employees transferred from an overseas branch/subsidiary to Japan	Qualifying corporate relationship + >=1 year prior work at the overseas office in professional/technical duties	5 yrs, 3 yrs, 1 yr, or 3 mos	**Yes**	Limited to the qualifying corporate transfer

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Pathway	Best Suited To	Main Entry Requirement	Normal Duration	Family Accompaniment	Employer Mobility
Highly Skilled Professional (HSP)	High-scoring professionals (>=70 points on ISA points chart)	Underlying professional visa eligibility + >=70 documented points (education, salary, age, JLPT N1/N2)	HSP(i): 5 years; HSP(ii): indefinite	**Yes** (+ spouse full-time work & conditional parent/helper rules)	HSP(i) tied to employer; fast-track PR in **3 years** (70 pts) or **1 year** (80 pts)
Business Manager	Entrepreneurs operating a substantial business in Japan	**Revised 2025-10-16 standard:** >=JPY 30M capital, >=1 full-time employee, B2 Japanese (by applicant or staff), degree/3 yrs mgmt exp, vetted business plan	5 yrs, 3 yrs, 1 yr, 6 mos, 4 mos, or 3 mos	**Yes**	Must continuously satisfy revised business criteria (transition rules apply through 2028-10-16)

1.5 Realistic Take-Home Pay & Savings Calculator (Gross vs. Net Yen)

Many applicants see a job offer advertising **¥200,000 / month** and multiply the full amount into Pesos, Dong, or Rupiah. **Do not make this mistake.** Under Japanese law, SSW and professional workers are enrolled in the same mandatory social insurance and tax systems as Japanese citizens.

Here is how a typical monthly SSW(i) paycheck works in practice (illustrative breakdown—exact rates vary by prefecture, overtime, and employer housing):

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Monthly Paycheck Line Item	Typical Range (JPY)	Important Explanation
1. Base Gross Monthly Salary (Kihon-kyū)	**¥185,000 – ¥220,000**	Must be >= local Prefectural Minimum Wage and equal to comparable Japanese staff.
2. Overtime & Night Shift Allowance (Zangyō-dai)	**+ ¥20,000 – ¥45,000**	Overtime must be paid at >=125% of base hourly rate (>=150% for late-night overtime).
Gross Monthly Total (Shikyū Gōkei)	**~¥215,000 – ¥255,000**	Total before mandatory deductions.
3. Health Insurance (Kenkō Hoken)	**– ¥10,000 – ¥12,500**	Covers 70% of all medical, dental, and hospital bills in Japan (employer pays the other half).
4. Employees' Pension (Kōsei Nenkin)	**– ¥18,000 – ¥22,000**	Mandatory (~9.15% employee share). **Good news:** If you return home permanently, you can claim up to 5 years back via the *Lump-Sum Withdrawal Payment (Dattai Ichijikin)*!
5. Employment Insurance & Income Tax	**– ¥4,000 – ¥7,500**	Unemployment protection + national withholding tax.
6. Municipal Residence Tax (Jūminzei)	**¥0 in Year 1 / ~¥7,000–¥10,000 in Year 2+**	Calculated on your previous calendar year's income in Japan. Expect your deduction to rise in June of your second year!
7. Company Dormitory Rent & Utilities	**– ¥20,000 – ¥35,000**	Must reflect actual reasonable costs—employers cannot profit by overcharging SSW(i) workers for shared rooms.
Net Cash in Your Bank Account (Tedori)	**~¥145,000 – ¥180,000**	Before food (~¥25,000–¥35,000/mo if cooking) and phone/internet (~¥3,000/mo).
Realistic Monthly Savings / Remittance Potential	**¥90,000 – ¥135,000 / mo** *(+ Pension Refund at end of stay)*	Over 3 to 5 years, disciplined SSW workers typically save and remit **¥3.5M to ¥6.5M+ JPY**, plus a **¥500,000–¥900,000+ Pension Lump-Sum Refund** upon returning home.

1.6 Regional Wage vs. Cost-of-Living Reality: Why Rural Prefectures Often Beat Tokyo for Savings

New applicants frequently insist on working only in **Tokyo or Osaka** because the statutory minimum wage is highest there. However, experienced SSW workers know that **net monthly savings** are often higher in manufacturing and agricultural hubs like **Aichi, Shizuoka, Gunma, Ibaraki, Mie, Hiroshima, or Fukuoka**:

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Region / Prefecture	Typical Hourly Base Range	Typical Company Dormitory Deduction	Monthly Living Cost (Food/Transport)	Net Savings Advantage
Tokyo / Kanagawa / Osaka	Higher (¥1,110 – ¥1,250+/hr)	Higher (¥35,000 – ¥50,000/mo)	Higher (¥40,000 – ¥55,000/mo)	Great for city lifestyle & Accommodation/Aviation jobs, but rent eats into base pay.
Chubu / Tokai Industrial Belt (Aichi, Shizuoka, Gifu, Mie)	Strong (¥1,020 – ¥1,180+/hr)	Low (¥18,000 – ¥28,000/mo)	Moderate (¥28,000 – ¥35,000/mo)	**#1 for Manufacturing & Auto SSW savings**—high overtime availability + cheap housing.
Kita-Kanto (Gunma, Ibaraki, Tochigi, Saitama)	Solid (¥1,000 – ¥1,150+/hr)	Low (¥15,000 – ¥25,000/mo)	Low (¥25,000 – ¥32,000/mo)	Close to Tokyo (1–2 hrs by train) with huge Food Mfg, Logistics & Agriculture demand.
Kyushu / Chugoku / Hokkaido (Fukuoka, Hiroshima, Hokkaido)	Moderate (¥960 – ¥1,080+/hr)	Very Low (¥12,000 – ¥22,000/mo)	Low (¥25,000 – ¥30,000/mo)	Strong Shipbuilding, Nursing Care, Agriculture & Food Processing communities; low rent.

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