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FREE LEAD MAGNET • COMPLETE MINI-GUIDE

The 2026–2027 Japan Work Visa Alert, Scam-Shield & Workplace Survival Mini-Guide

12 Costly Visa Myths, Pathway Comparison, Agency Red Flags & Unwritten Workplace Rules for Southeast Asian Applicants

KEY TOOLS, FRAMEWORKS & TEMPLATES INSIDE THE FULL EDITION:

- ✓ The 12 Costly SSW & Work Visa Myths Table (Updated Oct 2026)
- ✓ Urgent Alert: April 13, 2026 Food Service SSW(i) Intake Suspension
- ✓ August 2026 JFT-Basic Scoring Split Explained (Why You Need A2.2 = 200+)
- ✓ 5-Point Recruitment Agency Scam-Check & Top 5 Japanese Workplace Rules

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

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Ready for the Complete Step-by-Step Toolkit?

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The 2026–2027 Japan Work Visa Alert & Survival Mini-Guide

> **Important Legal & Operational Notice (Research Cut-Off: October 28, 2026):**
> Japanese immigration rules vary by status of residence, industrial field, job category, nationality, sending-country procedure, and consulate. This guide provides general operational information verified against official Immigration Services Agency of Japan (ISA), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), and Japan Foundation sources as of **2026-10-28**. It is not legal advice or a guarantee of visa issuance. Always verify current intake status with the relevant Japanese embassy, consulate, or regional immigration bureau before paying fees or signing contracts.

Part 1: Urgent 2026–2027 Policy Alerts Every Applicant Must Know

Most blogs, TikTok videos, and recruitment agencies in Southeast Asia are still repeating rules from 2021–2024. Following outdated advice can cost you months of study and thousands of dollars in non-refundable agency fees.

1. SSW(i) Now Covers 19 Industrial Fields (Not 14 or 16)

The Specified Skilled Worker (i) (*Tokutei Ginō 1-gō*) system now covers **19 specified industrial fields**, while SSW(ii) (*Tokutei Ginō 2-gō*) covers **11 fields** (with a sub-category restriction inside Industrial Product Manufacturing). Newer fields added in the recent expansion include **Automobile Transportation, Railway, Forestry, Wood Industry, Linen Services, Logistics Warehouse, and Resource Recycling**.

2. URGENT: Food Service SSW(i) New Intake Is Temporarily Suspended (Since April 13, 2026)

Because the Food Service (*Gaishoku-gyō*) sector approached its acceptance cap, the Immigration Services Agency (ISA) suspended new overseas Certificate of Eligibility (COE) issuances and general status changes into Food Service SSW(i) for applications received on or after **April 13, 2026**.

- **Who is exempt?** Existing Food Service SSW(i) workers changing employers, and specified transitions for trainees who completed the relevant Technical Intern Training or already held the designated preparation status (subject to cap space).
- **Action Rule:** Do **not** pay a recruitment agency placement fee for a "new overseas Food Service SSW(i) visa" while the intake suspension is active. Look instead at **Food and Beverage Manufacturing** (*Inshokuryōhin Seizō-gyō*—a separate field that remains open) or **Accommodation**.

3. JFT-Basic Changed Its Scoring in August 2026 (You Need A2.2 = 200+ Points)

Since **August 2026**, the Japan Foundation Test for Basic Japanese (JFT-Basic) no longer reports a single generic "A2 pass." It now reports three sub-levels on its 250-point scale:

- **145–174 points:** CEFR **A1** (Used for future ESD entry requirements from April 2027, **not** valid for SSW(i))
- **175–199 points:** CEFR **A2.1** (**Not** sufficient for standard SSW(i))
- **200–250 points:** CEFR **A2.2 (A2)** (**Required threshold** for standard SSW(i), alongside JLPT N4 or higher)

4. "Employment for Skill Development" (ESD / *Ikusei Shūrō*) Does NOT Start Until April 1, 2027

Japan enacted the new **Employment for Skill Development (ESD / 育成就労)** system to replace the old Technical Intern Training Program (TITP). However, **ESD does not begin accepting workers until April 1, 2027**. If any recruitment agency or broker asks you to pay money today for an "ESD visa placement," walk away immediately—it is a scam.

5. Major April 1, 2027 Language & Permanent Residence Reforms

- **SSW(ii) B1 Japanese Requirement:** From **April 1, 2027**, new COE applications for SSW(ii) (as well as Taxi/Bus and Railway train-operation categories) require **CEFR B1-equivalent Japanese** (JLPT N3 level).

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- **Revised Permanent Residence (PR) Guideline (Published Oct 1, 2026, Effective April 1, 2027):** SSW(i) and TITP years **do not count** toward the mandatory 5-year eligible work-status component of the 10-year Permanent Residence rule (though SSW(ii) and Engineer/Humanities do). Furthermore, the revised PR guideline explicitly evaluates **B1 Japanese ability** and **understanding of Japanese civic systems and social rules** alongside zero missed tax, health insurance, or pension payments.

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Part 2: The 12 Costly Myths Table (Print & Keep)

Common Myth Told by Brokers & Blogs	Verified Legal Reality (As of October 28, 2026)
"There are 14 (or 16) SSW fields."	There are **19 SSW(i) fields** and **11 SSW(ii) fields**.
"Food Service SSW(i) is open to everyone right now."	New Food Service SSW(i) intake has been **temporarily suspended since 2026-04-13**, with narrow exceptions.
"Scoring 180 on JFT-Basic passes A2 for SSW(i)."	Since August 2026, 175–199 is A2.1. Standard SSW(i) requires **200–250 (A2.2)** or JLPT N4+.
"NAT-TEST or J.TEST is accepted just like JLPT N4."	Standard SSW(i) accepts **JFT-Basic A2.2 or JLPT N4+**. Do not rely on other tests unless explicitly recognized by that field.
"Any SSW(i) worker automatically moves to SSW(ii) after 5 years."	SSW(ii) is **not automatic**. It requires passing advanced field exams AND performing supervisory/guidance duties over full-time staff.
"5 years on SSW(i) counts toward the 5-year work rule for PR."	SSW(i) and TITP **do not count** as eligible work statuses for the 5-year work component of Permanent Residence.
"Ex-TITP(ii) trainees are exempt from all SSW exams in every industry."	Completing TITP(ii) generally exempts you from the Japanese exam, but the **skills exam exemption only applies if your TITP job matches the SSW sector**.
"Changing SSW employers only requires sending a notice to Immigration."	Changing employers or fields requires **Change of Status Permission** before you can work a single shift at the new company.
"Leaving Japan for a 6-month vacation pauses your 5-year SSW(i) clock."	Time spent outside Japan while holding an active SSW(i) status **can still count** toward your 5-year cumulative limit.
"ESD (Ikusei Shuro) has already replaced Technical Intern Training."	ESD starts on **2027-04-01**. Trainees entering before then still use TITP rules and transition rules.
"Under ESD, workers can change jobs freely to any company after 1 year."	Voluntary transfer under ESD is restricted to the **same job category**, requires a **1–2 year field-specific wait**, and requires skill/Japanese benchmarks.
"If you have a university degree, SSW is your only way to work in Japan."	University graduates often qualify for **Engineer / Specialist in Humanities / International Services (*Gijinkoku*)**, which has no 5-year cap and allows family dependents!

Part 3: Quick Visa Pathway Comparison Matrix

Use this matrix to identify which legal status of residence (*Zairyū Shikaku*) matches your profile before you spend money on exams:

Pathway	Best For	Education / Exam Requirement	Max Stay Limit	Bring Spouse/Kids?	Counts for PR Work Years?
SSW(i) (*Tokutei Ginō 1*)	Hands-on workers in 19 industries	No degree required; JFT-Basic A2.2 (200+) or JLPT N4 + Sector Skills Test (or TITP(ii) exemption)	**5 years cumulative** (granted up to 3 yrs at a time)	**No**	**No** (Must upgrade to SSW(ii) or professional visa)
SSW(ii) (*Tokutei Ginō 2*)	Experienced supervisors/specialists in 11 industries	Advanced Skills Exam + supervisory/guidance experience (and B1 Japanese for new COEs from 2027-04-01)	**Unlimited renewals**	**Yes** (Dependent status)	**Yes**
Engineer / Humanities / Int'l Services (*Gijinkoku*)	University graduates in IT, engineering, business, translation, marketing	Bachelor's degree (or 10 yrs exp; 3 yrs for Int'l Services) + professional job offer (CEFR B2 required for Cat 3/4 language roles from 2026-04-15)	**Unlimited renewals** (5y, 3y, 1y)	**Yes**	**Yes**
Technical Intern Training (TITP)	Entry-level trainees learning skills via sending organizations	Approved training plan via Supervising Organization & home-country sending agency	Up to **5 years** across stages (i)–(iii)	**No**	**No**
**ESD (Ikusei Shūrō) — Opens 2027-04-01*	Entry-level workers training for 3 years toward SSW(i)	Accredited 3-year ESD plan + A1 Japanese test or specified course + bilateral MOC country	**3 years** (+ up to 1 yr for exam retake)	**No**	**No** (Designed to transition to SSW(i) then SSW(ii))

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Part 4: The 5-Point Recruitment Agency Scam-Check

Before you hand over your passport, sign a contract, or pay a placement fee in the Philippines, Vietnam, or Indonesia, verify these 5 non-negotiable rules:

- **1. Zero Security Deposits or "Runaway Penalties":** Under Japanese SSW law, contracts that charge a security deposit (*hoshōkin*) or impose financial penalties if you resign are **strictly illegal** and will cause your visa to be rejected or revoked.
- **2. Verify the Sending Agency License:**
- **Philippines:** Verify the Philippine Recruitment Agency (PRA) license and active Job Order on the official **DMW (Department of Migrant Workers)** portal.
- **Vietnam:** Verify the sending enterprise on the official **DOLAB** (`dolab.gov.vn`) registry.
- **Indonesia:** Verify the P3MI agency and job listing via **BP2MI / SISKOP2MI**.
- **3. Verify the Japanese Registered Support Organization (*Tōroku Shien Kikan*):** Every SSW(i) employer must either provide mandatory 10-point support in-house or contract a Registered Support Organization listed on the official ISA public registry (`moj.go.jp/isa`).
- **4. Demand a Written Fee & Salary Deduction Breakdown:** Your employer must pay you at least the same wage as a comparable Japanese worker. Ask for the exact monthly deductions for **Social Insurance (Health + Pension ~14–15%)**, **Income/Residence Tax**, **Housing/Dormitory rent**, and **Utilities**.
- **5. Never Surrender Your Passport or Residence Card:** In Japan, it is illegal for an employer or support agency to confiscate your passport, Residence Card (*Zairyū Kādo*), or bank passbook.

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Part 5: The Top 5 Unwritten Japanese Workplace & Society Rules

Getting the visa is only half the battle. Under the **October 1, 2026 revised Permanent Residence guideline** and SSW(ii) promotion standards, how you integrate into your Japanese workplace and neighborhood determines your long-term future:

1. **The "10-Minutes Early" Rule:** In Japan, if your shift starts at 8:00 AM, walking through the door at 7:59 AM means you are late. Arrive 10–15 minutes early so you are in uniform and ready for the morning assembly (*Chōrei*) at 8:00 AM sharp.
2. *Master* Hou-Ren-Sou *(報・連・相 — Report, Communicate, Consult): Never hide a mistake or try to fix a broken machine silently. In Japan, reporting a problem immediately (*"Sumimasen, shippai shimashita — Hōkoku shimasu"*) builds deep trust; hiding a mistake destroys it.
3. **The 14-Day Ward Office & Tax/Pension Rule:** You must register your address at your local municipal office (*Shiyakusho / Kuyakusho*) within **14 days** of moving in. Even **one late payment** on National Health Insurance, Pension (*Nenkin*), or Residence Tax (*Juminzei*) can block your future SSW(ii) or Permanent Residence application.
4. **Conquer Garbage Sorting (*Gomi*) & Nighttime Noise: Every Japanese city has a strict calendar for Burnable (*Moeru*), Non-Burnable (*Moenai*), and Recyclable (*Shigen/PET*) trash. Putting trash out on the wrong morning—or making loud phone calls/running a washing machine after 9:00 PM in thin-walled apartments—is the #1 cause of landlord complaints.
5. **Strict Bicycle Laws Carry Criminal Penalties:** In Japan, riding a bicycle while holding an umbrella, looking at your phone, riding two people on one bike, or cycling after drinking even one beer is a serious traffic crime that can lead to police fines and visa renewal rejection.

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Ready for the Complete Step-by-Step Toolkit?

This Mini-Guide gives you the alerts—our **Two-Book SakuraPass Mastery Bundle** gives you the exact templates, scripts, and study plans to execute:

1. *_Book 1:_ The SakuraPass Japan Job & Work Visa Playbook _(Full Edition)_*

- Complete 19-Sector SSW(i) & 11-Sector SSW(ii) Deep-Dive + Real Take-Home Yen Calculator
- 30-60-90 Day JFT-Basic A2.2 & Skills Exam Study Planner (with free official textbook links)
- Annotated Japanese CV (*Rirekisho* & *Shokumukeirekisho*) Templates + Top 15 Interview Q&As
- Full Printable Contract & Fee Audit Worksheet + PH (DMW), VN (DOLAB), and ID (BP2MI) Exit Guides

1. *_Book 2:_ Thriving in Japan — The Workplace, Culture & Society Integration Handbook***

- First 14 Days Arrival Checklist & PR-Safe Tax/Pension/NHI Compliance Manual
- Verbatim Japanese Workplace Scripts (*Hou-Ren-Sou*, apologizing, asking questions, requesting leave)
- Decoding *Tatemae vs. Honne* ("The Indirect No Dictionary") & Dormitory/Neighbor Harmony
- Supermarket Discount Hacks, Halal/Pork-Free Kanji Decoder, and Low-Fee Remittance Guide

Unlock both books at: `https://sakurapass.com/en/playbook`

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