

# A Welcome Focus on Speaking in Public Schools

**O**n June 5<sup>th</sup> it was announced that from 2019 there will be an English test for third grade students in Junior High Schools which will be administered once every several years in order to track their progress. It will offer useful data on the effect of the policy changes that will see an increase in the number and quality of English lessons in elementary schools, and the flow-on effect of these lessons on improved proficiency for this cohort of students. The test will cover all four skills of reading, listening, speaking and writing. Of particular interest to us at British Hills are the speaking and listening tests, as our lessons primarily focus on these skills.

The Ministry of Education indicated the speaking component of the Junior High School test will be similar in level to the Eiken 3<sup>rd</sup> grade test or the A1 level on the Common European Framework (this is an assessment guide that is becoming popular globally as a robust index of English proficiency – A1 is the lowest level and C2 is the highest). A speaker at this A1 level can understand and

produce simple sentences on topics such as describing simple scenes, expressing likes and dislikes, expressing greetings, and they can talk about familiar topics including where they live and who they know. In addition, a speaker at this level should be able to interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to rephrase or repeat phrases at a slower rate of speech, and support them in making their meaning clear.



We are confident that the lessons at British Hills can provide useful opportunities for producing this type of English speaking and give our pupils a chance to practise speaking smoothly and fluently. Along with other recent policy changes in English language education in Japan, we welcome this small, but

useful, shift towards a focus on speaking in public schools. We look forward to assisting students, through our lessons, to become more fluent and we look forward to assisting teachers, through our professional development courses, to become better able to teach and assess speaking at this level and higher.

Andy Lankshear

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## Summer Holidays

## Summer Down Under

**I**n late July, schools around England have their summer holidays. It is the time of year that every school child dreams of! For six whole weeks, schools are closed and many families in England use this time to travel abroad or around the country, or visit friends and family.

Interestingly, traffic and congestion around many parts of England actually gets better around this time, unlike Obon or Golden Week in Japan. This is because in England most parents choose to drive their children to school every day during term time. Whilst it is true that some families in England use public transport, such as buses and trains, they are generally not as efficient, cheap or convenient as those in Japan. This leads to huge traffic jams along the school routes and these disappear once the summer holidays begin.

Another interesting difference between Japan and England during school holiday times is travel habits. In Japan during holidays such as Golden Week in spring, most families will choose to travel around the country rather than abroad. This may be because holidays in Japan are sometimes quite short, and many working parents do not have enough time to travel further away. In England however, travelling abroad to places such as Spain is very popular with families. Travel to Europe from England is very cheap, and budget airlines often offer summer holiday package deals with travel and accommodation included at a reduced price.

Whatever you decide to do this summer, all of us at British Hills hope that you take some time off to relax with friends and loved ones, enjoy the warmer weather, and have a very pleasant summer holiday!

Brett A. Smithson



<http://www.british-hills.co.jp>

**D**ue to Australia being located in the Southern Hemisphere the seasons occur at opposite times to those in Japan. The summer season in Australia starts in December and runs through February, slowly transitioning into Autumn during March. In Australia, the seasons are not as pronounced as Japan however; with the weather being similar for much of the year.

With Summer starting in December, the summer holidays also coincide with Christmas. In Australia the weather is hot during Christmas and people often celebrate with family and friends outdoors, taking advantage of the beautiful weather. We will often have barbeques or go to the beach to celebrate. Unless they have travelled abroad, many Australians have never even seen snow like in Japan!

Summer is a magical time in Australia where you will see countless families and groups of friends flock to the beach to enjoy the warm water and the salt-licked ocean breeze. There will be people playing sports such as beach cricket, beach volleyball or even kicking around a football together. When they are hungry they might enjoy some fish and chips on the sand.

If we are not at the beach you might find us either at the cricket ground watching the mighty Australian cricket team play, or, if it is too hot, in the comfort of our air-conditioned homes watching the game live on TV.

No matter what people are doing during the warmer summer months, you will be hard pressed to find someone who doesn't look forward to them all year long!

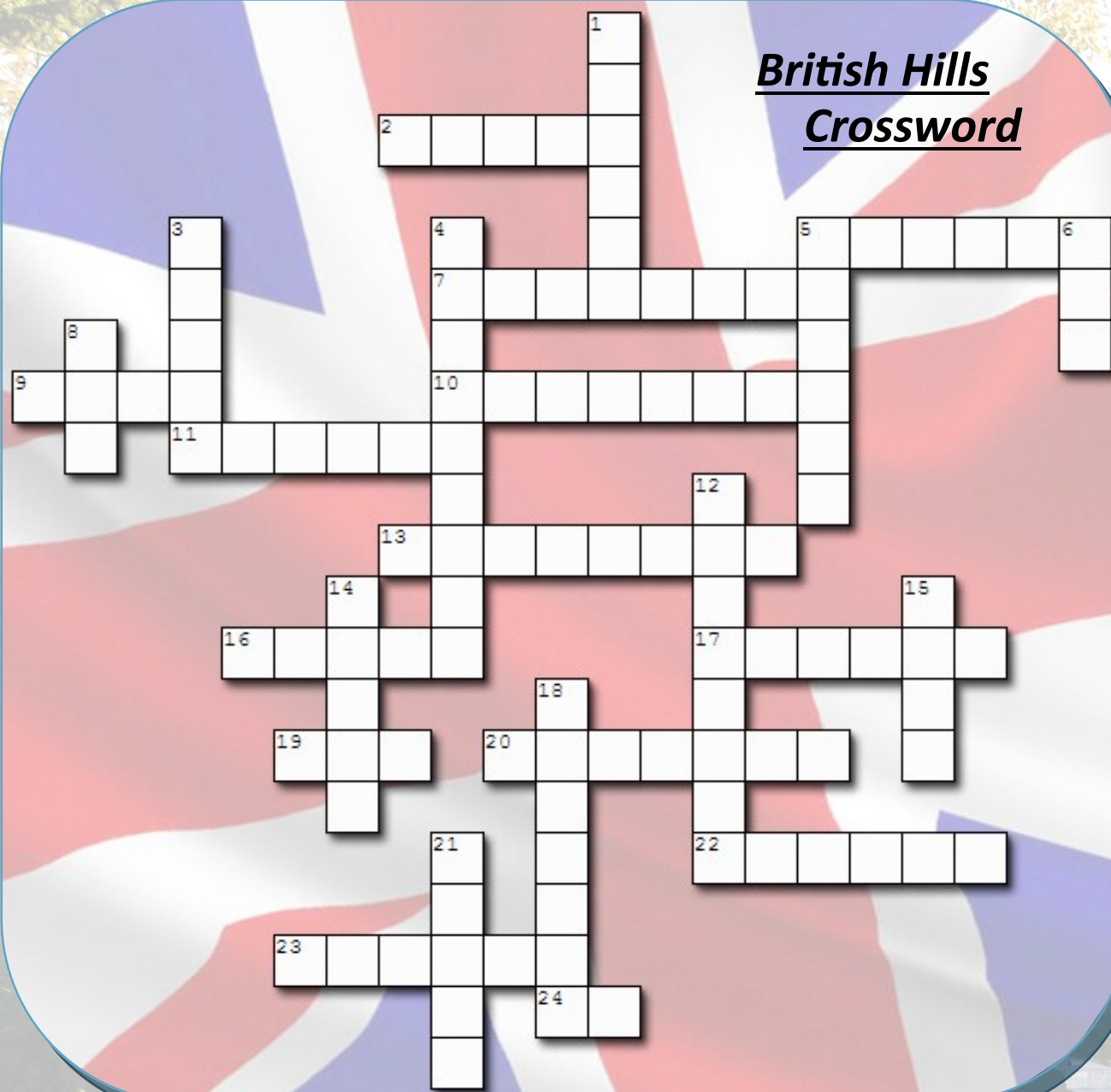
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## British Hills Crossword



# A

recent government announcement in June suggested that a new speaking test for third grade Junior High School students will aim for a level equivalent to that of the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade eiken test. Therefore, it is useful to look at what language is required for this speaking test and the structure of the test. The best way to find this out is to look at the virtual speaking test on the Eiken website [http://www.eiken.or.jp/eiken/exam/virtual/grade\\_3/](http://www.eiken.or.jp/eiken/exam/virtual/grade_3/)

For this test you should learn and practise:

- confident body language and eye contact when standing and sitting in a one to one situation
- what to say when giving and receiving items, such as “Thank you.”, “Here you are.”
- greetings such as “Good morning”, “Goodbye” and “Thank you for your time.”
- questions to clarify meaning such as “Could you repeat that please?” and “Do you mean you ...”
- answering comprehension questions after short reading passages of about 30 - 40 words in length
- speed reading and looking for key words in short texts that you have not seen before
- reading these short texts smoothly, without pauses
- pronouncing new sounds such as “Th”, “S”, “L versus R” and “V versus B”

Good luck with your speaking and practise hard!

## English Challenge

*In each line there is an extra word that should not be there. Find that extra word in each line and cross it out. The word in the first line has been done for you.*



Brett A. Smithson

## The Battle of Waterloo

If you have ever visited our Manor House and taken a [see](#) look inside the beautifully decorated “King’s Room”, you may have noticed a very wood special chess set. On one side, a man with a wide black hat leads an army of men wearing blue coats. These are the French, and their leader is the famous Napoleon Bonaparte. Facing him in red coats are the British army led by Sir Arthur Wellesley (or the “Duke of Wellington”). This chess set was made to represent one of the most famous but and important battles in British history – the Battle of Waterloo.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of June 1815 year, the British and French armies met in the place we now call Belgium. During that day, over 72,000 French men fought a huge battle with muskets, cavalry and cannons against 68,000 British men and 50,000 men from around over Germany and Northern Europe. At the end of the day, the French forces were forced to be retreat. Napoleon’s defeat was so bad that even in today, if someone fails completely to do something, in English we say that they have will “met their Waterloo”.

This year marks the 200th anniversary of the a Battle of Waterloo. Many believe that if we had not won this battle, Napoleon may have also invaded Britain yesterday someday. Had he done this, French may have become the global language and you might be looking reading the “*Les Colline Française de la Temps*” in French language right now!

**Answers:** (1) see, (2) wood, (3) a, (4) dad's, (5) were, (6) but, (7) year, (8) man, (9) over, (10) be, (11) in, (12) will, (13) a, (14) yesterday, (15) looking, (16) language

### Down

- This is the name of a famous sea monster who lives in the “Loch Ness” in Scotland (N).
- The name of money in England is this (P).
- The name of the British flag as one word (U J).
- The British-English word for 'potato chips' (C).
- The flag of England has two colours, white and this colour (R).
- If a man in England is “knighted” by the Queen, this word is used for his name instead of “mr” (S).
- The most popular sport in England, known as 'soccer' in the US (F).
- England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and this place make up the United Kingdom (W).
- The skin of this animal can be found lying on the King's bed (B).
- This is used in tennis and is spelled “racket” in America (R).
- Winnie the Pooh, or Pooh-san in Japan, is a famous British children’s storybook character. This is his favourite food (H).

**Crossword Answers**  
 Down: 1.Nessie 3.Round 4.UnionJack 5.Crisps 6.Red 8.Sir 12.Football 14.Wales  
 15.Bear 18.Racquet 21.Honey  
 Across: 2.James 5.Colour 7.November 9.Lion 10.Olympics 11.Dragon 13.Labrador  
 16.Chalk 17.Thames 19.Tea 20.Sausage 22.London 23.France 24.Ta

### Across

- A famous British spy from action films is called Mr Bond or 007. This is his first name (J).
- The British-English spelling of “color” (C).
- Guy Fawkes Night is a popular bonfire and firework festival in England. It takes place on the 5th of this month (N).
- There are two of these animals outside the Manor House. They are the animal of England (L).
- In 2012, London hosted this international sports event (O).
- The Welsh flag has a large red mythical animal on it. Known to breath fire, this is the name of the creature (D).
- Love-chan is this breed of dog (L).
- The white cliffs of Dover, and the small white sticks used by teachers to write on blackboards in schools, are both made from this kind of rock (C).
- The name of the large river which runs through London (T).
- The most popular drink in England (T).
- “Bangers and mash” is a famous British food. “Mash” is mashed potatoes, and a “banger” is this (S).
- The capital city of England (L).
- Chandeliers, like the one hanging above the entrance hall in the Manor House, come from this European country (F).
- An informal and friendly way to say “thank you” in central and northern areas of England (T).