

JLPT N4 — 4-Week Intensive Study Guide

Starting 2026-07-24 · exam 2026-08-20 · assumes Genki 1-2 (through Ch17) prior knowledge · target: 2-3h/day

How to use this guide: follow the day-by-day plan. Every session has a morning (theory + input) and afternoon (drill + output). Vocab and kanji counts assume you use the SRS on the site. Total: ~140 h over 4 weeks.

Prerequisites: comfortable with Genki 1 (Ch3-12) and Genki 2 (Ch13-17). If not, delay the exam and do the missing chapters first — this guide starts **above** that baseline.

Week 1 — Verb forms + Conditionals mega-week

Focus: The two most-tested N4 grammar areas: extended verb morphology (passive, causative, causative-passive) and all 4 conditionals.

End-of-week goal: By end of week: fluent recognition + production of all 5 new verb forms; able to pick the right conditional in context.

Day	Topic (hrs)	Study plan	Vocab / Kanji
Mon 2026-07-24	Passive & causative — the two most-tested N4 verb forms 3h	Morning: Read cheatsheet page 1 (passive + causative). Practice on 30 verbs via verb drill. Afternoon: Grammar exercises for g-passive + g-causative. Take notes on suffering-passive nuance.	Verbs A-K (100 words) Kanji: 体, 頭, 顔, 首, 齒, 指 (body cluster)
Tue 2026-07-25	Causative-passive (~させられる) + Imperative + Prohibitive 2.5h	Morning: Cheatsheet: causative-passive contraction rules. Focus on u-verb contractions (書かせられる → 書かされる). Afternoon: Imperative reading practice (~ろ, ~え forms). Prohibitive na. Read example sentences from cheatsheet.	Verbs L-Z (77 words) Kanji: 血, 皮, 病, 薬, 命, 死 (health)
Wed 2026-07-26	Potential + Volitional consolidation 2h	Morning: Distinguish potential vs passive (same form!). Understand ら-抜き usage. Afternoon: Volitional + と思う, + とする patterns. Verb drill: 20 verbs × volitional.	Suru compounds (40 words) Kanji: 温, 寒, 暑, 氷, 波, 島 (weather)
Thu 2026-07-27	Conditionals mega-day — ~ば / ~と / ~たら / ~なら 3.5h	Morning: Full comparison table review. Understand which conditional allows commands in B. Afternoon: All 4 conditional exercise sets. Write 5 original sentences per conditional.	i-adjectives (47 words) Kanji: 湖, 岸, 港, 根, 葉 (geography)
Fri 2026-07-28	Giving/receiving with honorifics + ~てあげる/くれる/もらう 2.5h	Morning: Master the 6 verbs (あげる/くれる/もらう + さしあげる/くださる/いただく). Focus on direction. Afternoon: ~てあげる/くれる/もらう applied to actions. Particle patterns (に vs が).	na-adjectives (31 words) Kanji: 開, 閉, 押, 引, 送 (movement I)
Sat 2026-07-29	Weekly review + Mock A 3h	Morning: Take Mock A under timed conditions (2 hours). Afternoon: Grade honestly. Note every miss. Categorize by grammar area.	Review week's weak items Kanji: 転, 進, 追, 屈, 投 (movement II)
Sun 2026-07-30	Rest & consolidation 1h	Morning: Leech card reviews only — no new material. Afternoon: Passive listening to N4 dialogues on commute.	— Kanji: —

Week 2 — Time / Purpose / Reasons / Modals / Appearance

Focus: Sentence-connecting grammar. Time expressions, purpose, giving reasons, expressing probability, and appearance/hearsay.

End-of-week goal: By end of week: fluent switching between ~ため/~ように, correct choice of reason particle (から/ので/ため/のに/し), and disambiguation of the ~そう/~らしい/~みたい family.

Day	Topic (hrs)	Study plan	Vocab / Kanji
Mon 2026-07-31	Time — ~間 / ~間に / ~うちに / ~ながら 2.5h	Morning: Cheatsheet time section. Understand continuous vs one-time distinction (間 vs 間に). Afternoon: ~うちに vs 前に. ~ながら drills. Write 10 sentences.	People & family (42 words) Kanji: 打, 泳, 走, 歩, 開 (verbs)
Tue 2026-08-01	Purpose — ~ために / ~ように / ~ようにする / ~ようになる 2.5h	Morning: Distinguish deliberate ~ために (control) vs ~ように (often intransitive/no control). Afternoon: ~ようにする (make effort) vs ~ようになる (come to be able). Verb-potential + ~ようになる.	Body + health (35 words) Kanji: 曜, 昔, 秒, 期, 世, 代 (time)
Wed 2026-08-02	Reasons & contrast — ~ので / ~ため / ~のに / ~し 2h	Morning: Politeness spectrum: から (casual) → ので (softer) → ため (formal). Note な shift for な-adj/noun with ので. Afternoon: ~のに = unexpected contrast. ~し = listing reasons. Multiple exercises.	Home & furniture (35 words) Kanji: 予, 始, 終, 倍 (time II)
Thu 2026-08-03	Modals — ~はず / ~べき / ~かもしれない / ~だろう + ~なければならない 3h	Morning: Probability spectrum: ~かもしれない (~50%) → ~だろう (~80%) → ~はず (logical certainty). Afternoon: ~べき (moral obligation). ~なければならない vs ~なくてもいい. Casual contractions (~なきゃ/~なくちゃ).	Food & restaurant (52 words) Kanji: 育, 守, 取, 持, 待 (verbs)
Fri 2026-08-04	Appearance & hearsay — ~そう (2 kinds) / ~らしい / ~みたい / ~よう 3h	Morning: CRITICAL: The two ~そう patterns are the most-confused N4 grammar. Afternoon: ~そう (V-stem, drops い) = looks like. ~そう (short-form + そう) = hear that. Then ~らしい vs ~みたい/~よう.	Clothing & shopping (29 words) Kanji: 起, 消, 落, 集, 配 (verbs II)
Sat 2026-08-05	Weekly review + Mock B 3h	Morning: Take Mock B. Compare accuracy vs Mock A. Afternoon: Grade + analyze. Focus on the specific grammar patterns that went wrong.	Transportation & travel (32 words) Kanji: 教, 習, 練, 研, 究 (study)
Sun 2026-08-06	Rest / passive review 1h	Morning: Kanji recognition speed drill (3 sec/card). Afternoon: Passive: N4-level YouTube (JLPT prep channel).	— Kanji: —

Week 3 — Advanced particles + full Honorifics

Focus: The last major grammar areas: subtle particles (～しか/～ばかり/～さえ) and the two honorific systems (尊敬語 / 謙讓語).

End-of-week goal: By end of week: recognize all honorific verb pairs; use ～しか + neg naturally; understand 3 meanings of ～ばかり.

Day	Topic (hrs)	Study plan	Vocab / Kanji
Mon 2026-08-07	Advanced particles: ～しか / ～ばかり / ～さえ / ～までに / ～ずつ 2.5h	Morning: ～しか (only + neg — scarcity nuance). ～ばかり (3 meanings: only, always, just did). Afternoon: ～さえ (even). ～までに (by deadline) vs ～まで (until). ～ずつ (each).	Nature & weather (48 words) Kanji: 調, 決, 定, 館, 屋 (verbs + places)
Tue 2026-08-08	Sentence endings: ～んです / ～かどうか / ～たまま / ～てしまう 2h	Morning: ～んです = explanation. ～かどうか = whether or not. Afternoon: ～たまま = state continues. ～てしまう = completion/regret. Casual contractions ～ちゃう/～じゃう.	Work + business (21 words) Kanji: 階, 庭, 局, 銀, 宿 (places)
Wed 2026-08-09	Honorifics I — 尊敬語 (respectful) 3h	Morning: Pattern お + V-stem + になる. Passive-form as honorific. Afternoon: Master the 8 irregular respectful verbs: なさる, いらっしゃる, ご覧になる, 召し上がる, おっしゃる, ご存じ, くださる. Note ～ます forms (いらっしゃいます, なさいます, くださいます).	School + academic (23 words) Kanji: 住, 所, 州, 県, 都 (geography)
Thu 2026-08-10	Honorifics II — 謙讓語 (humble) 3h	Morning: Pattern お + V-stem + する / いたす. Afternoon: Master the 8 irregular humble verbs: いたす, 参る, 伺う, おる, いただく, 拝見する, 申す, 申し上げる, 存じる.	Society + government (22 words) Kanji: 洋, 主, 客, 者, 君 (people)
Fri 2026-08-11	Reading comprehension focus 3h	Morning: Read 3 short N4 passages (~200 chars each). Time each: aim for 5 min per passage. Afternoon: Answer comprehension questions. Analyze grammar patterns used.	Time expressions (38 words) Kanji: 様, 族, 姉, 係, 感 (people + feeling)
Sat 2026-08-12	Listening comprehension + Mock C 3.5h	Morning: Listen to all N4 listening MP3s on the site. Take notes without pausing. Afternoon: Take Mock C (paper 3). Compare with A and B.	Adverbs & connectors (59 words) Kanji: 想, 考, 悲, 苦, 美 (feeling)
Sun 2026-08-13	Rest / recovery 1h	Morning: Rest. Afternoon: Light kanji flashcard review.	— Kanji: —

Week 4 — Weak-area drill + Final mock + Exam

Focus: Consolidation. No new material. Attack whatever went wrong on mocks A, B, C.

End-of-week goal: By exam day: leech list cleared; grammar cheatsheet fully internalized; confident in all sections.

Day	Topic (hrs)	Study plan	Vocab / Kanji
Mon 2026-08-14	Weak-area targeted review 3h	Morning: Redo problem categories from mock analysis. If passive is weak, drill 50 passive-form verbs. Afternoon: Vocab: expressions & abstract concepts. Cover any category with < 80% accuracy.	Expressions (39 words) Kanji: 味, 漢, 問, 題, 章 (feeling + study)
Tue 2026-08-15	Grammar cheatsheet full walkthrough 2.5h	Morning: Read every point on the cheatsheet aloud. Explain each in your own words. Afternoon: Grammar-only quiz mode. Any point < 80% → drill.	Review Kanji: 詩, 帳, 筆, 字, 写 (study)
Wed 2026-08-16	Kanji mass review 2h	Morning: All ~200 flashcards. Speed matters — 3 seconds max per card. Afternoon: Kanji-meaning match game. Kanji-reading match game.	— Kanji: 式, 実, 事, 話, 談 (study + speak)
Thu 2026-08-17	Vocab consolidation 2h	Morning: Anki 'again' pile clearance. Every word must move forward. Afternoon: Random vocab review — mix of all topics.	Leech list Kanji: 相, 返, 注, 意, 発 (speak)
Fri 2026-08-18	Final full mock under timed conditions 3h	Morning: Take Mock A again OR the hardest of A/B/C. Afternoon: Full length, timed, no breaks. Grade honestly.	— Kanji: 表, 号, 反, 对, 賛 (speak)
Sat 2026-08-19	Light review + rest 1h	Morning: Cheatsheet skim. No cramming. Afternoon: Sleep early. Pack bag: passport, pencils, watch, water.	— Kanji: —
Sun 2026-08-20	EXAM DAY —	Morning: Light breakfast. Arrive 30 min early. Afternoon: You've done the work. Trust your preparation.	— Kanji: —

Study tips (read once per week)

- **Timing:** N4 sections are tight. Practice each section to the timing given in the mock exams. If you regularly run out of time in reading, budget 5 min per passage max.
- **Cheatsheet drilling:** Read the 2-page cheatsheet aloud once per day. Not for memorization — for pattern recognition.
- **The two ~そう patterns:** The single most-confused N4 grammar. V-stem + そう = looks like. Short-form + そう = hear that. Practice this weekly.
- **Passive vs potential ambiguity:** For ru-verbs, passive and potential share the same form (見られる). Only context resolves it. Read many examples.
- **Honorific vs humble direction:** 尊敬語 = someone above me. 謙讓語 = me acting toward someone above. Never mix — using humble for your listener is offensive.
- **Leech list:** Any card you fail 3+ times gets special attention. Write it out by hand. Say it aloud 10x.
- **Listening rate:** Real N4 listening is faster than most textbook audio. Use the site MP3s at 1x first, then 1.25x for challenge.
- **Reading strategy:** Skim once for gist, then re-read for the questions. Don't read every word.
- **Rest days:** Sunday off is not optional. Recovery = consolidation. Cramming through Sundays hurts week 3-4 performance.

Exam-day checklist

1. 8:00 — Light breakfast (rice, protein). Avoid heavy/greasy food.
2. 8:30 — Leave for test site. Bring: passport, admission slip, 2 HB pencils + eraser, wristwatch (not digital), water bottle.
3. 9:15 — Arrive at test site. Find seat. Read cheatsheet page 1 once, calmly.
4. 10:00 — Section 1: 文字・語彙 (30 min). Speed matters here.
5. 10:35 — Section 2: 文法・読解 (60 min). Budget: 25 min grammar, 35 min reading.
6. 12:00 — Break. Eat light snack. Don't discuss the exam with anyone.
7. 12:30 — Section 3: 聴解 (35 min). Read questions BEFORE audio when allowed.
8. 13:15 — Done. Result comes weeks later. Rest.

Scoring & what "passing" means

JLPT N4 total: 180 points across 3 sections (60 + 60 + 60). Pass line: **90/180 total**, with each section $\geq 19/60$ (no section can be too low).

Realistic target: 50%+ on each section, 60%+ overall. If mocks are hitting 65%+ by end of week 3, you're on track.

What to do if you fall behind

- **Missed 1 day:** catch up on the weekend. Skip that day's rest.
- **Missed 2-3 days in one week:** compress into a 3-week plan by cutting Sunday rests and doubling the weakest area.
- **Missed a full week:** defer the exam to the December session. 3 weeks is genuinely not enough for a full course.