

Expanding Aptis Speaking Part One answers activities

Choose one of the short descriptions below and expand it as much as you can. Your teacher will tell you if should write the phrase or just say it, and if you can use the list of suggested language to help or not. You can add any (real or imaginary) information you like, but don't change the information that is already in the sentence. Then compare it with the model answer below and give yourself points out of ten for how good you think your version was. You can also give yourself more than ten points (e.g. eleven points or twelve points) if you think your answer is better than the model answer.

Accommodation/ House or flat

I live in an apartment.

Ambitions

I want to set up my own business.

I'd like to run a marathon.

Character/ Personality

I'm impatient.

Family

I have a small family.

Favourite food

I like Italian food.

Favourite music

I like rock music.

Favourite movies

I like all kinds of movies.

Favourite place

I can't think of a favourite place.

Favourite television

I never watch television.

Foreign languages/ Language learning

I can only speak Japanese and English.

I read the news in English.

Free time/ Hobbies (weekends, vacations, etc)

I don't have much free time.

I often watch movies.

Future plans

I'm going to meet my friends tomorrow.

Health and fitness/ Sports

I never do any exercise.

Hometown

My hometown is Yokohama.

Local area/ Neighbourhood

I live in Koiwa.

Name

My first name means "flower child".

This room

It's just a typical room.

Weather

It's cold.

Work and studies

I'm a sales rep.

I work for ABC Corp.

I work in this building.

Do the same with the ones in the second section below, this time just giving yourself points depending on how well you think you did (as there are no model answers to compare to this time).

Choose one of the topics above or below and take turns asking each other personal questions on that topic, this time answering truthfully and giving feedback after each answer.

Suggested Aptis Speaking Part One question starters:

- "(Please/ Can you) tell me about...(?)"
- "(Please/ Can you) describe...(?)"
- "What is... like?"

Suggested ways of expanding answers

- giving reasons
- giving examples
- adding information
- contrasting/ looking at the opposite side
- being more or less specific/ being more or less exact/ being vague
- explaining (more)/ clarifying (translating etc)

Suggested language for expanding answers

- about
- absolutely
- almost
- also
- although
- and
- and so on
- apart from that
- as far as I remember
- because
- but
- due to
- e.g.
- especially
- etcetera
- fairly
- for example
- generally
- however
- I guess
- I'm not sure
- in fact
- (be/ look) like
- mainly
- mostly
- or so
- perhaps
- probably
- quite
- really
- so
- sometimes
- such
- the main reason why
- then
- though
- (direct/ literal/ word-for-word/ usual) translation
- usually
- which is (a kind of)

Model answers

Imagine each answer below is ten points and give your expanded answers points out of ten (or above) by comparing them.

Accommodation/ House or flat

I live in an apartment. – I live in a small two-bedroom flat on the second floor of a wooden apartment building near a station called Tsudanuma, in Chiba near Tokyo. It's very basic but quite comfortable, and there is a park behind my block of flats, so I've got a nice view.

Ambitions

I want to set up my own business. – My greatest ambition is to set up my own insurance agency in my hometown, and I think I can do it within the next ten years, as soon as I save enough money, draw up a business plan and find some investors.

I'd like to run a marathon. – I'd really like to run the Tokyo marathon, but I need to do some more training and run some half marathons first, then there is a kind of lottery to get a place, so that might take a few years unless I'm really lucky.

Character/ Personality

I'm impatient. – I'm incredibly impatient. For example, I hate waiting for buses and so usually walk or take a taxi if I have to wait more than ten minutes and I complain if I have to wait more than twenty minutes for my food in a restaurant. However, I don't mind queueing, as long as people are standing in line properly.

Family

I have a small family. – Like most people in this country, I have a fairly small family. I only have one younger sister and my parents are both only children, so I don't have any uncles, aunts or cousins. However, I'm getting married in two months and I'd like to have a large family myself.

Favourite food

I like Italian food. – I enjoy all kinds of food, but I really adore Italian food such as pizza and pasta, but also less famous foods such as arancini, which are kinds of rice balls, a bit like Japanese onigiri but with a garlic taste. Italian is also my favourite cuisine to cook, but I can only cook really basic stuff like spaghetti with tomato sauce.

Favourite music

I like rock music. – I absolutely adore heavy rock, because it helps me relieve my stress. I mainly listen to Japanese rock, but I'm also fond of classic British heavy metal. And sometimes I listen to more relaxing music such as jazz and singer songwriters.

Favourite movies

I like all kinds of movies. – I like almost all kinds of movies, but I don't like horror very much. Perhaps my favourite kind is sci-fi. The main reason why I like it is that it is so different from normal life and so is usually surprising. Perhaps my second favourite is fantasy, e.g. Lord of the Rings.

Favourite place

I can't think of a favourite place. – I'm not sure that it is my favourite place, but the first place that springs to mind is a café round the corner near my house. It's quite cosy and relaxed, so it's a great place to relax and read a book, study, and so on. The food and drink is also quite cheap and fairly tasty.

Favourite television

I never watch television. – I almost never watch the box. In fact, I don't even have a telly, so I only really see it when I'm at my parents' house. However, I do stream programmes on Amazon. I generally watch documentaries and reality programmes. My favourite is probably Top Gear, which is a programme about cars that is quite interesting. It's also very funny!

Foreign languages/ Language learning

I can only speak Japanese and English. – My first language is Japanese and my second language is English. I've been studying English for many years, almost non-stop since primary school, but I still don't speak it very well. Apart from that, I have read phrasebooks in languages like Spanish and Greek before I went on holiday there, but I don't think I remember anything.

I read the news in English. – I try to read the news in English for at least ten minutes almost every day, usually in a newspaper but sometimes online, learning the new vocabulary from it later if I can.

Free time/ Hobbies (weekends, vacations, etc)

I don't have much free time. – I don't have much free time because I work overtime almost every day, but at the weekend and on the train to work I like reading magazines and self-help books, usually on paper but sometimes on my tablet. I also cook a lot, partly because I live on my own but also because I enjoy it quite a lot.

I often watch movies. – I go to the cinema once every two months or so to watch mainly sci-fi movies, and at home I also watch DVDs and stream movies on Netflix at least once a week. In that case I'm happy to watch almost any kind, from documentaries to horror.

Future plans

I'm going to meet my friends tomorrow. – I'm going out for drinks with some old school friends tomorrow evening. We haven't decided where we are going, but we're meeting at the station at seven thirty and then we usually go to an izakaya, which is a kind of Japanese-style pub.

Health and fitness/ Sports

I never do any exercise. – I used to do a lot of exercise when I was younger, because I was in the rugby team at school and university, but nowadays I almost never have time, so I'm getting a bit fat. My main exercise these days is just walking to the station and cycling to the supermarket, but that is a bit tough due to being on a hill.

Hometown

My hometown is Yokohama. – I was born in Yokohama, a large city south of Tokyo, but I left there when I was two and I was brought up mainly in a small farming village in Akita, which is a mostly rural prefecture in the north of Japan, so I consider that to be my real hometown.

Local area/ Neighbourhood

I live in Koiwa. – I live in a place called Koiwa, which is a slightly boring suburb in the East of Tokyo, about 20 minutes from here by train on the Chuo Line.

Name

My first name means "flower child". – My first name is written with the Chinese symbols for "flower" and "child". It's quite a common name in Japan, although it used to be more common in the past. My family name is "Suzuki", like the car and motorbike company name. It's one of the top five Japanese surnames, so my whole name is very boring. The literal translation of "Suzuki" is "bell tree".

This room

It's just a typical room. – I would say that this is a fairly typical meeting room for a company in this country, with one big table and some reasonably comfortable wheelie chairs. There is also a whiteboard on the wall and a large television which I guess is used for video conferences. The colours are quite boring, mainly beige and grey.

Weather

It's cold. – I haven't looked out of a window recently, but as far as I remember from when I arrived this morning, it's rather cold at the moment, especially here in Tokyo, which is unusual for this time of year. However, the sky is blue and the weather forecast said that it will warm up in the next couple of days. Unfortunately, though, it will also probably get more humid.

Work and studies

I'm a sales rep. – I work as a sales rep for a large international insurance company, selling liability and other insurance in Eastern Japan, mainly in the Kanto region near Tokyo.

I work for ABC Corp. – I work for ABC Corp, which is a large international insurance company whose headquarters are in New Jersey, near New York, but which has been doing business in Japan for many decades. Before that I worked for a Japanese insurance company called Fuji Fire and Marine which was taken over by ABC Corp, also as a sales representative, but before that as a member of the customer services staff.

I work in this building. – I am based in the building where I am now, the MT Building. My office is on the 17th floor, which is almost the top floor. I work in the HR department, which is the furthest section from the entrance on that floor and is near the window, so has a nice view all the way to Shinjuku, where you can see the skyscrapers district.

Section two – Ones with no model answers**Favourite actors**

I like Robert Downey Junior.

Favourite books

The book I like most is Harry Potter.

Friends

My best friend's name is John.

Perfect job

My dream is to be an artist.

Possessions

I have an expensive hi-fi.

Skills/ Strengths and weaknesses

I'm good at juggling.

Technology

I love and hate my smartphone.

Travel and tourism

I take the train to work every day.

I went to New York last year.

Typical day/ Routine

I get up at five thirty.