



VisaHelperz
IMMIGRATION CONSULTANT

JAPAN WORK PERMIT

The Complete Master Guide to Every Work Permit Pathway

Status of Residence • The Professional and Skilled-Worker Routes • Family and Student Pathways •
Special and Entrepreneur Provisions

Prepared by VisaHelperz Immigration Consultant

Immigration rules change frequently. This guide is an educational roadmap — always confirm current eligibility with the Visa Helperz Team before applying.

— JAPAN IMMIGRATION · UPDATED AUGUST 2026

Your complete map to the Japan Work Permit

Japan doesn't issue one universal "work permit." It runs on a Status of Residence system with 35+ routes into legal employment. This guide covers the full picture — every pathway, the step-by-step process, and the most common mistakes to avoid.

35+

Work-related statuses

7

Application stages

2026

Rules current as of

The real question Japan asks isn't "do you have a job?" — it's "what exactly will you do, for whom, and do you meet the legal requirements for that specific status?" Picking the right pathway matters more than anything else in this process.

There's no single "Japan work visa." There's a Status of Residence.

Japan uses a Status of Residence (Zairyu Shikaku) system. Your status determines exactly what work you're legally allowed to do. The visa is the document that gets you through the airport; the status of residence governs everything after you land.

— THE PROCESS

Seven stages, from job offer to your first day at work

This is the standard route for someone applying from outside Japan under an employer-sponsored status. Each stage has to be completed in order.

1

Choose the correct Status of Residence

The single most important decision in the entire process. Your occupation, education, employer type, and salary all determine which of the 35+ statuses actually fits — a software engineer, a university professor, and a company founder each need a completely different one.

2

Secure the qualifying job or activity

Most routes need a genuine Japanese sponsor. The employer typically prepares an employment contract, job description, salary and working conditions, and company/financial documentation.

3

Employer applies for your Certificate of Eligibility (COE)

Your Japanese sponsor (or their proxy) files with the Regional Immigration Services Bureau. The COE confirms you meet the landing requirements for the intended status — and it's now available electronically.

4

Apply for your visa

Once the COE is issued, take it — along with your passport, application form, and photograph — to the Japanese embassy, consulate, or visa application center for your place of residence.

5 Travel to Japan

Fly in, clear immigration inspection, and receive landing permission. Qualifying medium/long-term residents are issued a residence card on arrival.

6 Complete registration after arrival

Address registration at your municipal office, national health insurance and pension procedures, My Number registration, and setting up a bank account and phone line.

7 Work only within your authorized activity

Your actual duties must stay within what your status permits. If your role changes materially, you'll need a change of status or additional permission — Japan even offers a formal Certificate of Authorized Employment for peace of mind.

— QUICKFINDER

Match your situation to a pathway

Software, IT, engineering, finance, HR, marketing Engineer / Specialist in Humanities / International Services	Senior, highly paid professional Highly Skilled Professional (HSP) or J-Skip
Already work for a multinational Intra-Company Transferee	Chef, sommelier, specialised trade Skilled Labor
No degree, willing to test for a designated field Specified Skilled Worker (SSW)	Elite overseas university, no job yet J-Find (up to 2 years to job-hunt or start up)
Want to build a company in Japan Start-up route → Business Manager	Japanese spouse, PR, or long-term resident Broad work rights — no occupation restriction

— THE FULL DIRECTORY

Every pathway to a Japan Work Permit

All 35+ routes, grouped the way Japan's immigration system actually groups them.

A. Normal professional employment — 16 routes

Japan's official immigration system lists these as distinct, activity-based statuses. Duties must stay within the scope of whichever one you hold.

1. Engineer / Humanities / Int'l Services

The biggest route — IT, engineering, finance, HR, marketing, translation, design and more.

2. Intra-Company Transferee

For staff transferred by a multinational to its Japanese branch or subsidiary.

3. Highly Skilled Professional (HSP)

Points-based system rewarding qualifications, salary, age and achievements.

4. Special HSP (J-Skip)

Introduced 2023. Qualifies on education/experience plus sufficiently high income — no points test.

5. Professor

University and equivalent academic appointments.

6. Researcher

Employment at a qualifying Japanese research institution.

7. Instructor

Teaching in elementary, junior-high and high-school education.

8. Medical Services

Doctors, dentists, pharmacists, nurses — Japanese licensing required.

9. Legal / Accounting Services

Attorneys, judicial scriveners, CPAs and tax accountants licensed in Japan.

10. Nursing Care

For certified care workers, separate from the SSW nursing-care field.

11. Skilled Labor

Foreign-cuisine chefs, animal trainers, pilots, sports trainers, sommeliers.

12. Entertainer

Musicians, actors, singers, dancers, models, professional sportspeople.

13. Artist

Composers, songwriters, sculptors, photographers, craftspeople.

14. Religious Activities

Missionaries, monks, bishops and other qualifying religious personnel.

15. Journalist

Newspaper/magazine journalists, editors, news cameramen, announcers.

16. Business Manager

For genuinely running or managing a business in Japan — requirements tightened Oct 2025.

B. Specified / sector-specific routes — 3 routes**17. Specified Skilled Worker (i)**

Max ~5 years, no family accompaniment, requires a language + skills test in a designated field.

18. Specified Skilled Worker (ii)

More advanced skill level, no overall stay cap, family accompaniment allowed.

19. Technical Intern Training (TITP)

Still active in 2026, but being phased out in favour of the new Employment for Skill Development system.

C. Special employment routes — 9 routes**20. Working Holiday**

32 partner countries/regions as of April 2026. Cultural exchange first, work incidental. India is not currently a partner.

21. J-Find

Up to 2 years for graduates of eligible top-ranked overseas universities to job-hunt or prepare a start-up.

22. Start-up Visa / Foreign Entrepreneur

Municipality-backed preparation period before qualifying for Business Manager.

23. DigitalNomad

Up to 6 months for remote workers still employed by a foreign company — not a route into a Japanese job.

24. EPANurse / CareWorker

Bilateral Economic Partnership Agreement route, handled as Designated Activities.

25. Designated Activities (general)

Researchers, IT specialists, internships, international-cultural activities and more.

26. Designated Activities — job hunting

For graduates continuing their job search in Japan.

27. Designated Activities — graduate start-up

For graduates preparing a business ahead of Business Manager.

28. Designated Activities No. 46

Japanese-university graduates doing broader, Japanese-language-driven work than E/H/IS allows.

D. Already-broad work permission — 4 routes

These statuses generally aren't restricted to a particular occupation, unlike the categories above.

29. Permanent Resident

No occupation restriction. Change employers or industries freely.

30. Spouse / Child of Japanese National

Broad work freedom, not tied to a listed occupation.

31. Spouse of Permanent Resident

Similarly broad employment freedom.

32. Long-Term Resident

Includes certain persons of Japanese ancestry and other recognised categories; broad work rights.

E. Limited work attached to another status — 3 routes

33. Student + work permission

"Permission to engage in activity other than that permitted" allows limited part-time work only.

34. Dependent + work permission

Same limited part-time mechanism for accompanying dependants.

35. Designated Activities + extra work permission

Includes HSP spouse employment and HSP household-worker routes.

— AT A GLANCE

Your situation → the pathway to investigate first

Your situation	Best pathway to investigate
Software / IT / engineering	Engineer / Humanities / International Services
Finance, HR, marketing, business	Engineer / Humanities / International Services
University professor	Professor

Your situation	Best pathway to investigate
School teacher	Instructor
Research scientist	Researcher / HSP
Senior, highly paid professional	HSP / J-Skip
Multinational employee	Intra-Company Transferee
Foreign-cuisine chef	Skilled Labor
Designated shortage-sector worker	Specified Skilled Worker
Certified care worker	Nursing Care
Medical professional	Medical Services
Lawyer / accountant	Legal / Accounting Services
Entrepreneur	Start-up → Business Manager
Elite overseas graduate	J-Find
Japanese university graduate	Work status / Designated Activities No. 46
Recent graduate without a job yet	Job-hunting Designated Activities
Remote worker for an overseas company	Digital Nomad
Japanese spouse / PR / long-term resident	Broad work rights — occupation unrestricted
Student in Japan	Limited work permission, then change of status

— COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

What does NOT get you a work permit

✗ Entering as a tourist Tourist / Temporary Visitor status doesn't permit you to start working.	✗ Studying without a permit Full-time employment on a Student status requires separate permission first.
✗ Digital Nomad status Designed for temporary remote work for a foreign employer — not for taking a Japanese job.	✗ Working Holiday, long-term It's temporary and purpose-specific, not an automatic route to permanent status.
✗ Buying property Ownership in Japan has no bearing on your work status.	✗ Having a personal sponsor A friend or contact in Japan doesn't substitute for a qualifying employer and status.

✗ A foreign degree alone

It can help you qualify—it doesn't replace the need for a qualifying job and status.

✗ One-size-fits-all rules

Requirements depend on occupation, salary, nationality and employer — generic checklists go stale fast.

This guide summarises publicly available Immigration Services Agency policy as of August 2026 for general information only. It is not immigration or legal advice. Status of Residence rules and eligibility requirements change without notice, and eligibility depends on individual circumstances. Confirm current requirements with Japan's Immigration Services Agency or with the VisaHelperz Team before applying.



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