

# Shared Identities: Our Interweaving Threads

## Conventions and writing styles of rirekisho (Japanese resumes)

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More and more schools in Japan are requiring potential teachers to submit a *rirekisho*, a Japanese resume. While a seemingly straightforward task, rirekisho have a number of conventions and a writing style that is unfamiliar to many non-Japanese. This paper introduces rirekisho and breaks a basic rirekisho form down by section to demonstrate, in a step by step way, how to write one.

日本においてより多くの学校が、採用の可能性のある教師に対してリレキシヨ、すなわち日本語で書かれた履歴書を要求する傾向にあります。一見、何の事は無さそうな作業ですが、履歴書には何通りもの組み合わせや書式が存在し、日本人以外の多数の人にとってそれらは馴染みがありません。本論文では履歴書を皆さんに紹介し、基本的な履歴書を順序立てて項目毎に分け、書き方を実演しながら説明します。

**A** *rirekisho*, often translated as a Japanese-style resume, is a document used in Japan when seeking employment or changing careers. It can also be used as part of the application package for applying for certain types of visas, namely permanent resident visas, university admission, exchange programs, scholarships, etc. (Wikipedia Japan, 2008). Increasingly many Japanese universities and other schools are requiring applicants to submit a rirekisho in addition to, or instead of, an English resume. In the summer of 2008, a quick survey of job announcements posted on the Japan Research Careers Information Network (JRECIN) website revealed that all but two of the 25 randomly selected job announcements required a rirekisho.

This is an issue in the profession for non-Japanese English teachers because while rirekisho is translated as resume, it is very different from the documents used in western countries. First and foremost, a rirekisho has a fixed format which must contain specific information (Lofving & Kennedy-Takahashi, 2000). The format



standard is set by the Japan Industrial Standards Committee (JIS) (Wikipedia Japan, 2008) and has a specific writing style and a number of conventions that are commonly used.

It should be noted that even though JIS sets the standard, there are many different types of rirekisho (Yajima, 2008). For example, there are different forms for people looking for part-time jobs, people looking for full-time employment after graduation, or people changing jobs/careers. Furthermore, companies and schools often create their own unique rirekisho forms. Almost all of these rirekisho forms use the standards set by JIS even if they organize information differently, and applicants are advised to use the rirekisho writing style and conventions outlined here regardless of the form used. Most convenience stores in Japan sell blank standard JIS rirekisho forms but usually only for those seeking part-time jobs. Other types of forms can be purchased at a bookstore or a stationary shop.

Another notable difference is that in the United States resumes are summaries of experience and are often rewritten for each situation to highlight the applicant's best qualities (Pierson, 2006). A rirekisho, on the other hand, lists everything about the applicant and the content does not change from application to application.

This paper will look at a basic JIS 8303 form, section by section, in order to help non-Japanese teachers understand the differences between rirekisho and English resumes. The information here is taken from multiple *kakikata* (writing method) sources. While there is widespread agreement among the sources on most issues, they do not always agree. Applicants need to understand that these are not hard and fast rules but conventions and styles. This paper is intended to be

a guidebook through the world of rirekisho, but applicants can ultimately use a rirekisho in any way that they see fit.

### Basic conventions

Most rirekisho forms come with a set of instructions. The instructions that accompany a JIS 8303 form list the basic conventions used for most rirekisho. They say the form should be written by hand using black ink, correction tape and/or fluid should not be used, and a new rirekisho form should be written for each application. An applicant should not submit a photocopy nor should old forms, previously submitted, be used again.

However, it has recently become acceptable to submit a rirekisho created on a computer, usually using a word processor or spreadsheet. The debate is ongoing about whether or not this is acceptable (Wikipedia Japan, 2008), but when asked to submit a rirekisho via email, obviously, there is no choice.

The instruction sheet also advises that when mailing a rirekisho, send it in a full size A4 or B5 envelope without folding the contents. On the outside of the envelope indicate in red ink that there is a rirekisho inside. It is also a good idea to write the position being applied for on the outside of the envelope, again in red ink. Often, when purchasing a rirekisho, it will come with mailing envelopes.

The instruction sheet reminds applicants that a rirekisho is considered a formal document, so all the information should be written in a formal style. For example, applicants should use complete addresses and names and not use any of the *ryakugo* (simplifications) that Japanese are fond of using.

An important characteristic of formal Japanese documents is that all dates should be written using the *nengo* (era name) system; dates should not be entered using the Gregorian calendar. The current era is known as *Heisei* and the current year (2008) is 20. Even Japanese often find this confusing, so it is common for the instructions sheet to include a year conversion chart. Please see Appendix 1 for a conversion chart.

Finally, when completing a rirekisho that is unique to the company where employment is sought, be sure to follow all instructions included with that form. The conventions and styles may differ from those commonly used on a JIS 8303 form.

### Personal information

The first section of the rirekisho, whether a JIS 8303 or a proprietary form, is the personal information section. Style books remind applicants to start by writing the date of application on the top of the form. They say that it is important not to skip this step because not including it shows a lack of attention to detail.

The first part of this section, the name box, can be troublesome for a non-Japanese applicant. The convention for Japanese is to write their full legal name in *kanji* (Chinese characters) with the pronunciation indicated above. For individuals whose native language uses *kanji*, the name should be written as such.

However, for everyone else this can be a problem. Does one write one's name in *katakana*? Or should it be written using the alphabet? If the spirit of the convention

is to write the applicant's legal name, then perhaps the name should be written as it appears on one's Certificate of Alien Registration, which is the same as it appears on one's passport. In other words, applicants should write their name in capital Roman characters (*romaji*). The Japanese pronunciation is written above the name. Keep in mind that rirekisho are created for use by Japanese applicants, and the convention is that the *furigana* (pronunciation) line should be written in *hiragana*. So, as strange as this may seem, non-Japanese, even though their name is usually written in *katakana*, should write the Japanese pronunciation of their name in *hiragana*.

More trouble for non-Japanese is that, in Japan, names are written family name first followed by given name.

平成 20 年 11 月 30 日

### 履歴書

ふりがな 氏名	すみす (姓)SMITH (名)JOHN DAVID	じよんでびつど 	
昭和 55 年 11 月 1 日生 (満 28 歳)	性別 <input checked="" type="radio"/> 男 <input type="radio"/> 女		
ふりがな 現住所	とうきょうとみなとくしほこうえん 〒 105 - 0011 東京都港区芝公園 4 丁目 2 番 8 号メゾン東京タワー421 号	TEL. 03 3333-1111	携帯 090-0000-1111
メールアドレス	johnsmith@example.com		
ふりがな 連絡先	〒 - (現住所以外に連絡を必要とする場合のみ記入)	TEL.	方 携帯

Figure 1. Personal information section

However, many Japanese people do not expect non-Japanese to follow this custom; they expect them to put their given name first. For those with a common first and last name, for example John Smith, this is rarely a problem, but for those with a more uncommon name, specifically someone who has two “last” names, like the author Cameron Romney, a Japanese reader may not be able to tell which name is which. This problem can be solved by labeling each name with the character 姓 (sei) for last names and 名 (mei) for given names. This can be done in parenthesis as shown in Figure 1. This is my suggestion. However, the example in Thompson (2000) shows the applicant’s name listed as given name first followed by family name written using standard English capitalization. Turnipin (2008) recommends using katakana only. Ultimately, this is an area where there are not yet any standards set. Nothing is more personal than a name, so applicants can fill it in as they like.

Unlike western resumes and CVs, where photographs are not attached (Perrett, 2000), a photograph must be included with a rirekisho. Style guides say the photo should be a head and shoulders shot with the applicant looking directly into the lens. Conservative, professional dress is preferred, hair should be swept back from the face and women can wear make-up but conservatively. In general, an expressionless photo is preferred, but a photo with a slight smile, not an ear-to-ear grin, looks better (Kojima, 2005).

Below the name box is an area to indicate the applicant’s date of birth, age and gender. Again, because this is a formal document, the date of birth should be written using the *nengo* system and the applicant’s age, in full years, should be written. In the gender box applicants should circle either 男 for male or 女 for female.

Below this are two boxes for addresses: the first is the *genjusho* (current address), next is the *renrakusaki* (additional contact address). The first address box should contain the applicant’s current residence. For those who do not have a second address, simply leave the section blank. Addresses should be written in complete, formal style not using the typical address hyphen shortcuts. For example, the address of Tokyo Tower written in shortcut style is: 東京都港区芝公園4-2-8 (Tokyo-to, Minato-ku, Shibakoen 4-2-8). In the formal style it would be written as 東京都港区芝公園4丁目2番8号 (Tokyo-to, Minato-ku, Shibakoen, 4 chome 2 ban 8 go). Above the address block is another furigana line. The pronunciation for the kanji used in the address should be written.

Surprisingly, as almost everyone has a mobile phone and an e-mail address, there isn’t space to include this information on the standard form. Applicants who want to include it need to use a special version of the JIS 8303 form. On the standard form, the custom is to list only the home phone. Also, convention dictates that the city code should be written on a separate line from the actual telephone number, as shown in Figure 1.

## Education and employment history

The section after the personal information section is the section where applicants list their educational and work experience. The standard JIS form has only one block for both. It is common for forms used by universities to separate this information out into two sections.

## Education

The common convention is to begin the education section by writing *gakureki* (education history) centered on the top line as indicated in Figure 2. On the next line applicants begin listing the names and dates of schools attended. Only the year, *nengo* style, and the month need to be listed. In the third column, the location of the school, the school name and type of school (elementary, junior high, etc.) followed by either *nyugaku* (matriculation) or *sotsugyo* (graduation). For Japanese applicants, the entry starts with the prefecture, followed by the city, followed by the name. Non-Japanese can start with the country, followed by the state, etc. and then the school name as shown in Figure 2.

For each school attended, the convention is to use two lines. The first line indicates the date that the applicant started attending the school and the second indicates their graduation date. However, when listing elementary school and junior high school, only the date of graduation is needed. The typical style is to write the graduation date for both elementary and junior high school and then list both the entry and graduation dates for all other schools attended. However, Fukuzawa (2008) notes that for applicants with lots of work experience who need the extra space, low level education can be skipped. She recommends starting with graduation from high school, or in some instances even graduation from university.

For university entries, the location of the school does not need to be indicated, but this can be helpful for those who attended university outside of Japan. A typical university entry begins with the name of the university, the faculty or division, followed by the department and *nyugaku*

①年	②月	③学歴・職歴（各別にまとめて書く）
		④学歴
平成 4	8	⑤米国ニューヨーク州ニューヨーク市立 PS234 小学校卒業
平成 7	8	⑥米国カリフォルニア州ロサンゼルス市立 Washington Irving 中学校卒業
平成 10	8	⑦米国テキサス州ダラス市 Holy Trinity 高等学校入学（私立）
		⑧平成 11 年 8 月の夏休みに 1 か月間 兵庫県立田中高等学校に留学
平成 12	8	⑨米国テキサス州ダラス市 Holy Trinity 高等学校卒業
平成 12	8	⑩米国コロラド州立 Colorado 大学学芸学部英語学科入学
		⑪英語文学専攻・コミュニケーション副専攻
平成 18	5	⑫米国コロラド州立 Colorado 大学学芸学部英語学科卒業
平成 18	8	⑬米国コロラド州 Regis 大学大学院言語学研究科応用言語学専攻修士課程入学
平成 18	5	⑭米国コロラド州 Regis 大学大学院言語学研究科応用言語学専攻修士課程修了
		⑮修士論文「Student use of vocabulary lists」

Figure 2. Education section

(matriculation) or *sotsugyo* (graduation). A line can be inserted between the matriculation and graduation lines to list majors and minors. 専攻 (*senko*) is used for majors and 副専攻 (*fukusenko*) is used for minors. An additional line below graduation can be used to list the graduation thesis. This line should begin with 卒業論文 (*sotsugyo ronbun*), which means graduation thesis, followed by the title of the thesis in brackets.

Graduate school entries are similar but following the department and major 修士課程 (*shushikatei*), for a master's course, or 博士課程 (*hakushikatei*), for a doctoral course, is written. *Nyugaku* (matriculation) is used on the first line for entry, but *sotsugyo* is not used for graduation, instead 修了 (*shuryo*) is used. Again, on a separate line following *shuryo*, the title of the graduation thesis can be indicated.

### Employment history

The convention is to start by skipping a line and, as with the education history section, begin by titling the section with 職歴, *shokureki* (employment history), centered in the third column. Below, list all employment in chronological order beginning with the oldest. This is also something that is different from the application documents used in the West where listing experience in reverse chronological order is preferred (Urval, 2000). As with education history the date should be written in *nengo* style, listing the year and month only.

There are several different conventions for listing work experience, depending on the type of work. For full-time employment at a company, the style guides recommend using a two-line entry similar to a school entry. Start by listing the name of the company followed by *nyusha* (company entry). Keep in mind that the style is to use the official name of the company, not the name by which the company is often known commercially. For example, the *eikaiwa* (English conversation) school GEOS, should be listed as *kabushiki gaisha* (stock company) GEOS, not just GEOS. Please note that Japanese companies are not allowed to use the alphabet in their official name. Company names can only contain kanji, hiragana, and katakana. So, for the example above, GEOS would need to be written in katakana. On the following line(s), departments, branches, job titles, and responsibilities can be listed. The last line is for the date the applicant left the company.

Unlike Western documents, on a *rirekisho* applicants must list the reason they left full-time employment. There are three possible choices (Kojima, 2005). They are (1) *isshinjo*

*no tsugo ni yori taisha* (left the company for personal reasons), see Figure 3, line 10; (2) *keiyaku manryou ni yori taisha* (contract ended), see Figure 3, line 4; or (3) *kaisha tsugo ni yori taisha* (left for company reasons), see Figure 3, line 7. The third choice, leaving for company reasons, can be used in a variety of situations including being downsized, being fired for incompetence or the company going bankrupt. Applicants do not need to give any further details on their *rirekisho*, but should be prepared to explain in an interview.

The convention for a part-time job is to list it using only one line. The style guides say to start with the date, then list the company or school name followed by the job title plus *toshite* (as) followed by *kinmu* (worked). If an applicant is still working at the part-time job, this can be indicated by writing *genzai ni itaru* in parenthesis. Use the date plus *made* (until) if no longer working there. No reason needs to be given for leaving a part-time job. See Figure 3, line 13.

For dispatched jobs, whether full-time or part-time, the convention is for applicants to begin by indicating the date they registered with the dispatch company, followed by *haken gaisha* (dispatch company), a colon, the name of the dispatch company and *haken toroku* (dispatch enrollment). On the next line, applicants can list the name of the company or school where they were dispatched to plus the job title and *toshite*. As with part-time jobs, in parenthesis, indicate *genzai ni itaru* if still working or the date plus *made* if no longer working there. No reason needs to be given for finishing the assignment. See Figure 3, lines 11 and 12.

After all entries, the convention is to skip a line and write 以上, *ijo* (end of section), on the right side of the third

column. Again the style guides note that it is important not to skip this step as it clearly indicates that there are no further entries. Please see Figure 2, line 14.

		①
		②職歴
平成 18	8	③横浜市立鈴木中学校 外国語指導助手として勤務
平成 19	7	④契約満了につき退職
平成 19	8	⑤株式会社ノヴァ 入社
		⑥・英語教師
平成 19	11	⑦会社都合により退社
平成 20	1	⑧株式会社ジオス 入社
		⑨・外国人教師
平成 20	3	⑩一身上の都合により退社
平成 20	4	⑪派遣会社： 株式会社インタラック 派遣登録
		⑫・京都大学大学院生物学科 派遣講師として（平成 21 年 3 月まで）
平成 21	4	⑬近畿大学文学部 非常勤講師として勤務（現在に在る）
		⑭以上

Figure 3. Employment history

### Licenses and qualifications

The next section of a typical rirekisho is an area for applicants to list any licenses, certificates, qualifications, etc. that they have acquired. These do not need to be directly related to employment. For example, it is common to list a driver's license in this section. Other items might include Japanese language proficiency scores, CELTA certificates, etc. Non-Japanese may also want to list their visa status in this section. However, the convention is not to list university degrees here.

Again, write the date nengo style listing only the year and month followed by the name of the qualification and 取得, shutoku (acquisition). In the case of listing a visa, the expiration date can be indicated in parenthesis. The section is also ended with以上, ijo (end of section), written on the right side.

年	月	①免許・資格
平成 18	11	②第一種普通自動車運転免許 取得
平成 20	4	③日本人の配偶者等の在留資格 取得（平成 23 年 4 月 30 日まで有効）
平成 20	12	④日本語能力試験 2 級合格
		⑤以上

Figure 4. Licenses and qualifications

### Miscellaneous information

This section is found on the JIS 8303 form, but may not be found on other forms. This section has five boxes: one to list the reason for application, one for commuting time, and three for dependants.

In the first box, applicants are asked to write the reason why they are applying for the job and list any talents or interests that make them a better candidate than others. This section is one of the most important (Fukuzawa, 2008) and one of the hardest to write. While the form is asking for the reason for applying, the truth is that applicants would be better off by answering the question, “Why should the company hire me?” Non-Japanese might want to avoid writing in Japanese unless they are quite confident in their Japanese ability. Instead they can write in English. See Figure 5, box 1.

The remaining boxes in this section are relatively straightforward. One box simply indicates the amount of time that it takes to get to the work location in hours and minutes. The other boxes list the number of non-spousal dependants (i.e. children, in-laws, etc.), marital status, and indicate if the applicant supports his/her spouse. This may seem like redundant information for the head of a household, but remember that this form is often used by housewives looking for part-time employment.

①志望の動機、特技、好きな学科など I am especially good with children and low-level adult learners and your school has an excellent reputation with these kinds of students. I feel that I could make a significant contribution to your school.	②通勤時間 約 1時間 10分
	③扶養家族(配偶者を除く) 1人
	④配偶者 <input checked="" type="radio"/> 有 <input type="radio"/> 無
	⑤配偶者の扶養義務 <input checked="" type="radio"/> 有 <input type="radio"/> 無

Figure 5. Miscellaneous section

## Requests

The next section is a free section where applicants can list any requests that they have regarding salary, work hours, location, etc. Again the style guides say applicants need to be careful about what they put in this section. They should indicate how working at a certain location or at a certain time will benefit the company, not how it will benefit the applicant. However, applicants can essentially leave the section blank by writing特になし, tokuni nashi (nothing special). Keep in mind that this can be risky because some recruiters may think that it indicates a lack of desire to work (Kojima, 2005).

①本人希望記入欄(④特になし、⑤職種、⑥勤務時間、⑦勤務地、⑧その他についての希望などがあれば記入)
④特になし

Figure 6. Requests section

## Parent contact information

The final section of the JIS 8303 form is the parent contact information section. This section only needs to be completed if the applicant is a minor, under the age of 20. The applicant should list the name, address, and telephone number of his/her parents.

①保護者(本人が未成年の場合のみ記入)	TEL.
②ふりがな	
③氏名	④住所 〒 -
	FAX.

Figure 7. Parent contact information section

## Final advice and conclusion

More than not, a school that requires submission of a rirekisho will have its own unique rirekisho form that applicants should use. This form usually comes with instructions and may even include a style sheet. Much of what is written here is most likely still applicable, but if the instructions or the style sheet contradict what is written above, follow those instructions instead. The purpose of a

rirekisho or any other resume is to get an interview (Pierson, 2006); it is the first impression that schools have of potential teachers. Not following the instructions is unlikely to make a good impression.

Writing a rirekisho and researching the information needed to complete it takes time. It is a very good idea to work on it in advance so that the pressure of an application deadline is not compounded by having never written a rirekisho. By writing a practice or sample rirekisho in advance, applicants will be able to “cut and paste” information into the new form, albeit with the necessary changes in style, etc., to save time and energy.

It goes without saying that applicants need to fill in the form to the best of their ability following the conventions outlined here, but mistakes are bound to happen. Most Japanese employers know that rirekisho are unfamiliar to non-Japanese and are more likely to forgive a misstep here or there. With a little practice, writing a rirekisho shouldn't be any more intimidating than writing an English resume.

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## Appendix 1

Table 1. Gregorian and nengo (era name) year conversion

Gregorian	Nengo	Gregorian	Nengo	Gregorian	Nengo
1949	Showa 24	1969	44	1989	Heisei 1
1950	25	1970	45	1990	2
1951	26	1971	46	1991	3
1952	27	1972	47	1992	4
1953	28	1973	48	1993	5
1954	29	1974	49	1994	6
1955	30	1975	50	1995	7
1956	31	1976	51	1996	8
1957	32	1977	52	1997	9
1958	33	1978	53	1998	10
1959	34	1979	54	1999	11
1960	35	1980	55	2000	12
1961	36	1981	56	2001	13
1962	37	1982	57	2002	14
1963	38	1983	58	2003	15
1964	39	1984	59	2004	16
1965	40	1985	60	2005	17
1966	41	1986	61	2006	18
1967	42	1987	62	2007	19
1968	43	1988	63	2008	20