

## Japan rail death toll at 89 (Wed 27 Apr, 2005)

### WARM-UPS

**CHAT:** Talk in pairs or groups about: trains / train safety / Japanese trains / bullet trains / rail crashes / human error... For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

**BULLET TRAIN:** Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with bullet trains. Share your words with your partner / group and talk about them.

**TRAINS AND MY LIFE:** Talk with your partner about how important trains are in your life. Do you worry about safety? Does your country have a good rail network / safety record? Is traveling by train the safest mode of transport?

**TWO-MINUTE TRAIN DEBATES:** Face each other in pairs and engage in the following 2-minute debates. Students A take the first argument, students B the second. Rotate pairs to ensure a lively pace and noise level is kept:

- a. Trains are safest. vs. Flying is safer.
- b. Railway companies put safety first. vs. Railway companies put profit first.
- c. Japan's bullet train is the world's best train. vs. No. The Oriental Express is.
- d. We shouldn't have to stand on trains. vs. The train ticket isn't for a seat.
- e. Rail travel is nicer than flying. vs. Flying is the best way to travel.
- f. Sitting at the back is safest. vs. Sitting in the middle is safest.
- g. Trains should have safety belts. vs. That's not a good idea.
- h. A 23-year-old should not drive a train. vs. It's OK if the training is good.

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## PRE-READING

**WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... of the words 'rail' and 'crash'.

**TRUE / FALSE:** Look at the headline and guess whether these sentences are true or false:

- a. The number of deaths in Japan's horrific rail crash has risen. T / F
- b. The rail crash happened near Tokyo. T / F
- c. One car smashed into an underground car park of an apartment building. T / F
- d. It is Japan's worst ever rail disaster. T / F
- e. The investigation into the crash has started. T / F
- f. Driver error seems the main reason. T / F
- g. The train driver wasn't going too fast. T / F
- h. Japanese train drivers don't have much pressure in their jobs. T / F

**SYNONYM MATCH:** Match the following synonyms from the article:

- |    |          |             |
|----|----------|-------------|
| a. | deaths   | stress      |
| b. | tragic   | deadly      |
| c. | rise     | very        |
| d. | highly   | disciplined |
| e. | evidence | terrible    |
| f. | fatal    | clues       |
| g. | pressure | fatalities  |
| h. | punished | increase    |

**PHRASE MATCH:** Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- |    |                      |                           |
|----|----------------------|---------------------------|
| a. | tragic               | the evidence              |
| b. | The number of        | led to the fatal accident |
| c. | highly               | investigation             |
| d. | Japan's worst rail   | rail crash                |
| e. | looking through      | disaster since 1963       |
| f. | more than one factor | unlikely                  |
| g. | under                | pressure on their drivers |
| h. | putting too much     | dead will rise            |

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### READING:

**UNSCRAMBLE:** Put the words in the underlined parts of the article back into the correct order:

### Japan rail death toll at 89

**BNE:** The number of deaths in the horrific rail crash in Japan has risen to 89. More bodies were being pulled from the wreckage nearly 48 hours after the crash. Rescue workers at the scene near Osaka fear dead will number the rise of as they reach the front of the train. The first carriage smashed into an underground parking area of an apartment building. The second car wrapped itself around the corner of the building. Japanese police said it is else unlikely anyone highly will be found alive. Twenty people are still reported as missing. It is Japan's worst rail disaster since 1963.

Investigators are now looking through the evidence to crash the causes of the find. It seems more than one factor led to the fatal accident. Driver error reason to the main be appears. Japan Railways has said their 23-year-old driver was speeding so he wouldn't be 90 seconds late. The bosses of Japan Railways are also under investigation for putting too much pressure on their drivers. Ex-workers have said on television that drivers are often punished late one for being minute. Japanese trains are famous for arriving on time.

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## DISCUSSION

- a. What did you think of this article?
- b. What were you doing when you heard about this rail crash?
- c. Has this rail accident made you think more about train safety?
- d. Are the trains in your country very safe?
- e. Do you like rail travel?
- f. Do you ever think about safety when you get on a train?
- g. Do train companies think more about safety of profit?
- h. Have you ever had an accident on public transport?
- i. Have you been on any dangerous trains, buses, planes, taxis...?
- j. What do you know about Japan's railways?
- k. Would you like to drive a train?
- l. Is 23 too young to be a train driver?
- m. Should computers replace train drivers?
- n. Is it OK for a driver to speed to arrive on time?
- o. Is it OK for train bosses to punish drivers for being late?
- p. What is your favorite method of getting from A to B?
- q. Did you like this discussion?
- r. Teacher / Student additional questions.

## HOMEWORK

**1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

**2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find information on your country's railways. Share your findings with your class next lesson.

**3. MY IDEAS:** Write a list of ideas that could make train travel safer. Share your list with your classmates in your next class. They will give you feedback on your ideas.

**4. LETTER:** Write a letter to the bosses of a public transportation company telling them of their responsibilities to passengers.

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## SPEAKING:

**RAIL SAFETY ROLE PLAY:** Students A are bosses of a rail company that has no money and a bad safety record. To keep your jobs you must improve safety. Students B belong to a train passengers' group. You need safer trains. Students C are politicians. You could become leader of your country if transport safety is improved. But... you own 25% of the rail company and you need money.

Make notes in the following table with the other rail bosses, passengers or politicians in your group. These notes might help you in the role play.

Possible improvements	Your arguments for or against these improvements
Seat belts	
Double the amount of driver training	
All seats to face backwards	
Fully automated, computer controlled trains	
Prison sentences for speeding drivers and bosses	
Video cameras at every 100 metres along the rail track	
Train speed and speed limits in every car for passengers to see	
Stronger trains	
Two drivers per train	
Brakes in each car for passengers to press if the train is going too fast	

Students A, B and C come together for a rail safety meeting. You must all agree on three changes that must be made to make trains safer.

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Investigators are now looking through the evidence to find the causes of the crash. It seems more than one factor led to the fatal accident. Driver error appears to be the main reason. Japan Railways has said their 23-year-old driver was speeding so he wouldn't be 90 seconds late. The bosses of Japan Railways are also under investigation for putting too much pressure on their drivers. Ex-workers have said on television that drivers are often punished for being one minute late. Japanese trains are famous for arriving on time.