少しずつ・少しだけ・少しでも



Three Ways to Say “A Little”

Small steps, small limits, and even the smallest amount.

Choose the focus of a small amount: distribution or gradual change, limitation, or even a minimal degree. This workbook compares three expressions in ordinary contexts; it is not a complete grammar of ずつ, だけ, or でも.

Post-beginner / approximately N4 with selected N3 nuances

40 practice tasks | Explained answers | English guidance

LEARN. PRACTICE. UNDERSTAND.

Your route through this book

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Before you begin

Post-beginner / approximately N4 with selected N3 nuances. Levels are approximate teaching guidance, not an official JLPT syllabus or a proficiency guarantee.

Read, try, compare, retry

Read one lesson, study the Japanese examples and English meanings, then complete the matching practice. Write short answers on the lines and longer responses in a notebook. Check the reason as well as the answer. Return to the lesson when you cannot explain your choice.

How to use the answers

Open tasks have model answers, not the only possible wording. Accept natural alternatives that preserve the requested meaning and viewpoint. For each task, check both the answer and your reason. The final practice set is a self-check: try it without notes, then review the categories you missed.

Reading and use

This PDF is designed for zoomed reading and printing. Japanese examples use normal spelling; vocabulary notes support key words. No recorded audio or personal feedback is included. You may keep and use your downloaded files for personal study without a time limit. Printing for your own study is allowed. Sharing, redistribution, and resale are not permitted. © 2026 Junichiro Japanese.

01 / Start with the message

Separate amount from the speaker's focus.

One amount, three viewpoints

少し means a small amount or degree. Adding ずつ, だけ, or でも changes how the sentence presents that smallness. 少しずつ highlights small portions or gradual progression. 少しだけ limits the amount. 少しでも brings even a small amount into consideration.

Choose by intention, not English alone

English "a little" can appear in translations of all three. Read the whole message: are there repeated portions, an amount being limited, or a minimal amount that still matters? Several versions may be grammatical while answering different intentions. The exercises tell you whether to select a target focus or discuss multiple possible readings.

毎日、少しずつ漢字を覚えています。

I learn kanji a little at a time every day.

今日は漢字を少しだけ覚えました。

Today I learned only a little kanji.

忙しくても、少しでも漢字を覚えたいです。

Even when I am busy, I want to learn at least a little kanji.

DECISION / Name the focus in English before choosing the Japanese expression.

WORDS / 少し（すこし） a little; 漢字（かんじ） kanji; 覚える（おぼえる） learn/memorize; 忙しい（いそがしい） busy

AT A GLANCE

DISTRIBUTION / INCREMENTS
少しずつ: a little at each step

LIMIT / SMALL AMOUNT
少しだけ: only a little

MINIMUM / EVEN A LITTLE
少しでも: even a little, if possible

02 / Small portions and gradual change

Use 少しずつ without inventing a fixed time scale.

Repeated portions

少しずつ can describe proceeding in small amounts: adding water, moving furniture, or learning words. The portions need not be numerically measured. A short activity can happen little by little; the expression does not require weeks or months.

Change can be gradual too

A room can become brighter little by little. There is no requirement that a person deliberately performs each step. With distribution, 少しずつ can mean a small share for each recipient. Context tells you whether to imagine portions over time or portions across recipients.

水を少しずつ入れてください。

Please add the water a little at a time.

空が少しずつ明るくなりました。

The sky gradually became lighter.

みんなにお菓子を少しずつ配りました。

I gave everyone a small share of the snacks.

DECISION / Look for the portions or the changing degree, not a compulsory “every day.”

WORDS / 水（みず） water; 入れる（いれる） put in; 空（そら） sky; 明るい（あかるい） bright; 配る（くばる） distribute; お菓子（おかし） snacks

Name the focus

Review: 1. Answer the prompt and give a short reason.

Q001 Match each expression to its primary focus here: 少しずつ / 少しだけ / 少しでも. Labels: limited amount; small steps; even a small amount counts.

Q002 Choose the intended focus: you add water in several small portions, not all at once.
水を（少しずつ／少しだけ）入れます。

Q003 You opened a window only a small amount. Report that limit:
窓を（少しずつ／少しだけ）開けました。

Q004 You want some practice even if it is very little. Complete with one target expression: （ ）練習したいです。

Answers Q001-Q008

Q001 少しずつ: small steps. 少しだけ: limited amount. 少しでも: even a small amount counts.

These are starting contrasts for this workbook, not exhaustive definitions of the particles.

Q002 少しずつ。水を少しずつ入れます。 / I add water a little at a time.

Repeated small portions are central. 少しだけ could limit the total quantity without describing the portions.

Q003 少しだけ。窓を少しだけ開けました。 / I opened the window just a little.

The task specifies the final small opening, not gradual opening. 少しずつ would focus on the process.

Q004 少しでも練習したいです。 / I want to practise at least a little.

Even a small amount counts toward the wish. 少しだけ would instead bound the desired amount.

Q005 No. It means “Please add the water a little at a time,” which can happen in a short activity.

The phrase marks portions, not a fixed duration.

Q006 The sky gradually became lighter. The degree of brightness changes.

No deliberate human action is required. ずつ presents gradual change.

Q007 I gave everyone a small share of the snacks.

Here small amounts are distributed among recipients. It need not mean that each person received snacks repeatedly.

Q008 毎日、少しずつ単語を覚えます。

Accept 毎日、単語を少しずつ覚えます. The small recurring learning amounts are the focus.

This answer excerpt includes Q005-Q008; those tasks are not shown in this sample.

Keep the distinction

少しずつ: small portions, distribution, or gradual change. It does not require a long period or deliberate effort.

少しだけ: a limited small amount or degree. The expression does not inherently express disappointment.

少しでも: even a slight amount or degree matters; interpret the wish, condition, or comparison around it.

毎日 does not force ずつ. Multiple grammatical choices can express different focuses.

少しだけでも is a natural combination; do not treat the three expressions as mutually exclusive.

Retry Q001-016 for core meanings, Q017-028 for alternatives and false shortcuts, Q029-032 for production. Retake Q033-040 without the lessons.

Make it yours

Choose three tasks you found difficult. Change the people, objects or setting, then write a new example that follows the same distinction. Revisit it the next day and explain the choice without looking at the answer.