



*CULTUREGUIDE*

# JAPAN

SERIES 1  
PRIMARY (K–6)



BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY  
**KENNEDY CENTER**  
FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES



# JAPAN CULTUREGUIDE

This unit is published by the International Outreach Program of the David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies at Brigham Young University as part of their efforts to foster open cultural exchange within the educational community and to promote increased global understanding by providing meaningful cultural education tools.

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# WHY STUDY CULTURES?

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For most of us, cultures are misunderstood; they are nebulous, vague, and hidden. Like the famous iceberg analogy, we know that most of what a culture is cannot be seen. But what does that mean? And why, then, should we study cultures if we do not know what we're studying in the first place?

In the late twentieth century, Brigham Young University did not embrace a new discipline, but rather a new area of study—the study of cultures. Typically, anthropology is the social science that studies cultures. Why should they have all the fun? The study of cultures unites other academic disciplines (as needed), drawing upon literature, political science, sociology, and even the more applied areas of nursing, social work, law, and business. The study of cultures has grown into nothing short of a revolt against disciplines, “a mode of inquiry” that looks at things in new ways.<sup>1</sup>

In 1982, the David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies established International Outreach as a formal program to help build bridges of intercultural understanding. Since then, more than 10,000 *gratis* cultural presentations have been given to local area public schools, taking students to new places using language, multimedia, and imagination. *CultureGuides* derive from the same expertise that has been honed in classrooms—with the exciting exception that these intercultural learning tools are not geographically bound. Thanks to the Internet, accessible multimedia technology, and our trusty iMAC, a limitless audience can learn about different cultures.

Globalization, the driving paradigm of the post-Cold War world, means that now, more than ever, culture matters. Culture is the invisible context that may keep us from understanding important people, places, and ideas; it exists whether or not we think about it. Intercultural education can help us, not only as an intellectual exercise, but also in very practical ways to combat racism, to expand business, and to communicate effectively.

*CultureGuides* share the same aim as Edward T. Hall, the eminent cultural scholar, to try and “make culture real.”<sup>2</sup> Even though our “student guides” are not present in every classroom, we hope that *CultureGuides* will make classrooms of the mind and cultural laboratories wherever you may reside.

<sup>1</sup> Ziauddin Sardar and Borin Van Loon. *Introducing Cultural Studies*, Totem Books, New York: 1998.

<sup>2</sup> *The Edge: The E-Journal of Intercultural Relations*, Summer 1998, Vol. 1(3) Posted 10/11/98, <http://interculturalrelations.com/v1i3Summer1998/sum98sorrellshall.htm>.



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# TRADITIONS

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## NEW YEAR IN JAPAN

New Year in Japan involves more than changing from one year to the next. It is also associated with the renewal of life and relationships. Life is revitalized as the Japanese clean houses, discard old household items, and purchase new decorations. Relationships are strengthened by exchanging postcards with friends and visiting extended family.



### Starting Points

1. “*Akemashite omedeto gozaimasu!*” [a-ke-ma-shite o-me-de-to go-zye-mas] If you were in Japan, you would know that this means “Happy New Year!” You would also know that it is associated with the biggest celebration of the year!
2. What is your favorite holiday? What do you do to celebrate it? Why is it so important to you? If you ask a child from Japan what his or her favorite holiday is, he or she would most likely say “New Year’s!” In Japan, New Year’s is one of the most important holidays of the year.
3. As you learn about the Japanese New Year celebration, make a list of the different ways people celebrate. Then make a list of how the Japanese New Year is the same as New Year’s in the United States. You may also want to compare it to other holidays you celebrate each year.



### Information

#### New Year in Japan

The best way to learn about the traditions of a country is from the people of that country themselves. Read what Mika Yoshida, a native of Japan, explains about the Japanese New Year.

#### Mika Yoshida Tells about the Japanese New Year

Hi! My name is Mika Yoshida, and I am in eighth grade. Today, I’d like to share with you what it’s like to spend a New Year’s in Japan. When I was little, my favorite day of the year was New Year’s Day. Let me explain why.

The excitement of New Year’s starts when I start writing a bunch of New Year’s postcards to send to my friends. It is like a token of our friendship to exchange New Year’s greetings by sending postcards. My older sister receives more postcards than I do since she has many more friends than I do, but it is always our dad who beats us all. Every year, he receives more than one hundred of them! I wish one day I can get as many as he does. The New Year’s postcard usually contains a picture of *eto*, one of the twelve animals of [the] zodiac year. For example, the year of 1999 is the rabbit’s year, so most postcards of that year have a picture of a rabbit. I’ll show you

one that I received from my best friend (see **Traditions Visual 1**). I was born in 1985, the year of the ox. What year were you born? Do you know your animal (see **Traditions Visual 2**)?

After we finish writing postcards, then we start preparing for the next year. How? By cleaning the whole house. My mom always tells me that we need to remove all the dust from this year so we can start a year with a clean house and good feelings. We usually spend a day or two just to clean. It is quite a lot of work. The cleaning takes place around 29 to 31 December. When the whole house is clean, we can start preparing for the New Year's special dish called *osechi*.

On New Year's Eve, there are many TV programs offering a countdown to the new year. My favorite show is called *Kohaku Utagassen*. In this program, male and female singers form a group to compete with one another. Many of my favorite singers are male, so I always end up cheering for the male group. One of the TV programs shows people striking huge bells hung at various Buddhist temples. Buddhists believe that there are 108 worldly desires humans have to prevent us from going to heaven. So, on New Year's Eve, people go to the nearest Buddhist temple to strike the bell 108 times. Every time I see that on TV, it makes me feel like the year is ending and the new year is approaching.

Some people go to places so that they can see the first sunrise of the year. Most of us try to make a New Year's resolution. My school always makes us write our resolution using calligraphy.

When my family and I get up on New Year's Day, we bow to each other and say the greetings, "*Akemashite omedeto gozaimasu*." It means "Happy New Year." After a light meal, we go to Shinto Shrine to offer the first prayer of the year. Here is the picture of me and my family before the shrine (see **Traditions Visual 3**). I am the one on the right. Do you like my *kimono*? Kimono is the traditional Japanese dress my sister and I are wearing (see **Traditions Visual 4**). We wear these dresses on special occasions. Do you see the colorful string and the huge bell attached to that string on the shrine? When we go to the shrine, we offer our prayer by throwing some money into the huge wooden box located under the bell, shake the string to jiggle the bell, clap our hands twice, bow once, and pray. You can pray for anything you want. I pray for my family's health and good luck. Some people ask for a boyfriend or a girlfriend, others ask for good grades or money. Inside and outside the shrine is filled with many stands selling games, toys, and food. I always ask my dad to buy me a candy-covered apple.

The most exciting thing about New Year's is that all the children receive money from our parents and relatives. Every year, we go to visit my grandparents to spend some time together. We exchange our New Year's greetings, then the adults give the children some money in a little pouch. It's called *otoshidama*. My parents have seven siblings altogether, and I have two sets of grandparents, so that makes nine pouches. Each pouch may contain anywhere from one thousand yen to ten thousand yen [nine to ninety U.S. dollars determined by the year, as in the year 1999]. When I was little, I only got one thousand yen each. Now that I am older, I get five thousand yen or more.

We not only greet each other, but play lots of games together. My cousin and I normally go to a park to fly kites for a few hours, come back, and play games. My favorite is *fukuwari* because everyone can do this. Even my little cousin can play this game. She is only five years old. You should try to play this game. It really is fun (see **Traditions Visual 5**).

All day long we eat, talk, and play. It seems like all the grown-ups are relaxed more than any other day of the year. I cannot wait to have another new year.



### Activities

1. Play fukuwari in groups of four or five (see **Traditions Visual 5**).
2. Write a letter to Mika Yoshida about what you did to celebrate your New Year's.
3. Color the New Year's postcard or make your own New Year's postcard. Be sure to include a picture of this year's animal and a short New Year's greeting.
4. Sing the New Year's Song "Oshogatsu" (see **Traditions Visual 6**). Find someone to perform the song for or have your own New Year's celebration and sing it with your friends.



### Discussion Questions

1. Why is exchanging postcards important to the Japanese people? What does it signify? Do you exchange gifts during other holidays?
2. What holidays and traditions do we have in the United States that are similar to the Japanese New Year?
3. In what ways can you tell if a holiday is important to people?
4. Have you ever made a New Year's resolution? What did you resolve to do? Why do people make resolutions on New Year's?
5. What clothes did Mika wear for New Year's and what did she do when she was wearing them? Do you ever wear special clothing during a holiday? Why?



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# FOLKLORE & LANGUAGE

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## SPEAKING JAPANESE

Respect permeates every aspect of the Japanese culture, including communication. At all times, one must be polite and respectful of others in the way one speaks. This is shown by the way Japanese children bow and address even their closest friends by proper titles.



### Starting Points

1. Introduce yourself in Japanese. “*Konnichi wa. Ogenki desu ka? Nihongo no kotoba wo hanashitai desu ka? Dewa, isshoo ni nihongo wo hanashimashoo!*” [Koe-knee-chee wah. Oh-GEN-kee dess-kah? Knee-HONE-go no koe-toe-bah woe ha-na-shee-tie dess kah. Day-wah ee-shew knee knee-HONE-go woe hah bah-shee-mah-shew!] (Hello. How are you? Do you speak Japanese? Let’s speak Japanese together!)
2. Think about how you talk to your friends. Do you speak differently to your teachers? Your parents? Why? In Japan, people use many different words depending on with whom they are speaking because language is an important way that the Japanese show respect.
3. Learning a different language means learning more than just words. As you learn a few simple phrases in Japanese, think about the different aspects of communication that show respect. Why are these important parts of learning a language?



### Information

#### Pronunciation—Vowels

- a    *a* as in father
- i    *i* as in machine
- u    *oo* as in toot
- e    *e* as in get and pen
- o    *o* as in old or open

#### Pronunciation—Consonants

Japanese consonants are pronounced much like English consonants. However, the Japanese language does not use the sounds made by the letters *l*, *q*, *v*, or *x*. These letters are not included in the Japanese alphabet.

#### The Japanese Language

The Japanese language is spoken by more than 123 million people. Although Japanese uses the same writing system as Chinese, the two languages have different sentence structures and pronunciation. In addition to Chinese characters, Japanese also uses two types of alphabets.

In some ways, learning Japanese is easier than learning English. For example, the word for book, *hon*, may mean *a book*, *the book*, or *the books*. In English, we would change the spelling of *book* and then the articles for each phrase. Another example is the use of *san*. In English we use Mr., Mrs., Ms., or Miss to indicate whether the person we are talking to is male or female, married or single. However, in Japanese, the title *san* is used to address everyone.

### **Showing Respect**

Showing respect by speaking in a polite style is important to the Japanese people. The Japanese people use humble tones and words when talking about themselves, but they use flattering, elevated speech when speaking about another person. Furthermore, single words such as nouns, adjectives, and verbs have several different forms. Each form expresses a different level of respect and is used when speaking to different people such as parents, teachers, and peers.

### **Bowing**

In Japan, children are taught to be very well mannered. They are taught to bow and say “Konnichi wa” to their teachers, parents, and other adults. Bowing is a sign of respect. If the child and the person he or she is addressing both bow, the child is expected to bow slightly lower. This indicates to others that the person has a higher rank in society. Students also bow to their schoolmates. When bowing to a student in a lower grade, the older child allows the younger student to bow lower than himself. Bowing is not taken lightly by the Japanese, and it is always expected to be done properly. To bow, one must bend lightly at the waist and dip the head slightly. When greeting others, it is customary that both bow and simultaneously say, “Konnichi wa.” The Japanese also bow and say thank you, “*Arigatoo*.”

### **Titles**

Japanese students also show respect to their friends and fellow schoolmates in using the title *san*. For example, you could greet your friend Matt by saying, “Konnichi wa Matt-san,” while bowing. It would be done the same way for a female classmate named Jennifer—*Jennifer-san*.

### **Counting**

Unlike Europeans and Americans, the Japanese start with an open hand when counting from one to five. When they count the number one, they fold the thumb against the palm of their hand. For two, they close the index finger down over the thumb. The middle finger folds over the thumb for three, and so on until all the fingers are folded over the palm. The result is, of course, a closed fist. The Japanese count down to a closed fist because when fingers are extended, they are pointing at someone, which is considered impolite.

## Numbers

The numbers from one to five are pronounced as *ichi, ni, san, shi, go*. To help you learn these words, remember this mnemonic device: *ichi* (one) and *ni* (two) sound like “itchy knee” (scratch your knee). *San* (three) is like sanding wood, after which we wipe off sweat from our forehead and say *shi* (four)! Then, point a finger and say “let’s go” (five).

| JAPANESE | PRONUNCIATION | ENGLISH |
|----------|---------------|---------|
| ichi     | eech-ee       | one     |
| ni       | knee          | two     |
| san      | sahn          | three   |
| shi      | shee          | four    |
| go       | go            | five    |
| roku     | ROH-koo       | six     |
| shichi   | shee-chee     | seven   |
| hachi    | HAH-chee      | eight   |
| kuu      | koo           | nine    |
| juu      | joo           | ten     |

## Japanese Phrases

| JAPANESE                                     | PRONUNCIATION                                 | ENGLISH   |
|--|---|---|
| Dewa, issboo ni nihongo<br>wo hanashimashoo! | Day-wah, ee-shew knee<br>knee-HONE-go woe hah | Today, we are going to<br>learn Japanese!<br>nah-shee-mah-shew! |
| san  | sahn  | Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms.  |
| Arigatoo                                     | odd-ee-GAH-toe                                | Thank you, Thanks   |
| Sayonara                                     | sah-yoh-nah-rah                               | Good-bye  |



## Activities

1. Compose a short play using the Japanese words that you have just learned. You may want to use English for words that you have not learned in Japanese.
2. Practice speaking Japanese as you sing the songs “Sakura,” “Umi,” and “Mori No Kumasan” (see **Folklore & Language Visuals 1–3**). Think about how these songs show respect and why.
3. Draft a set of rules that would require everyone in a society (or classroom) to show respect for one another. Prepare a skit showing how each of the rules is used. Spend an hour (or day) actually living by these rules.
4. Make up a song to help you remember how to count in Japanese. Practice counting objects around your house or classroom by singing your song.





## Discussion Questions

1. Why is it important to show respect to others? Why do you think the Japanese have placed such a high value on showing respect in their speech?
2. How do we show respect to our teachers, parents, and friends? How is the way we show respect the same or different from students in Japan?
3. How do the words we use show respect for others?
4. Other than words, what things do you think Japanese children might learn about showing respect?

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# FOOD

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## EATING HABITS AND ETIQUETTE

The Japanese greatly emphasize respect, and this value is apparent even in the presentation and consumption of food. By practicing proper dining etiquette, one shows respect to those who provide and prepare the meal.



### Starting Points

1. What culture claims the longest living people in the world, attributing their longevity of life in part to a diet of rice, vegetables, and a delicacy often made of raw seafood? If you guessed Japanese—you're right! Now, can you guess how to set the table for a traditional Japanese meal? Finally, can you guess what all these things have to do with one of the most important values of Japanese culture? Respect.
2. What kind of rules does your family have regarding mealtime? Are there certain manners your parents expect you to use? Why do you think table manners are so important? What do they communicate? In Japan, eating etiquette is just one more way of showing respect.
3. Understanding the attitude the Japanese have regarding food and eating begins with understanding the importance of respect in the Japanese culture. As you learn about Japanese eating habits and etiquette, look for ways to show respect when eating and try to find parallels in your own culture.



### Information

#### The Japanese Diet

The staple of the Japanese diet is rice. The importance of rice is symbolized by the country's flag. The flag shows a red circle, representing the sun, on a white background which represents rice. The rice in Japan has short grains, which make it stick together easily. The stickiness makes it easier to eat with chopsticks.

Since Japan is an island country, much of its food comes from the ocean. At the market, people can buy all kinds of seafood including fish, seaweed, shrimp, crab, shark, snails, and octopus. The ocean is not the only source of food; people also eat vegetables such as cabbage, peas, onions, cucumbers, and beans, as well as other meats including chicken, pork, and beef.

#### Sushi

Many people know that *sushi* is made from raw fish. However, there are actually many kinds of sushi. Some kinds are made with cooked fish, or even no fish at all. A sushi bar offers different types of sushi as well as other seafood, such as squid and shrimp. Some Japanese restaurants have a tank where they keep their fish, so people

can choose which fish they will eat. Some restaurants slice the fish and serve it before the fish stops breathing! This may not sound appetizing to many Americans, but Japanese people are proud of their healthy diet. Fish and rice are high in protein and contain little fat, salt, sugar, or cholesterol.

### **Changes in Diet**

Although Japanese people have traditionally been among the longest-living people in the world as a result of this diet, conditions are starting to change. Young people in Japan are eating less rice and more fast food. This has led to an increase in heart problems and a decrease in life expectancy.

### **Chopsticks**

Japanese chopsticks are round, distinguishing them from the square Chinese chopsticks. There are many rules in using chopsticks appropriately. To hold the chopsticks correctly, grasp them near the thick end, using the thumb and forefinger to move the upper stick and the other fingers to anchor the lower stick. With very little movement, you should be able to pinch a grain of rice. If not, try scooting your hand closer to the thick end of the chopsticks (**see Food Visual 1**).

### **Etiquette: Showing Respect**

In Japan, table manners are very important. This includes knowing how to set the table for the family meal. All food in Japan is put into separate bowls. There is one bowl for rice, one for *miso* soup, one for meat or fish, one for vegetables, and perhaps one for Japanese pickles (**see Food Visual 2**). Japanese dishes are designed to be the right size and shape for holding in the hands. Separating the food in this way makes it more visually appealing, and Japanese people like to “eat with the eyes.”

It is a particular point in Japanese etiquette to lift the dishes to the chest when eating rice or drinking soup. It is acceptable to drink soup out of the bowl. It is also good etiquette to slurp and make noises while eating noodles, as this cools them. One should never rest one’s arms on the table.

To start a Japanese meal, everyone puts their hands together in front of their chest and says, “*itadakimasu*.” This phrase shows appreciation to both those who prepared the meal, and the gods who provided it. At the end of the meal the same gesture is repeated with the words, “*gochisosama deshita*.” This also shows appreciation and satisfaction.

### **Gyoza Recipe**

*Gyoza* [gyoh-zah] is the Japanese word for small meatballs wrapped in a piece of thin dough that is fried or steamed. These are called *yaki-mandoo* in Korean and *jiaozi-zi* or *guotie* in Chinese. In Japan, gyoza is made with so much garlic that someone once joked that after eating gyoza, a person’s breath could stop a freight train at a hundred yards!

#### **You will need:**

- 50 skins (3-inch square wonton skins or round gyoza skins)
- 1/2 lb ground pork or sausage
- 1 small (2-inch diameter) onion, finely chopped



3 Chinese cabbage (nappa) leaves, finely chopped  
garlic powder  
cooking oil—enough to barely coat bottom of the pan  
small paper cup 3/4 full of water  
mixing bowl(s)  
several teaspoons for dishing up filling  
small knife  
electric fry pan with lid (Teflon or coated surface is best to prevent sticking)  
paper plates  
metal spatula  
newspaper

### Preparation

1. Mix meat, onion, cabbage, and garlic in a bowl with your hands.
2. Place a square wonton skin or a round gyoza skin in the palm of the hand. Put a teaspoon of meat filling in the center.
3. Dip one finger in water and draw a wet line around half of the skin.
4. Fold the skin in half over the meat so that the edges touch. Press firmly so that the skin seals. For a fancy design, pleat the edges together to make a bag shape.
5. Pour a thin layer of oil on the frying pan heated to 360° F.
6. Place gyoza in a single layer with the sealed edge up and brown the bottom for about two minutes.
7. Add water and cover quickly with a lid. Cook until all the water has steamed out. The gyoza should be crisp on the bottom, soft and chewy on top.
8. Serve hot on plates or napkins with soy sauce. For an optional dipping sauce, try adding vinegar and hot pepper oil (rayu) to the soy sauce.

Yield: 50 gyoza

Note: This is not an exact recipe. It is possible to use just a little meat and stretch it with lots of cabbage and onion. In this case, a little *shoyu* (soy sauce) will moisten the filling so it holds together well.



### Activities

1. Make a proper Japanese table setting and cook the Japanese recipe for gyoza. Follow the rules of etiquette you have learned. Remember to say “itadakimasu” at the beginning and “gochisosama” at the end of the meal.
2. Practice using chopsticks. Have a contest to see who can pick the most pieces of hard candy out of a bowl in thirty seconds.
3. Complete the word search (see **Food Visual 3**).
4. Perform the role play in groups of four. You may want to create a traditional table setting and try eating steamed rice with chopsticks to make it more realistic.



## Discussion Questions

1. Considering their diet, why do you think the people in Japan live longer than Americans?
2. Is there a difference between being polite and showing respect? Discuss what you think the differences are.
3. How does the food we eat reflect an appreciation for our own cultural values?
4. How does etiquette in Japan differ from etiquette in the United States? Why are certain behaviors considered polite in one culture and impolite in another?
5. In addition to respect, what other values can we see by looking at the Japanese diet and etiquette?

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# CROSS-CULTURAL CONTRIBUTIONS

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## PLAYING GAMES

Japanese children enjoy various games and pastimes that are popular throughout the world. Japanese paper folding, known as *origami*, began as a game for children and has since evolved into a form of art. Japanese children also play a game similar to “paper, rock, scissors.” These shared games help us to understand how much we have in common with the Japanese culture.



### Starting Points

1. What kinds of games do you like to play with your friends? Do you think you would still play these games if you lived in a different country? You might be surprised to learn that some games are played all over the world!
2. Have you ever made a paper airplane? Do you know how to make other things by folding paper? Did you know that in Japan paper folding is not just a game for children, but is considered an art!
3. Even though they live in a different country, Japanese children enjoy many of the same things we do. As you learn about different games and hobbies, think about how your life might be different if you lived in Japan. How would it be the same?



### Information

#### Japanese Children's Games

Japanese children are like American children in that they like to have fun by playing games. Some of the games that they play are much like the games played in other countries. One of these games is a hand-clapping game like “paper, rock, scissors” called *jyanken pon* (jahn-ken pon). The Japanese children play this game by singing a song called “Ocharaka Hoi!” while clapping. At the end of the song, the children make one of the paper, rock, or scissor signs.

#### Origami

Another activity for Japanese children is paper folding, or origami. Origami has a long history in Japan. Written records as early as the Heian Era (782–1184 C.E.) make reference to it as a form of children's play. Children in Japan learn to fold paper into shapes the same way American children fold paper airplanes and boats. These folded shapes are called origami. Today, origami is not considered primarily a children's activity but is recognized as a creative branch of paper sculpting.

In origami, a piece of paper is folded into a recognizable figure without cutting, gluing, or drawing any details on the form. Some figures are simple enough to be folded by preschoolers, while others are mastered only after hours of practice. Experts



can make several thousand different forms. Cranes, frogs, boats, balls, and flowers are among the most common figures. The most popular, however, is the crane, the symbol of long life and happiness.

Today, Japanese children learn to do at least simple origami. There are adults throughout the world who create origami. People who are skilled in the art of paper folding are called *oragamians*. They publish a newspaper, the *Origamian*, and have a museum at Cooper Union in New York City. People have come from all across the world to see these beautiful works of paper art.



## Activities

1. Fold a simple origami figure such as the crane or samurai hat (**see Cross-cultural Contributions Visuals 1–2**). You will need square paper, one square sheet for each figure to be folded (approximately six inches).
2. Look in the library for origami books to teach you the more difficult figures. Teach them to your friends. You may want to color or decorate your origami figures to make a display.
3. Play Ocharaka Hoi! with a partner. The game may be played without learning the song (**see Cross-cultural Contributions Visuals 3–4**).



## Discussion Questions

1. What kinds of things can you make out of paper? Why do you use paper to make them? What would life be like without paper?
2. Why do you think Japanese children like to make origami figures?
3. What kinds of games would you like to share with Japanese children?
4. What other things, besides games, do you think are the same in Japan?

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# FACTS ABOUT JAPAN

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**Official Name:** Nippon or Nihon  
(Source of the Sun)

**Capital:** Tokyo

**Government Type:** constitutional  
monarchy

**Area:** 377,835 sq km

**Land Boundaries:** Coastline 29,751 km

**Climate:** varies from tropical in south  
to cool temperate in north

**Lowest Point:** Hachiro-gata 4 m

**Highest Point:** Mount Fuji 3,776 m

**Natural Resources:** negligible mineral  
resources, fish

**Natural Hazards:** many dormant and  
some active volcanoes; about 1,500  
seismic occurrences (mostly tremors)  
every year; tsunamis

**Population:** 126,974,628 (July 2002  
est.)

**Ethnic Groups:** Japanese 99%, other  
1% (mostly Korean)

**Religions:** observe both Shinto and  
Buddhist 84%, other 16% (including  
Christian 0.7%)

**Languages:** Japanese

**GDP:** \$3.45 trillion (2001 est.)

**GDP Per Capita:** \$27,200 (2001 est.)

**GDP Composition By Sector:** agricul-  
ture 2%, industry 36%, services 62%  
(2000 est.)

**Labor Force:** 67.7 million (2000)

**Unemployment Rate:** 4.9% (2000)  
urban; plus considerable underemploy-  
ment

**Industries:** steel and nonferrous metal-  
lurgy, heavy electrical equipment, con-  
struction and mining equipment, motor  
vehicles and parts, electronic and  
telecommunication equipment, machine  
tools, automated production systems,  
locomotives and railroad rolling stock,  
ships, chemicals, textiles, processed  
foods

**Agricultural Products:** rice, sugar  
beets, vegetables, fruit, pork, poultry,  
dairy products, eggs, fish

**Exports:** \$404.6 billion (f.o.b., 2001)  
manufactures (including machinery,  
motor vehicles, consumer electronics)

**Imports:** \$331.6 billion (f.o.b, 2001)  
manufactures, foodstuffs, raw materials,  
and fossil fuels

**Trade Partners:** U.S., Southeast Asia,  
EU, China

**Currency:** yen (¥)

**Exchange Rate:** 132.66 yen (¥) = \$1  
U.S. (January 2002)

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# HISTORY AND HOLIDAYS

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## TIME LINE

- 660 B.C.E.** Jimmu, the mythological descendent of the sun goddess, Amaterasu, founds the Japanese Empire
- 300** Yayoi period—rice cultivation, metal-working, and the potter's wheel are introduced from China and Korea
- 100 C.E.** Local clans form small political units
- 300** Yamato period—Powerful clan rulers unify the state, clan rulers claiming descent from Amaterasu Omikami create an imperial dynasty
- 645** Asuka period—Taika reforms, used to strengthen the emperor's power, are implemented
- 710** Nara period—New capital built at Nara, adoption of Buddhism, writing of *Nihongi* and *Kojiki*, ancient Shinto texts
- 794** Heian period—Capital moves to Kyoto, official contact with China stops
- 1185** Kamakura period—Military government established in Kamakura
- 1192** Title of shogun, or military ruler, first given out; Bushi (warrior class) becomes new ruling class.
- 1274 & 1281** Kublai Khan and the Mongols attempt to invade Japan, origin of kamikaze
- 1333** Muromachi period—the district of Muromachi becomes the center of the shogun-led government in Kyoto, new military leaders patronize Zen Buddhism
- 1467–1568** Warring states period—Turmoil and fighting within Japan
- 1549** Francis Xavier and the Jesuits introduce Christianity
- 1568** Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi begin the process of unifying Japan, Japan closes its borders to foreign influences and trade
- 1635** Sakoku, the isolation policy, begins, almost all foreign trade stops, shogunate moves to Edo (Tokyo)
- 1853** Commodore Matthew Perry of the United States arrives and demands that Japan open its markets to trade
- 1868** Meiji period—Shogunate dissolved and emperor restored to power, feudal system eliminated and Japan becomes a nation-state
- 1895** Sino-Japan War (Japanese victory)
- 1904** Russo-Japan War (Japanese victory)
- 1910** Korea becomes part of Japan
- 1925** Universal manhood suffrage begins
- 1931** Manchuria becomes part of Japan
- 1937** World War II, war in China followed by invasion of Southeast Asia
- 1940** Japan joins the Axis powers
- 1941** Attack on Pearl Harbor

- 1945** First atomic bomb is dropped on Hiroshima, the second on Nagasaki, the emperor airs by radio a statement of unconditional surrender, new constitution instated
- 1951** Japan regains its independence after signing a peace treaty
- 1964** Summer Olympic Games in Tokyo
- 1972** Relations with China are normalized
- 1989** Prince Akihito succeeds to the throne
- 1995** Hanshin Earthquake
- 1998** Winter Olympic Games in Nagano
- 2001** Junichiro Koizumi becomes new LDP leader and prime minister
- 2001** First child of Crown Prince Naruhito and Crown Princess Masako born; her birth resumes the debate about whether Japan should revise the male-only succession law
- 2003** Lower house of parliament agrees to send troops to Iraq to help with reconstruction efforts but deployment of troops is put on hold after a suicide bombing of the UN headquarters in Baghdad in August

## **HOLIDAYS**

- 30 Dec–2 Jan** Oshogatsu (New Year's)
- 15 Jan** Seijinshiki (Coming of Age)
- 3 Mar** Hina Matsuri (Girl's Festival)
- 21 Mar** Shunbun-no-hi (Spring Equinox)
- Apr** Sakura matsuri (Cherry Blossom Festival)
- 29 Apr** Golden Week
- 5 May** Kodomo-no-hi (Children's Day)
- 7 Jul** Tanabata (Star Festival)
- 12–19 Aug** Hanabi Taikai (Fireworks Festival)
- mid-Aug** Obon (Honoring of ancestors)
- 15 Sep** Keiro-no-hi (Respect for the Aged Day)
- 23 Sep** Shubun no Hi (Autumn Equinox)
- 10 Oct** Taiiku-no-hi (Sports Day)
- 15 Nov** Shichi-go-san (Seven-Five-Three Day, a special day for boys and girls of these ages when they give thanks and pray for the future)
- 23 Dec** Emperor's Birthday



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## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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### **JAPANESE EMBASSY TO THE UNITED STATES**

2520 Massachusetts Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20008  
Phone: (202) 238-6700, Fax: (202) 328-2187  
Web site: <http://www.embjapan.org>

### **JAPANESE DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM**

Web site: <http://www.jnto.go.jp>

### **JAPAN INFORMATION AND CULTURE CENTER (JICC)**

1155 21st St. NW  
Washington, D.C. 20036  
Phone: (202) 238-6900, Fax: (202) 822-6524  
Web site: <http://www.embjapan.org/j.cc>

### **JAPAN SUMO KYOKAI (JAPAN SUMO ASSOCIATION)**

2-1-9 Kuramae  
Daito-Ku. Tokyo 111, Japan  
(They have an explanatory pamphlet available in English.)

### **BOOKS**

Bapat, P.V. Professor, ed. *Twenty-Five Hundred Years of Buddhism*, Government of India: Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1959.  
*CultureGram '99*. Brigham Young University, 1998.  
Cuyler, F.L. *Sumo, from Rite to Sport*, John Weatherhill, Inc, 1979.  
Dykstra, Andrew. *Kanji ABC*, Kanji Press, 1987.  
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Goddard, Dwight, ed. *A Buddhist Bible*, E.P. Dutton and Co. Inc, 1952.  
*A Hundred Things Japanese*, Toppan Printing Co. Ltd, 1978.  
“Japan Now ‘98’,” *Japanese Journal*, Gakken, Inc, 1998.  
Kendrick, Doug. *The Book of Sumo: Sport, Spectacle, and Ritual*, Walker/Weatherhill, 1969.  
*Living Japanese Style*, JTB, 1989.  
Maraini, Fosco. “Tokyo,” *The Great Cities*, Time-Life Books, 1976.  
Morgan, Kenneth W. ed. *The Path of the Buddha, Buddhism Interpreted by Buddhists*, Ronald Press, 1956.  
Rex, Shelly. *Culture Shock!*, Graphic Arts Center Publishing Co, 1994.  
Sergeant, J.A. *Sumo, the Sport and the Tradition*, Charles E. Tuttle Co, 1959.  
*Sumo*, Japan Tourist Library, 1941.

Walsh, Len. *Read Japanese Today*, Charles E. Tuttle Co, 1969.  
Wheeler, John with Jesse Kahaulua. *Takamiyama: The World of Sumo*, Kodansha International, Ltd., 1973.  
Yee, Khiang. *Chinese Calligraphy: An Introduction to its Aesthetics and Techniques*, Harvard University Press, 1973.

## **FILM**

*My Neighbor Totoro*, Miyao Hayazaki, 1988.

## **INTERNET SITES**

### **CIA World Factbook:**

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html>

### **Kyoto Department of Tourism:**

<http://web.kyoto-inet.or.jp/org/hellokcb>

### **Japan National Tourist Organization (JNTO):**

<http://www.jnto.go.jp>

### **Japanese Recipe Collection:**

<http://www.bento.com/tf-recp.html>

### **Japanese Tutorials:**

<http://www.georgetown.edu/users/caplanj/index.html>

### **Paula's Sushi Central:**

<http://www.bento.com/morefood.html>

### **Nara Park, Visitors Web Page:**

[http://www.kippo.or.jp/culture/nature/spot/walking/nara\\_e.htm](http://www.kippo.or.jp/culture/nature/spot/walking/nara_e.htm)

### **The Virtual Japanese Restaurant:**

<http://www.sushi-ittosandiego.com>

### **Buddha and Buddhism:**

<http://www.san.beck.org/EC9-Buddha.html>

### **What do you think, my friend? (A selection of writings on Buddhism):**

<http://www.serve.com/cmtan/buddhism>

### **Zen Guide:**

<http://www.zenguide.com/history>



In English, this postcard says:

*Congratulations on the beginning of another year. Please accept me as your friend again this year. Your friend, Kayo. New Year's 1999.*

Traditions Visual 2: Japanese Zodiac

|                            |             |             |             |             |             |
|----------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>NE<br/>(RAT)</b>        | <b>1948</b> | <b>1960</b> | <b>1972</b> | <b>1984</b> | <b>1996</b> |
| <b>OSHI<br/>(OX)</b>       | <b>1949</b> | <b>1961</b> | <b>1973</b> | <b>1985</b> | <b>1997</b> |
| <b>TORA<br/>(TIGER)</b>    | <b>1950</b> | <b>1962</b> | <b>1974</b> | <b>1986</b> | <b>1998</b> |
| <b>U<br/>(RABBIT)</b>      | <b>1951</b> | <b>1963</b> | <b>1975</b> | <b>1987</b> | <b>1999</b> |
| <b>TATSU<br/>(DRAGON)</b>  | <b>1952</b> | <b>1964</b> | <b>1976</b> | <b>1988</b> | <b>2000</b> |
| <b>MI<br/>(SNAKE)</b>      | <b>1953</b> | <b>1965</b> | <b>1977</b> | <b>1989</b> | <b>2001</b> |
| <b>UMA<br/>(HORSE)</b>     | <b>1954</b> | <b>1966</b> | <b>1978</b> | <b>1990</b> | <b>2002</b> |
| <b>HITSUJI<br/>(SHEEP)</b> | <b>1955</b> | <b>1967</b> | <b>1979</b> | <b>1991</b> | <b>2003</b> |
| <b>SARU<br/>(MONKEY)</b>   | <b>1956</b> | <b>1968</b> | <b>1980</b> | <b>1992</b> | <b>2004</b> |
| <b>TORI<br/>(COCK)</b>     | <b>1957</b> | <b>1969</b> | <b>1981</b> | <b>1993</b> | <b>2005</b> |
| <b>INU<br/>(DOG)</b>       | <b>1958</b> | <b>1970</b> | <b>1982</b> | <b>1994</b> | <b>2006</b> |
| <b>I<br/>(BOAR)</b>        | <b>1959</b> | <b>1971</b> | <b>1983</b> | <b>1995</b> | <b>2007</b> |



### Traditions Visual 3: Shrine

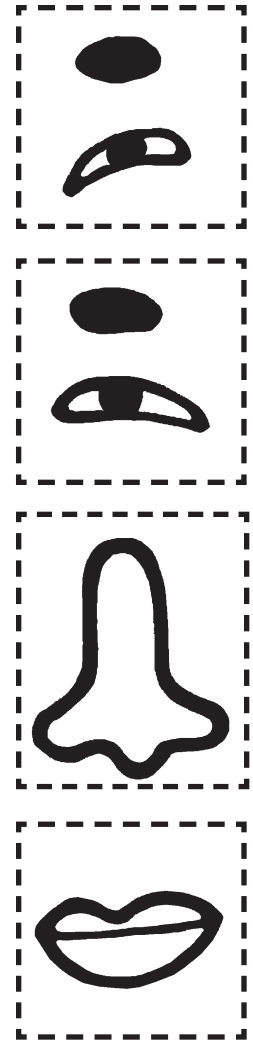
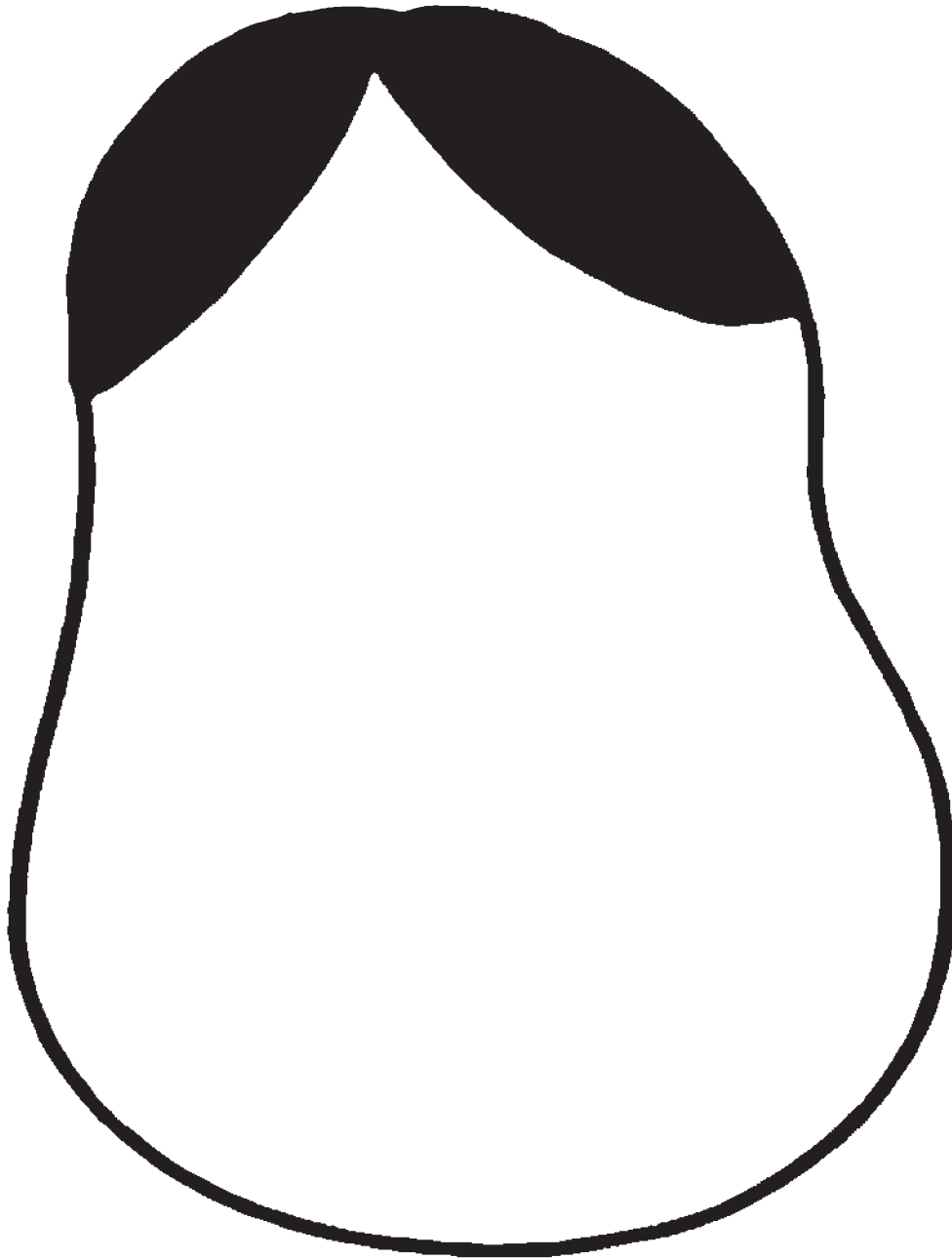




#### Traditions Visual 4: Kimonos

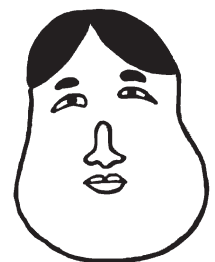






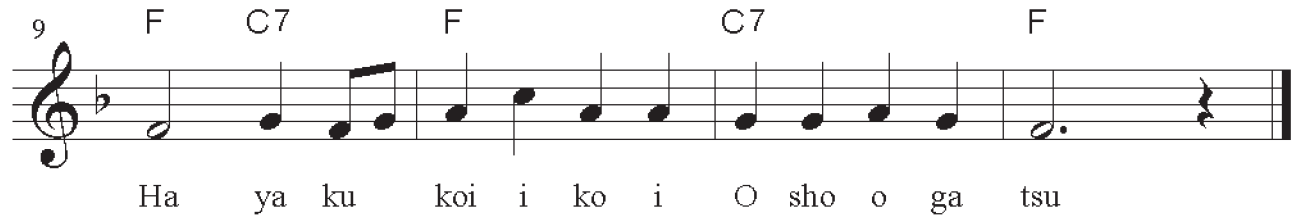
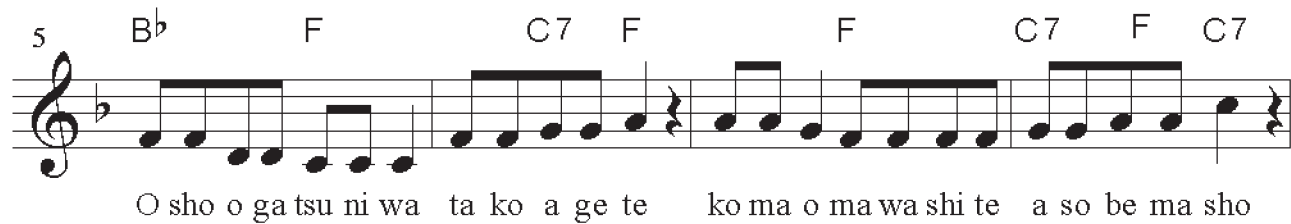
1. Make two copies of this face. Enlarge it if you like.
2. Cut out eyebrows, eyes, nose, and mouth.
3. Blindfold a student and hand them one of the parts of the face. Let them know what you are handing them.
4. Have the student try to place each part of the face in the correct place.

*This game is like “Pin the Tail on the Donkey.” Other students can distract the player by telling them where to place the piece.*



# OSHOGATSU

(New Year's Song)



*How many more nights must I sleep 'til New Year's Day?  
On New Year's Day we'll fly kites and spin tops, let's play!  
Quickly, come! Come! New Year's Day.*

# SAKURA

(Cherry Blossoms)

Sa ku ra sa ku ra No ya ma mo

Sa to\_\_ mo mi wa ta su ka gi\_\_ ri

Ka su mi ka ku mo\_\_ ka a sa hi ni

hi o\_\_ u sa ku ra sa ku ra

ha na za - ka ri

*Cherry blossoms bloom everywhere,  
in the mountain and in the village.  
They look like clouds.  
The scent of the flower is there.*

# UMI

(Ocean)



*The ocean is so big that the moon rises from there and the sun goes down to the ocean.*

# MORI NO KUMASAN

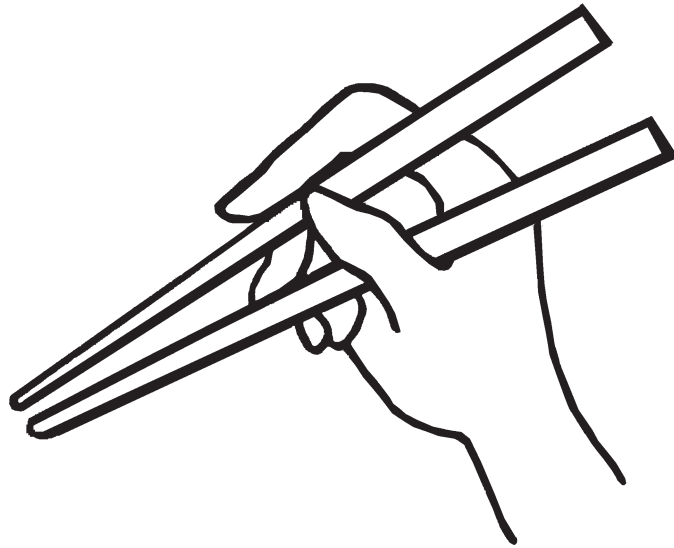
(The Bear in the Woods)



A ru - hi (a ru - hi) mo ri no naka (mo ri no  
naka) Ku ma san ni (ku ma san ni) de a - tta (de a-  
- tta) Ha na saku mo ri no mi chi Ku ma san  
ni de a - tta

*The other day in the woods, I met a bear.  
I met a bear in the woods.*

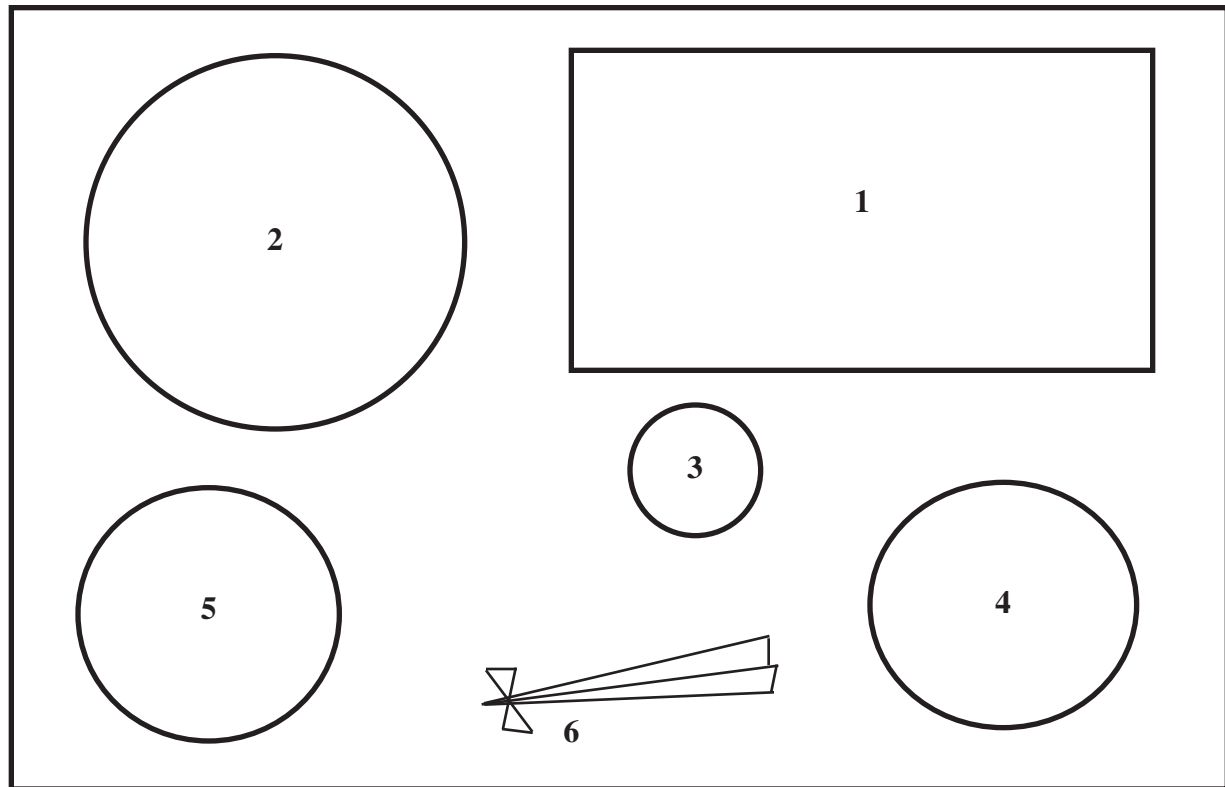
# When using chopsticks, follow these rules:



1. Never plant your chopsticks vertically into a serving of rice. This is the way they are presented to the deceased.
2. Never wave your chopsticks about in the air.
3. Share or divide your food only with your own chopsticks.
4. Never spear food with your chopsticks. They are to be used like scissors, not knives or forks.
5. Never use your chopsticks to shift dishes around.



## TRADITIONAL JAPANESE TABLE SETTING



1. Sashimi (raw fish) or baked dish (i.e., baked fish, baked chicken)
2. Boiled food (i.e., soy sauce stewed potatoes)
3. Salad
4. Soup (made with soy bean paste)
5. Rice
6. Chopsticks

### Food Visual 3: Role Play

#### Characters:

Father

Mother

Two children

#### Words/Phrases:

Father—*otosan* (o-toe-sahn)

Mother—*okasan* (o-ka-sahn)

A phrase used at the beginning of the meal. The equivalent of saying

“Grace”—*Itadakimasu* (I-ta-da-ki-ma-su)

Delicious—*Oishii* (oh-i-she)

Having seconds—*Okawari* (oh-ka-wa-ri)

Thank you—*Arigato* (a-ri-ga-toe)

Phrase used when finished eating—*Gochisosama deshita* (go-chi-so-sa-ma de-shi-ta)

#### Scene:

**Mother:** Time to eat! Kids, can you come set the table?

**Child 1:** O.K. okasan, should I take these plates?

**Mother:** Yes, please.

**Child 2:** Should I go get otosan?

**Mother:** That’s a good idea!

[Child 2 brings the father]

**Father:** Wow, it looks delicious.

**Everyone:** Itadakimasu!

**Child 1:** Oishii.

**Child 2:** Oishii.

[Child 1 keeps eating without holding the rice bowl]

**Father:** (Name of Child 1), hold your rice bowl.

[Child 2 puts his/her arm on the table]

**Mother:** (Name of Child 2), take your arm off the table.

**Child 2:** Yes, ma’am.

**Father:** I would like another bowl of rice (*Okawari*).

**Child 1:** I’ll get it for you.

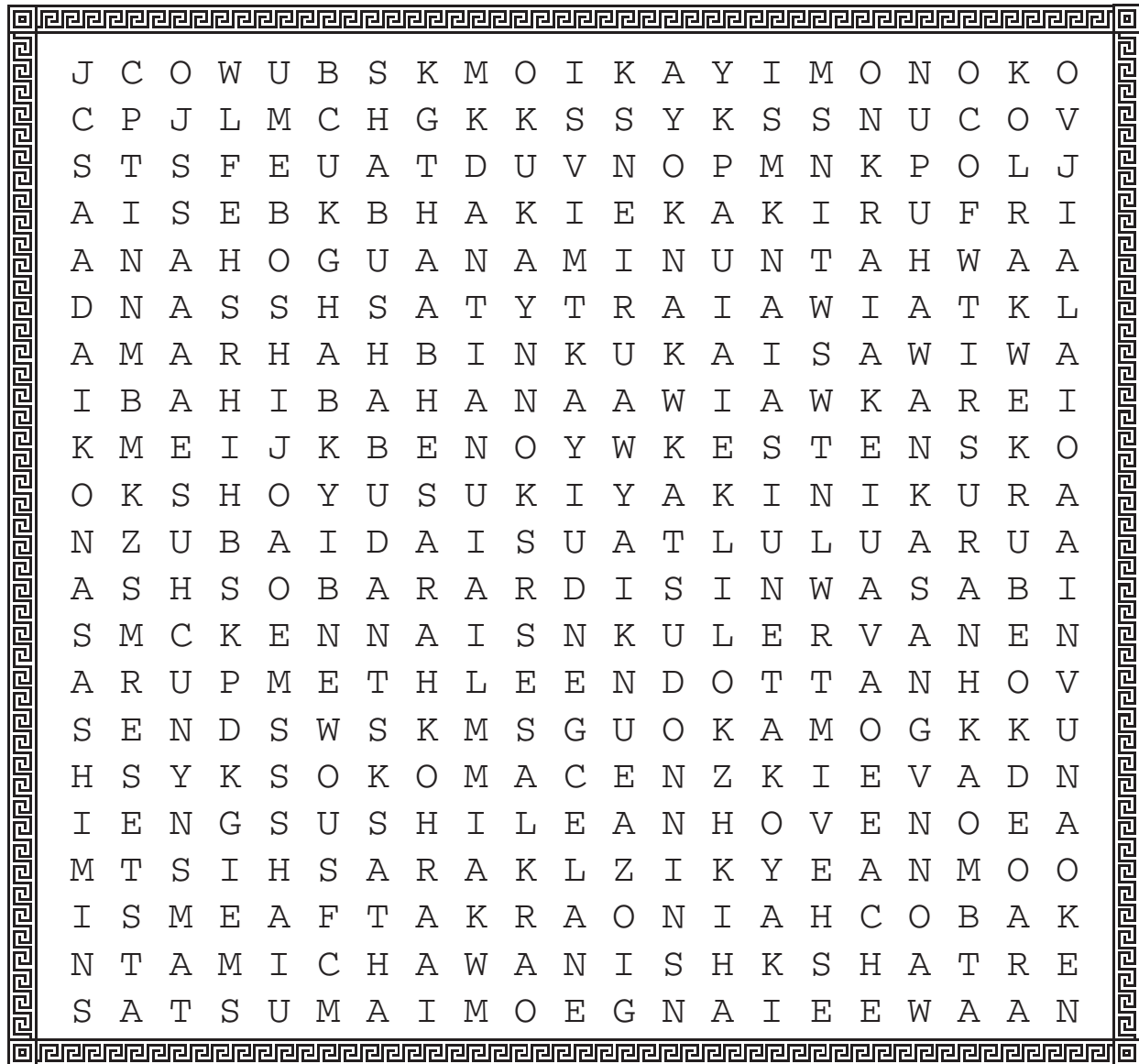
**Father:** Arigato.

**Child 2:** Gochisosama deshita (I’m done eating, thank you for the food).

**Everyone:** Gochisosama deshita.

# IN SEARCH OF SUSHI

Find the fourteen Japanese food words in the word search below.



KONNYAKU (JELLIED FISH)

MISO SHIRU (MISO SOUP)

OKONOMIYAKI (EGG OMELETTE)

GOHAN (A RICE DISH)

KATSUDON (VEAL & RICE)

KABOCHA (PUMPKIN)

SUSHI (RAW FISH)

SASHIMI (RAW FISH)

YAKINIKU (BARBEQUE)

KARE (CURRY)

SATSUMAIMO (SWEET POTATO)

SHABUSHABU (BOILED MEAT)

NATTO (FERMENTED SOYBEANS)

CHAWAN (FRIED RICE)

TEMPURA (FRIED)

SOMEN (THIN/SUMMER NOODLES)

FURIKAKE (RICE TOPPING)

UDON (FAT NOODLES)

TAKOYAKI (OCTOPUS DUMPLINGS)

DAIKON (TURNIP)

SHOYU (SOY SAUCE)

SUKIYAKI (BOILED MARINADE)

WASABI (HORSERADISH)

KARASHI (HOT MUSTARD SAUCE)

SOBA (BUCKWHEAT NOODLES)

GIOZA (POT STICKERS)

UMEBOSHI (PRESERVED PLUMS)

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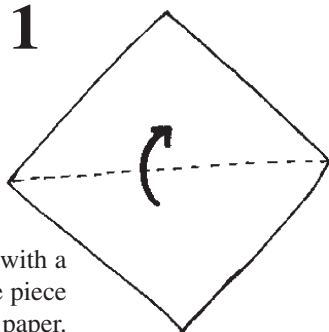
SOBA (BUCKWHEAT NOODLES)

GIOZA (POT STICKERS)

UMEBOSHI (PRESERVED PLUMS)

## Cross-cultural Contributions Visual 1: Origami Crane Instructions (1 of 3)

**1**



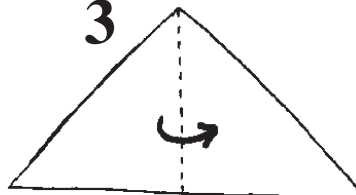
Begin with a square piece of paper.

**2**



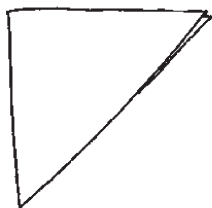
Fold into a triangle with the folded edge on the bottom.

**3**



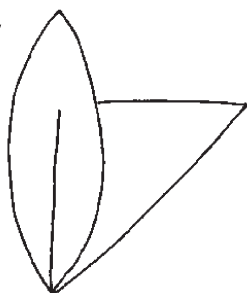
Fold the left corner of the triangle over to the right corner of the triangle to make a smaller triangle.

**4**



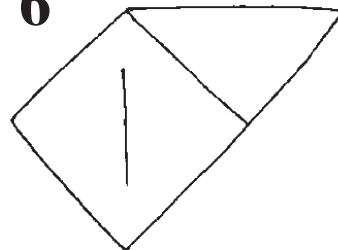
Turn the triangle so that the folded edges are at top and left sides.

**5**



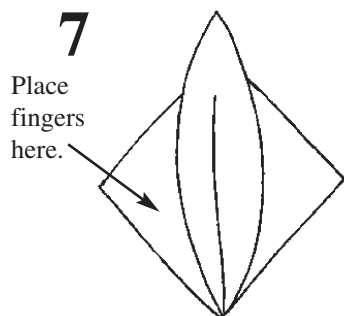
Lift the top triangle layer. Place hand inside this layer and push the sides out while . . .

**6**



. . . pushing the point of the paper in the air down to form a flat square. Turn over.

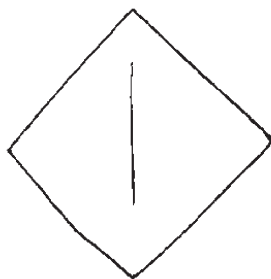
**7**



Place fingers here.

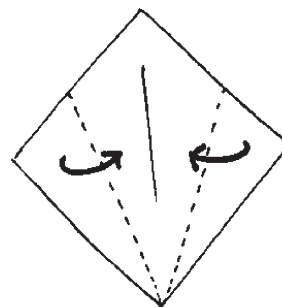
Place fingers as indicated and put other hand in between the top layers of paper. Push layers apart and down to form a square like on the other side.

**8**



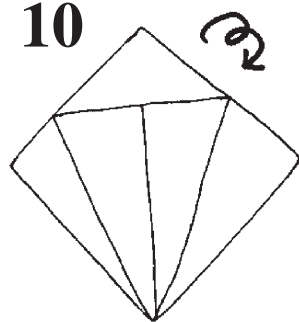
Turn the square so the open edge is pointed towards you.

**9**



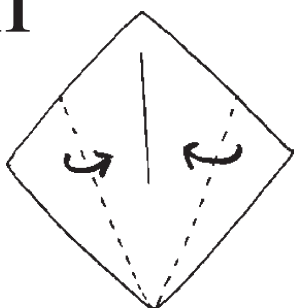
Fold the top left and right corners into the center. The two points as well as the sides should meet in the center . . .

**10**



. . . and form two triangles.

**11**



Turn over with open edge still pointed towards you and repeat step 9–10.

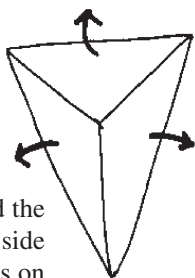
**12**



Fold top triangle down. Unfold top triangle. Turn paper over. Fold top triangle down on this side.

**13**

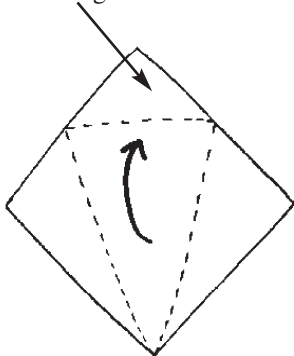
Unfold the top and side triangles on one side of the paper.



**14**

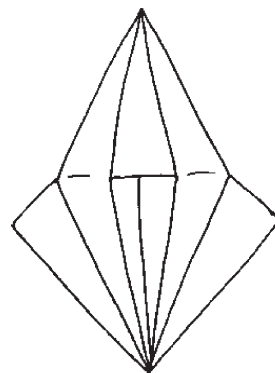
Place fingers here.

Place fingers on top triangle (as indicated in picture) and lift top flap of square.



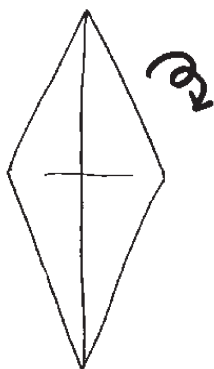
**15**

Push this piece away from you. You will notice that the sides will begin to bend inward. Keep pushing back until the sides meet in the middle. Flatten into a diamond shape.



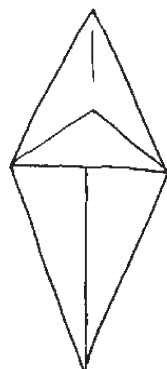
**16**

Turn over. Repeat steps 13-15. (Note: in step 13 you will only unfold the side triangles.)



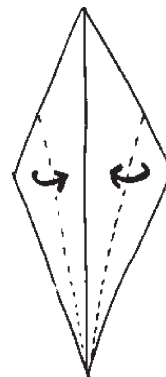
**17**

The bottom of the figure should be split, separating the right and left sides.



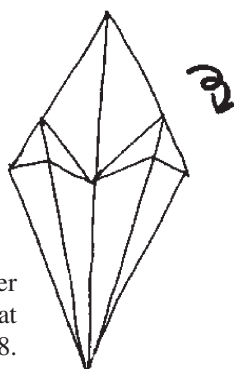
**18**

With the split triangles pointed towards you, fold the top left and right flaps to the center.



**19**

Turn over and repeat step 18.



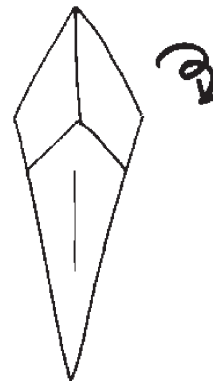
**20**

Fold the top right side flap over to cover the top left flap. Turn over.



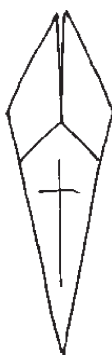
**21**

Repeat step 20. The top of the figure should be split, separating the top left and right sides.



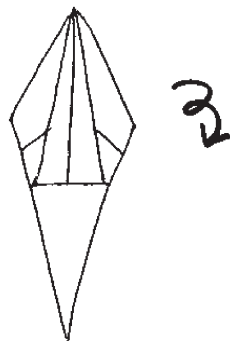
**22**

Fold the top triangle sheet from the bottom up to the two top flaps.



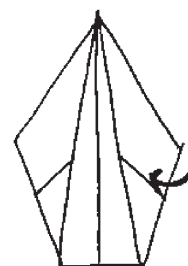
**23**

Turn over. Repeat step 22.



**24**

Fold the top right side flap over to cover the left side.



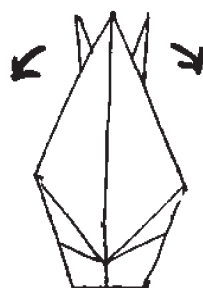


25



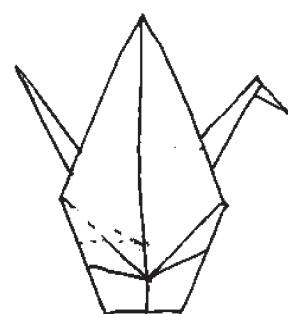
Turn over. Repeat step 24.

26



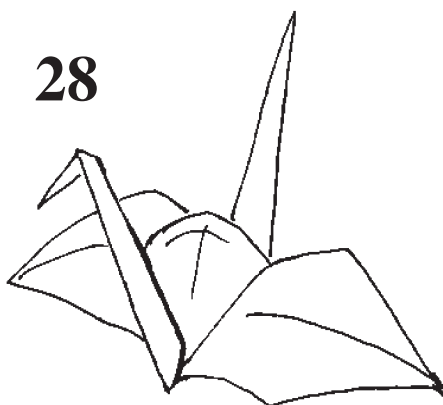
Pull the two tips out to form the tail and the neck.

27



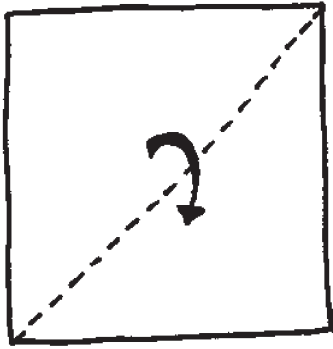
Fold one of the tips down to form the head.

28



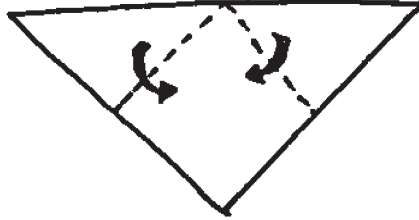
Pull out the wings to form the crane.

1



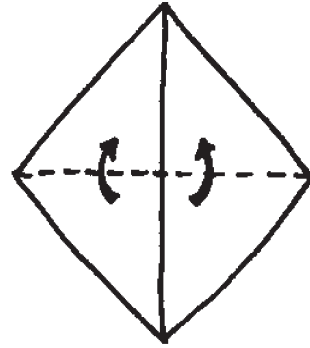
Fold diagonally in half.

2



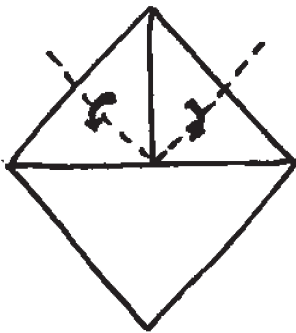
Fold the top corners down to form a square.

3



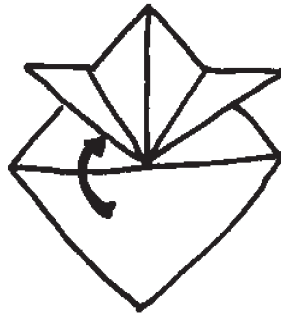
Fold the corners up to form a triangle on one half of the paper.

4



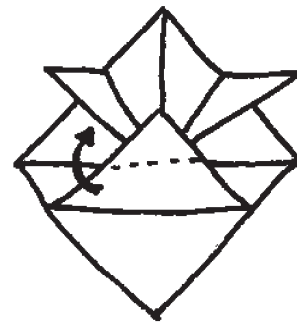
Fold the corners across into wings to look like the picture in step 5.

5



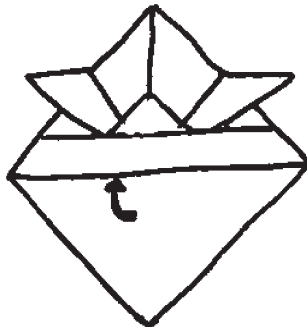
Take one piece of the bottom flap and fold a third of the way up.

6



Fold the bottom of this same piece up so that it is in line with the edge of the larger triangle.

7



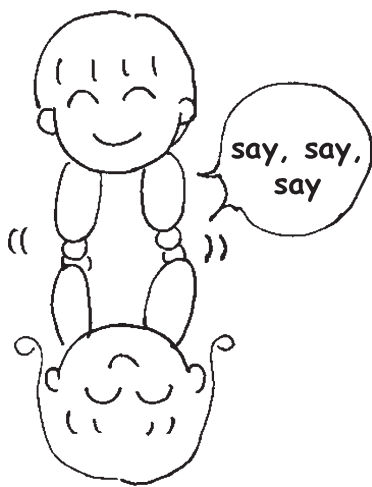
Fold the remaining piece of the bottom flap up inside the hat.

8

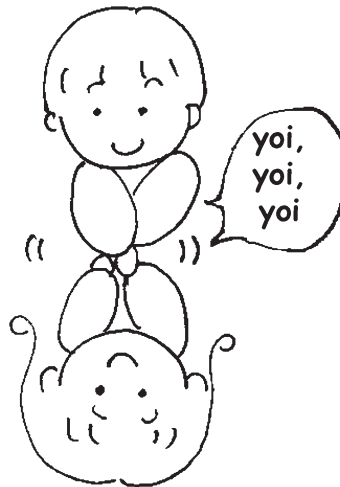


You did it!

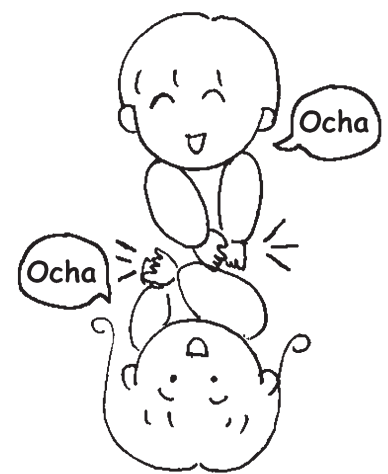
### Cross-cultural Contributions Visual 3: How to Play Ocharaka Hoi!



- 1** Hold hands, shake them three times as you say, “say, say, say.”

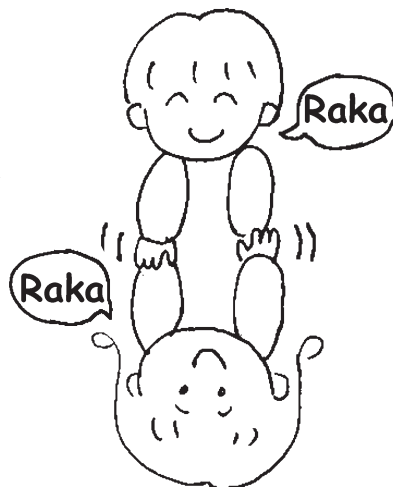


- 2** Cross hands, shake them three times as you say, “yoi, yoi, yoi.”

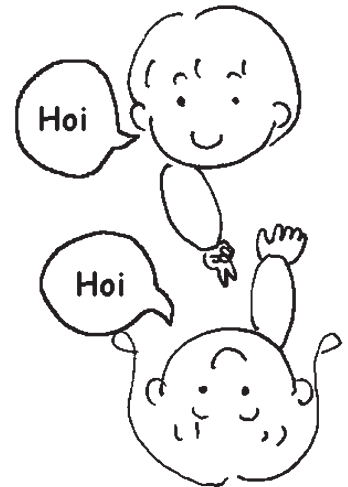


- 3** Clap your own hands to the left side and begin singing, “Ocha.”

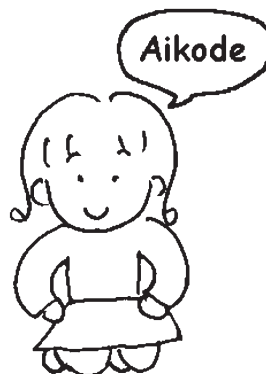
- 4** Clap the other’s hand and sing, “raka.” Make sure the right hand faces down and claps down while the left hand faces up and claps up to the other person’s hand. Repeat steps 3 and 4 twice.



- 5** While you sing, “Hoi,” make a *gyanken* sign (similar to rock, paper, scissors).



- 6a** WINNER—Raise your arms in the air and sing, “Kattayo!” (I win!)



- 6b** TIE—Put your hands on your hips and sing, “Aikode.”



- 6c** LOSER—Hands on the side, head bowed, and sing, “Maketayo!” (I lose!)

# OCHARAKA HOI!

(To be sung while playing the game Ocharaka Hoi!)

Voice

*speak:* Say say say, no yoi yoi yoi

5  
*sing:* O - cha-ra - ka O - cha-ra - ka O - cha-ra - ka hoi!

9  
O - cha-ra - ka \*ka - tta - yo O - cha-ra - ka hoi!  
ai - ko - de  
ma - ke - ta - yo

\* At this point, each player sings the word that corresponds to his or her outcome in the game. The winner sings “kattayo” while the loser sings “maketayo.” If there is a tie, both players sing “aikode.”



### **FLAG OF JAPAN**

The flag is white with a large red disk in the center representing the sun. The flag is symbolic of Japan as the “Land of the Rising Sun.”

## Map of Japan

