

# Japan

Japan is an island country that lies off the eastern coast of mainland Asia and is home to around 127 million people. It is one of the most technologically advanced countries in the world. Japan is the world's third largest manufacturer of cars and the largest electronic goods industry. It is also regarded as one of the most innovative countries in the world. However, Japan also has a fascinating culture and unique customs which make it a very interesting country.



## School in Japan



Education is extremely important in Japan and the Japanese people are highly educated as a result. At school, children study Japanese, English, mathematics, science, social studies, music, crafts, physical education, home economics and ICT. Students also learn traditional Japanese arts and skills. All children have to attend school only up until the age of nine but 98% of students decide to go on to high school.

## Sport in Japan

Sport is an important part of Japanese culture. Traditional sports, such as sumo and martial arts, are popular as well as sports adopted from western culture such as baseball and football. Japan has hosted many international sporting competitions including the 1964 Summer Olympics in Tokyo and the 2019 Rugby World Cup. Tokyo will be hosting the 2020 Summer Olympics.



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## Food in Japan

When people think about Japanese food, they probably think of sushi. However, sushi is not the only food eaten in Japan. Vegetarian food is very popular, especially 'natto', which is a very smelly dish made from fermented soybeans. Rice is a common ingredient in most meals as well as a variety of noodles such as thick wheat noodles or buckwheat noodles. Although many Japanese people use forks and knives to eat, chopsticks ('hashi' in Japanese) are still the traditional eating utensil and are an important part of Japanese culture and tradition. Some children are taught to use chopsticks before they can even walk!

### Did You Know...?

Sashimi is raw fish, not sushi as many people think. Sushi is a dish made up of small balls of vinegar-flavoured cold rice which can be served with vegetables, eggs or seafood.



### Tea Ceremony

The Japanese tea ceremony is a unique ritual in Japan. It is an important event in which green tea is prepared in front of and shared between special guests. Tea ceremonies represent harmony, respect, purity and tranquillity and can last for several days.



### Children's Day

Each year on 5<sup>th</sup> May, Japan celebrate Children's Day. On this day, families celebrate the healthy growth and happiness of children. Households fly large, colourful, carp-shaped streamers outside their houses. The carp was chosen because it symbolizes strength and success as Japanese legend says that a carp swam upstream and turned into a dragon.

## Reading & Grammar Questions

Which two languages do children study at school?

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What are hashi?

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What do tea ceremonies represent?

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Find and copy a word that means 'producer.

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Describe one similarity and one difference between Japanese culture and your own.

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Explain why you think a carp make a good symbol for Children's Day.

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Copy one word which tells us that tea ceremonies only happen in Japan.

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Copy and complete this sentence with at least four items, including correct punctuation: **popular sports in japan are**

*Japan has a fascinating culture and unique customs, which make it a very interesting country.*

- Circle all the nouns: Japan, culture, customs, country.
- Underline two verbs: has, make
- Find an adjective and replace it with a synonym: the adjectives are fascinating, unique and interesting; accept any suitable word to replace them.



## Reading & Grammar Answers

Which two languages do children study at school?

Answer: English & Japanese

What are hashi?

Answer: chopsticks

What do tea ceremonies represent?

Answer: harmony, respect, purity and tranquillity

Find and copy a word that means 'producer.

Answer: manufacturer

Describe one similarity and one difference between Japanese culture and your own. Any reasonable answer. For example: a similarity is we both learn English at school; a difference is they learn Japanese and we don't.

Explain why you think a carp make a good symbol for Children's Day.

Any reasonable answer that uses information from the text. For example: because it says in the text that they symbolise strength and success and this is something that parents want for their children.

Copy one word which tells us that tea ceremonies only happen in Japan.

Answer: unique

Copy and complete this sentence with at least four items, including correct punctuation.

Answer: *Popular sports in Japan are sumo, martial arts, baseball and football.* The children should use capital letters for both the start of the sentence and the word Japan, commas between the sports listed and a full stop at the end.

*Japan has a fascinating culture and unique customs, which make it a very interesting country.*

d) Circle all the nouns: Japan, culture, customs, country.

e) Underline two verbs: has, make

f) Find an adjective and replace it with a synonym: the adjectives are fascinating, unique and interesting; accept any suitable word to replace them.