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ハロー! ジャパン HELLO! JAPAN





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SAKURA
(Age 14)



YUTA
(Age 11)



Imperial Family, National Flag and National Anthem

Under the Japanese Constitution, the Emperor is the symbol of the state and of the unity of the people. The Japanese national flag is called the Hinomaru, and the national anthem is called Kimigayo.



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The Imperial Family

Emperor Akihito took the throne as the 125th Emperor of Japan in 1989. Members of the Imperial Family maintain wide contact with citizens across Japan including disaster struck areas, and promote international friendship. They are also very involved in academic activities and preserving the nation's cultural traditions.



National Flag

The red circle on the Japanese flag represents the sun, and the flag is called the *Hinomaru*, which means "circle of the sun."



National Anthem

The music to Japan's national anthem was composed in the late 19th century, but the lyrics are taken from a *waka* (a very old kind of poem). It wishes that the country will continue to prosper for so many centuries that small pebbles will have grown into moss-covered boulders.



Nature and Geography

Japan consists of a long chain of islands running north to south, so it contains many climates, from sub-arctic in the north through temperate to sub-tropical in the south. The scenery changes a lot in each of the four seasons.



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Shinano River

Japan's longest river (367km)

Most of Japan's rivers are fast flowing, and are used to generate hydroelectric power as well as for river transport. The Shinano River runs through spectacular countryside and is very popular for leisure activities like boating and fishing.



Lake Biwa

Japan's biggest lake (670 km²)

Japan has a huge number of lakes, of all shapes and sizes. As well as being the biggest, Lake Biwa has some of the most beautiful scenery, and is a great place to enjoy boating and jet skiing.

East China Sea

Okinawa

Land area: About 378,000km²
Population: About 128 million
Length (north-south): About 3,000km
Length (east-west): About 3,000km
Total coastline: About 34,000km
Almost 3/4 of Japan is mountains. Most people live on the plains formed by mountain basins or river estuaries, and the cities are very crowded. Temperature changes are mild and gradual, summer starts with a six-week rainy period, and many areas have snowy winters.

Sea of Japan

Pacific

Hokkaido

Honshu

Tokyo

Shikoku

Kyushu

Minamitorishima



Kushiro Wetlands

Japan's biggest wetlands (18,300ha)

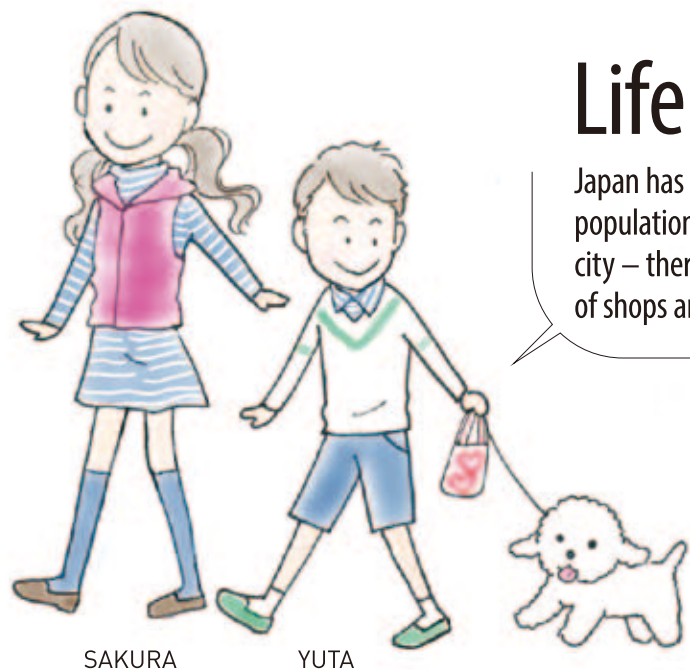
The wetlands of Japan are home to many rare and protected species of plants and animals. Kushiro is famous for its clear rivers, which you can explore by canoe.



Mount Fuji

Japan's highest mountain (3,776m)

Japan has many volcanoes, and Mount Fuji is an active volcano that last erupted 300 years ago. Many people climb to the summit of its perfect cone to watch the first sunrise of the New Year.



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Life in the City

Japan has many big cities, and twelve of them have populations of over one million. It's very convenient living in a city – there are buses and trains for getting around, and lots of shops and interesting places to go.

Japan's modern cities grew enormously in the period of rapid economic growth after the end of World War II, with surrounding suburbs to house the increasing numbers coming to work in the cities. The flow of people from the countryside to the city continues, but there is now a reverse trend: helped by the convenience of car ownership, many retired people are moving to the country.



Skyscrapers

In cities with huge populations like Tokyo, you'll see lots of skyscrapers. These often contain a mix of offices, department stores, hotels and sometimes apartments too.

My Town

We have a big train station, and there are also subways and buses. It's a very convenient place to live, since the shopping area around the station has everything we need. I can walk everywhere, except for trips when we go in the family car.

Factory



Hospital



Post Office



Convenience Stores

These stores are open every day, 24 hours a day, selling food and everything needed for daily life. You can even pay utility bills here, or use the ATM to draw money from your bank.

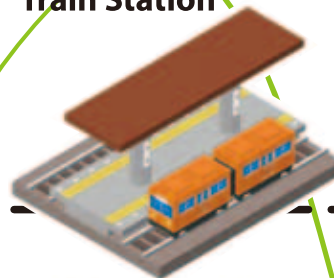


Around the Station



Around most train stations you'll find buildings filled with shops, restaurants and leisure facilities such as movie theaters.

Train Station

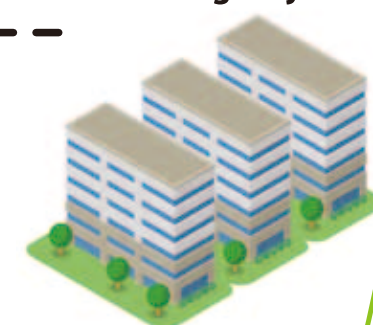


Rush Hour

Big cities have lots of railway lines, and the trains get very crowded in the morning rush hour when everyone is travelling to work or school.



Housing Project



Fire Station



Apartment Building



Family Restaurant



Park



Koban



The Koban is a special Japanese style of mini-police station. If you ever get lost in a city, there's usually a Koban nearby where you can go to ask directions.

Takuhaibin

Takuhaibin is the name for Japan's unique, nationwide door-to-door delivery system. There are several delivery companies, transporting almost anything and usually delivering by the next day.



Family Home



Castle



Schools

In the cities, most children can walk from home to a nearby elementary school. Schools also act as evacuation centers in case of a disaster like an earthquake.



Housing, Food and Clothing

The way we live in Japan today is a mix of traditional Japanese customs and modern western ways. You can see this in what we eat, our houses and how we dress.



Take off your shoes before entering



Study



Kimono

In the old days, the Japanese wore kimono all the time. Today, we normally wear western clothing, and keep kimono for special events and festivals. We also wear kimono to take part in traditional cultural activities like Japanese dance, flower arranging and tea ceremony.



Japanese Food

A typical family meal (bottom right photo) has three parts: a bowl of rice, miso soup, and some side dishes. Sushi (top photo) and tempura (bottom left) are popular with all ages. As snacks, we often eat onigiri rice balls (illustration on right).



We use chopsticks to eat from bowls



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School

I go to elementary school. In Japan, we start school at age six, and elementary school lasts for six years. As well as lessons, there are lots of other ways we study.

School Meals

Lunch is provided at school, and everyone eats together. The menu is different every day, but always balanced and healthy. Pupils take turns to serve and clear away the dishes.



Sports Day

At the annual sports day, parents come to school to watch and cheer on their children's efforts. It's not just a day for sports – pupils also perform things like plays and dances they have created.



Factory Visits

Visits to nearby factories and similar places show pupils how society works. It's always exciting to see things like candy and motorcars actually being made, and they experience things it's not possible to learn in class.



Field Trips

In autumn and spring, when the weather is mild, elementary schoolchildren go on day outings to famous nature spots and historical buildings. Everyone brings along a homemade obento, or packed lunch.

By law, education is compulsory for nine years, six in elementary school and three in junior high. After that, students usually must pass entrance exams for high school and university or college. About half of all pupils now go on to university.



Lessons

Each class has 30 to 40 pupils. As well as Japanese, math, civics and science, lessons include music, arts and crafts, gym, English and home economics. Homework and regular tests are designed to increase pupils' abilities.



Terms at elementary and junior high start in April and end in March the next year. There are three school holidays: summer, winter and spring. Commencement ceremonies are held in April, and graduation is in March.



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Japanese

Three types of character are used to write Japanese: *kanji*, *hiragana* and *katakana*. The *kanji* characters were imported from China in the fifth century, and Japanese later used some of the characters to develop *hiragana* and *katakana*.

	—		—	日	(日) SUN
	—		—	木	(木) TREE
	—		—	山	(山) MOUNTAIN
	—		—	人	(人) PERSON
	—		—	鳥	(鳥) BIRD
	—		—	月	(月) MOON

Kanji

The first, ancient *kanji* began as little pictures showing what each word meant, but today most *kanji* are not like that anymore. You can read most things in modern Japanese if you learn about 2,000 *kanji* characters.

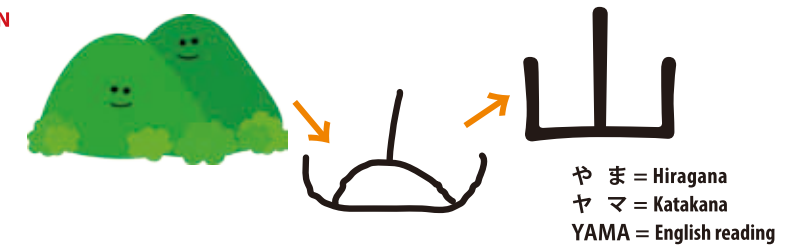


Chart of Hiragana and Katakana Characters

The sounds of spoken Japanese can be written using 46 characters, plus some markers that change the pronunciation slightly (for example, from ka to ga). Each *hiragana* and *katakana* character stands for a sound, usually a combination of a consonant and a vowel.

あ	か	さ	た	な	は	ま	や	ら	わ	が	ざ	だ	ば	ぱ
ア	カ	サ	タ	ナ	ハ	マ	ヤ	ラ	ワ	ガ	ザ	ダ	バ	パ
a	ka	sa	ta	na	ha	ma	ya	ra	wa	ga	za	da	ba	pa
い	き	し	ち	に	ひ	み		り		ぎ	じ	ぢ	び	ぴ
イ	キ	シ	チ	ニ	ヒ	ミ		リ		ギ	ジ	ヂ	ビ	ピ
i	ki	shi	chi	ni	hi	mi		ri		gi	ji	ji	bi	pi
う	く	す	つ	ぬ	ふ	む	ゆ	る		ぐ	ず	づ	ぶ	ぷ
ウ	ク	ス	ツ	ヌ	フ	ム	ユ	ル		グ	ズ	ヅ	ブ	プ
u	ku	su	tsu	nu	fu	mu	yu	ru		gu	zu	zu	bu	pu
え	け	せ	て	ね	へ	め		れ		げ	ぜ	で	べ	ぺ
エ	ケ	セ	テ	ネ	ヘ	メ		レ		ゲ	ゼ	デ	ベ	ペ
e	ke	se	te	ne	he	me		re		ge	ze	de	be	pe
お	こ	そ	と	の	ほ	も	よ	ろ	を	ん	ご	ぞ	ど	ぼ
オ	コ	ソ	ト	ノ	ホ	モ	ヨ	ロ	ヲ	ン	ゴ	ゾ	ド	ボ
o	ko	so	to	no	ho	mo	yo	ro	wo	n	go	zo	do	bo

きゃ	しゃ	ちゃ	にゃ	ひゃ	みゃ	りゃ	ぎゃ	じゃ	びゃ	ぴゃ
キャ	シャ	チャ	ニャ	ヒャ	ミャ	リャ	ギャ	ジャ	ビャ	ピャ
kya	sha	cha	nya	hya	mya	rya	gya	ja	bya	pya
きゅ	しゅ	ちゅ	にゅ	ひゅ	みゅ	りゅ	ぎゅ	じゅ	びゅ	ぴゅ
キュ	シュ	チュ	ニュ	ヒュ	ミュ	リュ	ギュ	ジュ	ビュ	ピュ
kyu	shu	chu	nyu	hyu	myu	ryu	gyu	ju	byu	pyu
きょ	しよ	ちょ	にょ	ひょ	みょ	りょ	ぎょ	じょ	びょ	ぴょ
キョ	ショ	チョ	ニョ	ヒョ	ミョ	リョ	ギョ	ジョ	ビョ	ピョ
kyo	sho	cho	nyo	hyo	myo	ryo	gyo	jo	byo	pyo

あ = Hiragana
ア = Katakana
a = English reading



Sakura

Sakura is the word for cherry blossom, the flower the Japanese love the most. We write *sakura* in *kanji* as 「桜」, in *hiragana* as 「さくら」 and in *katakana* as 「サクラ」. Japanese can be written from left to right or from top to bottom.

東京

とうきょう

有楽町

Yurakucho

Tokyo

神田

Kanda

Tokyo (とうきょう / TOKYO)

Train station names are written in *kanji*, *hiragana* and English to make sure everyone can read them.

Names of foreign places and people

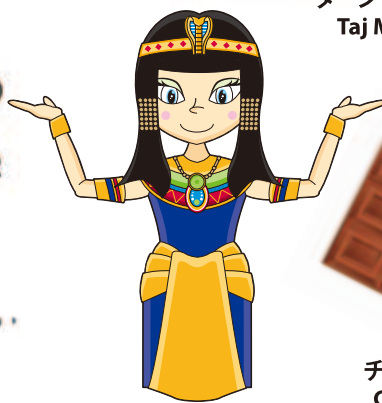
Katakana is used for writing words imported into Japanese from other languages, and for the names of people and places in other countries.



ニューヨーク
New York



シェークスピア
Shakespeare



クレオパトラ
Cleopatra

タージ・マハル
Taj Mahal



チョコレート
Chocolate



パスタ
Pasta

こんにちは
Hello

ありがとう
Thank you

さようなら
Goodbye

Seasonal Events

Japan has four well-defined seasons and there are lots of old customs and traditions to celebrate each one. The whole family takes part, and has a great time.



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Children's Day

Families fly a set of *koinobori*, big fish made out of cloth, in their gardens on May 5th. They represent the carp, which is a strong fish that fights its way upstream, so the streamers symbolize strong and healthy children.



Hina Matsuri (Doll Festival)

This March 3rd festival is held to pray for the health of young girls. Families set up a display of dolls dressed in the gorgeous robes of ancient court nobles.



Setsubun (Bean-Throwing Ceremony).....

This is an old event held around February 3rd to drive out evil spirits at the start of spring. One family member wears a red mask representing a demon, or oni, and everyone throws beans at him until he runs from the house.

Shogatsu (New Year)

Most companies and shops take a New Year break until January 3rd. Japanese families celebrate the start of the year with special meals and traditional customs to pray for health and happiness.



Spring

Summer

Winter

Autumn



Tanabata (Star Festival)

On July 7th, people write their hearts' wishes on long strips of colored paper and hang them from the bamboo poles that decorate the streets in this festival. Some regions hold Tanabata a month later, in August.



Fireworks

Japan is famous for huge midsummer fireworks displays, mainly held on the banks of big rivers or at the seashore. The bigger events go on for over an hour, lighting up the night sky with 5,000 or more giant multicolored explosions.

Tsukimi (Moon Viewing)

The full moon is most beautiful in autumn, and people hold parties to enjoy the sight. Viewing spots are decorated with long pampas grass, and everyone enjoys eating rice dumplings (round and white, they look like the full moon).



Autumn Festivals

Autumn is harvest time, and all over Japan there are thanksgiving festivals for the year's crops. The people of each community parade their local gods around their neighborhood, carrying them in mikoshi portable shrines.



Culture

In many ways Japanese culture is unique: traditional culture such as kabuki and tea ceremony, as well as modern culture, which includes video games and anime.



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Kawaii

You could say the expression "kawaii" (how cute!) sums up Japanese pop culture. Young people all over the world follow cute kawaii fashions from Japan.

Anime

There's nothing more exciting and fun than anime. And did you know that the stories of most anime you see in movie theaters and on TV around the world originally came from Japanese manga comics and games?

Games

Fun video games you can play by yourself or with your friends and families are often invented and made in Japan, and when new versions are announced it's big news for gamers all over the world.

Character Goods

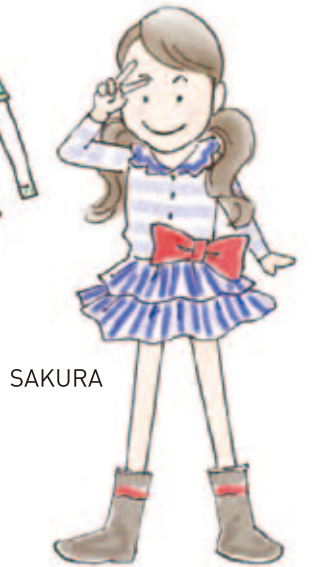
Japanese children – and grown-ups too – are huge fans of these cute animals and characters from anime and manga, and you see them on everything from T-shirts to candy wrappers.

Karaoke

With a karaoke machine playing the backing music for you, you can become a pop star and sing along with family or friends.

Cosplay

Cosplay = costume + play. Anime fans make these amazing costumes to dress up as their favorite characters at special events and conventions.



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Noh

Noh is one of the most ancient kinds of Japanese theater. The stories are told by actors dressed in colorful costumes and wearing masks, accompanied by chanting and music.

Lacquerware

Japanese lacquerware was so famous that the old English word for lacquer was just "Japan." Lacquer tableware is often used at home, but lacquer is also used to make beautiful and valuable works of art.

Wooden Architecture

Japanese buildings were traditionally made from wood, using unique carpentry techniques. Our old structures are carefully preserved today, and a Japanese temple is the world's oldest wooden building in existence.

Ikebana (Flower Art)

Over 400 years old, the art of ikebana still teaches us important lessons about nature, life and beauty, as we learn to arrange seasonal flowers according to its philosophical concepts.

Sumo

The Japanese love all kinds of sports, but the ancient traditional sport of sumo has a special place in their hearts. Famous wrestlers have many keen fans.

Ukiyoe (Woodblock Printing)

Japanese artisans developed this unique style of woodblock printing in the 18th century. After western artists discovered ukiyoe, it greatly influenced 19th century French Impressionism.



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Sports

We play all kinds of sports in Japan. I love soccer, and my sister is learning to skate. Granddad's hobby is budo, Japan's traditional martial arts.



Sumo

Sumo is a kind of wrestling that's over 1,000 years old. The wrestlers wear nothing but big cloth belts, and have their hair done up in the ancient style.



Judo

Judo is now an Olympic sport and is the best known Japanese *budo*. Like all traditional *budo*, judo teaches you to respect others, and trains the spirit.



Skateboarding



Fishing



Baseball



Skating



Surfing



Volleyball



Soccer



Golf



Marathon



Kyudo

Kyudo is an old style of archery, using unique traditional bows. It's famous for developing concentration and willpower. There are also contests where archers try to hit targets from horseback.



Kendo

Kendo began as a training system for samurai to practice their sword-fighting techniques. You use special bamboo swords, and wear protective clothing.



Karate

Karate traces its roots to old Okinawa, Japan's southernmost prefecture. Karate fighters train their punching and kicking techniques by practicing sequences of movements called *kata*.



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History

Japanese history can be roughly divided into six main periods, each one with a very different culture.



In the earliest times, the people of the Japanese archipelago lived by hunting. Later, they developed methods for cultivating rice and started living in fixed settlements. Groups of these settlements made up many small states. Eventually these would all merge to become a single country.



From hunting to rice cultivation

To late 6th century



From the 12th century, feudal Japan was ruled by a series of warlords known as shoguns. In the late 15th century, the warrior clans began to battle each other over territory and the nation entered a long period of fighting and unrest.



Rise of the samurai – Warring States Period

13th to late 16th century

Centralized state – Aristocratic culture

7th to late 12th century



A system of government was formally set up, centered on the Emperor. Kyoto, the new capital, grew into a large city where an aristocratic culture flourished among the court nobility.



Under pressure from Europe and the US, Japan ended its isolation and resumed trade with the world. The rule of the shoguns was over. Japan imported western ideas and culture and built a modern state. This period ended with the two World Wars.



End of isolation – Japan becomes a modern nation

Second half of 19th to first half of 20th century

Peace established – Prosperity for merchant class

17th to first half of 19th century



After World War II, Japan adopted a new, democratic constitution. By promoting and developing key industries, Japan achieved remarkable economic growth, becoming a wealthy nation with its own active program of international aid and assistance.



When peace finally returned, the shogun moved the government to Edo (the old name for Tokyo) and nearly 300 years of stability followed, bringing prosperity for merchants and townspeople. In these years, Japan followed a policy of isolation from the world.

Post-war to present

From second half of 20th century





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Government

The Constitution of Japan is based on the principle of separation of powers. Three independent branches of government, legislative, judicial and executive, balance each other and ensure that the rights and freedoms of the people are maintained, and prevent any abuses of political power.

International Relations



Japan plays an active role at the United Nations, striving to ensure peace and stability in the international community. As well as having bilateral relations with individual nations, Japan contributes to the resolution of global issues as a member of the G8 and G20, and in various regional cooperative frameworks.



Environment and Climate Change

Japan has been an influential voice persuading the nations of the world to agree on rules to limit the greenhouse gas emissions that cause global warming. The Kyoto Protocol, adopted in 1997, was a major step in this direction.



International Peace Cooperation and Counter-Terrorism Measures

Japan takes part in international peacekeeping and conflict resolution by committing personnel and goods to UN peacekeeping missions. Japan also cooperates with other nations in efforts to eliminate terrorism.



ODA and Emergency Aid

Japanese aid to developing nations is designed to best match their conditions, and includes loans, grants and technology transfer. Japan's experience coping with its own natural disasters is very useful when providing emergency disaster aid to other countries.



Cultural Exchange

Cultural and other exchange programs introduce people around the world to Japanese society and culture, promoting mutual understanding and building good relations with other countries.

Legislative

National Diet

The members of the National Diet debate and pass the nation's laws. The Diet has two houses, the House of Representatives and the House of Councilors. All members are elected by the people in national elections.



Elections



Citizens

Public opinion

National review

Judicial



Courts

The role of the courts is to protect the rights of citizens and preserve peace in society. They resolve disputes according to the laws and constitution, and determine guilt or innocence in criminal cases.

Executive



Cabinet

The cabinet is the branch of government that actually carries out the decisions of the National Diet. It is composed of the prime minister and the cabinet ministers in charge of the various government ministries.





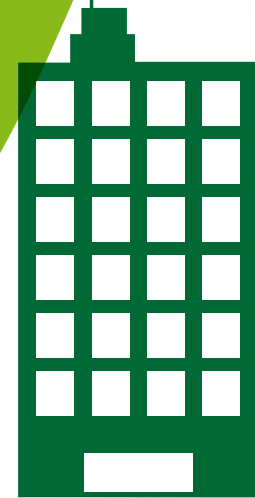
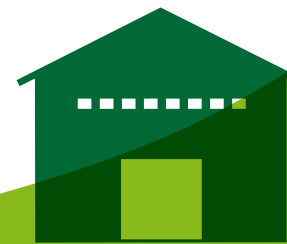
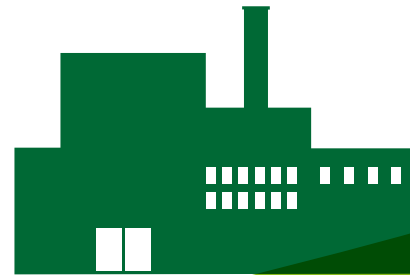
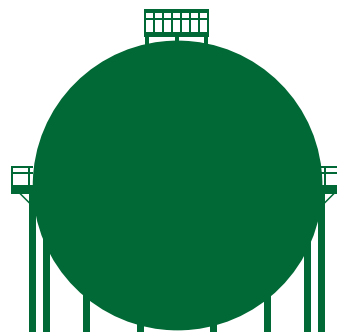
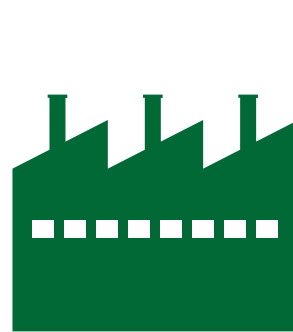
Economy, Industry and Technology

Japan is one of the world's most advanced industrialized nations. On this page, we'll show you some of the many kinds of technology that keep Japan at the top.



Japan's Economic Strengths

Japan is strong in manufacturing but has few natural resources, so we import raw materials and export finished products. Key industries include automobiles, precision machinery, computers and consumer electronics. Japan's economy is driven by innovation and technical ability.



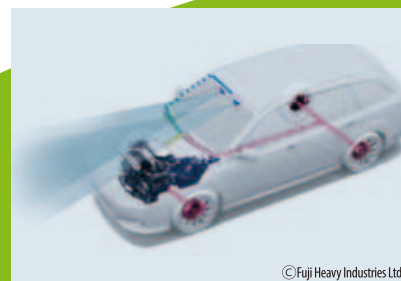
Super Computer

The Japanese super computer "Kei" is one of the world's most powerful, able to make 10 quadrillion (10¹⁶) calculations a second ("Kei" is a Japanese word meaning 10¹⁶). It's mainly used for energy and climate calculations, medical research and disaster prediction.



Shinkansen (Bullet Trains)

Trains on the Shinkansen lines travel at over 200 km/h. The fastest is the Hayabusa train, which reaches 320 km/h as it runs through the Tohoku region. Despite their super speed, these trains are very safe, punctual and comfortable to ride.



Safer Cars

Japanese cars are trusted worldwide for their safety, and they will continue to get even safer as new technology is developed to add life-preserving driver support systems that can control the car's engine and brakes to avoid accidents and minimize damage.



Robot Nurses

Japan is pioneering the development of robots that will move just like humans. There is a great demand for this kind of robot for factories and construction sites, and it's hoped that humanoid robot nurses could eventually take over much of the hard physical work of caring for elderly people.



Compact Digital Cameras

Japanese digital cameras continue to get smaller and lighter. But at the same time, advances in technology are making them smarter and easier to use – these days you don't have to know anything about photography to take great looking photos.

Farming and Fisheries



Japan's main agricultural crop is rice, but there are also many vegetable, fruit, beef and dairy farmers. And Japanese fishing fleets catch all sorts of fish. But because Japan has such a large population for its size, much of the food must be imported.

Currency



Japanese money is called yen, and the yen is one of the major currencies, with a great influence on world economies. There are 1,000, 2,000, 5,000 and 10,000 yen notes, and 1, 5, 10, 50, 100 and 500 yen coins, and both coins and notes have very complex designs to make them hard to forge.

Protecting the Environment

We all want to take care of the environment, and people keep coming up with good ideas to do this. Resources are precious, and we should all try our best not to waste them.



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Recycle

Instead of throwing things away after we've used them, we can recycle them as raw materials for new products. Drinks bottles, newspapers and old clothes are some of the things it's easy to recycle.



Reduce

There are lots of ways to reduce the amount of household garbage we create and throw away. For a start, we can take our own bags when shopping, and avoid buying items with too much packaging.

Reuse

An example of reuse is keeping your empty detergent bottle, and just buying refills when it gets empty. If something breaks, why not mend it? And when you grow out of your clothes, someone somewhere will be glad to take them.

"Mottainai"

This is an old traditional expression in Japanese that means to take good care of things and avoid waste. It's such a good match for the ideals of environmental conservation, there is a movement to adopt it as a slogan worldwide.

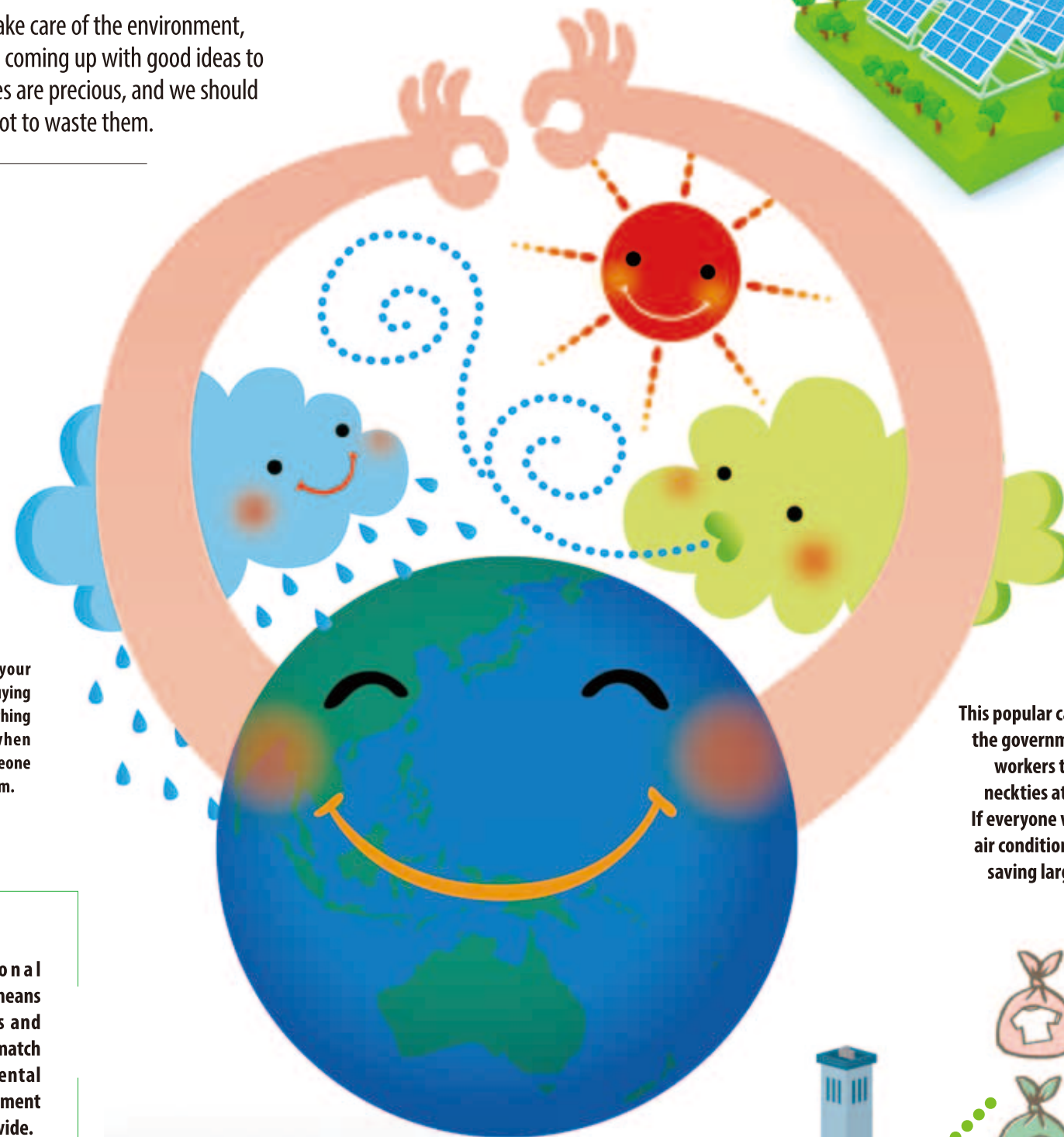
Greening

Greening projects come in all kinds and sizes, from replanting trees to bring back mountain forests, to making more city parks and planting trees along the streets, to even growing gardens on rooftops.



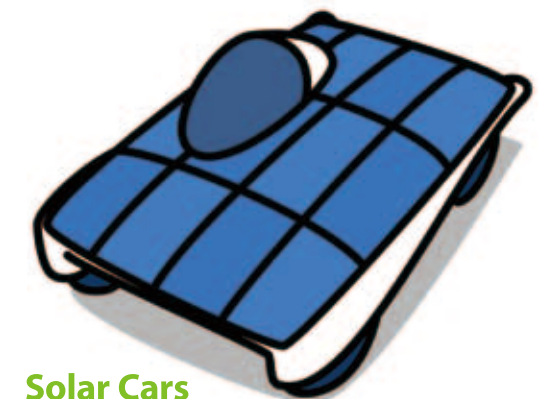
Smart Houses

Development is progressing on these ecological houses of the future, designed to generate, store and manage their own energy.



Solar Power

The Japanese have enthusiastically adopted solar power as an ideal clean energy source. Many houses have their own roof panels, and there are also whole towns that generate and share their own communal solar power.



Solar Cars

Japan is a world leader in research and development on electric cars powered by their own solar panels. When these cars become practical, they will greatly contribute to reducing CO₂ emissions.

"Cool biz"

This popular campaign promoted by the government encourages office workers to leave their suits and neckties at home in the summer. If everyone works in short sleeves, air conditioning can be set higher, saving large amounts of energy.



Waste Heat Utilization

Household waste and garbage is collected and burned in waste treatment plants. The heat energy created is a valuable resource, and modern plants reuse it for applications such as heating swimming pools.

