

Hot Topics 2 Japan Edition

Transcripts

Unit 1 Holidays in Japan

Track 1.

Listen carefully to the following information and complete the note-taking activity.

Scene *A guide is explaining some Japanese holidays to a visitor.*

M You came to visit Japan during a very busy time of the year, Mr. Chung. I'm sure you noticed how busy the airport was and how full the train was on your way here. You arrived just as we're kicking off Golden Week here in Japan.

The good news is that you will be able to enjoy a number of days off before you need to head to the office for any meetings. Today is Saturday, so of course, you have the rest of today and tomorrow free. Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday are all national holidays, so offices across Japan will be closed.

Monday is Constitution Day. I would suggest visiting the history museum that day. Usually the museum is closed on Mondays, but because of the holiday, it will be open. I'll be happy to come by in the morning and take you there.

The holiday on Tuesday is called Greenery Day. Since that holiday is related to nature and the environment, I would suggest a visit to one of our city's larger parks. The park near your hotel is a bit small. If you don't mind taking a trip on the subway, I can show you a much nicer park downtown.

On Wednesday, you will be able to enjoy Children's Day here in Japan. Have you seen any of the special Japanese flags that look like fish? You will see a lot more of those on Children's Day. It will be a good day to take some interesting photos to show your friends back home. People also eat special rice cakes on that day. We'll have to buy some so that you can try them.

I'm afraid it will be back to work on Thursday. For now, I will give you some time to unpack and rest. I'll be back around five to pick you up for dinner. How does all of that sound, Mr. Chung?

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Unit 2 The Low Crime Rate of Japan

Track 3.

Listen carefully to the following information and complete the note-taking activity.

Scene Two friends are talking about crime in Japan.

M What are you reading?

W I'm reading this article about crime rates in Japan.

M Anything of interest? There isn't a lot of crime in Japan.

W Oh yeah! Can you believe the biggest category of crime in Japan is stealing bicycles?

M That makes sense. We have so many bikes here. If people don't ride the train, they take a bike.

W I guess all those bikes make tempting targets for thieves. And when they can't take bikes, they take wallets out of people's pockets and purses. That kind of stealing is second on the list. This happens most in crowded areas, such as train stations and airports.

M I would hate to have my wallet stolen. It has my credit card in it.

W Watch out. A thief could use that without even taking your card. It's important to pay attention to your credit card bill. Some bars have been accused of using credit card numbers after the person has left.

M I had no idea that was a problem!

W Yeah, and this article also mentions that many Japanese are having problems with break-ins. So, people are increasing the security in their homes. People are beginning to install stronger locks for their doors and windows. Security companies are also installing more security cameras, window alarms, and car alarms than before.

M I'm surprised! What about violent crimes, like murder? Japan doesn't allow guns. Plus, the Japanese government requires people to register hunting rifles. So I would expect the number of crimes with guns on the books to be quite low.

W There aren't many shootings. However, people being stabbed with knives is a problem. Overall, it's pretty safe here, but there are always going to be problems. At least Japan is safer than most places.

M People in Japan are usually so trusting. It's terrible that this is changing.

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W Yes, but as long as you use common sense and pay attention to your surroundings, you should be safe. Also, it's best not to leave anything unlocked. It's best not to make it easy for thieves.

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Unit 3 Divorce in Japan

Track 5.

Listen carefully to the following information and complete the note-taking activity.

Scene *A student is giving a presentation in a classroom*

W Hi, everyone. Good morning. So, as you know, we're all giving presentations today on certain laws and how they've affected society. What I want to talk about is the divorce law that started in 2007 here in Japan. Under this law, wives can claim as much as half of their husband's retirement pension if the couple divorces.

Japan's salary men are world-renowned. Their lives consist of going off to work early in the morning and coming back late in the evening. As years go by like this, their wives often get to a point where they hardly know these guys. You'd think couples like this would be more likely to divorce. And since there are so many couples like this, the divorce rate would increase, right?

This is what people thought when the law came into effect. In doing research for the presentation, I came across a lot of old newspaper articles about the law. They were so extreme. Some were really funny. There was one article for husbands, telling them to watch for signs that their wives were planning a divorce. There were some good points. The wife doesn't want to spend time with her husband at all, for example. Others made me laugh. They said that if a woman starts to have quiet conversations with the children, she's thinking of divorce. If she starts dressing better or gets her hair done, she's looking for a new man. I mean, come on. Really? As if a woman has no other reason to look good.

The article even gave husbands advice on how to improve their relationships. They could do things like buy flowers for their wives or take them on trips. But the reporter said that husbands shouldn't take their wives outside of Japan. If they were no good at foreign languages, their wives would divorce them as soon as they got back to Narita airport!

People thought divorce rates would rise ...

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Unit 4 The Size of Japanese Women

Track 7.

Listen carefully to the following information and complete the note-taking activity.

Scene Two students are discussing food and exercise.

W Look at this new app that I've got on my phone.

M The Calcule-Eater? What does it do?

W It tells me the number of calories that I eat at every meal. I just put in the name of the food and the serving size, and it tells me how many calories it has.

M That's pretty interesting. Can I try it?

W Sure. Just tell me what you had for lunch, and I'll put it in the app.

M Let's see.... I had rice with a fried egg on top, and I drank milk with that. But I was still hungry, so I had a hot dog, too.

W I will assume that was a plain hot dog with a bun, one cup of rice, and one cup of milk.

M That sounds about right. Oh, and I had a banana as well.

W OK, all of that comes to 800 calories for lunch.

M Is that good or bad?

W That seems kind of high for one meal to me. I'm trying to eat less than 2,000 calories per day. But if you eat 800 calories per meal and three meals a day, you're getting about 2,400 calories per day.

M Well, you know I walk a lot. I bet I burn a lot of calories that way.

W I can check that. I have another app here that shows how many calories different activities burn.

M Check to see how many calories I burn while walking to and from school.

W Bad news. Even if you walk for an hour kind of fast like you're exercising, you only burn 500 calories.

M What about studying? Doesn't that burn any calories?

W Studying all day at school only burns about 300 calories.

M Maybe that's why my pants don't fit very well these days. I should start eating less and exercising more.

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Unit 5 Otsukare

Track 9.

Listen carefully to the following information and complete the note-taking activity.

Scene Two friends are talking about work.

M What's wrong? You look terrible! Are you sick?

W No, I'm not sick. I am exhausted. I worked a lot of overtime this month.

M Well, do you at least get a good paycheck out of it?

W No, I don't get paid for overtime. We are expected to work a lot. The longer we work, the faster we can get a promotion. In fact, last night, my team didn't knock off work until after midnight.

M That is crazy! You could get seriously ill if you keep that up!

W I know. One guy at our company went to the hospital last month. He had put in 114 hours of overtime!

M Doesn't the government do something about that?

W They have tried, but it is hard to set limits. In spite of some suggested rules for companies, there are no real legal limits on working too much in Japan like there are in the United States.

M Yeah, but I heard that big companies like Toyota started paying their employees overtime.

W Yes, but a lot of the Japanese workforce is temporary. That means they get less pay and have no rights. In fact, even if companies tell you to write down extra work hours, no one does it. It is also considered rude to leave before anyone else does. And you never want to leave before your boss!

M What does your boyfriend think about all of this?

W He is in the same situation. We never get to see each other. Sometimes we are able to go out one night every two or three weeks.

M Well, go home and get some rest. You definitely look like you need it!

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Unit 6 Japanese Traditional Foods

Track 11.

Listen carefully to the following information and complete the note-taking activity.

Scene A chef is explaining Japanese cuisine to a tourist.

W The power of five is important in Japanese culture. Though originally a Buddhist philosophy, the number five has greatly influenced how Japanese cuisine is prepared. Preparation of traditional Japanese food includes five colors, five senses, and five ways of cooking.

Five colors are important in traditional Japanese cuisine. It is believed that the colors white, black, yellow, red, and green should be used. They are thought to assist with eating healthy meals full of many vitamins. Examples of these colors would be white rice, black sesame seeds, yellow eggs, red meat, and green vegetables.

The Japanese also feel that food should be enjoyed with all five senses. Taste and smell are important, of course. Sight or presentation is probably as important as taste in traditional Japanese food. Touch is also important in terms of both food and what is used to eat the food. Sound may be a strange thing to think about when eating. However, an izakaya may be very loud while a well-to-do sushi restaurant may be quiet so that patrons may enjoy the restaurant's atmosphere. All of these things work together to create a certain atmosphere while eating.

There are five ways to prepare food. Japanese food may be served raw, steamed, simmered, fried, or grilled. Sashimi may be the first course of a meal. This may be followed by broth or vegetables. Later, stronger flavors or textures may be introduced, such as grilled fish or meat. Then rice and pickles can be served. Last, a cold desert may bring a perfect ending to the meal.

In order to truly appreciate Japanese cuisine, be sure to pay attention to the colors of your food, all five of your senses, and the different ways your food is prepared. When the power of five is taken into consideration, balance may be achieved.

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Unit 7 Martial Arts in Schools

Track 13.

Listen carefully to the following information and complete the note-taking activity.

Scene Two students are discussing junior high PE classes in Japan.

W I used to think that it was a myth that all Japanese people knew how to do karate, but maybe these days it's true. The Japanese government requires all kids to learn Japanese martial arts in school. They made it a law in 2012.

M What does that mean? Does every public school kid in Japan become a black belt in karate?

W It doesn't quite work like that. The classes simply introduce kids to Japanese martial arts.

M I can see that. It's like requiring schools to teach kids soccer. Public schools aren't trying to turn everyone into professional soccer players. They just introduce the game to kids so that maybe they can enjoy it.

W In this case, the government's aim wasn't really to get kids to enjoy martial arts like karate or judo. They wanted to help Japanese kids appreciate something about their culture.

M Do you think teaching Japanese martial arts in PE classes can really do that?

W You sound like you have your doubts.

M I do. It's like saying you can teach kids in the US about their culture through football practice in PE. Did you learn anything about your culture by playing football in school?

W No way! I didn't play football. Kids can get hurt playing a sport like that.

M And that's another thing. Don't you think kids can get hurt learning martial arts in school?

W They might get hurt if they do some kind of martial arts competition. But, just like when you were talking about soccer, most kids in school only play it to see what it's like.

M That makes sense. If the classes are just teaching kids some basic martial arts moves, they won't get hurt.

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W Right. And the kids who really want to get a black belt would need to sign up for extra classes at special martial arts schools. So I should really say all Japanese kids know about martial arts rather than saying they know how to do martial arts.

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Unit 8 Whole Person Education

Track 15.

Listen carefully to the following information and complete the note-taking activity.

Scene *A professor is speaking on Whole Person Education.*

M Today I would like to introduce you to Whole Person Education. To start off, let's talk about what Whole Person Education actually is. In the past, school has been about memorizing facts and learning skills like reading, writing, and math. Today, many educators believe that children need more. The Whole Person Education method helps the child think creatively and develop problem-solving skills.

In the Whole Person method, the goal is to teach students how to think. Students grow socially, emotionally, and spiritually. By spiritually, I mean that students are taught to explore their beliefs. Whole person educators want them to ask "Why?" and find their own answers. In the real world, answers to problems are difficult to find. This method aims to prepare them for figuring out answers to real-world questions in their future lives.

Teachers are more like friends. They don't lecture students. They help students, but they don't give answers. Students and teachers support each other in learning. It's very different from the old style of education that most students are used to.

As with other methods of education, the Whole Person method has changed a lot recently. Because of the Internet, students need more than just basic skills and facts. They need to be able to work with other people. They need to experiment with different methods. Most importantly, they need to think for themselves.

Let me show you a few examples of some lessons used by educators in this short video that I found online.

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Unit 9 The Suzuki Method

Track 17.

Listen carefully to the following information and complete the note-taking activity.

Scene *Two friends are discussing music lessons.*

W Where are you going?

M I'm headed to my piano lesson right now.

W Oh, I didn't know that you played.

M Yup, I've been playing the piano since I was four years old. It's one of my favorite things to do.

W Four years old! That's so young! Why did you start so early?

M Well, my parents thought it was important to begin early. They enrolled me in a Suzuki music school, and I've been playing ever since.

W I've heard about Suzuki music schools. Is there some secret method that they have to teach such young children?

M Actually, I think it's much easier for children to learn music than adults. Their minds are like little sponges. Think about it. If you are exposed to two languages from when you are a baby, you learn to speak both. Music is the same way.

W I've never thought about it like that.

M Well, I'd better get a move on if I want to be on time for my lesson. I have a performance next week with my classmates. You should come and listen.

W OK, I will. See you later!

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Unit 10 Internet Café Kids

Track 19.

Listen carefully to the following information and complete the note-taking activity.

Scene Two friends are talking about living in an Internet café.

W Where have you been? I saw your parents last week. They are worried about you.

M Well, I moved out of their house. They told me I was addicted to the Internet and wanted me to stop playing online so much. So, I sort of moved out.

W You moved out?

M Yeah, not completely though. I left my stuff there, but I have some clothes with me.

W I thought you were looking for a job.

M I was, but it's hard to find a job I want. I just graduated from college, and I can't find any place to hire me! Right now, I work at a convenience store part time. So, because I don't have a full-time job, I can't find an apartment. You need to have a full-time job to rent one.

W So where do you live?

M I stay at a couple different Internet cafés. There is one by the train station and another near where I work. They have everything you need! I can play video games for as long as I want! I can search the Internet. There are tons of comic books to read. When I get tired, I just put the chair down flat. Plus, I can eat and shower there! They even have lockers where I can keep my clothes!

W Yeah, but what about your family? They are worried. They don't want you to become a "Freeter!"

M Well, I want to live in Tokyo. There is so much to do here! My parents live in a small village. I will never find a good job if I stay with them. This is the only way I can look for a job AND have freedom to do what I want.

W Well, good luck. I hope you know what you're doing.

M Don't worry. It's only temporary, I hope.

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Unit 11 E-wallets

Track 21.

Listen carefully to the following information and complete the note-taking activity.

Scene A man is talking about how he uses an e-wallet.

M Last night, I went out to eat with some friends. After dinner, I paid for our meal using my cell phone. One of my friends was quite surprised. He had never seen anyone use an e-wallet before.

I think e-wallets are great. All of my financial information is in my phone! I never have to carry both my wallet and my phone. I can use it to make an online purchase or to buy something at a store. It's really easy to set up and incredibly convenient. E-wallets are also completely safe and secure. They developed the technology to encrypt all of your information.

My friend was interested in setting up an e-wallet for himself. I told him to make sure his smartphone has the technology. Then he just has to download the software. Next, he will need to enter all of his information. That's it!

A person with an e-wallet can use it anywhere that has the same system! It's also really great for e-commerce sites. You just transfer your information. In the past, I often had problems buying something online. The information that I typed in didn't always go through. It was such a pain in the neck to have to put my information in two or three times.

An e-wallet solves all of those kinds of problems! You enter your information once. It saves it for the next time you want to make a purchase! You can also turn your phone into a boarding pass or train ticket. It really is the way of the future.

Actually, there is one more interesting use that I just learned about. Systems that use e-wallets can check to see if someone who is trying to buy alcohol is underage.

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Unit 12 The Space Program

Track 23.

Listen carefully to the following information and complete the note-taking activity.

Scene Two students are discussing astronauts.

W Do you know who Naoko Yamazaki is?

M I don't have a clue. Who is she?

W She was a female astronaut in Japan's space program.

M I didn't know that Japan had any female astronauts. How many do they have now?

W Uh, now they have none, because Yamazaki retired in 2011. She was Japan's second female astronaut. A doctor named Chiaki Mukai was Japan's first female astronaut.

M But now they're both retired?

W Yes. Mukai was born in the 1950s, so of course, she's retired. But Yamazaki isn't that old. She was only 41 when she retired. She went back to school in order to continue her studies in engineering.

M How do you know so much about these women anyway? Did you see some TV show about them or something?

W No, I read about them online. I am writing an essay for class. I was planning to write about both, but I think I'll focus on Yamazaki for my essay.

M I see. So what are you going to say about her in your essay?

W I haven't finished my research yet, but so far I found out that she flew to the International Space Station during her career.

M That's interesting. Was that the high point of her career?

W Maybe it was. She did that right before she retired. She flew to the ISS in 2010.

M I didn't know that Japan had any space shuttles to take people to space and bring them back.

W Actually, she flew there in the US's space shuttle *Discovery*.

M I see. Then she retired the year after that mission. How long was she an astronaut anyway?

W I think I have that in my notes here. Let me see.... She began working for the National Space Development Agency in 1996. Then she was selected as an astronaut candidate to visit the ISS in 1999.

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M Would you ever consider that line of work? You could become Japan's next female astronaut!

W Are you kidding? I get sick on airplanes. There's no way I could go into space in a rocket.

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Unit 13 Idol Groups

Track 25.

Listen carefully to the following information and complete the note-taking activity.

Scene Two friends are talking about the upcoming AKB48 concert.

- M What are you listening to?
- W This is the new single from the J-pop phenomenon AKB48.
- M I think I heard about them when I was in New York. Don't they have 100 members or something?
- W Well, really, they only have 75. There are four teams and each team has their own theme.
- M Wow. That's a lot of teams for one group.
- W I know, but thousands of girls auditioned! I wish I could sing and dance. It would have been fun to audition for the group!
- M Why do you like them so much?
- W Well, their music is catchy and fun. They are really entertaining to watch when performing live. Plus, they really connect with their fans. They reach out to them in person. It's why I'm going to their concert in Tokyo next week! I'll get to meet them!
- M That IS exciting! But how can you meet a band that is so popular?
- W They have something called "hand-shaking events" where you can actually talk to them! That is why they are so popular. They are approachable. They get to know their fans, and their fans know them. Fans can learn things about each member, such as their blood type, favorite foods, hobbies, and other things they like. Even though they are a group, it feels like I know them.
- M Does your brother like them or does he only like boy idol bands?
- W Oh, he loves them! He would date any of them in a heartbeat! But they aren't allowed to date because fans may get jealous.
- M Well, I hope you have fun. It sounds like it will be a great time!
- W I'm so excited! I've never met a J-pop idol before!

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Unit 14 Taboo Tattoos

Track 27.

Listen carefully to the following information and complete the note-taking activity.

Scene Two friends are talking about tattoos in Japanese culture.

W What are you up to?

M I'm looking at tattoos online. I want to get one this week, but I'm not sure which one.

W Oh no! You don't want to do that! If you get a tattoo, you won't be let into hot springs, resorts, or fitness gyms! Many Japanese see tattoos as dirty.

M What? Why? That doesn't make any sense.

W Tattoos are associated with the yakuza. It's what we call the Japanese gangs. They are usually criminals. So, if regular people see a tattoo, they are often scared.

M But I heard that the yakuza are no longer getting tattoos because they are becoming businessmen.

W That may be true, but it is still taboo. Many people also believe that it is more for people of the working or lower class.

M But they are just for fashion! My friends all got tattoos to represent something important in their lives.

W People in this country don't see it that way. I've also heard that when you go to the doctor, you can't have some tests done. If you get an MRI, your tattoo will explode.

M Give me a break. You don't really believe that, do you? Tattoos do not explode.

W Still....

M Look. Getting a tattoo is a way to express myself. I love Japan and want to get a tattoo of cherry blossoms. Cherry blossoms aren't scary, are they? Every time I see my tattoo, I will remember Japan.

W But what about work? Hot springs?

M No one will see it. I will get the tattoo in a place where it won't show.

W But if anyone sees your tattoo, you may be fired!

M How about this I will get a tattoo before I leave Japan but after I am no longer working. That way, I won't offend anyone.

W OK. I think that would be wise.

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Unit 15 The Business of Cosplay

Track 29.

Listen carefully to the following information and complete the note-taking activity.

Scene A salesperson is explaining about a new service.

W For all of you Cosplayers out there, Fantasy Photos has a great new deal just for you! Come into our studio on any Wednesday in the month of July for a special offer. You will get one hour of studio time at 25% off of our regular price.

But there is more than just getting to use our spacious studio for a full hour. You will also have access to our entire line of fantasy backgrounds! You're sure to agree that our studio backgrounds are second to none. Set up and take as many photos as you like using your own camera. We have backgrounds for castles, alien planets, and forest adventures. Not only that, but you can also make use of any of the props in the Fantasy Photo's prop room. We have pirate chests, giant mushrooms, and boulders in many sizes. With our props and backgrounds, you're sure to get the perfect shot to add to your Cosplay portfolio.

Do you need to create or update business cards for your play identity? Fantasy Photo can help you with that as well. Get advice from our friendly staff to help you design eye-catching business cards, and we can even print them in the studio. You'll love our regular low price of just ¥3,000 for 100 high-quality cards.

For those of you playing multiple characters, we have good news. For the same low price of ¥3,000, you can print 100 cards with up to five different designs! That gives you twenty cards of each of your Cosplay identities!

So don't wait! Hurry in this month to take advantage of our special Wednesday studio rates or stock up on business cards. If you can imagine it for your Cosplay character, Fantasy Photo can make it happen.