

## Culture Notes – Bowing

### How do Japanese people greet one another?

If you meet someone for the first time in the UK, how might you greet them? In Japan, it is common for people to bow when they meet one another. If there is anyone in the class who can do Japanese martial arts, they may already know how to bow and could demonstrate to their classmates.

To bow correctly, boys should place their hands by their sides and girls should clasp their hands in front of them. Then keeping the back nice and straight, you should bow from the waist.



Bowing is a means of showing respect and how low you bow depends on how important the person is that you are bowing to. If you were bowing to your teacher for example, you would probably bow at an angle of about 45° (although no-one will measure!) This shows that you respect your teacher. In return the teacher may bow back to you at about an angle of 15°. This shows they are in a higher position than you!

Bowing in Japan is perhaps a little more complicated than you first thought? Now practise with a partner, taking on different roles and try to bow at the correct angle. Remember it takes Japanese people many years to perfect this skill.

### What is a meishi?

Meishi are Japanese business cards and are presented to someone when you meet them for the first time. They contain all of your contact details, such as your name, company/ school name and address, website and email details. The company logo is also usually displayed. Most importantly though, they give your job title – this helps people to know how important you are.

Meishi are also popular with some school children and they make up their own cards and swap them with friends. They may choose a cartoon character or some other logo which represents them and have a small picture of it in the corner.

When handing someone your card, make sure that you do so with your personal details turned to face the person you are presenting it to – so that it is easy for them to read. The card should be held with 2 hands and presented with a bow. The person receiving it should also bow and make a polite comment about the information on the card. The card should then be carefully placed away (usually in a special business card holder). It would be considered incredibly rude to put the meishi in your back pocket, or to scribble on it. It is also considered rude to staple someone's meishi to another piece of paper. Why do you think this might be?

Why not have a go at making a meishi once you've practised with your name badge? Perhaps you could even try handing it over to your classmates politely. Are you able to bow correctly? Have you remembered how to hold your meishi?