



THE
JAPAN
SOCIETY

Winter Holiday Activity Pack





Christmas in Japan

Christmas is pronounced *kurisumasu* in Japanese. If you are in Japan at Christmas time, some things will look the same as they do in the UK. For example, you will see lots of Christmas decorations and hear Christmas songs or carols played in shops. However, celebrations in Japan are quite different to celebrations in the UK.

Japanese people may exchange gifts and put up Christmas trees, but there is no religious significance behind the festivities because most people are not Christians in Japan. Also, 25 December is not a national holiday so shops and restaurants are still open and most people will go to work or school as normal!



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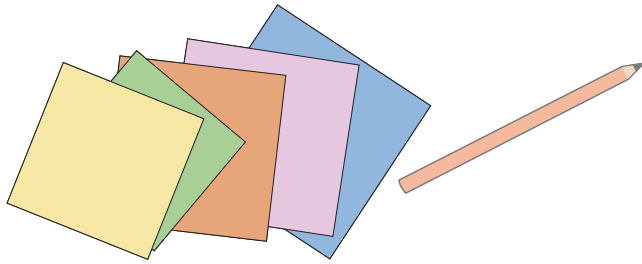
On Christmas Eve, family and friends might get together to eat Christmas cake, but in Japan it is a type of sponge cake decorated with strawberries and cream rather than a fruit cake like you might see in the UK.

Christmas Day is seen as a romantic occasion – similar to Valentine’s Day in the UK, and it is common to see people going on dates around Christmas time. New Year’s is a much more important holiday in Japan and people will spend the day celebrating with family.

Why not make some origami Christmas decorations to display at home or put up on your Christmas tree?



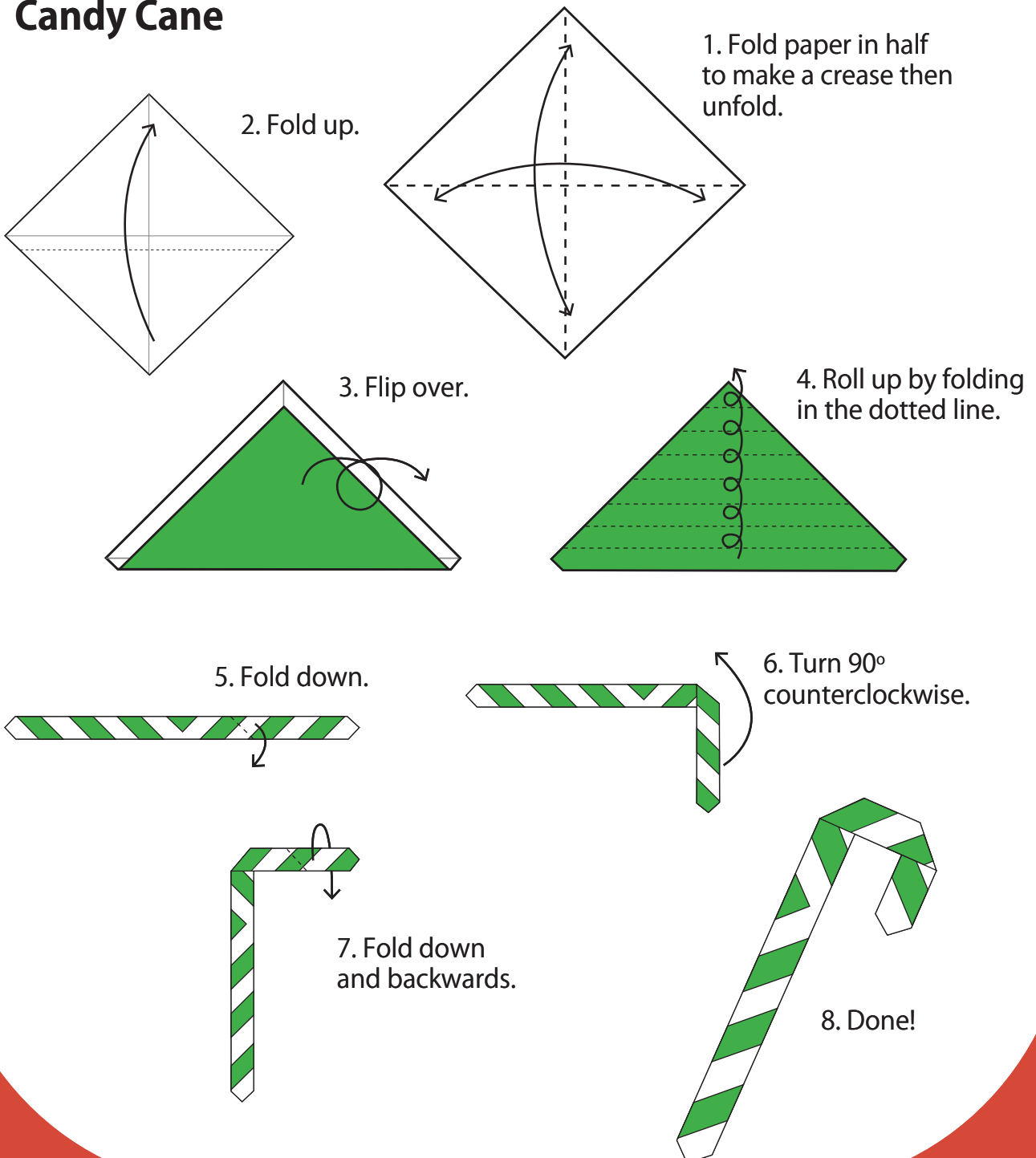
Holiday Origami Challenge



You will need:

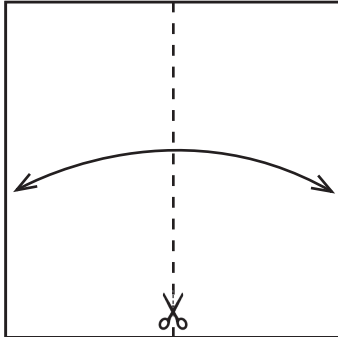
- origami paper
- pencil or pen

Candy Cane

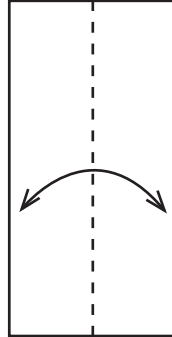




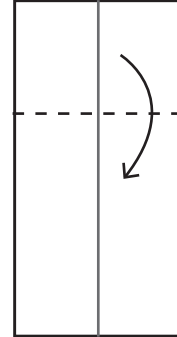
Santa Claus



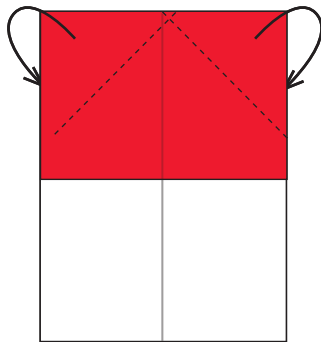
1. Fold paper in half to make a crease then unfold and cut in half.



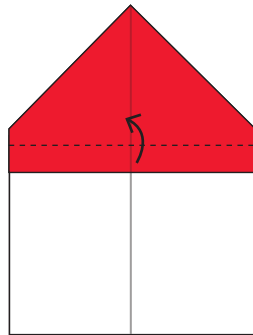
2. Fold one of the smaller halves in half to make a crease.



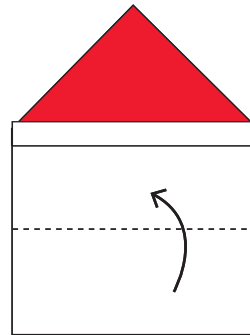
3. Fold down approximately 1/3 of the paper from the top.



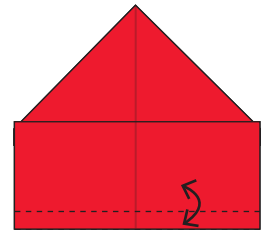
4. Fold backwards.



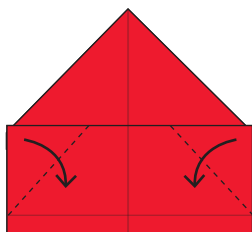
5. Fold up.



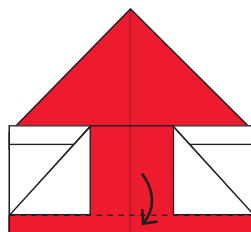
6. Fold up.



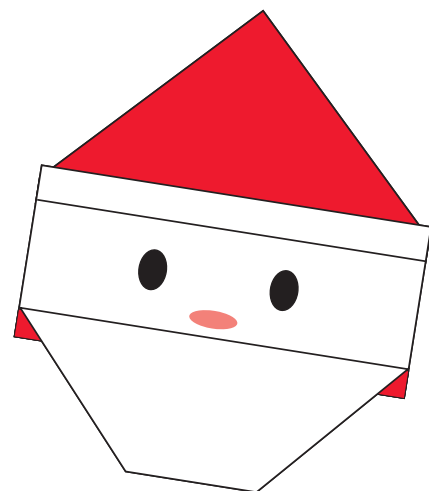
7. Fold up to make a crease and then unfold.



8. Fold down to the crease line from step 7.



9. Fold down.

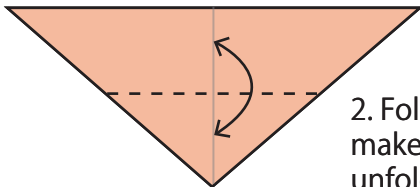


10. Finally, draw the eyes and nose and done!

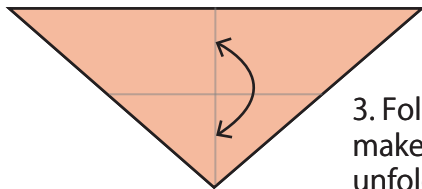
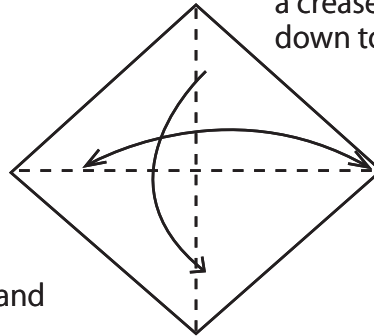


Reindeer

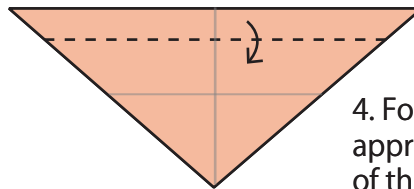
1. Fold horizontally to make a crease, unfold, then fold down to make a triangle.



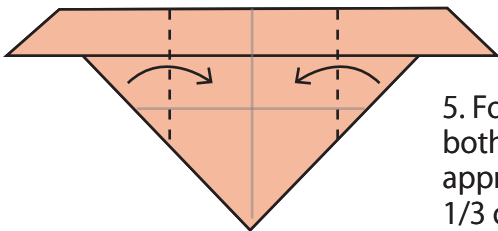
2. Fold up to make a crease and unfold.



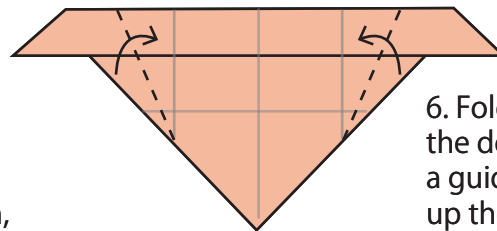
3. Fold up to make a crease and unfold.



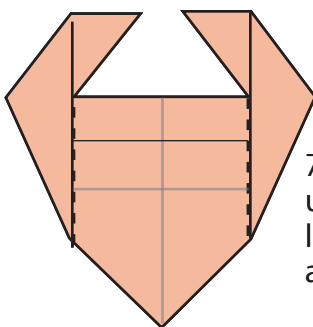
4. Fold down, approximately 1/3 of the top half.



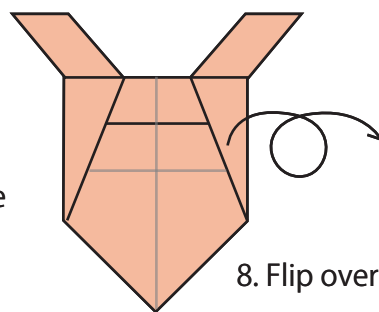
5. Fold in from both sides, approximately 1/3 of the width, to make a crease.



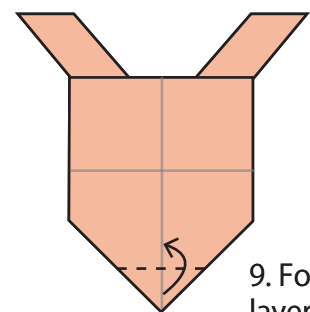
6. Fold in, using the dotted line as a guide, and line up the edge with the crease line from step 5.



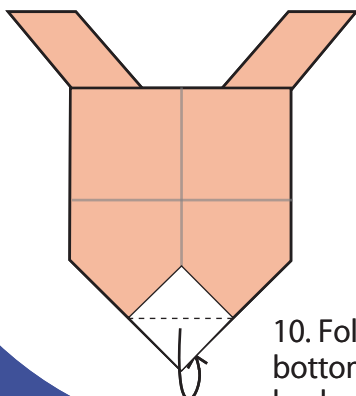
7. Fold in again, using the crease line from step 5 as a guide.



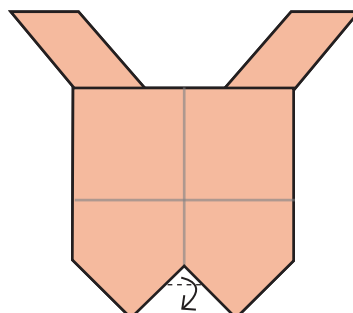
8. Flip over.



9. Fold top layer up.

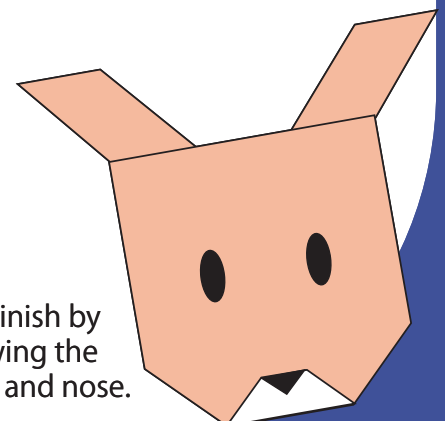


10. Fold bottom layer backwards.



11. Fold down.

12. Finish by drawing the eyes and nose.





The Zodiac Animals

In Japan, people associate each year with one of twelve zodiac animals, and the cycle begins again every twelve years. The zodiac system originally comes from China and there is a legend that explains why the animals are in this particular order.

The Legend

God wanted to create a zodiac system with twelve animals and invited everyone to a race on New Year's Day to decide their order in the system. The ox was the slowest of all the animals, so he got up very early so he could start before the break of dawn. The clever rat knew this and hid on the ox's back the entire way, letting him do all the work.

When they reached God, the rat jumped off the ox's back and finished in first place, making the ox second! The next ten animals to arrive were: the tiger, the rabbit, the dragon, the snake, the horse, the sheep, the monkey, the rooster, the dog and finally the boar, the last animal in the zodiac system.

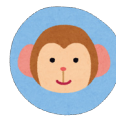
There was one more animal in the story that never even made it to the race - the cat. That is because the rat lied and told her that the race would be held on the second day of the New Year. It is said that the cat still hasn't forgotten about it and that is why cats always chase rats when they see one!

Animal Sounds

Did you know that animal sounds in Japanese can often be different to the ones we use in English? See if you can guess each animal with the sound it makes in Japanese.



a. wan wan



e. moo moo



b. meh meh



f. heheen



c. buu buu



g. ookee ookee



d. chuu chuu



h. kokekokko

Answers: rat, d; dog, a; sheep, b; boar, c; monkey, g; rooster, h; ox, e; and horse, f.



Kanji Characters

In Japanese, these two kanji characters 正月 mean New Year. The character お is usually before 正月.* These kanji characters 元日 mean 'New Year's Day'.

Can you write the characters? Trace the characters by following the stroke order, then try to write them on your own.

正	月	元	日
<i>shogatsu means New Year</i>		<i>ganjitsu means New Year's Day</i>	

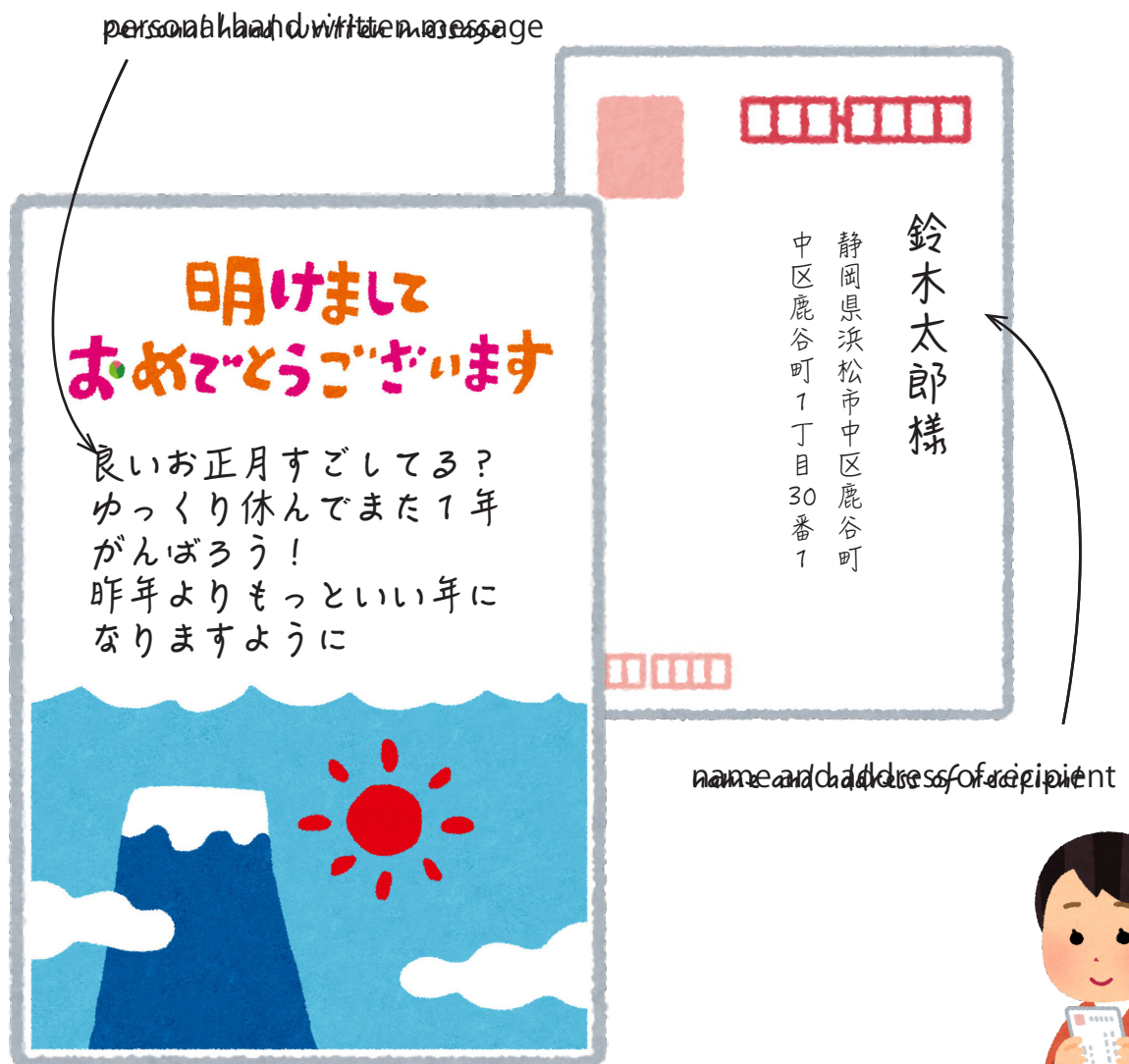
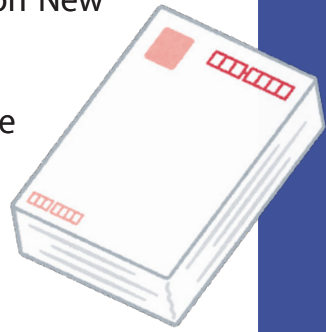
* It is common in Japan to add お in front of words to make it sound more formal and polite.



New Year Postcards 年賀状

In Japan, everyone sends New Year's Postcards called nengajo to their family and friends for New Year's. Unlike Christmas cards which can arrive any time before Christmas Day, nengajo are all kept by the post office and delivered on New Year's Day itself.

Around the end of each year, you will see a lot of nengajo for sale for the coming new year with all kinds of beautiful designs. The front of the postcard has a New Year's greeting, a space for a personal message as well as a seasonal design or that year's zodiac animal. The back is normally for the address only.





Activity: Write your own Nengajo!

Why not try to write your own New Year's message this year on a nengajo? You can use one of the templates provided or create your own!

HAPPY
NEW YEAR!!



Template 1



明けまして
おめでとうございます



Template 2



Template 3



Template 4