



THE  
JAPAN  
SOCIETY

# Children's Day



こいのぼり



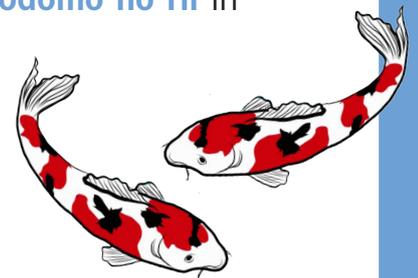
Shuchiba, CC BY-SA 4.0

## Kodomo no Hi

Children's Day is celebrated in Japan on 5th May. It used to be known as Boys' Day, but nowadays the festival is a way to celebrate the health and happiness of all children, both boys and girls. The festival is called **Kodomo no Hi** in Japanese. Kodomo means 'children'.

## Koi Fish

The carp fish is a symbol of strength and courage in Japan because carp can swim upstream. The word for carp in Japanese is **koi**. In fact, there is a famous story in Japan about a very special carp.

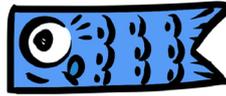


The story originally comes from a Chinese legend and goes like this: one day there was a school of carp fish swimming together up the river, their scales glistening like jewels in the water. It was a difficult journey and when they came to a waterfall many of the fish turned back, letting the water carry them away. However, some fish stayed and tried to jump over the waterfall into the river above. For 100 years, they tried and tried and finally, one fish made it to the top of the waterfall! The Gods thought this strong and determined fish should be rewarded and so they transformed the carp into a dragon!

**Why do you think it would be difficult to swim upstream like a carp?**

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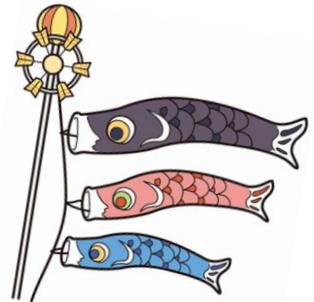


## Koi Nobori

From the end of April, there are public displays of bright and colourful flags shaped like carp fish and many families will display carp flags outside their houses too. These flags are called **koi nobori**.



When families display koi nobori at home, there are usually several carp on the pole. Traditionally the largest one represents the father, followed by the mother and then the children.



**Can you work out which carp is in the picture on the right?**

## Kintaro Dolls

Another way to celebrate Children's Day is to display a Kintaro Doll. **Kintaro** is the name of a legendary hero from a Japanese folktale who grew up in the mountains, befriended animals, and later became a courageous warrior. It is said that he rode a bear instead of a horse! Just like Kintaro, parents hope their children will be kind, brave and strong!





## Kabuto Helmets

Kabuto is a type of helmet that was worn in the past by Japanese warriors. They were part of traditional armour in Japan and worn by Japanese samurai warriors, so the helmet is a symbol of bravery and strength.



Nowadays, some families will display small ornaments such as kabuto helmets and samurai dolls at home around the time of the festival. Many school children will make origami kabuto helmets to wear on Children's Day.

If you visit a Japanese castle or Children's Day event around the 5th May, you may see people dressed up in samurai armour.



## Food

Like other Japanese festivals, there is a special sweet associated with Children's Day, it's called **kashiwa mochi**. These are chewy rice cakes (mochi) with a sweet red bean paste filling. Each sweet is wrapped in an oak leaf (kashiwa).

The oak leaves cannot be eaten, but are used for decoration. The leaves are a symbol of wealth and success for families because oak trees keep their old leaves until new sprouts grow.





*kodomo no hi*



### Kanji Characters

In Japanese, the kanji characters for kodomo or children are: 子供. However, kodomo is usually written in hiragana in the name of the festival like this: こどもの日.

**Why not try writing them below?** Follow the stroke order and trace each character, then practice writing them on your own.

 <i>ko</i>	 <i>domo</i>	子	供

Well done! Now you can practice writing the characters 力, for 'strength' and 鯉, for 'carp'.

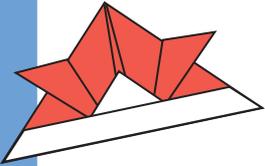
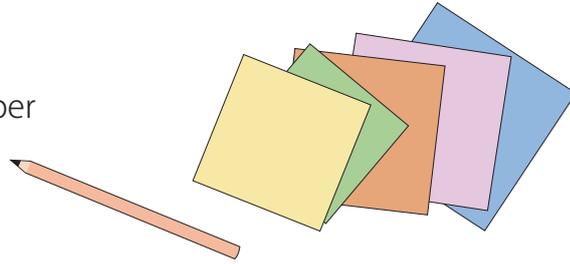
 <i>chikara</i>	力				
 <i>koi</i>	鯉				



# Activity: Origami Challenge!

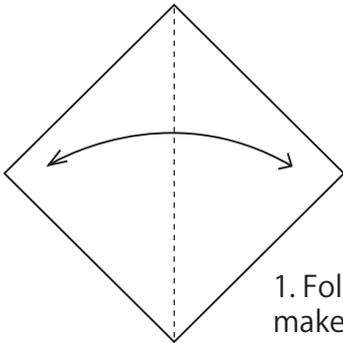
## You will need:

- origami paper or square paper
- pen or pencil

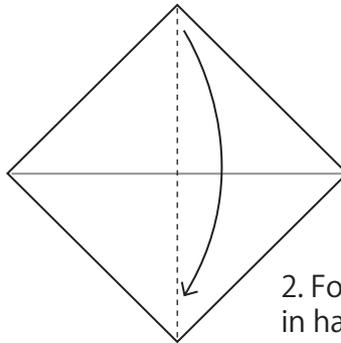


## Kabuto Helmet

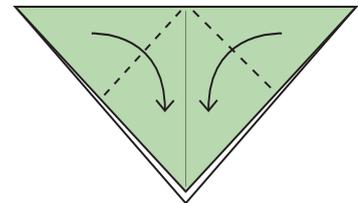
Use 60 cm wide squared newspaper or sugar paper for a large wearable one.



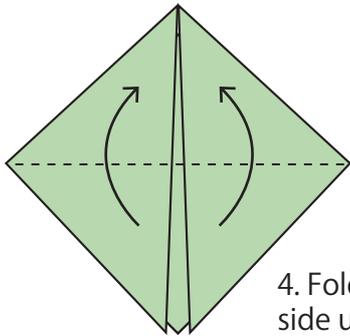
1. Fold in half to make a crease then unfold.



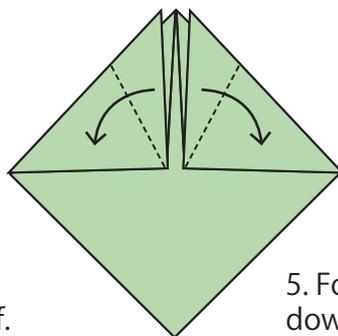
2. Fold in half.



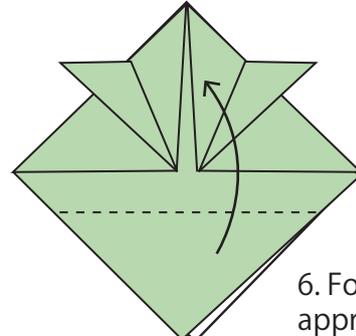
3. Fold down.



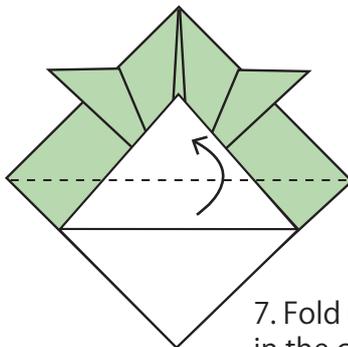
4. Fold each side up in half.



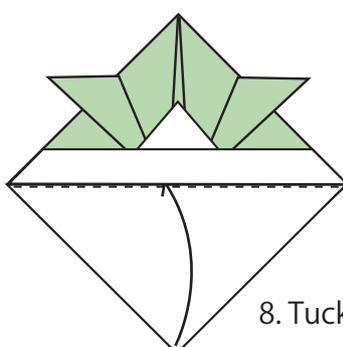
5. Fold down.



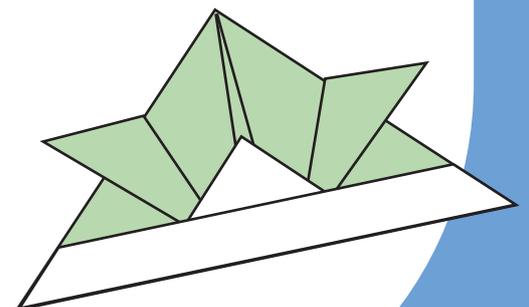
6. Fold up to approximately the centre of the top half.



7. Fold up in the centre line.



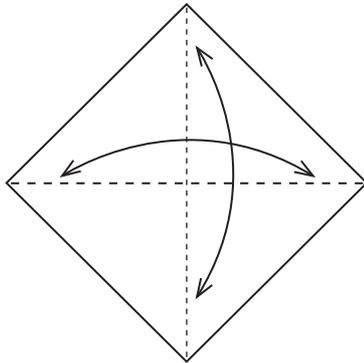
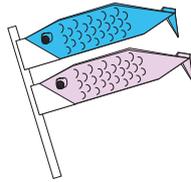
8. Tuck in.



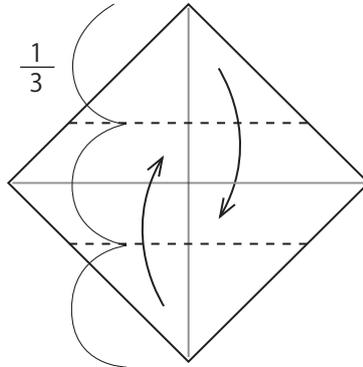
9. Finished!



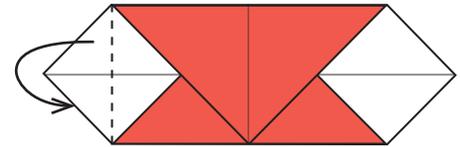
## Koi Nobori



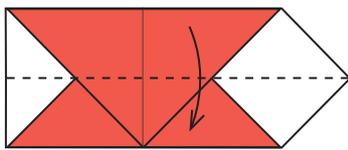
1. Fold in half to make a crease then unfold.



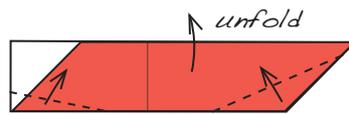
2. Fold in top and bottom, approximately  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the length.



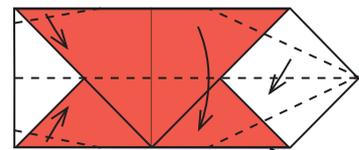
3. Fold backward.



7. Fold down



8. Fold in the dotted line to make a crease then unfold.



9. Fold in the dotted line then fold in half again.



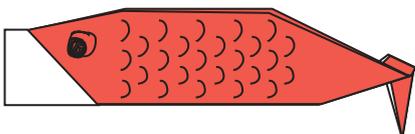
10. Fold up to make a crease then unfold.



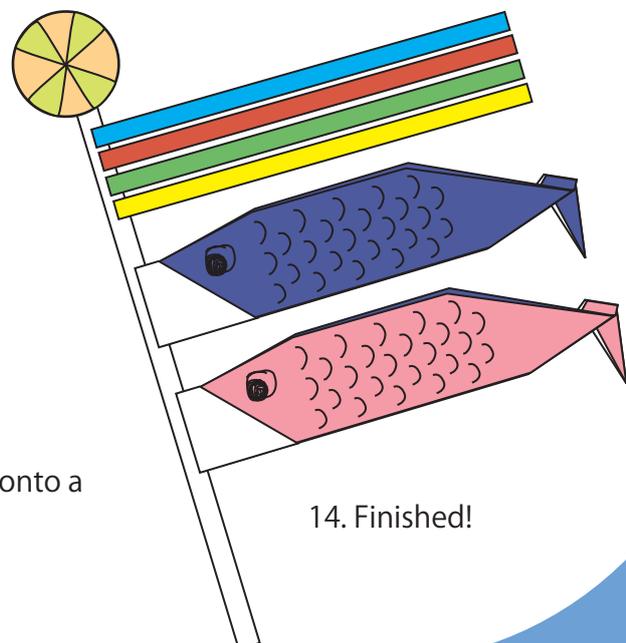
11. Tuck in and pocket fold in the dotted line.



12. Fold down to make a crease, then tuck in and pocket fold in the dotted line.



13. Draw the eyes and scales and glue onto a straw or stick with other decorations.



14. Finished!



## Activity: Design Your Own Koi Nobori!

