



THE
JAPAN
SOCIETY

Otsukimi お月見





o tsuki mi お月見

Otsukimi is an autumn festival in Japan. In Japanese, Tsuki means “moon” and “mi” means to watch or view. So Tsukimi* (tsue-key-me) means “Moon Viewing” and is a festival which celebrates the harvest moon.

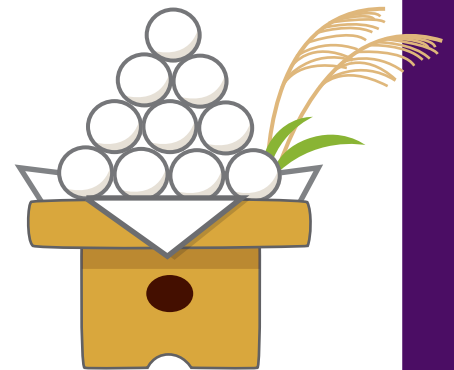


The harvest moon is the full moon that occurs closest to the autumn equinox (the beginning of autumn). Around this time, the days start getting shorter and the full moon is especially bright and rises earlier. In the past, the light from the harvest moon helped farmers to gather their crops before the winter, allowing them to work after the daylight had disappeared.

The festival is not as popular nowadays because more people live in cities where they cannot see the moon clearly, but people still observe the festival today to pray for a good harvest.

Food and Decorations

To celebrate Tsukimi, people display food and decorations in a room from which the moon can be easily seen. The most common food to display for Tsukimi is rice dumplings called Tsukimi Dango because they are white and round – just like the moon!



Other seasonal foods such as chestnuts and sweet potatoes might also be part of a Tsukimi display, as well as a plant called pampas grass which looks like a rice plant and symbolises a good harvest.

Many restaurants and fast-food chains produce special editions of their products for Tsukimi; for example adding an egg to hamburgers to symbolise the full moon.

What foods do you associate with autumn?

* For important words in Japan, an ‘O’ is added to the beginning to show respect. So Tsukimi and Otsukimi have the same meaning, but using ‘O’ is more polite language.

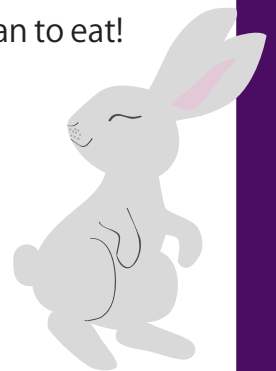


Rabbit on the Moon

Did you know there is a myth in Japan that rabbits live on the moon? According to the story, one day, a fox, a monkey and a rabbit came across an old man lying on the ground. He was weak and tired so the three animals set out to collect some food for him.

The fox caught fish from the river and the monkey collected fruit from trees, but the rabbit didn't know what to do. He was so upset that he didn't have anything to give the old man and so he made a fire and offered to cook himself for the old man to eat!

Suddenly, the old man transformed into the Old Man of the Moon. He was so touched by the rabbit's generosity that he took him back to the moon with him. It is said that, if you look closely today, you can see the rabbit on the moon.



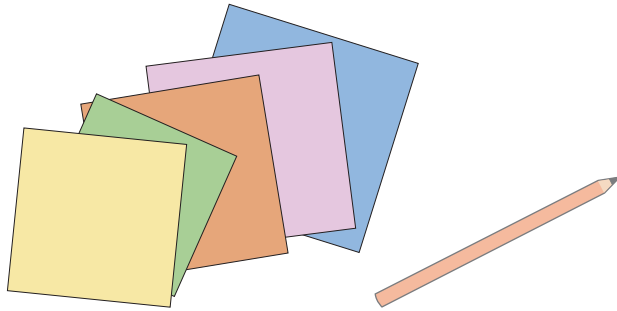
Kanji Characters

In Japanese Kanji, 月 means "moon" and 見 means "to view" or "to watch".

Can you write Tsukimi in Japanese? Follow the stroke order to trace the characters below, then try on your own.



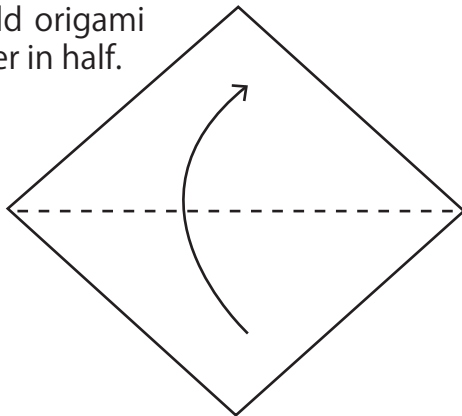
Origami Activity: Tsukimi Rabbit



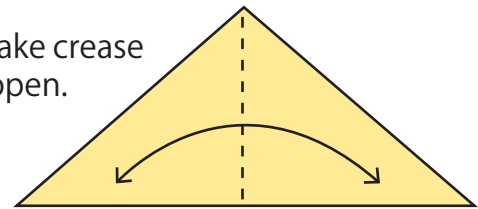
You will need:

- origami/ square coloured paper
- pencil or pen

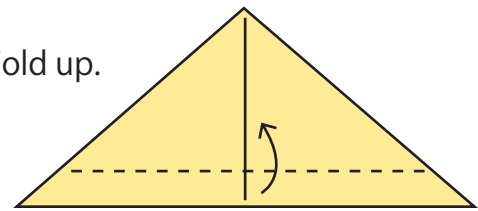
1. Fold origami paper in half.



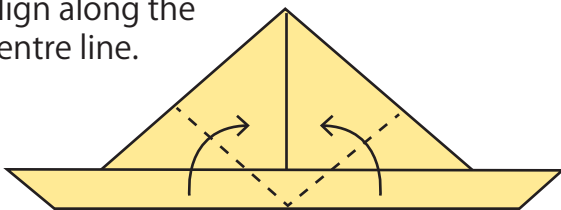
2. Fold in half to make crease then fold back to open.



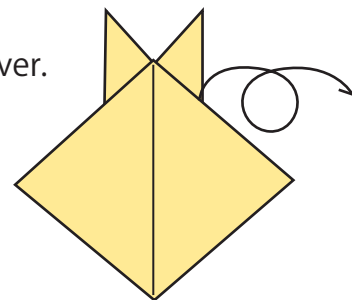
3. Fold up.



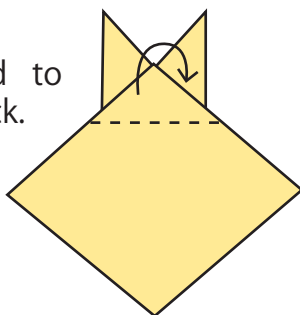
4. Fold up to align along the centre line.



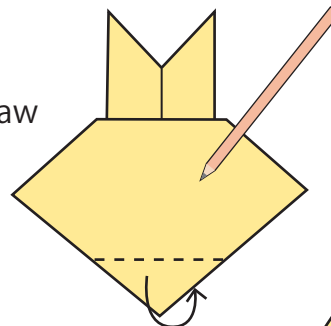
5. Flip over.



6. Fold to the back.



7. Fold to the back, then draw the eyes and mouth.



8. Done!





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