



Kites

Kites are a traditional toy in Japan and there are kite-flying festivals in various places throughout the year. For example, one popular kite festival called the Giant Kite Festival is held every year in Japan in July.

It's also a Japanese tradition to fly a kite around the New Year and many children would have played with kites on New Year's Day in the past. This is less common nowadays but, even so, kites are still associated with the New Year in Japan. The Japanese word for kite is tako.



Designs

Traditional Japanese kites are toys and also works of art. They come in a variety of shapes and sizes and many are decorated with bold designs and brightly coloured tails. Some kite designs are unique to the area they were made in and may be collected as works of art.

Japanese kite designs include: basic geometric shapes, warrior legends, local symbols or traditional patterns, written Japanese, birds or insects and more! One popular design is called yakko—it's the shape of a person.





Make a kite

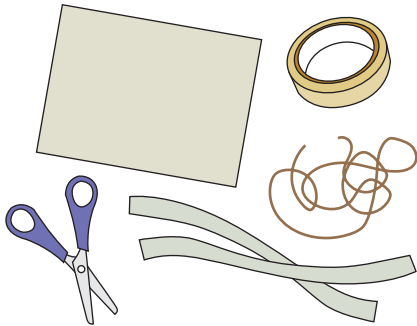
Japanese kites are usually made from washi (Japanese paper) with a light bamboo frame, but you can make your own simple kite out of newspaper and then decorate it using some of the common new year good luck motifs- there is a selection below! Follow the steps on the next page for instructions on how to make your own kite.





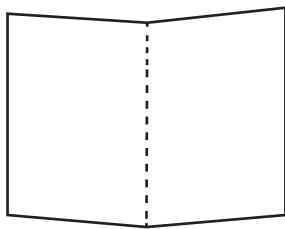
Make a Simple Japanese Kite!

Written by Susan Wright, edited by the Japan Society based on a design by Japanese kite-maker, Takeshi Nishibayashi.

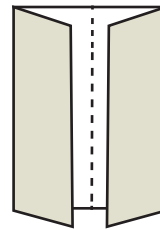


You will need

- A sheet of newspaper (or A3 paper)
- Scissors
- Tape
- A length of string or twine
- Two strips of paper or ribbon (Approx 2cm x 45-60cm)

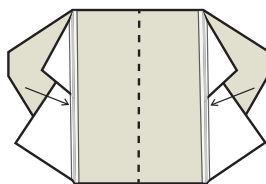
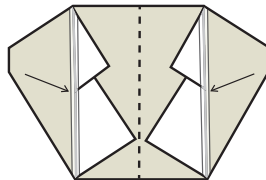
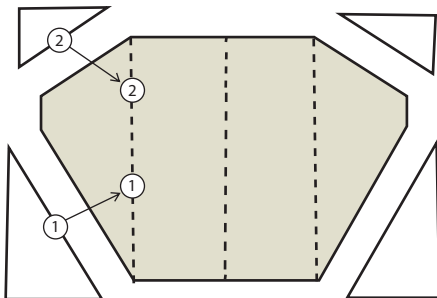
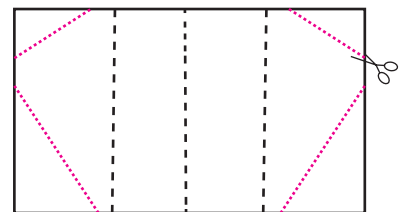
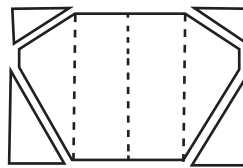


1. Fold an A3 sheet of paper or newspaper along centre and open out again.

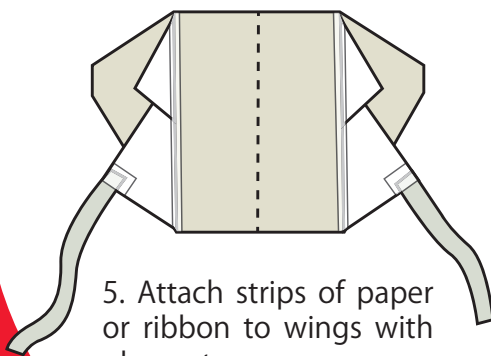


2. Fold outside edges to centre fold line and open flat again.

3. Cut off corners as shown and retain pieces. Flip the kite.

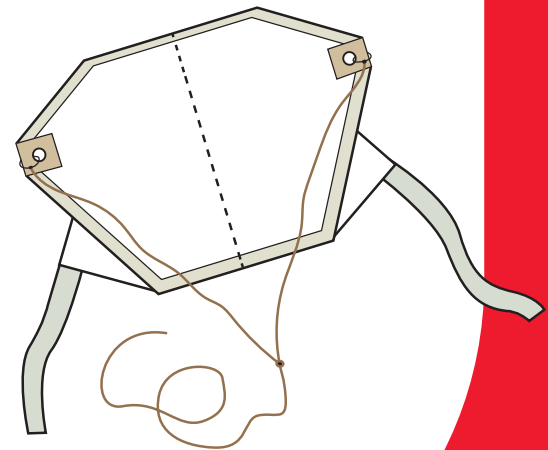


4. Tape cut off pieces to fold lines on back of kite as shown. Fold these 'wings' back and tape again on the other side to reinforce them.



5. Attach strips of paper or ribbon to wings with glue or tape.

6. Reinforce the kite edges with tape and punch a hole on each side. Tie 2 strings (60-70cm) through the holes with a double knot, then tie ends to form a harness.



*Tie an extra length of string onto the harness if you want your kite to fly high!