

Children's Day: Culture Notes

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Koi Nobori

Children's Day is celebrated in Japan on May 5th. It used to be known as Boys' Day; but nowadays, both boys and girls celebrate this event.

From the end of April, many families will display streamers shaped like carp fish outside their houses. There are usually several carp on the pole, the largest one representing the father, followed by the mother and then the children. Can you work out which carp is which on the photograph?

The carp is a symbol of strength and courage because carp can swim upstream. According to a Chinese legend, one carp was transformed into a dragon as a reward at the end of its journey.

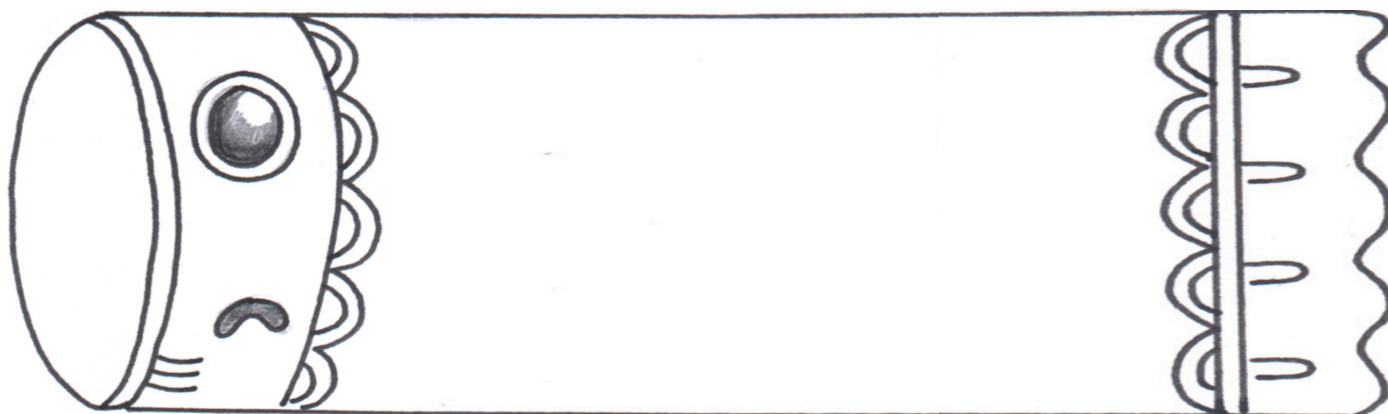


Why do you think it would be difficult to swim upstream?

Why do you think the carp in the tale was changed into a dragon?

Design your own koi carp streamer!

Think about the colours and try to come up with a symmetrical pattern for the main body.





Kashiwa Mochi

On Children's Day, children also celebrate with Japanese sweets, especially a sweet called Kashiwa Mochi. These are chewy rice cakes (mochi) with a sweet red bean paste filling wrapped in oak leaves (kashiwa).

The oak leaves are only used for decoration and cannot be eaten. They are used as symbol of success because oak trees don't shed their old leaves until new sprouts grow.



Kabuto Helmets

Kabuto is a type of helmet that forms part of the traditional Japanese armour. They were worn by Japanese samurai warriors who were said to have won a fierce battle against the Chinese on May 5th. The helmet is therefore seen as a symbol of strength, vitality, and wealth.

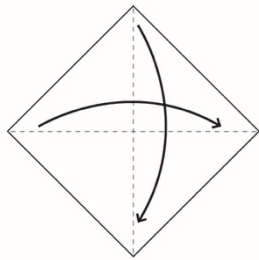
Nowadays, families will display small ornaments such as kabuto helmets and samurai dolls at home around the time of the festival. Many school children will make origami kabuto helmets to wear on Children's Day.

If you visit Japanese castles or Children's Day event on or just before May 5th, you may see people dressed up in samurai armour. Now follow the instructions on the next page to make your own kabuto helmet!



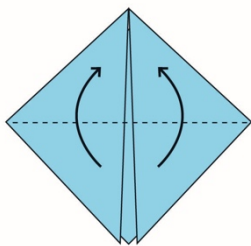
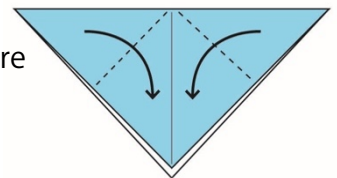
Make your own origami kabuto helmets!

You can make your kabuto with a sheet of origami or squared paper. If you want to make a large kabuto big to wear on your head, you can use a sheet of 60cm wide squared newspaper or sugar paper. Remember to make sure the paper is a proper square!



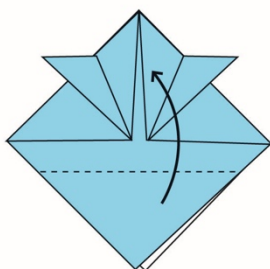
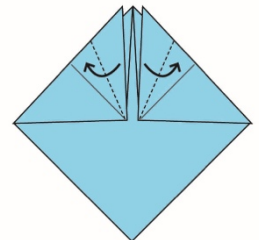
1. If you are using an origami paper, make sure the white side is faced up. Fold the paper in half by lining up the left and right corners. Open it and fold the paper in half again by lining up the top and bottom corners.

2. Fold the two small corners down along the dotted line to meet the centre line and large corner at the bottom. Make sure the edges line up neatly.



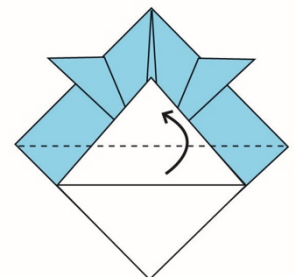
3. Next, fold each side in half by folding the bottom corner up along the centre (dotted line). Make sure the edges line up neatly.

4. Using the dotted line as a guide, fold the top corner of the small triangle on each side outwards to meet the centre line.

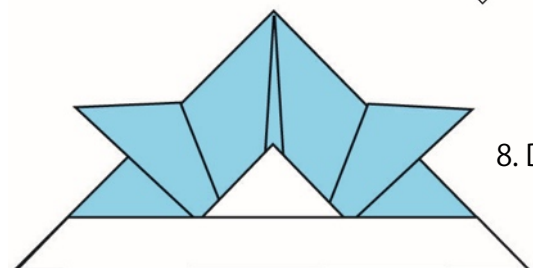
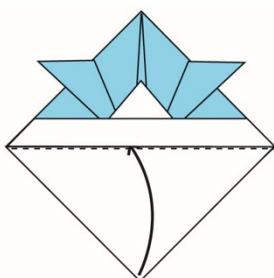


5. Fold the bottom corner up, using the dotted line as a guide, to roughly where the middle of the top half is.

6. Fold the rest of the bottom half up along the centre horizontal line.



7. Finally, tuck the bottom half inside by folding it into the pocket to hide it.



8. Done!!