

School Life

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An introduction to Japanese elementary school life

Learning Objectives:

- To compare and contrast Japanese schools to British schools.

Learning Outcomes:

- Pupils will increase their understanding of Japanese school life through discussion based and written activities. They will demonstrate this outcome by creating a similarities and differences chart.

Lesson Duration: 50 minutes – 1 hour (excluding extension activities)

Keywords: Japan, elementary school, genkan, kyuushoku, cleaning, teamwork, subjects, classroom, similarities, differences.

Resources:

PowerPoint – School Life presentation

Worksheet – Similarities and Differences

Additional Resources:

Background Notes for Teachers (PDF)

Worksheet – Letter Template

Worksheet – Example Letter

Video: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/class-clips-video/articles/zv9pbdm> Contrasting the lives of two children living in the capital cities London and Tokyo.

Website: https://web-japan.org/kidsweb/cool/21/202101_on-duty-activity_en.html Special Feature on Schools in Japan: Classroom Duties

Starter Activity

- Slide 1:** Display the picture of the Japanese elementary school building on the board. Ask pupils to look and think about the picture, generating a discussion of what they predict today's lesson might be about, i.e., where do you think this photo was taken? What is this building?
- If pupils haven't learned about Japan before, it might be beneficial instead to generate a discussion of what they already know about Japan.

Estimated Time: 5 minutes

Task 1

- **Slide 4:** Following the introduction of the learning objective (slide 3), get pupils to discuss either in small groups or pairs what they think a Japanese school might be like. Encourage them to consider whether they think it will be different or similar to a British school.
- **Slide 5** also has some photos you could use to help generate discussion. These will allow pupils to more specifically pinpoint aspects of Japanese elementary school life.
- Call on volunteers to share their ideas. You could write down a couple of predictions the class agree on, to then look back on at the end of the lesson. Were your predictions correct or incorrect?

Estimated Time: 10 minutes

Task 2

- Go through slides 6 – 15. These contain information regarding aspects of Japanese school life. On the bottom of the PowerPoint screen, click on Notes to see the Teacher's Notes for more information on each slide. You can also refer to the PDF Background Notes for Teachers for more general information about Japanese elementary schools.
- There will be key questions to consider at the bottom of each slide. You could allow a short 1 or 2 minute discussion in pairs for pupils to share ideas before feeding back, or just call on volunteers if children already have ideas they wish to share.
- Challenge pupils to consider what values are represented through Japanese school life. For example, one of the main values represented in Japanese schools is teamwork. Children learn the importance of teamwork by cleaning the classroom together and serving each other lunch.
- Are these values similar or different to your own class / school values?

Estimated Time: 15 minutes

Task 3

- **Slide 16:** Working either in pairs, small groups, or as a whole class, discuss and write down the similarities and differences between Japanese and British primary schools.
- You can either use the Similarities and Differences worksheet provided as a part of this lesson, or pupils can divide a page into two in their workbook, and write key similarities on one side, with differences on the other.

- Whilst writing these down, pupils should also consider what aspects of Japanese school life they like and what they dislike. Why do they like / dislike it?
- At the end, pupils should feedback as a whole class. At this point you could then look back on your predictions that you made at the start of the lesson – were they correct or incorrect?

Estimated Time: 20 - 25 minutes

Extension Challenge

- **Slide 17:** Introduce the extension challenge. As a whole class discussion, ask pupils to think about what aspects of Japanese school life they would like to be introduced to their own school, and what aspects they would dislike.
 - Some ideas of new rules you could discuss include: no school uniforms, wearing indoor shoes, cleaning the whole school every day, serving each other lunch, and eating lunch together in the classroom.
 - What do they think would work well? What do they think wouldn't work well? What could be the challenges of introducing these as part of their daily school routine? How would they feel about the new rules?
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Extension Activity

- **Slide 18:** Following on from this discussion, pupils will now write a letter to their headteacher to share their thoughts and feelings about these new school rules. They should ensure that they include what rules they think would be good, and what rules they think might not be so good for their school.
- You could read and show pupils the letter on the Example Letter worksheet for them to understand what they are expected to write. You could also use the Letter Template worksheet for pupils who may struggle with the activity.
- Pupils could read their letters aloud at the end of this activity to share what they have written with the rest of the class.