



THE  
JAPAN  
SOCIETY

# Otsukimi お月見





## Otsukimi

**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 full moon is especially bright and rises earlier as days get shorter. 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 celebration is not as popular as the past but people still observe the festival today to pray for a good harvest.

**Can you think of an autumn festival that we celebrate here in the UK?**

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## Decorations

For Tsukimi, people display food and decorations in a room where they can see the moon easily. Common decorations include rabbits, round foods, and a plant called pampas grass because it looks like a rice plant and symbolises a good harvest.



**Can you guess why round foods are part of the display?**

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



## Food

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.

Around the time of the festival, many restaurants and shops produce special editions of their products for Tsukimi, such as rabbit-shaped sweet buns or adding an egg to hamburgers or noodles to symbolise the full moon.



tsukimi udon noodles



sweet rabbit buns

## What foods do you associate with autumn?

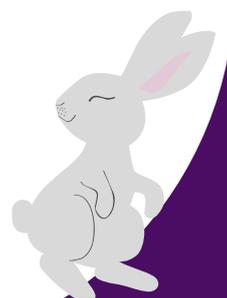
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### Rabbit on the Moon

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.





# o tsuki mi お月見

## Kanji Characters

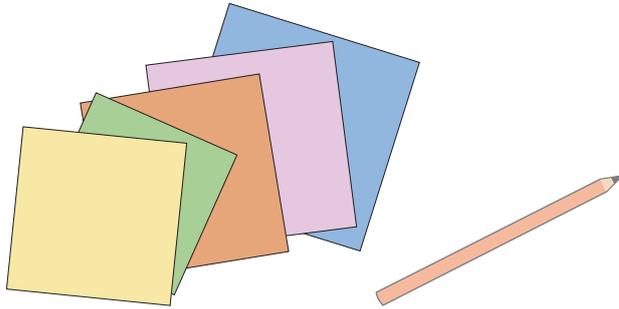
In Japanese, the character 月 means “moon” and 見 means “to view” or “to watch”. Together the two characters make up the festival name **Tsukimi**.

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


Well done! Now you can practice writing the characters 兔, for ‘rabbit’ and 秋, for ‘autumn’.



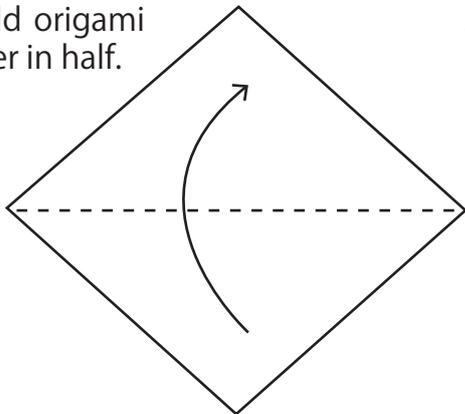

# Origami Activity: Tsukimi Rabbit



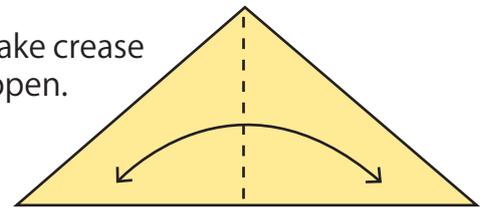
## You will need:

- origami/ square coloured paper
- pencil or pen

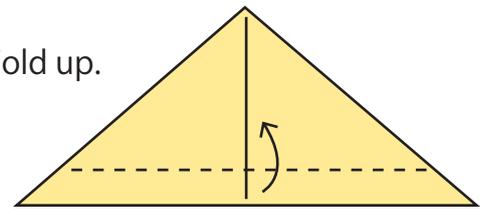
1. Fold origami paper in half.



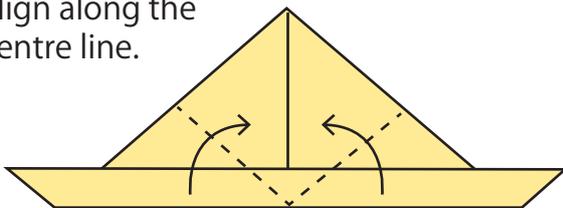
2. Fold in half to make crease then fold back to open.



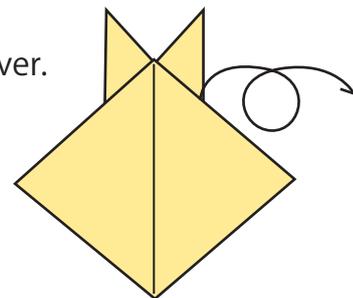
3. Fold up.



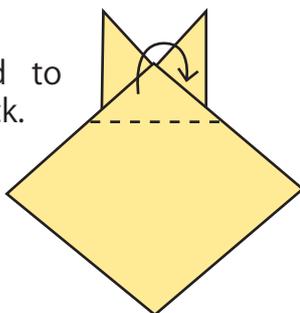
4. Fold up to align along the centre line.



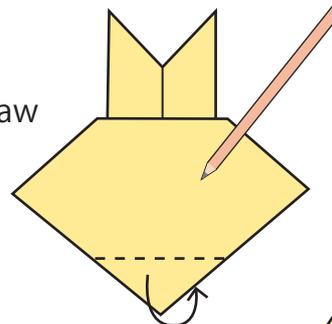
5. Flip over.



6. Fold to the back.



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



8. Done!





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