

## Japanese Calligraphy

### Writing in Japanese

#### Learning Objectives:

- To learn about the writing system in Japan and the origins and development of kanji characters
- To try Japanese calligraphy

#### Curriculum Links:

Promoting fundamental British values by enabling students to acquire an appreciation of and respect for...other cultures; Art and Design: various (KS1\*, KS2, KS3).

#### Keywords:

**hiragana** one of two phonetic alphabets used in Japan; **katakana** the other phonetic alphabet, commonly used for loan words and foreign proper nouns; **kanji character** a writing system originally imported from China; **shodo** the Japanese word for calligraphy

#### Resources:

Presentation: Japanese Writing

Video: [Calligraphy Tutorial](https://youtu.be/kBRTHcffPp4?si=Bw1NEVv3bsotVN0D) <https://youtu.be/kBRTHcffPp4?si=Bw1NEVv3bsotVN0D>

Loan: [Calligraphy class set](https://www.japansociety.org.uk/calligraphyset), includes brushes, ink, and inkwells or fude brush pens (a good option for those with limited time or to minimise mess) <https://www.japansociety.org.uk/calligraphyset>

#### Additional Resources:

Worksheets: [Calligraphy Strokes Practice](https://www.japansociety.org.uk/resource?resource=111) <https://www.japansociety.org.uk/resource?resource=111>

Lesson and Culture Notes: [Ready Steady Nihongo Lesson 4](https://www.japansociety.org.uk/rsn/lessons/4/) (see notes for a comprehensive overview of the three writing systems) <https://www.japansociety.org.uk/rsn/lessons/4/>

Quiz: [Kanji Guess the Progression](https://www.japansociety.org.uk/rsn/lessons/4/presentations/progression.html)

<https://www.japansociety.org.uk/rsn/lessons/4/presentations/progression.html>

Website: Hiragana and Katakana charts (with audio)

<https://www.nhk.or.jp/lesson/en/letters/hiragana.html> (*external resource*)

#### Equipment

If you are not loaning a calligraphy class set from The Japan Society, you will need:

- Brushes. Paintbrushes can be used; we recommend thick, round brushes
- Liquid ink (called sumi) or poster paint, watered down to an ink-like consistency
- Inkwell or paint palette which students may share.
- Paper for practising. Scrap paper is ideal as students will go through lots of sheets.
- Paper for final versions. You can order calligraphy paper (called hanshi) or use copy paper.
- Newspapers to put underneath the paper and protect your surfaces. Note: you will need multiple layers for each student.
- Paperweights or similar to place at the top of the paper to hold it in place.

**Advance Note for Teachers:** The calligraphy tutorial video is 20 minutes long and is intended to be paused at regular intervals so students can practice the different strokes and characters. We recommend watching it in advance of the class (on x2 speed) to familiarise yourself with the content and deciding which parts are suitable for your students.

If you would like to complete all the exercises in the video, we recommend allowing 45 mins to 1 hour and using the presentation in a separate session.

*\*Note for KS1 educators: KS1 pupils may struggle with holding the brush and will need more support. We therefore recommend KS1 groups of no larger than 15 pupils and suggest a minimum of 2 staff to supervise.*

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## Starter Activity

- Display the title slide and ask students what they think the symbols in grey are. Take guesses and then reveal it's written Japanese which we're going to learn more about.
- Note: The title appears after a mouse click so that it can be hidden for older students or to make the question more challenging.

**Estimated Time: 5 minutes**

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## Task 1

- Go through slides 1-9 with your class explaining each of the three different writing systems. Allow time for a think pair share activity on slide 4 and encourage them to notice any similarities and differences with English or other languages they know.
- The Culture Notes from Ready Steady Nihongo (see additional resources) provide a good overview for teachers who are unfamiliar with the Japanese writing system.

**Estimated Time: 5-10 minutes**

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## Task 2

- Continue with the slides explaining how kanji are formed. Examples for sun and moon are followed by 4 examples; students should try to guess the kanji meanings.
- There are suggested hints in the slide notes which can be adapted to your students' level.
- Finish with slides 21 and 22 which introduce Japanese calligraphy.

Estimated Time: 10-15 minutes

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### Task 3

- Try calligraphy with your class by using the tutorial video and pausing where appropriate. (Please refer to the teacher's note at the top of the lesson plan).

Estimated Time: 30 – 50 minutes

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### Extension Activities

- **Design a Kanji** Students can get creative and design their own kanji for anything they like. It can be a free choice, or if your students will struggle to decide you can pre-select for them. Below are some options alongside the actual Japanese kanji (also included on the presentation slides) so students could compare their designs with the real kanji afterwards.

Human	Child	Money	Horse
人	子	金	馬