



KCP eZasshi 雜誌 January 2011

January 2011

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正月 / **shōgatsu** / **Happy New Year!**

As always, Japan is full of customs and traditions for the new year. Bring in some of your own customs, and start some new ones--in Tokyo. Here's more.

A Japanese New Year

In Japan, and specifically Tokyo, people have great ways of celebrating the new year.

Food

People eat a special selection of dishes called osechi-ryōri (御節料理 or お節料理), typically shortened to osechi--boiled seaweed (昆布, kombu), fish cakes (蒲鉾, kamaboko), mashed sweet potato with chestnut (栗きんとん, kurikinton), simmered burdock root (金平牛蒡, kinpira gobo), and sweetened black soybeans (黒豆, kuromame).



Many of these dishes are sweet, sour, or dried, to keep without refrigeration, since the culinary traditions date to a time when stores closed for the holidays and before households had refrigerators.

Bells

On the new year's midnight, Buddhist temples all over Japan ring their bells 108 times to symbolize the 108 human sins and to purge the 108 worldly desires from everyone. A major Tokyo attraction is the Watch Night bell.



The Japanese believe that the ringing of bells can purge them from their sins of the previous year.

A video of [ringing the Watch Night Bell](#).

Postcards

The end of December and the beginning of January are the busiest times for Japanese post offices. The Japanese have a custom of sending New Year's Day postcards (年賀状, nengajō) to their friends and relatives. Nice to separate it from the Christmas craziness (at least in America).

Poetry

The new year is the time for poetry! Here's a first-place New Year's haiku ([HaikuWorld](#)) from a teacher in Poland--

whiteness
the water falls
into its sound
--Dorota Pyra

[New Year in Japan \(wikipedia\)](#)

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Learn Japanese through proverbs

虻蜂取らず
あぶはちとらず

romaji--abu hachi torazu

literally--catch neither the horsefly nor the wasp

meaning--he who grasps too much holds fast nothing

KCP students--advice for the new year

I've never been frustrated, proud, motivated, and happy in the same instant--until I came to

Japan. My time there has been probably the best 3-month life lesson I've ever had.
Take the initiative: go out and gain experience. Doing and knowing broaden your gaze.

--Valerie Traylor

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There is so much to explore in Tokyo. Before you arrive, make a list of what you actually want to do and give those things priority.

--Raymond Mac Vo

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Really practice using your Japanese in all 4 skill areas (reading, writing, listening, speaking). Learn the Japanese words for parts of speech such as verb, noun, adjective, adverb, passive form, and so on, before you come to Japan, especially if you are at Level 2 or higher. It will greatly help your understanding of class grammar explanations.

--Jerusha Nosek

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The greatest feeling is remembering my deer-in-the-headlights mood at the beginning, and knowing that now I can comprehend and speak up with confidence. The shift from a frightening to a rewarding experience is invaluable.

You are in a Japanese school system. Expect things to function differently--more structured--from U.S. colleges.

You are learning along with Korean and Chinese students, whose grammar structure is closer to that of Japanese. Don't feel frustrated--they want you to learn too and can help you.

You must decide whether you came to Japan to be a tourist or a student. This program is for serious students who want to throw themselves into all things Japanese.

--Owen Cooper

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[KCP Language and Culture Courses](#)

Upcoming program deadlines



Plan your journey well.

For the **2011 Fall extended semester program**, you have until **January 6** to apply.

The session itself runs July 5 to December 22, 2011—two semesters' worth of Japanese in Tokyo.

All the best in 2011.

Mike and the KCP International team

KCP Japanese Language School . . .

full immersion for the motivated student.

www.kcpinternational.com

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