

LESSON 7:

HAVING FUN IN JAPAN

Introduction:

In this lesson students explore the many ways that Japanese students spend their leisure time. Students first reflect upon the role of school clubs in their own culture compared to Japan. Next, they gather information about forms of recreation that Japanese young people enjoy. Internet research and cross-cultural comparisons with the Deai students culminate in the production of a multimedia reference on recreation for U.S. exchange students going to Japan.

Organizing Questions:

What can we learn about society and the individual?

Objectives: At the conclusion of this lesson, students will be better able to:

1. Compare school clubs and recreation in two cultures.
2. Research aspects of Japanese recreation unique to that culture.
3. Synthesize knowledge to explain recreation among Japanese young people today.
4. Create a multimedia reference on recreation incorporating their research and analysis.

Time Required: 3 class periods plus possible homework

Materials:

1. Deai photo sheets:
 - Mizushima Yu: P01, P03, P04, P09, P10, D07, D10, D14, D15, D16, D20
 - Oishi Kanta: P02, P03, P04, P05, P10, P11, P12, D10, D11, D12, D13, D14
 - Sakai Michi: P01, P04, P07, D09, D12
 - Tamaki Shun'ichi: P01, P02, P03, P04, P05, P06, P11, D05, D08, D09, D10, D11, D13
 - Yoshida Kojiro: P01, P04, D10, D14, D13, D15, D19, D20
 - Yamamoto Takayuki: P05, P07, P08, P11, P13, D05, D06, D07, D08, D09, D10
 - Yoo Yoo Jin: P01, D06, D08, D10, D13

2. One or two copies of the narratives of the seven Japanese high school students found in the *Deai Text Booklet*. The specific pages for each Japanese student are:
 - Mizushima Yu: pp. 57-65
 - Oishi Kanta: pp. 93-101
 - Sakai Michi: pp. 127-135
 - Tamaki Shun'ichi: pp. 159-167
 - Yoshida Kojiro: pp. 195-203
 - Yamamoto Takayuki: pp. 229-237
 - Yoo Yoo Jin: pp. 263-271

In lieu of photocopying, these narratives can be found on the Deai web site (http://www.tjf.or.jp/deai/contents/search/photo_top.html), where the seven Japanese students are pictured; students can click on "My Story in English" below each individual student's photo to read the narrative online.

3. Internet access
4. Copy of Handout 7-1, "A Day in the Life: Club Activities of High School Students," for each pair of students
5. Copy of Handout 7-2, "Having Fun in Japan: Data Retrieval Chart," for each pair of students
6. Copy of Handout 7-3, "Exchange Students' Guide to Recreation in Japan," for each pair of students

Procedure:

Day 1

1. Explain to students that they will be exploring the various ways that Japanese students have fun. Ask the students to think about their school and where they have fun. Record their responses on an overhead or the board. Did many of the students think of school clubs as a place to have fun? Why or why not? Next, divide the class into pairs, explaining that they will be working in pairs for the remainder of the lesson. Distribute a copy of Handout 7-1 to each pair. Ask each pair to carefully read the article about Japanese school clubs and then to discuss it in order to find at least three aspects of school clubs that are similar to the United States and three that are different. (**Note:** Although the article features Japanese high schools, students can assume that the information also applies to the middle school/junior high level.) Ask each pair to share their findings with the entire class.
2. Explain to the students that they are going to learn more about what kinds of school clubs are offered in Japan, as well as other ways that Japanese young people have fun, such as participating in hobbies, sports, and socializing with friends and family. Distribute copies of Handout 7-2, "Having Fun in Japan: Data Retrieval Chart." Tell students they should use the photo sheets as well as the student narratives (made available in hard copy or online) and Internet-based research to locate examples of sports, hobbies, school clubs, and socializing in contemporary Japan. Students should find as many examples as possible for each of the four categories. (*Students should be able to list items such as reading manga, talking on cell phones, photography, mystery writing,*

playing football, etc.) Allow students time to peruse the various Deai sources as well as those listed in the *Internet Guide on Traditional Japanese Sports* (<http://www.indiana.edu/~japan/intguid3.html>). If students need additional time, they can complete their assignment as homework.

Day 2

1. Still working in pairs, students should synthesize and apply their research by assuming the role of writers for a multimedia reference guide to recreation in contemporary Japan. Handout 7-3 provides instructions for creating the guide. The audience for the guide is U.S. exchange students. Each pair should choose a topic for a chapter in the guide that they will present to the class. Before each pair begins working, their topic must first be approved by the teacher in order to avoid overlap. In their portion of the reference guide, students must include examples that show evidence of outside research; they also must incorporate examples from the Deai students' photos and narratives. Additionally, students must comment on whether the activity is unique to Japan or also enjoyed in the United States. If enjoyed in the United States, students should include some comparative commentary. Further, students should keep in mind that they are presenting information for exchange students from the United States who are preparing to stay in Japan, so they should try to provide useful and helpful information. Because this is a multimedia guide, each pair can choose a presentation format. Possible presentation formats include posters, PowerPoint demonstrations, oral presentations, a Web site, audiotaped interviews, and a videotaped, magazine-style program.
2. Allow the remainder of the class period for student pairs to prepare their chapters.

Day 3

1. Allow time for class presentations of the reference guide chapters.
2. Conduct a discussion to encourage students to reflect on the chapters they have seen and heard. The following question could be used to assess understanding: Can U.S. exchange students have fun in Japan? Why or why not?

Extension and Enrichment:

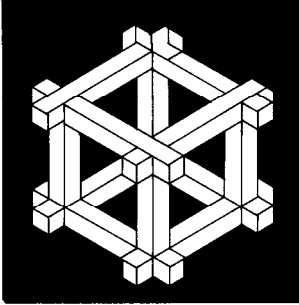
Confirm with students that, as they have seen, recreation in contemporary Japan is a complex subject. To underscore that complexity, encourage students to conduct Internet research on the current role of a traditional game such as *kendama* or a traditional sport such as *kendo*. Alternatively, they might explore the popularity of theme parks in contemporary Japan.

Supplemental Resources:

- Barta, Gregory G., "The Japanese *Kendama* and Its Role in Socialization," *Tora no Maki: Lessons for Teaching about Contemporary Japan* (Washington, DC: National Council for the Social Studies, 1996), pp. 13-16.
- Dolgos, Christopher J., "Let's Play! Children's Leisure Time in Japan," *Nippon Nyumon: An Idea Book for Teaching Japanese Economic Topics* (Washington, DC, and

Bloomington, IN: National Council for the Social Studies, ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education, National Clearinghouse for US-Japan Studies, 1999), pp. 18-23.

“Japanese Culture Now – *Keitai* (Mobile Phone): Essential Item for Keeping in Touch,”
The Japan Forum Newsletter, No. 21 (June 2001), pp.6.



Handout 7-1

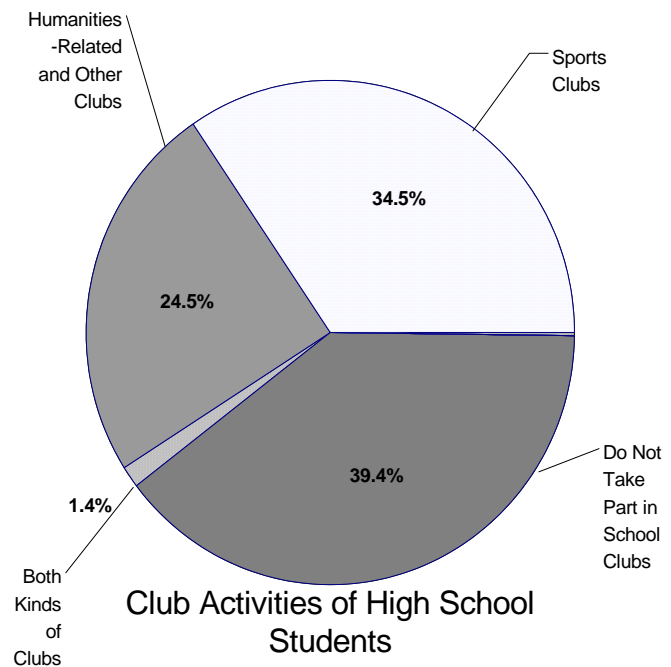
A Day in the Life: Club Activities of High School Students

Whenever Japanese junior high and high school students are called upon to introduce themselves, they invariably mention the school sport or activity clubs to which they belong. School activities start as a part of formal curriculum from fifth and sixth grades of elementary school. In junior high schools there are two types of club activities—those that are part of the formal curriculum and are compulsory, and extracurricular clubs, which are optional. The latter are more active in high school. One survey shows that more than 60 percent of high school students in Japan take part in a school club of some type (*Survey on the Daily Lives...*, 2000). The clubs provide opportunities for students to enjoy their hobbies, improve particular skills, and discipline themselves in the process. For many students, clubs are even more important as a way to get to know students in different classes or grades and forge lasting friendships.

School Clubs in Overview

Japanese high schools typically offer students a variety of sports, humanities-related, science-related, and arts clubs. According to the survey mentioned above, 34.5 percent of high school students join sports clubs, 24.5 percent humanities-related and other clubs, and 1.4 percent both kinds, while 39.4 percent do not take part in any school clubs.

In order to fulfill specific educational policies or create a distinctive school image, some schools emphasize particular kinds of clubs. For example, some schools seek to strengthen their athletics clubs by attracting suitably talented students from



Source: Adapted from “A Day in the Life: Club Activities of High School Students,” *The Japan Forum Newsletter*, No. 18 (September 2000), pp. 10-11.

all over the country under a recommendation-based enrollment system. Of course, there are also many students who prefer to pursue interests outside school rather than join a school club, as well as schools where club activities in general are not very popular.

At most schools, clubs are classified as extracurricular activities. Essentially they are managed by the students themselves, led by a club president supported by other club officers such as vice-president and manager. Normally club presidents are students in the higher grades. Guidance is usually given by members of the school teaching staff acting as supervisors or coaches and sometimes by ex-members/third-year students or graduates who visit their old clubs for practice. Clubs also include representatives from the teaching staff who act as advisors, act as liaisons between the club and the school authorities, and supervise the club's other external affairs.

School clubs vary widely in size. While some have only a few students, others, such as sports clubs that have achieved national renown, can attract over a hundred members at a time.

A Chance to Absorb Yourself in Something

In another survey (*Survey on Sports . . .*, 1996), respondents were asked what they felt were the most rewarding times at school. The second most common response, after "when spending time with close friends" (33.1 percent), was "when involved in student council, club, or other group activities" (16.1 percent). When the same question was put to American and Chinese high school students, although the most common response was the same as for Japanese students, in both cases the second most common response was "when taking lessons that I like," with "student council, club activities, etc." ranking third or lower. These results suggest that for Japanese high school students club activities play a particularly important role in school life.

A Place to Build Relationships

While the atmosphere of Japanese school clubs varies from club to club, there persists a traditional image, particularly in strict sports clubs, of *senpai* (upper-grade students) lording it over their *kohai* (lower-grade students). In clubs that keep such old-fashioned ways, first-year students often have a long initiation period of basic training, performing menial tasks, such as gathering up balls and generally learning the ropes. These days, however, this "rank" style of social interaction is dying out, and school clubs are becoming more relaxed places for making friends with students from other grades and meeting people who will offer various kinds of advice and guidance. Clubs also provide opportunities for students to learn about social interaction in general, such as by allowing them to develop interpersonal ties through group activities; through tasks such as teaching others and planning courses of action from a broad perspective; and through experiences such as training camps and inter-school matches.

Club Quotes

Below are statements made by Japanese students about their involvement in school clubs.

The swimming club at my school boasts a tradition that includes several Olympic swimmers. The club has about 20 members, all of whom entered the school by special recommendation with swimming as their main aim. Under [the coach's] guidance, the swimmers learn not only how to swim better but also what it means to be a strong person—Jun'ichi

The type of school I attend is called a *shingakuko* (for high-achiever, university-bound students). It's really difficult to keep up with your studies and also practice a sport at this kind of school, so hardly anybody joins the sports clubs. I have a friend who belongs to a basketball club. The trials of club activity have helped to develop her character, and I think it also enabled her to make friends with students in other classes.—Saori

I don't belong to any activity club, so after school my boyfriend and I often go walking in a park or just hang around school.—Saki

All that training is exhausting, but I love baseball. I started playing baseball in elementary school and I plan to keep playing as long as I can.—Masashi

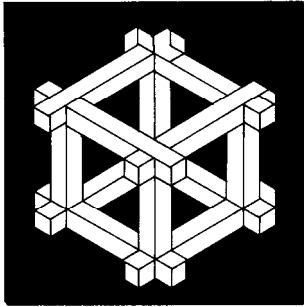
I have a lot of respect for a senior member of our photography club. She is cheerful, kind, and vivacious.—Suzuko

There are a lot of students who are really devoted to club and extracurricular activities to improve themselves.—Mayuko

Sources

Survey on the Daily Lives of Junior High and High School Students (Tokyo: Japan Youth Research Institute, 2000).

Survey on Sports and Health: A Comparison of Japanese, American and Chinese High School Students (Tokyo: Japan Youth Research Institute, 1996).



Handout 7-2

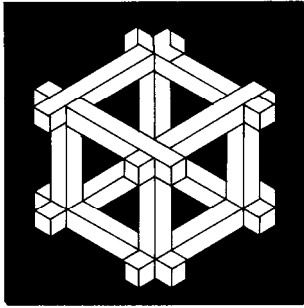
Having Fun in Japan: Data Retrieval Chart

Find as many examples as possible of recreational activities in each of the four categories. You should have examples from

- The photo sheets of the seven Japanese high school students provided by your teacher.
- The “My Story” narratives from the seven Japanese high school students, provided in hard copy by your teacher or accessed online at http://www.tjf.or.jp/deai/contents/search/photo_top.html (click on “My Story in English” below each individual student’s photo to read the narrative online).
- Other Internet sources; the *Internet Guide on Traditional Japanese Sports* (<http://www.indiana.edu/~japan/intguid3.html>) is a good place to start.

Clubs	Hobbies	Sports	Socializing

Clubs	Hobbies	Sports	Socializing



Handout 7-3

Exchange Students' Guide to Recreation in Japan

Imagine an exchange student, going to Japan to study for a year. Do you think a guide to recreational activities in that country would be useful to an exchange student?

You and your classmates are going to apply what you have learned in this lesson by creating a multimedia guide to recreation in Japan. The audience for the guide is U.S. exchange students.

With your partner, choose a topic from the information you recorded on Handout 7-2. Ask your teacher to approve your topic before you begin preparing your "chapter" of the guide. You will present your chapter to the class.

In your chapter, explain the activity you have chosen. Incorporate examples from the photos and narratives of the seven Japanese high school students, as well as information from your other research. Be sure to identify whether the activity is unique to Japan or enjoyed in other countries, including the United States. If it is enjoyed in the United States, include some comparisons between the two countries. For example, if your topic is baseball, you would describe how baseball in Japan is similar to and different from baseball in the United States.

Because this is a multimedia guide, you can create your section of the guide in almost any format. Some examples are posters, PowerPoint demonstrations, oral presentations, a Web site, audiotaped interviews, and a videotaped, magazine-style program.