



### 日本語センター

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# JLC通信

Japanese Language Center (つうしん)

December 2004

## \* 文化 (ぶんか) \* Culture Corner



### 大晦日 (おおみそか) Oomisoka

**Oomisoka** means New Year's Eve. Preparations for the New Year are to be made by **Oomisoka**. The biggest general home cleaning and **Mochitsuki** (rice cake making) used be among the most important work to be done before the New Year. After the house cleaning, people put up **Kadomatsu** (the New Year decorations made up of pine tree branches and bamboo) at the gates and hung **Shimenawa** (a sacred straw festoon) above the front door. **Kagami-mochi** (round shaped rice cakes) are set up on the **Kamidana** (altar) and **Tokonoma** (alcove).



Most families spend the time together without parties as opposed to the U. S. where people have a lot of parties. People eat **Toshikoshi-soba** (buckwheat noodles) and toast the New Year at the stroke of **Joya-no-kane** (the watch-night bell). Temples ring the **Joya-no-kane** 108 times, wishing to relieve the human sufferings caused by men's earthly desires, which amount, according to Buddhist belief, to 108.



## \* 食べ物 (たべもの) \* Food Corner



### 年越しそば Toshikoshi-Soba

This dish is called **Toshikoshi** (literally "year-passing") **Soba** and it symbolizes the old year's passing. **Soba** (buckwheat noodles) is long, thin brownish noodles made from a mixture of buckwheat flour and wheat flour. The ratio of the mixture varies depending on the shop or region.

There are two ways of eating soba. Soba is eaten in hot soup, but also is served cold on a bamboo plate and dipped into flavored sauce (soy-based sauce). Noodles are one of the most favorite foods of the Japanese.

In Japan eating soba as the final item on the New Year's Eve supper recalling incidents of the past year and looking forward to the coming year is a wide spread custom. This custom dates back to around the Edo period (17-19th century).

There are many versions of the origin of **Toshikoshi-Soba**. Here are some examples. Soba is narrow and long in shape, so it symbolizes a wish for long life. Besides, since Japanese noodles are easy to cut, we believe that we can escape a disaster easily.

The oldest story, from the Kamakura period, is that in Hakata, Kyushu, a businessman from China distributed buckwheat dumplings to poor people on the last day of the year and the following year their fortune changed for the better. So eating soba on New Year's Eve became a tradition.

The most persuasive explanation is that in the Edo era, goldsmiths used to clean factory floors with soba dumplings to pick up any gold dust on the last day of the year. So merchants started to eat

**Toshikoshi-Soba** to collect 'money', as gold or kin in Chinese characters means 'money'. Eventually ordinary people ate soba wishing for good fortune in money.

There is interesting survey data about **Toshikoshi-Soba** in the Tokyo metropolitan area by Living Life Laboratory (1998).

“Did you eat **Toshikoshi-Soba** on New Year’s Eve?”

It shows that a high percent of young people as well as older people ate **Toshikoshi-Soba**. The most popular hour *soba* was eaten was 7:00 p.m. (27% of households). The second most popular time was 11:00 p.m., which is the customary time one is supposed to eat **Toshikoshi-Soba**. 20% of families said that they ate something other than **Toshikoshi-Soba**, such as *sushi*.

Age group	Yes Households
Total	85.7%
20s	90.0%,
30s	87.5%

☒ **おたより** ☒ **From Guest book**



I studied Japanese at school for 4 years then lived in Japan for a year. However I have never used Japanese last 5 years since I came back to US. Which level of course should I take?

**Our answer:** If you take private lesson, your instructor will evaluate your skill level at the first lesson and find the best textbook and curriculum for you. However, if you take group course, self-evaluation of your own skill level is very important. If you join a wrong-leveled group, you can't learn much and you may bother other students.

Japanese 201 is normally reached after studying Japanese for around 80 hours. Japanese 301 is normally reached after studying Japanese for around 200 hours. Sometimes college students learn in a year as much as high school students learn in 4 years. Living in Japan is a different matter from using Japanese.

In your case, it's clear that you are not a real beginner (Japanese 101 level), but I can't tell any more. So we recommend you to take "Self Level Check" on our website. Please visit "Course Descriptions" page of our website at [http://www.japanese-language.net/course\\_descriptions\\_new.htm](http://www.japanese-language.net/course_descriptions_new.htm)

Self Level Check Japanese 101-104: <http://www.japanese-language.net/Self Level Check 101-104.pdf>

Self Level Check Japanese 201-204: <http://www.japanese-language.net/Self Level Check 201-204.pdf>

Self Level Check Japanese 301-304: <http://www.japanese-language.net/Self%20Level%20Check%20301-304.pdf>

☒ **自己紹介 (じこしょうかい)** ☒ **Student of JLC**

Hajimemashite, my Japanese name is Kimiko. I am Japanese, however American parents adopted me when I was a baby. I am always interested in Japanese Culture and really want to meet my biological parents someday soon. I asked Junko sensei to translate my birth certificate and family register and actually I visited my birthplace in Japan last year. I found that my mother is still alive, though I couldn't to meet her. I am planning to visit her next year and I would like to talk with her in Japanese. That is my dream.



☒ **ことわざ** ☒ **Proverb Corner**

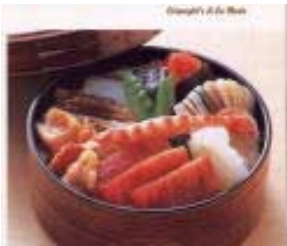
「光陰矢の如し」(こういんやのごとし) Koin yano gotoshi.



Time flies very fast like an arrow. In England, people said Time passes like the wind. Time passes faster and faster each year because we are getting old. Year 2004 is almost finished. Have you achieved your goal for the year? Another proverb said "By losing present time we lose all time."



🌸 レストラン 🌸 Restaurant I LOVE SUSHI



The Japanese community in Seattle area is kind of big and Seattle has good seafood. However, I have not found any good Japanese restaurant yet. Maybe my expectation is too high but the requirements for a great restaurant are good taste, reasonable price, good service, good presentation, good atmosphere, and good quality of guests.

I LOVE SUSHI is very popular among native Japanese. They sure serve good Sushi. The main reason is that their fish are very, very fresh, which is key factor for Sushi. From another point of view, it's OK, what I mean is that there is room for improvement.

I don't trust so much the Japanese sushi bars that serve everything. I LOVE SUSHI serves Sushi, Tempura, and tofu mainly, and that's pretty much it. I don't mean that I LOVE SUSHI is excellent, but I'm satisfied with the quality of their fish, rice and vinegar at least. When I want sushi I Love Sushi is the place to go! Oh yes, don't forget to try their great Sake menu!!! (June)

11818 NE 8<sup>th</sup> ST, Bellevue, WA 98005 (425) 454-5706 <http://www.ilovesushi.com/>

📄 プレスリリース 📄 Press Release

**Japanese Language Center announced the Curriculum for 2005**

*Japanese Language Center (JLC) provides Group, Private, and On-site Japanese lessons. JLC announced the Curriculum and the new course schedule for 2005.*

The following schedule provides a wide range of classes and dates for interested Japanese Language students. JLC offer Japanese lessons for business people, Teens, and also corporation training.

Courses consist of 8 weeks of Japanese language lessons, 2 hours (1 hr & 50 min instruction) during each lesson. Lesson fees are \$200/course. New courses start in the first/second week of January. Please sign up early before the class becomes full. Schedule may change without notice. Please visit our website, <http://www.japanese-language.net/schedule.htm> for an updated schedule.

Registration & Lesson fees are due 72 hours before the first lesson of the course. We don't accept payment for enrollment on the first day of the course. Also we will close enrollment when a course gets 4 registrants.

JLC has excellent instructors. All of them are Master's Degree/MBA/PhD holders with several years experience as University faculty, or the equivalent. Their teaching method is unique and you will learn!

Instruction is available 8:10am-9:00pm on Monday-Friday, 7:10AM-5:00PM on Saturday, and also 10:10AM-2:00PM on Sunday.

**Group Courses**

- Evening courses (7:10-9:00PM)
- Saturday courses (9:10, 11:10, 1:10, 3:10)
- Teens Japanese (Sun 10:10AM, Fri 4:40PM)
- Intensive Courses (One-week session) Please contact JLC for detail schedule



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Japanese Language Center (JLC), is based in Bellevue, Washington, serving the greater Seattle, Bellevue, Kirkland, Renton, Redmond, Issaquah and Tacoma area, provides Japanese Language instruction, tutoring, courses, seminars, translator and translation services to individuals, groups, and businesses. Serving all levels of Japanese language learning, from middle school, high school, and university students including postgraduate. Professional Japanese Interpreters and Translators.

❀ **新聞記事** ❀ Newspaper article



**Population grows older**

A record number of Japanese seniors live rigorous lifestyles, and their ranks are growing. Japan's elderly are not only the longest-lived but also the healthiest seniors in the world enjoying at least 75 years of relatively good health, according to the World Health Organization. That exceeds by nearly six years the average for Americans-who rank 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Studies indicate a multitude of reasons for the health of older people, with most citing a traditional diet heavy on fish and light on red meat, as well as the consumption of high-fiber rice. A national survey in 2000 showed the almost 64% of seniors don't overeat, 50% exercise regularly and 64% sleep well.

	USA	JAPAN
People 65 and older as a percentage of those ages 15-64 in 2050	38%	65%
Medical spending as percent of GDP	14.6%	7.8%
Male and Female life expectancy	77.3	81.9
(World ranking)	(20)	(1)
Female life expectancy	79.8	85.2
Male life expectancy	74.7	78.3
Average number of healthy years	69.3	75.0
(World ranking)	(23)	(1)

The number of people 65 and older is growing more rapidly than the working-age population, straining government finances. Health care costs rise dramatically as the population ages and life spans increase. The situation is becoming acute in Japan. Japan faces a plummeting population and massive government debt.

Japan's retirement benefits have never been as generous as those in the USA, and the country has one of the world's highest rates of personal savings. Even though the Japanese may not be able to rely on a government pension, they do have substantial nest eggs.

But Japan comes out at the bottom of Standard & Poor's calculations on debt and deficits, in large part because future demographics are so grim. By 2050, spending on the aged should reach 25% of Japanese GDP. Zits total debt will reach a staggering and unsustainable 400% of GDP as early as 2030, S&P says.



❀ **お知らせ** ❀ Remarks

JLC supports Japanese Language Meet up and JLC's instructor Junko is the organizer of Bellevue-Factoria Japanese Language Meet up.

Please bring your friend to JLC. Any referrals signing up for a class results in a 20% discount of your next block of lessons.

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