**CULTURAL NOTES**

PARTS AND FEATURES OF A JAPANESE HOUSE

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| **あまど（雨戸）** |
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| あまど are sliding door shutters made of wood or metal which are used to protect windows from heavy rain or strong wind. They are usually closed during winter to help keep the family home warm.  |

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| **いま（居間）** |
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| いま is a living room. It usually has a こたつ surrounded by ざぶとん, or sometimes a coffee table and sofa. The family relaxes here and watches TV together. Some houses have a かみだな in the いま.  |

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| **ウォッシュレット** |
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| This is a toilet system that uses warm water to wash a person after they go to the toilet. More than 50% of all Japanese homes have such a system, which also usually has a seat heater and other useful functions.  |

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| **えんがわ（縁側）** |
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| Houses with gardens often have an えんがわ. They are usually located just outside the house with the edge of the roof partially covering the area, similar to a verandah. They are usually quiet, peaceful places to sit in during summer. A wind chime often hangs over the えんがわ, tinkling in the wind.  |

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| **おしいれ（押入れ）**  |
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| ふとん, ざぶとん, clothes and furniture are stored in おしいれ , which has a sliding door (ふすま). おしいれ are found in わしつ. |

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| **かけじく（掛け軸）** |
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| かけじく is a long vertical hanging scroll which is usually displayed in the とこのま. It is made of either silk or paper with a roller at each end. A painting or calligraphy is displayed on the scroll. |

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| **かぶと（兜）** |
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| This is an old style helmet which appears on May 5 when Japan celebrates こどものひ. This is traditionally Boy's Day, and かぶと are displayed on this day if the family has a young son. |

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| **かみだな（神棚）** |
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| This is a small wooden Shinto altar traditionally found in Japanese homes. It is usually displayed in the いま(living room), and offerings of water, food or sake are placed in front of it daily.  |

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| **げたばこ（下駄箱）**  |
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| This is a cupboard used for storing shoes which is found in the げんかん. In Japan it is the custom to remove your shoes immediately upon entering a house. |

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| **げんかん（玄関）** |
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| げんかん refers to the entrance area of the house, including the area outside the front door as well as the interior entrance area. Traditional Japanese house entrances usually have sliding doors; contemporary houses have Western-style doors. In Japan, you take your shoes off in the げんかん, and usually slippers are provided for guests. There is a げたばこ in the げんかん in which the family’s shoes are kept. |

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| **こいのぼり（鯉のぼり）** |
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| These are carp streamers displayed on こどものひ, which is traditionally Boy's Day. It is hoped that by displaying the carp streamers, boys will become strong and courageous like the carp, which are admired because they can swim up waterfalls.  |

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| **こたつ** |
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| This is low table which has a heating unit attached underneath it. A blanket covers the table, and it is usually the gathering spot for the family. |

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| **ざぶとん（座布団）** |
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| A ざぶとん is a square cushion on which people kneel, usually used on たたみ floors. The cushion is about 55 to 60 cm on each side and is usually made of silk or cotton stuffed with cotton wool. ざぶとん became popular in Japan during the Edo period, which was from 1603 to 1868. Before this, people knelt on straw mats. |

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| **しょうじ（障子）** |
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| しょうじ is similar to ふすま in that it is a sliding door. It is usually located near a window, and is covered with thin rice paper which allows a filtered light to enter the room.  |

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| **スリッパ（Slippers)** |
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| Japanese slippers vary according to the seasons. A light form of slipper is worn in summer and a heavier one in winter. Many homes have special slippers reserved for guests.  |

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| **せんめんじょ（洗面所）** |
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| This is the area outside the ふろば where you undress before taking a bath. Usually this area has せんたくき and a wash stand. |

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| **たたみ（畳）** |
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| たたみ is the traditional covering used on Japanese floors. Mats are made of tightly woven rice straw with some grass and cloth hemmed edges. The standard mat is 180 cm by 90 cm and about 5 cm thick. The area of a Japanese style room is measured in たたみ mats, eg. a four and a half たたみroom or an eight たたみ room. たたみ should only be walked on with bare feet or wearing socks. Many Japanese people enjoy the smell of たたみ, believing it to be a great relaxant.  |

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| **たんす（箪笥）** |
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| A たんす is a chest of drawers or cupboard. Is often used to store きもの and other such expensive clothes. たんす are often made out of きり(paulownia), a special kind of wood which protects clothes from damage during extremely humid weather. It was the custom to plant a paulownia tree when a baby girl was born. When the baby grew into a woman and become engaged, the father would cut down the tree and use the wood to make the daughter a たんす for her new home. |

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| **ちゃぶだい** |
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| This is a low, round or square table used for meals. It has fold up legs, and people sit around it on ざぶとん. |

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| **テレビゲーム（Video Game）** |
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| Video games are popular in Japan with both children and adults. Role play and simulation games are extremely popular. Some adult games are banned for use by people under the age of 18. |

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| **トイレ（Toilet）** |
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| Both Japanese and Western style toilets are used in Japan. A traditional Japanese toilet is much longer and lower in height than a western toilet. The toilet is built into a large rectangular step, and people squat above the toilet to use it. After World War II, Western style toilets began to gain popularity in Japan. However, many Japanese people still prefer the traditional style of toilet. Japanese people value cleanliness, and some consider it dirty to sit on a toilet someone else has previously sat on. |

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| **トイレのスリッパ（Toilet Slippers）** |
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| These are slippers used only in the toilet. They are usually cheap and made of vinyl or plastic. Often such slippers are clearly marked as being toilet slippers, with a picture of a toilet drawn on them.  |

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| **とこのま（床の間）** |
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| Traditional Japanese rooms have a special raised area similar to an altar which is called a とこのま. It is a place of honour where a かけじく is often displayed, with a vase of flowers, candles and burning incense. Japanese people consider it extremely bad manners to step into this area. Today, とこのま are generally used to make a room more beautiful. They are also thought to help create peace of mind.  |

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| **のれん** |
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| This is short piece of cloth hung at the front of a traditional shop or restaurant. It usually bears the name or symbol of the shop and is cut at intervals so people can freely enter. It was originally used to keep dust and dirt out of a shop. |

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| **パソコン（Computer）** |
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| Personal computers are extremely popular in Japan. More than 60% of all homes have at least one computer. Similarly to Australia, brands such as NEC, Sony, IBM and Dell are popular. |

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| **ピアノ（Piano）**  |
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| Pianos are very popular in Japan, and more than a quarter of all homes have one. Recently, the silent piano is becoming popular. This piano produces no external sound; instead the pianist wears headphones to hear the notes. Such pianos are much more expensive than normal pianos.  |

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| **ひなにんぎょう（雛人形）** |
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| These are dolls displayed in the homes of families with daughters during the two weeks leading up to March 3. On this day ひなまつり, Girls’ Day is celebrated. The dolls are elaborately made and usually treated as family heirlooms. They may be a pair of dolls, the emperor and empress, or they may be a set, usually of 15 dolls, representing the emperor, the empress and their staff.  |

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| **ひょうさつ（表札）** |
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| This is a plate placed on the front of a house to identify the family living there.  |

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| **ふうりん（風鈴）** |
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| This is a wind chime. Japanese people believe the tinkling of the chime is an announcement that a wind has come up and the weather will now become cooler. |

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| **ふすま** |
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| ふすま are sliding doors used to separate rooms in Japanese homes. They sit in wooden rails at the top and bottom. Both sides of the doors are covered with decorative paper.  |

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| **ぶつだん（仏壇）** |
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| This is a small Buddhist altar traditionally found in Japanese homes. Beside the figure of the Buddha there are usually tablets with the names of family members who have died. Food, flowers and incense are often placed before the ぶつだん.  |

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| **ふとん（布団）** |
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| This is the traditional Japanese bed. It is a mattress which is laid directly on the floor (usually たたみ). The futon is made with cotton or synthetic fibres. The futon is never placed so that it is facing north, as this direction is traditionally associated with death. |

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| **ふろ（風呂）** |
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| ふろ is a Japanese bath. It is much shorter in length but much deeper than a western bath. People sit in the tub with their legs bent up, spending time to enjoy the very hot water. Washing is done outside the bathtub and the bath is for soaking, getting warm and relaxing.  |

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| **ふろば（風呂場）** |
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| This refers to the bathroom, which is made up of an open tiled area and a bathtub. People wash their bodies in an open tiled area next to the bath, with low taps and a low stool, before entering the ふろ. |

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| **ベランダ（Veranda）** |
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| A ベランダ is a small balcony or space where the washing is hung out to dry. It is usually covered, whereas a バルコニー is open. |

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| **べんきょうづくえ（勉強机）** |
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| This is a particular style of study desk. Traditionally, they were built very low to the ground, but nowadays most homes use a normal desk with a chair placed underneath. They are often given as a present to a child when a s/he begins primary school.  |

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| **ぼんさい（盆栽）** |
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| This is the art of miniature tree making. Bonsai trees can take up to a decade to create, and are considered to be very beautiful.  |

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| **わしつ（和室）** |
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| This is a traditional Japanese room (わしつ) with たたみ flooring. おしいれ, しょうじ, とこのま and ぶつだん are found here. You must take your slippers off before you step into the わしつ.  |

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