

6. Japanese Cultural Day activity ideas

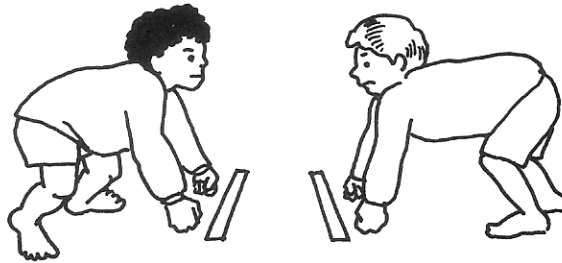
1. Outdoor activities

(1) *Sumoo* (Sumo)

Sumoo has been introduced in Idea Book 2 on pages 24 to 27.



Though Sumo may look violent, it is a clean contest of strength, skill and speed in which sportsmanship is highly encouraged and respected. There is no need to hire sumo suits. Please teach your students some of the rules and history of sumo, so they too can enjoy this simple sport.



(2) *Bon odori* (Bon dance)

Obon is a traditional form of Buddhist ancestor worship. It lasts for several days before and after August 15. It is believed that the souls of deceased ancestors return during *obon*, so people would dance to console the spirits of their ancestors. As is the case with many cultural and religious events, over time *obon* has evolved into a summer festival with its main emphasis on having fun. *Bon odori* music, words and dance are different throughout Japan, depending on the area.

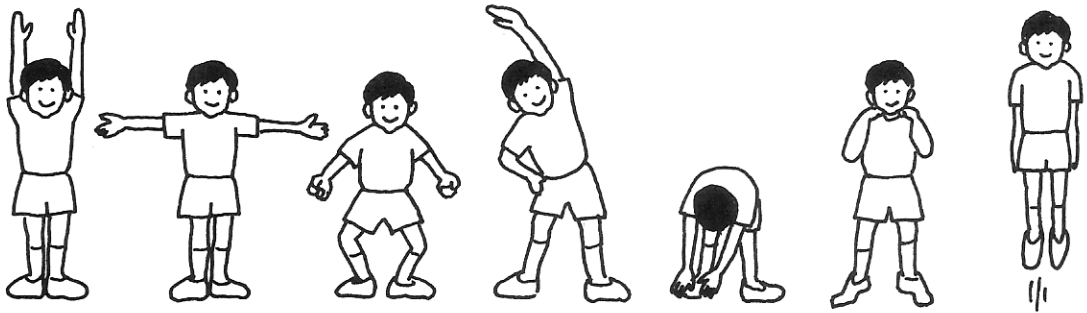
Usually dancers form a large circle around a decorated scaffold upon which a singer and drummer perform. This can be a wonderful thing to perform at an *undookai*. If you have access to a Japanese intern, or someone who can act as an instructor, I strongly encourage you to make good use of them.



(3) *Rajio taisoo* (Radio exercise)

In 1928, there was a ceremony to mark the coronation of Hirohito as the emperor of Japan. To commemorate this and to help make the people of Japan fitter and healthier, *rajio taisoo* was conceived. There were three versions of this. Version one has been used through much of the Japanese education system and so most Japanese people know how to do the version one exercises.

It is a great performance when you have hundreds of students performing *rajio taisoo* to the music as one. We had over 2000 primary school students at our cultural day and this activity went very well. See *Undookai* activities on page 60.



(4) *Janken* Championship

See *janken* games on page 40.



This is a great activity because it can be very exciting and especially because everyone can have a chance to be a champion. I strongly recommend this activity for your special day's event.

(5) Chorus

To have many voices singing together outdoors in a strong voice can be very uplifting. Have the students practice the songs that you wish to perform prior to the cultural day.



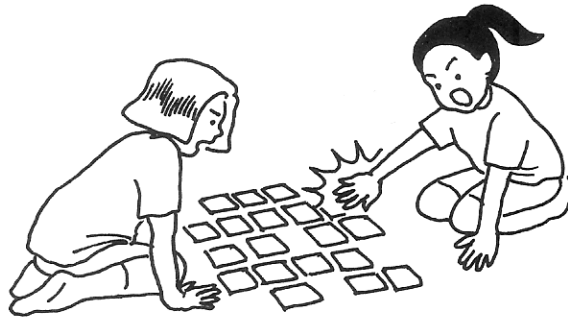
Here are some of my favorite songs that are easy to sing. When many people sing them together, it can make the group full of cheer.

♪ *Utae ban ban, Ookina uta, Mori no kumasan,*
Shiawasenara te o tatakoo, Minna de tsukuroo,
Yama no ongakuka, Ichinensei ni nattara ♪

2. Indoor activities

(1) *Karuta* tournament

Though *karuta* can be played with a group, it is most exciting when played by two people. Prepare quite a few *karuta* sets and you can have lots of pairs of students play. If you wish to make your own *karuta* cards, using just hiragana letters should suffice. You will only need one set of reading cards, as with one reading, each pair of players look for the correct card in front of themselves.

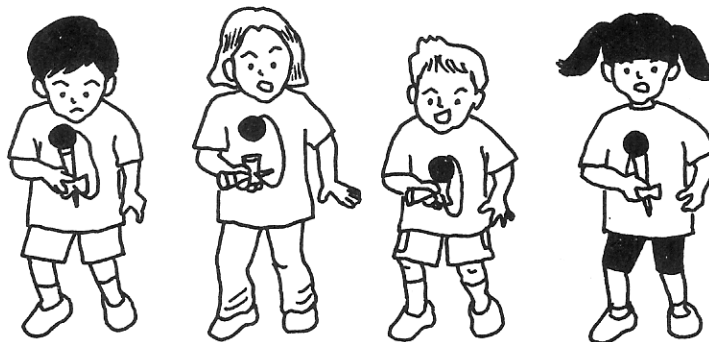


(2) *Kendama* tournament

There are quite a few different styles of tournament that you can run with the *kendama*. Following are just a few examples.

Moshikame tournament

A group of students stand side by side, each with a *kendama*. They all start at a signal, and the student who can continue doing *moshikame* the longest wins. See page 10 for instructions on *moshikame*.



Basic trick tournament

Decide on the number and type of tricks you wish to use. Each participant tries each trick ten times, their number of successes are recorded on a table. At the end of the day, the participant with the most successes wins. With this style of tournament, a lot of people can play as they don't all have to be in the one place at the same time.