

# Explaining Cultural Artifacts and Practices

For your second letter to your Cambodian partner, you will have to choose a Japanese cultural practice (e.g. festival) and describe it to your partner.

## Cultural Practices:

When you describe a cultural practice, use these steps:

**1. Give the Japanese word for the practice.**

e.g. One popular New Year's Eve practice is called *jōya no kane*.

**2. Give a translation for the practice.**

e.g. This means the "Tolling Bell Ceremony."

**3. Explain what people do during the practice.**

e.g. Big temple bells are rung 108 times about 15 minutes before midnight throughout Japan on New Year's Eve.

**4. Explain cultural artifacts that people use for the practice.**

e.g. One of the most famous bells is at Chion-in in Kyoto. This bell was made in 1636, is 3.3 meters tall and weighs 70 tons. The bell is so big that a team of 17 monks is needed to ring the bell on New Year's Eve.

**5. Explain symbolism or rules connected to the practice.**

e.g. The 108 rings represent the 108 "earthly desires" of men. This is done to free believers from the 108 "earthly desires".



## Cultural Artifacts:

When you describe a cultural artifact, use these steps:

**1. Give the Japanese word for the artifact.**

e.g. This is an *omamori*.

**2. Give a translation of the word.**

e.g. It means “amulet” in English. The word “mamori” means “protection.” *Omamori* is the honorific form of the word “to protect.”

**3. Explain what it is or what it is made from.**

e.g. It’s made of cloth that encloses a piece of paper or wood with prayers written on them. Japanese buy them at Buddhist temples and/or Shinto shrines.

**4. Explain what people do with it or how they use it.**

e.g. *Omamori* provide people with blessings or protection. Many Japanese attached them to their bags, use them as cell phone straps, or hang them in their cars.

**5. Explain any symbolism or rules connected to the artifact.**

e.g. *Omamori* should never be opened or they can no longer protect you. You should also replace an *omamori* after one year. When you want to discard an *omamori*, you should never through it in the trash. Instead, you should bring it to the temple or shrine to get burned.

