

Make a Tanabata Wish Card

七夕

THE JAPANESE HOUSE ACTIVITIES



Learn the story of
Tanabata and write a
wish on a *tanzaku* paper

1. Learn about *Tanabata*

Tanabata (literally “Seventh Night”) is the summer star festival, celebrated in homes and communities throughout Japan. The story behind *Tanabata* is a love story, which originally came from China. The Princess Orihime was separated from her true love Hikoboshi by her father, who was angry that the princess neglected her weaving duties to spend time with him. After Orihime, broken-hearted, pleaded with her father, he allowed them to meet once a year on the seventh day of the seventh month, when magpies would make a bridge across the Milky Way to enable Orihime and Hikoboshi to reunite. They are represented by the stars Vega and Altair.

Just as the star lovers’ wish to be reunited comes true, it is said that your *Tanabata* wishes will be granted as well. People write their wishes on *tanzaku* papers and hang them in bamboo trees. *Tanzaku* are long, narrow papers with printed art or calligraphy on them. Traditionally, five colors (blue, yellow, red, black, and white) are used for the *tanzaku* for the *Tanabata* festival. It is said that these five colors have the power to keep away evil spirits and bad luck.



TIME:

20 minutes

MATERIALS:

- *Tanzaku* wish paper
- Pens, markers, other materials, other decorating material
- Hole puncher
- String or ribbon
- Scissors

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE:

Tanabata: *Tah-na-baa-tah*

Tanzaku: *Tah-n-zah-coo*

Orihime: *Oh-ree-hee-may*

Hikoboshi:

Hee-koh-bow-she



2. Make your own *Tanzaku*

1. Write down a wish on *tanzaku* paper and decorate it. *Tanzaku* paper can be large or small.
2. Punch a hole in one end of the paper and place a string through it.

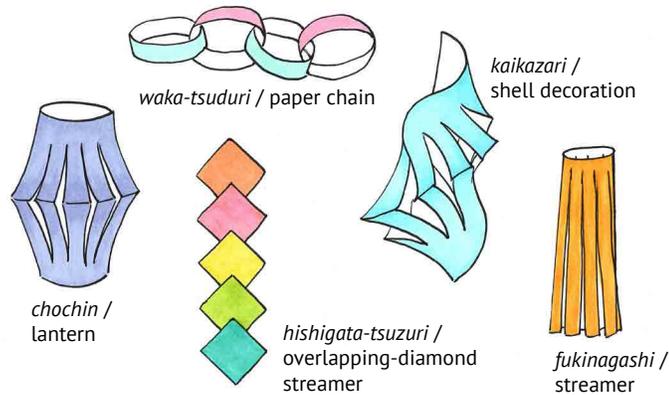


3. Hang the *tanzaku* on a bamboo tree, or just somewhere it can see the stars.



3. Things to Talk about

- *Tanabata* is celebrated in homes and communities throughout Japan. Sendai's *Tanabata* Festival (<http://www.sendaitanabata.com>) is one of the biggest—famous for their large streamer decorations.
- *Tanzaku* are not the only decorations for *tanabata*; here are a few others:



- To read the whole story of *Tanabata*, check out *A Song of Stars* adapted by Tom Birdseye, illustrated by Ju-Hong Chen, or the Kamishibai Storytelling edition, *The Story of Tanabata*.
- Bamboo is a common plant found in Japan. It is said that no other plant grows so tall as fast. It also has a wide variety of uses. Therefore, it has become very popular as a “green” material in recent years. What things have you seen made out of bamboo?

