

Make a *Hachimaki* Headband

はちまき

THE JAPANESE HOUSE ACTIVITIES



Learn about *natsu-matsuri* (summer festivals) in Japan and create a *hachimaki* headband.

1. Learn about *Natsu-matsuri*

Natsu means summer and *matsuri* means festival; therefore, *natsu-matsuri* are festivals held during the summer in Japan. Most Japanese festivals are closely associated with seasonal changes and often are based in a celebration of agriculture, especially the cultivation of rice. Summer is the season of natural disasters such as typhoons and droughts, so summer festivals are held to ward them off. As the end of summer approaches, there are festivals to bring the community together and get ready for the fall harvest.

People in festivals work hard—they dance, play music, and carry portable shrines called *mikoshi*. In Japan, when someone wants to apply herself to a serious task or problem, she wears a traditional headband called a *hachimaki*. These symbolize focus and concentration, as well as physical and spiritual strength. They're also practical, because they absorb sweat. *Hachimaki* are a very common sight at festivals, where everyone is working very hard.

TIME:

20 minutes

MATERIALS:

- White cloth cut in strips approximately 36" x 5" each
- Fabric markers or fabric paint

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE:

Natsu-matsuri:

Nah-tsu-mah-tsu-ree

Hachimaki:

Ha-chee-mah-key

Mikoshi: *Me-koh-she*



2. Make Your Own *Hachimaki*

1. Fold the fabric strip in thirds lengthwise.



2. Decorate the *hachimaki* with markers.



3. Tie the *hachimaki* around your head.



Useful tips:

- Use child-safe makers and fabric paint
- Make sure that only one side of the cloth is used for writing and drawing. Use this as the outer side, so the ink does not touch the skin.

3. Things to Talk about

- An important summer festival that is not related to agriculture is held in mid-August to honor one's ancestors' spirits; this is called *O-bon*. Why do you think this festival is held this time of year?
- Check out various Japanese festival scenes and dances on YouTube and other video sites. Each festival has own web site, and it usually has information in English. Here are some sites to get you started:

Sendai Tanabata Matsuri

<http://www.sendaitanabata.com>

See the July activity for more information about *Tanabata*.

Kyoto Gion Matsuri

<http://www.city.kyoto.jp/koho/eng/festivals/gion.html>

This festival has its origins in an ancient ritual to ward off sickness; today it is famous for its spectacular floats and parades.

Aomori Nebuta Matsuri

http://www.atca.info/nebuta_en/

This festival began as a ritual to cast off laziness and get ready for the harvest; it is known for its huge paper lantern floats and lively dancers.



- A word very important to *hachimaki* is *genki* (gay-n-key). *Genki* is a common word in Japan, but it's difficult to translate. It's the state of being fine, motivated, energetic, inspired, and healthy. When you put on a *hachimaki*, you are focusing yourself to become *genki* and take on difficult tasks, so you can make one any time you need to work hard.

From top to bottom: *Genki* written in *hiragana*, *katakana*, and *kanji* characters.

げんき
ゲンキ
元気