

Learn to Use Chopsticks はし

THE JAPANESE HOUSE
ACTIVITIES



Learn chopsticks culture and etiquette in Japan and try it yourself!

1. Learn about *Hashi*—Chopsticks

Chopsticks in Japanese are called *hashi*; *o-hash*i is the more polite way to say it. They are made from a variety of materials: wood (including lacquered wood), bamboo, metals, and plastics, but wooden chopsticks are the most common. There are different kinds of chopsticks for different uses: for eating, for cooking, and for picking up or serving cakes and sweets.

At home, each person has his or her own pair of chopsticks for daily use. Many people also have a second pair of chopsticks called *mai-hash*i (my chopsticks) that they would carry with them all the time for use at work or at restaurants. Even though disposable wooden chopsticks are still commonly used at fast food stores and restaurants, people like to have their *mai-hash*i because it minimizes waste and is better for the environment.

Children in Japan usually start learning to use chopsticks by the age of 4 or 5. There are various training chopsticks available for beginner users.



TIME:

25 minutes

MATERIALS:

- Video: *Many Homes in Kyoto, Japan—Shiori*
- A pair of chopsticks
- Small items to pick up

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE:

Hashi: *Hah-she*

O-hash: *oh hah-she*

Mai-hash: *mah-ee hah-she*



2. How to Hold a Pair of *Hashi*

Before you start—Watch the chapter “Shiori” in the video: “Many Homes in Kyoto, Japan.” Shiori and her mom prepare hamburger and eat it with rice. They use chopsticks!

1. Take one chopstick and rest it between your thumb and your fourth finger.
2. Place the second chopstick between the index and middle fingers.
3. Bring the tip of the thumb to the second chopstick, and pinch the top chopstick between your thumb, index, and middle fingers. If the tips of the chopsticks are not aligned, align them.
4. Practice moving the top chopstick with your thumb, index, and middle fingers. The bottom stick should remain totally still.



3. Things to Talk about

- Chopsticks are still the most commonly used utensils in Japan. However, forks, spoons, and knives are often used, too. When do you think people in Japan would use these utensils?
- To further your fun with chopsticks, here are some stories about them.
 - How My Parents Learned to Eat, by Ina Friedman
 - Oishinbo A la Carte, story by Tetsu Kariya, art by Akira Hanasaki
- Chopsticks Etiquette:
 - Do not spear food with chopsticks.
 - Do not point your chopsticks at anything or anyone.
 - It's considered unlucky to hand food directly from one pair of chopsticks to another.
 - The proper place setting of chopsticks is in front of you with the tips pointing to the left. Use a chopstick rest if available.
 - One should never stick chopsticks vertically in a bowl of rice. This is done only at funerals in the bowl of rice offered at the altar.

