

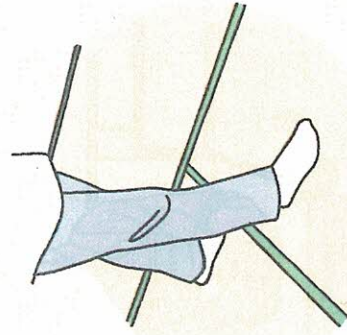
Japanese room

Manners in a Japanese room

Many restaurants and bars have Japanese rooms with tatami mats and paper sliding doors. Here are some basic manners to follow in a Japanese room.

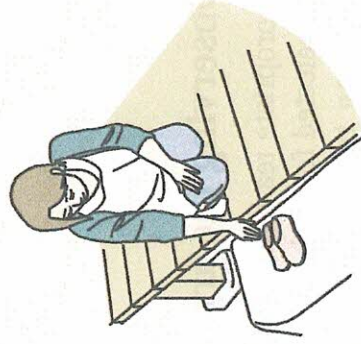
Taking off your shoes

Take off your shoes before entering a Japanese room. Arrange your shoes neatly with the toes of the shoes pointing to the exit.



How to walk on a tatami mat

A tatami mat has edges. Try not to step on them when walking.



How to sit on a cushion (*zabuton*)

Sit on the center of the *zabuton*. If it is hard to sit on your legs, give people some notice before stretching them.

How to bow

We bow when greeting, or conveying our appreciation. In a Japanese room, you can do so while sitting.



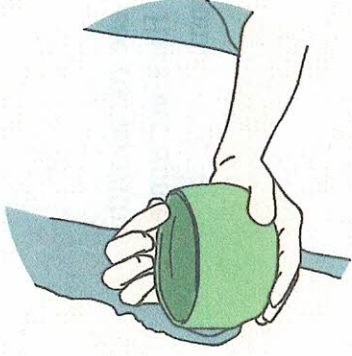
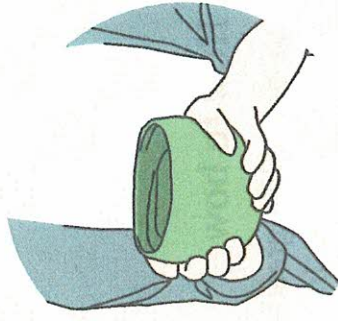
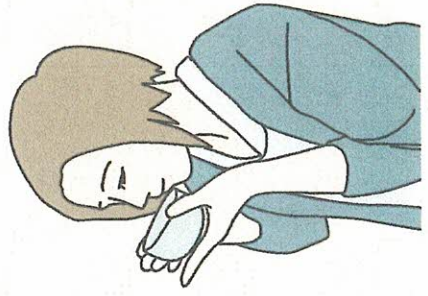
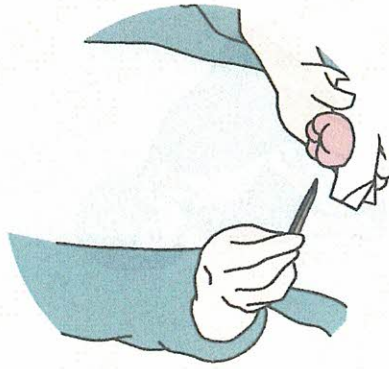
Japanese tea

To enjoy Japanese tea

Japanese traditional teas such as *Matcha* and *Sencha* are slightly bitter and aromatic. In Nara, there are many tea rooms where you can easily try them.

How to hold a tea bowl

Basically you hold it with both of your hands, having the bowl on your left hand and lightly attach your right hand. This is also to show your desire to carefully handle the bowl. The taste of your tea becomes even better if you eat a sweet first.

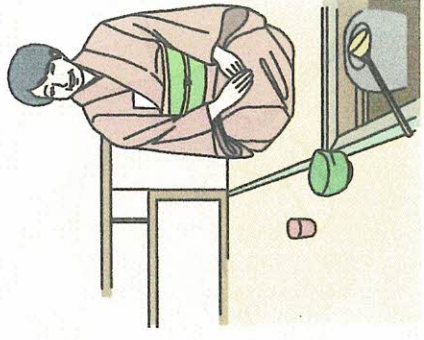


How to drink tea

Drink your tea while it is hot. There are no particular rules about drinking tea, but you will look smart if you slightly wipe off with your fingers the part where you have put your mouth to drink the tea, especially with *Matcha*.

Observing the arrangements

Appropriate tea bowls and sweets are selected for each season. After drinking tea, ask about these bowls and sweets. You also want to ask about the alcove where a vase or hanging scroll is displayed, and the garden.



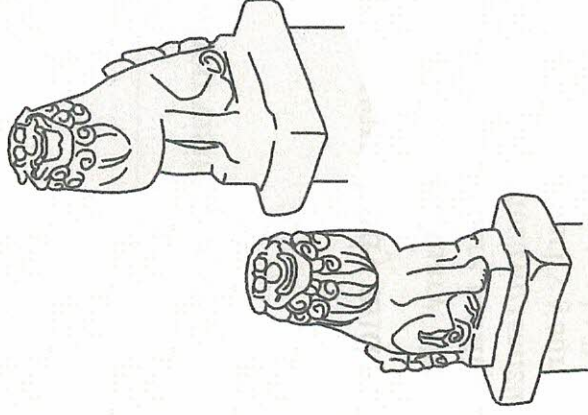
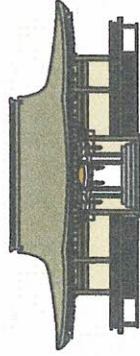
Shrine I

What you should know before visiting a shrine

Shrines are a sacred place where the gods came down from heaven. It is said that in Japan there are many gods (*Yaoyorozu-no-kami*) to protect people. Thus, there are a number of shrines, including many of those that enshrine several different gods.

Sanctuary (Shinden)

This is a building to enshrine a god. In Japan it is considered that the gods are invisible, but also believed that they love what human beings love. This is why sake and food, as well as songs and dances are dedicated to them as a symbol of our good faith.

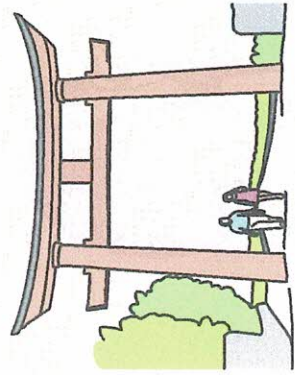


Shrine guardian dog (*komainu*)

Although it is called a dog, the stone statue actually resembles a lion. They are placed in front of *Torii* gates, for example, because it is believed that they can ward off evil spirits. Observe them carefully: they come in pairs, with one's mouth opened and the other closed. The Sphinx of Egypt and lions of Mesopotamia have the same belief.

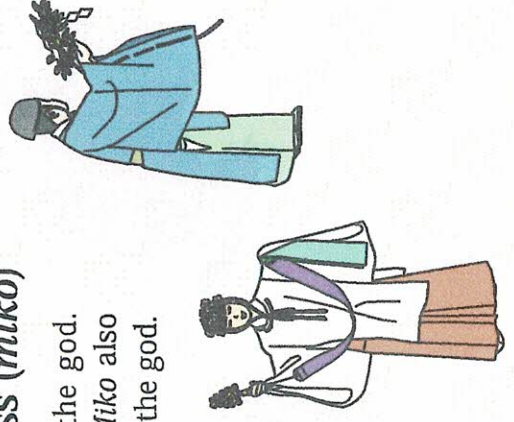
Torii Gate • Approach

There is an approach to the sanctuary, pointing to the holy praying area. The god goes through the middle of the approach, so human beings are supposed to avoid walking in the center.



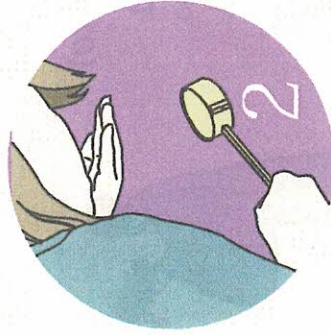
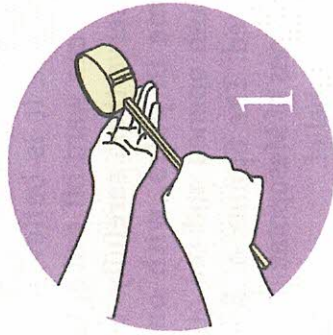
Shinto priest • priestess (*miko*)

These are people that serve the god. The females are called *miko*. *Miko* also sing and dance in dedication to the god.



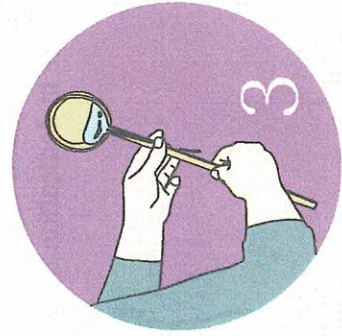
Shrine II

What you may want to try when visiting a shrine



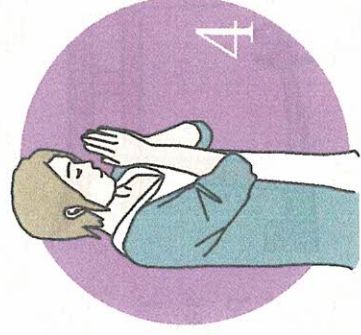
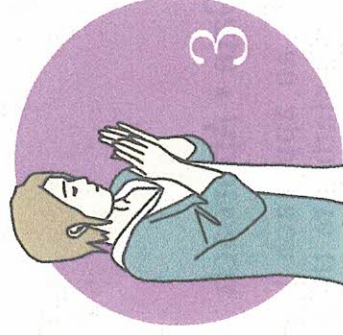
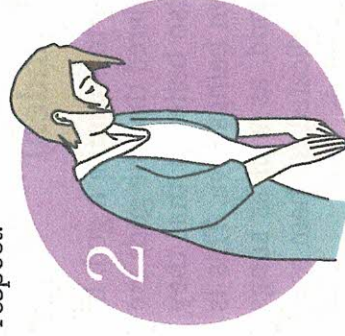
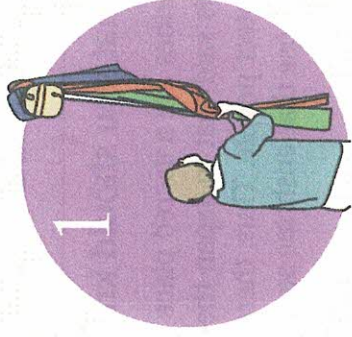
Purify your body and soul

Close to the sanctuary, there is always a place where purification water is kept (*chozuya/temizuya*). Before praying, purify your body and soul with the water: Ladle some water and then wash your left hand, right hand, inside the mouth, again left hand, and then the handle for the next person. (Note: The water is not for drinking)



Praying at the sanctuary

In front of the sanctuary, ring the bell or gong softly first. Then, bow twice, clap your hands twice, and pray while pressing your hands together in front of your chest with your eyes closed. Bow again to finish. Keep silent in front of the sanctuary to show your respect.



Temple II

What you may want to try when visiting a temple

In a temple, first go to the Hon-do (main hall) and put your hands together to pray to the principal image. Buddhism was first introduced to the Asuka region in the 6th century and was valued in the capital of Nara as a precept to protect the nation. Even today, there remain many Buddhist statues and buildings from ancient times in Nara.

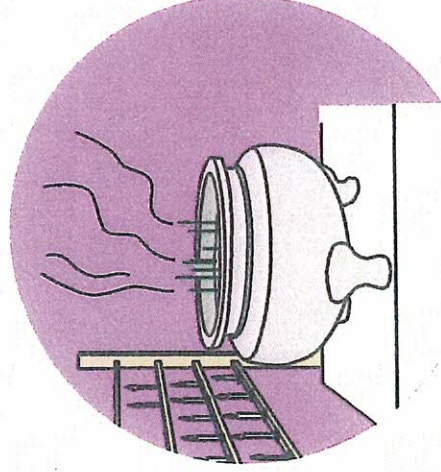
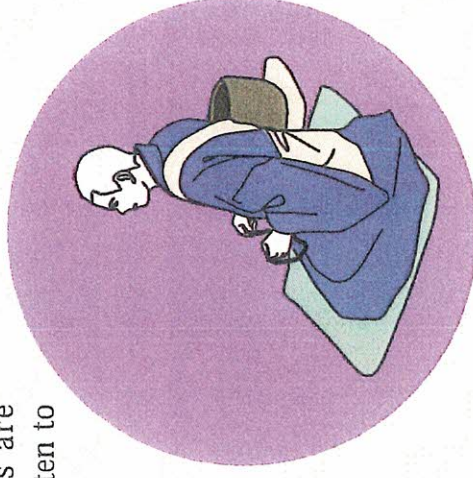
Pray to a Buddhist statue

In front of the statue or painting, put your hands together and make a slight bow.



Listening to a Buddhist sutra

Monks may be chanting a Buddhist sutra in the temple. Sutras are difficult to understand but listen to the sound in silence.



Incense and light

In Japan, flowers and incense, as well as lights are dedicated to Buddha.

If you find incense and candles for visitors in the hall, try to dedicate them yourself. (Charge applies)