

Important dates in May:

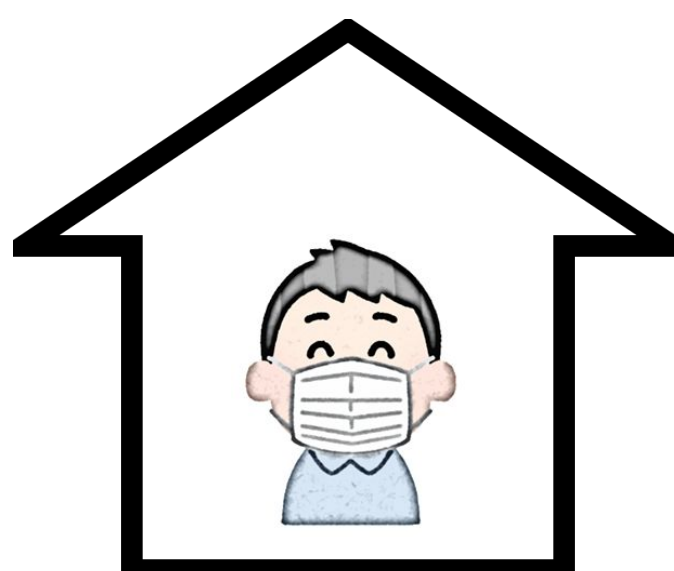
May 3rd - Constitution Day
 May 4th - Greenery Day
 May 5th - Children's Day
 May 6th - Constitution Day (observed)

Important dates in June:

June 1st - resumption of classes (tentative)

The Shiga Situation

Social
Distancing



Stay
At
Home

As Covid-19 becomes more and more prevalent in Japan, each of us has to do what we can to limit our contact with others. If your school is offering the opportunity to work from home, consider taking them up on it. Try to pick off-peak hours to do your groceries, and buy enough food for a few days so you can avoid the crowds. It's rough only being able to enjoy the spring weather from your apartment window, but it's in everyone's best interest to do so. 頑張ろう！

School Closures

Schools in Shiga have seen their closures extended yet again. Currently they're planned to be closed until the end of May. But as we've seen after the last two closure periods, that timeframe can be extended depending on the circumstances. With any luck this will help us to reduce our social contact and create fewer opportunities for virus transmission between individuals. No one knows how long the current situation is going to last, so we just have to adjust as best we can and try to stay productive.

Several BoE's in Shiga have begun letting their ALTs work from home. Some of you may be feeling stressed about how to use your time at home efficiently when you don't have classes to plan. There's a wide range of things you can work on that you wouldn't normally be able to, from researching teaching methods, to producing classroom materials, to creating online learning content. If you're looking for inspiration I've brainstormed a list of potential work projects that I've previously sent out to SHS ALTs when the prefectural BoE first approved Work From Home. Check it out and please share your own ideas with the wider JET community.

CLAIR's TELF/TESOL Grant

It's that time of year again. CLAIR is accepting applications for the TEFL/TESOL Grant. If you've never completed a TEFL or TESOL training, not currently enrolled in such a course and you are a JET recontracting for 2020-2021 you are eligible to apply. The grant is worth 15,000 yen. While this won't cover the complete cost of the course, it will cover a significant portion of most courses. If you've been considering pursuing your TELF or TESOL certification please look into this opportunity first!

Volunteers Needed!

This summer new JETs are scheduled to arrive later than usual due to the now-cancelled Olympics. That means they will be having their Survival and Job Orientations after the school year has officially started.

Every year we rely on senpai JETs to deliver presentations that will prime incoming JETs for their new lives in Japan and their new jobs as ALTs. If there is a topic that is near and dear to your heart that you'd like to present to our new JETs, keep your eyes peeled for an online volunteer request form that will be sent out sometime in the coming weeks.

For those interested, some important dates are:
 Summer Orientation Planning Meeting - Aug. 8th
 Group A and B Survival Orientation - Sept. 18th
 Group A and B Job Orientation Day 2 - Sept. 25th

April Showers Bring May Stimulus Packages

The Japanese government is offering 100,000 yen to all residents as part of their response to the coronavirus. As foreign residents, JETs are also able to apply for this money. Application forms will be mailed to your residence in the near future, after which you will have to complete the forms and mail them in to receive the funding. What's more the funds are going to be tax-exempt. Keep an eye on your mailboxes so you don't miss out!

If you have a My Number Card you can also apply online at:
https://myna.go.jp/SCK0101_01_001/SCK0101_01_001_InitDiscsys.form

Productive Days at Home

Being stuck at home might be boring but there are plenty of ways of breaking up the monotony and making the most of the situation. While most of us aren't able to jump on the bread-making train due to our lack of ovens, this is a great opportunity to step up our cooking game. We've all got to eat, so why not turn mealtime into a highlight of the day?

Most gyms have closed down for obvious reasons. To avoid the quarantine-15 after enjoying all of your delicious new recipes, there are plenty of ways to exercise at home. This is especially important if you're working from home as you're likely walking/cycling a lot less than usual. Early mornings and evenings are the perfect temperature for a comfortable run. Searching "calisthenics" will lead you to a variety of workouts you can do from home, most often with no equipment required.

Learn something new! Have you heard of MOOCs? Did you know major universities offer a variety of free courses on the internet? While most don't count for university credits, they're still a great way to deepen your knowledge on a familiar topic or break into something completely new. There are a number of sites where you can browse available subjects, two of the most popular being EdX and Coursera. Some of the courses you might find helpful in improving your classes once we get back to school!

How are you making the most of your time at home? Send me your answers at kenchopa@gmail.com. I'd love to showcase what our JET community has been up to in the next newsletter. Let's inspire one another!

Winner Winner Chicken Dinner

I present to you the uncontested, anonymous winner of the Issue 14 Short Story Contest. Enjoy!

Blossom

I started the year welcoming a new decade full of potential. For my resolution, I asked myself "what will I learn this year, what will define me?"

Little did I know the sorrow that was to come. As many wished the new year in, a silent killer roamed our streets. In a short time, the world was gripped by fear and anxiety. In this panic many have missed, what would have been a gentle spring. Winter subsided, nothing to fill it in its wake.

But we have not succumbed!

Instead the world bloomed with selflessness and caring; a new normal that seems to say, "From here on, the world will be ok."

Issue 15's Short Story Contest

Since we're all stuck inside anyway, why not show off our writing chops by making a submission for the next short story contest. I'll continue to highlight the winner of the contest in the newsletter but I also plan to include a link to the other submissions so that we can enjoy all of them.

The next writing prompt is "stifling". Feel free to interpret that however you like! Submissions in the form of poems are welcome too! Send your writing to kenchopa@gmail.com.