

# Entrance Examination Season has started!



Ema, with examinees prayers written

Many Japanese schools, colleges, and universities hold annual entrance examinations from January till March, since the Japanese school year begins in April. Japan has the 6-3-3-4 education system, with six years of compulsory elementary school, three years of compulsory junior high school, three years of high school, and four years of university education. High school entrance examinees are usually students aged fifteen who are in their last year of junior high school.

However, instead of the regular entrance exam, some students aged twelve years old take entrance examinations for an integrated institution that combines junior and high schools. Most university entrance examinees are students aged eighteen who are in their last year of high school; additionally, high school graduates who failed the previous entrance examination and some working adults also undertake the entrance exams.

In Japan, the school entrance exams are held

once each year. The method of acceptance relies almost entirely on one or two tests. Additionally, many people believe that a single examination has significant life-long consequences towards their professional career path and socioeconomic status. Therefore, there is an enormous amount of pressure on the examinees to do their best on the test.

In order to pass the test, in addition to studying very hard, many Japanese students usually go to a shrine dedicated to education to pray for their success in the entrance examination. Japanese shrines have wooden votive tablets called *ema* which are used by the examinee to write their prayers.

The shrines also have *omamori* a Japanese amulet, and many students have a study-dedicated *omamori* this season. If you happen to see young students studying seriously in a train or bus with an *omamori* hanging on their school bag, they must be entrance examinees this year. Please wish them "good luck" in your mind!



Omamori

## Sento (public bath) in Japan



Do you know what does sento mean? It means public bath in Japanese. Sento is a common facility in Japan where you pay an entrance fee

to take a bath.

There are 11 sentos in Meguro city. You can find the characteristics and seasonal events held at all the sentos at the Meguro Sento Union's page (<https://1010meguro.tokyo/info/>) and Meguro City's home page. There are various kinds of sentos, including those that were established back in the early 20th century, those with Mt. Fuji painted on the wall, sentos that provide unique herbal baths, and many more. For those who have never been to a sento before, let me tell you a bit of

its history and etiquette.

Japanese have the tradition of taking a hot bath every day, but back in the days, very few households had a bathroom at their houses, which is why there were so many sentos all around Japan. Sentos are separated into the male and female bath, and they are mostly indicated with a Noren (traditional Japanese fabric) of different colors. Before entering the bath you must clean yourself, and it is forbidden to enter the bath with a swimsuit. There are exceptions, but if there is something you are uncertain about, it is always recommended to check with the staff in advance.

For those who would like to try going to a sento, here are some tips. Sentos generally don't provide free towel, shampoo, and body soap, therefore it is recommended to either

bring your own or purchase them at the counter in advance. Before entering the bath, you will need to pay the entrance fee at the counter, and some sentos will provide you with a wristband key for the locker. Keep that key with you at all times even when you are in the bath!

The temperature of the bath at sento is generally fairly high, between 40-42°C. To have an enjoyable sento experience, it is important to keep yourself hydrated and constantly checks your body condition and don't overdo it by staying in the bath for too long.



MEGURO SENTO