

Cultural trends – Explaining cultural differences/ Practising the language of trends
Describe past, present and future changes in life, values, society etc in your country, e.g.
Business

Language

Body language and gestures

Leisure

Transport

Clothes, accessories and appearance

Food and drink

Festivals and celebrations

Home and garden

Religion

Education

Relationships

Arts and crafts

Character/ Morals

Politics

When you need to or when your teacher tells you to, look on the next page for more ideas.

Suggested subtopics

Business

- being moved from department to department
- bureaucracy/ paperwork
- business entertaining
- close relationships between government and business
- conglomerates/ cross shareholding
- consensus building
- continuous improvement
- death by overwork
- drinking with colleagues (= co-workers)
- enterprise unions
- graduate recruits in April
- group calisthenics (= group exercise like aerobics) at the beginning of the day
- humour in meetings and presentations
- interrupting
- lifetime employment
- moving without your family
- old school tie
- people speaking out in meetings
- public apologies
- punctuality
- rubberstamp meetings
- seasonal gift giving
- seniority-based pay/ promotion
- shareholder activism
- unpaid overtime
- use of business cards
- using first names
- waiting for your boss to leave first

Language

- Chinese characters
- dialects/ accents
- Janglish (English made in Japan)
- polite language (honorifics etc)

Body language and gestures

- bodily contact
- bowing
- eye contact
- hiding your mouth when you laugh
- kowtowing
- shaking hands
- slurping when eating noodles

Leisure

- golf
- hostess bars
- hot springs/ public baths
- karaoke
- large group tours
- martial arts
- shiatsu massage
- traditional flower arrangement

Transport

- being pushed into incredibly packed trains
- bullet trains
- jumping in front of trains
- rickshaws
- taxis with automatic back doors
- trains being late
- two-car families
- women's shopper bikes

Clothes, accessories and appearance

- grey suits with white shirts
- netsuke
- parasols
- traditional clothes
- trying to keep pale skin
- wooden clogs

Food and drink

- Chinese dumplings (dim sum, "potstickers", etc)
- Japanese-style pickles
- Western food
- bean curd
- carefully prepared lunchboxes
- chewy rice cake
- conveyor belt sushi bars
- cooking over charcoal
- dried mushrooms
- fermented soy beans
- green tea/ powdered green tea
- healthy food
- horse meat
- miso soup
- noodles/ pot noodles
- pickled plums
- pouring drinks for yourself
- raw fish
- red bean jam desserts

- rice balls
- rice crackers
- rice wine
- seaweed
- shaved ice with sweet toppings
- soy sauce
- traditional breakfast
- traditional spirits
- tripe (kidneys, liver, guts, etc)
- using chopsticks
- vegetarian food
- white rice

Festivals and celebrations

- a second party after the wedding reception
- cherry blossom viewing
- Christian weddings
- fireworks
- first prayers of the New Year
- lunar New Year/ Chinese New Year
- portable shrines
- processions
- summer festivals
- traditional music (drumming etc)
- traditional weddings

Home and garden

- folding screens
- hanging scrolls
- heated table
- heavy tiled roofs – thatched roofs
- household shrines
- miniature trees
- rush matting
- sliding screens
- small wooden houses
- traditional gardens
- waxed paper windows

Religion

- Buddhism/ Zen Buddhism
- cleaning graves/ tending to graves
- Confucianism
- cults
- going to Buddhist temples/ Shinto shrines
- praying to ancestors
- Shinto
- superstitions (lucky charms etc)

Education

- calligraphy
- children cleaning the classroom
- cram schools
- discipline problems
- good at maths and science
- importance of the university you go to
- importance of university entrance tests
- nationalistic history textbooks
- postgraduate studies (e.g. MBAs)
- respect for teachers
- rote learning/ memorising
- single-sex schools – co-ed schools
- sailor suits
- strict school rules
- Saturday classes

Relationships

- arranged marriages
- distant fathers
- group dating
- match makers
- neighbourhood associations

Arts

- animation/ cartoons
- comics

Character/ Morals

- being conservative
- being creative
- being dynamic/ being a self-starter – being passive
- being hardworking
- being indirect/ diplomatic
- being law abiding
- being polite (= having good manners)
- being punctual/ reliable
- being serious
- being shy
- geeks/ nerds
- importance of harmony
- perseverance
- putting hard work before results
- respecting elders
- the way of the warrior

Politics

- bureaucrats/ public servants
- Communist Party
- Constitution (Article 9 etc)
- Diet
- Emperor
- governor
- LDP (Liberal Democratic Party)
- prefecture
- prime minister

Discuss changes in character/ morals in your country. Are any of those changes problems? What could the solutions be?