



JAPAN INFORMATION
AND CULTURE CENTER
在米国日本大使館広報文化センター

TEACHING TUESDAY

KIMONO

The word “kimono” 着物 was originally used to simply mean “clothing,” but now is used to refer to a specific type of Japanese traditional clothing which came into use in the Heian Era (794-1192). Before the kimono, most people wore one-piece garments or ensembles consisting of separate upper and lower garments. The development of the kimono as we know it came with the creation of the technique known as the straight-line-cut method, which involves cutting pieces of fabric in straight lines and sewing them together.

Kimonos made with the straight line method were easier to fold and suitable for all types of weather, so they quickly became a part of Japanese people’s everyday lives. Wearing kimonos in layers came into fashion, and different color combinations represented different seasons or political status. As time wore on, kimono making became more and more of an art form, even when Western style clothing came into style.

Nowadays, kimono are only worn on special occasions. A typical ensemble for women requires more than 10 separate items, while men’s kimonos are easier, but usually also require a haori 羽織 half coat and hakama 袴 trousers. In the summer, a lightweight version called the yukata 浴衣 is worn at festivals.