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# TEACHING TUESDAY

## WASHITSU

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The central feature in traditional, and even modern, Japanese architecture is the washitsu (和室), or Japanese room. It has no dedicated purpose, but is marked by the tatami flooring, shoji sliding doors, and occasionally a tokonoma alcove for displaying flowers, pictures, and ornaments.

The standard type of washitsu is said to have been based on the residence of monks and the wealthy families of the Muromachi Period. The washitsu was originally designed to suit whatever purpose was needed at the time. The doors could be closed or opened to expand or contract the space, and furniture could be moved in or out quickly to suit the need of the day or season. In modern times, the washitsu is generally used as a receiving room, a family room, and an overall practical room.

Other elements of a traditional washitsu may include a shoin, or built-in desk, or chigaidana staggered shelves, but these are rare in modern architecture. While there may be many rooms with tatami, a true washitsu incorporates most, if not all, of these architecture features.