

令和八年



NENGAJO CONTEST 2026 Year of the Horse

ENTER TO WIN!

The JICC, Embassy of Japan is pleased to announce our 15th Annual Nengajo Contest! Nengajo are special Japanese New Year's post-cards that are sent to friends and relatives and delivered by Japanese post offices on the first day of the year.

Each year, the JICC honors this tradition by asking the public to craft their very own nengajo. 2026 is the Year of the Horse (午年), so don't horse around and submit your entries by the December 17th deadline! 🐎

 **DEADLINE:** December 17th, 2025
By 11:59PM EST

 **SUBMIT ENTRIES TO:**
jicc@ws.mofa.go.jp

 **YOUR 4X6 NENGAJO NEEDS:**

1. A horse that you created
2. 午 - (The kanji for horse found on *eto*, the Zodiac animal calendar)
3. The year 2026 / (Reiwa 8/令和八年)

Visit the link below for more details!

WWW.US.EMB-JAPAN.GO.JP/JICC/EVENTS/2025/NENGAJO-2026.HTML

ABOUT NENGAJO

Oshōgatsu, or Japanese New Year, is one of Japan’s most important holidays, celebrated on January 1st since the adoption of the Gregorian calendar in 1873.

It is a time for families to gather, clean their homes (a custom called *ōsōji*), prepare special foods (*osechi ryōri*), and exchange **nengajo**, or New Year’s greeting cards. These cards are a modern extension of an older tradition called *nenshi-mawari*, where people visited others in person to show gratitude and maintain good relationships for the year ahead.

Nengajo remain a popular tradition in Japan, with around 4 billion sent each year, often featuring zodiac animals, cultural symbols, or favorite characters. Families may create handmade cards together using calligraphy and stamps, often around a warm kotatsu table.

The Japanese postal service helps deliver these cards exactly on January 1st and even runs a lottery based on the cards’ numbers. There are specific rules, too—for example, avoiding nengajo to families in mourning. For many, receiving a bundle of cards on New Year’s Day is as exciting as opening holiday presents in the West.

Popular nengajo designs often feature the year's zodiac animal (**eto**), traditional symbols like Mount Fuji or the rising sun, and well-known characters. Adding to the fun, the Japanese postal service includes lottery numbers on special cards, with prizes ranging from cash and electronics to overseas trips.

Enter the JICC, Embassy of Japan’s 15th Annual Nengajo Contest by Wednesday, December 17th, 2025 at 11:59 EST. Submit all of your entries to jicc@ws.mofa.go.jp! 🐉

PREVIOUS 2025 WINNERS



CAROLINE R.,
34, VA



AZUSA M.,
14, CA



MIO I.,
7, NJ

JICC POP-UP EXHIBIT

In addition to first-place winners each receiving a lucky grab bag (*fukubukuro*) of prizes, eligible Nengajo submissions will be displayed at the JICC as part of our January Pop-up Exhibit! Local contest participants in the DC metropolitan area will also be invited to come to our culture center to enjoy this seasonal display of postcards from all around around the United States.



Adult category participant for JICC's 2024 Nengajo Contest (Year of the Dragon).



Student volunteers in front of an Ema Wish Board during a previous pop-up exhibit.

FOR INQUIRIES



GENERAL QUESTIONS &
CONTEST SUBMISSIONS:
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CONTEST PRESS / MEDIA:
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BUSINESS HOURS:
Open Mondays to Fridays
9:00AM to 5:00PM
(Special hours for events)



WEBSITE:
www.us.emb-japan.go.jp/jicc/



JICC LINKS DIRECTORY:
<https://linktr.ee/jicc>



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