

# Japanese Housing - Single-Family Houses

Most houses in Japan are traditionally made of wood. Japanese like the natural beauty of wood, and they feel more relaxed in wooden houses. Also, the ventilation is better that way. Because of all the large sliding windows, Japanese houses are full of light and fresh air. They are well suited for the Japanese climate, especially during the hot, humid summers. Houses also have roofs made of intricately designed and shaped tiles.

## Suppose you are invited to your Japanese friend's house:

### I. The Entrance

1. In Japan, you should take your shoes off in the *genkan*, or the front foyer. At most schools, you would do the same. Usually slippers are provided at the house, and at the school.

### II. Japanese Rooms: what would you discover after entering the Japanese guest room?

1. *Tatami*. *Tatami* is a mat made of woven straw. The surface of the straw is covered with a sheet of woven rushes. It is always six feet long by three feet wide, and about two inches thick. The size of a Japanese-style room is measured according to how many mats there are: ex. A four and a half mat room. Because *tatami* mats are very delicate, you should take your slippers off before entering the room.
2. *Tokonoma* (alcove): the wooden alcove in a Japanese room is usually the size of one *tatami* mat, sometimes half a mat. Hanging scrolls and flower arrangements are displayed there too. These displays often change according to the season or a special event.
3. *Fusuma* (sliding doors): sliding doors for *oshiire* (closet) or between rooms serve as partitions. The doors have wooden frames and are covered with Japanese paper. Japanese paper is then covered with a thicker layer of *fusuma* paper.

日本では、伝統的に木造住宅が主流を占めている。木造住宅が多いのは、木の自然の美しさと木造住宅の落ち着いた感覚が日本人好みだからである。また、大きな窓により通風や採光も良く、このため木造住宅はとりわけ夏に蒸し暑い日本の気候に適している。屋根は瓦屋根が多い。

## もし、あなたが日本の友達の家に招待されたら:

### I. 玄関

1. 日本では屋外ではいている靴はすべて玄関ホールで脱ぐ習慣がある。ここでスリッパに履き替えることもある。(多くの学校でも同様)

### II. 日本の部屋: その後あなたは客室へと案内されました。どんなことを発見するかな?

1. 畳は縦1.8m、横0.9m、厚さ5cmくらいのわらで作られたマットで、表面にはイグサで織ったシートが張ってある。和室の広さは畳の数で決まる(例、四畳半)。デリケートゆえにここではスリッパを脱ぎましょう。
2. 床の間は和室の壁面が一畳か半畳へこんだ板張りの場所。掛け軸をかけたたり生け花や置物を飾ったりする(季節や年行事によって変える)。
3. 襖は木枠に和紙で下張りをし、その上に襖紙を張ったもので、押入れの戸や部屋のしきりに使う。

