

Happy New Year! I spent another New Year's holiday in Japan this year (my third) so I don't have so many observations about things that are strange to me. I've gotten used to a lot of the Japanese traditions and I enjoyed making mochi, eating toshikoshi soba and lots of osechi ryouri. So this year I'll tell you a little bit about the only New Year's tradition that is widespread in America. New Year's resolutions.

Do you know what a New Year's resolution is? It's something that we decide to do or to change about ourselves for the upcoming year. In North America, the most popular New Year's resolutions are to go on a diet, to spend more time with family, or quite smoking. Quit smoking is #1. Some people don't like to make New Year's Resolutions because they know they can't keep them. Gym memberships always go up in January and February, but many of those people who join quit after the first month or two. Lots of people want to go on a diet after the holidays, too, but usually the diet doesn't last all year!

I don't usually make New Year's Resolutions, but this year I want to take Level 1 of the Japanese proficiency test in December. So in order to study for that test, I decided to make my New Year's Resolution about learning Japanese. I decided to try to learn 5 kanji every day (weekdays only) for the whole year—as well as trying to study more reading, grammar and writing as well. It will be difficult! I only started last week, but so far, I have been able to learn 5 kanji a day. I hope that I do not become one of those people who can't keep their resolution!

Do you make New Year's Resolutions in Japan? I think that many people in many different countries must try to change their lives in some way at the beginning of a new year. In some ways, it reminds me of the big cleaning that many Japanese people do at the end of a year. I did a big cleaning of my apartment and my desk at school at the end of last year too, in the Japanese way. It made it easier to start the new year fresh. Did you make a New Year's resolution this year? If so, I hope you can keep it!