

Labor Gakuen Newsletter V

News, Summer Trips, Recipes, Student Profile, Activities, Haiku

Labor Gakuen NEWS

Short Courses

During the break between terms, we will be offering several short courses to keep you busy. One course will be on using the Internet to help you study English. Another course will be on common and basic expressions used when visiting a foreigner's house, or when a foreigner visits you. We will also offer a Novice level review course. Do you like wine? Why not try the short wine-tasting course? You'll learn a lot about wine and have 2 enjoyable afternoons sipping wine and eating snacks!

Full Courses

There are a lot of classes available next term for those who have more specific needs for English study. There's the Business English course, the Art Expression workshop, the International Media course, the TOEIC course, the English Kyoto Guide course, the Listening & Pronunciation course and several other interesting choices! Ask the staff for more details.

Picnic at Gosho

On Sunday, July 6th we had a picnic on the grass at Gosho. It was the first Sunday event for Labor Gakuen and quite a few people came to the event. The weather was quite hot and humid but everyone seemed to enjoy themselves.

Teachers' Summer Reports

Chris went to Canada for 3 weeks to visit family and friends. While there he took a helicopter ride over Niagara Falls, went on a jetboat ride, played golf, went to see a Jack Johnson concert, went to the horse races, went to Marineland, and bought a Macbook. After coming back to Japan, he spent a week at Omi Maiko beach and drank too much beer!

Brooke was going to go back to Australia with her two daughters, visit Hiroshima and go to a taiko concert on Sado Island BUT....she moved house and didn't have the time or money to do any of these things! So, maybe next summer she'll go to Australia and.....

Miles and his family went to his hometown, Mandurah, which is about 100km south of Perth, West Australia. His mother lives on a small farm there, where she keeps horses, chickens, ducks, and an organic garden. There is a lot of bush on the property, which is home for all sorts of native wildlife - many birds, such as parrots, herons, spoonbills and sea eagles, as well as possums, bandicoots and the occasional kangaroo. They saw all of these things walking or riding around the property - Noah, his three-year-old, particularly enjoyed learning about the animals, and doing some of the chores such as feeding them, gardening, digging holes, and planting trees. His mum is trying to revegetate her property and another nearby one, so there was a lot of work to do. They also spent a couple of weekends in Perth meeting friends, having picnics, and shopping. Perth has really grown since he left four years ago - new buildings, new train lines, new people (immigration from all over the world is very high because West Australia has a mining boom at the moment) and new prices (also very high!).

Noah learnt lots of English - he can speak in sentences now, and is as good in English as in Japanese - and got to know his grandparents and cousins a bit better. All in all they had a relaxing and interesting time, which made them think of moving back.... one day....

Mark spent most of his summer relaxing and working out at the gym. He went to Mie on a trip and visited Ise Shrine, Ninjamura and Goza beach. Now that his health has improved he is looking forward to travelling again next year.

Keys to better listening skills

Why is my listening skill low?

For many students, listening is one the most difficult things to improve. Students often wonder why their listening skill improves so slowly. Usually there is one simple reason why your listening improves slowly; you don't practice enough! If you practice listening at home for at least 20-30 minutes a week, your listening will easily improve.

How can I improve my listening?

Of course any listening practice is better than no listening practice, but there are good ways and bad ways to practice listening. For example, watching movies is NOT a good way to improve your listening skills. Doing DICTATION is a great way to improve your listening skills!

What is DICTATION?

Basically, dictation is listening and then writing what you heard. You will need a CD, or tape, or video, or MP3 which has native English speakers speaking at regular conversation speed. If you have the words for the conversation it will be very useful to check.

How do I practice dictation?

1. Play one sentence from the CD and write as many words as possible that you heard.
2. Play the SAME sentence again and write more words you heard.
3. Keep playing the SAME sentence until you've written all (or most) of the words.
4. If possible, check the words in the textbook and fix any mistakes you made.
5. Listen to the SAME sentence again, then repeat with the same intonation, rhythm, stress, accent, and speed.
6. Play the next sentence and try again.

Why is dictation a good way to practice?

When you watch a movie once, you only have one chance to 'catch' the words. So... you usually only catch the easy words/phrases, and you never catch the difficult things. When you do dictation, you get to practice 'catching' ALL the words, including the difficult sounds/words/phrases!

Where can I find free listening resources?

If you like using the internet, I recommend the following free website:

<http://www.esl-lab.com/>

On that website, you can choose from a lot of different conversations with different levels of difficulty. You can also do a quiz with each listening and check your score. Most of the examples also give you the words which makes it easy to use for dictation!

What else can I do?

Dictation is great, but sometimes you may want something more fun.

Why not try listening to English songs and trying to 'catch' the words. Try something that's not too noisy or fast. The Carpenter's are a good example.

One of the main reasons why listening is difficult is because your pronunciation of English is quite different from a native English speaker's pronunciation. Of course the speed is different, but that's not so important. The way we join sounds is the key. Get a CD (or the website) and try to read aloud at the same time as the speaker, with the same intonation and same joined sounds.

Will I be able to understand English movies if I do these things once a week for 30 minutes?

I can't promise you'll understand everything, but you WILL understand much more if you practice, practice, practice!

BONUS SECTION

Common Native English Pronunciation

going to	~ gunnu
have to	~ haftu
want to	~ wannu
got to	~ gaddu
what are you	~ whadduyu
what do you	~ whadduyu

Haiku in English

We would like to thank all the students who contributed their English haiku to this newsletter. Writing haiku can be difficult even in your own language, so writing in English is doubly challenging. Even so, we were surprised at how many haiku we received – nearly 50! We couldn't print them all, so we've chosen some of our favourites for this newsletter (check the Labor Gakuen notice board for others).

If you want to try writing English haiku in the future, here are some tips to help you (taken from the book *Haiku*, by Patricia Donegan). Your haiku should:

1. Have 3 lines (with or without a 17 syllable count), and be one breath long.
2. Have a descriptive image (e.g. not just 'a flower', but 'a purple iris in the sun')
3. Refer to nature, and include a 'kigo', or 'season word'.
4. Be about real experience or memory, not imagination.
5. Not explain or tell, but show the feeling through your image.
6. Have a surprise ('ah!') moment that wakes the reader up.
7. Express compassion towards nature.

Also, if you're writing in English you may need a dictionary to check spelling, but you don't need to use difficult words. Haiku are written from experiences in ordinary life, so you should use simple, everyday language. As you read these summer haiku, you can experience each writer's precious summer moment through their imagery. Enjoy!

Summer Haiku

see the sea
white waves come and go -
hot happy sound

Naoko

walking on a colorful hydrangea path
it looks like a rainbow
appears in the sky

Yoshie Ando

in the two little hands
a young child keeps a firefly
so softly and carefully

Keiko Tomida

the incense
late mother loved
in folded summer kimono

Noriko Suzuki

slight breeze through the garden
sit under a tree of green
ice in glass tinkles like a wind chime

Yasuyo Ueda

the summer sea -
taiko sounds from
a shrine on the cliff

Yumiko Nishiwaki

I wish
together with fireflies
light up your heart

Kayoko Omoto

Summer Haiku

oh, summer weeds!
please give me strength
my life is like you

Sadako Yoshimura

the sound of the waves
little girls are fast asleep -
tent by Lake Biwa

Noriko N.

good old memories
straw hat, fireworks and love -
seaside of summer

Kumiko Tanaka

a joyful heart
too great to veil over
and in a parasol

Mutsuko Maekawa

the rainy season -
a mountain of laundry
heaped in the living room

Maki Nakayama

in the forest
I'm dyed with green
my heart, too

Yoko Kishima

see the firework display
my old fire love
come back to me

Emiko Nagasaki

morning glories are smiling
pink, red and blue -
the seeds left by my lovely mother

Teruko

the rainy season
many flowers of umbrella
are in full blossom

Kyoko Aoki

under the blue sky
white sails of yachts
brightening on the summer sea

Shigeo Tsuji

by making a right
at entrance of Mt. Aso
green field is shining

Kikuko Takeuchi

babbling in Kibune
giving us cool wind
Blowing tenderly

Noriko McClane

a wind-bell
tinkle tinkle -
dreaming

Yumiko Kojima

the shining sun
the blue and bright sea
soon the summer vacation

Saeko Terai

silence was broken -
the frog chorus started croaking
in flooded paddies

Yuko Miyatani

sounds of cicada
shaved ice with maple syrup -
somehow sentimental old days

Takashi Iki

Learning at Home with the Media

In the International Media Course we have been watching news broadcasts, videos and movies, documentaries and reading articles to develop our English. It is a challenging task, but a useful one. Firstly, if you go overseas, one of the only ways to engage with your host culture, or keep up with what's happening in the world, is to use English-language media. Secondly - and more importantly for students in Japan - it is one of the few ways to do that all-important activity - using English outside class, at home or work.

My job as a teacher is to make the media easier to use. I can't slow the speakers down, or simplify their vocabulary, but I can make YOUR task easier.

Often, students think that understanding a news report or a movie means understanding every single word. This is a negative approach because it is an impossible task. Most of my work in the International Media Course is helping students feel comfortable with NOT understanding everything. Students who are happy not to understand everything actually enjoy the media more than students who set themselves an impossible task.

So our aim in the Course is this: *To understand enough of the main ideas and key information of a story or programme, so that we can learn interesting new information, and discuss the content with others.*

That's all: understand some of the main ideas, and discuss them with others. It's easier than you think. Here are three steps to achieve this simple aim.

1. Use the pictures. An English proverb says, "Every picture tells a thousand words". So if you understand the pictures, that's less words you need to understand! The pictures on the screen tell you the topic of the news story, or movie scene. They also tell you what kind of people are involved, names and places, and what they are doing. Your knowledge of the world will then start guessing what the story is. Half your work is now done. All you have to do now is listen to confirm whether your guess is correct or not.

2. Listen for the key words. Don't listen to every word. Listen for important stressed words - names, days, numbers, verbs, events. These will often match the pictures. A good student will write these down as they listen. If you hear words you don't understand, ignore them. We are not studying vocabulary here, we are trying to understand a story. The combination of a few important words and pictures should allow you to understand some of the main ideas.

3. Write down the main idea(s). Using a few of the key words, write one or two sentences that express what you understand. Keep it simple. Write an elementary level sentence. It can be as simple as "*There was an earthquake in China yesterday*", or "*The Japanese PM resigned again.*" Simple, clear sentences like this are so much better than overcomplicated half-sentences, or attempts to copy exactly what the native speakers said in the programme. Don't try to write what the native speakers said. Write your own sentence, using a few of the easy key words. Keep it simple.

Watch again, adding more detail and key words each time. With each listen, you will understand more, if you follow this process. Here is a table you can use for this process, whether its the news, a movie scene, or something on YouTube. Copy it onto a piece of paper, and start using the internet or TV to improve your English!

	Topic	Key Words	Main Idea
Story 1			
Story 2			

If you do this again and again, once or twice a week, I guarantee your understanding and general English level will improve, mainly because you will gain an important language learner's skill: being happy with understanding a few of the speaker's main ideas, without understanding everything. Good luck, and be happy!

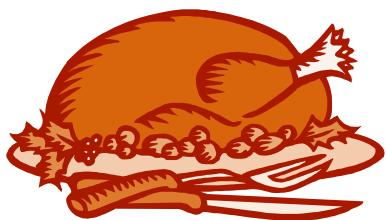
Cooking Verbs Quiz



1. match the verbs to the definitions below

- a) baste b) sauté c) simmer d) drain
- e) marinate f) beat g) grate h) blend
- i) brown j) sprinkle k) mix l) garnish

- i) to cook liquid at low temperature C
- ii) to soak a food in liquid before cooking
- iii) to pour the water out
- iv) to mix in blender, often to a paste
- v) to cook the outside of food until the colour changes
- vi) to mix until fluffy
- vii) to pour juice on roasting meat
- viii) to drop from your fingertips onto food
- ix) to make into small pieces or strips
- x) to cook quickly with very little oil
- xi) to combine ingredients thoroughly
- xii) to add ingredients on top of a dish for colour or taste



2. Now circle the correct verb in these sentences

The key ingredients of Waldorf salad are *sprinkled / grated* carrot and walnuts.

Good miso soup should be *simmered / boiled*

Before grilling that steak, you should *marinate / sauté* it in wine.

Before making a cake, you should *beat / blend* the eggs.

To improve that soup, why don't you *sprinkle / grate* some parsley on top?

If you don't *brown / baste* that leg of lamb, it'll be dry.

The first thing to do when you cook a curry is to *sauté / brown* the onions.

This pasta is too soft. I guess I didn't *drain / simmer* it properly.

When making fried rice, it's essential to *mix / blend* the ingredients properly.

Would you like to *garnish / marinate* that potato salad with chives?



Recipes from your Teachers

Magoo's French Toast

by Chris McCooey

Ingredients:

bread
egg
milk
vanilla extract
cinnamon
Canadian maple syrup
*whipped cream (optional)
*strawberries (optional)

Recipe:

1. Trim the crusts off 2 slices of bread.
2. Mix a large egg, a little milk and several drops of vanilla in a wide bowl.
3. Add some cinnamon powder and mix again.
4. Place the bread in the bowl and flip after a few seconds. Make sure the bread gets really wet!
5. Melt some butter in a pan and place the bread on the pan.
6. Cook until light brown on each side.
7. Top with fresh whipped cream, fresh strawberries, and hot maple syrup.

Miles' Middle East Hummus Dip

Ingredients

2 cups of cooked chick peas (garbanzo beans)
1 tablespoon of tahini (sesame seed paste)
1 teaspoon of salt
1 cup of water
1 tablespoon of olive oil
the juice of 1 lemon



Method

It's simple ~ just put all the ingredients in a bowl and blend until smooth.

Serve with pita bread, or crackers.

Mark's

Thai style pumpkin soup

Ingredients:

(serves 2)

Large pumpkin (1 quarter cut)
onion (half an onion chopped)
garlic (1-2 cloves)
coconut cream (400ml)
red Thai curry paste (1 teaspoon)
chicken or vegetable stock (2 teaspoons)
water (1 cup)
lime (or lemon) juice (1 teaspoon)
butter (1 teaspoon)
Parsley
salt and pepper.

How to make

1. Melt butter in a pot, add onions and garlic and fry for a minute. Now add the pumpkin, water and stock and simmer until the most of the water has gone.
2. Turn off the heat and add the coconut cream then mix with a blender until smooth.
3. Add the curry paste and salt and pepper and slowly heat up, finally add the lemon juice.
4. When you serve add parsley or coriander to garnish.

Tips

Try using other vegetables (like tomatoes) or meats (like chicken) to make the soup more filling.

Try green curry or yellow curry pastes for a different taste.

Try adding a dash of paprika or cayenne pepper to add more color when you serve.

Brooke's Savoury Impossible Pie

This is a quick, easy dish
that is nice for a Sunday brunch.
You can try different kinds of toppings too!

Ingredients:

- 4 eggs
- 1/4 cup melted butter
- 2 cups milk
- 1/2 cup plain flour

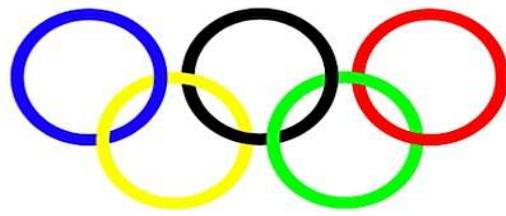
Topping:

- 1 small can of tuna
- 1/2 onion
- 1 small tomato
- 1/2 cup grated cheese
- salt, pepper, parsley

(You will also need a 30cm pie dish)

Directions:

1. Grease the pie dish
2. Drain the oil from the tuna
3. Chop the onion, slice the tomato and grate the cheese
4. Melt the butter in a saucepan (then let it cool a little)
5. Put the eggs, milk, flour and melted butter into a bowl and beat well
6. Pour the mixture into the pie dish
7. Place the tomato slices on top
8. Sprinkle with tuna, onion and grated cheese
9. Season to taste with salt, pepper and parsley
10. Cook at 180 for 30 minutes (or until brown and set)



Olympics Quiz

Now that the Olympics are over we thought it would be fun to test your Olympic knowledge with this quiz.

(Answers at the bottom of the page)

1. How many events are there in the Triathlon, heptathlon and pentathlon?
2. What are the names of the new Chinese national stadium and Olympic pool?
3. How many times has Japan held the winter Olympic games?
4. What colours are the five rings of the Olympic flag?
5. What do the 5 rings mean?
6. How many gold medals did Michael Phelps win?
7. How old are the Olympic games?
8. Where are the next winter Olympic games in 2010 going to be held?
9. Which Olympic sports will not be included in the 2012 Olympics?
10. Which country has held the most summer Olympic games?

answers.

1. three, five and ten. 2. The birds nest and the water cube. 3. twice Sapporo 1972 and Nagano 1998. 4. blue, yellow, black, green and red. 5. they represent the five continents: Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, and Oceania. 6. 8 gold medals 7. Over one thousand years old. 8. Vancouver. 9. Baseball and softball. 10. US four times.