Japanese School Clubs

One of the fun things about going to middle school is joining and participating in a club. Clubs generally revolve around a sport or cultural activity; their activities are largely organized by the students themselves.

There are clubs for such sports as baseball, basketball, soccer, swimming, tennis, table tennis, badminton, and volleyball. Clubs for cultural activities include those for the visual arts, flower arrangement, tea ceremony, brass band, and drama.

Almost all students join one club or another. According to a survey done in 2000 of Japanese students, 34.5 percent of high school students join sports clubs, 24.5 percent humanities-related and other clubs, and 1.4 percent both kinds, while 39.4 percent do not take part in any school clubs.

Clubs usually meet after school, though some sports clubs require students to gather on weekends to participate in tournaments or have games with teams from neighboring schools. Each club determines which days of the week it will hold practice or training sessions. Most clubs practice for two or three hours after school, though a few opt for morning sessions (called asa-ren ). In sports and athletics clubs, practice matches and official matches are held on weekends and holidays. During summer vacation, some clubs hold training camps (about a week long) or other intensive practice sessions. Training camps may consist of overnight stays at the school or trips to summer retreats or other facilities equipped for the particular club's activities.

Whilst a teacher might oversee a club, most of the club meetings, practices and activities are organised by the students – sometimes the teacher doesn’t even supervise. While the atmosphere of Japanese school clubs varies from club to club, there persists a traditional image, particularly in strict sports clubs, of senpai (seniors) instructing their kohai (juniors). For example first-year students often have a long initiation period of basic training, performing basic tasks such as gathering up balls and generally learning the ropes. These days, however, this "rank" style of social interaction is dying out, and school clubs are becoming more relaxed places for making friends with students from other grades and meeting people who will offer various kinds of advice and guidance. Clubs also provide opportunities for students to learn about social interaction in general.

Cultural clubs hold exhibitions, performances, and concerts during the school's cultural festival, usually held in autumn.

As soon as a new school year starts, clubs begin advertising for new members. They put up posters around the school and try to persuade nonmembers to join. For students who have just entered the school, the wide range of choices can be bewildering. So a few days after the entrance ceremony, a gathering is held where the activities and aims of the various clubs are explained.

In middle school, seventh graders gather in the school gym and listen to eighth and ninth graders explain what the club does. Those in sports clubs may talk about a recent game or describe what practices are like.

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Here is a list of the most popular clubs that Japanese students choose to be members of:

(Sound out the katakana ones using a katakana chart and guess their meaning)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. バレーボール \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. バスケットボール \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. テニス \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. きゅうどう Japanese archery
5. やきゅう Baseball
 | 1. バドミントン \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. サッカー \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. りくじょう Track and field
4. じゅうどう Judo
5. すいえい Swimming
 |

Sound out these words and match them to their meaning with a straight line

こうはい morning practice/training

せんぱい juniors

あされん seniors

Fill in the pie graph below with the correct labels using the information from the third paragraph.

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No answer 0.2%

Do both kinds of club activities 1.4%

34.5%

24.5%

39.4%