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Kanji of the year

The **kanji of the year** (今年の漢字 *Kotoshi no kanji*) is a Japanese character chosen by the Japanese Kanji Proficiency Society (財団法人日本漢字能力検定協会 *Zaidan hōjin Nihon Kanji Nōryoku kentei kyōkai*) through a national ballot in Japan, starting in 1995. The character with the most votes, selected to represent the events of that year, is announced in a ceremony on December 12 (Kanji Day) at Kiyomizu Temple.

Year	Kanji	Readings	Meanings	Events
1995	<u>震</u> ^[1]	shin furu-u	quake	The Great Hanshin–Awaji earthquake and growing feelings of unease caused by the sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway.
1996	<u>食</u>	shoku ku-u	food eat	Multiple outbreaks of food poisoning due to <u>E. coli O157</u> occur, affecting school lunch programs.
1997	<u>倒</u>	tou tao-su	collapse knock down	The 1997 Asian financial crisis results in a wave of corporate bankruptcies and bank failures, while the Japanese team beats regional powerhouses in the Asia qualifying tournament to win a berth in the <u>1998 FIFA World Cup</u> .
1998	<u>毒</u>	doku	poison	Sixty-seven people are sickened and four die after eating poisoned curry, for which <u>Masumi Hayashi</u> is arrested. Similar incidents follow amid concerns about <u>dioxins</u> .
1999	<u>末</u>	matsu sue	end	The final year of the century, when the <u>Tokaimura nuclear accident</u> occurs.
2000	<u>金</u>	kin kane	gold	Judo athlete <u>Ryoko Tamura</u> (now <u>Ryoko Tani</u>) and marathon-runner <u>Naoko Takahashi</u> win gold at the <u>Sydney Olympics</u> , <u>Kim Dae Jung</u> and <u>Kim Jong-il</u> hold the first <u>North-South Korean presidential summit</u> , the deaths of centenarian twin sisters <u>Kin-san</u> and <u>Gin-san</u> (whose names sound like "gold" and "silver"), and the introduction of the <u>¥2,000 note</u> .
2001	<u>戦</u>	sen tataka-u	battle	The <u>September 11, 2001 attacks</u> , the <u>U.S. war in Afghanistan</u> , and the <u>global recession</u> .
2002	<u>帰</u>	ki kae-ru	return	Japan and North Korea <u>begin talks</u> and five Japanese citizens <u>kidnapped by North Korea</u> return to Japan.
2003	<u>虎</u>	ko tora	tiger	The <u>Hanshin Tigers</u> win the Central League pennant for the first time in 18 years and the involvement of the <u>Japan Self-Defense Force</u> in the <u>Iraq War</u> , which some equated to "stepping on a tiger's tail" (虎の尾を踏む).
2004	<u>災</u>	sai wazawa-i	disaster	The <u>Chūetsu earthquake</u> , <u>Typhoon Tokage</u> wrecks great damages upon landfall, the accident at the <u>Mihama Nuclear Power Plant</u> , and scandal at <u>Mitsubishi Motors</u> involving the cover-up of known defects.
2005	<u>愛</u>	ai ito-shii	love	<u>Expo 2005</u> is held in <u>Aichi</u> , <u>Princess Nori</u> marries <u>Yoshiki Kuroda</u> , and table tennis athlete <u>Ai Fukuhara</u> plays in China, as well as a spate of <u>child-by-parent</u> and <u>parent-by-child</u> murders.
2006	<u>命</u>	mei inochi	life	Prince <u>Hisahito of Akishino</u> is born, while feelings of uncertainty about life arise from <u>hit and run accidents</u> due to driving under the influence, suicide due to bullying, and the notable suicide of a member of the <u>Imperial Guard</u> .
2007			deception	

	<u>偽</u>	gi nise		A series of food labeling scandals in which expired products were relabeled and sold, problems over political funds and faulty pension records, and allegations of <u>copyright infringement at the Beijing Shijingshan Amusement Park</u> .
2008	<u>変</u>	hen kawa-ru	change	Changing of the <u>Japanese prime minister</u> , <u>Barack Obama winning the American presidency</u> using the slogan " <u>change</u> ", <u>economical and ecological changes around the world</u> .
2009	<u>新</u>	shin atara-shii	new	The <u>Democratic Party of Japan is swept into power by lower house elections to end half a century of LDP dominance</u> , the <u>worldwide outbreak of swine flu (known as <i>Shin-gata influenza</i>)</u> , and <u>Ichiro Suzuki sets a new MLB record with nine consecutive seasons with 200 hits</u> . ^[2]
2010	<u>暑</u>	sho atsu-i	hot	Record <u>heatwaves affecting both people's livelihoods and the natural environment</u> and the <u>Chilean mine collapse trapped about 700 meters underground in a hot, humid mine</u> .
2011	<u>絆</u> ^[3]	han kizuna	bonds	The <u>Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami occurs</u> , with <u>people across Japan rediscovering the importance of their bonds with family and friends</u> and <u>Japan's women's national football team, <i>Nadeshiko Japan</i>, wins the 2011 FIFA Women's World Cup</u> , a result of <u>confidence and teamwork among its members</u> . ^[4]
2012	<u>金</u>	kin kane	gold	Several medals are won at the <u>2012 London Olympics</u> , <u>Shinya Yamanaka wins a Nobel Prize</u> , and a <u>solar eclipse is observed for the first time in Japan in 932 years</u> , amid concerns such as <u>consumption tax and welfare</u> (" <u>金</u> " is also the first kanji to be selected more than once).
2013	<u>輪</u>	rin wa	wheel ring	Successful bid to host the <u>2020 Summer Olympics</u> . (the original Japanese word for "Olympics" is 五輪, literally meaning "five rings")
2014	<u>税</u>	zei mitsugi	tax	Social discussion and <u>additional expense tax in Japan</u> . (VAT switching from 5% to 8%)
2015	<u>安</u> ^[5]	an yasu	safety	Safety (<u>安全</u>) issues concerning <u>explosion in Yasukuni Shrine</u> , <u>terrorist attack on Paris</u> , and the public outcry at the new <u>State Secrecy Law</u> devised by prime minister <u>Shinzo Abe</u> (<u>安倍晋三</u>)
2016	<u>金</u> ^[6]	kin kane	gold	High number of gold medals won at the <u>2016 Rio Olympics</u> , the shift to <u>minus interest</u> ("interest rate" is "kinri" in Japanese), <u>Trump's U.S. presidential election victory</u> ("blonde hair" is "kinpatsu"), and <u>Piko Taro</u> , singer of 'PPAP', who's known for wearing a <u>gold-colored animal print outfit</u> . (This is the third time this kanji has taken this honor.)
2017		hoku kita	north	

	北 ^[7]			North Korea's missile tests and nuclear test, the heavy rain in northern Kyushu, and the poor harvest of potatoes in Hokkaido.
2018	災 ^[8]	sai wazawa-i	disaster	The 2018 Osaka earthquake along with the heavy floods in southwestern Japan. This Kanji was also selected in 2004 as Kanji of the Year.
2019	令 ^[9]	rei ryou	order good	Japanese era name was changed into Reiwa (令和 <i>Reiwa</i> , lit. "good harmony"). As safety measures against the storm and downpour caused by Typhoon Faxai and Typhoon Hagibis in Kantō region, the government issued ("issuing order" is " <i>hatsurei</i> (発令)" in Japanese) evacuation orders.

See also

- Word of the year - Japan sponsors an annual word of the year contest called "U-Can New and Trendy Word Grand Prix" (U-Can shingo, ryūkōgo taishō) sponsored by Jiyu Kokuminsha.^[10]

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External links

- [Japanese Kanji Proficiency Society](https://web.archive.org/web/20061208100953/http://www.kanken.or.jp/event/index.html)
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