



Design Your Own Pictogram

Pictograms are simple, easy-to-understand symbols that help us find our way without needing written signs. They are especially useful when travelling, allowing people to navigate across language and cultural barriers.

Designers at the Nippon Design Center created the *Experience Japan Pictograms* as a visual guide for visitors to Japan, introducing everyday life, customs and cultures in a clear and engaging way.

Now it's your turn! Can you design a pictogram that represents something from your hometown or home country that you would like to share with others?

What you will need

- ☐ Grid template (Page 3)
- ☐ Pencil
- ☐ Black marker
- ☐ Rulers or stencils (optional, but helpful)

How to design your own pictogram

Step 1: Choose your subject

Pick something from your hometown or home country that you would like to share with people around the world. It could be from nature, a type of food, a mode of transport or landmark.



NATURE



LANDMARK



CULTURE



TRANSPORTATION



FOOD

Step 2: Read the tips from professional designers

Designers at the Nippon Design Center have shared some useful ideas below to help you make your pictograms clear and easy to understand.

Step 3: Sketch your ideas

Try drawing a few rough versions of your idea.

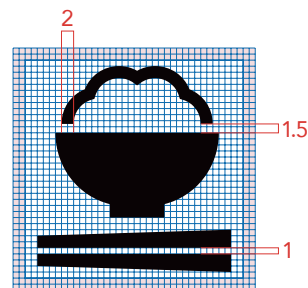
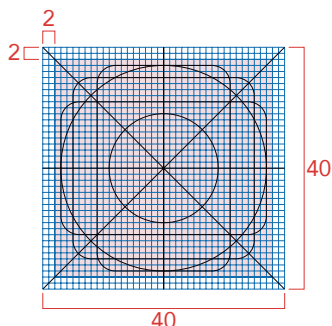
Step 4: Draw your final design on the grid

Use the printed grid template to draw your best version.

Step 5: Share your design

Share your completed designs with us by tagging @JapanHouseLdn on social media.

Design tips from the Nippon Design Center



1. Use a grid system

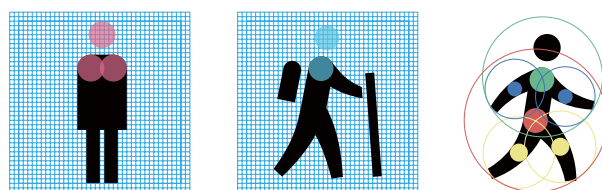
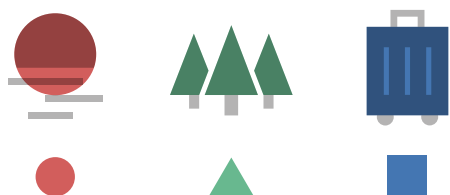
Many designers use a grid to keep their drawings neat and balanced. Each square in the grid is called a cell. The Experience Japan Pictograms use a 40 × 40 grid, with a blank margin of 2 cells left around the edges.

2. Set design rules

Establishing design rules for line thickness and the spacing between elements can help make you design clear and impactful.

Designers at Nippon Design Center use the following guidelines:

- Make shapes and lines 1.5 to 2 cells thick.
- Leave 1 to 2 cells of space between different parts of your design.



3. Combine basic shapes

Geometric shapes, such as circles, squares and triangles, can be combined to make more complex images. For example:

- A circle can be the sun.
- A rectangle can be a suitcase.
- Several triangles can become a forest.

4. Drawing people?

Use head size as a guide.

- A standing person is about six heads tall.
- Their shoulders are about two heads wide.
- If a person is looking sideways, use one head-width for the shoulder.

Frontal view



Side view



Aerial view



Onigiri



Mt Fuji



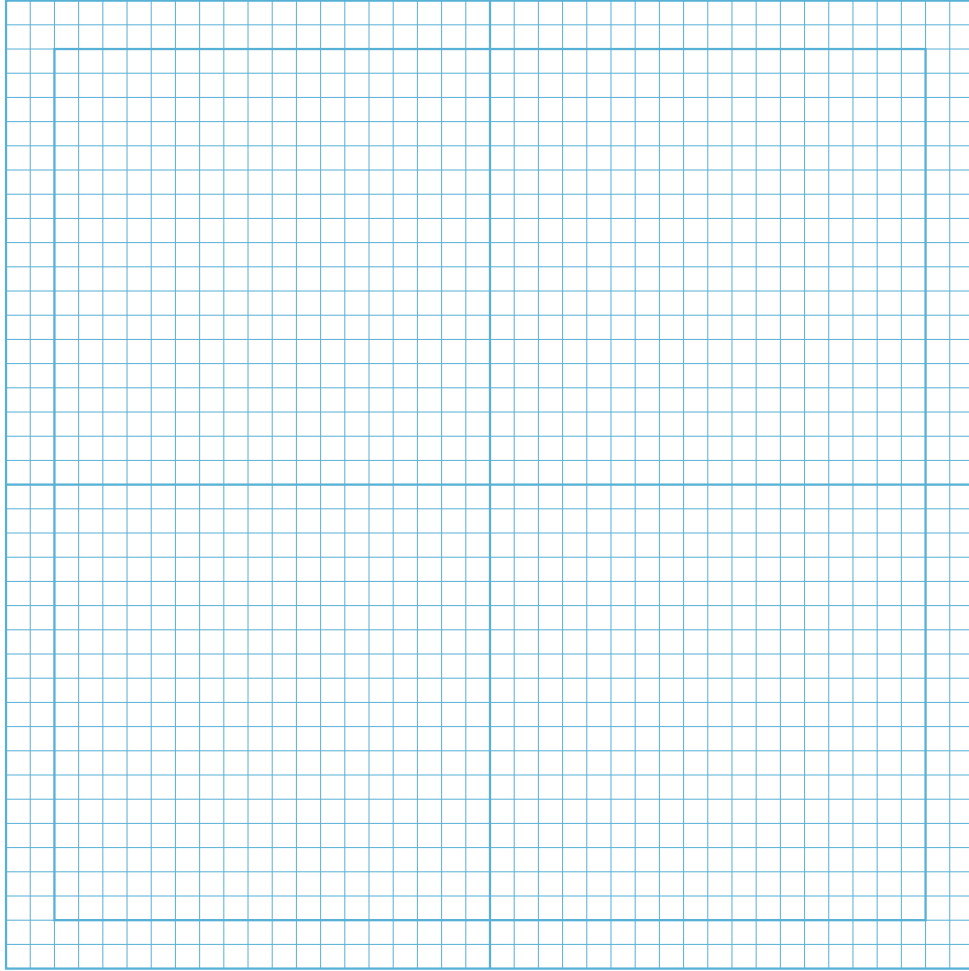
5. Choose your viewpoint

Objects can be shown from different angles: front view, side view or bird's-eye view. Think about which angle shows your subject most clearly, so that people can understand it at a glance.

6. To fill or not to fill

Filling shapes with solid black can add contrast and make your design stand out.

Try using both filled and outlined shapes to see what works best.



Name: _____

Title: _____

Theme: ☐ NATURE ☐ LANDMARK ☐ TRANSPORTATION ☐ CULTURE ☐ FOOD _____

Description: _____

