

Shuji

Joining a local Shuji (Japanese calligraphy) class a month after I arrived in Japan is one of the best decisions I have made during my time on JET. The benefits from joining go beyond just learning Shuji and being able to create beautiful artworks.

First, rather obviously, it helped me learn Japanese. It taught me how to write Japanese, helped me learn the meanings and readings of many kanji. The weekly classes helped my communication skills too, giving me a relaxed space to overcome my self-consciousness and practice my speaking skills with a small group of friendly people.

Less obviously, I learned a lot that I'm not sure I would have learned otherwise. Through casual conversation with my Sensei and other members I learned a lot about Japanese culture and society, as well as local knowledge such as the best places in my area to go for Sakura viewing, the best restaurants in town, when festivals are, local gossip etc.

Shuji class let me easily build friendships with Japanese people outside of school, and this has been hugely beneficial. The friendships I have made through Shuji have given me other people apart from my busy colleagues that I can turn to for information, advice and help.

After joining an activity, there will be times when you will be confused or frustrated. Don't be afraid to ask questions. Communicating, even if it's with hand gestures and google translate, will go a long way in solving any issues. As long as you try, I'm sure the teachers and other members will meet you halfway.

Trying something new and joining a class, especially if you don't know a lot of Japanese, can be daunting, but I guarantee the nerves won't last long. Take the plunge and you will learn new skills, gain new friendships and develop a firmer sense of community here.