

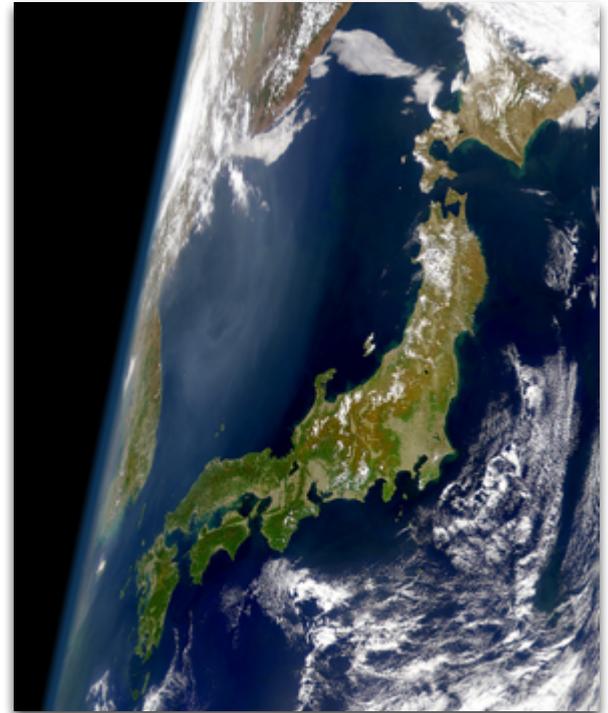
Earthquake Education in Japan

Japan is surrounded by sea, and it is situated at the boundary of several tectonic plates, on the 'Pacific Ring of Fire'.

This means that has always had a lot of earthquakes, many which are very strong and dangerous.

People in Japan work hard to teach children how to react to and how to protect themselves when an earthquake strikes.

In Japan, earthquake education is done with the idea that an earthquake could occur at any time, and to prepare the students for any time that an earthquake might hit. Lessons about earthquake preparedness is part of the official Curriculum for students of all ages. Students learn relevant knowledge and take part in regular drills. Read the table below to see what students learn about earthquakes at each school age.



Japan is made up of several large islands, as seen in this satellite image from 1999.
Image Credit: SeaWiFS Project, NASA/Goddard Space Flight Center, and ORBIMAGE

Stage	Age	Example of lessons in curriculum
Elementary	7-12	Science - Earth changes driven by volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and floods
Lower Secondary	13-15	Science - Characteristics of volcanic eruptions and earthquakes Health and physical education - Injury prevention and first aid in times of disaster
Upper Secondary	16-18	Science - Mechanism of volcanic eruptions and earthquakes Home economics - Cooking and living in times of disaster Health and physical education - First aid training in a time of disaster



In schools in Japan, earthquake drills are held once a month.



*"Cover! Hold!"—earthquake drills in Japanese schools
Image Credit: [Japansense](#)*

When the earthquake alarm goes off students in the classroom must get under their desks, head first, and to hold on to the desk legs until the quake is over.

Then the teacher leads the evacuation, and checks the class register to make sure everybody is there and safe. If students are out in the schoolyard during a drill they are instructed to gather in the middle of an open space, away from any buildings. In schools with three storeys, older students may also practice using emergency chutes to quickly get to the ground.

There is always cooperation between schools and local fire departments, or sometimes Disaster Prevention Experience-Learning Facilities. Many local fire departments have developed earthquake-simulation devices for children to experience earthquakes and practice drills in. These are special rooms that can shake, like during a real earthquake.

If a big earthquake strikes during school hours, students will stay at school with their teachers until collected by an adult. This is because it might be dangerous for them to walk home by themselves, as they would normally. There might also be damage to their homes, meaning that their family has to stay somewhere else. Waiting at school to be collected is also part of the earthquake drills.



*The head cover usually is sewn by a parent, and is taken as an essential in their school bag
Image Credit: [Japansense](#)*



*Earthquake simulation by fire department
Image Credit: [Japansense](#)*

Many public elementary and secondary schools also serve as public emergency shelters right after an earthquake, for people who have lost their homes. Some of these schools can accommodate large number of people for as long as several months, while temporary housing is being built.

You can watch [this video](#) to see what an earthquake drill in a Japanese school is like.