



# Education and School Life

Short-answer questions: cleaning time in Japanese schools | Cambridge IGCSE ESL 0510/0511

## 1. Lead-in discussion

Talk with a partner before you read.

1. Who cleans classrooms in your school?
2. Should students help look after school buildings?
3. What tasks would be fair for students to do?
4. Can cleaning teach anything useful? Why, or why not?

### Exercise 1 at a glance

Read one factual text. Answers are in the text. Copy exact words and check the question carefully before choosing your answer.

## 2. Read for overall understanding

Read the text. Why is cleaning time considered part of school life in Japan?

### Cleaning Time in Japanese Schools

In many Japanese schools, students take part in a daily cleaning period. It is often called soji, or cleaning time. Instead of leaving every task to cleaning staff, students help look after the classrooms and shared spaces they use during the school day.

Cleaning time is usually short, but it is organised. Students may sweep floors, wipe desks, clean blackboards, empty bins or tidy corridors. In some schools, music or an announcement tells everyone when the cleaning period begins. Teachers often supervise rather than doing the tasks for the students.

The practice is not only about keeping buildings tidy. Many educators see it as part of character education. Students learn that shared spaces need care and that ordinary jobs are not shameful. They also practise cooperation because each person has a role in the group.

Cleaning can also change how students behave during the day. If learners know they will clean their own classroom later, they may be less likely to leave rubbish on the floor or damage desks. The routine connects behaviour with responsibility in a practical way.

The system is not exactly the same in every school. Some schools still employ staff for specialist or heavy cleaning, and students may not clean every area. Younger children may be given simple tasks, while older students can take more responsibility.

People outside Japan sometimes find the idea surprising. However, supporters argue that cleaning time teaches respect for the school environment. It also gives students a regular habit of noticing the spaces they share with others.

### 3. Strategy focus

#### Do not over-copy examples

If a question asks for one example, choose one clear item from the list. Do not copy the whole sentence unless it is needed.

### 4. Exam-style short-answer questions

Answer the questions using words from the text.

1. What do students help look after besides classrooms? [1]

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2. What may tell everyone that the cleaning period is beginning? [1]

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3. What do teachers often do during cleaning time? [1]

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4. What may students be less likely to leave on the floor? [1]

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5. Who may be given simple tasks? [1]

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6. According to the text, what are three things students can learn from cleaning time? [3]

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### 5. Vocabulary notebook

Underline five useful words or phrases. Check their meaning, then record them in your vocabulary notebook.

### 6. Follow-up tasks

1. Discussion: Should students help clean classrooms? Why, or why not?

2. Summary: Summarise cleaning time in about 50 words.

3. Creative task: Write a fair cleaning rota for one classroom.

4. Research: Find one school routine from another country.

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## 4. Exam-style short-answer questions

1. shared spaces
2. music or an announcement
3. supervise
4. rubbish
5. younger children
6. Any three from: shared spaces need care; ordinary jobs are not shameful; cooperation; responsibility; respect for the school environment; noticing the spaces they share.

## Notes for checking

1. Answers should be short and clearly based on the text.
2. Accept bracketed or optional wording if the meaning is clear.
3. For the final question, learners need three separate details.