

You could cook while on the toilet: a night in one of Tokyo's micro-apartments

Level 1: Elementary / Pre-Intermediate – Teacher's notes

Article summary: The article explores micro-apartments in Japan as the answer to rising rents. The layout and contents of a model flat are described as experienced during the writer's 24-hour stay.

Time: 90 minutes (including research time)

Skills: Reading, Speaking

Language focus: Modals *can* and *could*

Materials needed: One copy of the worksheet per student

1. Warmer

- This activity aims to have students reflect on the things they 'can't live without' and discuss their answers in pairs or small groups. You can note down emergent language related to the theme on the board.
- Check understanding of 32m^2 by drawing a square and asking students how many metres each side would be (e.g., $6\text{m} \times 5.3\text{m}$). Ask them to answer the question in pairs or small groups. This aims to introduce the topic of micro-apartments and engage students in the case.

2. Key words

- Ask students to do the exercise individually and compare their answers in pairs or small groups. Alternatively, divide the class into two groups and ask each group to complete half of the items; regroup students and have them share the answers before checking with the whole class.

Use questions to check understanding. Some sample questions:

- If I have \$100 and the hotel costs \$150, can I *afford* it?
- How many *square* metres is this room?
- How long is your *commute* to school/work?
- Are all the flats in your building *occupied*?
- Are we in a *rural* location?
- What is the most *fashionable* area in this town/city?

Key:

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. <i>kitchenette</i> | 6. <i>ideal</i> |
| 2. <i>afford</i> | 7. <i>occupied</i> |
| 3. <i>Square</i> | 8. <i>ladder</i> |
| 4. <i>fashionable</i> | 9. <i>rural</i> |
| 5. <i>location</i> | 10. <i>commute</i> |

- Ask students to work in pairs or small groups to complete the task. As an extension, you could ask students to choose three or four sentences and change them, so they are true for them.

Key:

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. <i>fashionable</i> | 6. <i>square</i> |
| 2. <i>ladder</i> | 7. <i>occupied</i> |
| 3. <i>kitchenette</i> | 8. <i>rural</i> |
| 4. <i>afford</i> | 9. <i>commute</i> |
| 5. <i>ideal</i> | |

3. Comprehension check

- Ask students to read the statements carefully and find the relevant information in the text. Ask them to compare their answers in pairs or small groups before checking answers with the whole class.

Key:

- | | |
|-------------|-------------|
| 1. <i>a</i> | 5. <i>b</i> |
| 2. <i>a</i> | 6. <i>a</i> |
| 3. <i>b</i> | 7. <i>b</i> |
| 4. <i>b</i> | 8. <i>a</i> |

4. Key language

- Have students try to reorder the words individually first and then scan the article to check their answers. Help students to notice the use of *could* and *can* and ask them what form of the verb follows these modals (simple form).

Key:

- You could cook while on the toilet.*
- From the door, you can see the whole flat.*
- They are a solution for young people.*
- Rents for micro-apartments can be only ¥50,000 a month.*

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- b. Ask students to work individually to complete the sentences and then share them in pairs. Elicit ideas from the whole class.

As an extension, encourage students to develop their own sentences using modals.

5. Discussion

- a. Allow students time to note down their ideas and encourage them to give reasons for their answers. Also, encourage them to try to use new vocabulary from the lesson in their discussion.

6. In your own words

- a. Ask students first to brainstorm ideas and make notes. Then allow them to work in pairs to come up with their designs (or to continue individually if they prefer).
- b. Go over functional language with the whole class. Put students into new groups of three or four and ask them to present their designs.

As an extension, you could ask students to select the best ideas from their group and create a final design collaboratively.