

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

Level 3: Advanced – 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

Skills: Reading, Speaking

Language focus: Passive voice

Materials needed: One copy of the worksheet per student

1. Warmer

- Have students reflect on the absolute bare essentials in a living space. Make sure that they only select the things they 'can't possibly live without'. Have students discuss their answers in pairs or small groups. You can note down emergent language related to the theme on the board.
- Ask students to answer the question in pairs or small groups. This activity 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 then compare their answers in pairs or small groups. As an extension, you can focus on pronunciation. For example, have students identify the weak and unstressed schwa vowels: cubicle, developer, occupancy, quarter, rental, tenant, tumble.

Key:

a.

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. <i>viewing</i> | 7. <i>tenant</i> |
| 2. <i>Quarters</i> | 8. <i>Occupancy</i> |
| 3. <i>cubicle</i> | 9. <i>top-and-tailing</i> |
| 4. <i>kitchenette</i> | 10. <i>tumble</i> |
| 5. <i>offset</i> | 11. <i>plummet</i> |
| 6. <i>developer</i> | 12. <i>compact</i> |

b.

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. <i>viewing</i> | 7. <i>cubicle</i> |
| 2. <i>tenants</i> | 8. <i>developer</i> |
| 3. <i>compact</i> | 9. <i>plummeted</i> |
| 4. <i>occupancy</i> | 10. <i>kitchenette</i> |
| 5. <i>top and tail</i> | 11. <i>tumbled</i> |
| 6. <i>offset</i> | |

3. Comprehension check

- Ask students to complete the task individually and then compare their answers in small groups before checking with the whole class. Encourage students to read the summary circling key words and then find the supporting information in the text.

Key:

- Shanti Casa*
- 1,500*
- commutes*
- walking or cycling*
- Quality of life*
- their careers*
- nine square*
- ladder*
- Reina Suzuki*

4. Key language

- Ask students to complete this activity in pairs.

Key:

- Almost every inch of living space can be seen from the door.*
 - Their cosy proportions are offset by white walls.*
 - 100 buildings have been opened in Tokyo by this real-estate developer.*
 - Quality of life is sacrificed for convenience and affordability.*
 - 98% of the micro-apartments are occupied.*
 - A planned dinner of instant ramen had to be abandoned.*
- Encourage students to use the previous sentences as a model to write sentences about their ideal living space. Ask students to share and peer edit their sentences in small groups.

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Key:

Answers will vary, but structures might include:

... can be seen from the...

... is painted / framed / enclosed / situated / built / used ...

5. Discussion

- a. Ask students to share their ideas in small groups. Elicit ideas from the whole class.

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 develop a final design collaboratively.