

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

Level 2: 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

Skills: Reading, Speaking

Language focus: Comparative and superlative forms

Materials needed: One copy of the worksheet per student

1. Warmer

- a. Have students reflect on the necessary things in a living space. Make sure that they only select the things they 'can't 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.
- b. 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

- a. Ask students to do the exercise individually and compare their answers in pairs or small groups. Alternatively, divide the class into two groups and get each group to work on half of the items; regroup students and have them share their answers.

Key:

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. <i>cubicle</i> | 8. <i>occupancy</i> |
| 2. <i>kitchenette</i> | 9. <i>cramped</i> |
| 3. <i>cosy</i> | 10. <i>tumble, tumbled</i> |
| 4. <i>real estate</i> | 11. <i>commute</i> |
| 5. <i>rental</i> | 12. <i>envision, envisioned</i> |
| 6. <i>boom</i> | |
| 7. <i>tenant, tenants</i> | |

3. Comprehension check

- a. Ask students to complete the task individually and then compare their answers in small groups before checking with the whole class.

Key:

1. *False. There are 1,500 micro-apartments in 100 buildings.*
2. *True*
3. *True*
4. *False. They have a 98% occupancy rate.*
5. *True*
6. *True*
7. *False. They are meant for one person.*
8. *False. They are in their 20s and 30s.*
9. *True*
10. *True*

4. Key language

- a. Students complete the sentences to match those in the text. In some cases, both the comparative adjective (*-er/more than*) and comparative phrase (*as . . . as*) are grammatically possible, but only one answer is correct based on the article.

Key:

1. *the shortest*
2. *as low as*
3. *lower than*
4. *more restful than*
5. *more expensive*
6. *bigger*

- b. Encourage students to use the previous sentences as a model to write questions. Check the first three questions before asking students to add two of their own. Elicit questions from the whole class to check their structure. Then ask students to discuss these questions in small groups.

Key:

1. *the smallest*
2. *better / best*
3. *the most important*

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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 develop 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.