

Koi Windsock

In Japan, families celebrate their sons by flying carp-shaped windsocks, or *koinobori*, which symbolize courage and success. With this activity, kids (boys and girls!) make their own windsock in the shape of a koi fish using a 2-liter soda bottle and some bright paint. Not only are you teaching your child about Japanese culture, you're showing you appreciate her, too!

What You Need:

- 2-liter soda bottle
- Sharp scissors or X-acto knife
- Stapler
- Acrylic paints in white and a few bright colors
- Paint brushes
- Toilet paper tube or paper towel tube trimmed to the size of a toilet paper tube
- Colored ribbons
- Twine or string



What You Do:

1. Start by carefully cutting off the spout and base from the bottle. The spout end of the bottle will be the fish's mouth, and the base end will form its tail.
2. Squeeze the bottom end of the bottle so it's flat. Carefully cut large notches out of each of the sides and the bottom of the bottle to create the shape of a tail (see photo for example).
3. Staple the tail together in three or four places to keep it flat.
4. Now that you have your basic fish shape cut out, your child can get creative decorating it. Start by painting a layer of white paint over the whole bottle to serve as a base coat.
5. Let your child choose a few bright colors for his koi fish, one main color and one or two secondary colors. Koi commonly come in orange, yellow, red, and blue, but any bright color is good.
6. Have him paint the bottle with his chosen colors, leaving patches of white showing through to help give the koi fish's scales and face definition as in the photo. Make sure to paint in its eyes, too!
7. Let the paint dry completely.
8. Once the paint is dry, cut a few lengths of ribbon and staple them to the koi's tail like streamers.
9. Punch a hole into each end of the toilet paper tube, making sure the holes are the same distance in from the edge on either side.
10. Thread your twine through the holes, leaving as much length as you need for hanging before tying a knot.
11. Insert the toilet paper tube into the mouth of the bottle, then turn it so it rests at a perpendicular angle to the bottle so when you hold the bottle by the string, the tube doesn't fall out.
12. Now your child has his very own festive koinobori! Hang it up outside where the wind will catch it and watch as it floats and flaps in the breeze.