Shintoism: A Traditional Japanese Wedding

As in other cultures, in Japan dating and marriage are still taken seriously. Although many Japanese are Buddhists, and some are Christian or Muslim, most people will be married in a traditional Shinto wedding ceremony.

Before a Japanese wedding
- Until the middle of the 20th century, Japanese weddings were arranged by the parents of the bride and bridegroom, especially by the two fathers.
- Today, couples tend to arrange their own marriages after dating for a while.
- Once they have decided to marry each other, it is traditional for another couple to act as intermediaries between the young man and woman.
- Before the marriage, the bridegroom's family presents betrothal gifts to their prospective daughter-in-law. These may include tea, money, and the garments that she will wear at the wedding reception.

During a Japanese wedding
- In the past, rich Japanese brides would have been dressed in a splendid set of clothes called a junihitoe, made up of 12 brightly colored kimonos. Today this is worn only at imperial weddings.
- Modern Japanese brides still wear several layers of kimonos in the traditional Japanese marriage ceremony. One of the inner layers is a pure white kimono, while the outer one is a heavy, richly decorated one. They also wear an elaborate headdress.
- Bridegrooms wear a traditional black coat, bearing their family's emblem on certain parts of it. This matches the black kimonos, also bearing the family emblem, that the married female friends and relatives wear to the wedding reception.
- During the ceremony, the bride and bridegroom take three sips each of sake (hot rice wine) from small cups.
- After the ceremony, the bride and bridegroom change their clothes in preparation for the wedding reception. In western countries, they may dress in an evening gown and suit, respectively.
- The wedding guests are seated in a special arrangement during the reception, depending on how closely related they are to the bride and bridegroom.
- During the reception, the wedding guests tell funny stories about the newly married couple and drink to their health and good luck in their life together.
- Wedding gifts are presented to the newly married couple. These are wrapped and tied with special colored string, called mizuhiki. This string may be in combinations of silver and gold, red and gold, red and white, or crimson and white.

After a Japanese wedding
- After the wedding, the married couple leaves for the honeymoon.
- The friends and relatives of the bride and bridegroom return home from the reception with symbolic gifts, such as cakes.
- In some parts of Japan, the joining of the two families is symbolized by a presentation of three stitched pieces of cloth, called minofuroshiki, to the new wife. These become one of her most treasured possessions throughout her married life and are laid on her coffin after her death.

A bride and bridegroom, in traditional wedding dress, taking sips of sake during the marriage ceremony.