

Pachinko

In this lesson, you will learn about about a Japanese game that is similar to pinball. You will discuss the differences between gambling and gaming and practice procedural writing. You will also try to win some Japanese yen.

Pre-Reading

A. Warm-Up Questions

1. What kinds of games do you like to play?
2. Is gambling legal in your country?
3. What is the difference between gaming and gambling?



A National Obsession

Approximately 5% of the adult population in Japan is addicted to gambling. Or is it gaming?

B. Vocabulary Preview

Match the words on the left with the correct definitions on the right.

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| _____ 1. parlor | a) a small cylinder that sticks out from a surface |
| _____ 2. illegal | b) money or prizes given to a winner (usually when gambling) |
| _____ 3. gambling | c) a thing or action that a person becomes fixated on and can't stop doing |
| _____ 4. horizontal | d) to win a large prize |
| _____ 5. slot | e) arranged sideways like a horizon, opposite of vertical |
| _____ 6. insult | f) causing the feeling of wanting to do something over and over |
| _____ 7. obsession | g) a room or space where people go for a specific service or activity |
| _____ 8. payout | h) a trick or system that allows people to break rules without getting in trouble |
| _____ 9. addictive | i) disrespectful words or actions |
| _____ 10. peg | j) a narrow opening |
| _____ 11. hit the jackpot | k) playing a game of chance with the hope of receiving a profit |
| _____ 12. loophole | l) not allowed because of a law, opposite of legal |

Reading

A. The History of Pachinko

1. Pachinko is a Japanese game that is similar to pinball. It is played in pachinko **parlors** throughout Japan. Though gambling for cash is **illegal** in Japan, pachinko is legal. In Japan, pachinko is considered gaming, not **gambling**.
2. Game machines like pinball were used in Japan before World War II. Unlike games played on a **horizontal** surface, these were placed on vertical boards in shop corners. Players flipped coins into **slots** and received candies or cigarettes as prizes. The government decided that these games were an **insult** to the Imperial Family, whose faces were on the coins. Shop owners began to use metal balls instead. In 1939, when war broke out, the metal balls were needed for the war effort.
3. After the war, pachinko became popular again. The early game machines were simple in design and didn't use any electricity. Pachinko parlors began to open all over Japan's major cities. By the 1980s, the machines were much more technologically advanced. They had flashing lights and loud speakers to attract players and keep them interested. Pachinko became a national **obsession**.
4. Workers at a pachinko parlor encourage players to stay as long as possible. They offer food and beverages and help new players understand the machines. Machines display recent **payouts** to attract new players.
5. Though young people in Japan are more obsessed with online gaming these days, pachinko is still a multi-billion dollar industry. It attracts businessmen, housewives, and tourists. This highly **addictive** game contributes to debt, job loss, and divorce in Japan.

B. How to Play Pachinko

6. Playing pachinko is quite simple. First, choose the machine you want to use. Then put some money into the machine. Next, press a button to release a number of tiny silver balls. After that, turn a dial to the left or the right. This sends the pachinko balls through a course of **pegs**. Unlike pinball, many balls fall at once. If they fall into the right place, you get a big payout. Don't take your eyes away from the machine. If you do, you will probably lose. Keep playing until you **hit the jackpot**!

C. The Loophole

7. When you are finished playing for the day, it's time to collect your winnings. Your receipt shows how many balls you have won. Go to the exchange desk to claim prizes such as toys, electronics, or groceries. If you want money, ask for a special token. Exchange your token for cash at another location. Now you know the **loophole** that allows pachinko parlors to operate in Japan. Most pachinko parlors are owned by Koreans.

Comprehension

Read the statements below. Write T if the statement is true.

Write F if the statement is false, and correct the information in your notebook. Write NM if the fact is not mentioned.

- _____ 1. Gambling is legal in Japan.
- _____ 2. Playing pachinko helped Japanese people forget about the war.
- _____ 3. Pachinko is similar to pinball.
- _____ 4. People under the age of 18 are not allowed in pachinko parlors.
- _____ 5. Koreans own the majority of pachinko parlors in Japan.
- _____ 6. Pachinko prize money can be collected at a separate location.
- _____ 7. These days, coins are used in pachinko games instead of metal balls.
- _____ 8. Many people in Japan are addicted to playing pachinko.

Opinion

GAMING OR GAMBLING?

Place a checkmark (✓) beside anything that you think is gaming.

Place an x (✗) beside anything that you think is gambling.

Then compare your responses with a partner and have a discussion.

- _____ 1. kids playing online video games together
- _____ 2. Japanese businessmen spending half their paychecks on pachinko
- _____ 3. Japanese housewives playing pachinko while their kids are at school
- _____ 4. playing slots at a casino in Las Vegas
- _____ 5. playing billiards/pool with friends
- _____ 6. playing darts in a tournament (the prize for the winner is cash)
- _____ 7. buying coins in an app on a tablet so that you can play a more advanced game
- _____ 8. playing poker with friends (the loser has to buy dinner for the winner)
- _____ 9. betting money on a horse race

Vocabulary Review

A. Complete the Sentences

Complete the sentences using vocabulary from page 1.
You may need to change the word forms.

1. Playing pachinko is a national _____ .
2. The balls travel through the _____ and land in a slot.
3. _____ is illegal in Japan. Pachinko is considered *gaming*.
4. It took four hours of playing pachinko before I finally hit the _____ .
5. Pachinko parlors are not allowed to hand out cash, but there is a _____ .
You can exchange special tokens for cash at another location.
6. Draw a _____ line in the center of your page.

B. Vocabulary Game

Assemble a die from the template provided on the next page. Get into small groups or pairs. Take turns rolling the die and following the instructions. Work your way down the word list. Give yourself a point each time you take a turn and answer correctly. Each point equals 100,000 yen. If you roll a 6 and answer correctly, you get double the points!

If you roll a...

1. Spell the word without looking at it.
2. Categorize the word by its part of speech (noun, verb, etc.) in the reading.
3. Think of a synonym, antonym, or related word.
4. Pronounce the word correctly.
5. Use the word in your own sentence.
6. Give a definition of the word in your own words.

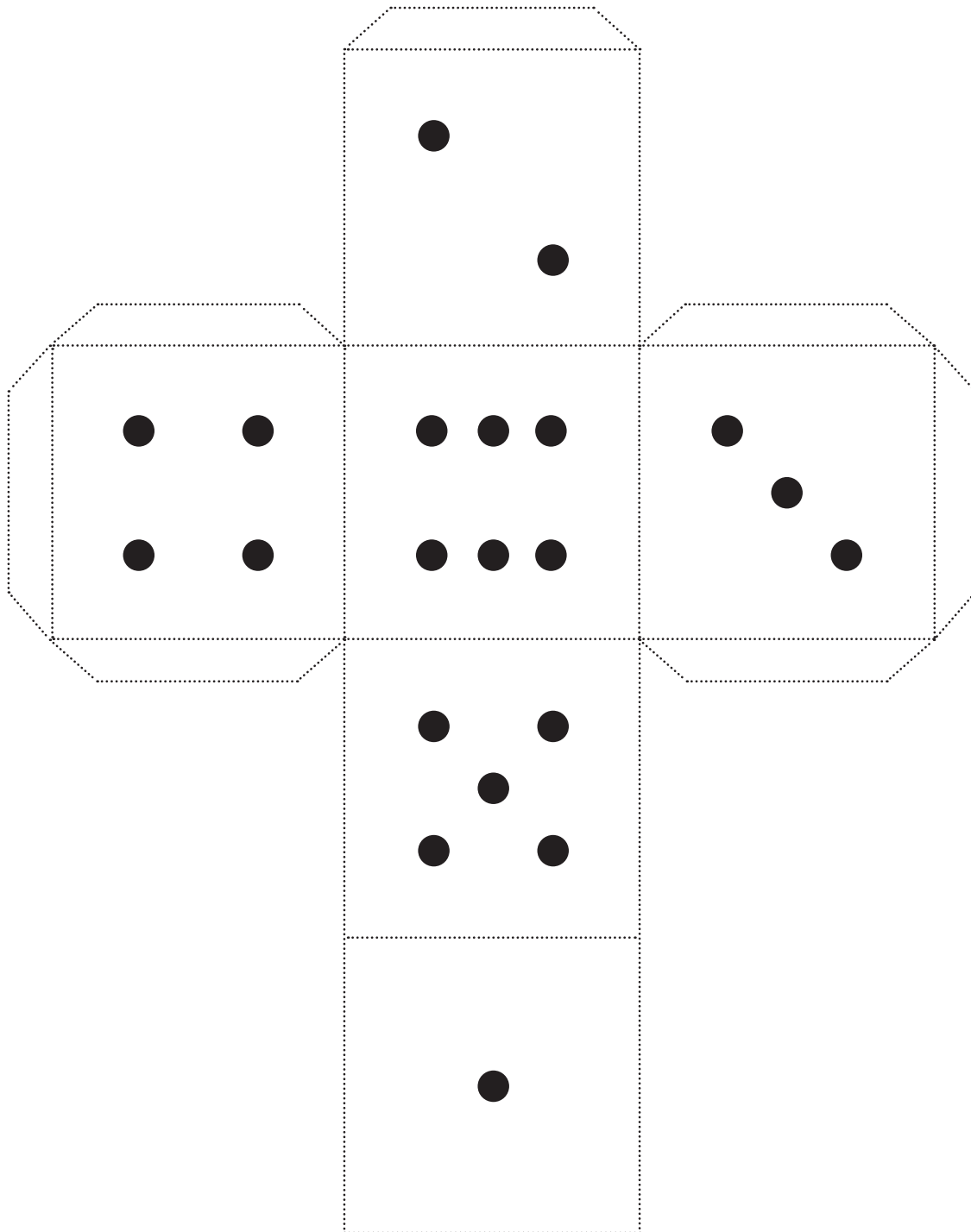
Example

Jin rolls first. She gets a 5. She has to use the first word in a sentence: *I went to a tattoo parlor*. Jin gets a point. Now it's Hiro's turn. He rolls a 2: *Illegal is a noun*. Hiro doesn't get a point, because Illegal is an adjective. Now it's Ana's turn. She rolls a 6. *Gambling is playing a game for money*. Ana gets two points! (200,000 yen)

Word List

- | | | | |
|--------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| • parlor | • payout | • pachinko | • token |
| • illegal | • addictive | • considered | • cigarettes |
| • gambling | • peg | • legal | • prize |
| • horizontal | • hit the | • metal | • vertical |
| • slot | • jackpot | • electronics | |
| • insult | • loophole | • coin | |
| • obsession | • national | • divorce | |

Make Your Own Die



Review the section titled **How to Play Pachinko** on page 2. Then write your own instructions for a game that you like to play. This can be a board game, a video game, a card game, or an outdoor activity or sport. You can also make up your own game. Use your notebook if you need more room.

- first
- second
- after that
- then
- next
- whenever
- if
- in order that
- for instance
- in the meantime
- to win
- finally

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.

1. Why do you think pachinko is addictive? What other games are addictive?
2. What are some of the similarities and differences between casinos and pachinko parlors?
3. How do you feel about the pachinko payout loophole?
4. Do you think Japan will legalize gambling for the 2020 Olympic Summer Games in Tokyo? Why, or why not?