



Set New Goals! – Ashley Prescod

Happy New Year! Now is the chance to restart and be refreshed. I love the new year because there is something about starting a brand-new year that always seems to motivate me.

In America, the New Year's holiday is a fun day where we all celebrate and party. There are parades in the streets and people discuss their New Year's resolutions.

A resolution is a goal that people create to either change or grow as a person. Some common resolutions that people make are to lose weight, make new friends, or travel.

Once we create our goals, we make sure that we do everything we can to make it happen that year. Sometimes we don't achieve our goals. Sometimes we get too busy or tired and forget our resolutions. But the new year is a great time to remind us that it's okay because we can try again.

Last year, my resolution was to travel and to eat less chips. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, I hadn't been able to travel as much or go to new places. I missed exploring the world! And now, amazingly enough, I am in Japan! (Although...I didn't eat less chips!)

As you begin this new year, what will your resolution be? Will you be more confident? Will you get good grades? Will you go to university? Or try something new and scary?

Whatever you do, always make sure you try to do your best. It's a new year and a new you.

New Year's Resolutions 2025!

- Eat more vegetables
- Exercise every day
- Get a new job
- Spend time with family
- Learn a new skill
- Study more

Midwest Nice – Katelyn Sondereker

For this Christmas and New Year's holiday, I went home to Ohio to spend time with my family. Ohio is in the Midwest region of the U.S. (アメリカ中西部), along with Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. The people who live in this area of the U.S. are known for being something called *Midwest nice*.

Midwest nice describes how kind, nice, and polite strangers (知らない人) are to each other. For example, in Ohio, people you don't know will always smile at you on the street, ask you how you are doing, hold open doors for you, and go out of their way to help you (わざわざ助けてくれる).

If your car is stuck in the snow (雪で立ち往生), someone will stop and help get you out. If you drop all of your groceries (食料品) on the ground, everyone nearby will stop what they are doing to help you pick them up. If someone bumps into you (あなたにぶつかる) accidentally, they will immediately apologize with "Ope, I'm so sorry!". Everyone tries to be kind and take care of each other, even if it is inconvenient. Not only that, but people are eager (熱心な) to help without wanting anything in return.

Because of this, there is a feeling of warmth and kindness between strangers that I feel in Ohio, and I haven't felt it anywhere else I have been. But something that is similar to Japanese culture is that people who are Midwest nice also want to avoid conflict (争いを避けたい). In Ohio, if a stranger does something that frustrates (イライラする) us, we usually don't get angry. Instead, when someone apologizes, we will just reply, "Oh, you're fine!" or "No worries!" because we don't want to make them feel bad.

While living in Japan, I have come to realize that the *Midwest nice* that I grew up with also exists here in Kumamoto. Even if strangers don't smile at me on the street or ask me how I am doing, I feel at home because the qualities of being kind, taking care of each other, and avoiding conflict are definitely here in Japan, too.



Winter Idioms!

What do you think these winter-related English phrases mean?

He made so many mistakes at his new job that his boss told him he is walking on thin ice.

She thought she wanted to marry him, but she suddenly got cold feet and stopped the wedding.

What does to walk on thin ice mean?

- A. to get used to something new
- B. to walk into an unfamiliar situation
- C. to be careful so that something bad doesn't happen
- D. to learn from your mistakes

What does to get cold feet mean?

- A. to get angry or upset
- B. to lose the confidence to do something
- C. to feel very cold and nervous
- D. to realize someone is not a nice person

Please try to use these phrases in your English conversations!

WINTER

Crossword Puzzle

The crossword puzzle grid is as follows:

- 1: Down (5 letters)
- 2: Down (5 letters)
- 3: Across (6 letters)
- 4: Across (8 letters)
- 5: Across (8 letters)
- 6: Across (3 letters)
- 7: Down (5 letters)
- 8: Across (6 letters)
- 9: Down (3 letters)
- 10: Across (8 letters)
- 11: Down (3 letters)
- 12: Across (8 letters)

Clue 11 is filled with the word "HOT COCOA".

Clue 12 is filled with the word "WINTER".

Illustrations include: a penguin (3), an ice skate (7), a snowman (2), a snowflake (12), a snow shovel (10), a mitten (5), a hot cocoa mug (11), a winter hat (6), a sled (9), a sweater (1), and a fireplace (8).