

# Kotohogu



## 賀 *kotohogu*

According to one theory, the character 賀 originally meant a ceremony in which farmers prayed for a good harvest. Over time, it evolved to take on the meaning of *kotohogu*—“to celebrate,” “to congratulate,” or “to express best wishes.” *Kotohogu* is a very old word and is rarely used today. The character is well known now by its more common reading: *ga*, which means “something joyous or worthy of celebration.”

For the Japanese, the New Year is a special celebration. At the end of the year, many Japanese do a thorough cleaning of the house to drive away misfortune and quietly welcome the new year with a fresh feeling. On New Year's Day, people all across Japan celebrate the day, and wherever you go you can hear people offering each other best wishes for the new year. Many of the words used on this occasion to express joy and happiness for the new year, include the character *ga* such as 年賀 (*nenga*), 賀正 (*gasho*), and 謹賀新年 (*kingashinnen*).

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