

Part 2

Back in the Age of

# Furoshiki

By Kikuchi Taiji

Photo: Ginza Kunoya



GINZA KUNOYA

### The Spirit of Wrapping

Wrapping and sending gifts in furoshiki is a deeply sensitive exercise of a uniquely Japanese expression to send a message that cannot be expressed by wrappings with paper/paper bags. Wrapping that expresses the feelings of the gift giver to the recipient without the need for words – that is the furoshiki.

The Japanese way in which a gift is carefully untied and unwrapped with all of the warmth and empathy involved the care taken with the gift, is unparalleled throughout the world. The gift-giving experience also, I hope, brings home again the rich sensibility and hospitality of the Japanese people.

### The Utility of Furoshiki

Furoshiki are useful for wrapping the entire gamut of articles – everything from round soccer ball and watermelon and heavy square objects like laptop computers and books to completely irregularly shaped items like dolls and bouquets, as well as wine bottles and barrels. Furoshiki can, of course, be used to wrap gift boxes of any shape. The owner of a store that sells bags once told me, “There is no purse or bag that is more practical or useful than a furoshiki.” A teacher also mentioned that, “These standard hard-shell student backpacks take up the same amount of space even when they are empty. When you take the textbooks out of a furoshiki and fold it up, though, it takes up no space at all.” And, out in the countryside, students are sometimes offered potatoes and cucumbers to take home with them after school. The students carrying the backpacks cannot fit these vegetables in their bags, whereas the students carrying their books wrapped in furoshiki simply say “Thank you” and run home happily... There are plenty of anecdotes that testify to the usefulness of furoshiki.

Take a single furoshiki. Below are instructions for creating just five of the many wrapping styles listed above. Follow the instructions given on the next page and try these styles for yourself. Those who do not have a furoshiki should substitute a handkerchief or scarf. It's so easy that it seems like magic.

### Traditional Furoshiki Wrapping Styles

1. Gift package
2. Watermelon / ball
3. Single bottle / two bottles
4. Book / laptop computer
5. Bag (to replace paper and plastic bags)

As described above, furoshiki can be considered a cultural treasure born of the traditional Japanese lifestyle. This treasure, though, was not necessarily conventionally a square of new cloth, and the originals were made of old kimono or patchworks of old clothes and scrap fabric, not a single seamless piece of cloth. This is a practical custom that has come into being as an efficient tool. In Japan, garments were not made by measuring out the amount needed first, but rather the cloth was woven from the outset in *ittan* units, the amount needed to create one kimono. The term *ittan* furoshiki refers to two, three or six *hagi* (an *ittan* is sewn into six sections). We encourage you to create patchworks of various fabrics at home to create your own furoshiki. These would also make the perfect handmade Christmas present.

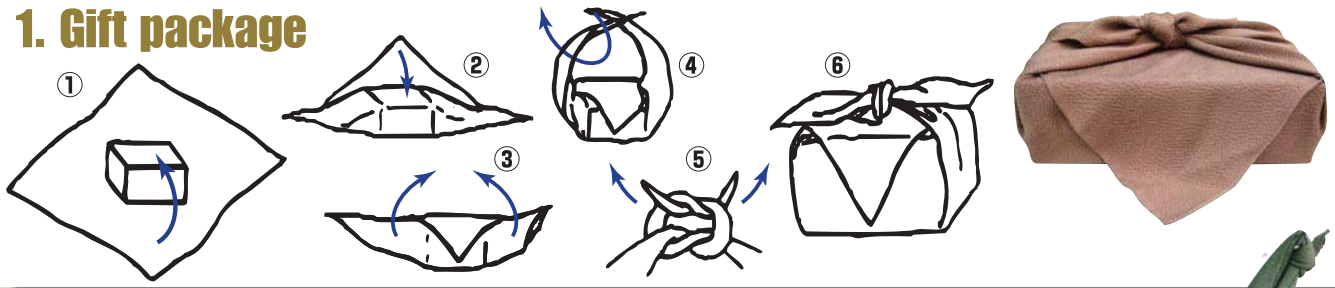
The fun possibilities are limitless – sew two furoshiki together to create a poncho, make them into curtains, or frame them for a decorative interior touch.

Moreover, today the ecology of the planet is a subject of great concern, and furoshiki, which can be used over and over in contrast to disposable paper and plastic bags, are back in favor thanks to their contribution to “reducing the waste of resources.”

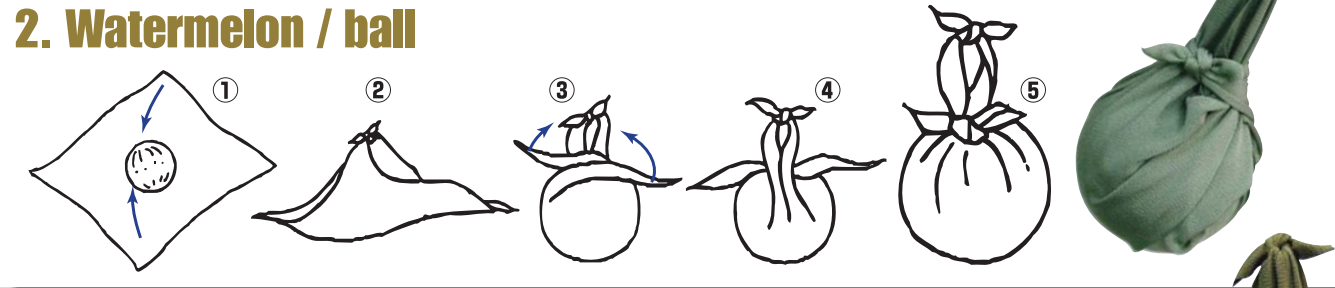
I myself am looking forward to the day when Japan's cultural asset, the furoshiki, serves to wrap the warm, beautiful spirit across the world together. **JS**

Kikuchi Taiji is a seventh-generation owner of Ginza Kunoya, a kimono accessory retailer founded in 1837. He is an ex-chairman of the Board of the Ginza Association and the Ginza Hyakuten Organization (selected 100 shops).

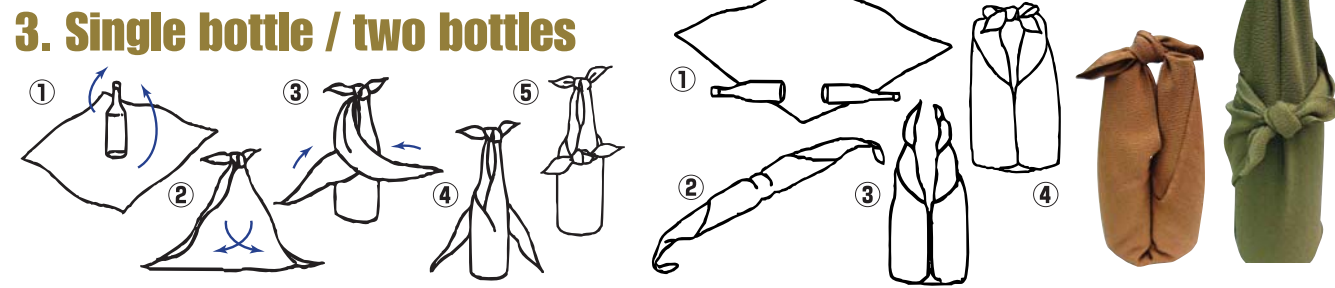
### 1. Gift package



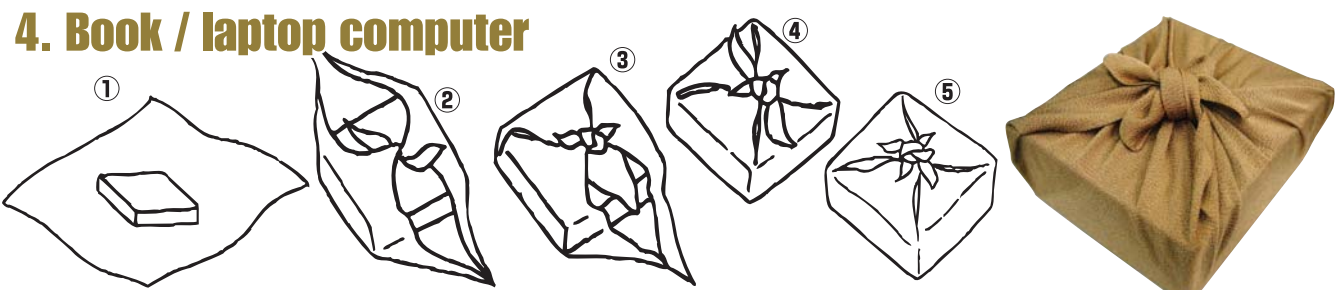
### 2. Watermelon / ball



### 3. Single bottle / two bottles



### 4. Book / laptop computer



### 5. Bag (to replace paper and plastic bags)



Photos: Ginza Kunoya