

UZAWA KOGEN

# Welcome to NIIGATA

A GUIDE TO HELP YOU DURING YOUR FIRST FEV WEEKS



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## Welcome and Good Luck

Welcome to Niigata, home to both the best rice and the best sake in Japan—and hopefully you will feel at home here too.

This guide has been compiled with the distilled knowledge of many a senpai ALT and updated by your Prefectural Advisors. While some of the information contained herein might be out of date, we hope that this guide serves to help you where other sources may be lacking.

*Remember: if in doubt, feel free to contact your supervisor, your PAs, and your RAs.* 

And if you have any questions, a large portion of the community is on the <u>Niiqata AJET Facebook</u> page and is always willing to help.

*We hope you enjoy your time here. Welcome to the Niigata Family!* 





# Getting Started

## **Checklists**

These checklists have been produced with the aim of making things easier for Supervisors, ALTs, and JTEs/HRTs. Many ALTs may be recent graduates with little teaching experience or unfamiliar with the Japanese school system and culture. Here are some tips that will hopefully get you on the right track.

## **First Week**

These lists are aimed at supervisors, ALTs, and JTEs/HRTs, to help them better understand how the ALT can begin to feel more comfortable and prepared in the beginning stages of their new lifestyle.

## <u>Supervisor</u>

- [On the first day] Help the ALT to do any shopping they need, and help them settle in.
- Introduce the ALT to all of their schools.
- Help the ALT set up/get:
  - A bank account + cash card.
  - A Japanese credit card (if desired).
  - A phone.
  - Internet.
  - Insurance (house, car, etc.)

## Supervisors should ensure that the ALT knows how to:

• Pay for things like rent, water, sewage, gas, electricity, internet, phone, insurance, etc. If possible, help them to set up automatic payments.



- Use the appliances in their apartment, like air-con, washing machine, TV, heater, gas stove, rice cooker, shower, hot water, etc.
- $\circ$   $\,$  Sort and dispose of the trash. A trash schedule is useful.
- Get to all their schools.

## The supervisor should, if available, give the ALT:

- $\circ$  A schedule for where they should go the next few weeks, and what they will need.
- A yearly school schedule, with important dates (such as national holidays, sports days, culture festivals, and graduation) highlighted.
- A map of their town/city, with important places (their apartment, the city hall, the supermarket, etc.) highlighted.
- A translated train timetable.
- A copy of all their textbooks.
- A form of contact- you should also share your email address, and personal & work phone numbers so they can contact you in case of illness or emergencies.

## ALT

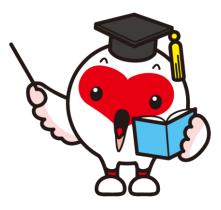
- Read/go through:
- The 'Successor's Guide' your predecessor left you.
- Any teaching materials your predecessor left you.
- Your school textbooks.
- Get your self-introduction down.
- Find somebody (supervisor, RA, co-worker) who can help you to set things up (like a bank account, phone, internet, etc.)
- o Get to know your area, such as schools, shops, train stations, etc.
- Decide if you would like to rent a car. Speak to your supervisor or RA about local dealers and the process involved.
- Ask your supervisors, co-workers, RAs, and other ALTs many questions.



• Make your home comfortable.

## JTE (Japanese Teacher of English) / HRT (Home Room Teacher)

- $\circ$   $\;$  Introduce the ALT to the other teachers & staff.
- Explain a typical school day to the ALT.
- Let the ALT know where they will eat lunch on their visit. If they are to eat with a class, let them know if they should wait in the teachers' room or go to the classroom themselves.
- Show the ALT:
- Around the school.
- How to use the photocopier & other equipment.
- Where supplies are kept.
- Where they can park.
- Where they can put their coat or change clothes.
- Give the ALT:
- A translated copy of the school timetable (lesson times, lunchtime, etc.)
- A translated office seating plan (teachers' name, subject, and HR class).
- Your email address and/or phone number(s) so they can contact you about lesson plans and in case of illness or emergencies.
- Class lists, with kanji name + reading (*hiragana* or *rōmaji*).





## **Lesson Planning**

These lists are aimed at ALTs and JTEs, to help them understand how they can help each other prepare lessons and have a positive team-teaching experience.

## ALT

- [As soon as possible] Have a meeting with your JTE/HRT about the goals and expectations of the lessons for the year. Talk about how you will share lesson planning.
- Ask for help, advice, or criticism if you need it.
- When you make a plan:
  - Use the textbooks to check students' knowledge of vocabulary.
  - Make it simple, and easy to explain and understand.
  - Show your JTE/HRT the plan as early as possible and go through it step by step.
  - Listen to the JTE/HRT's advice and make necessary changes.
- $\circ$  On the day of the lesson:
  - Confirm the schedule and lesson plan with the JTE/HRT.
  - Teach the lesson *with* the JTE/HRT.
  - Debrief with the JTE/HRT after the lesson and take notes on how the class/ activity went.

## JTE/HRT

- $\circ$  Give the ALT a lesson schedule as early as possible and notify them of any changes.
- Let the ALT know if any special events are happening (such as school photos, sports days, and lesson observations) in advance so that ALTs can prepare and dress appropriately.
- [As soon as possible] Have a meeting with the ALT about the goals and expectations of the lessons for the year. Talk about how you will share lesson planning.



- When you make a plan:
  - Show the ALT as early as possible and go through it step by step.
  - Make sure the ALT knows his/her role in the lesson and has time to prepare any materials they need.
- When the ALT makes a plan:
  - Tell them the aims and skills to be used in the lesson.
  - Help them make a plan if necessary.
  - Review the lesson plan and offer constructive criticism.
- $\circ$  On the day of the lesson:
  - Confirm the schedule and lesson plan with the ALT.
  - Teach the lesson *with* the ALT.
  - Debrief with the ALT after the lesson and offer constructive criticism.





## **Phones**

In recent years, it has become easier and more popular to buy a SIM card plan rather than sign a 2-year contract and buy a Japanese cell phone.

Buying a phone in Japan is a big decision. It is recommended that you think carefully about what type of phone you want, and what provider you want to use and that you do some prior research. One way to do this is to sit down with your supervisor, talk about the type of phone you want, and browse phones online before heading to the store. There is also the option to use Skype and pay for a Japanese phone number. Other online apps, specifically LINE, is widely used among the ALT community to communicate with supervisors and teachers.

There are two things you should keep in mind when phone shopping:

- **Do not be pressured into buying a certain phone**. If you want a smartphone but your supervisor is suggesting you buy an old-fashioned flip phone (*keitai*), or vice versa, do not feel obliged to go along with their suggestion. Simply tell your supervisor that it is not the one you want and ask if you can continue shopping. The final decision is yours, and yours alone.
- Do not feel pressured to sign up with a certain phone provider. Your supervisor will often take you to the nearest phone store or to the provider they got their phone from. Sometimes, the store you go to will not have the deal you are looking for or they may not carry the specific phone you want. If that is the case, don't worry! You are not obliged to buy a phone at a specific store and should not feel pressured to do so. Simply tell your supervisor that you want to shop around a bit more and ask them if you can visit another store before making your final decision.
- Please note that supervisors are not obligated to help you set up a phone plan; you may have to do this alone. If you run into this situation, please speak to your RA or other ALTs in your area for advice and assistance.



#### **Providers**

Japan's three main cell phone companies are **Docomo**, **AU**, and **SoftBank**. Recent years, however, have seen the rise of MVNOs (Mobile Virtual Network Operators) who lease network space from the main three companies and offer cheaper SIM-only options. An example of this is Sakura Mobile, which caters specifically to foreigners and does not require a credit card. There are other, even cheaper options available to those who have a credit card valid in Japan- however, the main 3 will likely appeal to those needing to purchase a new device.

#### Signing Up with Docomo, AU, or Softbank

Buying a phone can be a lengthy process and involves a large amount of high-level Japanese. It is therefore recommended that you clear a spot in your schedule for getting a phone and go with someone who speaks fluent Japanese. Be prepared to be at the shop for several hours – particularly if you are with a group of new ALTs, it may take the better part of a morning or afternoon.

## <u>Required Documents that are usually required- (please check the documents required online for each provider, before your visit)</u>

When you decide on the phone that is right for you, you will need to have the following things with you when signing up with one of the main three providers:

- o Bank account book
- Bank card or credit card
- Residence card
- o Passport
- Your work phone number or your supervisor's phone number
- Your home address



## **Pricing**

Here are three example pricing plans for popular phones with a **2-year contract** through Docomo, AU, and SoftBank. Prices may differ depending on any active provider promotions and any add-on services (insurance, etc.) you get. The cost of the phone itself can be paid in 24 monthly installments, as shown below, or you can pay for your phone in one lump sum. If you choose to pay for your phone monthly, you will still have to pay a portion of the fee upfront.

You will often be given a free 30-day trial of provider-specific applications which have monthly fees after the trial ends. When signing up for your phone, it is impossible to opt out of these services. However, after the initial 30-day free trial, you can go back to your provider and opt out. It helps to take the document from when you signed your contract which lists the optional applications you were signed up for. Make sure you remember to do this- it can save you a lot of money each month!

\*\*The following prices are examples from previous years – 2022 and may not be accurate. Please use this as an estimate and research providers on their official websites. \*\*



⊃age 🗕



The following is a sample of a 5G smartphone with a non-fixed phone plan. (Does not include tax)

Phone Services	Cost (¥)	
Contract Registration Fee		
(one-time only)	3300	
ISP/Texting	3.3/sending, free for receiving	
	22/30 sec	Flat rate per 30 seconds (Free among family on same plan)
Phone Plan*	1870	Kake-houdai (Unlimited calls)
		Gigalight Plan
	3465	Up to 1, 3, 5, 7 GB
	6765	(data speed is reduced after 7 GB usage limit is reached)
Data Plan**	5665	Gigaho Premier Plan
	7315	Up to 3 GB or up to 60 GB
Cost of Device	1492	Galaxy A53 5G
(paid monthly for 2 years,	2159	iPhone 12 64GB
may include a final fee to keep th phone)	le	

Docomo's new Data plans, as of 1st June 2019, no longer need to apply for a separate voice plan, which helps to reduce your costs; to compensate for this, new devices are more expensive. \*\* The monthly charge will depend on the amount of data you use. If you have the Gigalight plan and you use between 3 and 5 GB of data, you will be charged  $5,665 \neq$ , for example. Please consider which plan is best for you.

Page 1.



AU

The following is a sample of a 5G smartphone with a non-fixed phone plan. (Does not include tax)

Phone Services	Cost (¥)	
Subscription Processing Fee		
	2200	
(one-time only)	3300	
ISP/Texting		
	3.3/per 70 characters (domestic text)	
	22/per 30 sec	
		Flat rate for domestic calls
Phone Plan	880/month	
		Calls up to 5 minutes (domestic)
(Included with Data)	1980	Unlimited (domestic) calls
	3465	Adjust Plan Up to 1, 4, 7 GB
Data Plan*		(Pay as you use)
(data speed is reduced after the usage limit is reached)	6750	
	7238	Unlimited Plan (+30 GB
		tethering)
	1485	Galaxy A53 5G
Cost of Device	2625	iPhone 12 64GB
(paid monthly for 2 years)		

\*AU has also introduced similar fare changes to Docomo; you can examine all of this further in-depth on their website.



## <u>Softbank</u>

The following is a sample of a 5G smartphone with a non-fixed phone plan. (Does not include tax)

Phone Services	Cost		
Administrative Fee			
(one-time only)	3300		
ISP/Texting	3.3/sending, free for receiving		
	22/30 sec	Flat rate per 30 seconds (Free among family on same plan)	
	880/month		
Phone Plan		Calls up to 5 minutes (domestic)	
	1980	Unlimited (domestic) calls	
	2980		
Data Plan*	4980	Mini Fit Plan 0~3 GB	
(data speed is reduced after the usag	e		
limit is reached)	5480	ULTRA GIGA Monster () (50GB)	
Cost of Device	3570	Google Pixel 6 128GB	
(paid monthly for 2 years,	4650	iPhone 12 64GB	
may include the final fee to keep th	e		
phone)			
Monthly Total (not incl. texts/calls)	3000 ~ 1000	0+	



### **Additional Information**

Here are some additional things you should know about buying a phone in Japan:

- Buying a second-hand phone at a store like 2nd Street or Hard Off, then opening a data plan with that cell phone's provider, can be a great way to save money.
- Phone insurance in Japan is highly recommended. If you break your phone your provider will be able to help you with repairs and will give you a replacement phone (for a small fee) while you wait for yours to be fixed.
- Campaign deals are something you should keep an eye out for. For example, through Docomo, users under
   25 can receive a ¥ 500 per month discount.
- If you cancel your phone contract or leave Japan before it ends, you will have to pay a cancellation fee.
   This fee can be anywhere from ¥10,000 to ¥15,000 and does not include any outstanding balances.
- As mentioned above, a lot of the phone plans have changed this year. As such, other JETs may be on different plans with different pricing structures.
- The phones indicated in the table above do not represent the entire line of phones for you to choose from.
   You can always find something cheaper even in-store.

#### **MVNOs (Mobile virtual network operators)**

If you have an unlocked smartphone, it may be possible for you to purchase a SIM through an MVNO provider and avoid purchasing a new phone and being locked into a 2-year contract. MNVOs have been on the market for half a dozen years now and are generally (but not always) a cheaper option.

Both data only and data + voice SIMs are available – if you choose to go down this route, it is recommended that you purchase a data + voice SIM in order to have a local phone number for your school to contact you with, for use on all manner of official documents, and in case you need to be contacted in an emergency. Unlike data-only IMs, some data + voice SIMs do have a contractual obligation, but it is generally only 1 year. MVNOs may also require you to pay by credit card.

The easiest MNVO to sign up with, as mentioned above, is Sakura Mobile, which caters to the foreign crowd. (https://www.sakuramobile.jp/long-term/)



Other popular options include Ahamo, UQ mobile, Mineo, IIJmio, Biglobe, Line Mobile, Ymobile, and Rakuten Mobile.

**Disclaimer:** Please check whether your mobile phone will work on Japan's mobile networks. Generally speaking, most modern phones do, but it is up to you to check.







## **Internet**

The majority of new JETs arrive at their apartment with no internet connection. In some cases, it can take up to two weeks to get your internet set up, and many JETs either go without or use the Internet on their smartphones during that time. To make sure you get the Internet up and running as soon as possible, use this handy dandy guide to browse the options available to you. As with everything, it's recommended you ask your supervisor, a friendly JTE, or a fellow ALT to assist you if you have any questions.

#### **Internet Options**

Here are examples of different internet options to choose from:

- 1. HIKARI (Fiber Optics) Essentially the fastest option out there.
- 2. ADSL Normal speed internet, which is increasingly unavailable.
- 3. Portable Wi-fi One of the cheapest internet options available. It should be noted that many schools will not allow you to connect your personal laptop to their LAN or Wi-fi. This is a prefecture-wide rule and is not something you will be able to change or get around. In every school, there should be a shared computer that any member of staff can access. However, as with any communal item, you may find yourself waiting for other teachers to finish using it. This portable Wi-Fi option is therefore highly recommended if you would like to access the Internet on your personal laptop at your school.

## **Carrier Providers and Service Providers**

Unlike many countries, the provision of Internet service in Japan is divided into two parts – usually provided by two separate companies – both of which you need to be connected to in order to access the Internet. As a result, you will be billed for both services. If you'd like your bill to be combined, please remind whoever is helping you to request it for you. In some circumstances, your ICS will automatically combine both bills together.



- Internet Carrier Services provide the actual connection such as ADSL or fiber optics. In most cases, this will be NTT (<u>http://flets.com/english/).</u>
- Internet Service Providers, or ISP, provide the user ID and password as well as technical support and email service, etc.

## List of some Internet Service Providers

- ASAHI-NET (English friendly)
  - HIKARI: <u>http://asahi-net.jp/en/service/ftth/withflets/</u>
  - WI-MAX: <u>http://asahi-net.jp/en/service/mobile/wimax2plus/index.html</u>
- o OCN
- HIKARI: https://service.ocn.ne.jp/hikari/ocnhikari/
- MOBILE ONE: https://www.ntt.com/personal/services/mobile/one.html
- o @Nifty
- HIKARI: <u>http://setsuzoku.nifty.com/niftyhikari/</u>
- o BIGLOBE
- HIKARI: <u>http://join.biglobe.ne.jp/ftth/hikari/</u>
- WI-MAX: <u>http://join.biglobe.ne.jp/mobile/wimax/?i4c=253&i4a=517112</u>
- Ymobile -pocket wifi

There are even more service providers, and plenty of more detailed guides and comparisons on the internet to help you out. You can also bundle your home internet with your phone—which you may want to consider, as you can often get a cheaper deal.

TIP: \*\*Please choose a plan that works best for your situation and not what other ALTs are doing. Some ALTs have used only a portable WIFI device and asked schools to contact them via LINE or email. While others have set up home internet and data services. The choice is yours based on your expenses. \*\*



## **Household**

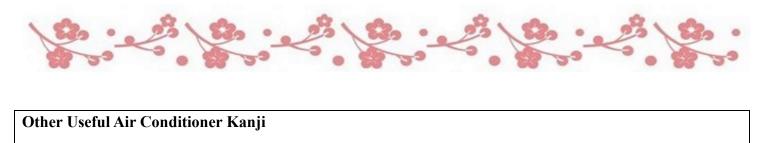
## **Translation of Appliances**

If you don't understand Japanese, using appliances in Japan can be pretty mind-boggling. On the following pages, you'll find some examples of Japanese appliances along with their English translations. If you find that the button or *kanji* on your appliance is not shown below, don't worry! There are various translation apps and websites available to help you. We recommend the Google Translate app, where you can either hand draw the *kanji* or snap a picture of it to find the English translation.

## **AIR CONDITIONER**



リセット=reset



# 冷房 = cooling 送風 = blast 暖 = heater 微 = fine 強 = strong 自動 = automatic 除湿 = dehumidifier

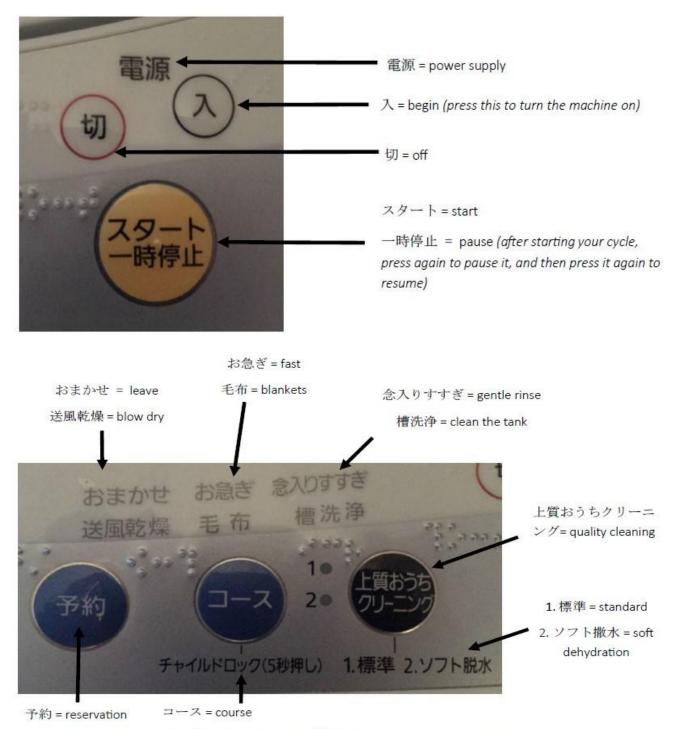


## **RICE COOKER**

切=off



WASHING MACHINE







風呂水 = bathwater 洗い = washing すすぎ1= rinse1

水量 = quantity of water



行程 = process flow 洗い = washing すすぎ = rinse 脱水 = dehydration





## **Understanding your Bills**

#### GAS, ELECTRICITY, WATER, and RENT

For many ALTs, all your utilities and thus your household bills (gas, electricity, water, rent) should be set up by your Contracting Organization during your first week. After opening a bank account, your supervisor should set up automatic payments (*jido furiko- mi*) for your gas, electricity, and water. This option takes away the stress of having to remember to pay your bills manually each month at the convenience store. Some of your supervisors may be new and may not think of offering this option to you, so please ask them to help you set up your bills so that they're paid via *jido furikomi*. Your rent, however, usually cannot be set as *jido furikomi*. There are special cases where it can be, but most ALTs will receive their rent bill by mail or from their base school. In this case, you must pay your rent at a designated bank. Some Contracting Organizations will take rent directly from your paycheck.

For some of your utilities, you will receive a small paper receipt in advance too - this will come through your mailbox. You do not need to do anything with this, it is just a notice of what your bill will be.

#### **INTERNET and ADSL**

For those unlucky ones whose houses aren't already equipped with the Internet, you will have to do some research with your supervisor and find a local company that can service your home area (see page 16 for more details on Internet options). When applying for internet, be sure to mark that you'd like to pay your bill via *jido furikomi*. If you fail to request this you will receive your bills through the mail and will have to pay them at a convenience store or bank.

For those who do not request *jido furikomi*, you will receive one or two bills, depending on whether your ICS has combined their bill with your ISPs bill, so look out for these in your mail! If you forget to pay one of these two bills, they will close your account and you'll have to re-open a totally new account, which will take another painstaking two weeks to process. So please pay your bills on time!

For more information on Internet, please check page 16.

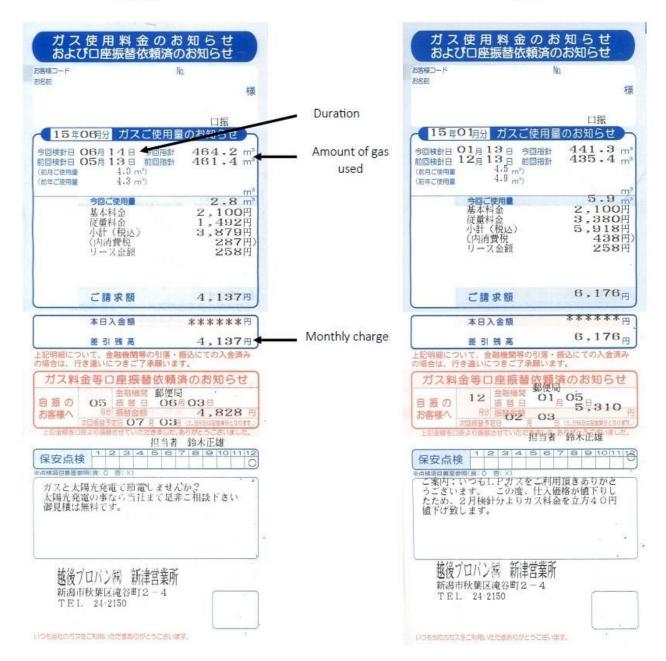


On the following pages are examples of what your bills and receipts might look like.

### GAS RECEIPT EXAMPLE

Summer

Winter



 $\mathsf{Page}23$ 



## **ELECTRICITY RECEIPT EXAMPLE**

#### Summer

#### Winter

いつも電気をご利用いただきありがとうこざいます. 電気ご使用量のお知らせ		いつも戦気をご利用いただきありがとうございます。
様。 お客さま番号 02-712-20-64-12-007150 ご使用場所		様 お客さま番号 02-712-20-64-12-007150 ご使用場所
契約種別·容量 従量電灯B 30724"7		契約種別·容量 従量電灯 B 3072ベ7
27年 5月分のご使用内容 (ご使用期間 4月 6日~ 5月 7日 ご使用日数 32日) ご使用量 90kWh ←	— kWh used	27年 2月分のご使用内容 (ご使用期間 1月 6日~ 2月 2日 ご使用日数 28日) ご使用量 260kWh
計器番号 903 当月指示数 2504 前月指示数 2414 差引使用量 90		計器番号     903       当月指示数     1995       前月指示数     1735       差引使用量     260
ご請求予定額 2,880円 ← □ 座振替予定日 5月15日 ←	— Monthly charge — Duration	ご請求予定額 7,290円 口座振替予定日 2月12日 早収期限日 2月23日
支払期日         6月8日           上記料金内訳※端数処理で一致しない場合もあります。         972円00銭           電力量料金(適用90kWh)         1,641円60銭           燃料費調整額         125円10銭           再工ネ発電賦課金         142円           (消費税等相当額再掲         213円)		上記料金内訳※端数処理で一致しない場合もあります。 基本料金 972円00銭 電力量料金(1~120kWh) 2,188円80銭 電力量料金(120kWh超過分) 3,481円80銭 燃料費調整額 452円40銭 馬工ス発電賦課金 195円 (消費税等相当額再掲 540円)
昨年 5月のご使用量・料金は、34日間のご使用 で、101kWh、3,089円でした。 燃料費調整単価 5月分 6月分 (1kWhあたり) 1円39銭 80銭 再工ネ発電賦課金単価 5月分 6月分 (1kWhあたり) 1円58銭 1円58銭 電気料金振替領収証		昨年 2月のご使用量・料金は、28日間のご使用 で、247km、6,524円でした。 燃料費調整単価 2月分 3月分 (1kmあたり) 1円74銭 1円93銭 再工ネ発電賦課金単価 2月分 3月分 (1kmあたり) 75銭 75銭 電気料金振替領収証(1月15日振替分) 27年 1月分
27年4月分       ご使用期間     3/5~4/5       契約種別     従量電灯B       ご使用量     177kWh       領収金額     5,036円		ご使用期間 12/4~1/5 契約種別 従量電灯B ご使用量 287kWh 領収金額 7,982円 運動当時(運場) 591円



## **INTERNET BILL EXAMPLE (SERVICE CARRIER / NTT)**

#### Front side

		(郵便区内特別)		17Tファイナンス株式会社 105-6791 港区芝浦1-2-1
		5 g	维行会社	2014年 3月17日第行 NTTファイナンス株式会社 宮城収納管理センター 0800-3330111 (無料)
		08595	- 8691 社用コード	山合市宮城野区原町6丁目 日本 第299時 仙台東統伊岡弘 第和 8 号 122002111010 08595 08594 00 D 31 011100 1 0 14030301D
D 下記に記載の料金をご請求させ、			いる場所でお支払いをお願いします。	( 1/ 2~-
ロ お 客 様 電 話 番 (BILLING NUMBER) お 客 様 番 (CUSTOMER NUMBE		年月 I OF ISSUE)	ご請求金額 (TOTAL AMOUNT)	お支払期限 (DUE DATE)
	2014 年	3月ご請求分	2,772円	2014年 3月31日(月)
* 【NTTファイナンスオ *** NTTグルー? NTT東日本分ご請求 (合計)	プ各社ご請求金額 ***	2. 1	<ul> <li>6 せ</li> <li>772円</li> <li>772円 詳細については、「</li> </ul>	こ請求内訳」をご覧ください。
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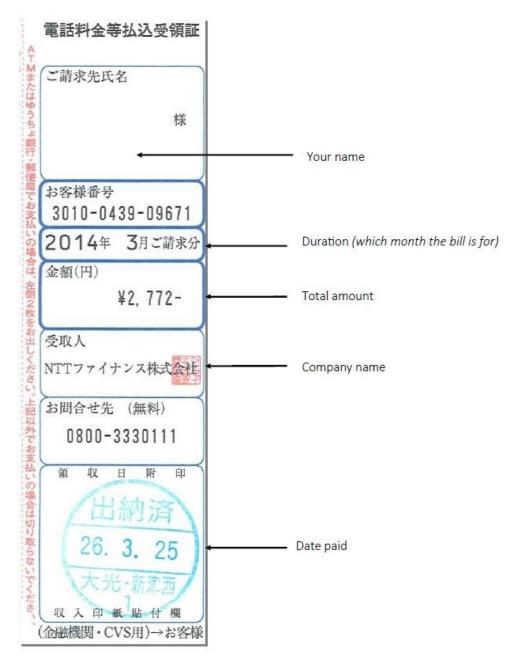
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After paying your bill at the convenience store, if it has a tear-away section, you will receive a receipt that looks like this:





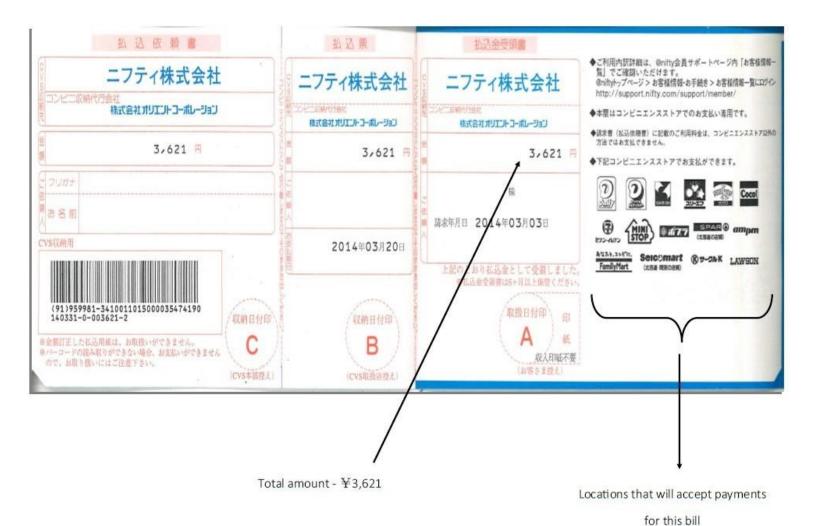


#### **INTERNET BILL (SERVICE PROVIDER)**

Some bills will have secret sections where you'll need to peel the front and back side away to reveal your bills. So, keep an eye out for those you have to peel open, and make sure you don't miss any sections!











 ${}^{\rm Page}28$ 



## How To Care For Your Apartment

Sections:

- 1. Tatami Mats (豊)
- 2. Futon (ふとん,布団)
- 3. Bathrooms
- 4. Kitchens
- 5. Summer
- 6. Winter



## 1. Tatami Mats

These mats, made of woven straw, are cool in summer and warm in winter. If these are in your apartment, you need to know how to look after them. Here is some basic information about tatami and some basic care instructions so that you can look after it.

## **Basic Information**

- ✓ Never wear footwear, including house slippers, on the tatami, as they are very delicate.
- ✓ Tatami is very expensive to replace. Each mat can cost between ¥10,000 and ¥20,000, and they must be replaced in sets. It is therefore very important that you maintain and care for them, so they last a long time.

## **Basic Care Instructions**

- ✓ At least once a week, vacuum and wipe the mats with a slightly damp cloth or with tatami wipes, following the grain of the mat.
- ✓ Don't use harsh chemicals to clean the mats. Instead, use a little dishwashing liquid or a mixture of water and distilled vinegar (howaito binegaa, ホワイトビネガー).
- Ensure the mats are kept dry and well-ventilated, as moisture can lead to permanent damage. If there is a spill, wipe it immediately and dry it with a fan or hairdryer.



- ✓ At least once a year, lift each mat individually and air it in sunlight. This helps to prevent mold (kabi, カ ビ) and tatami ticks (dani, ダニ).
- Tatami ticks are a type of mite that can live in tatami mats. They are invisible to the naked eye and thrive in moist places. If you are getting bites that aren't from mosquitoes, then you probably have tatami ticks.
   Special sprays with a needle-shaped nozzle attached for reaching below the tatami are sold at drug stores. After spraying your mats, you should leave the apartment for a few hours.

## 2. Futon

So, you were expecting a bed? Wrong! In Japan, apartments are usually small, and space is valuable, so a futon is usually preferable to a bed. Futon also breathes well and is temperature regulated — cool in summer, warm in winter. Additionally, a bed frame can damage tatami mats, so it's advised you opt for a futon if your apartment has one. Here are some top tips for caring for a futon.

- To ensure that your futon is kept in the best possible condition, put it away during the day to prevent the build-up of mold.
- $\checkmark$  Try to hang your futon outside in the sun to air it out at least once a week.

## 3. **Bathrooms**

Keeping your bath/shower room well-ventilated and dry is crucial to keeping mold and mildew at bay. If you have a mold or mildew problem, don't worry — Japanese cleaning chemicals are very strong. However, there are a couple of things to keep in mind regarding bathroom cleaning.

- ✓ It's advisable to wear gloves and/or a mask when using cleaning chemicals because they are highly potent!
- ✓ For less toxicity, you can use combinations of baking soda and vinegar.
- ✓ Drains may also become smelly and mold-ridden, so use special drain tablets or drain cleaners to prevent this from happening.



## 4. Kitchens

It's essential to keep your kitchen clean, especially in the summer months. It's important to make sure any organic waste is emptied and cleaned regularly, and that drains are kept clean. Otherwise, your apartment might start to smell really, really bad! Here are some notes to help you keep your kitchen clean and fresh.

- ✓ Most kitchens will have a small container with a mesh bag at the side of the sink to collect organic waste (namagomi, 生ゴミ), and a basket trap under the drain to collect smaller particles so they don't clog the plumbing. To prevent your kitchen from smelling, make sure you empty it and clean these regularly.
- ✓ The drains can get really filthy if they are not properly cleaned, so use drain tablets or drain cleaner. Drain cleaner comes in liquid (haisuikan senjō eki, 配水管洗浄液) and powder (haisuikan senjō zai, 配水管洗

浄剤) forms.

## 5. Summer

There aren't many places with summers as hot and humid as Japan. You may walk into your school building or apartment and see puddles of water on the floors or droplets on the walls. Yep, even inanimate objects sweat in a Japanese summer! Due to the high level of humidity, mold is the main issue at this time of the year. Everything, from your walls and ceilings to your futons and clothes, is susceptible to mold, so watch out! Here is some advice to help keep mold at bay.

- Proper ventilation prevents mold from growing. Keep some windows open when you go out each day and during your travels if you do not want to come back home to a mold infestation!
- ✓ For those with no bathroom fans, leave your window open a little bit (even in winter) to prevent the growth of mold and mildew.
- ✓ If you're worried about the humidity, or having problems, then you might want to think about dehumidifying your apartment. This can be accomplished in three ways:
  - Moisture collecting packets (shikketori, 湿気取り). These are relatively inexpensive and come in tubs, hangers, and sachets.



- Dehumidifiers (joshitsuki, 除湿器). While this machine is very convenient and has many uses, including drying your laundry, frequent use can increase your electricity bill.
- Your air conditioning unit may have a dehumidification setting. Look for a dehumidification button (除湿) on your AC remote, or the dehumidification setting under the options section of your AC remote (運転 → 除湿)

## 6. Winter

Unlike Western houses, most Japanese homes do not have central heating or insulation, which can mean your apartment will end up freezing cold. Usually, people only heat one room in winter to save money on energy costs, but it's up to you how you manage this. There are a few ways to keep warm during the winter months. Here are some of the options available.

### Adding Insulation

- ✓ Bubble-wrap doors and windows. Special sticky bubble wrap can be bought for this purpose, but the regular stuff works fine, too.
- ✓ Double up on curtains or use heavier curtains.
- $\checkmark$  Cover drafts in doors and windows.

## Heaters

- Electric space heaters. These have no fumes, are easily portable, and can be kept on all night. The downside is that they can lead to hefty electricity bills.
- ✓ Kerosene space heaters (sekiyu sutōbu, 石油ストブ). There are two types of kerosene heaters, ventilated and non-ventilated.
  - Non-ventilated heaters are cheaper, but there is a higher risk of carbon monoxide poisoning. Be sure to open your windows after a few hours, and never leave them on while you sleep.
  - Ventilated heaters are more expensive, but don't hold as much risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

It's still safer to turn it off before you sleep, though!



- Kerosene (tōyu, とうゆ, 灯油) can be purchased at gas stations and from home centers. You can buy it in containers or you can have it delivered to your home. If you prefer to have your tōyu delivered to your house, ask your JTEs for help.
- ✓ Air-conditioning units. Most AC units will be dual functioning, i.e. produce hot and cold air, although they are not necessarily the most economical option. It should be noted, though, that in areas where there is very heavy snowfall, it is recommended you avoid using your AC units because the snow may freeze over the external unit resulting in it simply circulating cold air. You will therefore end up with a huge bill at the end of the month and be none the warmer.

#### Other options for staying warm:

- ✓ Electric blankets (*denki mōfu*, 電気毛布). For safety reasons, it's best not to leave these turned on while you sleep or lay directly on them. It's best to cover it with another blanket or sheet so there is a protective layer between yourself and the electric blanket.
- ✓ Kotatsu (こたつ). A heated table with a blanket in between the tabletop and frame. This is possibly the best thing ever, and it's highly recommended you get one if your apartment doesn't come with one. However, these are not portable so once you get up from your *kotatsu*, you will be cold until you sit under it again. Hot water bottles (*yutanpo*, 湯たんぽ). Cheap, easy, safe, and portable.
- イ Adhesive heating strips (*hokkairo*, ほっかいろ / ホッカイロ) or *kairo* (かいろ / カイロ) for short. An adhesive heating strip to be worn on your body or underfoot. They should, however, never be attached directly to your skin as they can burn. *Kairo* are very effective and can be bought in large boxes or individually. There are also non-adhesive types to hold in your hands or place in your pockets to keep your extremities warm.
- ✓ Electric carpets. These heat the floors very well but aren't recommended to be your only source of warmth.
- ✓ Humidifiers. Moist air holds heat better and is a lot more comfortable in the dry winter months.

All the appliances and other items mentioned here may be purchased at home centers (Komeri, Nitori, Musashi), electronic stores (Shinden, Yamada Denki, K's Denki, Joshin), second-hand stores (Off House, Second Street), at convenience stores, or online (Amazon JP, Rakuten).



## **Cleaning Products**

If you can't read the instructions or aren't sure how to use the products mentioned here, please try double-checking with a helpful JTE/co-worker/supervisor.

English	Rōmaji	Kanji
ant spray	ari no sacchū-zai	アリの殺虫剤
baking soda	jūsō	重曹
bath tub cleaner	furo-yō senzai	風呂用洗剤
bleach	hyōhaku-zai	漂白剤
chlorine bleach	ensokei hyōhaku-zai	塩素系漂白剤
color safe (non-chlorine) bleach	sansokei hyōhaku-zai	酸素系漂白剤
carpet cleaner	jūtan-yō senzai	じゅうたん用洗剤
dehumidifying pellets	shikke tori	湿気取り
dish soap	shokki-yō ekitai senzai	食器用液体洗剤
drain cleaner	paipu kuriinā	パイプクリーナー
dani (tatami mite) killer	dani no kujo	ダニの駆除
fabric softener	jūnan shiage-zai	柔軟仕上げ剤
floor cleaner	fukisōji-yō senzai	拭き掃除用洗剤
floor wax	jūka-yō wakkusu	住家用ワックス
furniture polish	kagu no tsuya dashi	家具のつや出し
laundry soap	sentaku-yō sekken	洗濯用石けん
soap powder	kona sekken	粉石けん
detergent	gōsei senzai	合成洗剤
mildew cleaner	kabi kirā	カビキラー
moisture collectors	joshitsu-zai	除湿剤

Page 34



English	Rōmaji	Kanji
mosquito repellent (incense coil)	ka-tori senkō	蚊取り線香
mosquito repellent (electric)	denshi katori	電子蚊取り
moth repellent	bōchūzai	防虫剤
roach traps	gokiburi hoihoi	ゴキブリホイホイ
sink cleaner	nagashi-yō senzai	流し用洗剤
spot cleaner	bubun-arai-yō	部分洗い用
stain remover	shimi-nuki-yō senzai	しみ抜き用洗剤
toilet cleaner	toire-yō senzai	トイレ用洗剤
toilet cleaner, neutral type	toire-yō senzai chūsei	トイレ用洗剤中性
toilet cleaner, chlorine type	toire-yō senzai ensokei	トイレ用洗剤塩素系
toilet cleaner, acid type	toire-yō senzai sansei taipu	トイレ用洗剤酸性タイプ
toilet cleaner, antibacterial type	toire-yō senzai jokin senjō	トイレ用洗剤除菌洗浄
wool cleaner	ūru-yō senzai	ウール用洗剤
washing machine tub cleaner	sentaku-sō kuriinā	洗濯槽クリーナー





## <u>Trash in Japan</u>

The trash system in Japan is complex and confusing, which can make recycling and disposing of trash seem like an arduous and time-consuming process. To make the system easier and more straightforward, we've created this chapter to help you familiarize yourself with Japan's trash and recycling system. It's important to keep in mind that the following information may vary from region to region, so remember to double-check everything with the trash and recycling information provided for your region.

#### TRASH GUIDE

Also called 'moyasu gomi' Also ca

Also called 'moyasanai gomi'

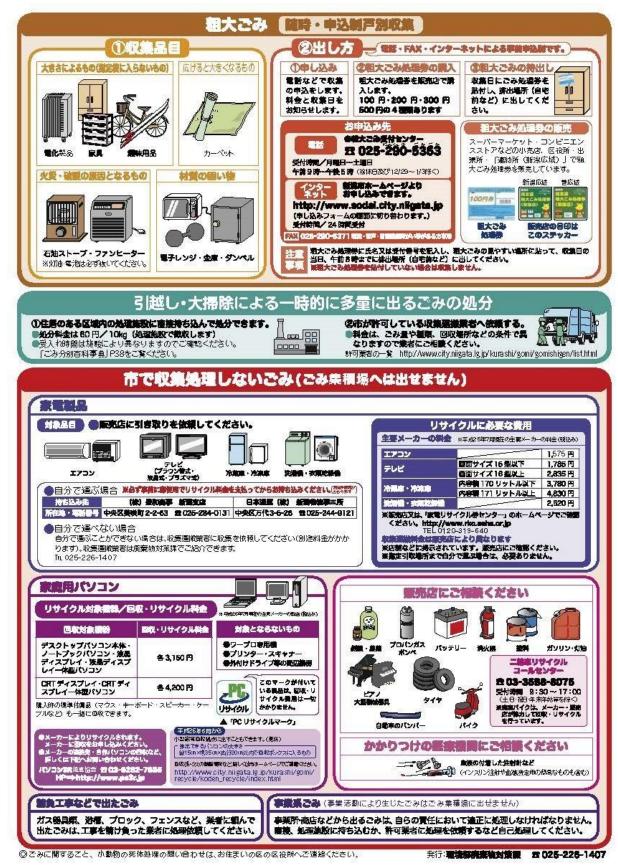


In general, there are three main categories for trash: burnable, non-burnable, and recyclable. In order to dispose of your trash quickly and efficiently, it's important to know what kind of items belong in each trash category. And that's where a trash guide comes in handy!

Each municipality has its own trash guide. These can be found at your local municipal office or town hall or will be posted to you sometime throughout the year. On the following pages is an example of the trash guide for the Nishi-ku area of Niigata City. Though yours may be different, it will most likely follow a similar layout.









One thing that's great about the trash guide is that it's color-coded and includes pictures. This is great if you don't understand Japanese or are in a rush in the morning.

The trash guide also includes the symbols associated with different categories of trash. So, if you're confused over whether the plastic container your convenience store dinner came in should go in the *pura mark* pile or with burnable trash, just look for the symbol on the packaging and find the corresponding symbol on your trash guide. If there are several pieces of packaging, check the main label to see how to dispose of the different parts.

On the following pages is a breakdown of the trash guide, so you have a clearer understanding of what goes in each category of trash and recycling.





#### **Accepted Items**

✓ Food waste, Clothing, Leather items, Rubber Items, Small Wooden Items, Plastic Items



#### Will not be collected if...



- x Trash is thrown is disposed of in a different bag.
- x The bag is taped to your trash.
- x Your trash is too big for your bag.



## **Non-Burnable Trash**



新潟市指定袋		指定袋	の価格	指定袋の販売
(12	5明袋) 	区分	1セット (10枚入り)	●スーパーマーケット・コンビニ エンスストアなどの小売店、区役所 出張所・連絡所で販売しています。
		大 (45ℓ)	450円	15215
	E45511/56123	中 (30ℓ)	300円	指定袋 粗大ごみ処理券
区役所・出張		小 (20ℓ)	200円	〈取扱店〉
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	(STONE)	超極小(5ℓ)	50円	目印はこのステッカー

Niigata City bags

Price and Size

Where to buy

#### Acceptable Trash

✓ Kitchen Goods, Broken Glass, Broken Plates etc., Small Domestic Appliances





#### Will not be collected if...



- x Trash is thrown is disposed of in a different bag.
- x It contains ineligible items.
- x Your trash is too big for your bag.
- x You have to use multiple bags.

## **General Trash**

<ul> <li>① 出し方</li> <li>新潟市指定袋</li> </ul>		指定袋	指定袋の販売
(オレンジ色半透明袋)	区分	1セット (10枚入り)	●スーパーマーケット・コンビニ エンスストアなどの小売店、区役 所・出張所で販売しています。
BRCASER OF TH	大 (45ℓ)	450円 300円	#### 指定袋
	小 (208)	200円	粗大ごみ処理券 く取扱店>
	極小 (108)	100円	🔛 🔜 🔁
	超極小(52)	50円	目印はこのステッカー
Niigata City Bags	Price and	Size	Where to buy





#### Acceptable Trash



✓ Microwave

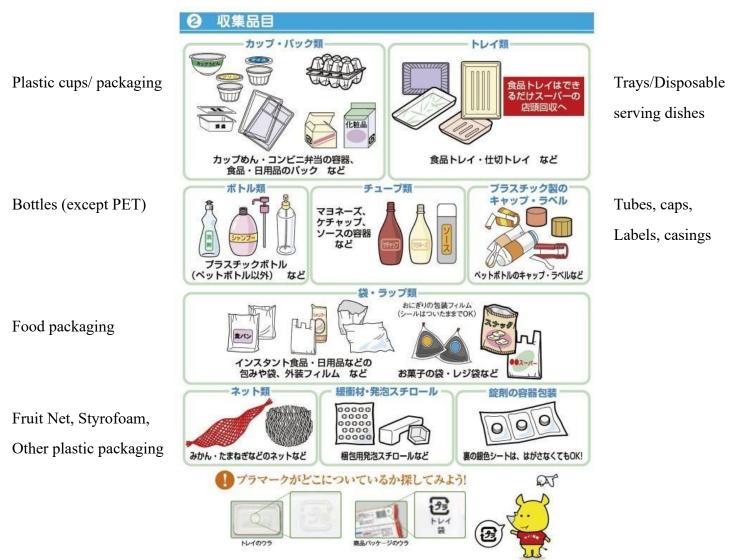
See page 57 for more details on how to dispose of oversized trash.



## Plastic (Pura mark)



#### Acceptable Items



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Please empty and clean before throwing these items away.

#### Unacceptable Items



Examples: plastic buckets, baskets, sponges, shower/bath buckets, clothes pins/pegs, toothbrushes, straws, plastic tableware, spoons, toys, stationery, plastic cases (e.g. for CDs), cassette video tapes, CDs, plastic flower pot, cutting boards, vinyl hose, Tupperware, dustpan, plastic tanks.



**Glass Bottles** 



#### How to recycle glass bottles



As usual, throw away the cap separately, and rinse before throwing it out. In Niigata City these are thrown into containers, but your city may allow plastic bags.



Coffee, Drinks, Kitchen ingredients, Jams, and others are all okay, but irregular/less common/ oversized containers are not.



## **Cans**



#### How to recycle cans



As usual, rinse before disposing of them; regular, transparent plastic bags are okay.



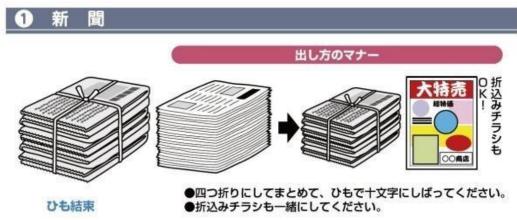
Various food/drink cans are okay, but spray cans/gas canisters should be thrown away separately.



Waste Paper



How to throw away waste paper



Magazines and paper shopping bags.

Please fold these and pile them in a (neat) stack, then tie them up with ribbon/ string. You can find packaging string at your local general store (such as a Komeri), or at a convenience store.

 $_{\text{page}}48$ 

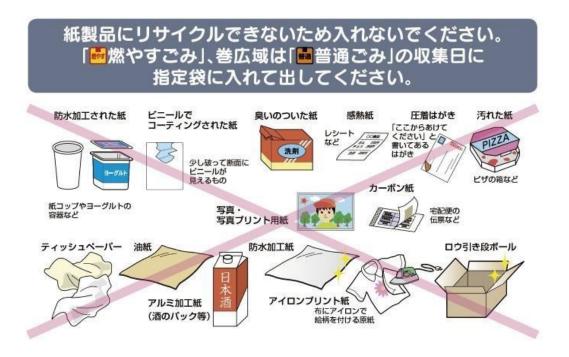


#### Acceptable items

E.g. food boxes, souvenir (*omiyage*) boxes, tissue boxes (remove any plastic), envelops (remove the cellophane window and dispose with normal trash), toilet rolls, plastic wrap rolls, direct mail flyers, copy paper, printer paper, scrap paper, memo paper, calendars, egg cartons, wrapping paper, instruction manuals, shredded paper (please put shredded paper in a transparent plastic bag).



Please do not place the following items with your waste paper recycling. Please dispose of them with your burnable or general trash.



#### **Unacceptable Items**

E.g. waterproof paper, paper cups, yogurt containers, paper coated with vinyl, tissue paper, oiled/baking paper, paper with an aluminum lining, photos, scented paper, thermal paper, crimping paper, dirty items such as pizza boxes, carbon paper, waxed cardboard, iron on transfers.



## **Garden Waste**



#### What can you recycle as garden waste?



#### How to prepare garden waste?



Tie up into maximum 1m long stacks of wood or branches; flowers, grass, and leaves may be disposed of in a plastic bag.



#### **Unacceptable items**



Wooden furniture, plants, rocks, earth and sand, paper, cigarettes, bamboo products, straw products, fruit, and vegetables.





### **Specific items**



#### How to throw away specific items



Batteries, Used light bulbs, Thermometers, Lighters and Spray Cans are thrown away separately in transparent plastic bags.



## **Trash Calendar**

With your trash guide should come a trash calendar. Make sure you keep this safe, as it will tell you on which days you can throw away certain categories of trash/recycling. Your trash calendar will most likely be colour coded, where each colour corresponds with a colour on your trash guide. So don't worry if you can't read Japanese, just look for colours!

Here is an example trash calendar for the Nishi-ku area of Niigata City. Though yours may be different, it will most likely follow a similar layout.

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	すごみ <mark>い</mark> 記袋)	每週火•	木·土曜日	ペットボトル 古紙類	田日書	2•4月曜日 爺	食用・化 な食	<sup>脏品びん</sup> 毎月 日 缶	月第1•3月曜日	枝葉・	章 每週 木	曜日 ※1月・2	月は収集休み
Contraction of Contractory	<b>さないごみ し</b> 自定袋) 🗮		4月曜日	35 プラマー 25 容器包装	皮 母週	金曜日(乾	特定5	水銀体温計、) 毎	月 第2月曜日	集団資源		施している場合、	ご記入ください)
粗大ごみ (申込制) 細大ごみ受付センター 2025-290-5353 受付/月曜日~土曜日 午前9時~午後5時 ※祝休日及び12/29~1/3除く URL/http://www.sodai.city.niigata.jp (24時間随時受付)													
4月	2016 AP	RIL					<b>5</b> 月	2016 M	AY				
🗄 Sun	月 Mon	火 Tue	水 Wed	木 Thu	🟦 Fri	± Sat	<b>⊟</b> Sun	月 Mon	火 Tue	水 Wed	木 Thu	金 Fri	± Sat
27	28	29		31	1 辺 プラマーク 容器包装	2 燃やすごみ	1	2	3 ■##### 燃やすごみ	4 aenos	5 こ260日 燃やすごみ 枝葉・草	6 プラマーク 容器包装	7 燃やすごみ
3	4 飲魚刪化糊(从) 飲食用缶	5 燃やすごみ	6	7 燃やすごみ 枝葉・草	8 プラマーク 密器包装	9 燃やすごみ	8	9 ペットボトル 古紙類 特定5品目	10 燃やすごみ	11	12 燃やすごみ 枝葉・草	13 プラマーク 容器包装	14 燃やすごみ
10	11 ペットボトル 古紙類 特定5品目	12 燃やすごみ	13	14 燃やすごみ 枝葉・草	15 プラマーク 容器包装	16 燃やすごみ	15	16 飲 飲 飲 食 用 缶 が し	17 燃やすごみ	18	19 燃やすごみ 枝葉・草	20 プラマーク 密器包装	21 燃やすごみ
17	18 飲 飲 飲 食 用 缶 い 総 服 い 総 服 い 総 服 い 総 服 い 総 服 い 総 服 い 総 服 い に 総 服 い に 総 服 い に 総 服 ・ に 編 い に 都 の 、 の の の の の の の の の の の の の	19 燃やすごみ	20	21 燃やすごみ 枝葉・草	22 プラマーク 密器包装	23 燃やすごみ	22	23 ペットボトル 古紙類 燃やさないごみ	24 燃やすごみ	25	26 燃やすごみ 枝葉・草	27 プラマーク 容器包装	28 燃やすごみ
24	25 ペットボトル 古紙類 燃やさないごみ	26 燃やすごみ	27	28 燃やすごみ 枝葉・草	29 照期の日 プラマーク 密器包装	30 燃やすごみ	29	30	31 燃やすごみ	1	2	3	4

Some recycling schedules can be very erratic, with PET bottle recycling days being the second and fourth Wednesday of the month, but glass bottles being the last Friday of the month. Be sure to plan ahead when it comes to trash and recycling to avoid build up in your apartment.



## How To Prepare Recyclables For Recycling

All recyclables should be washed, dried, and if necessary, broken down and dismantled. Here are some examples of how to prepare the more popular recyclable items for recycling:

#### PET bottles



There are three recyclable parts to a PET bottle: the bottle itself, the plastic sleeve, and the cap. If you are recycling it at home or at a supermarket, make sure you take the plastic sleeves off the bottle itself before recycling. If you are recycling it via a public, convenience store, or school bin, you just need to separate the

cap from the bottle and throw them into the corresponding bins. You may notice as you walk around your schools that there are bins full to the brim with PET bottle caps. Sometimes, schools receive rewards for recycling large quantities of PET bottle caps. Feel free to dispose of your PET bottle caps in these bins and help your school out!

There are no designated recycling bags for PET bottles. So, any plastic bag, such as a supermarket carrier bag, that can be tied closed will do.

#### Paper Packs

Paper packs should be thoroughly rinsed and dried. Once dry, they must be cut a certain way. You can usually find an image of how to cut the box on paper packs, but if not, here's an image of how it should be done.



Once you have enough paper packs, bundle them together and wrap them with some plastic string wrap. You can find plastic string wrap at hardware stores.



#### Paper and Cardboard

Paper and cardboard need to be broken down and flattened. Then, like the paper packs, it needs to be gathered up and tied together.





## **Trash Bags**

To dispose of your trash, you must use the designated trash bags for your area. These can usually be found in your local convenience store, supermarket, drug store, and general store. As a result, you cannot use trash bags from Joetsu City if you live in Murakami City.

Trash bags are fairly cheap, and you can buy many at a time. For a person who disposes of an average amount of trash each week, the recommended trash bag would be either the 20L or 30L bags. These sizes fit comfortably into most average-sized Japanese kitchen bins.



#### Misc Trash Items

#### Large items

To dispose of a large item, such as an item of furniture, you will need to arrange a special pick-up service for a fee. This fee will vary by municipality and will depend on the item you want to dispose of. This may involve calling the pickup service number and buying special stickers to place on the discarded item. These stickers can be bought at the convenience stores with ease.

#### Selling and donating things

If your predecessor left you items you don't want but are too good to throw away, consider selling them. Niigata AJET has a Facebook group called the "Niigata AJET Yard Sale" which is specifically designed for selling goods within the Niigata JET/ex-pat community.

You can also sell them to secondhand stores. Popular secondhand stores include but are by no means limited to Second Street and –Off store chains (Hard-Off, Book-Off, House-Off, Hobby-Off, etc.) However, it's important to note that these shops would buy the items from you for a very low price, so don't expect to make much profit if you choose this option.

#### Clothes

There are some options for donating items, such as clothing items. It's best to ask around at your schools to see if there are any donation centers or stores.



## Where does my trash go?

You will most often throw your trash away in these three locations: your apartment/ house, the grocery store, and the convenience store. Here are some exams of bins you might see and how to use them properly.

#### Household/Shared Trash Disposal Area

- Trash is usually put out a few days a week. It is frowned upon to put trash out any time other than the morning of pick up.
- There are different schedules for different areas. Remember to check the trash calendar your predecessor will have left you.
- There is usually a reminder list of the schedule on the bin itself, along with some tools for keeping the area tidy.
- Remember this is a communal space so be respectful. Pictures for reference:







## **Supermarket Bins**

Do not worry too much if you miss a certain recycling day, as your local supermarket will likely be able to help you out. Supermarkets often have bins to help you dispose of the following items:

- o Styrofoam Trays
- o Plastic Food Containers
- o PET Bottles
- o Cans
- Paper Packs
- o Cardboard and Paper

Please remember to clean everything out and remove any extra packaging before throwing these away.

Pictures for reference:







## **Convenience Store Bins**

These are outside of most rural convenience stores (but not every inner-city one!) and are there for customers to use. They include burnable, pet bottles and cans.

Please do not throw your trash from home here.



#### **Tips And Reminders**

- 1. Make your own system to remember what day is for each trash item and create a sorting system in your apartment.
- 2. Apartments in Japan are not always incredibly spacious, so plan ahead. For example, if you go shopping for large items, remember when your cardboard day is and plan around it.
- 3. Having a party on the beach or a picnic with friends? Be considerate of others. Separate your trash and split it between the group.

When it feels like a pain, remember there are towns in Japan that are nearly zero-waste producers! You can play your own role by recycling in Japan. Soon, it will become a habit and any other way will begin to feel incredibly wasteful.

**Good luck and happy recycling!!** 



# Transportation

## Taking the Train in Niigata

Navigating the trains in Niigata can be difficult, especially if you are new to using a train system. This is some general information about the trains, including how to buy a ticket at the station.

#### **Types of Trains**

- ✓ Local (*futsū*, 普通): Local trains stop at all stations. In major cities, some trains do not; there can be a difference between a local train and a 各駅停車(*kakuekiteisha*) train, which does indeed stop at all stations.
- ✓ Rapid (*kaisoku*, 快速): Rapid trains skip some stations. There is no difference in the ticket price of local trains and rapid trains.
- ✓ Limited Express (*tokkyū*, 特急): Limited Express trains stop only at a few major stations. There is a limited express fee in addition to the basic fare.
- ✓ Shinkansen (新幹線): *Shinkansen* run along separate train tracks and have separate platforms. They are the fastest, but most expensive, trains in Japan. There is a *shinkansen* fee in addition to the basic fare.

#### **Transit Planning Apps**

Many ALTs use a website called HyperDia to help them plan, in English, journeys on public transit. It allows you to input your origin and destination stations and the time you plan to leave or arrive. It will then generate several possible itineraries, all of which have the departure and arrival times, names of trains (if any), stations at which you must transfer, and a price. Of course, apps such as Google Maps and Apple Maps work just as well. Another website that is useful for people wishing to travel around is Japan Navitime. - <u>https://japantravel.navitime.com/en/</u>

Alternatively, if you have a good handle on Japanese, you may wish to use Yahoo!- https://transit.yahoo.co.jp/

Each one of these has a dedicated app for you to use on your smartphone too.



#### **Buying a Ticket**

These are step-by-step instructions on how to buy a train ticket:

✓ Step One: Find out how much your ticket will cost. Check one of the previously mentioned apps or use the in-station railway line map to find out. Here is a picture of one in Ikebukuro Station:



The station you are at is highlighted in red; other stations are listed with the far price next to them. As long as you don't exit the ticket gate after entering or switching railway company lines, the price will not change regardless of which route you take.

- ✓ Step two: Find an automated ticket machine. Nowadays, most machines have an English option.
- ✓ Step three: Put your money in the machine. There is a spot for coins and a spot for bills. Beware, as some machines do not take ¥5,000 or ¥10,000 bills.
- ✓ Step four: On the screen, there will be several fare denominations. Select the one that you would like.
- ✓ **Step five**: The ticket will be printed for you, and any change will be dispensed.



#### **Stations in Niigata Prefecture**

Here is a list of the kanji names for some of the more important stations in Niigata Prefecture:

Name in Romaji	Name in Kanji	
Gosen	五泉	
Itoigawa	糸魚川	
Jōetsu	上越	
Kakizaki	柿崎	
Kashiwazaki	柏崎	
Minami-Uonuma	南魚沼	
Murakami	村上	
Myōkō	妙高	
Naoetsu	直江津	
Nagaoka	長岡	
Niigata	新潟	
Niitsu	新津	
Ojiya	小千谷	
Shibata	新発田	
Tainai	胎内	
Tōkamachi	十日町	
Tsubame-Sanjō	燕三条	
Tsugawa	津川	
Uchino	内野	
Uonuma	魚沼	
Urasa	浦佐	
Yuzawa	湯沢	



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#### **Transit Smart Cards**

IC Cards are contactless smart cards that many people use in Japan to simplify transportation payments for shortdistance trips.

There are many types of these cards around Japan—each region seems to have its own—and the one available in Niigata is the "Suica", purchasable through JR East. It can only be bought at specific automated ticket machines but can be extremely helpful for when you don't know how much it costs to go somewhere. A Suica costs \$1,000, of which \$500 is a refundable deposit, with \$500 available immediately for usage. Suica can be reloaded at many automated ticket machines labelled 'CHARGE' ( $\$ + - \checkmark$ ) and can hold over \$5,000 in available credit. Almost all convenience stores in the prefecture and many shops in Niigata City accept Suica as a method of payment, as well.



#### Using a Suica

When approaching an automatic ticket gate holding a Suica, there will be a lit-up angled pad on which you can quickly touch your card and continue walking. Do not put your card through the slot, for any reason whatsoever.







You do not need to stop at the ticket gate unless the gate wicket fails to open. Should this happen, please turn around and exit the gate completely before attempting again. If you still cannot pass through the ticket gate, you may have one of several problems.

- × If you do not have enough money on your card to pay even the cheapest fare, you will not be allowed onto the rail network. You must recharge your card at a ticket machine in these situations or buy a ticket.
- × If you do not have enough money on your card to pay for the entirety of your journey, you can charge your card on the platform at a Fare Adjustment Machine for IC Cards, or by speaking to a station staff member at the ticket gate.
- x If you have another fault, please go to the manned gate at the station and consult the staff.

When you exit the rail network by paying with Suica, a small screen on the gate will show you the price of your journey as well as the remaining balance on your card. It will normally show blue but may light up red if you are running low on funds.

<u>Please note that many smaller and/or rural stations do not support Suica payment</u>. In these situations, you must have a station staff member refund your Suica and pay the fare in cash. Suica can only be used to pay for your journey in a limited area; a good rule of thumb is to buy tickets for any journey that takes over 2 hours or exits the prefecture. However, Suica is valid for most train journeys on JR across the entire country and can be used to pay for many types of transit in Tokyo, including buses and even some taxis. They are extremely helpful in simplifying the train system for even completely Japanese-illiterate persons.

You can also use your Suica card to pay for drinks from vending machines, for items at convenience stores, and for food in cafes. Look out for the Suica pad or logo to see if you can use it!

#### If you are planning on taking the train, there are a few special and convenient ticket options available:

- ✓ The Echigo One-Day Pass costs ¥1,570 for unlimited one-day travel on the local and rapid trains within Northern and Central Niigata.
- ✓ The Echigo Two-Day Pass costs ¥2,740 for unlimited two-day travel on the local and rapid trains throughout Niigata. The pass can only be bought on a Saturday.
- ✓ S-Kippu is a special discounted *shinkansen* ticket, useable only in Niigata Prefecture. Discounts are offered for tickets bought as a round-trip, or in packs of 4.
- ✓ Seishun-18-Kippu is a special discounted 5-day ticket, useable on all non-express JR trains in Japan. 5 days' worth of tickets cost ¥ 11,850, but can only be used during certain periods.

\*\* NOTE- These discount tickets / special offers change each season so please check beforehand to see what options are available and their prices before planning any trips\*\*

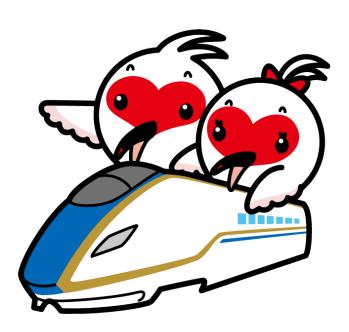


There are two *shinkansen* lines in Niigata. The Jōetsu Shinkansen line runs from Niigata station to Tokyo station and stops at:

- Echigo-Yuzawa station
- Urasa station
- Nagaoka station
- Tsubame-Sanjō station
- Niigata station

The Hokuriku Shinkansen line was extended in May 2015 and runs from Takasaki in Gunma prefecture all the way to Kanazawa in Ishikawa prefecture. In Niigata, it stops at:

- Jōetsumyōkō station
- Itoigawa station





## Traveling outside of Niigata and Japan

#### **Traveling by Highway Bus**

The highway bus can be taken from stops all along the expressway, and from various stations in Niigata, Nagaoka, Kashiwazaki, and Jōetsu. Niigata Kōtsu and Willer Express are inexpensive options for traveling to other prefectures.

- ✓ Niigata Kōtsu: <u>http://www.niigata-kotsu.co.jp/</u>
- ✓ Willer Express: <u>http://willerexpress.com/en/</u>

#### **Traveling by Plane**

If done right, traveling by plane can be fairly inexpensive. There are several low-budget options that operate in English:

- Peach Airlines (<u>http://www.flypeach.com/pc/en</u>) operates primarily out of the Kansai area and offers budget national and international flights.
- Jetstar (<u>http://www.jetstar.com/jp/en/home</u>) is based in Narita and offers budget national and international flights.
- ANA (<u>www.ana.co.jp/eng</u>) is popular for their budget tickets, called *ecowari* and *tabiwari*. The only downside to these tickets is that they must be purchased about 2 months in advance.
- Vanilla Air (<u>http://www.vanilla-air.com/en/</u>) is based in Narita and offers budget national and international flights.
- JTB (<u>http://www.jtbcorp.jp/en/)</u> and HIS (<u>http://www.no1-travel.com/)</u> are budget travel agencies that have English-speaking call centers.





When you travel outside of Japan, you must have your Residence Card (在留力一下) with you, otherwise, you won't be allowed back into the country. This card is as essential to foreign travel as your passport and plane ticket, so ensure you pack it before going to the airport.

Make sure your Board of Education or base school knows when you are leaving the country, and that they have a way to contact you in case of a disaster or emergency. Some Boards of Education may ask you to fill in a 'Notification of Overseas Travel' form when you are leaving the country.



TAKE - MARY TUMPLE





## Buying and Renting a Car

While the Niigata *inaka* (countryside) is breathtakingly beautiful, the local transportation is either very bad or simply non-existent. As a result, many JETs have no other option but to drive, especially if their schools are far from where they live. Renting a car can seem daunting, but your <u>supervisor and RA</u> can assist you with obtaining a rental car and will probably know the best local dealer that ALTs rent from. Here's a short list of the most popular dealers JETs rent from in Niigata: (this list may change so please speak to your RA or other JETs in your area for more up-to-date information)

#### 1. Fujita Car Rental - Sanjo City

Name: Fujita Hideaki (can speak English) Address: 2 Chome-14 Sanchiku Sanjō-shi, Niigata-ken 新潟県三条市三竹 2-14-27 Website: <u>http://www.lotas-fujita.co.jp/</u> E-mail: <u>info@lotas-fujita.co.jp</u> Telephone: 0256-32-2861 Hours: Mon-Sat 10:00am – 8:00pm; Sun 10am – 7:00pm Note: ALTs have been renting from Fujita-san for many years now.

#### 2. Tsukigata Motors - Shirone City

Name: Aoyagi Chieko (speaks very little English) Address: 889 Tsukigata Minami-ku, Niigata-shi, Niigata-ken 新潟県新潟市南区月潟 889 Website: <u>http://www.tsukigata.co.jp/</u> Telephone: 025-375-2156 Hours: Mon-Sat 8:30am-6:00pm

#### 3. Tsunashima Motors - Itoigawa City

Name: Tsunashima-san Address: 2 Chome-5-15 Terajima Itoigawa-shi, Niigata-ken 新潟県糸魚川市寺島 2-5-15 Website: <u>http://www16.plala.or.jp/tunasima/gaiyou.html</u> Telephone: 025-552-6864 Hours: 8:00am-7:00pm



#### What To Bring

Here are some things you will need to bring with you when you go to a car rental dealer:

- Bank book
- Inkan (name stamp)
- A Japanese driver's license or your home country's driver's license
- o An International Driver's License (IDL) or Permit (IDP), if you do not have a Japanese driver's license
- Residence card
- Some money from your savings or first month's pay (usually  $\sim$ ¥35,000)

## **Buying A Car**

Some ALTs choose to buy a car, either from another ALT, from a Japanese friend, or from a car dealership, instead of renting one. Owning a car may be cheaper in the long run, but the process of getting a car can be long and arduous. It's highly recommended that you ask for help from a JTE or fluent Japanese speaker to help you purchase a car and sign up for insurance. It's also worth bearing in mind that every two years a car needs a new warranty called *shaken*. This can get quite expensive, so make sure you check how much it will be and put aside enough to cover the cost.

#### The buyer will need:

- If the car is a white-plate a 'Certification of Parking Space' (*shakoshōmei*, 車庫証明). First, get an official form from the housing management company proving that there is a parking space. Then, go to the local police station and get the 'Certification of Parking Space' form. The police will then confirm that the parking space is valid by visiting it themselves, after which point they will send the 'Certification of Parking Space' to the buyer's address.
- o Inkan
- o Registration of inkan (inkanshōmeishō, 印鑑証明書) from the local city office/town hall
- Driver's license
- Residence card



#### The seller will need:

- o Inkan
- o Registration of inkan (inkanshōmeishō, 印鑑証明書) from the local city office/town hall
- o 'Proof of Payment of Automobile Tax' card (jidoshanofushōmeishō, 自動車税納付証明書)
- o Car registration certificate (shakenshō, 車検証)
- o Compulsory Automobile Liability Insurance Certificate (jibaisekihokenshou, 自賠責保険証)
- The buyer and seller will then take all of these documents to the buyer's local Land Transportation Office (*rikūnshikyoku*, 陸運支局) to complete the paperwork. Please note that forms may vary by area, so please double-check what forms you'll need with the buyer's local Land Transportation Office in advance.





## Driver's License

An International Driver's License/Permit (IDL/P) is valid for one year. This one year starts from the day you obtain the license, *not* from the day you arrive in Japan. If you're staying in Japan for more than one year and are planning on driving during that time, you will need to obtain a Japanese Driver's License.

- Getting a Japanese Driver's License can be time-consuming and costly. Please consider, ahead of time, how much *nenkyū* you need to take and how much money the process will cost you. The initial requirements for obtaining a Japanese Driver's License are as follows:
- You must meet the same requirements as Japanese applicants in order to take a test.
- Your driver's license from your home country must be valid and its granted license class must be equivalent to or higher than that of the license being applied for.
- You must remain in your home country for at least 3 months following obtaining the abovementioned license. If your driver's license has been recently renewed and the issue date is less than a year from when you arrived in Japan, please bring in the required documentation, such as a driving record or your expired driver's license, as proof.
- You must have the legal status of a resident if you are a non-Japanese citizen.
- You must be a registered resident in Niigata prefecture.

The next few pages will cover the step-by-step process needed to get your Japanese Driver's License, as well as a suggested timeline of when to do so.

We also encourage you to check the following link for this information: Niigata Prefectural Police Website

- ✓ Transfer of Foreign Driver's License to Japanese Driver's License: https://www.pref.niigata.lg.jp/uploaded/attachment/230033.pdf
- ✓ The Niigata Ajet website also has a helpful guide- <u>https://ajetniigata.com/guides-menu/guide-to-obtaining-a-japanese-drivers-license/</u>



#### **Step One: Compile Documents (February-March)**

Compile all the documents listed before making an appointment with the Niigata Prefecture Driver's License Center at Seiro Town for processing. Depending on your situation, you may need to have documents sent from your home country. Give yourself plenty of extra time for this. The documents needed are as follows:

- ✓ Valid driver's license from your home country (including supplementary documents if any)
- ✓ **Residence Card** or Alien Registration card
- ✓ **Current Passport** (plus expired ones if any)
  - This is to evidence whether your length of stay fulfills the requirements mentioned above after being licensed. If the issue date of your license comes before your current passport issued date, it shall be deemed that your stay in such country commenced on the date of issue of the passport. In case your passport does not contain the fact of your stay, you will need to provide another proof of stay.
- ✓ An official copy of your residence record (*jūmin-hyo*, 住民票) showing your nationality issued by your district municipality. Your supervisor can assist you with obtaining this. Some schools may have this on file, or you may have to make a trip to your City Hall to get it.
- ✓ A Japanese translation of your driver's license from your home country. This must be prepared by the embassy or the consulate of your country, or the JAF (Japan Automobile Federation) located in Niigata city. This can be done in person, or you can do it via post. The latter will prevent you from having to take *nenkyū*.
- ✓ **Photocopies** of the following on A4-sized paper:
  - National driver's license (front and back) including its supplementary documents if any
  - Residence card or Alien registration card (front and back)
  - **Passport** (all pages which show your identity, visas, and stamps)
- ✓ A photograph (must have been taken within the last 6 months)
  - o 3cm x 2.4cm, head and shoulders only, no headwear, plain background.
  - $\circ$  You may be able to have your photos taken at the Driver's License Center for \$800.
- Additional documents might be required depending on the individual case. Please confirm what additional documents you need before you go.



#### Step Two: Document Screening/License Issuance (for some countries) (March-April)

Make an appointment to have your (above) documents screened at the Driver's License Center in Seiro Town. The hours of the screening are very limited, so you may have to take *nenkyū* for this. An appointment is needed as of April 2023. Please call in advance to set this up.

Time: 1:00 pm – 1:30 pm (Monday – Friday)

Place: 2nd Floor, Counter 2 at Niigata Prefecture Driver's License Center (Seiro Town), Examination Unit

Address: 7-1-1 Higashi-ko, Seiro-Machi, Kitakanbara-Gun -北蒲原郡聖籠町東港7丁目1番地1 Phone: 025-256-1212 Extension: 256

Hours: 9:00 am – 5:00 pm (Monday–Friday, except on public holidays)

#### **Screening Procedure**

- $\checkmark$  You will be given a number card at the counter in order of arrival.
- ✓ Each applicant will be called and have his/her documents screened either by numerical order by the number cards or by appointment time.
- ✓ Presentation of the documents for screening must be made by an applicant in person and must be accompanied by an interpreter if he/she has difficulties communicating in Japanese.
- ✓ Note: Typically, prefectural ALT supervisors cannot accompany ALTs without taking nenkyū themselves. Therefore, it is a good idea to go with another ALT, Japanese- speaking friend, or have your supervisor's phone number on hand in case of any emergency language barrier issues.
- This process can easily take up to 3-4 hours or more, so make sure you don't have anything pressing to do later on in the day.

Note: Applications can only be processed at the Niigata Prefecture Driver's License Center in Seiro Town.



#### For ALTs NOT exempt from the written and practical exams:

Next, they will give you two course maps and will ask you to schedule an appointment for the written and driving test. The earliest they advise you to schedule your tests is two weeks after the day you've processed your documents. You can request to take your test at a Licensing Center near you if you live far away from the License Center in Seiro Town. Be sure to give yourself ample time to take and pass the test.

#### For ALTs exempt from the written and practical exams:

Next, you will only need to take an aptitude test followed by more waiting for same-day license issuance. Congratulations, you're finished!

**Countries exempt from both the written and driving exams include** Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Holland, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Korea, Luxembourg, Monaco, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, the United Kingdom, and the United States (States of Hawaii, Maryland, Ohio, Virginia, and Washington only). This list is not up to date so please check to see if your country is exempt.

If you have previously obtained a Japanese license, which has expired, you will be exempted from taking the written and practical exams.

#### License Issuance

All driver's licenses, which are issued by the Niigata Prefectural Public Safety Commission, are embedded with IC chips. You are requested to create two passwords to enter in advance. Each password must be a 4-digit number.

#### **Step Three: Driving Lessons (April-May)**

It is highly recommended that you take lessons before your practical test. The practical driving test does not only test your driving ability, but it tests you on how well you can memorize and perform on the Japanese standardized driving course. Some people have likened it to learning choreography as opposed to showing how well you can drive. There are two courses you must memorize. The course will be chosen at random on the day of the test so be sure to have both courses memorized – don't expect your driving inspector to tell you when and where to turn!

Taking driving lessons will help you with all of the minuscule parts you wouldn't think to count on the test, for example, the exact timing of turning on your blinkers, and how many meters from a turn you should start breaking, scoping out the area before getting in the car, etc. <u>So, heed our warning</u>: take the lessons, it'll be cheaper than failing your test three or even seven times. Many ALTs have taken lessons together and have taken down notes for each other. We suggest you ask a fellow ALT or even a Japanese friend to accompany you on your lessons and to recommend a venue for taking driving lessons. The test is like a choreographed dance, so practice makes perfect.



#### **Step Four: Testing Day(s)/License Issuance**

You do not need to be accompanied by anyone on this day. You will need to bring a copy of the processed documents given to you by the officials with you on this day, as well as  $\pm 5,000-6,000$  for processing your written and driving test fees. This day will be comprised mainly of waiting. The estimated time you will spend at the driving center on this day will be between 3 to 4 hours.

The written test is only 10 questions long and is not very difficult; it will be very basic, and the questions are simple, common sense questions. The driving test, however, is not easily conquered. It's common for ALTs to fail on their first try, so don't worry if this happens to you. If you fail the test your first time, the earliest they advise you to re-schedule would be in the next 10-14 days. As there is a chance of failing the driving test multiple times, it's strongly advised you start this process as early as possible. If your IDP/L runs out before you've obtained your Japanese Driver's License, you'll find yourself stranded without a car, which will be an inconvenience to you and your schools. If you've taken lessons, memorized the courses thoroughly, and practiced, the chances of you failing will be greatly reduced.

Listed below is a breakdown of the estimated cost of taking and/or retaking the test for a regular vehicle:

Test and Issuance Fees	Cost
Written/Driving Test	¥2550
Car Use	¥800
Physical License	¥2050
*Retake Driving Test	¥3750





#### **Useful Contact Information**

<u>Niigata JAF-</u>(Japan Automobile Federation) Address: 11-6 Shinko-cho, Chuo-ku, Niigatashi, Niigata 新潟県新潟市中央区新光町11-6 Phone: 025-284-7664 Hours: 9:00am – 17:30pm (Monday – Friday except on public holidays)

<u>Nagaoka Driver's License Center</u> Address: 7-1 Nagaokashi, Kamimaejimam- achi Phone: 0258-22-1050

<u>Kakizaki Driver's License Center</u> Address: 1174-3 Kakizaki-ku, Nomihama Phone: 025-536-3688

Sado Driver's License Center Address: Sado-shi Nakahara 350-1 Phone: 0259-57-5067





## **Useful Gas Station Phrases**

#### **Key Words**

English	Rōmaji	Japanese
Cash	genkin	げんきん
Trash	gomi	ごみ
Credit card	kurejitto kādo	クレジットカード
Window	mado	まど
Windshield washer fluid	uosshā eki	ウォッシャーえき
Full tank	mantan (de)	まんたん
Car wash	sensha	せんしゃ
Air Pressure	kūkiatsu	くうきあつ



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**Customer Phrases** 

English	Romaji	Japanese
<price> of petrol, please.</price>	<price> onegaishimasu</price>	<price> おねがいしま す。</price>
Full tank, please.	gasorin mantan de one- gaishimasu	ガソリンまんたんでおねがいしま す。
How much is it?	o-ikura desu ka?	おいくらですか?
Can I pay with credit card?	kurejitto kādo tsukaemasu ka?	クレジットカードつかえ ますか?
Do you have any window washer fluid?	uosshā eki ga arimasu ka?	ウォッシャーえきありますか?
Please fill up my windshield washer fluid	uosshā eki o irete kudasai	ウォッシャーえきをいれてくださ い
Can you please check my tire pressure?	taiya no kūkiatsu no chekku o onegai dekimasu ka?	タイヤのくうきあつのちぇっくを おねがいできますか?
Is there a carwash available here?	koko de sensha dekimasu ka?	ここでせんしゃできます か?

**Server Phrases** 

English	Romaji	Japanese
How would you like to pay?	oshiharai wa dou saremasu ka?	おしはらいはどうされますか?
Would you like me to wash your windows?	mado fukimashou ka?	まどふきましょうか?
Would you like me to empty your ashtray or throw away any garbage?	haizara to gomi wa daijōbu deshou ka?	はいざらとごもはだいじょうぶで しょうか?

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## Finances

## **Budgeting**

#### **Keeping a Budget**

Budgeting may not be the sexiest topic, but it is incredibly important, especially for long-term travel planning. If you want to make the most of your stay, a budget can help you to best achieve all of your Japanese hopes and dreams.

In budgeting, there are three things to remember:

- 1. Be realistic,
- 2. Set out your goals,
- 3. Make a plan to achieve your goals.

#### **Be Realistic**

- ✓ First month. During your first month in Japan, you will need money to pay for groceries, appliances, mobile phones, and other items. It may come to ¥60,000 yen or more to pay for these initial expenses.
- ✓ Weekly expenses. Your weekly expenses will depend on your own standard of living and how much traveling, shopping, and dining out you choose to do. Remember that while in Japan, you will have some daily expenses, such as food and transportation, that you may not be accustomed to if you haven't lived or worked alone or abroad before. Be sure to budget monthly so you will be financially stable for the entire length of your stay.
- ✓ Unexpected costs. Prepare and budget for unexpected costs such as hospital bills, additional parties, damaged cars or phones, and a plethora of other things that could occur and cost you money. There will definitely be expenses you cannot foresee so there is no harm in leaving yourself some extra wiggle room.



#### **Set Out Your Goals**

Think about your personal goals while in Japan. Do you want to spend money on traveling, save money for paying student loans, or eat out for every meal? Try to be specific! The more specific you can be the easier it will be to keep your budget and do the things you really want to do.

Everyone has different aims for budgeting, so make sure you can achieve your own personal goals while in Japan. Stick to your goals (for example: saving a certain percentage each month or cooking most of your own meals) but also keep in mind that this is (usually) a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Try not to let budgeting overwhelm you. It is a tool to keep you financially savvy but also to allow you to splurge when the time is right!

Most importantly, balance the cost and benefit for you personally when budgeting. A good way to do this is Goal Writing. Write down your goals for your stay in Japan. All of them. Be realistic with yourself, then rank your goals in something like the table below:

Must Do	Want to do	Would like to do (but
		it's OK if I don't!)
Go to all of my work parties	Eat out a few times a week	Go to Thailand for Golden Week
Visit Kyoto for a long week-	Go snowboarding (buy gear	Climb Mt. Fuji
Take a trip to Sado Island for the Earth	Visit Cat Island in Miyagi	Eat at Jiro's sushi restaurant in
Celebration		Tokyo
Attend a tea ceremony	Take Japanese classes	Go to a bunny cafe
Pay student loans monthly	Go home for Christmas	
Rent a car	Join a gym	



#### Make a Plan to Achieve Your Goals

Make a spreadsheet for yourself and start charting your finances from the beginning, if possible. You can already estimate how much certain things will cost, like rent, bills, and daily transport. Then, estimate how much your must-dos and wants will cost. Consider that traveling during holiday times (when most JETs are available to travel) can cost up to three times as much as normal prices. See what is doable on your goals list and adjust your expectations and/or your budget! You can use the budget spreadsheet below to help you, which is in turn followed by an example budget, just to help you find your feet:

What to expect- EXAMPLE	Estimated Cost	Total Estimated
	Per Month ( $ eq$ )	Costs (x12) (¥)
Initial Expenses	N/A	100,000
Daily Travel to Work (Gas/Train Pass/ Bike)	5,000	60,000
Car (Yes/No? Rent/Buy?)	Rent—35,000	420,000
Apartment Rent	25,000	300,000
Bills: Water	3,000	36,000
Bills: Electric	6,000	72,000
Bills: Internet	5,000	60,000
Bills: Gas	2,500	30,000
Larger Travel Expenses (highway tolls, flights, bullet trains, weekend trips)	20,000	240,000
Food: Grocery/ Restaurant/ Convenience Store (consider breakfast, lunch, and dinner)	30,000	360,000

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Weekend Expenses (visiting friends, parties with friends/co-	20,000	240,000
workers) *Remember, enkai (work parties) can be very		
expensive!		
Money Being Sent Home	50,000	600,000
Other: (Medical Expenses)	5,000	60,000
Other:		
Salary per Month: ~¥235,000		
(Estimates after taxes for 1st year ALTs)	Total Per Month:	Total Estimated Costs
Salary Total: ~¥2,800,000 (plus what you bring with you)	216,500	2,698,000
(Estimates after taxes for 1st year ALTs)		

Compare your total per month to your salary. How much will you have left to do the things you listed on your goal sheet? Where can you save money? Where do you have room to spend more? Remember: the rent will vary depending on where you live. While Niigata placements tend to be rural, some inner-city apartments will be significantly more expensive—so try to take this budget with a pinch of salt.

How you budget is up to you. Just remember to be realistic, set goals, and make a plan to achieve what matters to you! Make the most of your time and resources while you are here.





### Sending Money Home

There are various ways to send money home, however, the service recommended by most ALTs is Wise formally known as TransferWise. When you use Wise, you send the money to a local account in Japan, which then completes the transaction before. They are a UK-based company and have been operating in Japan for a couple of years now.

#### Signing Up for Wise

To sign up with Wise, you simply go to their website and then enter your details. You will need two things for the first time you sign up: your My Number (the Japanese equivalent of a Social Security Number or National Insurance Number, which you receive upon registering your address at the town hall) and a photo ID. If you have the My Number Card, rather than just the notification letter, you only need that—otherwise, you will need a Japanese driver's license or your *zairyuu* card.

Once that information is uploaded, you'll get a confirmation screen and information of a Mitsubishi Tokyo UFJ account for you to send the money to. Once you get that, send the money as quickly as possible and everything should be sorted. To make things easier, TransferWise also has an app, which you might want to check out.

#### How Long Does it Take?

Wise says it takes 2-4 working days. Generally, people seem to find it takes about 1-2 days usually, and very rarely any longer than that.

#### How Much Does it Cost?

The fees are generally lower than any competitor— depending on the amount you send. Wise also tends to have the best currency exchange rates of its competitors, too, which helps you lose less money. However, in the past 3 years, the yen to USD rates have not been the best, and transfer fees can mount to up to 30usd depending on the amount you transfer. Wise is still one of the better options for sending money home.

If you have any other questions about these services, do not hesitate to ask around—there will always be someone willing to share their insider info!



Food

#### **SECTIONS**

- 1. Introduction
- 2. Cooking
- 3. Eating at school
- 4. Food shopping
  - o Useful words & phrases for shopping
  - The mystery unravels- a picture guide
- 5. Building a balanced diet
- 6. Dietary restrictions
  - o Useful words & phrases for those with dietary restrictions

#### 1. Introduction

One of the great things about living in Japan is the variety of new and exciting foods and flavors you have the opportunity to try! You may worry that you will not be able to adapt to the drastically different cuisine in Japan, or that you won't be able to find foods you like, but fear not! There is such a wide range of food available here that soon you will adapt and come to enjoy the food Japan has to offer.

With that in mind, here's a piece of advice (for those who don't have any dietary restrictions) you should keep in mind when you start your culinary adventure:

*Try everything, and when in doubt, don't ask, just eat it. If you likeit, ask what it is afterwards. If not, don't have a second bite.* 

Unless you eat *fugu* (blowfish) from a shady back-alley restaurant, nothing you are offered here is going to kill you, and trying things you may not necessarily be comfortable with may sometimes help you build a good reputation or open the doorway to new experiences.

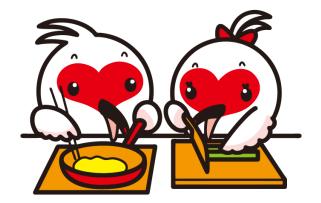




#### 2. Cooking

If you don't already know how to cook, investing some time to learn and prepare your own meals is a very useful thing to do. Not only is cooking usually a healthier and more cost-effective option than eating out or buying preprepared meals, but it also gives you a great chance to learn about ingredients and try new foods. Moreover, it is something that can be enjoyable and social. If you're new to cooking, or not a very confident cook, here are some ideas to help you in your new task:

- ✓ Invest in some good kitchen utensils and appliances, like a decent non-stick frying pan, a good quality saucepan, microwave, blender, slow cooker (crock pot), etc.
- ✓ Spend some time learning to cook things that you can freeze or store, and that you don't mind eating frequently so that you have a stock of healthy, homemade food.
- ✓ Invite some friends for dinner! Rather than meeting up at a restaurant, invite your friends and cook a meal for them. If you're not confident in cooking for others, team up and cook meals together.
- ✓ Invest in a slow cooker. Slow cookers have become increasingly popular within the Niigata JET community because they're easy to use and fairly inexpensive. Because you can make a lot of food that will keep for a long time, they're great for preparing food for those days when you come home and don't feel like cooking. In addition, because the food stays hot for a long time, you can put fresh, healthy foods in it without ever having to worry about them going bad. It's a fantastic option, especially if you are new to cooking.



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#### 3. Eating at School

It is very likely that you won't have the option of going back home for lunch, in which case you have to think about what to eat and where to get it during school time. Here are four options for eating lunch during the school day:

- ✓ <u>Kvūshoku</u> (きゅうしょく、給食). *Kyūshoku* is the lunch that the students have in most <u>elementary and</u> junior high schools. Senior High School students do not get Kyushoku. It is a very balanced meal, and it is cheap and convenient, but you do not have a choice as far as the menu goes. Therefore, if you have any dietary requirements (especially allergies), it is important to let your supervisor and school(s) know in advance, so they can check if there is anything you can't eat. You can order *kyūshoku* to eat every day or some days of the week, and it is usually paid for monthly.
- ✓ Packed Lunch. Bringing your own food from home is potentially the cheapest and healthiest option, but it does take the most work on your part. You have to prepare ahead of time, so you don't get stuck rushing out the door with no food. Additionally, if you want warm food, you'll have to check that your school has a way to heat food, and you'll also have to make sure you have the appropriate utensils. Particularly if you're eating lunch with students, it is recommended to take a lunch bag, lunch mat, and appropriate utensils and containers.
- **Bentō** Box (おべんとう、お弁当). Bentō lunches are also sometimes available at schools, particularly when there is a special event such as graduation. These lunches are delivered to the school for the staff members (not the students), often from a local bentō shop. They are similar to normal school lunches, and can also be very balanced and healthy, but are more expensive than  $ky\bar{u}shoku$ . The difference with this option is that you can choose whether or not you want rice, and you have slightly more control over the menu.
- ✓ Eating out. If you choose to eat out, you have two options: either sitting in at a restaurant or buying from a convenience store or fast-food outlet. If you want to eat at a restaurant, be sure to check that they can seat and serve you quickly enough for you to get back to work in good time. Convenience stores tend to have a short waiting time and offer a decent selection. Eating out is not the most cost-effective or healthy option available to you, but you do have plenty of choices, which is sometimes nice.



#### 4. Food Shopping

There are lots of options for food shopping. Here are some useful things to know about where and how you can do your food shopping while you live here:

#### ✓ Grocery Stores

One of the first things you'll do when you arrive in Niigata will probably be to find the nearest grocery store and buy food for your empty apartment. The location of your grocery store is of vital importance, especially if you don't have a car, because it will determine how far you have to travel with heavy grocery bags. This can be particularly challenging in winter when you'll have to walk through the snow and wind because you won't be able to use a bike.

There are many big and small grocery stores, and these vary depending on location. Some of the most common grocery stores are:

- o Harashin
- Aeon (usually as part of a shopping mall)
- Uoroku (ウオロク)
- o Narus (ナルス)
- Lion d'Or (リオンドール)

However, there are many more than just these, so it's worth asking somebody about what grocery stores there are near to you or exploring yourself. Most supermarkets look pretty similar, so they shouldn't be too hard to find.

If you don't live near a large grocery store, then there will definitely be a smaller one close by. The disadvantage of shopping at a smaller store is that they may have fewer options. The advantage, however, is that smaller places often have special deals on specific days, and if you learn when they are, you can make it a habit to stock up on food (and save money) on those days. It's also a good way to meet people from your local community and build up a rapport with the shop clerks and customers.

#### ✓ Convenience Stores (Conbini)

*Combini* are very common and you'll find them all over Japan. They sell all kinds of essential (and non-essential) goods, including a limited selection of groceries and pre-prepared foods. While it is possible to get a semi-healthy, reasonably priced meal with plenty of variety at a Japanese *combini*, it is not advisable to eat all of your meals, or do most of your shopping, from there. *Combini* are usually open 24 hours a day, so they're a good place to pick up items such as bread and milk if the grocery store is closed— which makes them the number one hotspot out in the countryside!



#### ✓ Online Shopping

Japan has plenty of food choices and you will never lack for essential food, but some- times it may be hard to get your hands on your favourite 'home' foods, for example, Nutella, certain types of peanut butter, wheat breads, certain cuts of meats, and cheeses. Some people choose to live without these foods as they can be expensive in comparison to their home country. However, if you have an insatiable craving for Mexican food (which can happen here), you may want to look online for things like good, refried beans, or the right kind of meat. Some popular and reliable sites for ordering food are:

- o The Meat Guy
- o Amazon: Grocery & Gourmet Food
- o Rakuten
- The Flying Pig
- o iHerb

In other news, Costco is also planning on launching an online service in Japan. Details have yet to emerge, but it is something to keep your eyes on!

You can Google search those terms and they will likely be the first hit. The JET Food Facebook group is also a great way of exchanging recipes and finding websites from which to buy foreign food.

#### ✓ Foreign Goods Stores

There are a small number of foreign goods stores around, although some of the items may be a bit more expensive than back home. These stores usually have a pretty decent selection of dry goods, drinks, and some perishables. However, they can be limited in their selection, so if you're looking for something very specific, online shopping is still your best bet. Some popular foreign goods stores include:

- YaMaYa, a popular foreign goods store with locations across the prefecture.
- o Jupiter  $(\forall \exists \forall \beta -)$  Import Shop, located in Niigata and Nagaoka stations.
- Kaldi (カルディ), a coffee and import store chain
- *Costco,* the American wholesale shop. There is no location in Niigata prefecture, however, there are locations in neighboring Yamagata and Gunma. The plan for a Niigata location was unfortunately scrapped. It would take approximately 2-3 hours one way. Many ALTs make it a road trip, splitting gas and tolls and it's a great bonding moment on a Costco road trip.



#### ✓ Useful words & phrases for shopping

English	Rōmaji	Japanese Phrases
Excuse me	sumimasen	すみません
Please help me	tetsudatte kudasai	てつだってください
Where is?	wa doko desu ka?	はどこです か
Do you have ?	ga arimasu ka?	がありますか
Thank you	arigatō gozaimasu	ありがとうございます
	Condiments	
Salt	shio	しお (塩)
Pepper	koshō	こしょう
Flour	ko-mugiko / furawā	こむぎこ (小麦粉) /フラワー
Sugar	satō	さとう (砂糖)
Vinegar	su	- ţ
Soy Sauce	shōyu	しょうゆ
Olive Oil	oriibu oiru	オリーブオイル
Salad Dressing	doresshingu	ドレッシング
Butter	batā	バター

100000	3 0 ···	· · · · ·	23 Kg	~ ~ ~ ~
		Maat		

	Meat	
Chicken	tori niku	とりにく (鶏肉)
Beef	gyū niku	ぎゅうにく (牛肉)
Pork	buta niku	ぶたにく (豚肉)
Fish	sakana	さかな (魚)
Eggs	tamago	たまご (卵)
	Perishables	
Garlic	ninniku	にんにく
Vegetables	yasai	やさい (野菜)
Fruits	kudamono	くだもの (果物)
Tofu	tōfu	とうふ (豆腐)
Firm tofu	momen dōfu	もめんどうふ (木綿豆腐)
Soft/silken tofu	kinugoshi dōfu	きぬごしどうふ (絹漉し豆腐)
	Non-perishables	
Rice	kome	こめ (米)
Bread	pan	パン
Pasta	pasuta	パスタ
	Drinks	
Milk	gyūnyū	ぎゅうにゅう (牛乳)
Soy milk	tōnyū	とうにゅう (豆乳)
Juice	jūsu	ジュース



Cooking and Eating Utensils		
Fork	fōku	フォーク
Knife	naifu	ナイフ
Spoon	supūn	スプーン
Chopsticks	hashi	はし (箸)
Plate	o-sara	おさら (お皿)
Bowl	bōru	ボール
Cup	koppu	コップ
Cooking pot	nabe	なべ
Wooden Spoon	kibera	きべら (木べら)
Spatula	hera	へら (箆)

#### ✓ The Mystery Unravels—A Picture Guide

Shopping in Japan is an exciting experience, but it can also be frustrating when you are looking for a specific ingredient. Not all Japanese food is a mystery. Things like eggs, fruits, vegetables and bread all look about the same here as they would at home. Even canned goods often have a picture on them so you can easily tell what's inside. And often there will be an English translation for the ingredient alongside the Japanese word. But to those of us who can't easily read Japanese, there are some items that are a bit more elusive. Here is a short list with pictures of those essential items that may prove a challenge to decipher otherwise, starting with how to read a common label.



#### The Label

- 1. Bar Code
- 2. Product name (牛肉合挽肉)
- 3. Price/100g (132)
- 4. Total grams (401)
- 5. Price (529)
- 6. Price + Tax (572)
- 7. Best By (15-5-23) (2015-May-23<sup>rd</sup>)



#### Chicken

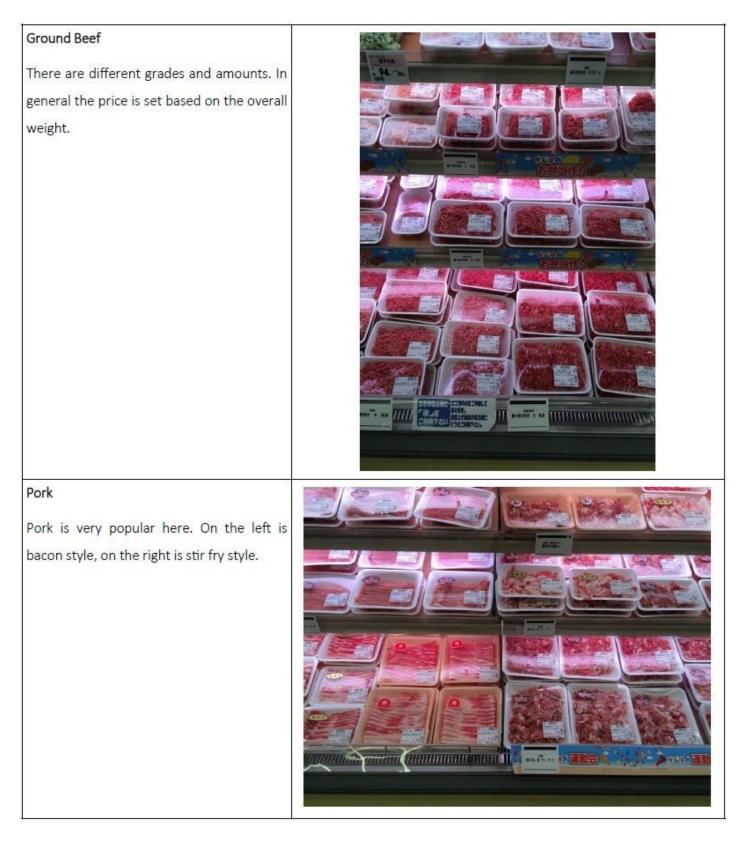
This is a small sample of what may be available.

\*\*NOTE\*\*

It can be difficult to find whole chickens in supermarkets.









#### Ground Beef

There are different grades and amounts. In general the price is set based on the overall weight.

Note: Most ground beef is mixed with pork.



#### Pork

Pork is very popular here. On the left is bacon style, on the right is stir fry style.









#### Pepper

Pepper should be found next to the other spices (except salt). Don't be afraid to experiment to find which one you like the most.

Many of the spices you'll find in the supermarket will have the English name as well as the Japanese name written on it.



#### Salt

There is big variety of brands to choose from, but it can be hard to find brown (sea) salt. For some reason salt is *not* next to the other cooking spices, but rather in a separate aisle.





#### Sugar

You can find white and brown sugar in most supermarkets, and usually in fairly big quantities. Just remember to keep the package sealed after you open it.



#### Garlic

This is a highly recommended garlic paste. Fresh garlic can be found in the vegetable section of the supermarket.



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#### Soy Sauce

Welcome to the 'Kingdom of Soy Sauce', where you'll never again have to worry about variety.



/ 11.

#### Vinegar

Sometimes you can get special kinds of fruit vinegar, but not

always. You can usually find

mirin next to or near this section.





# There is plenty to choose from, and it should be next to other baking goods. Rice Niigata is famous for rice. There are different kinds of rice, but you generally can't go wrong. Your supervisor or coworkers should be able to recommend some good brands to you

Flour

\*\*NOTE\*\* Make sure you don't buy rice for making *mochi (mochi gome, もち米)*. This rice is a lot stickier than normal rice, and usually has a rabbit on the packaging.







#### 5. Building a balanced diet

If you think that just by moving to Japan your diet will change, you're probably right! If you think that *just* by moving here your diet will change for the better, you're badly mistaken. On average, Japanese people have a very balanced diet, but it is still possible to find unhealthy food here or fall into unhealthy eating habits. Trying to figure out your diet, in conjunction with living in a country where you may not speak the language, and compounded with the potential stresses of work, is a surefire way to mess with your diet.

If you find yourself struggling with weight in Japan, there are some things you can do, such as eating fewer unhealthy, fatty, or sugary foods, cutting your portion size, or doing more physical activity. But keep in mind that when you think of the word "diet" you should be aiming more for a healthy lifestyle than for a temporary restriction to your normal eating habits. Being hungry all the time is not only not fun but also not healthy.

#### 6. Dietary Restrictions

The Japanese are very accommodating when it comes to dietary restrictions. They understand that we, as foreign people, are not accustomed to a lot of the food here. So, if you have moral, philosophical, spiritual, or biological reasons for not eating certain foods, there are still plenty of healthy and delicious options available to you.

- ✓ Food allergies: Comparatively to other countries, there are few common food allergies in Japan. Because of this, food is not always labeled as containing a certain ingredient on things like restaurant menus, although some might. If you have a food allergy, it is very important that you let those around you (supervisor, co-workers, and friends) know, and always be sure to let people in restaurants know if you have an allergy to something.
- ✓ Vegetarian & vegan: In general, Japanese people are not vegetarians. While people understand the general idea, they might not be sure of the specifics, i.e., what exactly you do and don't eat. Accordingly, when you ask for a vegetarian dish at a restaurant, it is possible that they will bring you a dish that is topped with some kind of meat or which was made with a meat product. This is not out of spite, but because that dish does not register as a "meat" dish. Certain foods, like the very common *miso* soup for example, which contains fish stock mixed with miso paste, is not commonly thought of as containing meat/fish. Therefore, if you want to be vigilant about avoiding meat/fish and their stock, you may need to clarify what that means for whoever is cooking.
- ✓ Religious restrictions: Although not eating certain things for religious reasons is uncommon in Japan, people understand it as a reason for not eating certain foods. You should never feel obliged to disclose any religious beliefs, but it can help to explain to people why you are refusing certain foods if you ever want to clarify.
- ✓ Organic food: Organic food in Japan does exist, but it's not a native concept and therefore a bit difficult to communicate. The option to buy organic foods has been steadily increasing in Japan in recent years, mostly due to international demand, but it's still not a widespread idea. If you are set on finding organic food, then you will have to do some research in your local area. A good place to start would be your coworkers, supervisor, or local market.



#### ✓ Etiquette for declining food

- Be as polite as possible when denying food, as there are some situations where it may come off as disrespectful or rude. Food is a big part of culture, and by denying it in a brash or insensitive way, you may come off as though you are looking down on or have disdain for, a part of the culture.
- Always try to inform your host or co-workers beforehand of the foods you cannot eat. If you are unable to do that, be conscious of how you turn down the food you are offered. Always offer an apology, and decline food in a polite, friendly manner.
- Understand that there will be occasions when you may have to weigh the importance of your dietary restriction with that of having a small scuff on your reputation or image.
- Know how to convey your food restriction to people around you clearly. A slightly coarse, but clear, way to do this is to say the name of the food you can't eat in Japanese while crossing your arms in an "X" shape in front of you. However, it's recommended you try the Japanese provided below to decline food more politely.



#### ✓ Useful words & phrases for those with dietary restrictions

English	Romaji	Japanese
I don't eat	watashi wao tabemasen	わたしはをたべません.
It's OK.	wa daijōbu desu	はだいじょう ぶです
I am allergic to	watashi wani arerugii ga arimasu	わたしはにアレルギーがあります
Is there_in this food?	Kono tabemono ni wa haite imasu ka?	このたべものに ははいっていますか
I am a vegetarian/vegan	watashi wa bejitarian/ biigan desu	わたしはベジタリアン/ビーガンです
Chicken	tori niku	とりにく (鶏肉)
Beef	gyū niku	ぎゅうにく(牛肉)
Pork	buta niku	ぶたにく(豚肉)
Fish	sakana	さかな(魚)
Shrimp	ebi	エビ(海老)
Crab	kani	かに(蟹)
Eggs	tamago	たまご(卵)
Butter	batā	バター
Milk	gyūnyū	ぎゅうにゅう (牛乳)
Dairy	nyūsei hin	にゅうせいひん(乳製品
Peanuts	piinatsu / rakasei	ピーナツ/ らっかせい

If you want more information on food in Japan, check the following links:

- o Food labels: <u>http://www.survivingnjapan.com/2012/04/ultimate-guide-to-reading-food-labels.html</u>
- o Allergies: http://www.survivingnjapan.com/2012/07/allergy-friendly-food-in-japan.html
- o Natural food: <u>http://www.survivingnjapan.com/2012/12/how-to-find-natural-food-in-japan.html</u>



Work

## **Meeting Schools**

Everyone will have a slightly different experience with meeting their schools and teachers; this may be immediate, on a pre-determined day after you arrive, or on the first day teaching at the school. Regardless of when your first visit to your school is, there are a few things to keep in mind:

- ✓ Dress professionally. The rule is to dress more formally, to begin with, and get more casual as you settle in. For your first meeting(s) with your school(s), a suit or very smart clothes are recommended.
- Act professionally. You still know little to nothing about your schools and how the people there act. Maybe they will be the friendliest people in the world; maybe they will take a while to warm up to you. Regardless, be yourself, but make sure you do it in a professional manner.
- ✓ Perfect your self-introduction. You will have been told to do this many times over now, and there's a reason for it. You will likely be asked to do your self-introduction in Japanese or English in front of all your schools, to your teachers (in the teachers' lounge), and to the students (in a special welcome assembly). It's going to be much easier for you if you have it practiced and ready to go, as you might be asked on short notice. It is not required to do your introduction in Japanese, but it will leave a good first impression. Simple Japanese will be fine or even a mix of Japanese and English. You can ask your supervisor to double-check your Japanese before you give your introduction.
- ✓ Have a bladder of steel. This is for those who will be meeting multiple schools in one day. It's customary to give a guest a drink (usually hot green tea, iced tea, or iced coffee during the summer), so if you have a few schools to visit, it might be a good idea to take a bathroom break beforehand. Also, remember that it's polite to finish a drink before you leave.



## **Morning Meetings**

Depending on the size of the school, there will be a morning meeting every day or once a week. Morning meetings are usually pretty short, averaging 5-15 minutes, but they are taken quite seriously, and it's very rude to interrupt them. Therefore, try to make sure you arrive a little early, so as not to disrupt the meeting. Some schools may schedule you to arrive after the meeting; should that be the case, and they are still having the meeting when you arrive, you can wait outside the teachers' room until they finish.

#### Key information about morning meetings:

- ✓ Morning meetings usually start with the vice principal or principal asking everyone to stand up, then saying "*ohayō gozaimasu*." Try your best to say it back clearly and at a decent volume, as that is seen as very respectable.
- ✓ When the vice principal says "*owari desu*" and people go about their business, it means the meeting is over and it's OK to do your own thing.
- ✓ For your first morning meeting, they will probably ask you to give a short self-introduction, for example, "Hello, my name is ~. I come from ~. *Yoroshiku onegai shimasu*." If you ever bring a guest (for example, a visiting friend or family member) to the school, they may be expected to give a self-introduction, too.
- ✓ Sometimes morning meetings are held in the gym, so if all of the teachers get up and leave the teachers' room, or if it's empty, go to the gym to see if they are there. There may also be a meeting in the gym after the normal teachers' room meeting.

#### Morning meeting etiquette:

- ✓ Do not be late. If you are, apologize to the principal, and say "gomen nasai, shitsurei shimasu," and hurry to your desk.
- ✓ If your school has morning meetings that take place while you are there, be respectful. No working on the computer, shuffling papers, reading, or anything like that. It is advisable to keep out a pen and paper and use this as a studying opportunity. Write down the words you hear, and write down the meaning if you know it, and if you don't, look it up later. This way you will be productive, but not disruptive.





## **Dealing with Multiple Schools**

So many new and unfamiliar faces and environments can make things very confusing and can really make you feel swamped before you're adjusted. Below you'll find some ways to navigate some of the worries and problems ALTs face when dealing with multiple schools.

#### Things to remember:

- ✓ Don't worry if you forget people's names. Obviously, there are some people whose names you really should remember, like your JTEs, supervisor, principals, etc. How- ever, people generally realize that, particularly for people not used to Japanese sounds, it can be very difficult to remember so many new names. People won't get offended if you need to ask again!
- ✓ If you make a mistake, apologize and get on with things. Schedule changes, going to the wrong school, calling somebody by the wrong name, bringing the wrong lesson plan the opportunities for things to go wrong when you have a lot of schools are endless. Just remember that everybody makes mistakes, so try not to let it ruin your day or affect your teaching. Acknowledge your mistake, apologize, and try not to do it again. (If you do, then apologize more!)
- ✓ Schedules will change. You might be very lucky and get plenty of warnings with every schedule change. However, it's possible that schedule changes will be made and you might not find out about them until the last minute, which could leave you unprepared. If this happens, it's important to keep your cool, try to do as much as you can, and let your teachers know if you're unprepared. If schedule changes happen often without you knowing, it's highly recommended that you speak to your supervisor as soon as possible to get it sorted.



Ideas for keeping track of your schools:

- ✓ Make sure you receive a schedule from your supervisor or the Board of Education for the coming month/year.
- Mark your schools' locations on a map, whether that's a physical map you can keep in your car, or as 'pins' on your phone. It's also worth doing a 'test drive' to your schools a couple of times beforehand to make sure you know directions and timing.
- ✓ Buy a diary/planner and use it to note down which school you're at next, and what you need to prepare for your next set of classes.
- ✓ Make a brief note of each lesson, including the class number, date, and what you did. This doesn't need to be much a textbook page number and name of the activity should be enough.
- Make a 'school sheet' with the name of the school, the principal, the vice principal, and your JTEs/HRTs.
   See the Appendices for an example school sheet.
- ✓ Use the plastic sheet on your desk to keep things like name lists of your classes and the teachers. You can ask one of your teachers for name lists or to help you convert the Japanese names into *rōmaji*.





### **Useful Work Phrases**

English	Rōmaji	Japanese
Good morning	ohayō gozaimasu	おはようございます
Hello	konnichiwa	こんにちは
Good evening	konbanwa	こんばんは
Good night	oyasumi nasai	おやすみなさい
Thank you	arigatō gozaimasu	ありがとうございます
Sorry / Excuse me / Thank you	sumimasen	すみません
Sorry (Casual)	gomen nasai	ごめんなさい
Excuse me (Entering a room/office)	shitsurei shimasu	しつれいします
Excuse me / Sorry for bothering you (Leaving a room/office)	shitsurei shimashita	しつれいしました
Good job- (If somebody has just finished a difficult/tiring task) Goodbye (When somebody else is	otsukare sama deshita (Literally – "You must be tired")	おつかれさまでした
Good job (Casual. This may be used when talking to students, for example after cleaning time)		ごくろうさまでした
(When you are leaving work before		おさきにしつれいします

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### Useful Everyday Phrases

Here are some useful everyday phrases you can use when making small talk with your co-workers, or with younger students at schools:

English	Rōmaji	Japanese
It's hot, isn't it?	atsui desu ne	あついですね
It's cold, isn't it?	samui desu ne	さむいですね
Wow, it's raining/snowing so	ame / yuki wa sugoi desu ne	あめ / ゆきはすごいで すね
It's so windy!	kaze ga tsuyoi desu ne	かぜがつよいですね
The weather is nice today, isn't it?	kyō, tenki ga ii desu ne	きょう、てんきがいいですね
Do you like <thing>?</thing>	<thing> ga suki desu ka?</thing>	<thing> がすきですか?</thing>
What <thing> do you like?</thing>	suki na <thing> wa nan desu ka?</thing>	すきな <thing> はなん です か?</thing>
What is your favourite <thing>?</thing>	ichiban suki na <thing> wa nan desu ka?</thing>	いちばんすきな <thing> はなん ですか?</thing>
How was your weekend?	shūmatsu wa dō deshita ka?	しゅうまつはどうでしたか?
What did you do?	nani o shimashita ka?	なにをしましたか?
Wow, great!	ii na!	いいな!
I went to <place></place>	<place> ni ikimashita</place>	<place> にいきました</place>
It was fun / interesting	tanoshikatta / omoshiro- katta	たのしかった / おもしろかった です



## Miscellaneous

### Post Office

Post Offices are fairly easy to come by in Japan, and thanks to their bright red logo, they're usually easy to spot. Opening times will vary depending on the branch, so it's best for you to check at your local branch to make sure the information you have is accurate.

#### Japan Post (JP) Website

Luckily for us, most of the JP website has been translated into English, and it's very easy to use. This is probably the best place for you to go if you want to see how much it will cost you to send a postcard, letter, or package overseas. It also has some other tools that you might find useful in the future, although some of these are only available in Japanese.

Since international mail is probably the service you will be most interested in at first, here is a screenshot of the International Parcel Post page:

Select by purpose		
¥ For first-time users	Sending international postal items	What happens if?
<ul> <li><u>Goods/Services</u></li> <li><u>How to Use</u></li> <li><u>Select the product for you</u></li> </ul>	<ul> <li><u>Check rates and delivery days</u></li> <li><u>Check addressee status (Japanese Version Only)</u></li> <li><u>Filling out EMS label</u></li> </ul>	<ul> <li>FAQs</li> <li>I want to know the status of EMS delivery</li> <li>I don't know how to send a postal item</li> </ul>
👔 I want some handy information	Progress of overseas mail order	Business uses
<ul> <li>My-page Service</li> <li>How to send Greetings Cards</li> <li>Practical Guide for International Students</li> </ul>	Link to Online Shopping	<ul> <li>I want to consult with someone about sending postal items</li> <li>Real-life examples</li> <li>Using the logistics service (JP Sankyu Global Logistics)</li> <li>UGX (U-Global Express)</li> </ul>

On the 'Goods/Services' page, you can find links to different International Mail services. Clicking on the different links will take you to a new page where you can find the sizes and weights restrictions, as well as prices, which should give you a good indication of how much it will cost to send things to friends and family. They also have a comparison function to help you find the best deal for your needs.

		0 65 0 0 65
nternational Mail		
Goods/Services		
Service Details		
Express Mail Service(E	<b>IMS)</b> cional mails is placed on this service. Our <b>fastes</b>	
Express Mail Service(E		→ EMS for Business
Express Mail Service(E		
Express Mail Service(E Top priorityamong internat	tional mails is placed on this service. Our <b>fastes</b>	→ EMS for Business
Express Mail Service(E	tional mails is placed on this service. Our <b>fastes</b> <u>Small Packets</u>	<ul> <li>◆ EMS for Business</li> <li>● Postal items for the blind</li> </ul>

We will suggest the most suitable service that meets your needs.

#### **Useful Vocabulary**

The best place to get information about sending packages is the JP website, but the only place you can send them is at the Post Office itself! Here are three very simple phrases to get you through your first couple of encounters at the Post Office.

English	Romaji	Japanese
<price> stamp, please.</price>	<price> no kitte kudasai.</price>	<price> のきってください。</price>
Please send this to <country>.</country>	<country> made, onegai shimasu.</country>	<country> まで、おねがいし ます。</country>
How much is it?	o-ikura desu ka?	おいくらですか?

If you want anything very specific (such as tracked/signed for post or a particular type of transport), there are several websites online where you can find some very useful and specific phrases to use when sending things. Please see below for some of our recommendations.



#### **Parcel Delivery**

If you miss a delivery, you will get a delivery card posted through your door. JP delivery notices are red and white, and you can either phone, go online, or go to the Post Office to arrange for redelivery. Alternatively, you can collect the parcel yourself from the Post Office. If you decide to collect the parcel yourself, be sure to take a form of ID such as your Residence Card, in order to prove your name and address. There will probably be a collection window, open later than the main Post Office, from which you can collect your parcels outside of the usual opening times.

How to deal with other delivery notices will depend on the delivery service. Most of these just provide a number to call for re-delivery, as the main warehouse may be situated quite far away. Some cards will have an English line you can call, but others will be in Japanese, so if you are not confident speaking on the phone, it might be worth asking your JTE or supervisor to help you arrange a suitable delivery time.

#### **Other Useful Information & Resources**

- ✓ JP website (English): <u>http://www.post.japanpost.jp/english/</u>
- ✓ Alternative Delivery Companies
  - Yamato Transport (*Kuroneko*): <u>http://www.kuronekoyamato.co.jp/en/</u>
  - o DHL: <u>http://www.dhl.co.jp/en.html</u>

#### Other useful web pages:

- ✓ Post Office vocabulary: <u>http://thejapanesepage.com/vocabulary/post\_office</u>
- ✓ Post Office vocabulary: <u>http://maggiesensei.com/2010/09/16/郵便 yuubin-postal-service/</u>
- ✓ Arranging redelivery: <u>http://melt-in-japan.blogspot.jp/2008/02/rescheduling-deliveries-in-japan.html</u>



### <u>Onsen</u>

*Onsen* are wonderful things, especially in the winter months. They are basically public baths, usually used as a way of winding down and relaxing, although they're also handy for scrubbing up if you're traveling. You can find an *onsen* by looking for these signs:

Each area has its own style and water and set-up, and many have outdoor baths, which are particularly nice at night. If you're ever unsure what to do, follow what others are doing or ask for help, or look for a poster that shows you what to do. Enjoy! Have fun, and don't let the nakedness of it all scare you away from giving it a try. *Onsen* are a really great experience and are definitely worth checking out.

#### What to take to the onsen:

- $\checkmark$  In general, things you should take to the *onsen* include:
- ✓ Money for entry (usually between ¥600-1,000)
- $\checkmark$  A change of clothes
- ✓ A towel and washcloth (unless you know they are provided)
- ✓ Shampoo and soap (if you like a specific type)
- ✓ Change for drinks afterwards (optional, but useful)



Most, but not all, places provide some soap and shampoo. Some will provide towels and washcloths, but some do not, and some charge a fee for use of them. Also, please note that in some *onsen*, soaps, and shampoos are not permitted.

#### **Onsen Etiquette:**

- ✓ Enter the correct bath! The women's entry is red, with a  $\pm$ , and the men's is blue with a  $\pm$ .
- ✓ Wash your body thoroughly before entering the *onsen* water. There are washing stations where you can do this.
- ✓ Most but not all people cover up their privates with the small wash towel when walking around; it is the courteous thing to do.
- ✓ Do not run or horseplay in the *onsen*. Not only is this dangerous, but it's also very disrespectful.
- ✓ Onsen are places where people can relax. It's therefore rude to be loud and noisy when in an onsen. If you are with a group of friends, try to chat quietly amongst yourselves to avoid disturbing those around you.



- ✓ Some people may feel awkward and uncomfortable if you just start talking to them out of the blue, so allow others to initiate conversation (if you want to have a conversation).
- ✓ This is a fantastic article about Onsen. It gives a step-by-step guide on onsen etiquette and how to use them. It's a highly recommended read if you've never been in an onsen before: <u>http://en.rocketnews24.com/2015/02/11/english-hot-spring-manners-poster-is-so-thorough-even-japanese-people-are-learning-from-it/</u>

#### Things to be aware of:

- Some *onsen* allows tattoos, some may flat-out reject you, and others may ask you to leave if they see it or if they've received a complaint about it from another customer. To be safe, ask at the reception if they allow people with tattoos to use their *onsen*. Or, if your tattoo is small, put a Band-Aid or something similar on it to cover it up.
- Do not drink alcohol in the *onsen* and be sure to stay well-hydrated. Being in the *onsen* dehydrates you and raises your body temperature. Staying in for long periods of time or going in when drunk can be dangerous.
- If you shave before an *onsen*—especially if it is a true, natural water *onsen*—the area you shaved will burn a bit. So, it is best to shave either hours in advance or, more advisably, the day before. However, nobody will care if you haven't shaved.
- You may get some stares if you're really pale or you're voluptuous, but most people will keep to themselves when you go to an *onsen*.
- You may visit an *onsen* before big work parties with your co-workers. Don't let it intimidate you; what happens in the *onsen* stays in the *onsen*. Plus, it's a great way to show that you are part of the group.
- There is a place to store valuables in the changing room, or just outside it. It's advisable to store things here, not necessarily because theft is common, but more to be safe.



### <u>Enkai</u>

*Enkai* are parties with your school co-workers. Sometimes they are held as a dual *onsen*/dinner experience, so be sure to ask if you will be just eating or going to an *onsen* too (for more information about *onsens*, see page 113). They also usually have a second, third, and sometimes even a fourth after-party at different places. You can decline the after-parties, but skipping out on the main *enkai* event is frowned upon, and your co-workers may think you don't like them, so keep that in mind. Going to an *enkai* is a very important part of building bonds and friendships between co-workers. It's also a great time to learn more about your co-workers because they talk more freely — and you can find out who actually speaks English, because they usually speak a lot more of it after a beer or two!

There are usually several *enkais* held every school year. Some are bigger, some are smaller. The usual times to have *enkai* are:

- ✓ When you first arrive in September (Sports Day, 2nd Term Opening *enkai*)
- ✓ In December (End of Year, 2nd Term Closing *enkai*)
- ✓ In March-April x2/3 (Graduation, Leaving Teachers, New Teachers *enkai*)
- ✓ When you're leaving in July (ALT Farewell, 1st Term Closing *enkai*)

There will likely be other *enkais* throughout the year for other events such as Culture Festivals, or just because there hasn't been one in a while.

#### Key things to remember:

- ✓ Most schools assign seating for bigger *enkai*, or they may have a 'seating lottery' so that everyone sits and mingles with people outside of their department. At smaller *enkai*, you can usually sit where you like.
- ✓ Typically, there is a special food set to be brought out in different courses, so all you need to decide is what to drink. There are usually some speeches and things before eating as well, so just follow the group and do as they do. When they start eating, you start eating.
- ✓ Never, ever drink alcohol if you are driving or cycling. This can't be stressed enough. Japan has a strict zero tolerance for both driving and cycling under the influence, and any amount of alcohol in your system will get you in a lot of trouble. A lot of schools arrange carpools or a bus-taxi service to shuttle people around, and many of your co-workers will take the train home. Ask about transportation arrangements before the *enkai*, if you need a way to get home.
- ✓ Big *enkai* are usually in nice restaurants, so your co-workers will wear work clothes (business attire) to them. You can also change into something more relaxed after the main *enkai* has finished, either at the *onsen* or before the after-party. For smaller *enkai*, the dress code is usually more relaxed. If you are unsure, just ask your co-workers beforehand.

⊃age 🗕



RSVPs for *enkai* are usually done via one of two methods. One way is a check sheet that is passed around the office, where you can check if you are going to the *enkai*, and also whether you will be driving. Another way is an RSVP slip on your desk, which you must fill in with your name, and circle whether or not you will attend, and whether or not you need transportation. You can ask your co-workers if you need help filling anything in.

#### Enkai etiquette:

- ✓ Enkai starts off with a short speech and some beer for the opening "kanpai" ("cheers!") ceremony. Do not drink before the kanpai. Drinking before the kanpai is a huge enkai faux pas.
- ✓ It is OK to eat and drink during speeches (after the *kanpai*). However, try not to be too loud, and don't speak during speeches.
- ✓ An *enkai* usually ends with a "*banzai*" everybody will stand up to do it, so just follow everybody else!
- ✓ It's considered rude to talk about the *enkai* at work the next day. *Enkai* are events where co-workers can loosen up a bit and not worry, so don't bring up the events of the night, especially if it could cause embarrassment.

#### Payment:

*Enkai* can be quite expensive, ranging between ¥4,000-10,000. Additionally, after-parties can be around ¥1,000-3,000 each. Different schools handle payment differently. Some Schools collect a monthly bill that goes towards enkais and you get reimbursed for the ones you don't go to, whereas others you pay as you go, and some do both.

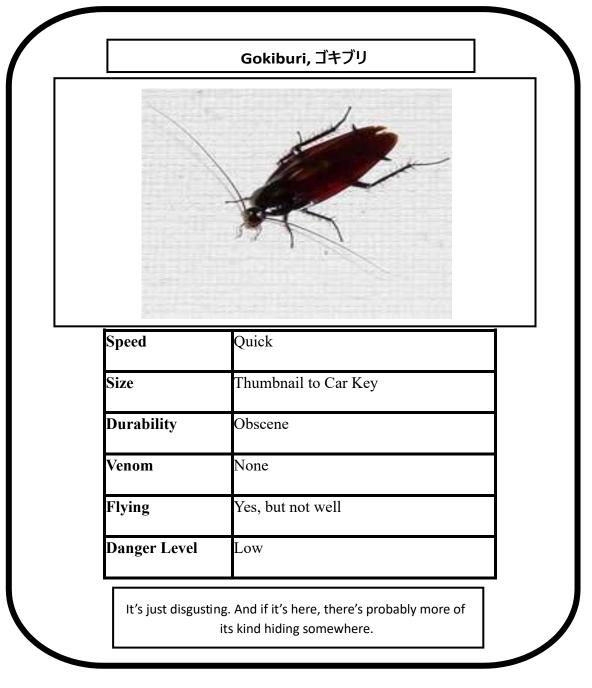
\*\* Enkais can add up to a huge expense so it is advised to go to your welcome enkai and other important ones, however, you can turn down the offer, in a polite manner, for smaller enakis.\*\*



### **Bugs**

<u>Scenario:</u> You're alone in your new apartment/house. You enter a room and turn on the lights. Something moves out of the corner of your eye. You freeze and turn to look. It's a...

Cockroach



 ${}_{\text{Page}}117$ 

Weaknesses: "Hoi Hoi", Cockroach Hotels



Sticky stuff inside to trap the cockroaches. Pop it open and put the bait packet in the middle.

Leave it on the floor. Check on it once in a while. Eventually a roach (or two or three) will get caught in the sticky stuff.

**Note**: You might catch other bugs with it besides cockroaches.

Pros: No poison required. Easy Peasy.



Cockroaches eat the poison food on the inside and go back to the nest. It dies there, the other cockroaches cannibalize it, poison themselves, and die.

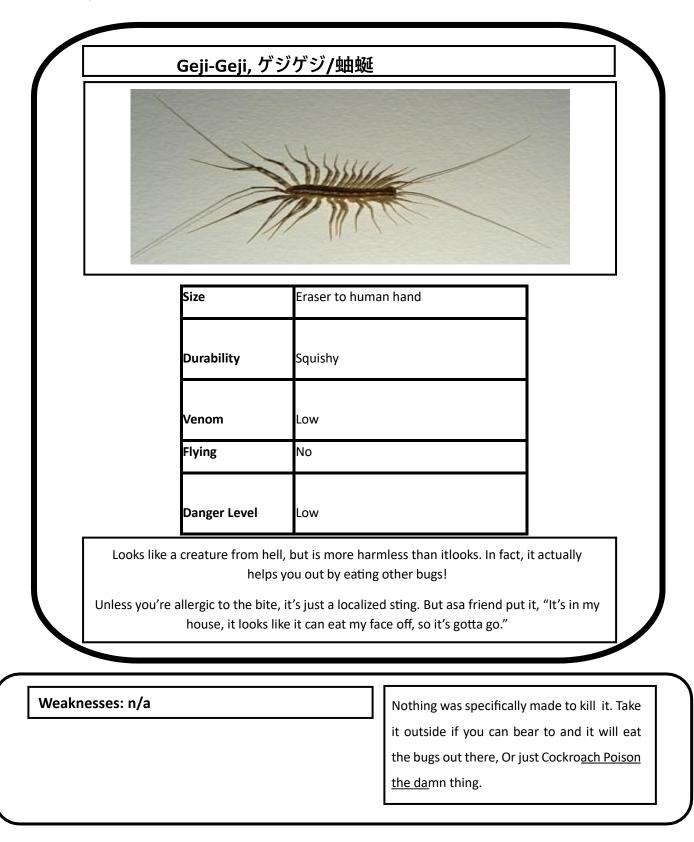
Open the package and stick the traps on walls in corners, etc. Leave them there forever.

**Note**: Or just <u>Cockroach Poison</u> the damn thing.

**Pros**: No close contact required and kills the nest.



The House Centipede





Spiders

Kumo, クモ/ 蜘蛛



Speed	Slow to fast
Size	Small speck to business card
Durability	None
Venom	Varies
Flying	No, unless you count jumping as flying
Danger Level	Varies

Spiders are so varied in Japan that there could be a whole separate guide for them. When in doubt (or in terror), just <u>squish it</u> or use <u>cockroach spray</u>.

Good luck.



**Giant Hornets** 

	i,オオスズメバチ/大雀蜂
Speed	Moderate
Size	Ain't called 'giant' for no reason
Durability	Crunchy
Venom	Much yes. Giant Sting. Ow.
Flying	Most definitely
Danger Level	Extremely high
Danger Level A nightmare to deal with, aliv 40-50 deaths a year in Japan. and destroys nerves. When in	



You can hear it as well as see it. Hope it doesn't find its way indoors. If in doubt, keep your distanceand *cock<u>roach spray</u> it.* Then cover it up (maybe a plastic trash bin or something) to try and stop the chemical that attracts its own kind. Also don't opendoors and windows, especially if you hear the buzz.

Note: Seek medical attention right away if stung.

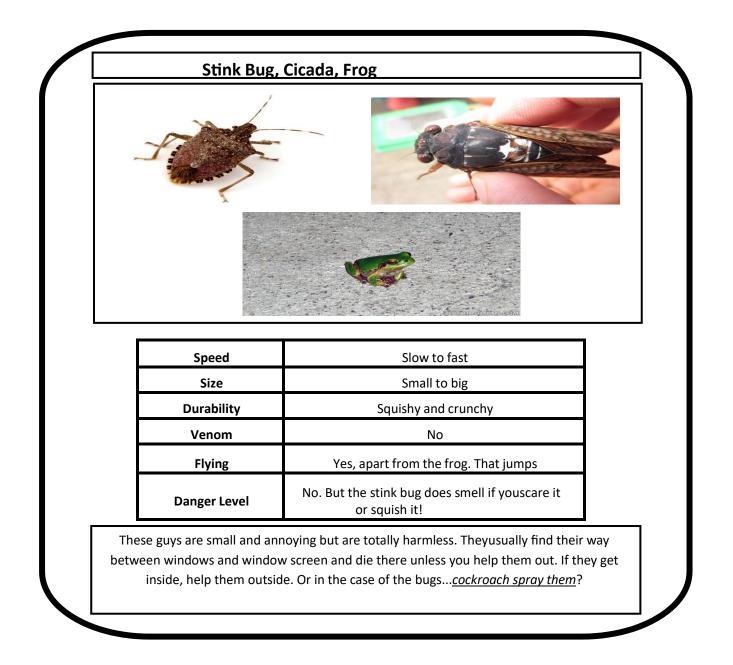


Mukade

	Mukade, A	<u>カデ/百足</u>		
	Speed	M	oderate to quick	
	Size	Spagh	netti to garden hose	
	Durability	Toug	her on the outside	
	Venom		OUCH! YES!	
	Flying	No	, thank goodness	
	Danger Level	High, un	iless you're Australian	
really long	like tatami and indoor plu time, so tryyour best to s	umbing. If you get b stay away from the	on, especially in the south of Japa bitten, it will swell and hurt a lot a bitey bits. Its coloring may vary i iji-geji" forthe "mukade" but they	and for a n reds,
Weaknesses: n	n/a er chop them up. They rel	ease	There's nothing on the mark boys. Attempt to drown it in water mixed with plenty of wa	boiling water or



"Harmless" Bugs and Others





If All Else Fails...

Use cockroach poison spray!



Your cat's not here to defend you and eat it, so arm yourself with the *biggest and baddest weapon* in the war against the bugs. It's you or them. So just breathe. You got this.

... Unless you just sprayed a bug with cockroach poison.

......Then don't breathe, and ventilate the room.





# Contributors

Special thanks go to all the following JETs who contributed over the years, without whom this update would have been incredibly more arduous. If you ever run into them around the world, don't forget to say thank you!

Emma Bainbridge Natasha Barradell Unwin JD Duquette Janice Laureano Anne Marie Hart Mary Miller Bazyl Nettles Mei Perrier Vanessa Preddie Ashleigh Stebbins Kat Truong Daniel Zacarias Grant Friedheim Katelyn DePalmer

ありがとうございます!



v. 2.7 updated April 2023 Shanisa Sabdarali ALT Prefectural Advisor

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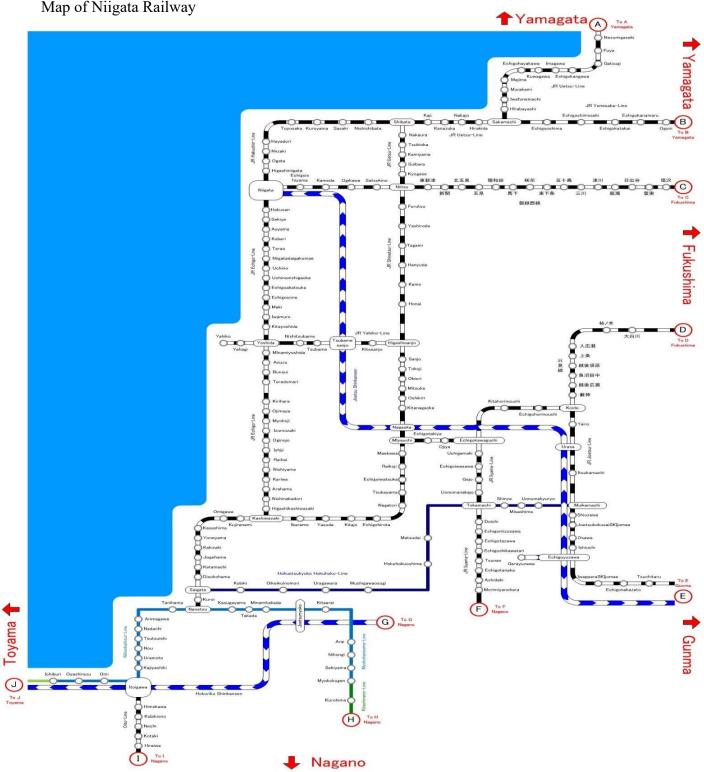


An example school sheet you could use to keep track of your multiple visit schools:

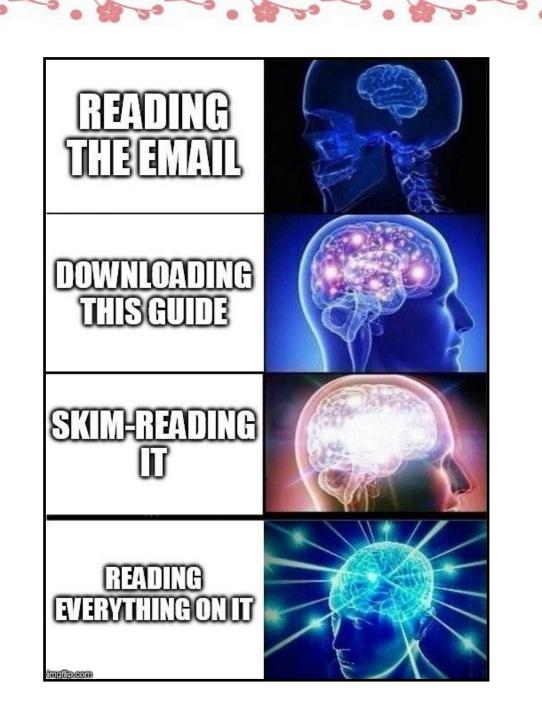
School Name	
Number of Classes	
Principal	
Vice-Principal	
Supervisor	
JTEs/HRTs	
Other Notes	



Map of Niigata Railway

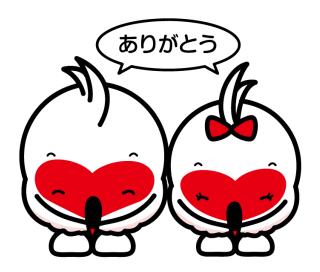


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That was certainly a lot of information, but we hope it helped you prepare for your arrival. We look forward to welcoming you to our Niigata family. Whether it's going to be 1 year or 5, the Niigata experience will certainly be enjoyable.







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