

# JAPAN

## A PRE-DEPARTURE GUIDE



[www.newpathrecruitment.com](http://www.newpathrecruitment.com)

## Table of Contents

<u>FINANCIAL PLANNING</u>	3-4	<u>PAPERWORK</u>	10-11
■ Initial amount of money you should bring	3	■ Alien registration card	10
■ Other methods of exchange	3	■ Re-entry permit	10
■ Income and deductions	3	■ Inkan	10
■ FAQ	3	■ Bank account	10
<u>INCOME TAX</u>	4	<u>CULTURE SHOCK</u>	11-12
■ Income tax in Japan	4	■ What is culture shock?	11
■ Income tax in your home country	4	■ Some ways to cope with culture shock	11
<u>HEALTH INSURANCE &amp; NATIONAL PENSION</u>	4-5	■ Getting support	12
■ Japanese national health insurance	4	<u>HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR MONEY</u>	12-13
■ Japanese national pension plan	4	■ Shopping	12
■ Municipal tax	5	■ Convenience store shopping	12
■ Travel insurance	5	<u>GETTING READY FOR DEPARTURE</u>	13
<u>ACCOMMODATIONS</u>	5	■ Departure for Japan	13
■ The typical single apartment in Japan	5	■ What should I wear on the plane?	13
<u>WHAT CAN I BRING?</u>	6-7	■ Checked luggage	13
■ Airline restrictions	6	■ Carry-on luggage and important items	13
■ Dress & appearance at work	6	■ If problems occur	13
■ Will clothing in Japan fit me?	6	■ Clearing customs	13
■ Personal items	6		
■ International driving permit	6		
■ Eye glasses / contact lens	6		
■ Alarm clock	6		
■ Dealing with customs	7		
<u>ELECTRONICS &amp; ELECTRICAL POWER</u>	7-8		
■ Camera	7		
■ Computers & Internet	7		
■ Music players	7		
■ Television, video, DVD	7		
■ Electrical outlets and plugs	8		
<u>COMMUNICATIONS</u>	8-9		
■ Mobile phone	8		
■ Land based telephone	9		
■ Public phone	9		
■ Internet services	9		
■ Post	9		
■ FAQ	9		

### Initial Amount of Money You Should Bring

- Teachers should bring at least ¥250,000 to Japan when you first arrive to pay for work-related transportation costs and living expenses such as food and entertainment.
- Of the ¥250,000, we suggest you have ¥60,000 - ¥70,000 in Japanese cash (not Traveler's Checks) as soon as you arrive to Japan to pay for expenses. Exchanging Traveler's Checks in Japan can take time, so please bring the suggested amount of Japanese cash with you. There may not be time to exchange money at the airport when you arrive.
- We suggest you bring Traveler's Checks in Japanese Yen or US Dollars.
- Japan is still very much a cash-based society so you won't be using your credit cards or ATM cards like you do back home.

### Other Methods of Exchange

**Traveler's Checks:** Businesses that accept Traveler's Checks are rare and it takes time and effort to exchanging them at Japanese banks. Some banks will not exchange your Traveler's Checks unless you have an account with them.

**ATM Cards & Credit Cards:** Businesses and bank machines that accept ATM card issued overseas are rare. Credits cards issued overseas may be accepted but some retailers may not accept them. While it may be worthwhile to bring them to Japan, do not rely on being able to use them, Having said this, there are some Japanese ATM machines and post office ATMs that accept foreign ATM card (card that operate on the PLUS or CIRRUS networks), but do not rely on having one in your area.

**Checks and Money Orders:** Checks and money orders are very rarely accepted at Japanese banks. Even if you find one, the service fees will be very high. We don't suggest you bring these.

### Income and Deductions

**Salary:** Teachers usually receive their salary once a month on the 25<sup>th</sup> of the following month.

**Commuting Reimbursement:** Teachers pay for their work-related commuting costs each month and this cost is reimbursed to them along with their salary.

**Income Tax:** The income tax rate for Working Visa teachers is approximately 7%.

**Employment Insurance Premium:** This is approximately 0.7% of a Working Visa teacher's gross income, Employment Insurance is a Japanese social welfare benefit program that grants benefits in the event that a worker loses a job, or experience difficulties in maintaining successive employment.

### FAQ

Q: What are the most common Japanese currency denominations?

A: The most common notes are ¥1000, ¥5000, and ¥10,000. All of these are widely accepted and can even be used in some vending machines. Almost any store will easily make change for a ¥10,000 note – even if your purchase is small. A ¥2000 note is also in circulation but is not commonly used. For color photos of current Japanese currency and coins please see

<http://www.thejapanfaq.com/japanfaq1c.html>

The most commonly used coins are the ¥1, ¥5, ¥10, ¥50, ¥100, and ¥500 coins. There is a newer version of the ¥500 coin that is gold in color.

Q: I heard Japan is a very expensive place to live. Will I be able to live comfortably?

A: Although Japan can be considered a very expensive place to live; the wages our teachers earn are enough for them to live comfortably. Depending on lifestyle, many teachers are able to save a significant amount of money while they are in Japan.

Q: I have financial obligations at home (i.e. student loans). How can I send money home?

A: Teachers commonly send money home in a variety of ways: postal money order, wire transfer service, or bank telegraphic transfer. The related fees and time vary. Teachers can also assign a proxy for your bank account (at home), such as a family member or trusted friend. A proxy has access to your bank account and can act on your behalf. Please enquire at your bank about setting up a proxy.

## INCOME TAX

Schools have an obligation by Japanese tax law to withhold income tax from our teachers' salaries. While you are living and working in Japan you may also have tax obligations in your home country.

### Income Tax in Japan

Income tax in Japan is deducted from the teacher's monthly salary. The income tax rate is based on the teacher's visa status and duration of stay in Japan. The income tax rate is broken down into two separate categories:

1. Residents of Japan. The income tax rate for residents is approximately 5% - 8%. Residents include people who have lived in Japan for over a year and people who have visas with an initial validation period of 1 year or more. Working Visa teachers are taxed at this rate (unless they leave Japan within a year).
2. Non-Residents. The income tax rate for non-residents is much higher. Currently it is approximately 20%. Non-residents include people who have visas with an initial validation period of less than 1 year.

### Income Tax in Your Home Country

We strongly suggest that you do your own research on your home country's tax laws before you leave for Japan. If you have specific questions regarding income tax we suggest you speak to an accountant.

Nation	Tax Authority	Website
Canada	Canada Customs and Revenue Agency	<a href="http://www.cra.gc.ca">www.cra.gc.ca</a>
United States	Internal Revenue Service	<a href="http://www.irs.gov/">www.irs.gov/</a>

## HEALTH INSURANCE & NATIONAL PENSION

The Japanese government expects everyone who resides in Japan to register onto the Japanese National Health Insurance Plan and the Japanese National Pension Plan.

### Japanese National Health Insurance (KOKUMIN KENKO HOKEN)

- The monthly premium for Japanese National Health Insurance is based on your previous year's income, and the rate is different for each municipality. For teachers who are new to Japan, the premium may be as low as ¥3,000 to ¥4,000 per month during the first year. The average cost for teachers who have resided in Japan for over a year is ¥20,000 per month or more.
- When receiving medical help, National Health Insurance holders usually pay for 30% of the cost of medical/dental expenses and 70% is covered by the insurance. Treatment not covered by insurance are: medical check-ups, preventative vaccinations, cosmetic surgery, normal childbirth, orthodontic work and abortion.
- Teachers who enroll onto National Health Insurance after being in Japan for a period of time will be charged back premiums calculated from the date that they first arrived in Japan.
- If you are planning to enroll onto National Health Insurance, please purchase enough travel insurance from your home country to cover you until your new coverage takes effect. We suggest obtaining 2 months worth of travel insurance.

## Japanese National Pension Plan (KOKUMIN NENKIN HOKEN)

- The monthly premium for the Japanese National Pension Plan is about ¥13,300. This may or may not be deducted from your salary. It will depend on who you will be working for.
- People are eligible for pension after a minimum of 25-years of payment into the system.
- Non-Japanese nationals who have paid into the pension plan for a minimum of 6-months are eligible for a lump-sum payment (up to 80%) after returning to their home country.

## Municipal Tax

- All Japanese income earners incur municipal tax. The amount is calculated from the previous year's income.
- The rate is different for each municipality.

For more information, please visit the following websites:

<http://www.clair.or.jp/e/>

<http://www.nta.go.jp> click on English at the bottom

<http://www.metro.tokyo.jp/ENGLISH/RESIDENT/LIVINGIN/index.htm>

## Travel Insurance

Most new teachers elect to purchase travel insurance from their home country. It is a good idea to purchase about two months worth of travel insurance in order to cover your time until you receive National Health Insurance.

## ACCOMMODATIONS

### The Typical Single Apartment in Japan

Below are the layouts for typical single person apartments. It is called a 1K or 1DK apartment. The majority of Japanese singles live in an apartment like this. Compared to western standards they are very small. But they are adequate and once you get used to it, it's not too bad.

The main living space is approximately 3m×4m. This is where a person sleeps, relaxes, studies, keeps their things, etc. The closet may be western style with one high shelf and a rod to hang things. Alternatively, the closet may be Japanese style with one shelf placed mid-way in the closet and no rod, It is also common for there to be a door to separate the main living space from the kitchen/utility space, This helps keep the apartment cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter. The apartment will also usually have a balcony the width of the apartment where teachers will dry their laundry on a line or pole.

The small kitchen area will have a sink, small storage for dishes, food and other utensil, and a refrigerator. It is also in this kitchen/utility area where a washing machine is normally kept. There may also be some storage near the front door.

The apartment also normally has a unit bath – a one-piece fiberglass unit that includes a tub/shower, western-style toilet, and sink/vanity. The unit bath is designed according to the Japanese style of bathing. A person would first fill the bathtub with hot, clean water. Then they would wash themselves outside the tub and rinse off using the hand-held shower head. Lastly, they would soak in the tub and relax. Normally, the sink and tub drain will feed into the same exit pipe and trap.



## WHAT CAN I BRING?

### Airline Restrictions

Be aware of airline restrictions regarding luggage weight and dimensions. Before deciding what to pack, you should contact your airline to see what your luggage allowance will be. Your airline may charge extra if your luggage is oversized or overweight.

### Dress & Appearance at Work

Japan has all four seasons with all types of weather and temperature conditions. Therefore, please bring clothing suitable for all types of weather. For work appearance, this will depend on your school's policy. Please make sure that you bring what is required of you.

### Will Clothing in Japan Fit Me?

Japanese sizes are definitely a lot smaller than in western countries. For example: men's shirts may have shorter sleeves, shoulders may not be wide enough, or the neck may be too tight. Women's clothing tends to be smaller and petite sizes and cuts favor straight, narrow hips. Clothing and shoe sizes are measured in centimeters, not inches, and there are specialized measurement systems used for suits and dresses.

You should bring your own comfortable clothing and don't depend on buying everything in Japan. In general, if you are a small to average sized man you will easily be able to find clothes that fit. If you are an average sized woman you may find it difficult to find clothes that fit since Japanese women are much smaller.

### Personal Items

- Some personal care items common in western culture are not commonly available in Japan. For example, deodorant and anti-perspirant are not commonly found in Japan.
- Dental hygiene products are easily found in Japan. There are many choices for toothbrushes, toothpastes, flosses, mouthwash and other products to help you maintain your teeth.
- Contact lens care products are common in Japan. You will find products made by many of the same companies you are used to seeing at home: For example, Opti-free, Bausch and Lomb, Ciba Vision and Johnson & Johnson
- If you require regular medication, we suggest that you bring enough supply to last you for your time in Japan. Or, have your parents or somebody close to you send it to you. You can also check to see if you can obtain the same medication in Japan, once you arrive.
- You may want to bring over the counter medication such as cold medicine, allergy medicine, ibuprofen, or medicine for upset stomach/diarrhea. Communicating your needs to a Japanese pharmacist may be difficult. Medicines containing ephedrine or derivatives are illegal in Japan. There may also be limits on what you can bring. Please call the Japanese consulate for more information.

### International Driving Permit

If you plan on driving in Japan you should bring an International Driving Permit along with your regular driver's license. These permits are valid for one year and can only be extended from outside of the country. After one year, you can switch to a regular Japanese driver's license.

### Eye glasses/contact lens

Teachers are encouraged to visit their optometrist for an eye exam prior to coming to Japan. It is a good idea to have a copy of your prescription in case you need to purchase eye glasses or contact lenses in Japan. If you do need to purchase glasses or contact lenses, you will have to be checked by an optician, who usually works inside a eye glass store. Eye glasses are relatively cheap compared to western prices.

### Alarm clock

Bringing an alarm clock is a good idea so that you won't be late for work. Try to bring a compact, battery powered alarm clock.

## Dealing with Customs

Teachers should be aware of what they can and can not bring to Japan. This can include some over-the-counter medications, prescription medications, currency, personal affects, alcohol and tobacco, plant or animal matter, and materials subject to censorship (i.e. pornography). A Japanese embassy or consulate can also be of assistance in helping you determine what should not be brought to Japan. Useful links include:

<http://www.customs.go.jp> (click on English)

<http://www.centrair.jp/en/guide/baggageinfo/index.html>

## ELECTRONICS & ELECTRICAL POWER

### Camera

Teachers are encouraged to bring a camera so that you can capture all your memories in Japan. Disposable film cameras and 35mm film stock are widely available, Film processing is also widely available and relatively inexpensive, Most shops will process a 24-exposure roll of film; provide 3.5×5 prints and an index print for approximately 1200-1500 Yen. Service is usually very fast and quality is also good. Many photo shops also allow users of digital cameras to make prints. Most will have machines that you can insert your camera's memory chip or a CD-ROM into and then select the photos you wish to make prints of.

### Computers & Internet

If you have a laptop computer, you might want to consider bringing it with you. But you can also purchase computers in Japan for a relatively inexpensive price. However, be aware that Japanese language software cannot always be operated correctly on an English operating system. Power is also a consideration. Japan runs on 100V 50-60Hz electric power, Check to see if your device is capable of operating at this setting, If it can not, you may need to purchase a power converter.

There are a few shops in Japan that specialize in English language computers, software and support. "PrimePC" is one of those shops. You can order custom made computer with an English operating system for a relatively inexpensive price. Other equipment such as printers and scanners, speakers, and other items can be purchased cheaply in Japan. For common items like printers and scanners, English language drivers and normally available for download from the manufacture's website.

### Music Players

Many teachers bring some form of music player – digital MP3 player, CD player, Walkman, etc. You can then either listen with headphones on the train or plug in some small peripheral speakers for music at home.

### Television, Video and DVD

In Japan, the television standard is NTSC. The NTSC standard is the same used in North America. The UK, Australia and New Zealand use the PAL standard. Japan has several national networks that produce a variety of programming but it does not include English programming. Some new broadcasts, movies, and other programs are "bilingual" broadcasts that have an alternate Language track. You will be able to access this alternate language track if you have a stereo VCR or television. Satellite television is also widely available (Sky Perfect) and offers a wider variety of foreign language (English) programming.

VHS format videocassette tapes are still commonplace in Japan. The growth of DVD and recordable DVD machines and hard-disc recorders come at the expense of video cassette players and recorders. Videocassettes are encoded with the NTSSC television standard. VHS tapes from North America can be viewed in Japan with no problems or modifications. VHS tapes from the UK, Australia and New Zealand cannot be played in Japan as they are formatted as PAL. New videocassette recorders stereo models can be purchased for as little as ¥5000.

DVD players are becoming increasingly popular in Japan and are becoming less expensive. DVDs are regionally coded into worldwide zones (1 for North America, 2 for Japan, the UK, & Western Europe, and 4 for Australia and New Zealand). Both the

player and software must have the same zone coding in order for the content to be seen or played. Players and software from different regions are not compatible. DVD players in Japan also use the NTSC video standard, We do not recommend bringing a DVD player with you. DVD players can be purchased for as little as ¥5000. It may be possible to enable some DVD players to become “region free” and capable of playing any zoned disc. These “region free” models can be slightly more expensive. Players and discs are marked with their region code.

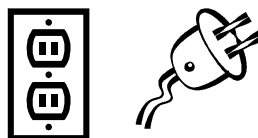
#### Other Electric Devices

Teachers may want to bring personal care electric devices – hairdryers, curling irons, electric razors, etc. Please read the section below regarding electrical power to see if your item will be compatible with the electricity in Japan. You may wish to purchase similar items in Japan or travel versions. Travel versions often run on 100-240 Volts of power and various Hertz cycles.

#### Electrical Outlets and Plugs

Before packing electronic devices, teachers should be aware of the electrical power standards used in Japan. Japan operates on 100Volts of current and 50 to 60 Hertz cycles. Eastern and Northern Japan operate on 50Hz cycles and Western Japan – including the Chubu region, Kanasai, Kyusyu and Shikoku operate on 60Hz cycles. The sockets and plugs may be different from what is normally used in your country. Check the below diagrams to see if your items are compatible.

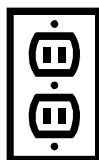
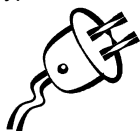
Japan, (Type A plug) 100 Volt 50 or 60 Hertz cycles



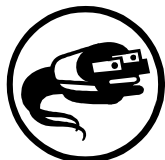
Canada and the USA (Type A & B Plug)120 Volts 60 Hertz

In the US & Canada, two-blade plugs are often polarized. One blade is often larger than the other. Most outlets are designed to accept polarized plugs. The large blade is a safety feature intended so the plug can be inserted one way only to reduce the chance of shock. If you try to plug a modern plug into an old-style receptacle for equal size blades it will not fit. Outside North America many countries with Type A use the old style plug and a newer, polarized plug might pose a problem. This can be bypassed using an adaptor which converts the newer Type A plug to the older model with equal-sized blades. Be aware, that you might also be bypassing the protection that polarization provides.

Type A



Type B



Australia & New Zealand (Type I Plug) 230-240 Volts and 50 hertz

The United Kingdom (Type G Plug) 230Volts and 50Hertz

#### COMMUNICATIONS

#### Mobile Phone

Mobile phone service is available from many companies but the three most popular are NTT DoCoMo, Softbank, and Au. There are many different models and colors for mobile phones in Japan.

<http://mb.softbank.jp/mb/en>

<http://www.nttdocomo.co.jp/english/>

<http://www.au.kddi.com/english/index.html>

You should do some research before obtaining a mobile phone. Contracts, pricing plans and usage rates will also vary from company to company. In order to obtain a mobile phone the teacher must have an Alien Registration Card and passport. If a person is not 20 years of age they may have difficulty in obtaining a mobile phone in their name and may require a guarantor. An average user should budget ¥10,000 per month for their telephone costs. Be aware that if you talk on your phone a lot, your bill will

be very large.

Currently, the common features include email text messaging, a digital camera, Internet browsing capability (limited), and the ability to make and receive calls from overseas. Mobile phones in Japan tend to be advanced when compared to what is available in other countries.

Pre-paid mobile phones are also available, and can be a cost-effective alternative if you don't plan on using the phone much and wish to be contactable. These phones are available at convenience stores as well as electronics shops and mobile phone service providers. The person normally needs to purchase the phone and then purchase to use the phone.

Pre-paid phones tend to lack many of the features found in contract phones and can be more expensive in terms of cost per minute.

### Land-based Telephone

The national telephone company, NTT, is responsible for all land-based lines in Japan. Most teachers do not need a land based line, and depend only on their mobile phone. Landlines in Japan have to be purchased and it can be very expensive – up to ¥75,000. Land-based telephone service may be available if a person subscribes to a particular Internet service. It may also be possible to rent a land-based telephone line.

<http://506506.ntt.com/english/index.html>

### Public Telephone

Due to the popularity of mobile phones, public pay telephones are becoming harder to find. Public phones are generally found in or around train stations, convenience stores, and other public areas. There are primarily two types of pay phones: gray ones capable of making international or domestic calls and green ones only for domestic use, Pay phones accept ¥10 and ¥100 coins and do not give change. Some public phones also accept phone card (pre-paid credits), and also credit cards.

[http://506506.ntt.com/english/service/c\\_card/](http://506506.ntt.com/english/service/c_card/)

[http://506506.ntt.com/english/service/p\\_card/](http://506506.ntt.com/english/service/p_card/)

### Internet Service

Internet cafes are popular in Japan. Broadband Internet service in the home is also on the rise, so staying in touch with your family and friends through the Internet and email is relatively easy. To obtain Internet service in your apartment the most common providers are Yahoo! BB, Fusion GOL, and NTT FLETS.

### Post

Japan's postal service is quick and reliable and offers many options to get your letters, postcards, and other items to their destinations. There are over 20,000 post office branches in Japan so there should be one close to you. Post is delivered from Monday through Saturday. Stamps are also available from convenience stores and some vending machines. Airmail to North America takes approximately a week and surface mail of packages takes approximately a month. Domestic post costs ¥80 or more and airmail starts at ¥120.

The Post office and post boxes will have the 〒 or 郵便 symbol on them.

### FAQ

Q: How can my family call me in Japan?

A: In order to connect to your personal phone the following pattern needs to be followed:

(International Access Code) + (Country Code) + (Area Code) + (Number)

i.e. 001-81-12-3456-7890

- Note that international access codes will vary.
- Area codes in Japan start with the number "0". When dialing from overseas the "0" is not to be dialed. Area codes are normally 3 digits but can be as many as 4-5.

- Mobile phone numbers are normally made up of a 3-digit area code (080 or 090) then an 8-digit number.
- Common country codes are:
  - Japan = 81
  - Canada and the USA = 1
  - Australia = 61
  - New Zealand = 64
  - the UK = 44

## PAPERWORK

---

### Alien Registration Card (ARC)

All foreigners living in Japan must apply for this form of photo identification within 90 days of arriving in Japan. This document looks similar to a driver's license but serves many functions in Japan. The Alien Registration Card must be carried with you at all times and must be presented to authorities upon request. The ARC will note your place of residence, visa type and expiry information, your employers' name, visa sponsor and other information. Teachers need their ARC in order to obtain a variety of services: open a bank account, obtain a mobile phone, obtain a membership at a video rental shop or gym, etc.

Teachers normally apply for this card once they have moved to their placement. It takes approximately two weeks to obtain and you can only apply for it at the city hall or ward office where you are residing. Until the ARC is issued, teachers must carry their passport or a copy of their passport for identification purposes. Any time your personal information changes (address, visa expiry date, passport information, etc) you are obliged to report it to the city hall or ward office where you live within 14 days. The City Hall or ward office staff will write the updated information on the back of the card and notarize it.

If your ARC is ever lost or stolen you must report it to the city hall or ward office where you live as soon as possible. Once you leave Japan (permanent departure) you must surrender the ARC to the Immigration officials.

### Re-Entry Permit

If a teacher wishes to leave Japan briefly (i.e. for a vacation) and return to continue living and working they must obtain a re-entry permit from their local immigration bureau before their departure. If re-entry permit is not obtained the immigration authorities will assume you are leaving Japan and will cancel your visa. Re-entry permits can be single-use or multiple. Multiple-use re-entry permits are valid as long as your visa and cannot be transferred from one visa term to another. Re-entry permits cost between ¥3,000-6,000.

For more information regarding re-entry permission please see the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website:

[http://www.mofa.go.jp/j\\_info/visit/visa/02.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/j_info/visit/visa/02.html)

### Inkan

An *inkan*, also commonly referred to as a *hanko*, is a personal stamp/seal that serves as your official signature. Japanese people use *inkans* all the time. Non-Japanese can often use their signature in lieu of an *inkan* but there may be times when it may be necessary or more convenient to use an *inkan*. Examples of this may be to open a bank account or begin a mobile phone contract. *Inkans* are relatively inexpensive – approximately ¥2000 – and can be made to have the person's name in Japanese katakana characters. Due to the size of the *inkan* head longer names or full names may not fit.

### Bank Account

In order to open a bank account, you will need your Alien Registration card, a small amount of money, and an *inkan* may also be required. Once the paperwork has been completed they will issue you a passbook and a cash card will be made and sent to you at a later date.

Please be aware that banking in Japan is very different from what you may be used to. Banks will normally operate Monday to Friday from 10am to 3pm. Most ATM machines do not operate 24hours a day and will normally operate from 8am until 10pm and will have restricted hours on Saturdays, Sundays and national holidays, during holiday periods, such as Golden Week and New Year, ATM's may be shot down for several days.

## CULTURE SHOCK

---

### What is Culture Shock?

Culture shock is defined as:

*"...a term used to describe the anxiety and feelings (of surprise, disorientation, confusion, etc.) felt when people have to operate within an entirely different cultural or social environment, such as a foreign country. It grows out of the difficulties in assimilating the new culture, causing difficulty in knowing what is appropriate and what is not. This is often combined with strong disgust (moral or aesthetical) about certain aspects of the new or different culture."* (Wikipedia)

Most people do experience some sort of culture shock. However, there are different intensities of culture shock that people feel. This intensity will depend on the person's feelings toward being in Japan, their attitude, flexibility, and adaptability. It also depends on the person's social network.

Some common symptoms of culture shock can include:

- Extreme homesickness or a desire to return home
- General anxiety – even if nothing is obviously wrong
- Social withdrawal and a lack of desire to meet local people
- Wanting only to meet or be with people from your own culture
- Lack of confidence, lethargy, & depression
- Increased irritability, feelings of loneliness or isolation
- Excessive alcohol intake, overeating or lack of appetite
- Strained personal relationships – especially with partners or spouses
- Reduced performance at work
- Physical health problems – such as upset stomach and headaches

### Some Ways to Cope With Culture Shock

- Do Some Research. Before your departure read and research about what it is like to live in Japan. Books, websites, Internet forums, and speaking to people who have lived in Japan will give you better idea of what to expect.
- Try new things and explore where you live and work and the region. Many places are easily accessible by public transit.
- Learn Japanese. Learning some conversational Japanese will help open many doors you never knew existed. You may not be able to learn the whole language in a short time so set realistic goals and get out and use what you have learned.
- Socialize. Make the effort to meet new people from Japan by trying new things such as, sports, and cultural activities. Introduce yourself to your neighbors. The people you meet may be able to help you and offer you advice and encouragement.
- Stay in touch with family and friends. Call, email, and write letters or postcards. Your support network will be able to listen to your problems and help you solve them and give you any encouragement you may need. It may also be comforting to have photos of your friends and loved ones with you.
- Comforts. Try decorating your apartment with your favorite photos and posters, books and CDs from home or in your native language, imported food, watching a favorite movie or going to the cinema.
- Keep a journal, diary or scrapbook. This can be therapeutic and a way to express you feelings. Things that bother you may seem less problematic once they are on paper or after you have had some time to reflect on it.
- Exercise and eat healthy.
- Be rational. When in Japan not everything will be done in a way that is familiar to you. Instead of passing judgment on something

as “good” or “bad” try to think of it as “different” and try to understand why it is done that way.

- Get help. If you have tried the above and still re having a tough time there are counseling services available. Your local international center may have resources you can turn to and there are help lines, as well.

### Getting Support

Tokyo English Lifeline Call 03-5774-0992

<http://www.telljp.com>

<http://www.hozumiclinic.com/counselinge.html>

Tokyo English Lifeline

Counseling Service

### HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR MONEY

Many people have a preconception that Japan is a very expensive place to live. This can be true, but it is also a very affordable place to live if you know where to shop.

### Shopping

- Look for a ¥100 or ¥99 Shop. These are the Japanese equivalent to a ‘Dollar Store’ where all items sell for 99 or 100 yen (plus tax). These stores commonly carry plastics, stationary, dishes, dry goods, household items, cleaning products, and a variety of other things. In some cases, fresh food may also be available. These “Dollar Stores” have so many more things in them than they do here in North America.
- Department stores, supermarkets, and local grocery stores. Be aware that it may be cheaper to shop at your local independent grocery rather than at the local supermarket or department store. It pays to shop around and compare prices.
- Department store chains also market themselves to different clientele. One department store may be low end, mid-level, or much more exclusive ( i.e. expensive).
- Recycle shops may sell items you need at low prices. The items may be new or used. You may be able to purchase electronics, appliances, house wares, and other items.
- Look at some internet sites such as, [gaijinpot.com](http://gaijinpot.com), where people are selling their goods before they head back home.
- It may be less expensive to purchase items on-line.
  - <http://www.fbcusa.com> – Imported Food Service
  - <http://www.theflyingpig.com/ftp/Shop.ASP> – Imported Food Service via Costco Japan
  - <http://www.primepc.jp> – Computer sales
  - <http://www.amazon.co.jp> – English books and media (English search capable)
  - [www.pricechecktokyo.com](http://www.pricechecktokyo.com) – Offers an unofficial reference of what things cost in the Tokyo area.
- Fruits and Vegetables tend to be seasonal and can be expensive.
- Bread will come in smaller sized loafs (4-10 slices) than westerners are used to. Bread is normally white and whole-wheat bread is not very common.
- Rice can be considered expensive – it’s approximately ¥400-500 per kilogram. Rice is normally sold in 2Kg, 5Kg and 20Kg bags. Virtually all rice sold is grown in Japan. Other types of rice (i.e. Basmati or Chinese long-grain rice) may only be available at specialty shops.
- Department stores and supermarkets tend to discount perishable food items in the evenings.
- Items in stores can be marked discount (割引 wari-biki), half price (半額 han-gaku) and free (無料 mu-ryou).

### Convenience Store Shopping

Japanese convenience stores can be found nearly everywhere and offers fast meals.

- Non-alcoholic beverage (Cola, tea, water, etc.) 300-500ml ¥120-150
- Cigarettes ¥320-350
- English Newspaper ¥160
- Onigiri (rice ball) ¥105-200
- Bento (lunchbox) ¥300-600

- Sandwich ¥140-320
- Milk 1L carton ¥200, 500ml ¥130
- Cup soup ¥150-300
- Candy bar ¥100-150
- Yogurt (180g flavored) ¥140

Dining out in Japan is common and can be less expensive than you think. Some suggestions on what to consider include:

- Most restaurants will list the costs on their menu. If you are unsure ask the staff before ordering. Tipping is not required.
- An average restaurant meal set costs ¥800-2000
- Cup of coffee ¥300
- Fast food set ¥400-800

## GETTING READY FOR DEPARTURE

### Departure for Japan

It's almost time for you to depart for Japan. Make sure to say goodbye to your family and friends.

### What should I wear on the plane?

You should wear something comfortable! It's a long flight to Japan so you may want to consider that the in-plane environment can be cold and very dry. We suggest wearing smart casual clothing on your trip to Japan.

### Checked Luggage

Contact your airline to find out restrictions on luggages. Be sure of any dimension and weight limitations for both checked luggage and carry-on luggage. Your airline may charge you extra if you luggage is oversized or overweight.

### Carry-on Luggage and Important Items

Consult your airline for limitations and restrictions regarding what can be in your carry-on luggage. When preparing carry-on luggage ensure you have the following items available, completed, and accessible:

- Passport
- Certificate of Eligibility
- Proof of Health Insurance
- Passport sized photos

Teachers are also encouraged to pack some personal effects for 1-2 days (clothing, toothbrush, necessary medication, money, etc) just in case you are separated from you luggage or arrive after the stores have closed for the day.

### If Problems Occur

If there are any problems that occur, please try to contact us, or have your family contact us. This is very important especially if your flight is delayed.

### Clearing Customs

One you have arrived in Japan, make sure you have completed your Embarkation/Disembarkation Card. This will be provide to you during the flight. Proceed to customs and present you passport, COE, and the Embarkation/ Disembarkation card. The immigration officer may ask you questions at this time. The officer will process the paperwork you have provided and issue your "Landing Permission" (see visa section for sample).

Collect your luggage and proceed to the customs counter. The customs officer will ask to see your passport and may ask you questions regarding your luggage at this time. There is also a possibility that the officer will want you to open one or more pieces of your luggage to inspect the contents. Once cleared you are ready to leave the Customs area and enter the arrivals area and meet our client representative.