

GUNMA JET

ARRIVAL GUIDE

Information Brochure for New JETs



Congratulations and welcome to the cabbage patch! GAJET (Gunma Association for Japan Exchange and Teaching) has also prepared an arrival guide for new JETs! You can find it here: <http://www.gunmajet.net/newcomers-guide/>

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Pre-Arrival Information

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Clothing

Gunma can be very hot and humid in the summer and very cold and dry in the winter. In fact, some of the highest temperatures ever recorded in Japan were recorded in Gunma!

Therefore, it would be best to bring things to wear in very hot weather to start with. For example, sportswear that wicks away sweat is very popular in Gunma during the summer. If you are short for space, you can buy winter clothes after you arrive as there are many places to buy cheap winter clothes. Or, you can have your winter clothes shipped to you later. The “dry wind” (karakkaze) is a famous part of autumn and winter in Gunma. If you will be living in Northern Gunma, you should be prepared for snow as well!

Larger-sized clothes can be difficult to come by in Japan. However, there are several shops in Gunma that cater to foreign sizes. One popular Japanese store is www.uniqlo.com/jp. They carry Japanese sizes XS-3XL in many of their clothes. They also carry sizes 22.5-26 in some of their shoes as well. Larger sizes might need to be ordered online. They do carry undergarments as well but the range of sizes isn't very large.

And of course you have other options outside of Japanese brands. Some foreign brands have stores in Japan, which makes it very easy to order online. Larger shoes can be found at most big sports outlets. Tokyo is also a great place to shop for larger-size clothing items as it is in more demand there.

You should also bring a pair of comfortable and clean non-marking shoes with you to school to wear indoors only. If you have a visit school it is a good idea to have another pair of shoes and a shoe bag to take to school with you. Otherwise you can wear the slippers they provide to guests. If you have tattoos you will probably be expected to cover them at school.

As for accessories, Japanese teachers tend to not wear much at all. However, as a foreigner, you might be able to wear some accessories if you keep it simple. Piercings should be alright depending on their size and location. Nail polish is the same, it can also be alright if the colors aren't too bright. But these both depend on your schools. You won't know until you start working. If you want to bring accessories with you, bring simple things that don't bring too much attention.

For Males

For your first month at work it is advisable to wear something professional until you can judge what is appropriate to wear at work. During the summer months, professionals usually wear “cool biz”. This means suit trousers and a button up shirt (short sleeves are okay), but no tie. For comfort, it is a good idea to wear a polyester (or other wicking-type material) undershirt.

For graduation ceremonies you will be expected to wear a white tie with your suit, but you can buy one from a 100-yen store after you arrive. Black ties are worn at funerals, so they are generally not worn at work or other ceremonial events. Keeping a spare set of clothes at school will also come in handy in case of rain or excessive sweat.

For Females

By looking at what the other teachers wear when they teach, you can decide what is appropriate. Many teachers have to teach club activities, so they wear sports clothing outside of class, but this might not apply to you. To be safe and to stay professional, you should prepare to wear “cool biz” at school. This means a dress, or a dress shirt/blouse with dress pants or a skirt. You most likely won’t need to wear a suit every day, so just bring one black suit to wear for special events. Once you get used to how your teachers dress and feel more comfortable at your new schools, you can adjust your clothing.

Some things that are not appropriate for school to keep in mind while packing:

- Low cut shirts
- Visible undergarments
- Tight clothing
- Mid-thigh skirts
- Bare shoulders
- Bare feet (you must wear socks or stockings if you wear open toed shoes)

Things to Buy/Bring

Omiyage

In Japan, there is a culture of giving small gifts or souvenirs called “omiyage.” People will often buy omiyage for their coworkers when they travel somewhere for work, during holidays, or when starting a new job. It is a great way to start new friendships and break the ice, so

while not obligatory, it's highly recommended that you bring some omiyage for the people at your schools and possibly some people at your Board of Education (BOE).

What should I get?

Generally speaking, individually wrapped snacks are the most common omiyage that people give out in Japan. So, it's not a bad idea to follow that example and bring snacks that are unique to your home country, or even better, your local area. You can also get non-individually wrapped snacks, or some trinkets (keychains, magnets, etc.), but these options are likely less convenient and/or affordable. Please be aware that summer in Gunma is very hot and humid, so it would be wise to avoid bringing chocolates and other snacks that may melt in the heat.

New JETs tend to get stressed about what omiyage to bring, so it's helpful to keep in mind that you can get gifts that a peer in your home country wouldn't necessarily get too excited about. That same gift will still be an interesting gift for a Japanese person, as they will be receiving something from a foreign country that they can't normally get. Something as simple as a piece of popular candy from your home country for each of your teachers could be exciting.

In addition to getting something small and inexpensive that can be distributed to all of your coworkers, it's also a good idea to get something a little bit nicer for the people you will work most closely with (English teachers, supervisor), and the people who hold senior positions (principal, vice principal, superintendent). Some examples include calendars, pens, larger bags of trinkets or candies, etc. There is a bit more freedom here, because it's only for a few people.

How much is enough?

The amount of people you need to consider for this varies according to position and placement, so try to find out that number from your predecessor. Take into account the level of school you will teach at, and that you may visit more than one school. You are not expected to have omiyage for all the students in your schools, but if you want to bring something, take sheer numbers and expenses into account. Keep in mind that candy/snacks and money are often banned for students at elementary and junior high schools. Stickers, and things of that sort, are a popular option. Please refer to the information below for some general numbers for one school at each level.

Elementary school

All staff (20-30 people), vice principal, principal. Although uncommon, there may be JTEs (Japanese Teacher of English) or English Advisors at elementary schools.

Junior high school

All staff (20-60 people), JTEs (1-5 people), vice principal, principal

Senior high school

All staff (30-60 people), JTEs (2-10 people), vice principal (1 or 2), principal

*Please keep in mind that all senior high school ALTs in Gunma teach at two or three schools.

Board of Education

Supervisor(s)

*However, if you're in a small town/village, and/or there is only one (or a few) ALT(s), then you may be more closely involved with your BOE, and it may be useful to prepare for 10-20 people and the superintendent. For larger towns/cities, there probably isn't any expectation in regards to omiyage outside of your supervisor (if at all).

For CIRs

If you choose to bring omiyage, bring enough for your office. Staff office numbers vary greatly (10-60), so please ask your supervisor for numbers. You can also bring some nicer items for the higher ups, i.e. your 担当, 係長, 副課長, 課長, 部長など.

What not to bring

The following items cannot be brought into Japan by airline passengers:

- Major contraband: illegal drugs, needles, large quantities of antihistamines.
- Minor contraband: fresh fruit, meat products, vegetables, rice, flower seeds or bulbs, flour and straw, and pornography.
- Quarantine: rooted plants, furs, shells, meats, stuffed animals (taxidermy).

Please see airport information for a complete list. Be careful when packing your bags.

Other Important Items

Medications

Keep in mind that some over-the-counter medications (e.g. allergy and sinus medication) may be illegal in Japan. Japan's drug laws are very strict, so be aware of what you're bringing.

Some more information can be found here:

<https://jp.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/doctors/importing-medication/>

Toiletries

If there are certain kinds of shampoo, deodorant, tampons, toothpaste, etc., that you have a preference for, it's recommended that you bring over a supply of them that will last you a while. You'll miss them when they're gone, and it'll be expensive to get more of the same product from abroad.

While it'd be an overstatement to say that you can't get toothpaste with fluoride, or that you can't get antiperspirant stick deodorant, the main thing is that if you're a bit particular about the products you use, it's a hassle to find replacements, with Japanese labeling, that are effective in the way that you want them to be. If you're really not selective about the products you use, then it's possible to find suitable replacements for nearly anything.

If you are worried about not being able to ship items from home that you need, <https://jp.iherb.com/> is a good option. You can view the website in English but pay at the convenience store in yen. They have many things including a wide selection of deodorant and toothpaste.

You can also find a fair selection of items on www.amazon.co.jp/. You can also pay at the convenience store and shipping usually is very quick. For example, not all stores carry tampons, but these are easily ordered through amazon (although there isn't a large variety, and prices are often higher than usual). If you are a woman, another option besides tampons is a menstrual cup, which can be purchased online and shipped to Japan or your home country.

Important Documents

Driver's License & International Driving Permit (IDP)

Even if you're not planning to drive, we highly recommend still getting an International Driving Permit (IDP) before you leave for Japan so the option is still available to you. You can buy it from a licensed retailer in your home country (e.g. AAA in the USA, CAA in Canada, etc.). The IDP will be valid for a maximum of one year, either from the date it is issued or the date of your arrival in Japan, whichever comes first and is effectively non-renewable (as you can only renew if you spend another 3 consecutive months in your home country). Please note that the IDP must be obtained while you are overseas - it is NOT available in Japan. The IDP is a supplement to your regular driver's license, so you will need to carry both when you drive.

Also make sure to renew your license before you come to Japan as it can be difficult to renew after you arrive. If you renew your license within 3 months of leaving for Japan, please be sure to bring your previous license as well. Note that you need a full license (not a learner's permit) to use the IDP.

Lastly, you will need proof that you lived in your home country 3 months prior to arriving if you do decide to change your license to a Japanese license. Pay stubs, bills, or bank or credit card statements have worked for people in the past.

You can see more information about driving in your JET General Information Handbook and in the [Transportation](#) section of this document.

Passport

Be sure to renew your passport before you leave Japan if necessary. CLAIR recommends having at least a year before expiry on your passport. You can renew your passport in Japan, but it may take time and be a bit of a hassle, so you can spare yourself the trouble by doing it ahead of time.

Banking

Before you depart, tell your bank that you are moving to Japan so your account isn't frozen while you are in Japan. You can also ask your bank for your account information so you can easily set up a way to transfer money either online or at the post office. More information about money transfers will be given at Prefectural Orientation.

Cell Phones

As you may or may not know, Japan has three major mobile carriers: Docomo, AU, and Softbank. JETs in Gunma have used all three services. If you'd like to use one of the three major carriers, you can visit one of their many stores. Most workers probably won't be able to speak English, so bringing a Japanese-speaking older JET or asking your supervisor to help is advised. They all have English helplines if you are having trouble communicating with the in-store staff. There are also MVNO (Mobile Virtual Network Operator) services in Japan.

Buying a Phone in Japan

Android and iPhone

- Here are some costs to consider if you buy from Docomo, AU or Softbank:
 - Installation cost: ~ ¥3,340
 - Monthly plan fee: Varies by provider (data plans can average ¥4,000 to ¥9,000/month)
 - Smartphone/iPhone purchase: Varies by product, but a new iPhone can average ¥60,000 or more (may be able to pay off in monthly installments, or may be required to pay full cost upfront)
 - All plans are for two years. If you want to break contract after a year: (~ ¥9,500 - ¥18,000)
 - Note: Two year contracts may be longer than exactly two years, i.e. 25 months.
- Note: From May 2015, the Japanese government passed a law requiring the major carriers to unlock iPhones purchased with a plan on request. If you would like to request this option when purchasing a phone so that you can use it after you leave Japan, please inquire with store staff. However, note this process will incur a fee.

Flip phones/ Feature phones

- Flip phone are still popular in Japan.
- Japanese flip phones are highly evolved devices that are increasing in popularity with a huge range of style and function.
- They have lower hardware and data costs.
- Current flip phones now operate on 4G LTE network.

Docomo, AU, and Softbank

It's important to note that you must sign up for a 2-year plan. Cancellation fees can be quite expensive, so keep this in mind. You can either buy a new phone at the store (you should be able to set up a payment plan if you can't pay upfront, but this might depend a lot on the plan you decide upon*) or bring your unlocked phone to buy a SIM card.

*Some stores may require a credit card when setting up a plan in order to pay for a new phone in monthly installments. If you do not have one, they may require you to pay the full cost upfront.

The three major carriers all have English information on their websites regarding phone plans and charges. Please have a look for yourself to compare charges and support services:

- AU: <https://www.au.com/english/mobile/> ; www.au.com/english/support/faq/
(*AU has a good online customer service. You can send them emails in English and they can help answer extra questions.)
- Docomo: <https://www.nttdocomo.co.jp/english/charge/> ;
www.nttdocomo.co.jp/english/support/
- Softbank: <https://www.softbank.jp/en/mobile/> ; www.softbank.jp/en/mobile/support/

Bringing a Phone from Your Home Country to Japan

Android

- If you would like to use your Android phone, you won't be able to know if you are able to use a SIM card until you present your phone in-person to the mobile carrier.

iPhone

- Make sure your phone is either SIM-Free or unlocked. For more information, you can read through this website:
blog.gaijinpot.com/smartphones-japan-buy-unlock-change-plans/

MVNO

MVNOs are cheaper and are a good option for those who don't want a 2-year contract. The most important thing about bringing an unlocked phone is to make sure your phone is

completely unlocked. There are many different ones available, so here are some resources you can use to decide which one is best for you:

- Online:
 - The Gunma JET website has an article on getting a SIM card online: <http://www.gunmajet.net/guides/how-to-get-a-sim-card-in-japan-for-foreign-phones/>
 - www.sakuramobile.jp/
- In store: Yamada Denki, Bic Camera (electronics stores)

*The following information is for iPhone users and prices might vary between mobile carriers.

Below are two examples of a SIM card plan at your local mobile carrier in-person:

Data High-Speed Plan (データ高速プラン)		Data Unlimited Plan (データ無制限プラン)	
Data Only (データのみ)	Data and Call (通話付き)	Data Only (データのみ)	Data and Call (通話付き)
980 yen/ month	1,680 yen/ month	1,980 yen/ month	2,680 yen/month
Up to 3 GB/ month	Up to 3 GB/ month	No limit	No limit
	Domestic call 20 yen/ 30 seconds		Domestic call 20 yen/ 30 seconds

There is not a cancelation fee after one year. However, it's ¥9500 to cancel the SIM card before a year.

Other Important Information

- Things to bring with you
 - Residence Card
 - Bankbook/ credit card depending on your preferred method of payment
- Payment: Major credit cards are accepted
 - VISA, JCB, Mastercard, American Express and Diners Club International
 - Direct deposit from Japanese bank
 - Pay by cash at a convenience store
- Things to look out for
 - In the past year, some ALTs had trouble setting up payment without a credit card. Be aware that you may have to either:

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- Use a credit card at first and then later set up a direct deposit from your Japanese bank account OR
 - Pay for the phone (if you are buying a phone) entirely upfront
 - Check the content on their website and bring a Japanese supervisor with you if you have issues when setting up your mobile phone in Japan

*All information above are estimates. Prices and options are subject to change.

Google Voice

If you would like to keep your current phone number while you are in Japan, Google Voice is an easy, cheap option.

There is a \$20 USD fee to move your mobile number to Google Voice. Before canceling your phone plan check out the website below for more details on how to keep your current phone number: <https://support.google.com/voice/answer/1065667?hl=e>

Japanese Number Using Skype

If you purchase an MVNO SIM card, it will not provide you with a registered cell phone number in Japan. For bureaucratic purposes, having a Japanese cell phone number will be very convenient if you wish to apply for a variety of things. If you would like to use the MVNO option, you can get a local Japanese cell phone number via Skype, which you can use via the Skype mobile app on your smartphone.

More information about this option can be found on the Skype website:

<https://www.skype.com/en/features/online-number/>

A Note About Internet

Your internet situation will vary based on where you live and what options are available to you. Some JETs will be able to bundle internet and cell services, while others will handle their internet separately. Note that the hardware for your internet and the broadband provider are often separate companies. Keep in mind if your apartment is not set up for internet it can take up to a month for the whole process to take place. Pocket WiFi is becoming a common option in Japan if you think you will need internet right away. [Here](#) is website with more information. Otherwise, please talk with your supervisors (and maybe predecessor) about setting up internet once you arrive.

Expectations

Important Things to Consider Regarding Your Expectations for Arrival in Japan

- Your predecessor will have the most relevant information for your specific placement. However, keep in mind that while their information and advice could be helpful guidance, your experience could also end up differing greatly from your predecessor.
 - Though small, there is a chance that you don't have a JET predecessor, in which case your start-up fees may be somewhat higher than initially expected.
 - Gunma is considered a rural prefecture, and while there are several cities with modern conveniences, most JETs will not live in the center of a large city. Please check with your predecessor, Contracting Organization, or regional JETs about the specifics of the location of your placement (housing and schools).
 - Even if you have traveled/lived in Japan before (as a study abroad student), bear in mind that working in Japan and living independently in a Japanese community is often a very different experience with new challenges. Many JETs who previously studied abroad in Japan will attest to this fact.
 - The initial weeks of getting settled in Japan can be stressful, overwhelming, and/or frustrating for some people. This is natural. Please make use of the well-developed support system on JET. You can contact your supervisor, Prefectural Advisors, and other JETs if you need assistance while in Japan.
 - No matter how much Japanese you know (or don't know), living in a country where the major language is different than your native tongue entails making mistakes or being misunderstood. While this isn't always a pleasant experience, being humble, curious, and adopting a growth mindset (i.e. your ability level in any skill is not static—practice and mistakes will lead to improvement) can help with your mental health, your relationships with those around you, and your Japanese ability in the long run.
 - It is best to not overestimate your Japanese ability when you first arrive. Please don't be afraid to ask for help and don't be too hard on yourself for making mistakes.
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Post-Arrival Information

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Housing

Prior to Moving In

Incoming JETs' living arrangements vary widely—from moving into a brand new apartment without any furniture or appliances (meaning fridge, washing machine, or stove), to a 20-year-old room that's been passed down from ALT to ALT. In any case, you will want to ask your predecessor about what he or she is willing to sell or leave behind for you before you arrive. Some ALTs may also have some items provided by the BOE, so please check if you are a municipal ALT in a smaller town. This way, you will have a better idea of what you will be inheriting, what you'll need to buy upon your arrival, and a general idea of how much you may be spending on making your place comfortable for you. Asking for pictures of your new place will also help you to make determinations about space and setup. Keep a healthy dialogue open with your predecessor in order to make moving into your new home as smooth as possible!

(Alternatively, you may not have a predecessor, so reach out to your supervisor about your living arrangements, and what you can expect—space and furnishing-wise—upon your arrival.)

Furnishings

Inheriting

Generally, your predecessor will leave some small things to you like plates, or maybe a lamp. However, this will vary from predecessor to predecessor. Some may leave you everything at little to no cost, and some may leave you absolutely nothing. In some cases, your predecessor may ask you to buy some of the larger items from them.

Please be aware that there have been some complaints in the past about incoming JETs feeling as though they were ripped off by their predecessors; either the price was too high, or the quality was not up to par. Alternatively, leaving JETs have made fair payment arrangements with their successors and were ultimately not paid for the items they provided. Don't feel obligated to purchase or keep the things that your predecessor is offering to you.

However, if you do agree to purchase items, please be honest and fair in paying your predecessor what you agreed to. Feel free to reach out to the Gunma ALTs Facebook page, Gunma PAs, and other resources if you have any concerns.

(Tip: Always ask for pictures to make sure you know exactly what you are buying. If you're not given pictures, it may be best to look elsewhere for your home goods. It is also possible to buy many things cheaply at a local home improvement store or second-hand shop.)

If you are interested in buying goods from a store, some options you may be interested in include Hard Off, Daiso, Beisia, Nitori, and Muji. Hard Off is the cheapest option, but is sometimes lower in quality due to it being a second-hand shop, while Muji is higher quality, but much more expensive.

Also, there is a Facebook page for people who are interested in buying or selling their items in Gunma. Search “Gunma Buy, Sell, Exchange” to find good deals, or to compare prices for items you are interested in purchasing.

[\(https://www.facebook.com/groups/304639676386625/\)](https://www.facebook.com/groups/304639676386625/).

New Apartments

Some JETs will be moving into a new apartment. An unfurnished apartment can mean no washing machine, no stove, no refrigerator, and possibly no light fixtures. These JETs should plan on bringing more money from their home country, if possible, as this will help with initial start-up costs. If you are moving into a new apartment and are purchasing items from a predecessor or someone else in the community, be careful about the size of the item, as it may not fit or be useful in your new apartment. For example, the refrigerator may be too big for your space, or the stove won't work because it's not the correct type. Hopefully your predecessor or supervisor will be willing to check the dimensions and other specs for you.

Depending on what is required to furnish your home in the first few weeks, please plan around those costs accordingly. You may want to bring more money than the \$2,000-\$3,000 USD previously advised. If you can't, buy only what is truly necessary, and hold off on other things until your first paycheck.

(Tip: Again, community resources via Facebook are your friend—many people leaving may be willing to part with items at a lower cost to save them the trouble of sorting it out/disposing of them as their departures grow nearer.)

Pets

During your stay in Japan, you may be tempted to adopt a pet. We strongly advise you to neither bring nor adopt a pet. Most apartment complexes do not allow pets, and/or have strict policies against them. Not only that, but most JETs will not have the time nor the space to properly care for a pet. Please do not jeopardize your living arrangements by keeping a secret pet, either. If you absolutely must have (not want) a pet for medical reasons, please contact your supervisor to get that resolved as soon as possible.

Garbage Disposal

One of the first things you will want to ask about is how to dispose of garbage. Separating garbage in Japan is necessary, and the rules vary depending on where you live. Typically, you will sort items into two categories: burnable and non-burnable. There may be further subcategories for both, especially with regards to recycling items. Drop off locations and times can also vary within the same town, based geographically. Please ask your supervisor (or predecessor, if you have one) for this information on arrival.

Technology Terms

When you arrive to Japan, whether your apartment is furnished or not, you will ultimately be using Japanese appliances. The following is a list of general terms you'll see on electric appliances.

電源 / でんげん	power	自動 / オートキー	automatic/auto key
メニュー	menu	メモリーキー	memory key
入 / 入り / 運転	on	手動	manual
切り / 停止	off	タイマー	timer
取り消し / キャンセル	clear/cancel	予約	setting the timer
リセット	reset	時間	time/hours
スタート	start	分	minute(s)
停止 / 止め	stop	残り	(time) remaining
ロック解除	unlock		

AC/Heating

温度	temperature	風量	fan speed
切替 / 運転切替	change operating mode	弱	gentle/weak
運転切換	operating mode	強	strong
暖房	heat/warm	風向	air flow direction
冷房	cold air (air conditioning)	空清 / 空気清浄	clean/filter air in room
ドライ / 除湿	dehumidify	気流	take in outside air
送風	fan only	フルパワー	full power
換気	ventilate	省エネ	energy saving

Money Matters

Bank Account

Your supervisor (or equivalent) will go with you to set up a bank account during your first week. The bank you go to will be determined by your BOE. If you already have a bank account in Japan, please discuss with your supervisor if you want to (and are able to) receive your payment in that account.

Things to be Aware Of

- ATMs often have set hours. This means that there may be additional usage fees after certain times, but it may also mean that your ATM is literally blocked off at certain hours (locked doors in the ATM area, gates around the ATM, metal sliding doors closing off the whole ATM area, etc).
- JETs are paid once a month (usually in the latter part of the month) so budgeting is paramount. You may be tempted to deck your new apartment or home out in everything chic immediately upon arrival, but most JETs do not receive their first paycheck until they have been working for a month. Assess what is absolutely necessary for daily life in relation to your first month's budget. Be particularly aware of the money you might need for transportation and food within your first month, so as not to run out of money. Other JETs can be a great resource on what expenses to expect.

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- When budgeting for purchasing items for your apartment, please don't hesitate to ask about other options. When purchasing items (with a supervisor or another ALT) don't be afraid to ask for information about recycled or used goods. Some people may prefer brand new items, but keep in mind that recycling appliances and home goods is quite common in Japan. You can expect to find items that are barely used or very gently used or not even that old at all at various recycle shops.

Health Matters

Emergencies

If you encounter an emergency within the week or two of arrival, please note the following emergency numbers (more information will be provided at Prefectural Orientation). In general, knowing how to contact emergency services, police, your supervisor, your PAs, and also other ALTs in your area can help keep you safe. Please ask for your supervisor's contact information upon arrival and keep a hard copy of their phone number (along with the following numbers) with you at all times in case of an emergency.

- Police: 110
- Ambulance/Fire: 119
- CIR/PA, Sarah Dela Cruz: 070-2168-3803 (please contact this number only in cases of emergency)

Take time to familiarize yourself with the Japanese pronunciation of your address and if possible, aim to be able to write your address in Japanese script (*hiragana* at least). In case of emergency, you will want to be able to tell emergency services or police where you live. Here are some useful phrases if you find yourself in an emergency:

<i>Tasukete kudasai</i>	Please help
<i>Tounan ni aimashita</i>	There has been a robbery
<i>__ wa nusumaremashita</i>	My __ has been stolen
<i>Jiko desu</i>	There has been an accident
<i>Kyuukyuuusha onegai shimasu</i>	Please send an ambulance

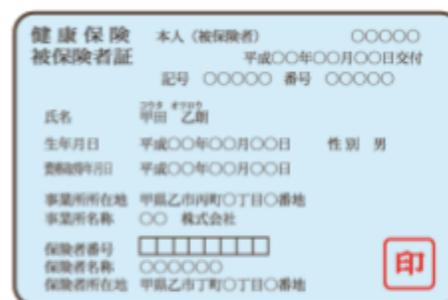
<i>Jyusho wa __ desu</i>	My address is __
<i>Namae wa __ desu</i>	My name is __
<i>Denwa bangou wa __ desu</i>	My telephone number is __

Getting Sick

If you need to go to the hospital soon after arrival, please get in touch with your supervisor ASAP. They will know the best place to go in your area and should be able to help you. If they are not available, you can try asking a coworker or a fellow ALT. In addition, there are some hospitals in Gunma that can provide assistance in foreign languages (<http://www.gtia.jp/kokusai/english/living/medical.php>) as well as a medical interpreter service (<http://www.pref.gunma.jp/foreign/c2800001.html>) that can help you with visits for a 2000 yen fee.

Insurance

You are covered by National Health Insurance (NHI) once your contract begins, but you will not receive your blue insurance card immediately upon arrival. If you get sick and end up going to the hospital before receiving your blue National Health Insurance card, you will need to pay for your treatment in full up front, but can be reimbursed at a later date. Be sure to save any receipts from this time so you can be reimbursed (70% for eligible procedures). You can ask your supervisor with help regarding reimbursement.



Example of a NHI card

New JETs are also covered by JET Programme Accident Insurance (remaining 30% of certain procedures) starting from their date of arrival. For more information about JET Programme Accident Insurance, please see <http://jetprogramme.org/en/jpai-outline/>.

Note that dependents are also covered by NHI (70% of eligible procedures), but not JET Accident Insurance.

More information about insurance and hospitals will be given at Prefectural Orientation.

Transportation

Cycling

Most ALTs ride bicycles to and from work. Japan drives on the left hand side of the road, so you should generally do the same. Here are some of things cyclists can be punished for doing under Japanese law:

Riding under the influence of any amount of alcohol. Listening to music while riding. Holding an umbrella whilst riding. Talking on the phone whilst riding. Giving another person a lift on your bicycle. Riding through train stations.

You will see some Japanese people breaking these laws, but we would advise you not to follow them. Police officers keep a close eye on cyclists as several old people were killed after being hit by distracted riders on bicycles. Cycling under the influence of alcohol is strictly prohibited. Offenders can face several years in jail or a large fine. Additionally, anyone who gives a person alcohol knowing that he or she will later ride a bicycle may also be subject to punishment.

By law, bicycles must be equipped with a front light, a rear reflector, working brakes and a bell. Cyclists legally must also use bicycle lights at night and in tunnels or during foggy weather. You can purchase cheap lights and reflectors at hardware shops and at many local bicycle shops. While many people do not wear helmets, it is highly recommended you do so. Junior high school students are all required to wear helmets when cycling to school, so it sets a good example if you wear one, too. Falling from a bicycle even at a slow speed could cause you serious injuries.

Cycling accidents generally occur at intersections, so please slow down and stop before passing through them. There are many blind corners in Japanese towns so it is very easy to have an accident.

止まれ - Tomare

By law all people must stop at the places marked by these characters (usually indicated by a red triangle or painted onto the road). Many kanji are useful to know, this one could save your life!

Buses

When boarding, be sure to take a ticket from the dispenser located at the point of entry (usually at the back of the bus). When you are ready to leave, most buses have buttons located near the seat to let the driver know that you want to get off at the next stop. Generally, you pay when you get off the bus. The fare is usually displayed above the driver's seat. If you took a ticket it will tell you what number stop you got on. You can then look at the fare display to see how much you need to pay. Exit at the front of the bus. There are two slots on the machine next to the driver: one is for the fare, and the other is a change machine. Be aware that the change slot only takes ¥1,000 bills and ¥500 or ¥100 coins, and it is polite to make change before your stop.

You can research bus routes on [Google maps](#) or [Navitime](#) (in Japanese). There is also a less-detailed English site here: <https://transit.navitime.com/en/jp/>.

Trains

Most stations have ticket machines with English explanations. On the other hand, timetables (bus and train) will generally only be available in Japanese, but the station staff will be able to help you if you can show them the kanji name of the station you wish to go to. Therefore, it is a good idea to know the name of your home station, the last station on your trainline, and the station you wish to go to.

Using Tickets

You can buy tickets from machines outside the station gates. When buying a ticket, you have to first look for the name of the station you wish to go to on the map. Underneath that will be a number, for example 970. This is the fare you will have to pay. Purchase the amount that you need and put your ticket into the ticket gate to enter the station. Don't forget to take your ticket out of the gate before heading to your train. When exiting the station, put your ticket into the ticket gate again, and you will be able to exit. This time your ticket will not pop out again, but you are good to go. If there is no gate or attendant, please be sure to still purchase the correct ticket amount as you can be fined or even arrested for fare evasion.

Using IC Cards

You can also use a prepaid card called an IC card (usually branded Suica or Pasma). These cards can be bought and topped up from machines inside stations. Press the English button to see how to buy them.



They can also be used to buy things from vending machines, shops inside the station, and ride buses. However, keep in mind that some train stations (and most buses) in Gunma do not accept Suica/Pasmo. Some local companies have the option to buy a prepaid card, but often these local cards cannot be topped off like a Suica and instead must be purchased again after the previous card has run out (they're often available in increments of ¥1,000).

When entering the platform you should tap your card on the green area. The ticket gate will then open and show your remaining balance on the small screen. Be aware that not all stations have ticket gates, so you may not be able to 'tap out' of the station. This will put your card in a confused state as it will not know you have finished your journey. In this case you should try to explain your situation to the station staff before leaving. If no one is around, you can ask an attendant the next day, but it's possible you may be charged extra without proof of which station you got off at. Also note that you will not be able to use your card again without resolving this issue first.

If you do not have enough money on your card when you get to your destination, you can top up your card before you leave the gate on the machines that are next to the ticket gates.

Taxis

Taxis can be expensive, but are reasonable, convenient, and safe if you are in a group. You can find taxis at most train and bus stations. Most taxi doors open and close automatically. You do not need to tip the driver.

Cars

While there is public transportation in Gunma, there is a long-standing driving culture here, and there are still some places throughout the prefecture where cars aren't only recommended, but they are necessary. While many ALTs get by without one, a lot of ALTs buy or rent a car for their time on JET.

In order to find out whether you need a car, or if it's recommended you get one, it's best to consult with your predecessor and your BOE. From there you can discuss whether renting or buying a car is the best option for you. It's good to know that, although rare, some BOE contracts prevent their ALTs from being able to drive for purposes beyond work, being able to drive outside city/town limits, or being able to drive at all.

Sometimes buying your predecessor's car from them is an option, but know that you aren't obligated to buy it if you don't want to. Additionally, while most people are trustworthy, it

doesn't hurt to check if the price that's being offered is fair before committing to any transactions. One important thing you'll want to check when purchasing a car is when the *shaken* (motor-vehicle inspection) is due to expire. This inspection must be done every two years, and roughly costs about ¥100,000. So if the inspection is going to expire very soon after you purchase your car for, let's say, ¥100,000, then the real cost will be around ¥200,000, give or take.

In order to drive in Japan, you either need an international driving permit (IDP) or a Japanese driver's license. For more information about the IDP, please read the [Important Document](#) section above. Once you've arrived, depending on the country that issued your current driver's license, you can either get a Japanese license by submitting paperwork and paying cash, or by submitting paperwork, passing a written and driving test, and paying cash. If you have renewed or are going to renew your driver's license within the 3 months leading up to coming to Japan, please be sure to bring proof that you had a valid driver's license before that as well, as it will cause trouble at the driving center if you are trying to get a Japanese license. More information about driving in Japan will be available to you at orientation and can also be found on the GAJET website: <http://www.gunmajet.net/the-gunma-drivers-test/>.

Also, please be aware that Japan has a zero tolerance policy for drinking and driving. There are heavy consequences, so do not drive if you have consumed *any* alcohol.

What to Do Before Work Starts

For ALTs

After arriving in Gunma and before classes start in September, many ALTs are required to go to their assigned schools or their Board of Education. While some BOEs give ALTs time off during this interim period, do not automatically assume that you can stay home because classes are not in session. Be sure to speak with your supervisor or your Board of Education about expectations during this time. Will you be allowed to stay at home during the day to set up your apartment/house in this interim? Will you need to take paid time off in order to do so? On what days should you be at your base school/visit schools? Are you expected to spend this time at your Board of Education?

You may or may not have time off on your own, but you will almost definitely be expected to spend some time at your assigned schools during this interim period.

Work Culture and Etiquette

Before classes begin is an excellent time to feel out the culture of your school(s) and get to know your teachers and the expectations for your role. You'll be able to put your self-introduction skills to use quite a bit during this time! It's also a good idea to observe those around you and get used to the work culture and etiquette of Japan, Gunma, and your school(s).

Attempting to follow local rules and etiquette goes a long way toward developing positive relationships and earning the respect of your students, coworkers, and community. As a public servant, you are held to a higher standard of etiquette than others. Even if you have lived in Japan, behaviors that were considered acceptable in your prior situation may be unacceptable now. In addition, you live among your teachers and students, and they will be noticing what you wear and do at work and socially, and you will be making strong first impressions based on what they see. It can be difficult to change those first impressions.

Adapting to social etiquette in a new country can be difficult. Especially in Japan, learning etiquette can be a source of stress for newcomers. You will often hear about "reading the air" or reading between the lines to learn about etiquette in Japan. You may not be told directly if you have broken a rule of etiquette or are doing something frowned upon. It's more likely that you will be given vague and indirect cues or comments in these situations. For example, if you are wearing a low cut shirt or tank top a coworker may ask you "aren't you cold?" even though it is the hottest and most humid day of summer. The teacher most likely wants to warn you to cover up. Additionally, a lack of comments does not equal praise. No one may comment on the fact that you're habitually five minutes late to school, but your coworkers or supervisors are most likely noticing but want to avoid an embarrassing situation by bringing it up. So pay attention to your coworkers and supervisors during this time as you learn what is acceptable and what isn't at your school.

When you arrive at your new school, classes will not be in session. If you're looking to your teachers to see what is acceptable to wear to class, summer vacation is not always a good indication of what is acceptable to wear when classes resume. It may be better to "overdress" on the first day or ask a supervisor. Generally, elementary and middle school dress codes are much more casual than high school dress codes. It would be wise to ask another ALT at your school if you have any further questions about appropriate attire. Also, if you have a visit school, those dress codes may again change so be aware of that as well.

Though you won't have classes yet, there may still be some work to do. This is a great time to organize the materials that are already available at your school. If there are some other materials that are not available, ask your teachers to see if the school can purchase them for you. You can also read through the English textbooks to get an idea of what students are learning and will learn later with you! Look over lesson plans if they are available to you to you and begin discussions with JTEs and/or HRTs—how will lessons proceed, what materials are available, how will teaching roles be split between you and the teachers, what will your schedule be, are there any expectations for you outside of the classroom (lunch, cleaning time, recess, etc) and so on.

If you find that you have prepared as much as possible for your work but still have free time and are at your school before classes begin, there are several ways to constructively pass time. Depending on your school and Board of Education, things like exploring your school, observing any club activities still in session, studying Japanese, reading, researching teaching methods, talking to teachers (if they aren't busy!) or writing may or may not be acceptable. Keep in mind that using your phone (even for studying or as a Japanese dictionary) may be unacceptable. Some things to keep in mind in your office:

Keeping busy is important. Even if you have not been assigned any work, appearing to goof off at your desk will not be appreciated. Also note that watching movies, etc. during break times may have been okay back home, but it is not really acceptable in a Japanese work environment.

Noise: any noise unrelated to work, including music, videos, and personal mobile phone talk is generally not accepted. Set your phone to vibrate or completely silent mode.

Beverages: drinking beverages at your desk is usually OK. If your office has a shared beverage station, such as a coffee maker with beans provided, ask about usage rules (e.g. fees, etc.).

Administrative Matters

Depending on your school(s) and Board of Education, you may have time off before classes to start to set up your life. In most situations, there is some time set aside right after you arrive with a supervisor, coworker, or more experienced ALT to help you with your apartment/house and other administrative concerns. You can expect help with things like setting up your bank account, registering at city hall, confirming personal information with your board of education, signing the lease and paying rent and other fees for your apartment/house, confirming information for various utilities, and sorting out any other necessary registration.

In your first few days you may also get help getting a cell phone, setting up internet, and buying any necessary appliances and various sundries for your daily life.

For CIRs

Most CIRs should have some time to get used to their workplace environments when they arrive. Unlike ALTs, there is no set summer vacation so you may start doing work before orientation. Like ALTs, your first few days will probably be spent setting up accounts and other things. Your first few days at work may include going around to different sections/divisions for 挨拶 and setting up your desk.

Your workplace may or may not be used to having a CIR (or they may be used to a different CIR) so they may not be aware of what you do or do not know. Now is the best time to ask questions about how to use the phone, where to find resources, contacts within your office, or really anything you can think of. I recommend at least asking for a seating chart (座席表).

Also please be aware that your office may have many technological restrictions. For example, your computer may not connect to the internet, you may not be allowed to use external USBs, etc. To stay on the safe side, ask about proper procedure before sending/transferring any personal or confidential data.

Japanese to Know

Foreign Names in Japanese

When it comes to any official documentation, or registration, the name order is rather unique for foreigners in Japan. In most instances names are in “Last name, First name, Middle name” order. So, please be careful when you are asked to write your name on any form, and don’t hesitate to ask to make sure how they would like you to write it.

Additionally, if your name is to be written in Japanese, it must be written in katakana, which is the letter system used primarily for words of foreign origin. If possible, please familiarize yourself with the katakana writing (and Japanese pronunciation) of your name before arriving in Japan as you will likely need to write it on forms many times soon after arriving in Gunma.

Self-Introductions

Upon first arriving and throughout your time in Japan, you will be asked to introduce yourself many times and in a variety of situations. For introductions at the Board of Education, to your school principal, and to other teachers at your school, a simple Japanese introduction will be much appreciated. Below is an outline for a basic self-introduction in Japanese.

はじめまして。 <i>Hajimemashite.</i>	Nice to meet you.
わたしは_____です。 <i>Watashi wa _____ desu.</i>	I'm _____.
_____からきました。 _____ <i>kara kimashita.</i>	I'm from _____.
よろしくおねがいします。 <i>Yoroshiku onegaishimasu.</i>	I look forward to working with you/getting to know you. / Please be kind to me.

Commonly Used Phrases

Japanese Phrase	English Meaning
ありがとうございます。 <i>arigatou gozaimasu.</i>	Thank you
お願いします。 <i>onagai shimasu.</i>	Please
すみません。 <i>sumimasen.</i>	Excuse me
はい。 <i>hai.</i>	Yes
いいえ。 <i>iie.</i>	No
ごめんなさい。 <i>gomen nasai.</i>	I'm sorry
(日本語が) わかりません。 <i>(nihongo ga) wakarimasen.</i>	I don't understand (Japanese)

英語を話せますか。 <i>eigo o hanasemasu ka?</i>	Can you speak English?
もう一度お願いします。 <i>mou ichido onegai shimasu.</i>	Can you repeat that, please?
_____はどこですか。 _____ <i>wa doko desu ka?</i>	Where is _____?
いくらですか。 <i>ikura desu ka?</i>	How much does this cost?
_____はありますか。 _____ <i>wa arimasu ka?</i>	Do you have _____?
お先に失礼します。 <i>osaki ni shitsurei shimasu.</i>	I'm leaving now. (Said before leaving work for the day)
お疲れさまでした。 / お疲れ様です。 <i>otsukaresama deshita. / otsukaresama desu.</i>	You must be tired. (Said in reply to お先に失礼します or to coworkers you meet throughout the day)

School Terminology/Paperwork Terminology

Japanese	English Meaning
職員 (しょくいん) <i>shokuin</i>	staff/faculty
教師 (きょうし) <i>kyoushi</i>	instructor/teacher
～式 (～しき) ～ <i>shiki</i>	～ceremony
始業式 (しぎょうしき) <i>shigyoushiki</i>	Start of term ceremony
朝礼 (ちょうれい) <i>chourei</i>	Morning assembly
打ち合わせ (うちあわせ) <i>uchiawase</i>	Meeting
校内研修 (こうないけんしゅう) <i>kounai kenshuu</i>	Faculty meeting
宴会 (えんかい)	Drinking party

<i>enkai</i>	
集会 (しゅうかい) <i>shuukai</i>	Assembly
会議 (かいぎ) <i>kaigi</i>	Formal meeting
保険 (ほけん) <i>hoken</i>	Insurance
年休 (ねんきゅう) <i>nenkyuu</i>	Paid leave
病休 (びょうきゅう) <i>byoukyuu</i>	Sick leave
代休 (だいきゅう) <i>daikyuu</i>	Time in lieu
特休 (とっきゅう) <i>tokkyuu</i>	Special leave
判子 (はんこ) / 印鑑 (いんかん) <i>hanko / inkan</i>	Personal seal
在留カード (ざいりゅうかあど) <i>zairyuu kaado</i>	Residence card
家賃 / やちん / <i>yachin</i>	Rent
敷金 / しききん / <i>shikikin</i>	Deposit
礼金 / れいきん / <i>reikin</i>	Thank you/gift money (Key money)
健康診断 / けんこうしんだん / <i>kenkōshindan</i>	Physical examination, medical checkup

Medical Terminology

Japanese Phrase	English Meaning
気分が悪いです。 <i>Kibun ga warui desu.</i>	I don't feel well.
熱があるようです。 <i>Netsu ga aru you desu.</i>	I have a fever.
風邪をひきました。 <i>Kaze o hikimashita.</i>	I caught a cold.

頭痛がします。 <i>Zutsuu ga shimasu.</i>	I have a headache.
めまいがします。 <i>Memai ga shimasu.</i>	I feel dizzy.
胸が苦しいです。 <i>Mune ga kurushii desu.</i>	I have chest pains.
喉が痛いです。 <i>Nodo ga itai desu.</i>	My throat hurts.
お腹がいたいです。 <i>Onaka ga itai desu.</i>	My stomach hurts.
吐き気がします。 <i>Hakike ga shimasu.</i>	I feel nauseous.

Final Words

The information included in this guide is intended to simply assist new JETs with the pre-departure and post-arrival period. You will also receive extensive guidance at both Tokyo Orientation as well as the Gunma Prefectural Orientation (August 13 - 14). In addition to the JET Programme General Information Handbook distributed by CLAIR, you will also receive a larger, more comprehensive paperback copy of a Gunma Orientation Handbook that you will be able to reference during your time on JET.

If you have any general questions about the content of this guide, or any other general questions related to your pre and post-arrival in Japan, please feel free to contact the PAs.

- Sarah Dela Cruz (CIR & Host Prefecture PA): s-delacruz@pref.gunma.lg.jp
- Mark Shohei Cereste (ALT Advisor/PA): cereste-m@pref.gunma.lg.jp
- Mikhail “Misha” Pinyo (ALT PA): mikhail.pinyo@gmail.com

If you have any specific questions about your placement, please contact your CO or predecessor.

Best of luck with your preparations. Your PAs, Orientation Committee, and senpai JETs are excited to welcome you to Gunma, Japan!



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