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KEY COFFEE

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Stories and advice from JETs who went through Tokyo Orientation and came out the other side a little wiser. We picked our favorites to show you.

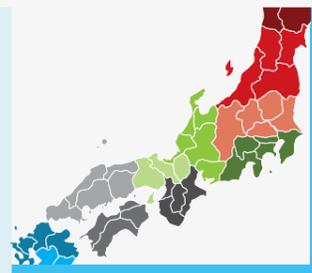


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Japan has a great community, and there's plenty of opportunity to give back. Find out more about volunteering and some worthy organizations.



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This edition, and all past editions of AJET Connect, can be found online at <http://ajet.net/ajet-connect>. Read Connect online and follow us at <http://issuu.com/ajetconnect>.



You Made It!

You made it! Congratulations to all of you. Through the applications, the waiting, the interviews, the more waiting, the excited research, the packing, and the long flight, you made it. Now you're here in Tokyo and I know it feels a bit unreal. Remember one thing: you deserve to be here. You were chosen. Someone believed in you enough to spend thousands of dollars to place you in a specific town so you can make a positive impact. Do not waste this opportunity and do not underestimate your worth. When you feel doubt, when things get frustrating, when you feel useless or ignored, remember that you are here in Japan for a reason.

What's that reason? That's up to you. We're all brought here as international ambassadors—representatives of those distant lands beyond the Japanese islands. How you choose to get involved and what story you want to tell is in your hands.

Connect magazine is here to help. We're here to tell your story of Japan. We take what the community is doing and put it in the spotlight. Each month, we promise to not only share interesting content with you, but help you get more involved. Whether it's keeping you informed on current events, understanding the culture, or teaching you how to cook in a Japanese kitchen, we want you to be equipped to make the most of the time you have here.

Interested in writing, designing, or taking photos for us? Check out page 54 for detailed information about working with Connect magazine or National AJET. We're looking forward to hearing from you.

All the best,

Steven Thompson
4th-year Fukushima ALT
Head Editor



Congratulations and Welcome on Board the JET Programme!

Like most other JETs, I often reminisce on my Tokyo Orientation days. Three years ago, I thought I was entering a completely Japanese community. I soon realised I had become a member of one of the most international communities and biggest cultural exchange initiatives in the world. With over four thousand other current JETs like you, from forty-three different countries, our community is easily one of the most powerful, vibrant, and unique networks of working professionals worldwide.

Make the most of this opportunity to meet your fellow peers. You already have something in common – enthusiasm and a passion for Japan. Step outside your comfort zone, attend your Block welcome events, connect with the local community, join the local cultural and sports clubs, and foster those connections that will become your support system in the years to come.

Whether or not it's your first time in Japan, I guarantee that your time as a JET will bring you countless new and fascinating adventures. It may not be without challenges, but remember you are not alone. Stay connected with us and share your experiences. Explore, dream, discover, and enjoy. Welcome to your new home!

Best wishes,

Sandy Cheng
4th-year Kobe ALT
Chair, AJET National Council



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MEET THE CONNECT TEAM

OUR FIRST WEEKS IN JAPAN



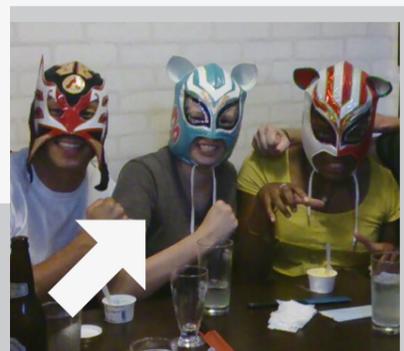
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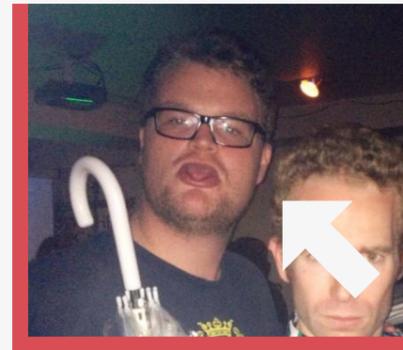
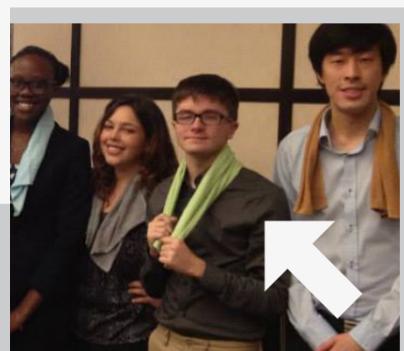
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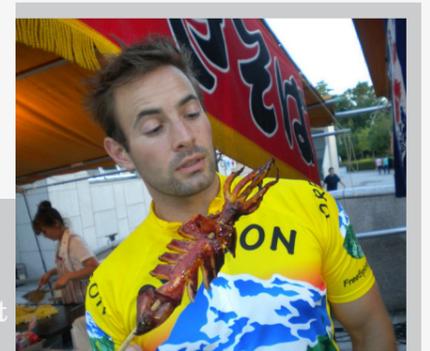
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CONNECT
PICK A SECTION. SEND AN EMAIL!

KEIO PLAZA / SHINJUKU MAP



Food

1. Slappy Cakes
2. Din Tai Fung
3. Menya Kaijin (麵屋海神)
4. Journal Standard Burgers
5. Ginzo Sushi
6. Freshness Burger
7. Tully's Coffee
8. Chaya Macrobiotic Restaurant
9. Cochin Nivas

Points of Interest

10. Lumine Shinjuku
11. Okada
12. Kinokuniya
13. Dug
14. Shot Bar Zoetrope
15. Suntory Lounge Eagle
16. Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building

- T** Train Station
- C** Convenience Store
- S** Starbucks

SHINJUKU TRAINS

FEE	MIN	STATION	PLATFORM
160	11	IKUEBUKURO	↑
160	7	MEJIRO	
140	8	TAKADANOBABA	
140	3	SHIN-OKUBO	
JR YAMANOTE 山手			
140	3	YOYOGI	↓
140	5	HARAJUKU	
160	6	SHIBUYA	
160	10	EBISU	



JR CHUO LINE SOBU LINE 中央・総武	
↑	KOENJI 9 160
↑	NAKANO 5 160
↑	HIGASHI-NAKANO 4 140
↑	16 OKUBO 2 140
↓	13 SENDAGAYA 4 140
↓	SHINANOMACHI 5 140
↓	YOTSUYA 6 160
↓	ICHIGAYA 10 160
↓	IIDABASHI 13 160
↓	SUIDOBA 13 170
↓	AKIHABARA 20 170

Shinjuku station is the busiest train station in the world. At first glance, it can appear terrifyingly complex. Thankfully, Japan's trains are color-coded. Above we included the two main lines that'll take you to many of Tokyo's main sites: the world-famous lime-green Yamanote line (山手線) and the bright yellow Chuo Sobu line (中央・総武緩行線).

At Shinjuku station, pick a place to go, find a ticket machine (they look like green ATMs with maps above them), select the amount of money for your station, pay,

take your ticket, and go! Once through the gates, follow the color-coded signs for your platform, hop on the train, and pay attention to the stops. No worries!

But where to go? We recommend:

- **Shibuya** – Take the Hachiko station exit to enter a world of jaw-dropping neon. See Shibuya crossing, Tower Records, and Shibuya 109. Great for restaurants and dance clubs.
- **Akihabara** – Any self-proclaimed nerd's

paradise. Grab some English games at Trader, tabletop at Yellow Submarine, or anime goods at Kotobukiya.

- **Harajuku** – Center of Japanese pop-culture and fashion, get an eyeful of trendy shops, cosplayers and crowds before retreating to the quieter Yoyogi Park and Meiji Shrine.

Or just hop off at a random station and explore! As long as you catch the last train back to Shinjuku (around midnight) you're fine!

SHINJUKU RESTAURANT RECOMMENDATIONS

NICK POWERS (KAGAWA), VERITY TOWNSEND (HYOGO)

EXPLORING SHINJUKU

SIMON GRIFFIN (KYOTO), LACEY LEE (KUMAMOTO)

Photo - Mark Noizumi

Jetlagged and confused? Hungry? Here are some food recommendations all within walking-distance from the Keio Plaza hotel. As you'll see, your best bet is the top floors of department stores near the station!

1. Slappy Cakes

Mind-blowing pancakes with a vast menu.

- Lumine Est, 7th Floor
- 03-6457-4155
- 11:00 - 23:00
- <http://www.slappycakes.jp/>

2. Din Tai Fung

World-famous Chinese food, known for baozi (dumplings).

- Takashimaya Times Square, 12th Floor
- 03-5361-1381
- 11:00 - 23:00
- <http://d.rt-c.co.jp/>

3. Menya Kaijin (麵屋海神)

Ramen made with the catch of day and weird toppings.

- Sanraku Bldg, 3rd Floor
- 03-3356-5658
- 11:00 - 15:00, 16:30 - 23:00

4. Journal Standard Burgers

Unique burgers above a clothing store.

- Journal Standard, 3rd Floor
- 03-5367-0185
- M-F 11:00 - 22:30. Weekends 10:30 - 21:30
- <http://journal-cafe.jp/shops/>

5. Ginzo Sushi

The tasty Japanese standby.

- Shinjuku NS Building, 29th Floor
- 03-3347-9050
- 11:30 to 14:30, 17:30 - 23:30
- <http://danke-bros.co.jp/store/ginzo/>

6. Freshness Burger

Cheap chain burgers with vegetarian options and booze.

- 1st Floor, 3-1-16 Shinjuku
- 03-5269-9307
- 10:00 - 23:00
- <http://www.freshnessburger.co.jp/>

7. Tully's Coffee:

Good chain coffee. Soy milk available.

- Cocoon Tower, 1st Floor
- 03-5909-8233
- 8:00 - 21:00
- <http://www.tullys.co.jp/>

8. Chaya Macrobiotic Restaurant

Slightly expensive but amazing food, with delicious desserts.

- Isetan Dept, 7th Floor
- 03-3357-0014
- 11:00 - 22:00
- <http://www.chayam.co.jp/restaurant/isetan.shtml>

9. Cochin Nivas

Indian food with vegetarian options.

- 5-9-17 Nishishinjuku
- 03-5388-4150
- 11:30 - 14:30, 17:30 - 21:30 Closed Tuesdays

Convenience stores and Starbucks:

Conbini are 24/7, and they have a range of food, personal goods, and coffee (there's one at the bottom of the hotel). Starbucks are open from 7:30 - 23:00, and have free Wi-Fi.

Thanks to [Tokyo Cheapo](#) and [Bento.com](#).

You're tired, you're sweaty, your mind is still in a time-zone far from where your body is, but you're in Tokyo! And who knows when you'll be back? So drink some strong coffee, grab a sweat-towel, and get out and explore while you have the chance.

Even if you're not a shopaholic, with your base as Keio Plaza Hotel, you've got many options to flex your shopping muscle.

10. Lumine Shinjuku

Lumine Shinjuku is only a 10-minute walk from Keio. If you're tired but still up for an outing, this mall has everything. It's the perfect opportunity to lose some cash before shipping out to a small-town placement. Stores open 11:00 - 22:00; restaurants 11:00 - 23:00.

11. Okadaya

For those who like to make your own clothes, Okadaya is the haberdashery of choice. Take the east exit from Shinjuku towards Kabukicho for 7 floors of crafty wonder. 10:00 - 20:30.

12. Kinokuniya

On a slightly different track, if you're a manga or book enthusiast, Kinokuniya is the place to be. Only a 12-minute walk from Keio, they've recently expanded their foreign book selection. 10:00 - 21:00.

Tokyo Orientation is a rare opportunity to meet like-minded individuals who come from around the world and will live all across the country, so take advantage by socializing and having a good time. There are plenty of izakaya around you, but a few bars intrigue as far as offering a unique Tokyo experience.

13. Dug

A reiteration of the many jazz coffee shops that sprung up in Shinjuku in the 60's and 70's, Dug is a dimly lit cafe/bar venture about a 13-minute walk northeast of Keio. 12:00-2:00 Mon-Sat; bar from 18:30.

14. Shot Bar Zoetrope

An 11-minute walk away, Shot Bar Zoetrope

specializes in Japanese whisky, serving up 300+ bottles to choose from. In the evening the owner of this third floor retreat occasionally screens old-timey films. 19:00 - 4:00 Mon-Sat.

15. Suntory Lounge Eagle

Underground cocktails and whisky? Yes please. A 12-minute walk and a jaunt down a stairwell bring you to Suntory Lounge Eagle, where you can imbibe not only below ground, but below soft chandelier lighting. 17:30 - 24:00.

16. Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building

If you're looking to satisfy that human need to go to a very high place and look down at things, then the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building is a five-minute-walk-away must-see. Not as tall as Tokyo Skytree, nor as famous as Tokyo Tower, the free observation decks boast amazing views. 7:00 - 23:00.

Now, let's Shinjuku!

WELCOME PARTIES & DINNERS

Among all the lectures and formal events of Tokyo Orientation, there are several groups holding welcome events. This helpful table will tell you when and where to meet up. As a reminder, JETs arrive in Tokyo Sunday and depart Wednesday morning. Monday night is the formal JET reception, and Tuesday night is when countries' embassies have their receptions. Make sure you don't double-book!

	Group A		Group B		Time - Keio Plaza Location
	28th	29th	4th	5th	
Asian Pacific Islanders AJET	●		●		6:30 - Main Lobby Escalators
Fukushima AJET	●		●		9:00 - Main Lobby
Ibaraki AJET		●		●	6:30 - Main Lobby
Miyagi AJET		●		●	6:30 - Main Lobby
Niigata AJET		●		●	6:30 - Main Lobby
Stonewall Japan	●	●	●	●	8:30 (28th) / 9:00 - Main Lobby
VegJET	28th, Sunday - 3rd, & 4th				6:15 (3rd) / 8:30 - Main Lobby

HOTEL TIPS & ETIQUETTE

PATRICK FINN (TOYAMA)

In Your Room

- Be mindful of roommates trying to sleep by avoiding the snooze button in the morning and being quiet at night.
- Try coordinating shower times. Showering at night can ease bathroom congestion too.
- Headphones are a good idea when listening to music or watching TV.
- You'll be spending a few days in the same room, so find out a little bit about your roommates. Suggest

eating together to break the ice. Going out with groups is also useful if you're unfamiliar with Japanese—it's easy to get lost in Shinjuku.

- Some people will be Skyping with family, so be aware of conflicting timezones, schedules, and sharing the internet.

In the Hotel

- Irons are available, but if you're too exhausted to bother, hang clothes in the bathroom while showering for a quick steam.

- Free buffets are always nice, especially in Japan. Wake up early and eat a hearty breakfast. You'll have the opportunity to meet other JETs and energy to make it through the day.
- Get yourself on Japan time. Avoid going to bed too early or taking extended naps. However, a 20-minute power nap in your room or a chair in the hotel is better than sleeping through a lecture.

Photo - Chris Low

THE NARCISSIST'S GUIDE TO ORIENTATION

TOM LEGGE (HIROSHIMA)



First impressions matter and Orientation is no exception. Bring your A-Game. Here are 8 steps to show everyone who means business and who's just making up the numbers.

- 1 Talk only about your placement. Emphasize how great it is. **Don't ask about others' placements.** It's irrelevant; they need to know about where you're going.
- 2 If someone starts a conversation with you, **check their name**

badge. If they're going to a different prefecture than you, run away. No one wants to be seen socialising with anyone from Shimane.

- 3 **Deride people** whose interest in Japanese comes from anime or games. That doesn't count.
- 4 Speak **only Japanese.** Your aptitude will inspire others. Begin doing this on your flight.
- 5 Frequently reference **your semester in Japan** as a reminder that you

don't need any advice.

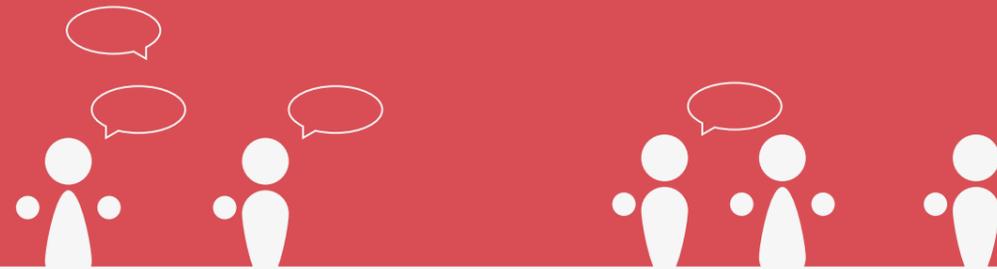
- 6 Complain about the heat. **Complain about absolutely everything.** Ask everyone if they are hot.
- 7 Ask everyone you meet **how much money** they brought with them. Respond with a grimace and offer sympathy regardless of the response.
- 8 **Never pour** anyone a drink. It makes you look weak.



Photo - Chris Low

MY ORIENTATION

STORIES & ADVICE FROM YOUR SEMPAI



Sophie Patterson

When we eventually found a place to eat, a friend waited eagerly and ravenously for her noodles (her first non-plane food meal in several days) only to be presented with a bowl of processed cheese strips! **My advice: Make new friends and get their contact details for future couch surfing opportunities.**

Katherine Leung

Sleep on the plane and charge up for the info and sensory overload at Tokyo...explore when you have a free moment! **You can't do everything, just do your best.** Also, it's blimming hot, so find a lightweight shirt/jacket to wear. Good luck! It's a blast!

Hannah Brown

Go out at night for some Tokyo gyros, and remember to **take a moment to breathe** between all the madness!

Jack Morrison

If you're curious about it, **don't shy away from the LGBT events!** I'm really glad I plucked up the courage and went. Lots of useful information, and good friends and connections to be made, as well as a fun night out on the town!

Vikki Coulson

My advice for the newbies is that if you need to skip one seminar to have a nap, then do it. It's allowed so don't feel bad about it, you travelled a long way to get there. (Just **don't sleep though [Monday night's] dinner**, the food was super tasty)

Nick Powers

Stay up until as close to a **normal bed time** to reset your internal clock. And eat a lot. Don't run off to a Mumford and Sons concert at a bar without eating a proper lunch and dinner or you might faint in the crowd.

Vicki Clark

My group ended up drinking in a tiny izakaya hidden on the seventh floor of an unobtrusive building. Though almost none of us could speak Japanese, a few beers in we found ourselves invited to celebrate a birthday with the only other group in the bar. My advice is, if you need to take a nap so that you can **go out and socialize** on the night, don't be afraid to do so.

Simon Griffin

Try not to be too worried just yet. 'Did I bring enough omiyage?', 'Is my apartment too small?', 'I don't know enough Japanese.' It can be all too easy to get a little worried before heading on to your placements, and miss some of the great opportunities you get while being in Tokyo.

Steven Thompson

Go up to the 43rd floor, there's **deluxe bathrooms with amazing views** of the city. I'd recommend hopping on the express elevator that goes directly there.

Nate Berne

Don't fall in love, steer clear of Kabukicho, and trust NOT all new-found friends...have fun and network to blow off a little steam. Don't let any of the cynics or crazies lead you astray, never succumb to jetlag, but DO meet the folks from other prefectures, as you'll likely be road-tripping their way in the future, and we all end up couch-surfing through each other's soon-to-be stomping grounds eventually.

Joanna Misiura

No matter how tired you are, take a minute or two to **connect back home**. Call, e-mail, Skype, whatever, a simple "I'm here" will make you and the people back home feel better.

Catrina Caira

Remember to **close the hotel curtains** on your first night. The sun gets up WAY too early here and jet-lag is hard enough to deal with when the sun is not shining on your face at 4 AM.

Lesa Rondeau

Keep all of the handouts and look back on them later because, odds are, you'll barely recall a thing from Tokyo Orientation with the jet lag alone. Oh and breathe, relax and Hakuna Matata your way through these first few weeks of Japan!!

Johnny Morris

If you knock a full beer over, don't worry as they are definitely not full pint sized.

Some may advise skipping lectures to go out and see Tokyo. Because your time at Tokyo Orientation is paid work as part of your contract, we cannot condone or print such advice. Skip at your own risk.

WHAT IS AJET? SPOILER: IT'S YOU!

Photos - Michelle Castro



The Association for Japan Exchange and Teaching (AJET) is a support network for JET participants—a community for JETs. There are two main branches of AJET: prefectural AJET chapters provide support in their respective locales, while National AJET serves at the national level.

At the regional level, prefectural AJET chapters are self-sufficient organisations, with their own leadership and structure. Prefectures with active JET communities often have an effective prefectural AJET, which organises many social gatherings, cultural shows, charities, and other events to engage in community-building; for this aim, some local AJET chapters have membership fees. You can find your prefectural AJET at ajet.net/prefectural-ajet-directory/.

On a wider scale, National AJET is spearheaded by the AJET National Council, a committee of 20 current JETs elected from across Japan to better the larger community. As members of the JET community, all JETs are supported as part of National AJET; membership

service: Voice, Resource, and Community. First, National AJET liaises with MIC, MOFA, MEXT, and CLAIR, the JET Programme's government sponsors, to ensure that JETs' concerns are heard at the national level. Second, it provides a wide array of resources for JETs,

NATIONAL AJET FOCUSES ON THREE MAIN AREAS OF SERVICE: VOICE, RESOURCE, AND COMMUNITY.

is free. Representation on the AJET National Council comes from Blocks—groupings of prefectures that together elect one Block Representative to the Council. Find your Block and more information on it in the Block section on page 26!

National AJET focuses on three main areas of

from organising professional development opportunities to personal support through the Peer Support Group. Ultimately, community is National AJET's central focus; it works to foster connections in our diverse populace of 4,500 participants from 43 countries. National AJET serves as a network for

prefectural AJET chapters and Special Interest Groups, promoting ties between JETs throughout Japan no matter where their placement takes them.

AJET, both prefectural and National, always needs energetic, capable people to run the show—there's so much to do! If you want to contribute to the JET community, get in touch with your local AJET chapter or Block Representative. Drop us a line at ajet.net/contact-ajet/!

What do we do?

The purpose of National AJET is threefold: to give voice to JETs, to serve as a resource, and to support the community. For these aims, National AJET works on several major projects, including:

CLAIR Opinion Exchanges and AJET Surveys

National AJET embarks on survey programs to help JETs make their voices heard on a wide range of issues. Past surveys and exchanges have helped push for a ban on smoking in the staff room, extended *nenkyuu* [paid leave] days from 10 to the current 20, and increased the JET tenure from 3 to 5 years.

Community Support

National AJET works to give cooperative support for prefectural AJET chapters through Block Representatives and Block Groups. National AJET also supports SIGs by giving publicity and space to grow through its representation

network. Other initiatives, such as the *Tatami Timeshare* for couchsurfing JETs, make life easier in Japan by expanding contacts.

Volunteering and Publicity Initiatives

Despite large amounts of volunteering and fundraising done by JETs, many municipalities have been cutting back on JET participants in recent years because of costs. Volunteering from prefectural AJET

JETs.

Publications and Educational Resources

The National AJET website [ajet.net] hosts a vast archive of educational resources, be they teaching material or sites for learning Japanese. Additionally, National AJET has two publications, *Planet Eigo* and *Foxy Phonics*, that serve as helpful guides to working as a JET.

VOLUNTEERING FROM PREFECTURAL AJET CHAPTERS, COUPLED WITH NATIONAL AJET PUBLICITY INITIATIVES SUCH AS RACE TO THE TOP, HELP MAKE THE CASE THAT JETs ARE WORTHWHILE.

chapters, coupled with National AJET publicity initiatives such as *Race to the Top*, help make the case that JETs are worthwhile.

Professional Development

National AJET coordinates multiple professional development conference calls throughout the year to help current JETs learn from working JET alumni. It also facilitates networking opportunities through partner organisations (JETAA and JETwit), as well as organises professional development conferences in conjunction with JALT.

Corporate Sponsorship

Through the weight of support from the JET community, National AJET negotiates with corporate and institutional entities to obtain discounts, special offers, and other benefits for

National JET also supports two autonomous services, namely:

AJET Peer Support Group [PSG]

The AJET Peer Support Group is a listening and referral service which operates on the principles of confidentiality and anonymity. It is open to all JET Programme participants every night of the year, from 8:00 pm to 7:00 am—a period when other services such as the *Tokyo English Life Line* (TELL) are not in service, and when Prefectural Advisors (PAs) are often unavailable. National AJET furnishes operating costs for PSG.

AJET PSG can be contacted at 050-5534-5566, and via Skype voice call at AJETPSG.

AJET Connect Magazine

AJET Connect Magazine is a publication created for the English-speaking community in Japan at large, with particular focus on the JET community, to showcase all of the talents that we have to offer. It is sponsored by National AJET.

In addition to this, National AJET works to help keep JETs informed through its monthly eConnect News email, as well as its social media channels, about the latest happenings in the community. To see all of the great things that National AJET does, visit our website at ajet.net/!

to cooperate with AJET, and introduced the biannual CLAIR-AJET exchanges while also letting AJET play an active part in the organisation of national and local level conferences. Since then, **AJET has grown as a support group** and it has become less active as a pressure group, as many of the major issues in the past (such as tax issues and pension rebates) have been resolved.

However, AJET is once again in flux following changes from CLAIR in 2013, which included deferment of AJET participation in national JET conferences and relegation of the biannual CLAIR-

IN ITS EARLY YEARS, AJET GREW BOTH AS A SUPPORT AND AS A PRESSURE GROUP, SUPPORTING JETs DURING THEIR TENURE WHILE PRESSURING THE GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES TO ENACT NEEDED CHANGES

The History of AJET

Closely linked to the history of the JET Programme, AJET began in 1987, when the two predecessors of the JET Program merged; each had their own volunteer support groups, and they likewise merged to form AJET.

In its early years, AJET grew both as a support and as a pressure group, supporting JETs during their tenure while pressuring the government ministries to enact **needed changes**. To start, the position of AJET within the JET Programme was uncertain. Early on however, CLAIR and the ministries decided

AJET exchanges to an as-needed basis. Yet, AJET is a dynamic and constantly evolving organisation which adapts to the climate of the Programme, and AJET **looks forward** to creating new ways to build community and serve as a resource for JETs, while continuing its work with CLAIR and the ministries.



MEET THE COUNCIL

The National Council is a group of current JETs elected by the community to represent and work for them. The men and women of the National Council volunteer their time and energy to make sure the AJET community (all current, future, and former JETs) is connected, informed, and given a voice in the JET Programme. Please feel free to contact any member of the National Council at ajet.net/contact-ajet/.

The appointed positions are members of the National Council who apply for specific jobs on AJET based on their interests and skills. Because appointed members are not elected, they do not vote on national matters, working instead on AJET's core structure and services.



CHAIR
SANDY CHENG

As chief executive officer, the National AJET Chair is the face of AJET and acts as the primary representative voice of AJET to the ministries of Japan, media groups and other organisations. If you ever have a question, concern, or want to talk about AJET/JET, please contact Sandy via email at sandy.cheng@ajet.net.



VICE CHAIR
XAN WETHERALL

Works together with the Chair and Treasurer to ensure an efficient executive body, including preparing agendas and organizing meetings.



TREASURER
AARON GILLING

Works with the Executive Officers to administer and supervise the AJET budget, while also playing a supervisory role in matters pertaining to the function and productivity of the National Council.



PROJECT MANAGER
ROCHELLE ZHENG (CIR REPRESENTATIVE)

Works to ensure that all AJET projects progress smoothly and meet deadlines by developing project timelines and working with all members of the National Council. In particular, the Project Manager is responsible for coordinating the execution of biannual AJET surveys and reports presented to the Japanese governing ministries and CLAIR.



DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS
TAYLOR READ (BLOCK 1 REPRESENTATIVE)

Manages the AJET Awards Programs, and is involved with community building projects throughout Japan. Some of these include, but are not limited to the Tatami Timeshare Couchsurfing Project and JET Bloggers. The Director of Community Relations aims to increase JET participation in AJET and the participation of Japanese people in AJET activities.



DIRECTOR OF JAPANESE SALES AND MARKETING
MATTHEW HEADLAND (BLOCK 2 REPRESENTATIVE)

A member of AJET's corporate team specifically responsible for finding and negotiating with Japanese organizations.



DIRECTOR OF PROFESSIONAL AND EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT
CHRISTOPHER LOW (BLOCK 3 REPRESENTATIVE)

Works to assist JETs in becoming skilled and accomplished educators and professionals by gathering educational resources and maintaining a selection of up-to-date tools for Japanese language study. The Director of Professional and Education Development also provides opportunities to speak at and attend conferences and enroll in teaching courses, in Japan and online.



DIRECTOR OF SALES AND MARKETING
PATRICK LOYER (BLOCK 4 REPRESENTATIVE)

A member of AJET's corporate team whose goal it is to establish and negotiate relationships with various organizations, providing special offers and discounts for current JETs and JET alumni.



**DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE ADVERTISING
DEREK GUMB (BLOCK 5 REPRESENTATIVE)**

Oversees all advertising that AJET does for its corporate sponsors. Working directly with AJET's media avenues, the Director coordinates discounts, giveaways, and promotions of relevant, high-level products and services to current JETs and JET alumni.



**DIRECTOR OF ALUMNI RELATIONS
ASHLIE O'NEILL (BLOCK 6 REPRESENTATIVE)**

The primary liaison between AJET and Alumni groups, and works to help promote relevant alumni activities to the current JET community, the Director of Alumni Relations is in charge of building a resource hub to provide leaving JETs with necessary information for a smooth transition into alumni groups and life after JET.



**DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC RELATIONS
KEVIN CHEN (BLOCK 7 REPRESENTATIVE)**

Writes and manages public content for AJET, directs all AJET promotional campaigns, and works to ensure that AJET is effectively represented to those we serve.



**DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES
CASEY MCGARRAUGH (BLOCK 8 REPRESENTATIVE)**

Manages and distributes all of AJET's digital, video, audio, and printed publications and works on increasing the amount of resources accessible to JET Programme participants.



**DIRECTOR OF AFFILIATE RELATIONS
DUSTIN REIMER (BLOCK 9 REPRESENTATIVE)**

Manages AJET's Special Interest Groups and other Affiliated Groups. Assists with the maintaining and forming of new Special Interest Groups and other Affiliates.



**DIRECTOR OF VOLUNTEERING
TKA TYNE (BLOCK 11 REPRESENTATIVE)**

Responsible for organizing and implementing volunteer opportunities for JETs and the Japanese community, the Director of Volunteering reaches out to local and national organizations, non-profits and religious groups to supply individuals with pertinent information about possible volunteering initiatives to get involved in relief efforts throughout Japan and internationally.



**DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL MEDIA
EMILY MAITLAND (BLOCK 10 REPRESENTATIVE)**

Responsible for the management of AJET's social media presence on Facebook, Twitter, and the official JET forums. The Director of Social Media works to ensure that JETs are kept up-to-date on JET and AJET activities in their communities and throughout Japan.



**VOLUNTEER
HERE!**

DID YOU KNOW?

The AJET National Council works with teams of volunteers on projects throughout the year.

Volunteer with AJET to improve things for the AJET community by working on national projects alongside the National Council. You can build professional experience, sharpen your skills in your field of interest, and make a concrete contribution to the JET Program.

DID YOU KNOW?

AJET volunteers have worked on great projects such as the creation of the AJET mascot Tsuru-chan, translation for official reports, data analysis, and the upcoming redesign of the AJET website. We need volunteers with skills in translation, graphic design, journalism, public relations, web design, and more.

JOIN THE TRANSLATION TEAM!

Japanese translation is one of our biggest and most important jobs. Cassandra Walker, our Translation and Interpreting Coordinator manages teams of translators for AJET's website content, online publications, and annual reports to the Japanese government. JLPT level N2 or equivalent required.





**HEAD OF VISUAL MEDIA
PATRICK FINN**

Ensures that the AJET image is clean and consistent by presenting a streamlined, clear, minimal design that showcases the hard work put into every AJET publication, particularly the monthly magazine, Connect.



**TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING COORDINATOR
CASSANDRA WALKER**

Responsible for interpreting and making AJET-related materials available in Japanese, the TIC is the Japanese voice between AJET and CLAIR, the Japanese ministries, and other AJET-affiliated organizations. Cassandra works together with a group of volunteer translators, interpreters, and native Japanese speakers. Interested volunteers should contact her via email [here](#).



**ONLINE PUBLICATIONS EDITOR
STEVEN THOMPSON**

In charge of AJET's community publications, primarily the monthly magazine, AJET Connect. This involves managing magazine content, expanding readership, actively seeking and screening new contributors, and determining AJET's publication schedule.



**WEBSITE COORDINATOR
SERENA LAI**

In charge of AJET's web redesign project, Serena oversees the reorganization and design of website content, ensuring that AJET's new online presence is modern and user-friendly.



**WEBSITE COORDINATOR
DAVID BERG**

In charge of the day-to-day maintenance of the AJET website and providing IT support to the AJET National Council, David also manages e-mails, backs up the database, handles inquiries and feedback from website visitors, and provides support for other AJET-affiliated websites.

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- We offer as fast as next day shipping and don't charge extra for frozen or cool items.
- We are the only service that offers IKEA products for sale online in English in Japan.

AJET exclusive special offer

Enter **AJET-2014** in the coupon code section during checkout to receive a **500 yen** discount for your first order over 10,000 yen!



OVERSEAS COUNSELING SERVICE

www.overseascounseling.com

We all feel overwhelmed at times, and the additional stresses of living abroad can sometimes make these issues more difficult to deal with.

Services at Overseas Counseling Service are provided by a former JET who understands what it is like to be a JET living in Japan. Services are available via Skype or Email

I support many issues including: relationships, anxiety, depression, low mood, adjustment, life changes, and many other unique circumstances.

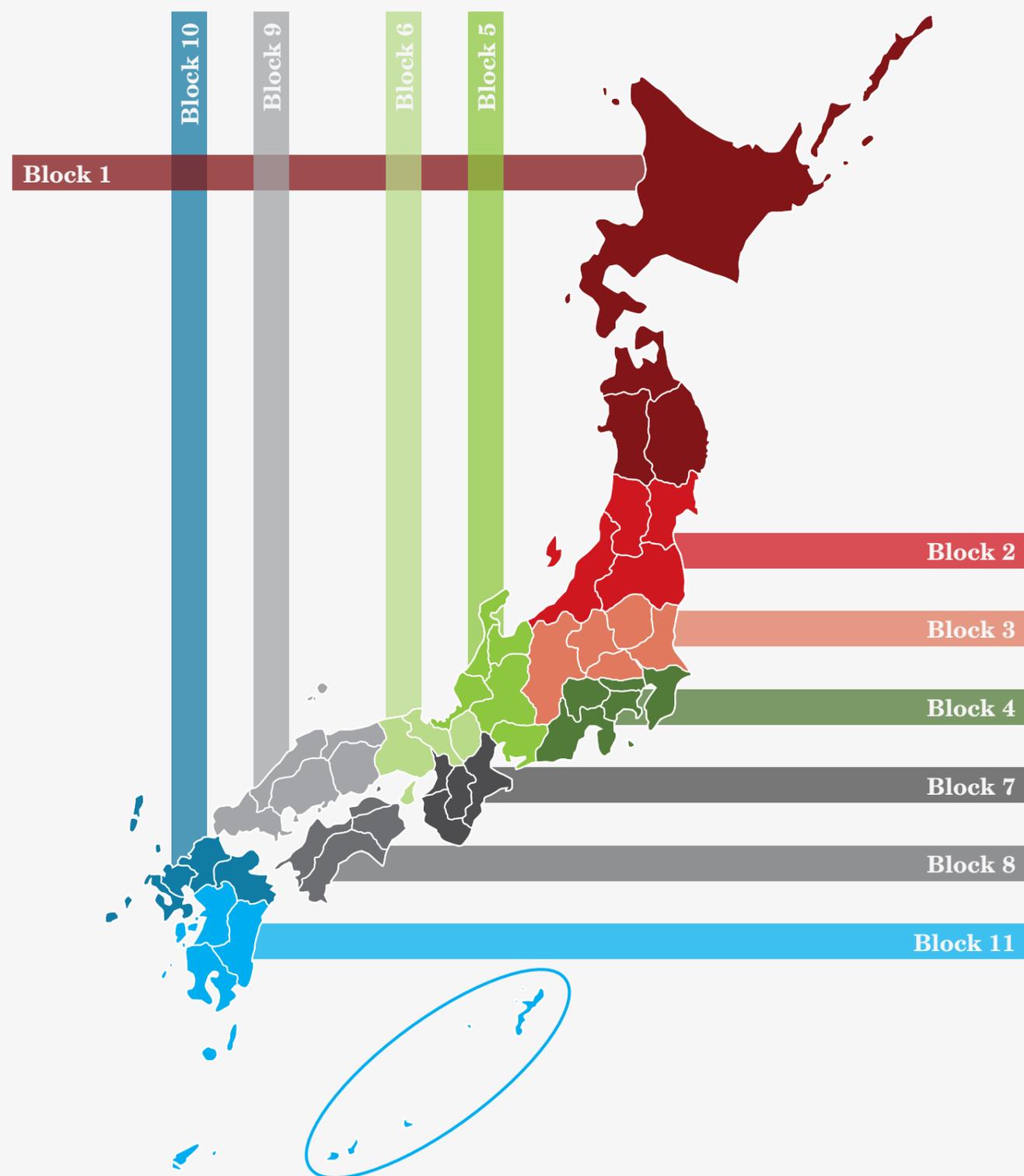
20% reduction in fees for current JETs

cochraneocs@gmail.com

AJET BLOCKS

No matter where you're headed, you'll find an active community in your Block. The prefectures of Japan are divided into geographical "blocks" for AJET's networking, events and representational needs. Each block has a Block Representative that's there to help you be an active member of the national JET community during your time on the JET Programme.

Your block rep will help keep you informed about interesting things happening in nearby prefectures, and is your personal link to the AJET National Council. Contact them with your suggestions, concerns, and questions about your area or AJET. Make sure to also join your Block's Facebook page for news and updates!



1 AOMORI, AKITA, HOKKAIDO, IWATE

Taylor Read / taylor.read@ajet.net



Apart from the winter snow and nationally recognized festivals—Aomori's Nebuta, Sapporo's snow festival, Akita's fireworks festival—our area is also known for being full of nature and greenery. Nature hikes, camping, beach outings along Iwate's coast, the best ski and snowboarding resorts, our region has a lot to offer. It's rich in history and offers a variety of historical, cultural, and scenic must see locations to boot!. With HAJET in Hokkaido, AAJET in Aomori and the AAJ in Akita, along with an active membership in Iwate, the northern Block boasts a tight JET community with a variety of events throughout the year!



2 FUKUSHIMA, MIYAGI, NIIGATA, YAMAGATA

Matthew Headland / matthew.headland@ajet.net



Witness a rural town transform into an arena of modern art or visit the serene island of Sado in Niigata Prefecture. Ascend the rocky heights of Yamadera or face the "snow monsters" of Zao in Yamagata Prefecture. Stroll the tree-lined streets of Sendai during Tanabata or visit the only place to strike Bashi speechless, Matsushima, in Miyagi Prefecture. Explore the samurai stronghold of Tsuruga castle or hula beneath waterslides in Fukushima Prefecture. Block 2 is an open and active JET community spanning and mixing all 4 prefectures!



3 GUNMA, IBARAKI, NAGANO, SAITAMA, TOCHIGI

Christopher Low / chris.low@ajet.net



Block 3 is as diverse as it is close to the urban heart of Tokyo. We have Tochigi, with great festivals in the countryside. We have Gunma, with outdoor activities, traditional Japanese culture, and city life. We have Nagano, with skiing and outdoor-bathing monkeys. We have Saitama; concrete jungle at one end and idyllic nature at the other. We have Ibaraki, with heaps of festivals and a view of Japan seen from atop Buddha. Ultimately, what makes Block 3 spectacular is the JET community with whom we make great memories.



4 CHIBA, KANAGAWA, SHIZUOKA, TOKYO, YAMANASHI



Patrick Loyer / patrick.loyer@ajet.net

There is always something to do here. Block 4 is amazing and has some really active JETs. You can climb Fuji in one of the prefectural or the Block 4 climb, have fun in our annual Tokyo Scavenger hunt; join Chiba JETs in taiko or sake festivals, enjoy some fine wine in Yamanashi's grape (read: wine) festival or go pick tea in Shizuoka. Don't hesitate to join events in your prefecture or another. You want to make an event? Hell yeah! Let's work together on that! This is your community, let's make it even more awesome!

5 AICHI, FUKUI, GIFU, ISHIKAWA, TOYAMA



Derek Gumb / derek.gumb@ajet.net

Aside from tourist attractions and festivals, Block 5 has a fun social scene for JETs. Come party with JETs in the nightlife hubs of Kanazawa and Nagoya, bask in the sun at our beach party, get scary at the Halloween party, try your luck at our new speed dating event, and light up the night sky at our famous fireworks show. Last year we enjoyed a tour of Inuyama City, led by the world-renowned Anthony Bianchi, who is famous for being the only foreigner ever to be elected to public office in Japan. We're open to new event ideas too!

6 HYOGO, KYOTO, SHIGA



Ashlie O'Neill / ashlie.oneill@ajet.net

From the legendary temples and shrines of Kyoto, to the international hub of fashion and food in Kobe, to the stunning beauty of Lake Biwa, you'll never be far from breathtaking sightseeing or social experiences! With the perfect Kansai location and the best JET community in Japan, we are the home of exciting events such as partying till dawn on Halloween, Hanami Japanese style, Christmas Charity bake sales, and our classy Lake Biwa Boat Ball! Excited yet? Hold onto your hats because this year is going to be bigger and better than ever!

7 MIE, NARA, OSAKA, WAKAYAMA



Kevin Chen / kevin.chen@ajet.net

Block 7 is a beautiful microcosm of Japan, with everything from the dazzling streets of Osaka, to the serene repose of the ancient capital in Nara, to the breath-taking beauty of mature sakura groves at Mount Yoshino. We also have some of the best events in Japan! Relax for a weekend away from the world at the temple-city of Koyasan, flaunt your wildest Halloween costumes at the massive Osaka party in October, or transform into a ninja at Iga. All this and more awaits you here. Make the most of it—you're in for a wonderful time!

8 EHIME, KAGAWA, KOCHI, TOKUSHIMA



Casey McGarraugh / casey.mcgarraugh@ajet.net

A little-known part of Japan, Shikoku is rich in history, culture and natural wonder. From the original Dogo hot spring in Ehime, to the beaches of Kochi and vivacious Awa Odori Dance Festival of Tokushima, Shikoku is a picture of authentic Japan. Kagawa prefecture completes the block as rolling plains flow into the island-studded sea—now adorned with contemporary art! The JETs of Shikoku are a diverse and friendly bunch! Be it biking, hiking, musicals, game nights, poetry readings, or volunteering, you're sure to find what you're looking for!

9 HIROSHIMA, OKAYAMA, SHIMANE, TOTTORI, YAMAGUCHI



Dustin Reimer / dustin.reimer@ajet.net

If you like outdoor adventures, try kayaking to Miyajima Island off the coast of Hiroshima then reward yourself with Hiroshima-style okonomiyaki. Visit Tottori and ride a camel on the sand dunes, or go paragliding on the beach. Be daring and test your palate by eating puffer fish from Yamaguchi before strolling through Akiyoshido, Japan's largest limestone cave. In Okayama, take a dip in the island waters and swim with bioluminescent phytoplankton. But let's not forget Shimane, which has Izumo Taisha, the preferred vacation spot of the gods. Off the coast are the Oki Islands where you can hike alongside wild horses.

10 FUKUOKA, NAGASAKI, OITA, SAGA



Emily Maitland / emily.maitland@ajet.net

Dive into the rich Dutch and Chinese influenced history and culture of Nagasaki in the west, or the world famous onsen and gorgeous mountains of Oita in the east. In between, you can enjoy the International Balloon Festival, or visit the historic ruins of Yoshinogari in Saga. Get your fix of foreign foods and nightlife in the bustling city of Fukuoka, while the rest of the prefecture offers excellent hiking opportunities and beautiful beaches. We hope you will love being a part of the Block 10 community.

11 KAGOSHIMA, KUMAMOTO, MIYAZAKI, OKINAWA



Tka Tyne / tka.tyne@ajet.net

Okinawa is home to 160 tropical islands! Coral reefs offer bountiful ocean life, great diving and white sand beaches. World heritage sites and indigenous Ryukyu culture come together to create a truly unique prefecture. Kagoshima and Kumamoto are home to two of Japan's gigantic active volcanoes, Sakurajima and Mt. Aso, which drives the hot spring business. Off the coast of Kagoshima are the old growth forests of Yakushima, a UNESCO world heritage site, that is a must see for any nature enthusiast. One Miyazaki's most famous sites is Takachiho, which boasts a stunning gorge, as well as countless shrines.

WHAT TO EXPECT IN YOUR FIRST MONTH

LACEY LEE (KUMAMOTO), TOM LEGGE (HIROSHIMA), COLIN O'NEILL (SHIMANE)

Your first month will be a blur. Myriad information is thrown at you in an unfamiliar environment. This should have you finding your feet in no time.

Leaving For Your Prefecture

If Tokyo Orientation was a whirlwind, your prefectural inauguration will be the perfect storm. You'll meet many important people in your new community in just 24 hours. A word of advice from the veterans—avoid recreating The Hangover on your last night in Tokyo. While your newfound Wolfpack may howl for an evening, your nausea could leave a lifetime of bad first impressions. By the end of day one, you'll arrive at your apartment exhausted, excited, vulnerable, and optimistic. It will be 5 o'clock in Japan so have a drink, relax, and unpack.



Settling Into Japanese Life

Your supervisor will assist with your bank account, inkan stamp, and cell phone the first week. Ask about auto-withdrawal for bills. Research mobile options and network signal beforehand. You or your supervisor will have to initiate internet setup. Voice your interest or apply using bbapply.com ASAP.

Find out if you need a car and seek out deals. Keep vehicle insurance and yearly car tax in mind when choosing small/yellow or big/white plate vehicles; these add-ons are more expensive for larger cars. If you commute via train or bus, obtain a schedule.

Introducing Yourself To Colleagues

Whether you are extraverted or reserved by nature, introducing yourself to your colleagues will leave you uncomfortable and exposed in this culture of homogeneity. Be conscious of the positive cultural exchange you provide by being different, but review what is expected. Expect plenty of bowing and repeating your basic information. Practice your introduction in Japanese until you've got it perfect. Try remembering names of people you meet. To really impress your coworkers, bring some omiyage (souvenirs/treats from home/Tokyo). Be open, be respectful, and be patient.



Prefectural Orientation

This is held mid-late August. You'll focus on expectations for your assigned teaching level. Our best resources are each other, so pester experienced JETs for information. Seek out ALTs geographically closest to you. Start building your support group now.

Don't suffer information overload. Sometimes JETs tell you every single thing you need (and don't need) to know. Just let it wash over you. Know that trial and error are great teachers; some questions won't have answers and that's okay! Part of the adventure is figuring things out for yourself.

Your New Apartment

Though you now call it 'home,' your new place may seem strange and unfamiliar. Do what you can to settle in and make it your own. Investigate cabinets and closets for information left by your predecessor. Knowing which remote button to push so you can sit spread-eagled in front of your A/C unit will be valuable in these hot summer months. An important reminder: just because something was left behind doesn't mean you have to keep it!



Firsts: Classes and Parties

Be interactive. There's nothing worse than a lecture you don't understand from someone you don't know. Expect moments of silence—don't be afraid of gestures. Don't worry about over-planning. Go with the flow. You make an impact just being a native speaker.

Always attend enkais. Enjoy the food, booze, and atmosphere. Every inebriated teacher suddenly speaks English. Speak to as many people as possible. Harrass English teachers if Japanese evades you. You may have to make a speech in Japanese. Say anything and your colleagues will be amazed.



SAY GOODBYE TO THE MAIN STAGE AND MAKE THE TREK TO YOUR PREFECTURE. WE'LL BE BACK, TOKYO!

OH YOU THOUGHT WE WERE KIDDING? EGGS ON EGGS ON EGGS BABY!



EXHIBIT A: SOMETIMES YOU'LL BE LEFT WITH A TV SET FROM THE 1800'S COMPLETE WITH KNOBS AND AN ANTENNA FEEL FREE TO KEEP IT AS A DECORATIVE PIECE BUT BY ALL MEANS, TOSS IT.

Housekeeping Issues

Appreciate that trash disposal is a revered art. Whether you have a specific day to put out your egg carton trash bag (yes, that exists) or you have your own garbage hut to use freely, separating refuse is part of your new life. Anti-moisture boxes are a must for rainy and summer seasons, preventing your home from getting moldy. If it's too late, you can use "Kabi Killer" for most mold. You'll soon grow familiar with insects that claim cohabitation; verify their Japanese names and buy specifically targeted products. If all else fails, seek bottles with pictures!



What Next? - 5 Final Tips To Ensure Future Happiness

- Listen to advice, but don't follow it blindly. Finding things out for yourself is way more exciting!
- Don't panic to furnish your apartment immediately. Equally, don't hesitate to make yourself comfortable. A comfortable home is worth spending money on.
- Don't be afraid of mistakes. They happen often. Try to see the funny side.
- You're a foreigner. Don't try to be Japanese. Embrace differences.
- Find ways to meet locals as soon as you feel comfortable.

SURVIVING THE JAPANESE SUMMER

TIPS FROM SURVIVINGNJAPAN.COM

Summer in Japan can hit you like a sack of humid, sweaty bricks. No matter where you go, it's good to be prepared for some of the problems unique to Japan's summers. Surviving in Japan has you covered.

Humidity

Depending on where you came from, you may not be familiar with humid heat. Hot and sticky, it clings to you and can sap your energy.

1. **Try an electric fan** and open some windows. Put a bowl of ice in front for cooler air.
2. **Carry a sweat towel.** Everyone uses them. You will need it.
3. **Drink lots of water.** Carry a water bottle. Drink. Refill. Repeat.
4. Buy a pretty hand fan (団扇, uchiwa or 扇子, sensu)
5. **Go out** and take advantage of public A/C.
6. **Accept** that people will repeatedly remark on how hot it is ("Atsui desu ne")
7. **Buy some sweat pads**

Good deodorant

If you're coming to Japan, you will probably hear someone lamenting about the inability to find any "real" deodorant here. Let me reassure you, it IS possible to get deodorant in Japan.

1. The Flying Pig - Familiar brands from CostCo.
2. Amazon.jp - The Amazon you know and love. Fast and cheap.
3. iHerb - Online store for natural organic products.
4. Don Quixote - Giant stores with a huge variety.

Mold

Every year I realize more and more just how hard it can be to WIN the mold war, short of bleaching everything in sight (which, I don't do, for various reasons). So how can you keep it from taking over?

1. Keep your shower dry by running the fan and keeping the window open.
2. Use a spray for "kabi" (mold) from the store, or this non-bleach spray from iHerb.
3. Distilled white vinegar (蒸留白酢 jouryuu shirazu) is a good natural alternative

4. Lower the moisture in the air using charcoal

Charcoal

Bamboo charcoal also known as 竹炭 (takesumi) is great at absorbing moisture, odors, and harmful chemicals in the air. It can also purify water when added.

You can also buy activated charcoal for deodorizing trash bins, shoe racks, closets, freezers, and more.

Bugs

While you can stock up on chemical repellents and sprays, the best offense is a good defense. Keep your apartment clean. Keep trash outside if possible.

1. Essential oils such as tea tree or peppermint sprayed around doors and windows can repel pests
2. Set up boric acid traps in discrete locations
3. Light mosquito coils made with pyrethrum

You can find even more tips for the summer, such as Japanese sunscreen, at Surviving in Japan.

EATING IN JAPAN

NICK POWERS (KAGAWA), VICTORIA CLARK (KAGOSHIMA)

Before you arrive

If you have any food concerns, mention them to your supervisor before you arrive, so they can make sure you're provided for. It'll only confuse the staff if you tolerate something you can't eat, then suddenly decide to stop eating it a few months later.

Alternative diet resources

VegJET is the go-to group for vegetarian or vegan lifestyles in Japan. You'll find shared recipes, restaurant recommendations, dietary advice, and a slew of food porn. Anyone can join the page, even if you aren't vegan or vegetarian, and you can post whatever, whenever, as long as it's relevant. Also look for the Hokkaido AJET-published book on living vegan/vegetarian in Japan, called Veg Out: The Vegan and Vegetarian Survival Guide for Japan. You can find it at hajet.org.

Gluten-free JET is the group for living gluten-free in Japan. Celiac and gluten intolerance are a little ways behind veganism and vegetarianism. Fortunately, various types of rice flours can be found at your local supermarkets, as rice flour is the basis of many traditional Japanese sweets. Rice flour is good for gluten-free baking, but you may have to search online for the recipes, as finding gluten-free cookbooks in Japanese bookstores isn't easy.

Kyushoku: school lunch

Your school lunch situation—like everything else on JET—will depend on your placement. Eating kyushoku with your students is a good way to bond. The students bring all the food to their homeroom and serve it themselves, and they're generally more relaxed than in class. Beware that school lunch is intended for growing

teenagers, so it may be more calories than you're used to. You can have your lunch altered if it's too much, and at some schools (not all), you can trade food with the students. Expect to pay ¥200-300 per meal.

Your teachers may ask you early on if you want to eat kyushoku or opt out. If you can't eat kyushoku for whatever reason, make sure your supervisor or teachers know your reasons when you arrive. Be honest and clear. In most cases, if you bring your own food, you have to eat with the teachers in the staff room.

Special occasions (graduation, sports day, culture festival, and so on) have special lunches, purchased by the teachers or prepared by the PTA. Ask your teachers if it's possible to prepare or order a special lunch for you if you can't eat what everyone



Photo - Vicki Clark



else is having, or ask if you can bring your own. If you can eat the bento, but don't recognize everything in it, be adventurous and ask for help in eating it! Food is a fantastic way to bond with people.

MAKE A LIST OF WHAT YOU NEED AND INCLUDE THE BASICS (IF YOU WANT TO COOK JAPANESE FOOD, THAT'S RICE VINEGAR, MIRIN, MISO, DASHI, AND SOY SAUCE).

Buying groceries

Arriving in Japan, many of you will find yourselves illiterate and clueless. Basic tasks, such as food shopping, are turned into a near impossible mission. So to help with navigating your way around the supermarket, here are a few tips:

1. On my first supermarket trip I made the mistake of entering the labyrinth that is the inner aisles,

where unfamiliarity assaults you from every direction. If you feel overwhelmed, stick to the outer aisles where you'll find vegetables, fruit, meat and dairy.

2. Handily, the outer aisles are also where you'll find the store's ready-made meals. Top tip: go just before closing when they're reduced by up to 50%.

3. Should you gain the courage to venture further in, make a list of what you need and include the basics (if you want to cook Japanese food, that's rice vinegar, mirin, miso, dashi, and soy sauce).

4. Install a Japanese dictionary on your phone. When you're stuck, you can thrust it into the hands of an unsuspecting shop assistant.

5. If choosing between the hundreds of soy sauces available is about to induce a mental breakdown, simply ask another foreigner or a Japanese friend to send you a picture of theirs.

6. And finally, don't worry. I promise it does get easier!

Eating out

Japan is overrun with small, locally-owned eateries, and the best ones are those that focus on one dish. It is perfectly acceptable to claim a barstool by yourself at a restaurant and eat alone without judgment. If you're up to it, talk to people! Become a regular at a local place. Bring a dictionary or smartphone app with you to ask about ingredients, or to identify

unfamiliar foods. If you have no dietary restrictions, be adventurous! Living here is a cultural experience, and food is a part of that. If you can't read a menu, don't be afraid to point and ask for help. And beware of seating charges at some bars (ask before you sit down!)



Photo - Vicki Clark

YOU GOT THE JOB! NOW WHAT?

3 TIPS FOR YOUR FIRST JOB AFTER GRADUATION

COLIN O'NEILL (SHIMANE)

The stress relief felt in finding gainful employment after a rigorous search is freeing and reassuring. So now that you have the job, how do you focus on what's next? Use your time here to develop into a young professional.

Professional Consistency

Dressing to impress, never being late, and working overtime are all overused clichés in the job world that miss the point of a healthy routine. Prepare a consistent approach so people can rely on you.

Productive Personal Time

'Me time' will have an absurdly different definition than it did in college. Don't shut your brain off after work. Invest in yourself. Personal development opportunities can be found in Japanese study, reading, exercising, or learning to play a new instrument.

Structure

In college, semesters came to a definitive close and papers had submission dates, clearly marking the end of your focus on that specific topic. Life as

a professional is different. Most work won't be signified as finished by a final date or grades anymore. You work hard, improve, and stay consistent in your tasks not to get the job done, but to increase your capacity to get better at what you do every day.



JAPANESE ETIQUETTE: THE 10 COMMANDMENTS

ERICA GRAINGER (FUKUSHIMA)

- ㄨ** Thou shalt lower your eyes when bowing and avoid eye contact when speaking; seen as aggressive.
- ㄒ** Thou shalt always be early, being 'on time' is actually considered late.
- ㄒ** Thou shalt wear minimal makeup and jewellery in the workplace. Tattoos are generally not acceptable anywhere in public, so cover them please!
- ㄒ** Thou shalt change shoes when coming inside from outside, or when entering a toilet.
- ㄒ** Thou shalt not point ones' feet towards other people when sitting. Sit in seiza if you can.
- ㄒ** Thou shalt wear a kimono at all times...Kidding! At important ceremonies one should wear a formal suit. The first week of school, it's better to overdress than underdress. Take cues from your coworkers. Don't wear anything low-cut or extremely tight. Women should cover their shoulders.
- ㄒ** Thou shalt use friendly, polite Japanese greetings whenever appropriate, such as upon arriving to work or leaving for the day.
- ㄒ** Thou shalt not eat or drink at a dinner before the toast ('Kampai!')
- ㄒ** Thou shalt bring omiyage (souvenirs) for work colleagues after an outside trip, ideally individually wrapped food.
- ㄒ** Thou shalt be mindful of polite Japanese when speaking, and address people by their titles.

This article was originally published by Tofugu and has been edited for length. You can read the full version online [here](#).

Photo - Tofugu

HELP! I DON'T KNOW HOW TO ALT!

VERITY LANE (HOKKAIDO)

Summer is almost here, bringing with it sweltering heat, limited edition Crunky ice cream bars, and a whole new flock of ALTs (Assistant Language Teachers). Soon you and other ALTs will be scattered across the Japanese countryside, about to be faced with your first classes.

Three years ago I found myself in front of a class of 40 high school kids for the first time. I'd worked with children before (though they tended to throw things at me rather than sit silently staring.) This was a whole different situation. So I've written this slightly unconventional guide to ALT-ing so you can learn from my mistakes. This is a mix of practical tips and some more abstract ones that will hopefully help you get through the first few weeks.

ALTing and the Art of Improv

If I was running an

orientation for new ALTs, I'd replace almost all the talks with three days of improv classes. "Every situation is different," is the realistic but often frustrating refrain heard at these orientations. Okay, so all your situations are going to be different. Then let's learn how to improvise to suit any of them! Mostly I'm talking about a mindset (though some improv games can also be adapted very neatly into English games too.) The most important one of these I think is the, "Yes, and..." mentality. In the classic improv game, you have to accept what your partner says ("Yes,"). Then you add your own element to the story or performance ("and..."). It's a practice in positivity and rolling with whatever comes your way.

When a Japanese Teacher of English (JTE) asks you to do something strange, ("Please talk about [random thing],")

reach for the "Yes, and..." When a kid says something a bit weird, cheeky, or even rude, just "Yes, and..." them.

Kid: "You became fat."

Me: "Yes, and I'm practicing sumo."

This attitude will help keep you from the nightmare situation of being flustered in front of class. It does take practice, but it is something you can learn.

"Yes, and..." doesn't mean you have to agree with everything. You can "No, but.." instead. The important thing is accepting that you've been told something and adding your own information.

Smile Until Your Face Falls Off

I suddenly became a much, much better ALT one gloomy day in October. I only had to change one thing—my face. After I arrived in August I

had been walking around with a slightly terrified expression, like a dog confused by a lemon. Then one day I decided to smile. I simply decided to smile, no matter what happened.

Then suddenly it became a good day. Kids smiled back. Shy kids spoke up. Loud kids were loud in English. I felt like I'd discovered something magic. The kids became more willing to talk to me, less sleepy in class, and discipline problems lessened. It was a positive feedback loop. I smiled – kids smiled – I was happy – I smiled more. I felt more confident, which made a huge difference in how I acted in class. Smiling is free. It is a simple thing, but it can make a big difference.

The ALT Voice

OK, so you've got your ALT face on. Now let's work on your voice. That smile you've already got is affecting how your voice sounds. Try it. With a straight face say, "This is a weird experiment you are making me do," Then smile and try saying it again. Listen to how your voice changes. That smiley voice is part of developing an ALT voice.

Now slow it down and speak louder. Really, really slow and really really loud. Even slower! Even louder!

There you go. That's your ALT voice. It took me weeks of confused students' stares before a teacher took me aside and told me I was speaking too fast and too quietly. Doing some voice exercises will help you develop the endurance you'll need to genki your way

through six classes in a row and still be up for karaoke that night.

Games vs. Motivation

I'm talking specifically about senior high school and maybe the upper years of Junior High School. Games will only get you so far in motivating older kids. What really motivates them is a feeling that they are learning something and are improving. You can have fun in class, but fun that teaches the students something relevant is best. If you are doing a game, try to make sure it's linked to the material the students are studying. That can be harder

close to a realistic shopping experience as we could.

Realia, or real items from your home country, are great for creating a true-to-life setting. Props are great tools too. Even a simple thing like using a book for a passport when doing an airport role-play can make a difference.

A good rule to remember, and to tell your JTEs, is if it wouldn't be interesting in Japanese, then it's not going to be interesting in English. English doesn't magically make something cool (despite what all the strange English on T-shirts would have you think.)

A GOOD RULE TO REMEMBER, AND TO TELL YOUR JTES, IS IF IT WOULDN'T BE INTERESTING IN JAPANESE, THEN IT'S NOT GOING TO BE INTERESTING IN ENGLISH.

Building Your ALT Kit Bag

Whether you are stationed at one school or twenty, you can make your ALT life easier by making yourself a kit bag. Grab it and go!

• English Posters

You can create a good English learning environment in any classroom by preparing some posters and take a few magnets. Mine include different ways to answer, "How are you?", a poster about the benefit of mistakes, and a few useful classroom English phrases.

than it sounds, especially if your JTE doesn't cooperate and tell you what material the class is covering, but persevere if you can.

For example, when I was asked to make an activity using vegetable cards, I put as much realism into it as I could. To create a realistic setting, I divided the class into shoppers and shopkeepers. Each shopper had a different shopping list. Each shopkeeper had different goods to sell from their "shop". The important thing was that, even though we were still in their classroom in Japan, we'd made that classroom as

- **A Timer**

A very useful tool for keeping students and yourself on track.

- **A Set of Laminated Pictures**

Or other simple, flexible activity materials. I just went online and found about 40 interesting pictures. They have saved me many times from the dreaded “Please do an activity,” request that comes 5 minutes before a class.

- **Your Self-Introduction Materials**

You never know when a school is going to surprise you with a class of students they have kept hidden for months.

same as teacher training, but if you can familiarize yourself with teaching theory you’ll have a skeleton to build your teaching around.

importantly, I learned how to talk with JTEs about my ideas using terms they were familiar with.

WHILE I MIGHT BE ABLE TO FUNCTION IN ENGLISH, THAT’S NOT THE SAME AS BEING ABLE TO TEACH IT. I HAVE DONE MANY A FRANTIC GOOGLE SEARCH TO REMIND MYSELF WHICH ARE TRANSITIVE AND WHICH ARE INTRANSITIVE VERBS.

One of the turning points for me as an ALT was working at a seminar run by Dr Olenka Bilash. She is a Canadian educator who works with the Hokkaido Board of Education to improve English teaching. [Her website](#) is a good place to go to understand some ways of thinking about education, particularly aspects which are often lacking in Japan,

Educate Yourself on English

Okay, so you’ve got your kit bag, you’ve spent those long hours at your desk studying up on educational theory, you are ready to go! Not quite. You need to do a bit of English study too.

“But I’m a native speaker/native speaker level,” I hear you say, “I’m crazy good at English.” Dear Reader, that is what I thought too, but I was wrong. I have a Masters in writing and I still get stumped by our bizarre language sometimes. While I might be able to function in English, that’s not the same as being able to teach it. I have done many a frantic Google search to remind myself which are transitive and which are intransitive verbs. You need to know the vocabulary to talk about sentence constructions that you’ve probably been using since you learned how to talk. I was never taught those at school, especially some of the

such as student output (“using it” and “proving it”) and how assessment should feed back into how children are taught. At that seminar, I saw that there were better ways of teaching English than the read-repeat-read-repeat I’d mostly seen in Japanese classrooms. Perhaps more

obscure ones used in Japan.

Don’t worry. You already speak the language. You just have to review the bits of English that we use to talk about English. You can get a head start by Googling some grammar guides and glancing at the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA).

And lastly...

If you see a JTE make a spelling or pronunciation mistake, don’t say, “Hey that’s wrong!” Instead use the wonderful variety of the English language to your advantage. The phrase, “Maybe that’s the American

spelling. In Britain we write it like this...” has saved me many times, even when I knew that it was just flat out wrong. Swap American with British, Canadian or Australian etc. as you wish. You might be significantly better at English than the JTEs you work with, but by avoiding stepping on their toes you’ll make your own life easier in the long run.

Good luck brave, new ALTs! You will face challenges, especially if you are placed in a bad school, but ALTING can be quite rewarding. Don’t beat yourself up in those first few weeks if it’s tough. I’m sure

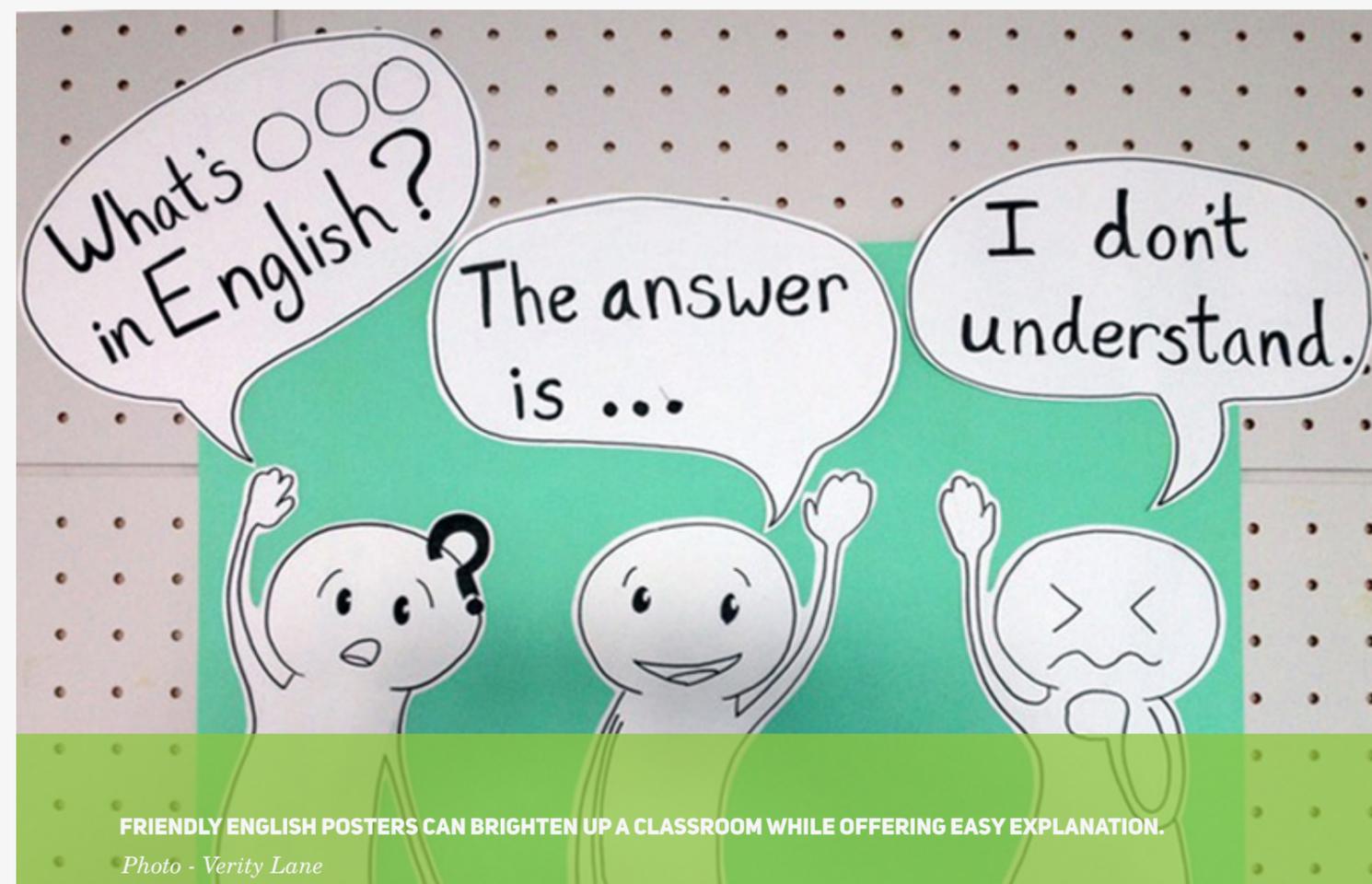
you’ll find your own groove in no time! Just remember to smile!

Verity Lane spent three years at the very eastern end of Hokkaido, where the sun rises at 2AM, and bears and deer hangout at the combini parking lot. Verity writes about all things Japanese for [Tofugu](#). She is also writing a novel based on her rather dramatic time in Hokkaido, where she lost several teeth, but found true love. More of her writing can be found at [veritylane.com](#)

IF YOU CAN FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH TEACHING THEORY YOU’LL HAVE A SKELETON TO BUILD YOUR TEACHING AROUND.

Educate Yourself on Education

The reality of the current situation is that many ALTs, private or JET, come to Japan with little teaching experience or pedagogical training. So if you are one of those ALTs, I’d really encourage you to do some research. It’s not the



FRIENDLY ENGLISH POSTERS CAN BRIGHTEN UP A CLASSROOM WHILE OFFERING EASY EXPLANATION.

Photo - Verity Lane

DOWNTIME: ALONE AT YOUR DESK

NICK POWERS (KAGAWA), VICTORIA CLARK (KAGOSHIMA)

Welcome to your new school(s)! Between classes, every ALT encounters downtime, especially during this long hot summer break. As you're still settling in though, bear in mind that your choice of how to use this time wields a significant impact on your standing as an ALT, and even on your own mental health. To avoid the pitfalls of falling out of step in your off-hours, or of descending into the purgatory of Facebook and net-surfing, here's how to stay involved during your off-time:

• **Explore and Pitch-In:**

Though it's a blazing hot Tuesday afternoon, and you're slumping into a post-lunch coma, if the staff room is empty, it only means that there's work being done, and someone else is out there doing it. This is your chance to run outside and help your principal with the gardening, join the P.E. staff in setting up soccer nets, or even help the in the kitchen. Your extra efforts won't go unnoticed, and your professional stock can skyrocket for

simply lending a hand. In short: get out, get active!!

just stay busy, polite, and appreciative—off-

BEAR IN MIND THAT YOUR CHOICE OF HOW TO USE THIS TIME WIELDS A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON YOUR STANDING AS AN ALT, AND EVEN ON YOUR OWN MENTAL HEALTH.

• **Join a Class:**

Join any class!! True, you're an English teacher, but you're also a key component of your students' daily lives, so seize every opportunity to interact. Always ask permission before entering a classroom, but do make an effort to sit-in on an art lesson, learn shodo, help a 12-year-old learn to saw in the woodshop, or hit the gym for a kendo lesson. In these serendipitous moments outside of class, you're no longer an odd gaijin or an academic authority; you're a three-dimensional friend for the kids to get to know, and soon enough, they'll open right up.

• **Plan and Produce:**

During exams or holidays when kids are absent and teachers are hustling,

days are your chance to design lesson plans or discuss them with your JTE. Sit down and master Powerpoint animation, dream up a new activity, or create your own flashcards or game-boards. Please ask permission before using schools' supplies, and your ingenuity might attract some further positive attention from your new co-workers.

• **Respect the Net:**

The web is a privilege that your school can take away. Past ALTs have faced discipline for clicking the wrong link, posting pics of students, or burning off a few hours social networking, so please keep your desk time responsible and respectful, but don't feel shackled. As you build the proper clout, freedoms grow.

“YOU’RE SO GOOD AT CHOPSTICKS!”
SIMON GRIFFIN (KYOTO)

Welcome to Japan, and to the many odd things people say when trying to make conversation!

“YOUR JAPANESE IS SO GOOD!”

Basic greetings or chopstick use are all it takes to receive seemingly patronizing compliments and excessive comments. For foreigners, these can become an annoyance, but remember that they are generally meant encouragingly. Sarcastic responses are best avoided. Instead reply with; “Back home we sometimes use chopsticks,” or “My Japanese is still poor, but I’m studying.”

“CAN YOU EAT SUSHI?”

Food-related questions such as “Can you eat rice?” or “Can you eat natto?” are common. The translation to ‘can’ makes the question sound odd in English, when really “Do you like sushi?” is more the intent. Again, honest, polite answers; “I love sushi!” or “Natto is the work of the devil!” are encouraged dialogue.

“DO YOU HAVE RICE IN AMERICA?”

Expect some potentially odd questions, ranging from: ‘Do you have rice in your country?’ to ‘Do you know winter?’ Some Japanese can be somewhat uninformed about countries outside Japan, but appreciate their desire to learn, and use this as a teachable moment! It’s our job, after all.

STUDYING JAPANESE
JESIAH JEFFERS (KYOTO)

Learning any new language is a journey, and all journeys must have a beginning. Getting the two basic scripts, hiragana and katakana, under your belt is a perfect place to start with Japanese. The highly recommended **Genki textbooks by the Japan Times** can help you move through elementary and intermediate vocabulary and grammar, and are a good next step. Visiting your town hall to find an affordable tutor is also a great idea.

Flashcard Apps

There are a couple **helpful flashcard applications**, Anki (free for PC and Android), and Memrise (free for iOS and Android). Both use spaced repetition systems (SRS) to determine how often you need to see each word. There are plenty of free Japanese vocabulary and kanji flashcard decks to download, or you can create your own.

Web Extensions

It’s also worth mentioning dictionary apps (see page 45), to use on the go or during study sessions. If you often find yourself on Japanese websites, **download an extension** called Rikaikun (Chrome), or Rikaichan (Firefox) which allow you to see words and kanji defined when you hover over them with the mouse. Ask around; JETs can be great resources too! Good luck in your studies and enjoy the journey.

ENAKI ETIQUETTE

NATHAN BERNE (OKAYAMA)

Photo - Nathan Berne

Let's get social!! Beyond simple dinner and drinks, enkai provide an important social function for coworkers. True, some teachers see them as additional work—time to impress the boss or entertain sempai—but the purpose is good old-fashioned sociability. Etiquette is key, but the rules are simple.

- **Pour:** When a neighbor's glass is empty, grab an open bottle and pour for them. Respect and social reciprocity are the fabric of any enkai.

- **Sip Your Drink:** When someone pours beer or tea for you—after you've politely indicated your preference—take a few sips right away as a sign of gratitude. No need to guzzle (unless urged).

- **Read the Mood:** Some gatherings are quiet and respectful, but many are playful and silly. If the group begins to arm wrestle, play charades, or build a human pyramid, join in!

- **Keep it Light:** Coworkers generally prefer light

group conversation, so steer clear of serious or controversial subjects unless your neighbors show genuine interest. Find new common ground through hobbies and culture.

- **Be Patient:** If someone accidentally offends you with a pointed or personal question, just take it in stride, and politely change the subject. Take care not to shame or embarrass anyone, and let your assertive positive attitude speak for itself.

BEST CONBINI BUYS

BUYS TO GET YOU THROUGH THE DAY AFTER THE NIGHT BEFORE

VICKI CLARK (KAGOSHIMA)

Open 24/7, conbinis sell just about everything and anything, and will be your lifeline in the early days when you may find yourselves burning the candle at both ends. Should you get a bit carried away enjoying Tokyo's nightlife, here are some purchases to make the following day of lectures pass a bit easier:

Grab to go

- Bananas: full of potassium, you'll usually find these around the ready-made meals.

- Coffee: most conbinis offer cheap, freshly brewed coffee, as well as an assortment of (often incredibly sweet) coffees in canned and carton forms.

- Onigiri: rice balls of goodness. If you're not feeling too adventurous, try tuna mayo ツナマヨ or salmon サーモン (katakana) 鮭 (kanji).

Behind the counter

- Nikuman: A steamed bun served hot with various fillings, this is Japan's answer to a meat roll.

- Fried chicken: Lawson's arguably has the best, but all conbinis tend to get this right.

Prevention's better than a cure

- Ukon no Chikara: many people swear by this, downing it before drinking to mitigate the effects. Certainly worth a shot.

- Pocari Sweat: Japan's favourite sports drink. If possible, drink a bottle before sleeping.



Photo - Vicki Clark



TRAVEL PLANNING

ERIKA KLEIN (HYOGO)

An exciting aspect of living in Japan is travel: not only to Japan's forty-seven prefectures, but also to other countries in Asia. Learning methods to make the most of your nenkyuu (paid leave) days can let you maximize your travel opportunities, but works best if you plan in advance to avoid straining your bank account.

New JETs are commonly advised to obtain a calendar from their base school, but many newcomers may mistakenly assume that a calendar's use is limited to planning for Sports Day or winter vacation. Of course summer break, winter break, and Golden Week are popular and convenient travel periods, but finding other times can minimize crowds, maximize savings, and add some adventures to your month. In fact, there are multiple national holidays from September through November which provide fantastic travel opportunities for those who are prepared. The following are holiday dates and useful resources for you to begin your travel plans now, both around your home prefecture and beyond.

Long Weekends & Holidays in 2014

09.15	Mon	Respect for the Aged Day
09.23	Tue	Autumn Equinox
10.13	Mon	Sports Day
11.03	Mon	Culture Day
11.23	Sun	Labor Thanksgiving Day
11.24	Mon	Labor Thanksgiving Day (Observed)
12.23	Tue	Emperor's Birthday

Budget Airlines

- Air Asia
- Jetstar
- Peach Aviation
- Skymark Airlines

Flight Search Engines

- Fly Me Anywhere
- Kayak
- Momondo
- Skyscanner

Buses

- Bus Sagasu (Japanese)
- Willer Express

Trains

- HyperDia
- Jorudan

Accommodation

- Hostelworld
- Jalan
- Trivago

Notes and Tips

- Check with your school regarding dates for Sports Day and Culture Festival, two mandatory full-school events which usually take place on Saturdays in October and November.
- Use your nenkyuu to extend three-day weekends, or on the Monday before a Tuesday national holiday to create a four-day weekend.
- Sign up for emails from Jetstar and Peach Aviation to receive information about upcoming sales (often with substantial discounts).
- Join the JET-setters Facebook group to discuss travel destinations, questions, and recommendations with other like-minded JETs.

CLICK US!

WELCOME TO JAPAN PLAYLIST

HANNAH KILLOH (TOTTORI)

We put together an online playlist to start you off on your JET adventure. Let us carry you through your first week.

Pre-Departure (1 - 12)

Before you get on the plane:

- “Send Me on My Way” - Rusted Root
- “Big Jet Plane” - Angus & Julia Stone
- “Journey of the Featherless” - Cloud Cult
- “Around the World” - Daft Punk

Tokyo Orientation (13 - 26)

It's the big one:

- “On Top of the World” - Imagine Dragons
- “I Got You (I Feel Good)” - James Brown
- “Life on Mars?” - David Bowie
- “Bohemian Rhapsody” - Queen

Arriving at Your Placement (27 - 38)

Getting excited as you start your adventure:

- “Eye of the Tiger” - Journey
- “On the Road Again” - Willie Nelson
- “Lust for Life” - Iggy Pop

Settling In (39 - 57)

Settling in after your first week:

- “Sunday Morning” - The Velvet Underground
- “You Get What You Give” - New Radicals
- “Turning Japanese” - The Vapours
- “Home” - Edward Sharpe & The Magnetic Zeros

LISTEN!

COPING WITH HOMESICKNESS

VERITY TOWNSEND (HYOGO)

Homesickness can strike at anytime, regardless of your familiarity with Japan or whether you've lived abroad before or not. Here is a list of effective ways to cope with this and enjoy your time in Japan.

Keep in touch with friends and family online, or writing letters for a personal touch. If you don't have Internet when you arrive, get an international call card from the convenience store.

Ask family or friends to send **treats from home**. Send

them little gifts from Japan in return!

Spend the odd quiet evening in watching **your favourite TV shows and films** from home.

Get involved! Join your local gym, cooking club or traditional tea ceremony. Don't worry if you don't speak much Japanese. Doing a group activity is a great way to make friends in your community and improve your Japanese.

Hang out with other ex-pats

and **talk about your week in English**. Everyone is in the same (well, similar) boat after all!

Reach out if you're stressed out. If it's late, you can contact the AJET Peer Support Group on 050-5534-5566 (every night 8pm-7am)

Stay busy! Too much time to think can cause you to start feeling homesick. Organise trips, plan activities; you'll find your weeks start flying by.

Photo - Daniel Brooks

ATM GUIDE

STEVEN THOMPSON (FUKUSHIMA)

Once you've got your cash card and bank book, you'll be ready to hit the ATM. While many ATMs have English options available, not all will. Don't worry. With a little bit of vocabulary and practice, you'll have no trouble.

Buttons

Correct 訂正 teisei

Use this if you entered a number incorrectly.

Cancel 取消 torikeshi

Use this to cancel your transaction and get your card back.

Confirm 確認 kakunin

Use this after entering something.

Return 戻る modoru

Use this to go back a screen.

Issue (a receipt) 発行する/しない hakkou suru/shinai

Select at the end if you want a receipt. Choose 発行しない if not.

Main Menu

Withdrawal 引き出し hikidashi

Get your hard-earned cash out!

Deposit 預け入れ azukeire

Put in your money. How responsible of you! Most machines allow you to add coins (look for a big X sign that says otherwise)

Bank transfer 振込み furikomi

If you set up an account to send money home, or if you're paying your local AJET chapter for an event, you'll be furikoming. There's a lot of steps, and every bank's ATM is different. Ask someone to help or check out one of the general guides online.

Check balance 残高照会 zandaka shoukai

How much money is left until payday? Check it here, then select 明細票 (meisai-hyou) for a slip, or 終了 (shuuryou) to end.

Bank book update 通帳記入 tsuuchou kinyuu

If you want to update the book without making a withdrawal.

What's a bank book?

Your bank book, or 通帳 (shuuchou), keeps track of all your transactions. If you put it in at the start, it'll print all the recent transaction and your current balance. Very handy!

Tips

ATMs in Japan close at night to go home and be with their families (or something). Know the hours for the ATMs in your town. Average is about 8 PM.

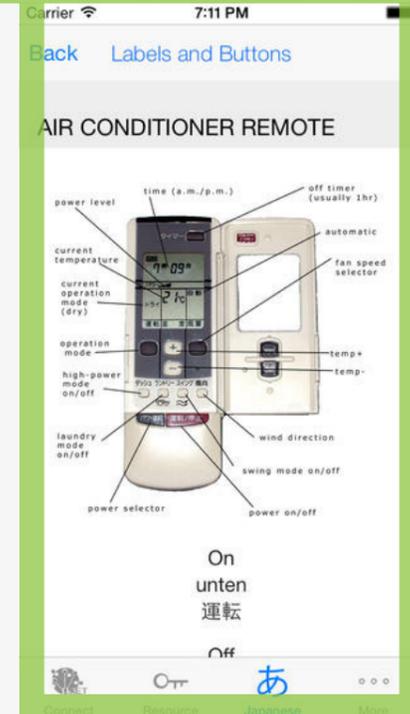
Local ATMs will not accept foreign credit or debit cards, but 7/11 will. Open 24 hours, 7/11 ATMs offer English service and work with nearly any card from around the world. They charge a small transaction fee (around 200 yen). Remember to notify your bank you're moving, or they may shut down your card for suspicious overseas activity!



Photo - Steven Thompson

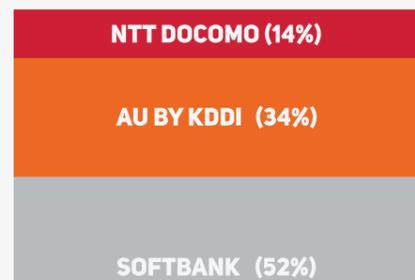
GETTING A PHONE AND JAPAN APPS

STEVEN THOMPSON (FUKUSHIMA)



When you first arrive in your new town in Japan, one of your first priorities will be getting a phone. Many supervisors will take you there on your first day, while others will have a temporary phone to give you until you can set up your own phone. Most companies offer 1 or 2-year contracts, so make sure you do a bit of research, know what you want, and make a choice you'll be happy with for at least a year.

There are a few main providers to choose from. Check out the graph below to see their relative popularity within the Connect community.



Here's what people had to say about the providers:

Softbank

"Because I have an iPhone"

"Cheapest"

"Cool free stuff and good package with my WiFi at home."

"It was the service that the other JETs in my town used, so I decided to do the same to get free calling/texting between them!"

au by KDDI

"Cheaper than Docomo, better coverage than Softbank"

"They have the best service in rural and mountainous areas."

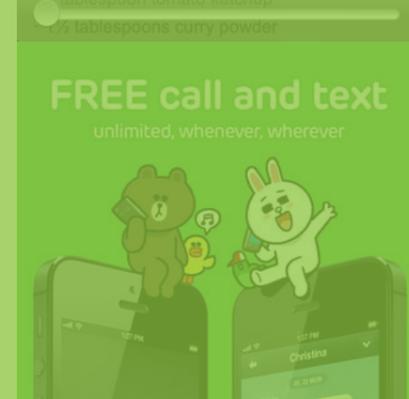
"Offered good rates on 4G and iPhone tethering, which have been super helpful."

NTT Docomo

"Best coverage, fastest network and they had the phone I wanted."

"Good service and coverage area. Allow unlocked phones not sold from carrier. Will unlock most phones they sell."

You can see a bit of a pattern. In general, Softbank is cheapest, au is best for rural areas, and Docomo is reliable. All three carriers now sell the iPhone, but their other phones will vary. If you're interested in Android or others, search their shops online. Make sure to ask about special promotions for signing up, and consider bundling your phone with your internet service to save time and money.



Transportation

- Hyperdia* (free) Android/iOS

*Hyperdia, like many English versions of Japanese services, sometimes does not feature the same or as many routes as its Japanese counterpart.

- Japan Transit Planner (¥299) iOS
- Navitime (Japanese only, free) Android/iOS

Restaurants

- Yelp! (free) Android/iOS
- Hot Pepper (Japanese only, free) Android/iOS

Japanese Cooking

- Japanese Tasty Recipes (free) Android
- Let's Cook Japanese (free) iOS
- Cookpad (Japanese only, free) Android/iOS

Accommodation

- airbnb (free) Android/iOS
- Booking.com (free) Android/iOS

Top Apps for Japan

Originally published in the January 2014 edition of Connect magazine. You can read the full version [here](#).

It goes without saying that a smartphone is going to be a valuable tool while living in another country. From looking up kanji to train times, having a good selection of Japan apps will help you thrive.

Japanese dictionary

- JED (free) Android
- imiwa? (free) iOS

Japanese study

- Human Japanese (¥999) Android/iOS
- Obenkyo (free) Android
- Learning Japanese (free) iOS

- Hostelworld (free) Android/iOS

- Jalan (Japanese only, free) Android/iOS

Messaging

- LINE (free) Android/iOS

Games

- Puzzles & Dragons (free) Android/iOS
- LINE Pokopang (free) Android/iOS
- School Idol Festival (free) Android/iOS
- Shinjuku Dungeon (free) Android/iOS

JET Resources

- AJET - iConnect (free) Android/iOS

CLICK ANDROID OR IOS FOR LINKS!

STAYING UP TO DATE

ERIKA KLEIN (HYOGO)

Staying informed about Japan's current events not only gives you insight into Japanese culture and important social issues, but may broaden your discussions with Japanese co-workers and friends. Starting this year, Connect's News section will feature articles and editorials aiming to cover the most important Japanese current affairs of the past month. For even more coverage and information, see below for a varied list of Japanese and Japan-or Asia-related news sources, both in Japanese and English. Choose one (or several) and subscribe or follow it semi-regularly to keep up-to-date on your new home!

Online International News

- Al Jazeera (Asia Pacific section)
- BBC News (Asia section)
- Bloomberg (Japan section)
- CNN (Asia section)
- Economist (Asia section)
- Forbes Asia
- New York Times (Asia Pacific section)
- Telegraph (Asia section)

Online Japanese News (English)

- Asia & Japan Watch (Asahi Shimbun's English publication)
- Japan Times
- Japan Today
- Mainichi
- News on Japan
- NHK World
- Nikkei Asian Review (Nihon Keizai Shimbun's English publication)
- RocketNews24
- The Japan News (Yomiuri Shimbun's English publication, previously the Daily Yomiuri)

Online Japanese News (Japanese)

- Asahi Shimbun (朝日新聞)
- Nihon Keizai Shimbun (日本経済新聞)
- Yomiuri Shimbun (読売新聞)

Television News Networks

- Fuji News Network (FNN) (Sankei Shimbun Affiliate)
- Japan News Network (JNN)
- NHK
- Nippon TV (NTV) (Yomiuri Shimbun

Affiliate)

- TV Asahi (Asahi Shimbun Affiliate)
- TV Tokyo (Nihon Keizai Shimbun Affiliate) (1)

Tips

- The TV networks listed above all broadcast news programs, but check your local television guide for channels and times. Some news recordings are also available online, both in Japanese and in English.
- Local newspapers provide valuable Japanese language practice as well as information about your community. If interested, ask your supervisor how to subscribe.
- Many news sources provide updates via Facebook and Twitter, including (in English) the Japan Times, Japan Today, BBC News Asia, CNN Asia, Forbes Asia, Asia & Japan Watch, RocketNews24, and The Japan News, and (in Japanese) the Asahi Shimbun and the Nihon Keizai Shimbun (Nikkei). Follow them for regular instant updates!

Sources: (1) <http://www.kanzaki.com/jpress/broadcast.html>

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GETTING STARTED GETTING INVOLVED

HIROSHI FUKUSHIMA (KUMAMOTO), LACEY LEE (KUMAMOTO)

Photo - Erika Egner

Getting involved in Japan is something that you likely wanted to do even before you were physically in Japan! It's a great way to build networks and make new friends. Making connections is part of creating your new life here, and the best way to do so is through your interests. There are many options available that enable you to continue what you did back home or learn something new. But first you need to know where to start.

At School

Outside the classroom are further opportunities for your students to get to know you and become more exposed to international influences. There's no time for chatting in class! Similarly, it's a chance for you to get to know your students better.

There are various ways to be a part of the action. You can join one of the extracurricular clubs. You can participate in staff sports competitions and/or Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) leisure activities. From soccer tournaments and volleyball to running relays (ekiden), you should have a lot to choose from. Ask around!

Volunteering

Find time to volunteer when opportunities arise in your community. Some popular options include: reading English books to children at your local library, running a small eikaiwa group, or WOOOFing (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms). Find more on page 54.

JET-based Groups

The diverse JET community is home to a bunch of national groups that host events all throughout Japan. Some, like ALT Soccer Tournaments, host nation-wide gatherings which are a great way to connect with people outside your area. Others, like JETfit are online support communities. Find more on page 52.

Cultural Opportunities

You've come all this way to Japan, why not learn something Japanese? This is by all means not an extensive list! Conduct your own research and seek out others who study your chosen revered art. Cultural opportunities include: kyudo, kendo, judo, sado (the way of tea), traditional dance, aikido, taiko, shamisen, or shodo (calligraphy)

Who to Ask

Openly express interest and ask everyone around you! People in the office, people at school (not just JTEs!), your supervisor, people from the community that you meet randomly...the list goes on! Even if they're not involved, there is a chance they know someone who is. It may take time, but it's an achievable task.

Go online! Sportsnet is a website that lists many sporting events. If you're into running check out RunNet. You can enter events online and pay via conbini. If you're near a big city there are free Nike Run Clubs to join, as well as other running groups all around Japan. If possible, also try to follow some blogs out there that offer advice specifically related to Japan.



Photo - Verity Townsend

How to Buy

Learn from those around you. Do a lot of internet research. Write down what you need on a piece of paper and take it to the sports store. If need be, have someone write it for you! If you are not sure or can't remember the vocabulary, use a mobile dictionary app and show the shop assistant, or even a quick Google image search on your phone might help someone pinpoint what you're looking for.

BRAND	CLICK US!	Language	Online	Clothing	Gear	Shoes
Columbia		Japanese	●	●	●	●
Merrell		Japanese				●
Mont-bell		English		●	●	
North Face		Japanese	●	●	●	●
Patagonia		Japanese	●	●	●	●
DISTRIBUTOR						
ABC Mart		Japanese				●
Amazon Japan		Jap / Eng		●	●	●
Base Camp Outdoor Shop		Japanese	●	●	●	●
ICI Sports		Japanese	●	●	●	●
Murasaki Sports		Japanese		●	●	
Pearl Izumi		Japanese		●	●	
Plant Green Real Outfitter		Japanese	●	●	●	●
Sierra Trading Post*		English		●	●	●
Sports Authority		Japanese	●	●	●	●
Super Sports Xebio		Japanese	●	●	●	●

*Based in America, but shipping is reasonable.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS



What's your passion? Special Interest Groups are a great way to get involved, connect with other people, and join great events. In a nutshell, SIGs are groups in Japan who get together in person and online to share what interests them.

Create your own Special Interest Group today and share it with other like-minded individuals across Japan. Sports, reading, hot springs, anime, underwater basket weaving... whatever it is you love, AJET is here to help! If you are interested in creating a Special Interest Group, contact Dustin Reimer at activities@ajet.net. Dustin will be happy to offer you advice, ideas and support in establishing and expanding your own group! While you're at it, don't forget to check out the Special Interest Group forums at <http://sigs.ajet.net/>, too!

ALT Soccer Tournament Group

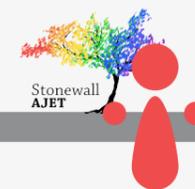
altsoccertournament@gmail.com

Just arrived in Japan and want to play soccer? Well you'll be pleased to hear that a series of soccer tournaments are run specifically for the JET community... the aptly-named ALT Soccer Tournaments! These tournaments take place bi-annually—in spring and autumn—and have been running for the past eleven years (in both Nagano and Hyogo prefectures), during which we've hosted over 9,000 participants from all over Japan. All JETs are welcome to participate: male or female, big or small, serious or social. It's a great way to meet new people and enjoy football on some of the best grass pitches.

Asian Pacific Islander (API) Group

api@ajet.net

The mission of the Asian Pacific Islander Association for Japan Exchange and Teaching (API AJET) is to provide peer support for the Asian Pacific Islander (API) community in Japan, as well as to raise local and global awareness about the diverse range of issues that face this community. The group is open to any and all who wish to share experiences and/or promote cross-cultural understanding through discussions, events, activities, etc



Canada National Group

canadaNG@ajet.net

AJET's Canada National Group is a network of Canadian JETs who wish to exchange information and ideas, as well as promote Canada inside and outside of the classroom. The aim is to share lessons related to Canada, Canadian cultural resources, and information particular to Canadians in Japan. So far through Facebook alone, we have shared over twenty Canada-related lessons, given advice on teaching about Canada, and helped distribute information from the Canadian Embassy for Japanese students interested in Canadian scholarship opportunities. Get involved today!

JETs of African Descent (JETs AD)

jetsad@ajet.net

JETs AD is a group that focuses on topics related to JETs of African Descent, and is open to all. The group serves as a platform for discussion, support, and announcements relating to the JET community at large. We aim to provide useful information and share resources on hard-to-find hair and beauty products, foreign foods, events, ways to stay connected, and other topics relevant to our demographic. We also plan nationwide and region-specific events. Join JETs AD on Facebook to stay up-to-date on all the happenings in the JETs AD community!



JET Christian Fellowship (JCF)

jcfnatco@gmail.com

JET Christian Fellowship is a non-denominational group of JETs who share a common belief and faith in Jesus Christ. It was formed in 1988 by Christians on the JET Program. We meet together to develop friendships, pray for one another, and encourage each other in the walk of faith. We strive to share Jesus and His message of hope with other JETs, foreigners, and Japanese people we come in contact with



Stonewall Japan

stonewallsig@ajet.net

Stonewall Japan provides an affirming, open, safe zone for LGBTQ individuals and allies in Japan, while enhancing lives through collection and dissemination of information, maintenance of online platforms for communication, and provision of opportunities for fellowship, mutual learning, and peer support. We recognize the need to maintain and nurture a sense of community for all of our members throughout Japan. We encourage solidarity, insight, pride and respect, and self-discovery through development of an international community at the regional and national levels. Stonewall Japan envisions an international community where compassion and respect, social justice, and equality are extended to all individuals.

VegJET

vegjet.japan@gmail.com

VegJET is an active networking community and resource group for vegan and vegetarian JETs living in Japan. We support one another by sharing helpful information, recipe ideas, event postings, and more! If you're a current or incoming JET wishing to maintain your lifestyle and meet other compassionate people, join VegJET!



VOLUNTEERING WHILE ON JET

NATHAN BERNE (OKAYAMA)

Volunteers come in all shapes and sizes, and the events they design and operate across Japan serve charities and communities of every stripe. Though we support schools and students as ALTs, we have an unprecedented opportunity to contribute through our communities, our cities, and our new host country. Through our collective strength (JETs, non-JETs, and Japanese alike), we share our efforts, ideas, and community across Japan to give back; we are all the AJET community.

As a whole, AJET is a vehicle through which JETs and communities can come together to raise funds for charity, launch an activist campaign, or just plan an exciting social gathering for JETs and for communities nationwide. Beyond charity and activism, AJET also organizes local social events and cross-prefecture endeavors, and has grown to include everything from Mt. Fuji climbs to sports tournaments around Japan. Take the initiative, and jump at the chance to start a pledge drive, organize outdoor clean-up, or support a local orphanage; the opportunities to participate, motivate, and contribute are truly endless.

Where to Look:

In your search for your ideal charitable or volunteer organization, join and consult your local AJET chapters, Block Groups, and a detailed list on ajet.net. Here's a few:

- National Land Afforestation Promotion Organization
- Japan Civil Network
- Foreign Volunteer Center in Fukushima
- Green Cross Japan
- Habitat for Humanity
- Japan Cat Network
- Japan NGO Center for International Cooperation
- Indonesian Education Promoting Foundation
- Animal Refuge Kansai (ARK)
- Karabao Association
- Smile Kids Japan
- Jellyfish Wishes

Note that prefectures post lists of local charities and programs online, so please consult the web and ask around locally. If a program is based outside of your prefecture, consider opening a local chapter, or even organizing a weekend field trip to volunteer.

Launch Your Own Program:

Never hesitate to initiate a new program through AJET—all you need is a plan and some effort. If you're ready to roll, consider the following guidelines:

CLICK US!



Photo - Ayaka Shiga

How to Launch an AJET Event

Set Your Goal Set a clear purpose for your AJET event or program, and assemble a team. Assert your desired timelines, and clarify commitments.

Assess Your Needs If you require particular venues, transportation, clean-up, or additional facilities, reserve them early. Obtain appropriate permits, and keep the community appraised—coordinate with public services, if necessary. For procedural and permit questions, consult your CIR or the AJET National Council.

Coordinate Seek advice from schools, contracting organizations, or any apposite local groups. Communities can provide additional tools or ideas for your program, and their positive word of mouth adds greater reach. Local news media might also show an interest, and good press benefits all of AJET.

Remain Accountable Check and double-check your supplies, venues, and number of participants to avoid last-minute scrambling. If you collect fees, consider registered mail to secure payments, or invoke Japan's genkin kakitome futo system. Always keep records.

Support & Safety Be appraised of the nearest emergency services, and ensure that participants respect the community with regard to noise, property, waste disposal, and general conduct.

!!Report!! Inform AJET of your amazing charity, program, or event, and submit your acquired donations and volunteer hours to the Race to the Top competition (see below).

Please note that our work through AJET affects the community. While we can accomplish much and have a great time doing it, please maintain proper respect and consideration for the customs and constraints of your community. Your neighbors will appreciate your efforts all the more if they feel informed, involved, and esteemed by your efforts.

JET Community Service Tracker

As you rack up the events, charitable contributions, and community service hours, keep accurate records, and please report everything to the AJET National Council via the JET Community Service Tracker form, available at ajet.net. Your accomplishments assist AJET in sharing the accomplishments of JET with the ministries of Japan, and your work inspires current and future JETs as well

Race to the Top

From November to April, AJET will also support the Race to the Top Challenge, as JETs compete between prefectures to accumulate the most charitable donations and volunteer hours. Winning prefectures receive prizes and further great exposure, while the competition only adds to the proud national standing of AJET.



Photo - Tim Botroff

CONTRIBUTING TO CONNECT

Connect is a magazine for the community in Japan, by the community in Japan. Everyone is welcome to write, no matter your experience or style! If you have an idea you want to see in these pages, reach out to our Head Editor, or any of our awesome section editors. We'll work with you to make it the best it can be and share it with our audience of thousands. Not every article needs to be an essay! We feature interviews, infographics, top-ten lists, recipes, photo spreads, travelogues, and more.

Contact Head Editor Steven Thompson at connect.editor@ajet.net with your submissions, comments, and questions.

ARTICLES

Write about something you're doing. Write about something you love. Tell us a story.

SPOTLIGHT

Tell us about someone in your community whose doing something neat and noteworthy. Cooks, collectors, calligraphers, we want to hear about the inspiring people around you.

COMMENTS

Let us know what you think. Click the comment button at the end of any article, or interact with us on Facebook, Twitter, and issuu.com.

PHOTOS

All of Connect's photos are provided by the community. From the cover to the articles and everything in between. If you're an aspiring photographer and want your work published, send it to us at connect.editor@ajet.net.

HAIKU

Each month Connect will feature haiku from our readers. Haiku are simple, clean, and can be about anything you like! If you're an aspiring wordsmith with the soul of Basho, send all of your haiku along with your name and prefecture to contest@ajet.net.

COMICS

You asked for it, and now Connect features comics. Whether you're a desk doodler or a published artist, we want to see your panels and strips about life in Japan.



CONNECT WITH US

Interested in contributing to Connect? Want to stay up-to-date on interview opportunities, photo requests, and Connect announcements? Sign up to be a contributor at the Connect Contributors Circle online to receive updates from us, pitch your ideas, and discuss with the Connect staff and community.

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