

Regarding Use

This Guidebook has been produced to provide foreign persons with information in various languages for living in Japan.

The content has been edited in order to provide general information. Depending on the district, status of stay in Japan, etc., services that one can receive may differ. For details, enquire at the relevant office.

The content is that as of April 1, 2003. Please note that system and regulation changes, etc. may have come into effect after this date.

Finally, we would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the Hanshin District Committee for the Establishment of a Multilingual Guidebook which provided the data and considerable cooperation for the production of this Guidebook.

March 2003

Council of Local Authorities for International Relations

If you are a victim or are involved in an accident or theft

How to contact the police

If you are the victim of a robbery or violence, or are involved in a traffic accident, telephone the police (Tel. 110).

When the police officer answers your “110” call, remain calm.

Tell the officer (1) what happened, (2) when it happened, and (3) where it happened.

When you hear the siren of the patrol car, come out to meet the car and guide it to the scene of the accident or crime.

The “110” call to the police is a free call. ¥10 coins or telephone cards are not necessary when calling from a public telephone.

In order to remain calm when you make the telephone call to the police, it is a good idea to keep a note near your telephone, in hiragana or Roman letters, of your name, address and the names of recognizable buildings, etc. near your residence.

When calling the police (110) from a mobile phone

- (1) When calling from a mobile phone, be sure to give the location (address) of where the call is being made from and the mobile phone number. If you do not know the address, use some buildings, etc. which can indicate the location or call from the nearest public telephone.
- (2) It may be necessary for the police to call you back to check the location or circumstances, so after you have contacted the police, do not switch off the phone and remain at the scene of the accident or crime.
- (3) If you are driving, stop the car in a safe place before making the call

FAX 110

The FAX (facsimile) number is 0120-110221 (freecall).

Koban (Police Box)

There is a Koban(police box) in each district with a police officer on duty.

The Koban deals with local patrols, people who have lost their way and lost articles. If you need to ask for directions, you can get help at the Koban.

Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your local police station or Koban.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

In case of a fire

How to contact the fire department

If a fire breaks out, shout out to let the neighbors know and contact the fire department to send a fire engine (Tel. 119).

It is dangerous to try to extinguish a fire alone.

When calling the fire department (119), remain calm. Tell the officer (1) there is a fire, (2) where it is (address or some landmarks), and (3) what is on fire.

When you hear the siren of the fire engine, come out to meet it and guide it to the scene of the fire.

The telephone call to the fire department is a free call. ¥10 coins or telephone cards are not necessary when calling from a public telephone.

In order to remain calm when you make the call, it is a good idea to keep a note near your telephone, in hiragana or Roman letters, of your name, address and the names of some recognizable buildings, etc. near your residence.

When calling the fire department from a mobile phone

- (1) When calling from a mobile phone, be sure to give the location (address) of where the call is being made from and the mobile phone number. If you do not know the address, use some buildings, etc. which can indicate the location, or call from the nearest public telephone.
- (2) It may be necessary for the fire department to call you back to check the location or circumstances, so after you have contacted the fire department, do not switch off the phone and remain at the scene.
- (3) If you are driving a car, stop the car in a safe place before making the call.

FAX 119

The FAX (facsimile) number is 0120-119221 (freecall).

Risai Shomei-sho (Disaster Victim Certificate)

It is necessary to have a Risai Shomei-sho (Disaster Victim Certificate) when applying for tax deductions or tax reprieve, etc. for victims of a fire disaster. Application forms for a Risai Shomei-sho may be obtained from your city, ward, town or village office or fire department.

Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office or fire department office.

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In case of sudden illness and injury

How to contact the fire department (for an ambulance) (Tel. 119)

In case of a sudden illness or injury, call the fire department for an ambulance (Tel. 119). In cases of minor injuries or normal illness, use a taxi or car, etc. to get to a hospital or clinic.

When you call the fire department (119), remain calm. Tell the officer (1) it is an emergency, (2) what happened, (3) your location (address or some landmarks), (4) your full name, and (5) the phone number from which you are calling.

The “119” call to the fire department is a free call. ¥10 coins or telephone cards are not necessary when calling from a public telephone.

When calling for an ambulance, be sure to have ready cards the sick or injured person holds if possible, such as a health insurance card or hospital/clinic card, for when the ambulance arrives.

In order to remain calm when making the call, it is a good idea to keep a note near your telephone, in hiragana or Roman letters, of your name, address and names of recognizable buildings, etc. near your residence.

When calling 119 (the fire department) from a mobile phone

- (1) When calling from a mobile phone, be sure to give the location (address) of where the call is being made from and the mobile phone number. If you do not know the address, use some buildings, etc. which can indicate the location, or call from the nearest public telephone.
- (2) It may be necessary for the fire department to call you back to check details of the location or circumstances, so after you have contacted the fire department, do not switch off the phone and remain at the scene.
- (3) If you are driving, stop the car in a safe place before making the call.

FAX 119

The FAX (facsimile) number is 0120-119221 (freecall).

Holidays (Night) Emergency Patient Services

There are emergency patient services in each district to treat emergency patients during holidays and at night. A dial-up inquiry service is available in Japanese.

- Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your nearest fire department or police station.
- Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

In case of an earthquake

Japan is a country that has many earthquakes. Using the Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake as an invaluable lesson in which countless precious lives and property were lost in an instant, it is important to be prepared mentally and materially for an earthquake no matter where or when it happens so that losses can be kept to a minimum.

Everyday measures

- (1) Check where the safest place in your house/apartment is.
- (2) Store enough drinking water – 2-3 liters per person per day.
- (3) Prepare a rucksack or emergency bag and store it in a place familiar to everyone in the family.
Example of items to put in the rucksack / emergency bag:
(a) torch light, (b) batteries, (c) drinking water and food, (d) money (including some ¥10 coins for using a public telephone), (e) copies of identification materials such as passports and bankbooks, etc., and other valuables, (f) matches, lighter and candles, (g) a first-aid kit (those requiring regular medication should not forget it), (h) a helmet or other protective headwear, (i) cotton work gloves, socks and underwear, (j) heat insulating and waterproof blankets, (k) rope, etc.
- (4) Use metal fittings to secure furniture and prevent it from falling over.
- (5) Use shatter-prevention film on windows, cupboards, shelves, etc. where glass is used.
- (6) Make a note of emergency contact telephone numbers and the phone number, address and other contact details of someone who can communicate in your language.
- (7) Confirm where your nearest emergency shelter and hospital are and how to get there. Inquire at your city, ward, town or village office to confirm the whereabouts of your nearest emergency shelter.

When an earthquake happens

- (1) Ensure your personal safety and get to the nearest safe place.
- (2) Switch off the gas, gas cookers, etc. in use. Switch off all appliances, such as cooking and heating appliances which may cause a fire. If a fire breaks out, extinguish it immediately with the nearest fire extinguisher.
- (3) Open all doors including the front door to ensure an escape route.
- (4) Try to listen regularly to the TV and radio or telephone for earthquake information.
- (5) Do not rush out of a building. Wait until the earthquake has temporarily stopped, then get your emergency bag, put on a helmet or other protective head covering and make your way to an open space.
- (6) Try not to become separated from family members or neighbors. Check you are all together and make your way as quickly as possible to a shelter.
- (7) If you are driving, avoid breaking suddenly. Reduce your speed slowly and move over to the left shoulder of the road. Do not park the car next to a gasoline station or high-pressure gas facility, nor under a pedestrian bridge.
- (8) If you are walking along a wide road, move out to the center. If downtown, be careful of falling objects such as signs, telegraph poles and glass from windows, etc.

After an earthquake

After an earthquake, there is the danger of yoshin (after-shocks) and tsunami (tidal-waves). If possible get accurate information from the radio, newspaper, television, etc. If you find you cannot return to your residence after a big earthquake, inform your country's embassy or consulate, your place of employment or school of the safety of both you and your family.

***Saigai-yo dengon dial* (Telephone message service in times of disaster) (Tel. 171)**

When a disaster occurs, it is often difficult to make telephone calls to the affected area. In such circumstances use the Saigai-yo Dengon Dial service (telephone message service in times of disaster). People outside the area can listen to recorded messages made by those in the affected area regarding their safety, etc. It is like a voice recorded message board. Similarly, people outside the area can send messages to people in the affected area.

Notification of the introduction of the NTT Saigai-yo Dengon Dial service will be made on the radio and television, etc. You use the service by dialing 171 and following the guidance in Japanese to record or listen to messages.

Useful information in foreign languages in times of disaster

The website below provides foreign translations of signs and information posted at emergency shelters, etc. in times of disaster such as major earthquakes. The Website information is in PDF format. There are 79 words and phrases in 10 languages: English, Chinese (People's Republic of China Chinese and Taiwan Chinese), Spanish, Portuguese, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Thai, and Cambodian.

Yokohama-shi Kokusai Koryu Kyokai

(Yokohama Association for International Communication and Exchange)

(Saigai-toki ni yakutatsu gaikoku-go hyoji sheet – Yokohama-ban)

(Useful information in foreign languages for use in times of disaster – Yokohama Version)

<http://www.yoke.city.yokohama.jp/>

Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office.

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In times of typhoons and floods

Being prepared for typhoons and floods

In Japan from summer through autumn, there are many typhoons that bring strong winds and torrential rain which can cause landslides and flood damage. To be prepared for such strong winds and floods, the following points should be given attention.

- (1) Your residence should be fully inspected. In order to keep damage to a minimum, repairs and reinforcements should be carried out.
- (2) Window glass, etc. should be reinforced with gummed tape or vinyl tape. If there are shutters, they should be closed.
- (3) Boxes, flowerpots and other objects in the garden or on the balcony should be fastened or taken into the house to prevent them from being blown around by strong winds.
- (4) Television antennas etc. should be reinforced with splints, wire, etc.
- (5) Clear drains, shores and water tubs of any dirt and debris to ensure good drainage.
- (6) If you live in a lowland area or in an area where flooding is possible, you should place furniture and electrical appliances as high as possible.
- (7) In the event of a blackout (electric power failure), have a flashlight, portable radio, etc. in a set place familiar to each member of the family.
- (8) Keep things you need to take with you in an emergency in a convenient place.
- (9) Confirm where the nearest disaster shelter is and how to get there. Confirm whether or not your residence is in a safe district. Information can be found in the Kiken Kasho Zu (Danger Zones Map) at your city, ward, town or village office, fire department office or civil engineering department (names may vary depending on district) concerning the location of disaster shelters and the threat of heavy rain-induced landslides in certain areas.

If a typhoon comes

- (1) Do not go out in strong winds. If you must go out, wear a helmet or thick hat.
- (2) Do not go near fallen utility poles or sagging cables.
- (3) Pay close attention to weather forecasts. If a warning to evacuate the area is given, evacuate as quickly as possible. Families with elderly or sick persons or infants should evacuate early.

Risai shomei-sho (Disaster Victim Certificate)

It is necessary to have a *Risai Shomei-sho* (Disaster Victim Certificate) when applying for tax deductions or a tax reprieve for victims of storms and floods.

Application forms for a *Risai Shomei-sho* may be obtained at each city, ward, town or village office or from a fire department.

- Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office or your nearest fire department or police station.
- Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

If involved in a traffic accident

If you are a victim

- (1) Report the accident to the police immediately. If the accident is not reported to the police, the Kotsu Jiko Shomei-sho (Proof of a Traffic Accident), required to receive insurance payments due to a traffic accident, may not be obtainable.
- (2) Confirm the address and name of the driver and the owner of the vehicle (when the driver is not the owner), and also the vehicle registration number, date of insurance entry and name of insurance company.
- (3) Even if you think your injury is minor, have a medical check-up.

If you caused an accident

- (1) Help the victim (give first-aid, call an ambulance).
- (2) Notify the police.

Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at a nearby police station or your city, ward, town or village office.

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Gas leaks

If you notice any irregularity with the gas

Using the gas improperly is very dangerous.

If you notice any irregularities, switch off the gas, open the windows and do not light any flames (or sparks) in the house.

Propane gas is heavier than air, so it is necessary to sweep it out.

If you notice any irregularities, contact your local gas company, regardless of the time of day or holidays.

If you use propane gas, contact details are written on the gas cylinder.

Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at a gas company near you.

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Lost property

If you have lost property

If you have lost property, go to the nearest police station or Koban (Police Box) to check if it has been found.
If you lose something while riding public transport, try the following:

Train: Ask the railway station staff. (If you know the name of the destination of the train you were riding, it may be easier to find your lost property.)

Bus: Ask at one of the bus company's offices.

Taxi: Ask at the taxi company's office.

If you find lost property

Take any found lost property to the nearest police station or Koban (Police Box) as soon as possible. If you find it on a train or in a department store, take it to a railway station employee or to the lost property department of the store. In either case, be sure to obtain a Shutoku-butsu Azukari-sho (Deposit of Lost Property Certificate/Slip).

Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at a police station or Koban (Police Box) near you.

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How to find housing and rent housing

Private rental housing

It is convenient to use a real estate agent to look for a private rental house or apartment. Real estate agents usually have offices near railway stations, etc. A real estate agent will introduce you to a rental house or apartment to suit your budget, size and commuting needs.

When renting a house or apartment, you will also have to pay shiki-kin (security deposit) and rei-kin (gift money) to the property owner (landlord) in addition to rent, as well as chukai-ryo (an agency commission fee). The total of these expenses can amount to about 5-6 months' rent.

When making a contract, in principle, a guarantor is required.

Shiki-kin (Security Deposit)

Shiki-kin (Security Deposit) is the money deposited with the property owner when a contract is made. The amount is usually 1-2 months' rent. This money is used to reimburse the owner for unpaid rent or for repairs required when the tenant leaves the residence. If there is some money remaining after these deductions, it is returned to the tenant.

Rei-kin (gift money)

Rei-kin (gift money) is a sum of money given to the property owner when a contract is made. The amount is usually 1-2 months' rent and it is not refunded when the tenant leaves the residence.

Chukai-ryo (Agency Commission Fee)

Chukai-ryo (Agency Commission Fee) is the sum of money paid to the estate agent who introduced you to the rental residence. Usually, it is about 1 month's rent.

Public housing

Prefectures, cities, wards, town and villages provide public housing for those in need of housing. The period for applying to enter public housing is fixed.

Since the number of applicants wishing to enter public housing is large, those who are not chosen by lottery cannot enter the housing for which they apply. However, there is some housing for which applicants can apply which does not require to be chosen by lottery.

Income limits apply with regards to applications. People with higher incomes cannot qualify for such housing.

Note 1 Authorities responsible for application, application procedures, kinds of services and the names of such may vary according to the city, ward, town or village.

For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

Procedures when moving residence

Terminating a rental contract (Lease)

If you live in a rental residence it is necessary to notify the property owner 1-2 months before the date you intend to terminate the lease. Details of the termination of a lease are written in the contract. (Notification of the termination of a lease may be required in writing.)

Using a removals company

There are many removal companies in Japan. It is recommended to get quotes from a number of companies before choosing one. If you want to do the removal work yourself, there are car/truck rental companies.

The disposal of garbage from a removal

If a large amount of garbage results from a removal, the city, ward, town or village office will dispose of it for a fee. You need to contact the desk in charge and make a request for the disposal.

Bulky garbage should be disposed of in the designated manner in the assigned place and day. Televisions, air conditioners, refrigerators and washing machines are not collected as bulky garbage. These should be returned to the store where they were bought or an electrical goods store should be asked to collect them for recycling. A recycling fee and transportation fee must be paid.

Procedures before moving residence

(1) Electricity, gas, water

Notify each utility company of the address, name and telephone numbers and moving date of your present residence and the new residence. It is useful to hold onto a meter reading slip or receipt which shows your customer number (okyakusama bango).

(2) Telephone

Notify NTT of the moving date and your new address (Tel. 116).

If you have a contract with another company, notify it also.

It is useful to have the use of your telephone on the moving day, so request it to be disconnected the following day.

(3) The Post Office

If an application is submitted, mail will be forwarded to your new address for one year. You can obtain a Notification of Change of Address Postcard (iten todoke hagaki) or use a regular postcard. Indicate (1) the date of application, (2) both your new and old addresses, (3) your full name/s (householder, family members), (4) the date to start forwarding mail, and (5) the seal of the applicant. The postcard can be handed in at a post office counter or sent by mail.

(4) Monetary facilities (banks, etc.)

Notify your bank etc. of the change of address. The procedures can be done by mail for most facilities.

(5) National Health Insurance

The insured person should return their insurance card to the desk in charge at their city, ward, town or village office.

(6) Changing schools (leaving school – elementary/junior high school)

Notify the school your child is attending of the moving day.

Various registrations and reports to be made after moving residence

(1) Alien Registration (gaikokujin toroku)

Notification of a change of address must be made within 14 days after moving to a new address. This is

done at the city, ward, town or village office in your new area.

(2) Registration of personal seal (inkan toroku)

For relevant persons, a new registration of one's personal seal should be made at the city, ward, town or village office in your new area.

(3) For those who have joined the National Health Insurance and National Pension systems

Notify your entry to the systems at city, ward, town or village office in your new area.

(4) Driver's license

Bring some identification of your new address to the police station or driver's license examination center in the area of your new address and complete the required procedures.

- If you have moved from another prefecture a (3cm high X 2cm wide) photograph is required.

(5) Changing schools (entering a new school – elementary/junior high school)

After completing Alien Registration procedures, an application must be made to the city, ward, town or village board of education of the area to which you have moved.

Note 1 Authorities responsible for applications, application procedures, services and the naming of these may vary according to cities, wards, towns or villages.

For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

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Electricity

Using electricity

In western Japan the electricity current is 100 volts/60 Hz; in eastern Japan it is 100 volts/50 Hz. Note that there may be some electrical appliances which cannot be used due to this frequency difference.

If you use many electrical appliances at the same time, you may use more amps than is stated in your contract, resulting in the circuit breaker switching off. If this happens, reduce the number of electrical appliances in use and switch on the circuit by switching (flipping up) the switch on the circuit breaker.

If you want to change the amp volume in your contract, contact your electrical supply company. It will install a new increased amp circuit breaker. However, your electricity bill will also increase slightly. You can also apply at an electrical maintenance company.

How to pay an electricity bill

The amount on the bill sent should be paid before the stated due date at a bank, post office or convenience store.

It is possible to have the bill automatically deducted from your account at a bank or post office if you have one.

Note 1 Establishments responsible for applications, application procedures, services and the naming of these may vary according to each district.

For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your electrical power supply company.

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Gas

Using gas

There are 2 types of gas used in the home toshi gas (town gas) and propane gas. The type will vary depending on the district. It is very dangerous to use gas appliances unsuited to the type of gas you use. Using gas improperly is extremely dangerous, so, be very careful.

If you notice any gas irregularity

If you notice any gas irregularity, close the gas cock and meter cock immediately. Open the windows and do not use any flames in the house. Do not touch electrical appliances switches or plugs, etc. Since propane gas is heavier than air, use a sweeping brush to sweep out the gas.

If you notice any gas irregularity, contact your gas company even if it is a holiday or at night.

How to pay a gas bill

The amount on the bill sent should be paid before the stated due-date at a bank, post office or convenience store, etc.

It is possible to have the bill automatically deducted from your account at a bank or post office if you have one.

Note 1 Establishments responsible for applications, application procedures, kinds of service and the naming of these may vary depending on the district.

For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your gas company.

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Water

Using water

In order to start using water from the water supply, contact your local water supply board. If you have any water-related troubles (the water supply stops or you find water leaking from the pipes), contact your local water supply board.

How to pay a water bill

The amount on the bill sent should be paid before the stated due date at a bank, post office or convenience store.

It is possible to have the bill automatically deducted from your account at a bank or post office if you have one.

- Note 1 The authorities responsible for applications, procedures, services and the naming of these may vary according to each district.
For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office.
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Garbage/Recycling

How to dispose of household garbage

The public office of cities, wards, towns and villages collect garbage from households.

How the garbage is separated and put out for collection differs from district to district.

The place, day and time for garbage collection are fixed. Ask a neighbor or your city, ward, town or village office for details.

Put your garbage out on the assigned day in the assigned manner.

How to separate garbage

Garbage is separated differently depending on the district.

In some districts, garbage is divided into types and put into specific garbage boxes for collection.

Ask a neighbor or your city, ward, town or village office for details.

Obey the rules of garbage disposal in your district when you dispose of your garbage.

How to dispose of bulky garbage (*Sodai gomi*) or large item garbage (*Ogata gomi*)

The collection of bulky/large-item garbage such as electrical appliances (such as air conditioners, televisions, refrigerators, and washing machines are not included) and furniture, etc. varies according to each district.

In some districts the collection day is fixed; in others you must contact the public office in charge and put garbage out on a decided day. In some districts, collection fees must be paid in advance.

For information on how to dispose of bulky/large item garbage, contact your city, ward, town or village office.

Unneeded air conditioners, televisions, refrigerators, and washing machines

Air conditioners, televisions, refrigerators and washing machines are not collected as bulky/large item garbage. When they become unusable or unneeded, they should be returned to the shop where they were bought, or to the shop where you purchased the replacement air conditioner, television, refrigerator or washing machine, for recycling. A recycling fee and transportation fee must be paid. If you cannot ask the store to do this service, contact your city, ward, town or village office.

The collection of items which can be recycled as resources

Items such as old newspapers, magazines, empty cans, bottles, etc. which can be recycled as resources are collected separately from regular garbage in some districts.

The kinds of items which can be recycled and the methods of collection vary from district to district.

For information on how to put out such items for collection, ask a neighbor or your city, ward, town or village office.

Note 1 The authorities responsible for applications, procedures, services and the naming of these may vary according to the city, ward, town and village.

For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office.

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The bath and toilet

How to take a bath

It is important to take care when taking a bath in another person's house or in a public bathhouse.

Before getting into the bathtub, wash your body using soap and rinse by pouring hot water over yourself (in the event there is no shower). Use soap to wash yourself outside of the tub. Do not wash your body in the bathtub. The hot water in the tub is not changed for each person, so do not take out the plug and drain the water.

Toilet (The disposal of human waste)

In urban areas most toilets are flush toilets. However, in some districts where there are no flush toilets, a human waste collection service is provided. Contact your city, ward, town or village office for information.

- Note 1 The authorities responsible for applications, procedures, services and the naming of these may differ according to the city, ward, town or village.
For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office.
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The Japanese Family Register System (*Koseki seido*)

In Japan, there is a family register system in which births, deaths, marriages and other personal related information are registered as official records.

Foreign nationals living in Japan should register births, deaths and marriages that occur in Japan in accordance with the Family Register Law (*koseki ho*). Certificates of registration and any copies should be kept in a safe place as they provide proof of personal identification.

Births, deaths, and marriages should also be reported to the government of the individual's nationality. For information on procedures, enquire at your country's embassy or consulate.

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Notification of a birth

Notification of a birth

Notification of the birth of a child must be made at the city, ward, town or village office.

Foreign nationals living in Japan should register a birth that occurred in Japan in accordance with the Family Register Law.

Besides making the notification of the birth, the baby will also have to be registered as an alien and receive a status of residence (zairyu shikaku). These should be done at the same time as the registration of the birth.

The birth of a child should be reported to the government of the individual's nationality. For information on procedures, enquire at your embassy or consulate.

- For information on Alien Registration (gaikokujin toroku), see 5 “Alien Registration” (gaikokujin toroku).
- For information on obtaining a Status of Residence (zairyu shikaku no shutoku), see 4 “Obtaining a Status of Residence” (zairyu shikaku no shutoku).

- (1) Period of notification: Within 14 days of the birth
- (2) Notification applicant: Father or mother
- (3) Place of notification: The city, ward, town or village office of either the place of birth, individual's address or the address of the family register
- (4) Required documents:
 1. Notification of Birth Form (shusei todoke sho)
This is available at the city, ward, town or village office and at some hospitals.
 2. Proof of Birth Certificate (shusei shomei sho)
This is the Notification of Birth Form (shusei todoke sho) with a doctor or midwife's confirmation of the birth received at the time of birth.
 3. The notification applicant's seal (inkan)
Those who do not have a seal may use their signature.
 4. Maternal and Child Health Handbook (boshi kenko techo)
This is the handbook received from the city, ward, town or village office of the mother's residence when she reported her pregnancy.
 5. National Health Insurance Card (kokumin kenko hoken sho)
This is applicable to those who have joined the system.
- (5) Certificate of Receiving a Notification of a Birth (shusei todoke juri shomei sho)
This document confirms the receipt of a notification of a birth.

Note 1 The authorities responsible for applications, procedures, services and the naming of these may vary according to the city, ward, town or village.
For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

Notification of a death

Notification of a death

When a death occurs, the city, ward, town or village office should be notified. Foreign nationals living in Japan should make a notification of a death that occurred in Japan in accordance with the Family Register Law.

In addition to notification of the death, the deceased person's Certificate of Alien Registration (gaikokujin toroku shomei sho) should be returned to the city, ward, town or village office (preferably at the same time as notification of the death if possible).

The death should also be reported to the government of the deceased's nationality. For information on procedures, enquire at the relevant embassy or consulate.

- (1) Period of notification: Within 7 days of being notified of the death. Make the notification before cremation.
- (2) Notification applicant: A family member of cohabitant
- (3) Place of notification: The city, ward, town or village office of either the place of death or the address of the deceased
- (4) Require documents:
 1. Notification of a Death Form (shibo todoke sho)
This is available at city, ward, town or village offices and from some hospitals.
 2. Doctor's Certificate of Death (shibo shindan sho)
This is a Notification of a Death Form (shibo todoke sho) with a doctor's certification of the death received at the time of the death.
 3. Notification applicant's seal (inkan)
Those who do have a seal may use their signature.

Note 1 The authorities responsible for applications, procedures, services and the naming of these may vary according to the city, ward, town or village.
For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

Notification of a marriage (When one of the couple is a Japanese national)

* If both persons are foreign nationals, the relevant diplomatic offices should be consulted.

Notification of a marriage

Notification of a marriage should be made at the city, ward, town or village office.

Foreign nationals living in Japan should make a notification of a marriage in accordance with the Family Register Law.

A foreign national does not obtain Japanese nationality by making a notification of their marriage to a Japanese national, nor does a Japanese national obtain foreign nationality. Foreign nationals who have married a Japanese national and would like to change their status of residence (zairyu shikaku) to a spouse of a Japanese (nihonjin no haigusha) should consult the immigration office for their district.

A marriage should be reported to the government of the individual's nationality. For information of procedures, consult the relevant embassy or consulate.

The conditions for the conclusion of a marriage vary according to the country. Japanese nationals must fulfill the conditions required in Japan, and foreign nationals must fulfill the conditions required in their country.

- (1) Period of notification: Voluntary
- (2) Notification applicant: The married couple (both people)
- (3) Place of notification: The city, ward, town or village office of the address of either person or of their family register (honseki).
- (4) Required documents:
 1. Notification of a Marriage Form (konin todoke sho)
This is available at city, ward, town and village offices. This document must have the signature and seal of two adult witnesses.
 2. Certificate of No Impediment to Marriage (konin yoken kubi shomei sho)
This is a document to certify there is no impediment to the marriage. The document is issued by an embassy or consulate. If it is written in a foreign language, a translation of it must be made and presented at the same time.
Those who cannot obtain this document should, with the help of a person who understands Japanese, contact the Ministry of Justice through their city, ward, town or village office.
 3. The applicant's seal (inkan)
Those who do not have a seal may use their signature.
 4. Identification of one's nationality
Passport, etc.

Note 1 The authorities responsible for applications, procedures, services and the naming of these may vary according to city, ward, town or village.
For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

Notification of a divorce (When one of the couple is a Japanese national)

* If both persons are foreign nationals, the relevant diplomatic offices should be consulted.

Notification of a divorce

A notification of a divorce should be made at a city, ward, town or village office.

Foreign nationals living in Japan should make a notification of a divorce in accordance with the Family Register Law.

A divorce should be reported to the government of the individual's nationality. For information on procedures, consult the relevant embassy or consulate.

The conditions for the conclusion of a divorce vary according to the country. Japanese nationals must fulfill the conditions required in Japan, and foreign nationals must fulfill the conditions required in their country.

(1) Notification period: Voluntary (Within 10 days after the conclusion of a divorce by arbitration, judgment or court ruling)

(2) Notification applicant: Husband and wife (for divorces by arbitration, the petitioner)

(3) Required documents:

1. Notification of a Divorce Form (rikon todoke sho)

This is available at city, ward, town or village offices. This form must have the signature and seal of two adult witnesses.

2. Copy of one's Resident's Registration (jumin hyo)

3. Passport

4. (genpyo kisai jiko shomei sho)

Note 1 The authorities responsible for applications, procedures, services and the naming of these may vary according to the city, ward, town or village.

For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

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Seals/Registering a seal

Seals

In Japan, when filling in an application form at a public office, receiving important (registered) mail, or receiving home-delivery parcels, etc., a seal is used in the same way as a signature is used in other countries. For such purposes, usually a small general-purpose seal (mitome in) is used.

Official Seal (jitsu in) and Seal Certificate (inkan shomei sho)

The seal that is registered at the city, ward, town or village or other public bodies, is referred to as a jitsu-in (official seal).

The seal used as one's official seal is usually a little larger in order to prevent it from being forged.

Registration of the seal is made at a city, ward, town or village office.

The document certifying the official nature of one's seal is called an inkan shomei sho (Seal Certificate).

When using one's official seal, the Seal Certificate is often used as proof of the official nature of the seal.

In Japan, when buying land, a house, a car, etc., or when important contracts are involved, an official seal and seal certificate are required.

Registering a seal

Seal registration is a very important system that protects one's property and rights.

(1) Who can register a seal:

A person over 15 years old who has a fixed address in the city, ward, town or village, or a person registered as an alien can register a seal.

(2) How to register a seal:

If the owner of the seal making the application brings the seal and their Certificate of Alien Registration (gaikokujin toroku shomei sho) to the public office, registration can be completed that day.

An application by proxy is also possible.

(3) Registering one's signature:

A signature (written by the individual) can also be registered instead of a seal.

Inkan toroku card (Seal Registration Card)

When you register a seal, a Seal Registration Card (inkan toroku card) is issued. If the owner or a proxy presents this card to an official at the desk of a city, ward, town or village office and makes an application, they can obtain a copy of the Seal Certificate (inkan shomei sho).

Note 1 The authorities responsible for applications, procedures, services and the naming of these may vary according to the city, ward, town or village.

For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

Post office

Post office

Japanese postal services are generally provided by post offices.

Besides post offices, post cards and stamps can be bought at shops displaying the post office symbol.

Post offices are located in every city, ward, town and village in Japan including sparsely populated areas.

In Japan, a 7-digit postal code is used. When sending mail within Japan use the postal code in order to have the mail delivered quickly and accurately to the addressee.

You Net (Postal Services Website) <http://www.post.yusei.go.jp>

Postal code numbers, approximate delivery times, and information on postal services is available on this website. Information is also available in English.

- (1) [Yubin Bango Kensaku](Postal Code Search) Search system for when you do not know a postal code number
- (2) [Shin-yubin Nisu Hyo](Tables of Delivery Times) Search system on information on how long it takes for delivery from the date of dispatch
- (3) [Yubin Tsuiseki System] (EMS Track & Trace System) Search system to track the whereabouts of your parcel, registered mail or International Speed Mail
- (4) [Yubin Ryokin Hyo](Postal Charges Table)
- (5) [Kokusai Yubin Joken Hyo] (Conditions for International Mail Table) Search system for international mail charges, conditions, weight restrictions, items prohibited to be mailed to certain countries / districts

“Postal services information” - information in English

For foreign people unfamiliar with Japanese a telephone postal services information service in English is available to help them use the postal services with ease.

- (1) Sapporo 011-251-3957
- (2) Sendai 022-711-7544
- (3) Tokyo 03-5472-5851, 03-5472-5852
- (4) Nagano 026-255-8835
- (5) Kanazawa 076-262-2325
- (6) Nagoya 052-961-0103
- (7) Osaka 06-6944-6245
- (8) Hiroshima 082-224-0380
- (9) Matsuyama 089-932-5932
- (10) Fukuoka 092-752-8504
- (11) Naha 098-868-4472

Customs information desk

For international mail – parcels sent abroad and received from abroad – customs officers are stationed at certain post offices (tsukan kyoku) where customs inspections are carried out. For information on duty on items sent by international mail contact the zeikan gaiyu shuchosho (customs branch office) at a tsukan kyoku.

- (1) Sapporo Customs Branch, Sapporo Gaiyu Shuchosho 011-748-2321
- (2) Tokyo Customs, Tokyo Gaiyu Shuchosho 03-3241-6652

- (3) Tokyo Customs, Narita Airport Freight Branch Office, Gaiyu-bumon 0476-32-6037
- (4) Yokohama Customs, Kawasaki Gaiyu Shuchosho 044-366-7766
- (5) Nagoya Customs, Nagoya Gaiyu Shuchosho 052-529-3121
- (6) Osaka Customs, Osaka Gaiyu Shuchosho 0724-55-1850 ~ 1854
- (7) Kobe Customs, Kobe Gaiyu Shuchosho 078-361-3702
- (8) Moji Customs, Hakata Branch, Hakata Gaiyu Shuchosho 092-431-7515
- (9) Okinawa District Customs, Naha Gaiyu Shuchosho 098-854-8292

International mail

When sending letters or parcels abroad

- (1) For documents and items which need to receive priority treatment and arrive speedily and accurately the [Kokusai Speed Bin (EMS)] International Speed Mail EMS) service is available to 117 countries / districts abroad,
 - (2) To send mail by airplane use [Kokubin] (AIRMAIL)
 - (3) There is also a service that is cheaper than airmail, but faster than surface mail called [Economy Koku (SAL)] (Economy Air (SAL))
 - (4) To send mail by ship (surface mail) use [Funabin] (Surface Mail)
 - (5) To send a message by facsimile use [Kokusai Retakusu] (International Lettax)
- For information on size and weight limits etc., enquire at a post office.

Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your nearest post office.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

Telephone

Private and public telephones

Private telephones are those connected to homes and companies. As in other countries public telephones are to be found near railway stations, in front of shops, etc. and require ¥10 or ¥100 coins. Telephone cards can also be used.

Getting a new telephone line connected to your residence

To get a new telephone line connected to your residence, you must apply to NTT.

When making an application, proof of your name and address is necessary (passport, certificate of alien registration or driver's license, etc.) A fee is charged for making the connection.

When an application is made, the date of the connection will be decided. The applicant (someone) must be at home on that day.

For details, telephone 116.

Information guide numbers

- When moving or for other general enquiries about telephone services, call 116
- If the line is faulty, call 113
- If the number you call is always busy, call 114
- To send a telegram, apply by calling 115
- To make a collect / credit call, apply by calling 106

Telephone companies other than NTT, mobile phones and PHS

If you wish to apply to a company other than NTT, enquiries should be made to that company.

At present, mobile phones and PHS can be used in most areas. Since there are a number of mobile and PHS telephone companies, enquiries should be made directly to the company of your choice.

How to pay a telephone bill

Pay the bill from the telephone company as instructed before the due-date at the nearest NTT branch office, sales office, bank, post office or convenience store.

Paying the bill by bank or post office transfer is also a convenient method. To apply to pay by bank or post office transfer, bring a telephone bill, your bankbook, the seal used at the bank or post office to your bank, post office or telephone company and make the application.

How to make an international telephone call

International telephone calls can be made directly from private and public telephones.

Depending on the telephone company you use, charges, countries/districts you can call may vary.

Depending on the telephone, a simple procedure may be required before making the call. For details, enquire at the telephone company you are using.

To make an international telephone call from a public telephone, use the green or grey telephones that have a gold colored panel on the front and have [International & Domestic] displayed on them. Coins and telephone cards can be used to make international telephone calls.

telephone company in your city, ward, town or village.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced since then.

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Savings / remittances

Opening a bank account

Personal identification such as a passport, driver's license, certificate of alien registration etc. is required when opening a bank account.

There are several different kinds of savings (accounts); Futsu (Sogo) Yokin - Ordinary (General) Savings, Teiki Yokin - Fixed-Term Deposits, Toza Furikae Yokin - Checking (Savings), Tsumitate Yokin - Accumulative Savings.

If you open a bank account you can obtain a bankcard (cashing card). With a bankcard and a registered PIN (Personal Identity Number), you can withdraw cash, deposit cash, make a bank transfer, check your account balance, etc. at an ATM (Automatic Teller Machine).

ATM (Automatic Teller Machine)

If you have a bank account and register a PIN and have a bank (cashing) card, you can make a deposit, a withdrawal, or transfer money with this card. Operating the ATM is fairly simple. ATMs usually have a Japanese instruction screen (panel), but some have English language instructions. The waiting time at ATMs is comparatively much shorter than that for the counter service. If you do not know how to use an ATM, ask a bank guide in the lobby or at the counter to help you.

Overseas remittances

(1) Fill in the payee's name, address, bank name and account number on the Overseas Remittance Application Form (Gaikoku Sokinn Moshikomi-sho). The payee will also have to pay charges at his/her bank.

For details regarding charges, and length of time required, enquire at the bank.

(2) Remittance checks (Money Orders) (Sokin Kogite) can be issued and sent to the payee by post. The payee then takes the remittance check (Money Order) to his/her bank to be cashed. For details regarding charges and length of time required, enquire at the bank

Monetary services at the post office

Besides ordinary postal services, the post office also provides monetary services such as savings and (monetary) exchange.

The post offers Tsujo (Sogo) Chokin - Ordinary (General) Savings, Teikaku Chokin - Fixed-Sum Deposit Savings, Teiki Chokin - Fixed-Term Savings, Tsumitake Chokin - Accumulative Savings. These services are almost the same as those of the bank.

The limit an individual can deposit, the total sum of all accounts, is ¥10,000,000.

Overseas remittances at a post office (There are post offices which do not provide this service and countries which are not included in the service.)

(1) Ask the post office to issue you a Kawase Shomei (Money Order). The post office will send the money order by airmail to the payee. Upon receipt, the payee then takes the money order to his/her post office to be cashed.

Depending on the country, there are considerable differences in how long it takes. Check at the post office for details.

(2) Remittances can also be made directly to the payee's account. If urgent, a cable transfer service is also available.

There are some countries in Central and South America which are not included in the service.

- Note 1 Kinds of service and the names of these services may vary.
For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire at the relevant bank or post office for you.
- Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system changes may have been introduced after this date.

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Community associations (*Jichi-kai/Chonai-kai*)

What are community associations (*Jichi-kai/Chonai-kai*)?

In Japan, there are organizations in each district that are generally referred to as chonai-kai or jichi-kai. The chonai-kai or jichi-kai organize or supervise the kairanban (a file containing notices from public offices or the community attached to a clipboard, etc), and also organize festivals and disaster prevention activities. Membership fees collected from each resident cover expenses incurred in running these activities. If they are residents of the community, foreigners can also become members of the community organization. Please listen the next time an organization committee member visits you to talk about joining such an organization.

- Note 1 Depending on the city, ward, town or village, the authorities responsible for applications, procedures, services and the naming of these may vary.
For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office.
- Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

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Funerals (Sogi)

When someone close to you dies, it is usual to attend either the wake (tsuya) or the funeral (kokubetsushiki). Black clothing should be worn as a display of mourning. Men should wear a black tie.

Money should be enclosed in special envelopes for the occasion (fushugi bukuro) (sold at stationary shops) and brought to the wake or funeral.

When a member of the family dies, the type of funeral will depend on the religion of the individual or family. In Japan cremation is usual. Undertakers (sogiya) carry out funeral services. Since fees vary according to the type of funeral, it is important to check with the undertaker.

Note 1 Depending on the religion, the naming of various aspects related to funerals, may vary.
For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village's local community association (jichi-kai), public office.

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Cooling-off system

If for some reason you carelessly signed a door-to-door sales contract etc. but later realize that you want to terminate the contract, the cooling-off system can be applied. By using this system, in principle, a contract can be terminated unconditionally within 8 days of signing it. If you sign a contract under duress, etc., it may be possible for it to be terminated even after the cooling-off period has expired under the Consumer Contract Law (shohisha keiyaku ho).

For details, enquire at your nearest Consumer Lifestyle Center (shohisha seikatsu center) or city, ward, town or village office.

Note 1 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

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Resolving disputes

Resolving disputes

The ideal way for private individuals to settle a dispute is through discussion. However, when discussions fail, the use of a civil arbitration court (minji chotei) or an arbitration center (chusai center) is an option. Such institutions are also referred to as dispute settlement centers (funso kaiketsu center) or out-of-court mediation centers (jidan assen center).

Trial fees

There are 2 kinds of trial fees: lawsuit costs and lawyer's fees. The lawsuit costs are costs incurred for holding a trial. The lawyer's fees are initial fees and remuneration.

Initial costs consist of an advance payment for the lawyer's services until the case is resolved. The remuneration is based on the settlement sum set by the court.

- If the prospect of winning the case is good, but there is a lack of finance, an application for assistance can be made to the Legal Aid Association (horitsu fujo kyokai). If the application is successful, the Association will pay the costs of the trial in advance. This advance payment is repaid at the rate of about ¥10,000 per month. The Association will also pay the lawyer's remuneration after the trial. This can be repaid in installments.

For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at nearest Bar Association.

- Note 1 Depending on the district, the naming of various aspects of the above may vary.
For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office.
- Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

On-duty lawyer system (Toban bengoshi seido)

The on-duty lawyer system provides those who are being investigated by the police the chance to receive legal advice. On receiving a request from the suspect, a member of his family or an acquaintance, the lawyer on standby (on-duty) will meet with the suspect and offer free consultation. This system is provided by bar associations throughout Japan.

The difference between a suspect and an accused

According to Article 34 of the Japanese Constitution, a suspect has the right to an attorney. While under investigation, the individual is referred to as the suspect (higisha) and an accused (hikokunin) after being indicted. For an accused who does not have the economic means to employ a lawyer, the state provides an 'appointed attorney' (kokusen bengonin) whose expenses are covered by the state.

Since there is no appointed attorney for suspects prior to indictment, the individual must pay for a lawyer's services. The on-duty lawyer system (toban bengoshi seido) was therefore established for those who could not pay for a lawyer's services or who did not know how to request the services of a lawyer.

Requesting an on-duty lawyer

A suspect or a family member, friend or acquaintance can request an on-duty lawyer.

The lawyer on duty on the day of contact will bring an interpreter for the meeting with the suspect. The lawyer who meets the suspect will advise on the suspect's status, rights and prospects thereafter and provide an outline of criminal procedures. The lawyer will also check if illegal investigations are being carried out. No fees are incurred for the first visit. However, after this initial visit, the lawyer is considered to be privately appointed and will require lawyer's fees.

Use of the Legal Aid System

In circumstances where it is difficult to pay lawyer's fees, the Legal Aid Association provides a system of assistance. To apply for legal aid, in principle, the following conditions should be met: (1) innocence is contested, (2) the suspect has a pre-trial lawyer, (3) the suspect is under 20 years old, etc.

If required, the on-duty lawyer will help with the application procedures. If the application is successful, a predetermined amount of the lawyer's fees will be paid by the Legal Aid Association. In principle, the deferred fees must be reimbursed.

For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to contact your local bar association.

Note 1 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

Animals/Pets

Keeping a dog

(1) Registering a dog

Irrespective of the size of the dog, dogs over 91 days old must be registered within 30 days from the day its owner started keeping it. The registration must be made at the respective counter of the city, ward, town or village office or public health office of the owner's residence. Puppies should be registered within 30 days after they become 90 days old.

Applications for registration can be made when rabies vaccinations is being administered.

When a registration is made the owner is given a dog license (kansatsu) which must be attached to the dog's collar.

You need only to register your dog once. If matters related to registration change, such as the owner's change of address or a change of ownership, the owner's city, ward, town or village office must be notified immediately.

(2) Rabies vaccination

Dogs over 91 days old must receive a rabies vaccination once a year. Rabies vaccinations are administered at your local veterinary clinic. After the dog has been vaccinated, the owner is given a "rabies vaccination completed" (kokenbyo yobochusha sumi hyo) tag which should be attached to the dog's collar.

Every year around April and May, open rabies vaccinations take place on fixed days and times in front of community halls and public offices and parks, etc. Information such as day and time of group open rabies vaccinations will be noted in public offices' newsletters and publications. In some districts, registered dog owners are notified directly by postcard.

(3) Other

It is forbidden to keep pets in some apartments/condominiums, etc. If you intend to keep a pet in an apartment, it is advisable to check the conditions in the lease. In Japan, it is the dog and cat's owner's responsibility to clean up after the dog or cat if it fouls while out for a walk. Take a bag along, take it home and dispose of it there.

When you can no longer keep a dog or cat

If you cannot find a new owner for your dog or cat, you should contact the office in charge of animal hygiene within the local public health office or health and welfare office of your city, ward, town or village and enquire about disposal of the animal. In some cases a fee is charged for disposal.

Note 1 Depending on the city, ward, town or village, the authorities responsible for applications / registrations, procedures, services and the naming of these may vary.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

Status of residence and period of stay

When a person of foreign nationality enters Japan, they are given a status of residence and a period of stay is decided. This status and period are then indicated on the individual's passport.

An application is required when an individual is involved in activities beyond those of their status or stays in the country longer than the permitted period of stay.

If these conditions are not obeyed, the individual may be punished or forcibly deported.

Status of residence

The status of residence is the status given by the immigration officer on entering the country in accordance with one's reason for entering the country and reason for staying in the country. There are a total of 27 different kinds of statuses. Foreign nationals are allowed to be involved in activities within those defined by the status held.

Period of stay

The period of stay is defined according to each status of residence. Foreign nationals are allowed to stay in Japan only for a period within the period of stay.

Staying in Japan longer than the period of stay is not permitted.

Immigration Bureau Voice Guide / Fax Service

(1) Tokyo Immigration Bureau Voice Guide / Fax Service (Japanese / English)

This service provides information on immigration procedures and procedures for staying in Japan using a voice guide and fax. The service can be used 24 hours including Sundays and holidays. After calling the number, follow the automatic voice instructions.

Telephone No.: 03-3216-3333

Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Gaimu-sho)– Homepage (Website)

(Information on Japanese visas – in Japanese)

http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/toko/visa/annai/visa_4.html

Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at the Immigration Bureau.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

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Renewing a period of stay

If you wish to renew your period of stay

In order to renew your period of stay, you must apply at the immigration bureau for your district before the expiration date of your present period permit. A fee is charged for processing the application.

After you lodge your application, the immigration bureau will examine it. Notification of your acceptance or rejection will be sent to you.

The renewal of a period of stay will be given if the Justice Minister decides there are suitable reasons for renewing the permit.

Required documents:

The documents required will vary depending on your status of residence and conditions of stay. For details enquire at the immigration bureau for your district.

Note 1 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

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Changing a status of residence

If you wish to change your status of residence

If you wish to change the status of your present status of residence, it is necessary to apply at the immigration bureau for your district. A fee is charged for processing the application.

Example scenarios:

An overseas student who has graduated and found a job wants to continue living in Japan

A person marries a Japanese national

Required documents:

The documents required will depend on one's status of residence and the conditions of stay. For details, enquire at the immigration bureau for your district.

Note 1 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

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Obtaining a status of residence

A child born to a foreign couple in Japan who does not have Japanese nationality but intends to reside in Japan must apply within 30 days after birth for a status of residence at the immigration bureau for its district. However, if the child will leave the country within 60 days this is not necessary. Even if a passport has not been obtained, an application should be made.

Note 1 The documents required will vary depending on the status of residence and the conditions of stay. For details, enquire at the immigration bureau for your district.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

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Activities outside the status permit

When you want to obtain a permit to engage in activities not allowed by your present permit

If you wish to engage in activities which are not allowed by your present status permit and from which you will earn an income, you must apply for a permit at the immigration bureau for your district.

Example: An overseas student who wants to work part-time

Required documents:

The documents required will vary depending on ones status of residence and conditions of stay. For details, enquire at the immigration bureau for your district.

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Re-entry permit

When you want to obtain a re-entry permit

If a foreign national living in Japan who intends to leave temporarily and re-enter Japan makes an application at the immigration bureau for a re-entry permit, they will not need to apply for a new visa.

In principle, this permit is a one-time permit, but for those who go abroad regularly, a multiple re-entry permit may be granted.

A fee is charged for processing the permit. The fee for a one-time permit differs from that of a multiple re-entry permit.

Required documents:

The documents required will vary depending on one's status of residence and conditions of stay. For details, enquire at the immigration bureau for your district.

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Permanent Residency Permit/Naturalization

People who wish to live permanently in Japan must either obtain a Permanent Residency Permit (eiju kyoka) or become a naturalized Japanese citizen (kika).

Permanent Resident Permit (*Eiju kyoka*)

With a Permanent Residency Permit an individual may live permanently in Japan as a foreign national. If you wish to apply for a Permanent Resident Permit, enquire at the immigration bureau for your district.

Naturalization (*Kika*)

Naturalization (kika) means a foreign national forfeits his/her foreign nationality and obtains a Japanese nationality.

To become a naturalized Japanese citizen, a permit from the Minister of Justice is necessary, so you should enquire at the Regional Legal Affairs Bureau (Chiho Homu Kyoku) for your district.

Your name will be registered in kanji (Chinese style letters), hiragana or katakana.

Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you with the relevant authorities.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

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Choosing a Nationality

An individual who holds both a foreign nationality and Japanese nationality (dual nationality) must choose one nationality before the age of 22.

Those who obtain dual nationality after the age of 20 must choose one of the nationalities within 2 years of obtaining the nationalities.

Ministry of Justice, Homepage (Website): <http://www.moj.go.jp/>

- Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at the Regional Legal Affairs Bureau.
- Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

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About alien registration

What is alien registration?

Persons who are foreign nationals and live in Japan for more than 90 days must register as aliens at the city, ward, town or village office where they live in accordance with the Alien Registration Law.

Those who have both Japanese nationality and a foreign nationality (dual nationality) do not need to register as aliens. Diplomats, consulate-generals officials, American military personnel and their families do not need to register as aliens.

When registering

- (1) Those who hold a foreign nationality and who intend to live in Japan for more than 90 days should make an alien registration at the city, ward, town or village office where they live within 90 days after arriving in Japan.

Those who intend to leave Japan within 90 days do not need to register as aliens.

- (2) Required documents:

Passport

2 Photographs (4.5 cm X 3.5 cm). Those under 16 years of age do to require photographs.

(When a child is born)

- (1) A child's alien registration must be made within 60 days after birth at the city, ward, town or village office where it lives.

(Note that a Status of Residence (zairyu shikaku) must be obtained within 30 days.)

- (2) Required documents:

Certificate of Receiving a Report of a Birth (shusei todoke juri shomei sho) or the passport in which the child is registered.

(Registration can be made even if a passport has not been obtained.)

- (i) Certificate of Receiving a Report of a Birth (shusei todoke juri shomei sho)
A Certificate of Receiving a Report of a Birth can be obtained when the Birth Certificate (shusei shomei sho) written by a doctor or midwife is taken to the city, ward, town or village office for registration.
- (ii) Having a child registered in a parent's passport
The Certificate of Receiving a Report of a Birth (shusei todoke juri shomei sho) should be sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs after which a certificate of confirmation will be received. This certificate should then be brought to the embassy or consulate in Japan and have the child registered in the passport. Since procedures vary depending on the country, it is necessary to confirm these with the embassy or consulate.

(When Japanese nationality is lost or forfeited)

- (1) It is necessary to register as an alien within 60 days of losing or forfeiting, etc. Japanese nationality at the city, ward, town or village office.

- (2) Required documents:

Proof of loss or forfeiture of Japanese nationality

2 photographs (4.5 cm X 3.5 cm). Those under 16 years of age do not require photographs

Registration by proxy

- (1) Alien registration is normally done by the individual. However, those under 16 years of age or those who cannot go to the public office because of illness or other reasons can have their registration made

by proxy by a person over 16 years old living with the individual to be registered.

- (2) Documents required when a registration is made by proxy:

The Certificate of Alien Registration (card) of the proxy

In the case of illness, a Certificate of Illness (shindan sho) from a doctor

Certificate of Alien Registration (card)

When a person registers as an alien, a Certificate of Alien Registration (card) (gaikokujin toroku shomei sho) will be received.

This Certificate of Alien Registration is your personal identification while in Japan.

Persons over 16 years of age must carry it at all times.

After registering, you will be asked to return to the public office within a fixed period (about 2 weeks) to receive your Certificate of Alien Registration (card).

Those under 16 years of age will be registered on the day of application.

Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office.

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Toroku genpyo kisai jiko shomei sho

What is a *Toroku genpyo kisai jiko shomei sho*?

This is a document which proves one is registered as an alien. It is similar to the former Proof of Completion of Alien Registration (gaikokijin toroku sumi shomei sho).

This document is required when entering a school, applying for a job or registering a marriage, etc.

How to obtain the document

- (1) Apply at the city, ward, town or village office where your alien registration was made. A fee is charged for issuing the document.

Persons who are not family members living with the individual who apply for a copy of an individual's toroku genpyo kisai jiko shomei sho must have a letter of proxy.

- (2) Required documents:

Certificate of Alien Registration (card)

Personal identification of the applicant such as the applicant's or the proxy's Certificate of Alien Registration (card).

Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office.

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Procedures for reporting changes

Changes in registration contents

Those who are registered as aliens must report changes in their registration contents (address, name, nationality, occupation, status of residence, period of stay, address of employment) within 14 days to their city, ward, town or village office.

(1) Documents required for change in address:

Certificate of Alien Registration (card)

(2) Documents required for changes of; name, nationality, occupation, status of residence, address of employment:

Certificate of Alien Registration (card)

Documentation which verify the change

2 photographs (4.5 cm X 3.5 cm) *Photographs are required when there is a change of name or nationality.

(3) Documents required when a new Permanent Resident Permit (eiju kyoka) or Special Permanent Resident Permit (tokubetsu eiju kyoka) is received:

Passport

2 photographs (4.5 cm X 3.5 cm). Those under 16 years of age do not require photographs.

Documentation that verifies a Permanent Resident Permit or Special Permanent Resident Permit has been obtained

Certificate of Alien Registration (card)

Permanent Resident Permit and Special Permanent Resident Permit holders are not required to report changes in employment, address of employment or changes in the name of a privately owned company (office) or its address.

Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office.

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Registration confirmation (renewal) procedures

What are registration confirmation (renewal) procedures?

(1) Alien registration expires on your fifth birthday after registration.

The “renewal period” (jikai kakunin/kirikae shinsei kikan) is indicated on the Certificate of Alien Registration (card).

Registration must be renewed within the stated renewal period at one’s city, ward, town or village office.

Permanent Resident Permit and Special Permanent Resident Permit holders must renew their registration every 7 years.

Those under 16 years of age are not required to renew their registration. On becoming 16, registration must be renewed within 30 days from the date of the applicant’s 16th birthday.

(2) Documents required for renewing registration:

Passport

photographs (4.5 cm X 3.5 cm)

Certificate of Alien Registration (card)

Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office.

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Loss of or damage to an Alien Registration Certificate

When a Certificate of Alien Registration (card) is soiled or torn

(Application for an exchange)

- (1) If your Certificate of Alien Registration becomes badly soiled or torn, you can apply to have it exchanged for a new one at anytime.
- (2) Documents required for applying for an exchange:
 - Passport
 - Certificate of Alien Registration
 - 2 photographs (4.5 cm X 3.5 cm). Those under 16 years of age do not require photographs.

When a Certificate of Alien Registration has been lost or stolen

(Application for a reissue)

- (1) If your Certificate of Alien Registration has been lost or stolen, you should apply to your city, ward, town or village office to have one reissued.
- (2) Documents required:
 - Passport
 - 2 photographs (4.5 cm X 3.5 cm) Those under 16 years of age do not require photographs.

Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office.

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Returning a Certificate of Alien Registration

When leaving the country (Japan)

If you are leaving Japan without a Re-entry Permit (Sainyukoku Kyoka), your Certificate of Alien Registration (card) should be returned at the airport or port of departure.

If you are leaving the country with a Re-entry Permit, you may hold onto your certificate (card).

When Japanese nationality is lost or forfeited

The individual should return his/her certificate (card) to the city, ward, town or village office within 14 days.

Upon death

A family member living at the same address as the deceased should return the certificate to the city, ward, town or village office within 14 days.

- Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office.
- Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

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What to do if you suddenly become ill

Sudden illness or serious illness

In the case of serious illness or serious injury call the fire department for an ambulance (Tel No. 119).

If the illness or injury is not serious, go to the hospital or clinic by taxi, car, etc.

When you phone '119' and the fire department officer answers do not panic, remain calm.

Tell the officer (1) it is an emergency, (2) what has happened, (3) where you are (address or some notable landmarks), (4) your full name, and (5) the phone number from which you are making the call.

When you hear the siren, go out to guide the ambulance to the location.

'119' is a free-call number to the fire department. When using a public telephone, ten yen coins or telephone cards are not required.

When you call for an ambulance, have a health insurance card and hospital/clinic card (if any such cards have been obtained) ready if possible.

Sudden illness on holidays or at night

Use the emergency medical facilities in your district.

- (1) Emergency illness on Sundays, national holidays, New Year holidays
Emergency Medical Facilities for Holidays (Kyujitsu Kyukan Shinryosho)
- (2) Emergency illness at night or after hours
Emergency Medical Center (Kyukyu Iryo Center)
Night Emergency Illness Center (Yakan Kyubyo Center)
- (3) For toothaches on holidays and at night
Dental Health Medical Center (Shika Hoken Iryo Center)
- (4) Doctor introduced by telephone in an emergency
Emergency Medical Facilities for Holidays

The naming, contents and opening hours of services vary depending on the district.

It is advisable to find out in advance about emergency medical services in your district.

Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your nearest fire department, hospital or your city, ward, town or village office.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

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Basic knowledge about medical facilities, etc.

Have a family doctor

It is important to have a family doctor who has a clinic in your neighborhood with whom you can consult whenever necessary.

You should first visit a clinic in your area for an examination upon showing mild symptoms. If you have a serious illness or symptoms of which the cause is unknown, the doctor will refer you to a specialist hospital that can offer specialist treatment.

General points to consider in hospitals and clinics

- (1) If you are worried about language problems, use an interpreter service (depending on the district, an international exchange society will provide an interpreter service).
- (2) If there is something you do not understand, ask immediately.
- (3) Ask the doctor to explain such things as test results and methods of taking medication as easily as possibly until you understand.
- (4) Do not be late for appointments or consultation times.
- (5) Do not use a mobile phone or PHS phone inside a hospital or clinic.
- (6) Consult with the hospital in regards to inpatient costs, items you do not understand, services you may use. If there is a social worker at the hospital, consult with the social worker.
- (7) In Japan, there are many services you must apply for on your own, otherwise you will not be able to make use of them. It is important therefore to know about them. If you want such information, consult a social worker. Since consultation is free and privacy is protected, feel free to consult a social worker or medical facility.

Useful multi-lingual chart of words and phrases used at a medical examination interview

A multi-lingual chart of words and phrases used at a medical examination interview is available at the following website.

Kanagawa International Association – Multi-lingual Medical Examination Chart (kanagawa-ken kokusai koryu kyokai tagengo monshin hyo)

<http://www.k-i-a.or.jp>

- Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office.
- Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

Medical fees and public medical insurance

Medical fees

If you require medical treatment but do not have medical insurance, you must pay the full amount of the bill that can sometimes be very expensive.

There is medical-fee assistance for those suffering with incurable diseases and for the elderly, infants and single-parent families.

Japanese public medical insurance

In Japan, every citizen has an obligation to be covered by a public medical insurance in accordance with the insurance system.

There are 2 types of public medical insurance; the health insurance which one joins at one's place of employment and the national health insurance which one joins through the city, ward, town or village office where one lives.

Being covered by medical insurance of a private insurance company is not a reason not to join a public medical insurance system.

If you are covered by public medical insurance, you must pay insurance premiums. However, if you become ill or have an injury, as a general rule, you need only pay 30% of the medical fees. You can also receive a refund after paying fees for childbirth or expensive medical treatment.

Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

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The Social Insurance System

What is the social insurance system?

The social insurance system is a system which provides livelihood security and social benefits for the insured and his or her family in times of illness, injury, times of physical handicap, death, old-age or unemployment.

The social insurance system is divided into “Social Insurance” and “Labor Insurance” and falls under the jurisdiction of the Health, Labor and Welfare Ministry.

Included under the umbrella of “Social Insurance” are medical insurance, which includes the Social Health Insurance, National Health Insurance and Nursing-Care Insurance, and pension insurance, which includes the Social Security Pension and National Pension.

Included in “Labor Insurance” are Workmen’s Accident Compensation Insurance and Employment Insurance.

- For details, see 8-7 Social Insurance, Labor Insurance

Social Health Insurance

The Social Health Insurance (sometimes known as Employee’s Health Insurance) is a medical health insurance system that provides medical payment support to the insured and his or her family in times of illness and injury thus providing livelihood security. Procedures for joining the system are carried out at the insurance system’s offices. The cost of insurance payments (premiums) is shared equally between the employer and the employee.

Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office, social insurance office or health insurance association.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

National Health Insurance

What is National Health Insurance?

National Health Insurance (kokumin kenko hoken) is a public health insurance system for the self-employed, farmers, the retired and those who are not covered by another insurance system.

Those who do not join an insurance managed at a place of employment or those not receiving social welfare must join this system.

Those who do not join an insurance system may have to pay the full amount of medical costs incurred.

Those who withdraw from the insurance offered at their place of employment should apply to join the National Health Insurance.

(If you join the National Health Insurance system)

(1) You will pay 30% of costs when seeing a doctor.

(The cost of items not covered by insurance must be borne by the individual.)

(2) When a child is born to an insured person, that person may receive a lump sum payment after birth for child rearing expenses.

(3) At death, payments for funeral expenses may be received. Other payments and benefits are also available. Enquire at your city, ward, town or village office.

(How to join the system)

Those foreign nationals who have registered as aliens and have stayed in Japan in accordance with the immigration law for more than 1 year may enter the system. Those who have stayed in Japan for less than 1 year but out of consideration for their purpose for entering the country are considered as having stayed over 1 year can also join the system.

(1) Applications should be made at the city, ward, town or village office where one's alien registration was made.

(2) Required items

- Certificate of Alien Registration or toroku genpyo kisai jiko shomei sho
- Seal (if none, a signature will do)
- Document to prove you have stayed in Japan over 1 year
(Passport, school/college identification card, study project, etc.)

(National Health Insurance Card)

One National Health Insurance Card is issued per family.

When seeking medical treatment, bring the insurance card to the hospital or clinic and show it at the reception desk.

If members of the family live separately, an extra copy of the National Health Insurance Card can be issued.

About insurance premiums

The annual insurance payment is calculated on the insured individual's annual income (municipal tax valuation) and the number of people in the family as one unit.

People over 40 years old and under 65 years old must also pay an additional premium for Nursing Care Insurance (kaigo hoken).

Since there is no income prior to your first year in Japan, you will be charged the minimum rate during the first year. From the second year, you will be charged according to your income.

Annual insurance payments are decided according to your municipal tax and are paid in 10 installments from June to March the following year. An insurance payment bill will be sent from the city, ward, town or village

office. Payment should be made by the due date at a bank or post office. If the appropriate application is made, payments can be made automatically by your bank and transferred from your bank account.

Since joining a public health insurance system is compulsory, you must join either the health insurance system at your place of employment or the National Health Insurance system.

As public health insurance is compulsory, you are required to subscribe to either National Health Insurance or another public health insurance offered by your employers. Although you are allowed to apply for the National Health Insurance at any time, you will also be asked to pay either for the period starting from the day you completed alien registration to the day you became insured, or for a period specified by the relevant law.

In cases of disaster, unemployment, bankruptcy, etc. when it becomes difficult to pay insurance premiums, it may be possible to receive a remission from payment.

If insurance premiums are not paid, the total cost of medical expenses may have to be borne and benefits may be suspended.

The following must be reported

The following should be reported within 14 days:

- (1) A change of address (When you have moved within the city, ward, town or village)
- (2) Moving in or out a city, ward, town or village
 - (i) When moving out of the city, ward, town or village where you have lived, bring your National Health Insurance Card to the public office where you have lived before you move and report the date of your removal. Within 14 days after your move, report your move into the city, ward, town or village to the public office of your new residence.
- (3) When a child is born, when the head of the family (householder) changes, or when there is a death
- (4) When the insurance card is soiled, etc.
- (5) When withdrawing from (leave) the system

You cannot withdraw from the National Health Insurance except for the following reasons: entering the social insurance system, moving from your city, ward, town or village.

If you withdraw from the National Health Insurance during the fiscal year, insurance premiums will be recalculated and must be paid accordingly.

Note that the documents required to present will vary depending on the circumstances.

People who cannot join the National Health Insurance

- (1) People who have not registered as aliens
- (2) People who do not have a status of residence (zairyu shikaku)
- (3) People on short stays (in Japan)
- (4) People who have already joined another health insurance system
- (5) People receiving social welfare

Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

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Items for which health insurance cannot be used

Items for which health insurance cannot be used:

Normal pregnancy and birth, abortions for economical reasons, health check-ups (ningen dock), vaccinations, cosmetic surgery, treatment for teeth alignment, injuries and accidents at work, acupuncture, moxa treatment (Chinese alternative medicine), massage (unless it is prescribed by a doctor), amenity bed costs, meals while in hospital, medical tests, operations, treatment and medication not covered by insurance.

- Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office.
- Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

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Other insurances related to medical services

Pensions

The National Pension (kokumin nenkin) and Social Security Pension (kosei nenkin) provide livelihood security when you cannot work due to old age, illness, or accident.

Please see 7-8 for information on the National Pension and 8-7 for information on Social Insurance and Workers' Insurance.

Workmen's Accident Compensation Insurance

If due to work you have an accident, become ill or die, the Workmen's Accident Compensation Insurance (rosai hoken) provides security regarding medical expenses and livelihood.

It is compulsory for employers to join this insurance scheme. They must also pay the insurance premiums.

Applications for insurance claims are made by the company and individual.

Medical expenses are paid directly to the medical institution, and compensation for loss of pay due to the inability to work, etc. is paid to the individual about 1 – 2 months after an application is made.

For information on Workmen's Accident Compensation Insurance see 8-8 Social Insurance.

Note 1 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

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For Health (The Work of Public Health Offices)

To help citizens lead a healthy life, health and welfare offices (names vary depending on the district) provide a variety of services.

Illness prevention

To prevent illness, health consultations, health examinations and vaccinations are provided. There are both charged and free services. Although some services incur fees, examinations and vaccinations are much cheaper than those at medical institutions.

Health of mother and child

Consultations, advice and health examinations are provided for pregnancy, birth and child-rearing.

Mental health

Consultations, advice and hospital introductions are provided for neurosis, mental illnesses and the mentally impaired.

Diet

Consultations and advice on diet and healthy living are provided as well as responses to questions and complaints regarding foodstuffs.

Dental health

Consultations on dental health are provided.

Note 1 Depending on the district, application offices, application procedures, services and the naming of these may vary.

For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

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Vaccinations

Vaccinations

Each city, ward, town, village and public health office (name varies depending on the district) provides vaccinations for polio, tuberculin reaction tests / BCG, DPT (whooping cough, diphtheria, tetanus) vaccinations, and vaccinations for measles, rubella, etc.

You can redeem vaccination coupons enclosed in the Maternity and Child Health Book (boshi kenko techo) for free vaccinations.

Regardless of whether you have free vaccination coupons, your baby or child can receive free vaccinations at any designated medical facility in the city if he/she is between 12 months and 89 months old.

Notification of times to receive second stage vaccinations for Japanese encephalitis, diphtheria and tetanus will be provided in the city, ward, town or village newsletter, or by the public health office, kindergarten, elementary school and junior high schools.

Administration procedures vary according to the city, ward, town or village. Age at which certain free vaccinations can be received may also vary.

Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office, your nearest public health office or medical facility.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

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Prevention of infectious diseases

In Japan, limitations on work, recommendation to enter a hospital for infectious diseases and the disinfecting of one's home is decided by law depending on the type of infectious disease.

Tuberculosis

Though the number of people infected with tuberculosis is fewer than in the past, the disease is the greatest infectious disease in Japan today.

If the discovery of the disease is late, the possibility of infecting one's family members and others around the infected individual is high.

Receiving tuberculosis health examinations is important. You should receive a tuberculosis health examination at your place of work, school, or at a public health office of the city, ward, town or village where you live.

Venereal disease

Venereal disease does not only affect the infected person but their family and descendants. To prevent the spread of venereal disease, syphilis serum reaction examinations are provided at public health offices and some medical facilities.

AIDS

AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) is a disease that develops after being infected with HIV. The 3 routes are (1) blood, (2) sexual activity, (3) mother – child infection.

Privacy will be protected at public health offices. Free consultation on AIDS and anonymous examinations are available here.

Those who think they might be infected are recommended to receive an examination.

Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office or nearest public health office or medical facility.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

Dealing with financial problems (social security, etc.)

What social security is

Social security is a system which helps and supports individuals or their families who because of death, illness or injury or a reduction in their income find themselves in financial difficulty.

In order to receive social security, a person must first make every effort to use their full potential. If after making such an effort the person cannot meet a minimum standard of living, social security will then become available. (Social Security Act, article 4 'supplementary principle') (Sikatsu Hogo Ho Dai 4 Jo 'Hosokusei no Genri')

Japanese citizens, permanent residents, spouses of Japanese citizens, those who have settled in Japan, etc. can receive social security.

Types of benefits (Assistance)

Depending on the needs, the following social security assistance is available.

- (1) Livelihood assistance
Expenses to cover daily living expenses for food, clothing, etc.
- (2) Housing assistance
Expenses to cover rent, land rent, house repairs and house maintenance
- (3) Educational assistance
Expenses to cover school meals, study materials, etc
- (4) Nursing care assistance
Expenses required to receive nursing care
- (5) Medical assistance
Expenses to cover medical fees incurred for medical treatment at hospital or medical facility and medication
- (6) Temporary assistance
In special circumstances the following assistance is available. However, to receive such benefits certain conditions must be met and there are limits on the amount of money available.
 - (i) Birth Expenses Assistance: Inpatient fees during labor, expenses for hygiene materials, etc.
 - (ii) Business and Working Skills Assistance: Expenses involved in starting a small-scale business or learning working skills
 - (iii) Funeral Expenses Assistance: Expenses to cover cremation, and the transportation of the corpse, etc.
 - (iv) Special Assistance: Diapers, bed clothing expenses, special necessary transport expenses, security deposits, etc. required to move residence, expenses required for preparation to enter elementary or junior high school, etc.
- (7) Other support
 - (i) Water bill (basic charges) exemption
 - (ii) Traffic Accident Insurance premium payment exemption (Kotsu Saigai Kakekin no menjo)
 - (iii) Free bus and subway passes
 - (iv) National Pension premium payment exemption
 - (v) NHK reception fees exemption

Borrowing from the Social Welfare Fund (*Seikatsu fukushi shikin*)

For those with a low income, a handicap or of old age who have financial difficulty, the Social Welfare Fund

provides loans with low interest (sometimes with no interest) under certain conditions for births, funerals, etc. for house reconstruction, expenses for entering high school or college and expenses incurred in starting to work.

- Note 1 Depending on the city, ward, town or village, application office, application procedures, the kinds of service available and the names of these services may vary.
For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office, social welfare office (the names of which may vary depending on the district).
- Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

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Child Welfare

Day Nurseries

Day nursery services are provided for children of preschool-age whose parents cannot take care of them at home during the day because they are working or because of illness.

Day nurseries are child welfare facilities operating in accordance with the Child Welfare Act and under the administration of the Health, Labor and Welfare Ministry.

There are both licensed and non-licensed day nurseries.

(1) Licensed nurseries

There are public day nurseries which are managed by the city, ward, town or village and private day nurseries managed by social welfare bodies licensed in accordance with the Social Welfare Act.

Applications to enter day nurseries are accepted in most cities, wards, town and villages in early January for the next school year. However, if there are vacancies, it is possible to enter your child in a nursery at anytime. Applications can be made at the city, ward, town or village office. Cities, wards, towns and villages have decided that day nursery fees are, in principle, calculated according to the guardian's income for the previous fiscal year.

(2) Non-licensed nurseries

Non-licensed nurseries are those within a workplace, 'baby hotels', etc. These are not licensed in accordance with the Child Welfare Act. Nursery fees and entrance are decided between the management and the guardian.

Child Guidance Center (*Jido sodan sho*) (Naming may vary depending on the district)

The Child Guidance Center provides guidance and counseling on child-abuse, etc. children with mental and physical handicaps and general children's problems.

The centers also provide counseling and guidance on reports, or notification of cases from Welfare Offices (naming may vary depending on the district) or relevant bodies and their officers will go to meet guardians directly or offer counseling over the telephone.

Mother and child support facilities (*Boshi seikatsu shien shisetsu*)

Mother and child support facilities accept mothers with children under 18 years of age who for various reasons cannot properly care for their children. These are child welfare facilities.

Midwifery facilities (*Josan shisetsu*)

There are designated facilities available for pregnant women who find it difficult to pay the costs involved in childbirth. In principle, the applicant must be from a family whose annual income for the year in question is tax-exempt.

Children's allowance (*Jido teate*)

Financial support is available for families bringing up pre-school children.

Child support allowance (*Jido fuyo teate*)

Allowances are available to mothers or their substitute who supervise and are guardians of children under

18 years old who have lost their father through death or divorce or whose father is severely mentally or physically handicapped (if the child has a medium-level or higher physical or mental handicap, the child's age limit is under 20 years old). There are income conditions.

Special child support allowance (*Tokubestu jido fuyo teate*)

Allowances are available to the mother or father or their substitute who cares for children under 20 years old who has a medium-level or higher physical or mental handicap. There are conditions attached related to income.

- Note 1 Depending on the city, ward, town or village, the application office, application procedures, the kinds of service available and the naming of these services may vary.
For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office or welfare office.
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Single mother/ Widow's welfare

Single mother/ Widow's welfare

To assist single mother families and widows in maintaining a secure livelihood the 'Living Expenses Fund' (Seikatsu Shikin) is available. There is also the 'Work Support Fund' (Jigyo Kaishi Shikin) to assist them in becoming financially independent, and the 'Education Support Fund' (Shugaku Shien Shikin) for children as well as various other funds from which low-interest or no-interest loans are available.

Note 1 Depending on the city, ward, town or village, the application office, applications procedures, the kinds of service available and the naming of these services may vary.
For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office or welfare office.

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Violence in the home (Domestic Violence D.V.) / Stalking

Violence in the home

Violence in the home is physical or mental suffering beyond a certain level imposed on a spouse, child or elderly person (weak person) inside the home or in places outsiders cannot observe. In particular, physical suffering caused by violence can be considered a criminal act.

In 2002, 'Laws related to protection from violence inflicted by a spouse and the protection of victims' (DV Prevention Act) (DV Boshi Ho) were enacted and in which provision of counseling concerning violence inflicted by a spouse and the protection of victims was stipulated.

Protection services

For information on women's centers and consultation offices, enquire at your welfare office. If the situation is sufficiently serious then you should contact the police.

If you are a victim or know of someone who is a victim, consult the nearest 'domestic violence Consultation and Support Center (Haigusha Boryoku Sodan Shien Center) welfare office or police station. There are also women-only telephone counseling services, 'Women's Human Rights Hotline' (Josei no Jinken Hotline) provided by Regional Legal Affairs Bureaus (Chiho Homu Kyoku) throughout the country.

At the 'domestic violence Consultation and Support Center' consultation is provided by women, and protection is also available.

National Women's Consultation Service Homepage (Website)

<http://www6.ocn.ne.jp/~heiner/index.html>

Stalking

A stalker is a person who because of romantic or emotional attachment or unfulfilled emotional reasons develops malice toward a woman or individual and 'pursues them / lies in wait for them / uses forceful entry' or 'demands to meet or have a relationship with them' or 'makes nuisance phone calls', etc.

In 2002, the 'Stalker Control Act' (Stalker Kisei Ho) was enacted in which punishment for stalker acts and support for victims is stipulated.

Those who are victims of stalkers or know of someone who is a victim should consult their nearest police station or police box (Koban).

General Police Enquiries # 9110 (Nationwide number)

Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at a women's consultation center, your city, ward, town or village office or nearest police station.

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Welfare for the elderly

Welfare services are available for the elderly (generally speaking for those over 60 or over 65 years old).

Services for the healthy elderly

Educational, recreational and health lectures. Club activities where the elderly can get together for travel, sports or hobby related activities.

Regular health check-ups are encouraged to manage one's health. For those who have a desire to work, short-term or part-time work can be introduced, and 'Silver Personnel Centers' (Silver Jinsai Centers) offer classes to obtain the necessary information and skills needed for work.

Services for those who are prone to illness

Classes are available to promote good health and learn about diabetes, osteoporosis and other life-style related illnesses. Personal counseling and home visit advice services are also available.

Services for those who need nursing care

If a person needs nursing care, services to suit the needs of the person's mental and physical condition as well as the person's living environment can be provided.

Firstly, it is necessary for facilities which provide such services to be qualified for nursing care by the city, ward, town or village.

Examples of Home Services (Zaitaku Service):

home-help service, day service, short-stay service, house reform, etc.

Examples of 'stay services' (Nyujo Service):

Special Nursing Home for the Aged (Tokubetsu Yogo Rojin Home), Health Facility for the Aged (Rojin Hoken Shisetsu), entering a nursing ward of a hospital, as well as services not covered by Nursing Care Insurance – meal delivery service, free diaper service, etc.

Services for families of the aged

Classes on nursing care for the aged.

Note 1 Depending on the district, the application office and application procedures, the kinds of service and the naming of these services may vary.

For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office.

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Nursing Care Insurance (*Kaigo hoken*)

Explanation of the Nursing Care Insurance (*Kaigo hoken*) system

The nursing care that we may be needed in our old age and which is often a cause for anxiety should not be born by the family alone. As a result, a new system, the Nursing Care Insurance (Kaigo Hoken) system was set up so that society as a whole could take on the burden.

This insurance system is supported by insurance premium payments and tax.

If an elderly person becomes bedridden or suffers from senile dementia and requires nursing care for his/her daily needs such as bathing, help with going to the toilet, meals, etc. a relevant nursing care qualification should be obtained from the city, ward, town or village office. With this, nursing care services can be provided within certain assigned limitations.

Those with Insurance

Citizens over 65 years and those between 40 and 64 years old who have joined a medical insurance (National Health Insurance, Health Insurance) are insured.

(i) No. 1 Insured: All citizens over 65 years old

(ii) No. 2 Insured: All citizens between 40 and 64 years old who have joined a medical insurance

The calculation of the burden of insurance premiums and the conditions for receiving service are different for No.1 Insured and No.2 Insured.

Insurance premiums

The insurance premiums for No.1 Insured and No.2 Insured are different.

To receive nursing care

(1) Conditions for qualification

People over 65 years old who require nursing care or those who require nursing care for designated diseases (Parkinson's disease, etc. - 15 designated diseases in total) can receive nursing care service.

(2) Qualification for nursing care

To receive nursing care service, a person must first present an application form to the city, ward, town or village office. Regarding the level of nursing care, 'Qualification for Nursing Care' (Kaigo Nintei) must be obtained. When an application is received a qualification investigation is made. The result of the investigation together with assessment of the situation made by a doctor will be sent to the 'Nursing Care Qualification Committee' (Kaigo Nintei Shinsa-kai) which will decide on the level of nursing care required (6 ranks: support required, nursing care required 1-5 levels).

(3) Preparing a Care Plan

After qualifying, a nursing care support specialist (Care Manager) from a home nursing care support company (Zaitaku Kaigo Shien Gyosha) will be asked to make a plan for the home service (Care Plan). The individual will then be able to receive services according to this plan.

For information on the contents of nursing care services, enquire at your city, ward, town or village office or welfare office.

Note 1 Depending on the district, the application offices, and application procedures, the kind of service available and the naming of these services may vary.

For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office or welfare office.

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Welfare for the Disabled

Various kinds of welfare booklets (*Techo*)

People who are physically disabled should receive a Physically Disabled Person's Welfare Booklet (shintai shogaisha techō).

People who are mentally impaired should receive a Foster Care Booklet (yoiku techō).

People who have a mental disorder or have constraints on their daily or social activities should receive a Mental Illness Insurance Welfare Booklet (seishin shogaisha hoken fukushi techō).

With these booklets (techō) various services may be received as well as tax deductions and exemptions and discounts on transport fares.

Government services for the disabled

(1) Medical expenses assistance

Depending on the degree of the disability and the extent of the medical treatment, partial assistance is available for medical expenses.

(2) Supply of equipment and its repairs

Equipment (wheelchairs, artificial legs, hearing aids, canes for the visually impaired, etc.) required by people with a disability, depending on the degree of the disability and livelihood circumstances, are supplied and repaired or lent.

(3) Issuing of allowances

Depending on the degree and type of disability, allowances are issued to people with serious disabilities who have not entered welfare facilities.

Welfare facilities

There are facilities for the training and support of disabled people.

Note 1 Depending on the district, application offices, application procedures, services and the naming of these may vary.

For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office or welfare office.

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National Pension Scheme

What is the National Pension Scheme?

The National Pension Scheme is a system whereby everybody receives a common 'basic pension' (kiso nenkin).

It provides income security in old age, in the event you acquire a disability or in the event of your death.

Everyone including foreign nationals between 20 and 59 years old must join the National Pension Scheme.

People who have joined the Employee's Pension Scheme or a Providential Society's Scheme are also members of the National Pension Scheme.

How to join the scheme

To join the National Pension Scheme, you should apply at a city, ward, town or village office.

It is not necessary to apply if you have already joined an Employees' Pension Insurance Scheme or a Providential Society's Scheme.

Insurance premiums

If you join the National Pension Scheme, you will have to pay insurance premiums. Premium bill payments should be made at a post office or bank. Bank transfer payments are also possible.

People who have joined the Employees' Pension Scheme or a Providential Society's Scheme will have their premiums deducted from their salaries or bonuses.

When it is difficult to pay premiums

For people with no income, or people whose income is so low premium payment is difficult, you can apply to be made fully exempt from paying or exempt from paying half of the premium cost. Students can also have payments suspended according to the Student Special Payment System (gakusei nofu tokurei seido). Some special schools (vocational, language, dressmaking, etc.) are not included.

Receiving a pension

National pensions will be paid out when a person becomes old, disabled, or when the insured person dies. Below are the different kinds of pensions.

- (1) Basic Old-Age Pension (rorei kiso nenkin)
- (2) Basic Disability Pension (shogai kiso nenkin)
- (3) Basic Survivors Pension (izoku kiso nenkin)
- (4) Widow's Pension (kafu nenkin)
- (5) Lump-Sum Death Payment (shibo ichiji kin)
- (6) Old-Age Welfare Pension (rorei fukushi nenkin)

There are conditions regarding receiving each kind of pension. An application must be made in order to receive a pension.

Returning home (leaving Japan)

There is a lump-sum refund payment system for people when they withdraw from the National Pension Scheme or Employees' Pension Scheme.

This system allows a foreign national who has lived in Japan and joined a pension scheme to receive a lump-sum refund provided that he/she has paid more than 6 months worth of premiums and makes a

prescribed application within two years of leaving Japan.

It is also possible to receive a pension after you have returned home (left Japan).

Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office.

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Community Service Workers/Child Welfare Workers

(Minsei-in/Jido-in)

What is a Community Service Worker (*Minsei-in*)?

Community Service Workers (Minsei-in) and Child Welfare Workers (Jido-in) are private community service workers who are commissioned by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare in accordance with the Local Public Employees Law (chiho komuin ho) and are considered special civil servants with a term of service of 3 years. Community Service Workers, who have a good knowledge of conditions of the area to which they are designated, provide counseling, advice and support to help those suffering hardship, the aged, the disabled and single-parent families.

Note 1 Depending on the city, ward, town or village, the application offices, application procedures, services and the naming of these may vary.

For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office.

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Looking for work

In Japan, it is forbidden to discriminate against a person's nationality or religion in respect to pay or working hours, etc.

Foreign workers employed in companies and factories are entitled to the same rights as Japanese workers. It is important for a person to know and understand laws and systems related to work.

To be employed in Japan

You must have a status of residence (zairyu shikaku) which allows you to work. The content of the work and activities associated with that work must fall within the limitations of that permit.

Looking for a job in Japan

You can use public employment security offices (*kokyo shokugyo antei sho*) which are administered by the government (these services are free), use a private employment agency, or use a group which is certified by the Health, Labor and Welfare Ministry (both free services and charged services are available).

Public Employment Security Offices (*Kokyo shokugyo antei sho*)

Public Employment Security Offices are offices administered by the government that offer consultation on and introductions to employment. Public Employment Security Offices are now connected by a computer system, so, job vacancy data from around the country can be obtained on the spot and job introductions made.

If you can understand Japanese, please use the nearest Public Employment Security Office.

For those who cannot understand Japanese, there are 'Foreigner's Employment Service Corners' (*gaikokujin koyo service corners*) which provide information on job vacancies and job introductions for foreign students and foreigners who have special skills.

(Main contacts)

Tokyo Foreigner's Employment Service Center 03-3586-8609

(Tokyo Gaikokujin Koyo Service Center)

Osaka Foreigners Employment Service Center 06-6241-5606

(Osaka Gaikokujin Koyo Service Center)

Industrial Employment Center, Tokyo Office (Nikkei's Tokyo) 03-3836-1090

(Sangyo Koyo Antei Center, Tokyo Jimusho (Nikkei's Tokyo))

Industrial Employment Center, Osaka Office (Nikkei's Osaka) 06-6947-7950

(Sangyo Koyo Antei Center, Osaka Jimusho (Nikkei's Osaka))

Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your nearest Public Employment Security Office.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

Employment contracts

Employment contracts

An employment contract is a contract stating the working conditions between each employee and their employer.

The employer must state in writing working conditions such as pay and working hours, etc. of the employee and give this to him/her.

Trouble can occur when only a verbal contract is made since there is no evidence of pay terms. It is therefore important to obtain a written contract with as many details as possible.

If the contract is written in Japanese, have it translated into your native language and check the contents.

Details which must be stated in an employment contract

- (1) The term of the working contract
- (2) Place of work and work content
- (3) Work starting time and finishing time, the possibility of work outside the specified work hours, rest time, holidays, vacations, etc.
- (4) Pay terms, how it is calculated and method of payment, when it is to be paid, information about pay increases
- (5) Details about retirement

If a company has fixed working regulations ask to see its 'Work Regulations' (shugyo kisoku) and check the contents.

Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office or enquiries office.

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Wages (Pay)

Method of payment of wages (Pay)

To ensure wages are properly paid, wages must, in principle, be paid (1) in money, (2) directly to the individual employee, (3) in full, (4) once or more a month, (5) on a certain day in accordance with the Labor Standards Law (rodo kijun ho).

Minimum wage

The minimum wage is decided by the Minimum Wage Law (saitei chingin ho).

An employer must pay employees more than the minimum wage.

If an employer pays less than the minimum wage, not only will they have to pay the employee the difference, they may also be fined.

The minimum wage differs depending on the region and is revised every year.

The minimum wage also applies to part-time workers.

If wages are not paid

If wages are not paid, consult a Labor Standards Inspection Office (rodo kijun kantoku sho) or labor enquires office immediately.

Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at the Labor Standards Inspection Office for your area or a labor enquiries office.

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Dismissal and retirement

What is work dismissal (*Kaiko*) ?

Work dismissal (*kaiko*) is the one-sided termination of an employment contract by the employer.

An employer must have a rational reason to dismiss an employee.

If you are dismissed without a justifiable reason, you should consult a Labor Standards Inspection Office or a labor enquiries office immediately.

(1) In the case where there is no fixed term of employment

An employer must give at least 30 days notice of dismissal to the employee. If the employer dismisses an employee immediately, the employee must be paid an average wage for 30 days or more as 'notice pay'.

(2) In the case where there is a fixed term of employment

An employer cannot dismiss an employee during the term of the employment contract except under unavoidable circumstances. Even under unavoidable circumstances, the employer needs to give 30 days or more notice or pay 'notice pay'.

(3) If you are dissatisfied with your dismissal

If you are dissatisfied with your dismissal, you should express your dissatisfaction with your employer and have the employer issue a 'Proof of Resignation' (*taishoku shomei sho*) to clarify the reason for the termination of the contract, whether it was a dismissal or resignation.

If you are not satisfied with the employer's reason for dismissal, you should consult a Labor Center (*rodo center*), a lawyer or some trustworthy enquiry office. If you think your dismissal breaks the Labor Standards Law, consulting a Labor Standards Office is also possible.

Resignation (*Taishoku*)

If the employee makes a request to resign and the employer agrees, the employment relationship is terminated by a mutually agreed contract.

An employee with no fixed term of employment can leave the company 2 weeks after the date of their notification of resignation even if the employer does not agree with the resignation.

If the employee is working under a fixed term of employment, they cannot ask to terminate the contract during the fixed term except under unavoidable circumstances.

If an employer agrees to an employee's resignation, the employee, in principle, cannot withdraw their resignation request. It is important to be careful when requesting resignation.

In the case of resignation, if the employee demands, unpaid wages can be paid within 7 days. Savings, wages and other money which you have a claim to can also be returned.

The employee must return to the employer any company ID cards, uniforms lent to them, and their health insurance card by the date stated in the 'working rules'.

Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at a Labor Standards Inspection Office or a labor enquiries office.

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Working hours

Legal working hours

Working hours according to The Labor Standards Law are, in general, the hours worked under the supervision and direction of the employer.

If preparation for work, tidying up after work, and training are done under the direction of the employer, this time is considered to be within working hours.

Working hours are, in principle, 40 hours per week excluding break-time and within 8 hours per day.

For small-size businesses (under 10 people), movie and theater businesses, health and hygiene businesses and entertainment/amusement businesses which deal with customers as a special measure, working hours are 44 hours per week.

Break-time

Employers must give 45 minutes break-time for work over 6 hours and 1 hour break-time for work over 8 hours. The break-time must be given during working hours.

This break-time must be given to all employees at the same time. Employees must be free to use this time as they wish. (This excludes certain businesses and industries where a written agreement is made.)

There are also laws concerning pay for overtime work, extra pay, pay for holidays and vacations.

Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at a Labor Standards Inspection Office or a labor enquiries office.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

Part-time workers

What a part-time worker is

In general, a part-time worker is a worker who works shorter hours than a full-time worker.

Labor related laws apply to part-time workers as they do to regular workers.

Working insurance and social insurance is therefore applicable for part-time workers. Such workers can receive Workman's Accident Compensation Insurance if they are injured or become ill due to work.

If certain conditions are met, part-time workers can also be insured under the employment insurance and health insurance.

Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at a Labor Standards Inspection Office or a labor enquiries office.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

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Social Insurance and Labor Insurance

About the social insurance system

This is a system which offers security by providing insurance for the insured individual and his/her family in case of illness, physical or mental disability, death, old age, or unemployment.

The social insurance system is divided into 'social insurance' and 'working insurance' and is administered by the Health, Labor and Welfare Ministry.

'Social insurance' includes medical insurance (Social Health Insurance and National Health Insurance, Nursing Care Insurance) and pension insurance (Employees Pension and National Pension).

'Working insurance' includes the Workmen's Compensation and Insurance for Accidents (rosai) and employment insurance.

Workmen's Compensation Insurance for Accidents (Rosai)

If you are injured, become ill due to work, die from overwork (karoshi), commit suicide due to excessive work, or are injured while commuting to and from work and fulfill certain conditions, you may be eligible to receive medical treatment benefits (iryo hoshō kyūfu), benefits for sick leave (kyūgyō hoshō kyūfu), or disability benefits (shōgai hoshō kyūfu).

This system applies to all foreign workers.

(Enquiries should be made at the Labor Standards Inspection Office for the district of your place of employment.)

Employment insurance

Employment insurance provides workers who have been made unemployed with unemployment benefits (shitsugyō kyūfu) with the aim of providing social stability until they are reemployed.

- Joining the Employment Insurance and qualification for being an insured person

In principle, even if only one employee is employed, the employer must enter the Employment Insurance scheme. The burden of paying insurance premiums is shared between both the employer and employee. Foreign nationals who have permanent residency, have a Japanese spouse or are settled in Japan are also eligible to join the scheme.

Those who are employed for a short term or who may return to their native country (leave Japan) upon finishing work are not eligible to be an insured person.

- To receive unemployment benefits

Benefits can be received if the insured person has worked consecutively for 6 months during the year prior to being made unemployed, has a desire to work and is able to work.

Social Health Insurance (Shakai Kenko Hoken)

This system is intended to provide social stability in times of illness or injury by providing medical treatment benefits and allowances.

All corporate bodies must enter this insurance system.

The burden of paying premiums is shared equally between the employer and employee.

(Enquiries should be made at the Social Insurance Office for the address of your place of employment.)

The self-employed, farmers and fishermen, the unemployed should enter the National Health Insurance scheme (kokumin kenko hoken) which is managed by the city, ward, town or village. National Health Insurance premiums are paid in family units to the city, ward, town or village office.

(Enquiries should be made at your city, ward, town or village office.)

Employees Pension (Kosei Nenkin Hoken)

This is a system which workers at companies, factories and shops join.

The main purpose of this system is to ensure the social security of workers in their old age. However, it also offers social security to those who can no longer work due to injury or illness and to surviving family members of workers who have died.

All corporate bodies must join this system.

The burden of premium payments is shared between the employer and the employee. The amount of insurance premiums varies according to the amount of your wages (income).

(Enquiries should be made at the social insurance office for the address of your place of employment.)

The self-employed, farmers, fishermen and the unemployed who cannot join the Employees Pension scheme should join the National Pension scheme.

(Enquiries should be made at your city, ward, town or village office.)

Withdrawal refund payment system (datai ichijikin shikyu seido)

There is a withdrawal refund payment system for people who withdraw from either the Employees Pension scheme or the National Pension scheme.

Through this system, foreign nationals who while living in Japan entered a pension scheme and paid more than 6 months insurance premiums can receive a withdrawal refund if he/she make an application in the prescribed method within 2 years after returning to their country or leaving Japan permanently.

Before leaving Japan, you should get a 'withdrawal refund application form' (datai ichijikin seikyu-sho) from the Social Welfare Insurance Office (shakai hoken jimusho). After leaving the country, you should then fill in the form and send it with the attached documents to the Social Welfare Insurance Service Center (shakai hoken gyomu center) in Japan.

(Enquiries should be made at the Social Welfare Insurance Office for the address of your place of employment.)

Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at the relevant office.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

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The Japanese education system

The Japanese education system is basically comprised of 6 years of elementary school, 3 years at junior high school, 3 years at senior high school and 4 years at university (or 2 years at college).

Among these, elementary school and junior high school are compulsory.

Entrance to high school and university is, in principle, decided by an admissions examination.

There are also colleges and schools for mainly junior and senior high school graduates that teach technical and occupational skills.

There are national schools managed by the state, public schools managed by prefectures, cities, wards, town and villages and private schools managed by school foundations.

The school year begins in April and continues until March the following year.

Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

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Kindergartens

According to the School Education Law (gakko kyoiku ho), kindergartens are considered schools and are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry for Education, Science and Technology. Kindergartens are education facilities for children aged 3 years and older which they attend in the years before they enter elementary school.

They are established by the state, regional public bodies, and school foundations.

There are public and private kindergartens. Children generally attend kindergarten for a period of 1-3 years. (Regarding day nurseries, see 7-2 Child Welfare)

Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at a kindergarten or your city, ward, town or village office.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date

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Elementary and Junior High Schools

What are elementary and junior high schools?

An elementary school is a school for children between the ages of 7 years old and 12 years old whose birthday is between April 2 of the year they wish to enter school and April 1 of the following year.

A junior high school is a school for children between the ages of 13 years old and 15 years old whose birthday is between April 2 of the year they wish to enter school and April 2 of the following year.

Entering school

If a person wants to enter their child in a public school managed by a prefecture, city, ward, town or village, they should lodge an Application for a Foreign Child to Enter School (gaikokujin shugaku shinsei) at their city, ward, town or village office or board of education.

If a person wants to enter their child in a private school or a school for foreign children, they should apply directly to the school.

Notice to Enter School (Nyugaku Tsuchi/Nyugaku Annai)

Many cities, wards, towns and villages send the guardians of children who have registered as aliens and have reached school-going age a Notice to Enter School (nyugaku tsuchi/nyugaku annai).

The Notice to Enter School will show which school the child will enter and the date and time of the child's health examination.

If a person intends to enroll their child in a school, they should make every effort to bring the Notice to Enter School and the child's alien registration certificate to the city, ward, town or village office by the specified date to process the application. If for some reason the person cannot make the application by the specified date, applications can be accepted at anytime.

In some cases a Notice to Enter School may not arrive. If this happens and the child is near school-going age, the guardian should enquire as early as possible at their city, ward, town or village office, board of education or nearest school.

For children who will enter junior high school as new first-year students, the Notice to Enter School is sent to guardians of children who will graduate from public elementary schools. If a notice does not arrive, enquire at your city, ward, town or village office.

About school expenses

Class fees and textbooks are free at public elementary and junior high schools.

It is necessary to pay for study materials, expenses incurred for commuting to school, expenses for outside-school activities, expenses for school trips and school meals.

If for financial reasons it is difficult to pay these expenses, the school expenses support system (shugaku hi no enjo seido) is available. Enquire at the school or board of education.

This system does not only apply to public schools. Children attending private or national elementary or junior high schools or elementary and junior high school equivalents for foreign children within the city, ward, town or village can also make use of this system. Applications should be made at each school.

After-school care of school children (Gakudo Hoiku) & after-school children's clubs

Depending on the district, there are facilities where children between 1st and 3rd grade whose parents are

not at home after school hours can be taken care of and play in a healthy environment.
You should enquire at the city, ward, town or village office about after-school clubs for school children.
Applications to join a club should be made directly to the club.

- Note 1 Depending on the city, ward, town or village, the applications office, application procedures, services and the naming of these may vary.
For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at a nearby school or city, ward, town or village office.
- Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note a that new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

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High schools

A high school is a school for students who have graduated from junior high school.

In Japan, more than 90% of the population advance to high school.

To enter a high school, a person must take an examination. There are also schools which have a recommendation entrance system.

Even if a person has not graduated from a Japanese junior high school, if the person obtained an education that is recognized as being equal to a junior high school education, the person can take an entrance examination.

There are many kinds of high schools. Classes are divided according to content; schools can offer regular courses, specialist courses (technical, business, agricultural and foreign language courses, etc.) and general studies courses.

Schools are also classified according to the hours classes are held; daytime (zennichi sei), part-time (teiji sei), and correspondence (tsushin sei) schools.

Besides these, there are new types of high schools.

Some schools have special systems for foreigners.

Note 1 Depending on the city, ward, town, or village, the application offices, application procedures, services and the naming of these may vary.

For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at the relevant school or your city, ward, town or village office.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

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Universities and Colleges

Universities and colleges are schools for students who have graduated from senior high school.

You must sit an entrance examination in order to enter a university.

If a person has not graduated from a Japanese junior high school or senior high school, that person is still eligible to sit an entrance examination if he/she has obtained an education the equivalent of a Japanese senior high school.

Some universities and colleges have special systems for foreigners.

Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at a university or college.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

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Schools for foreigners

There are schools where classes are offered in English, Chinese, Korean and other languages. Schools for foreigners are classified as 'Miscellaneous Schools' (kakushu gakko) according to the School Education Law (gakko kyoiku ho).

Some Japanese universities do not allow students who have graduated from schools for foreigners to take their entrance examinations.

Depending on each school for foreigners, some Japanese universities and graduate schools do allow students who have graduated from such schools to enter their schools. Please enquire at each school.

Note 1 For details, contact the relevant school.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

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Support for schooling/scholarships

Schooling support

There is a schooling support system for children attending elementary and junior high schools who have difficulty paying for study materials and other required items for school.

If you have difficulty paying for study materials, items required to attend school, outside-school activity expenses, school trip expenses and school meals, you should consult the school or the board of education.

This system is available not only at public elementary and junior high schools, but may also be available at private schools within the city, ward, town or village, national elementary and junior high schools and schools for foreigners which are the equivalent of Japanese elementary and junior high schools.

Scholarships (Shogakukin)

There is a scholarship system for university and high school students who have difficulty attending school due to economical reasons.

There is also a tuition remission system at universities and high schools.

Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at a school or at your city, ward, town or village office.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

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Japanese language education

Studying Japanese

Japanese can be learned at a Japanese language school, Japanese language classes and Japanese language courses.

Tuition fees must be paid at Japanese language schools. However, there are cheap or free Japanese language courses and classes offered by various organizations and groups. For information on these, enquiries should be made at the international exchange organizations in your area.

Japanese Language Proficiency Examination (Nihongo Noryoku Shiken)

(1) What is the Japanese Language Proficiency Examination?

This is an examination conducted in Japan and abroad for measuring a person's proficiency of the Japanese language and accrediting it. The examination is, in principle, for those whose native language is not Japanese.

In Japan, the examination is administered by The Association of International Study (zaidan hojin, nihon kokusai kyoiku kyokai), and abroad by The Japan Foundation (kokusai koryu kikin).

(2) The contents of the examination

The examination is divided into 4 levels from which you choose to sit according to your Japanese ability. Each level consists of 3 sections: characters/vocabulary, listening comprehension, and reading comprehension/grammar. For information on examination layout, standards for each level and the application procedure see "The Japanese Language Proficiency Examination Guide" (Nihongo Noryoku Shiken Juken Annai) which is published each year.

(3) Enquiries

- (i) The Association of International Study http://www.aiej.or.jp/index_e.html
Telephone: 03-5454-5215
- (ii) (Examinations in Japan)
 - 153-8503 Tokyo, Meguro-ku, Komaba 4-5-29
The Association of International Study,
Project Department Examination Section <http://www.aiej.or.jp>
Telephone: 03-5216-5501, 03-5454-5577
- (iii) (Examinations abroad)
 - 598-0093 Osaka-fu, Sennan-gun, Tajiri-cho, Rinkuport-kita 3-14
Japan Foundation, Kansai Kokusai Center Examination Section
Telephone: 0727-90-2603 e-mail: jlptinfo@jpf.go.jp

*Hyogo Nihongo Volunteer Network <http://www.hyogo-ip.or.jp/hnvn/index.htm>

Note 1 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

About tax

Tax imposed on a person's income can roughly be divided into Income Tax (Shotoku Zei) that is imposed by the state and Citizen Tax (Shimin Zei) which is imposed by the prefecture, city, ward, town or village. Foreigners must pay tax just as Japanese nationals do.

Income Tax and Citizen Tax are usually automatically deducted from a salaried worker's salary (pay) each month. Those whose tax is not deducted must go to the tax office and file an income tax return, and to the city, ward, town or village office to file their Citizen Tax.

- Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office or tax office.
- Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

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Income tax

About income tax

Income tax is the tax imposed by the state on a person's income for a year from January through December. Income tax is automatically deducted from a salary-worker's salary each month. (This is called "withholding tax at the source" (*gensen choshu*), or deducted from one's salary (*kyuyo tebiki*).

Depending on whether a foreigner is a resident or non-resident, the tax limits and rates are different. (A resident is a person who has an address in Japan or who has lived continuously in Japan for 1 year or more.)

Foreign residents must pay the same tax rates as ordinary Japanese.

Non-resident foreigners, with the exception of tax exemption because of a tax treaty, have, in principle, a 20% tax imposed on their income.

Withholding tax at the source statement (*Gensen choshu-hyo*)

The Withholding tax at the Source Statement indicates the amount of income tax you have paid from January through December for the stated year and is given to you by your employer by the end of January of the following year.

If you have quit your employment, you should obtain a Withholding Tax at the Source Statement from your employer within one month from the date you left your employment.

The Withholding Tax at the Source Statement is proof of payment of tax. Since it is necessary when applying for a renewal of your status of residence, it is important to keep it safe.

Year-end adjustments

At the end of each year, adjustments are made in the tax deducted from a person's salary every month for total income, insurance premium payments, etc. If there is an excess or shortage in the income tax, adjustments will be made. These adjustment procedures are done by the employer.

Family members living abroad may be considered as dependants. For details, enquire at your tax office.

If a child is born or you have joined an insurance scheme between the time the year-end adjustment was completed and December 31, a readjustment can be made by the end of January of the following year.

Since these procedures are carried out by the employer, it is important you notify the employer of any changes as soon as possible.

Enquiries

(1) National Tax Bureau, Tax Enquiries Office

(Please ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you.)

(2) TAXANSER Homepage <http://www.taxanser.nta.go.jp>

Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office or tax office.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system

revisions may have been introduced after this date.

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Filing final tax returns

About filing final tax returns

Filing final tax returns is filing the amount of tax calculated on income earned from January through December of the previous year.

People whose income tax was not withheld from their salary, who had income from two or more sources, had income other than a salary must file a final tax return (kakutei shinkoku) between February 16 and March 15 of the following year at their nearest tax office.

Final Tax Return forms are sent by post to those who have lived in Japan for more than 1 year and filed a tax return in the previous year.

The Final Tax Return forms are not sent to those who are filing their final tax return for the first time or those who had their tax withheld from the source.

Items needed when filing a final tax return

- (1) Documents as proof of previous year's income (Withholding Tax at the Source Statements, original receipts, etc.)
- (2) Documents for exemptions for dependents and spouse (Birth certificates of dependants abroad, proof of remittances to dependants abroad)
- (3) Documents for exemptions for insurance (Insurance premium payment receipts)
- (4) Certificate of Alien Registration
- (5) Seal /Signature

Tax refunds

A tax refund can be applied for in cases such as the following: a child was born resulting in an increase in the number of dependants, costly medical expenses were incurred, house, etc. and possessions were lost or damaged by in a disaster (fire, earthquake, etc.), a new house / residence was purchased, one's income was as low as a part-time worker's. Applications should be made at the tax office and can be made for expenses, reduced income, etc. incurred for the 5 years before an application is made. This application can be made before February 15.

If when renewing or changing your status of residence, a copy of your Final Tax Return is required, apply for a copy to be issued.

Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office or tax office.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

Citizen tax

About citizen tax

Citizen tax is the tax imposed by the prefecture, city, ward, town or village on a person's previous year's income.

Irrespective of a person's nationality, tax is imposed on a person who has an address in the prefecture, city, ward, town or village as of January 1.

Citizen tax is calculated by considering the previous year's income and is decided by each city, ward, town and village after April, after which the individual is informed.

Citizen tax is deducted from a person's salary over 12 months from June through May the following year for salary earners.

A person, whose citizen tax is not deducted from a salary, will receive a citizen tax bill from the city, ward, town or village. Upon receipt of the bill, payment should be made through a bank or post office.

It is possible to avoid being 'doubly taxed' – in Japan and your own country – on income earned in Japan.

Tax payment certificate (*Nozei shomei-sho*), Income certificate (*Shotoku shomei-sho*)

Proof of your income is necessary when renewing or changing your status of residence, entering your child into a public nursery or applying to enter public housing. If you require documents of proof of your income, you should apply at your city, ward, town or village office.

Tax payment extensions, reductions or exemptions may be received if tax payment is difficult due to a disaster (fire, earthquake, etc.), illness or unemployment etc.

If tax is not paid

A late-payment fee (*entai-kin*) on tax arrears is charged for the period from the due-date of payment until the actual payment.

If non-payment continues, the person's assets may be seized or other measures taken.

Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

Consumption tax

Consumption tax is the tax imposed on purchases, etc. and other consumer items.

The consumption tax rate is 5% (as of January 2001).

The 5% consumption tax is either added to the marked price or included in the marked price.

Note 1 For details, ask person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at the tax office for your area.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

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Automobile tax

Automobile tax

Automobile tax is a tax levied on a person who owns an automobile as of April 1 each year.

Automobile tax bills are distributed by each prefectural office. Bills should be paid by the stated date through a bank, etc.

For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your prefecture's Automobile Tax Administration Office (Jidosha Zei Kanri Jimusho) or Prefectural Tax Office (Kenzei Jimusho).

Light-vehicle tax

Light-vehicle tax is levied on a person who owns a scooter (gendo-tsuki jitensha) or light-vehicle (large motorcycles included) as of April 1 each year. Tax bills are distributed by the city, ward, town or village where you live. Bills should be paid by the stated date through a bank, etc.

For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office.

Note 1 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

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When pregnant

When pregnant

A woman who has become pregnant should go to the city, ward, town or village office where she lives and report her pregnancy. Since the office (counter) to report a pregnancy differs according to the city, ward, town or village, enquiries should be made at the nearest public office. When a woman reports a pregnancy, she will receive a Maternal and Child Health Handbook (Boshi Kenko Techo).

Maternal and child health handbook (*Boshi kenko techo*)

This handbook is designed to record the results of both the mother and child's medical check-ups and provide information on medical examinations, vaccinations and health services.

The handbook also includes a section on Pregnancy Health Examinations (Ninshin no Kenko Shinsa). With this service, free examinations may be received at medical facilities within the prescribed district.

Health advice and health examinations during pregnancy

"Mother and Father Classes" (Hahaoya – Chichioya Kyoshitsu) are held at city, ward, town and village offices for those experiencing their first pregnancy and their husbands. A public health nurse will teach the participants about birth and childcare.

"Home Visits by a Public Health Nurse" (Hokenfu ni yoru Homon Shido) A public health nurse can also make home visits and offer advice.

Note 1 Depending on the city, ward, town or village, the application office and application procedures, the kinds of services available and the naming of these services may vary.

For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office.

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After giving birth

Required procedures

- (1) Have the doctor or midwife issue a Birth Certificate (Shusei Shomei-sho)
- (2) Within 14 days (of the birth), bring the Birth Certificate and Maternity and Child Health Handbook (Boshi Kenko Techo) to your city, ward, town or village office and report the birth
At that time, receive a Proof of the Report of a Birth (Shusei Todoke Shomei-sho)
- (3) Within 30 days (of the birth), apply for a status of residence (for the child) at the Immigration Bureau.
However, if you intend to leave the country within 60 days, this is not necessary.
- (4) Within 60 days (of the birth), make an alien registration (for the child) at the city, ward, town or village office.

Health insurance and birth expenses

As normal births are not covered by health insurance, considerable expenses are involved. Since allowances (for midwifery-fees, costs incurred during labor – at the hospital / clinic) can be obtained from your health insurance, you should apply for these from the health insurance scheme you are a member of.

Midwifery facilities (*Josan shisetsu*)

There are specified midwifery facilities for pregnant women who find it difficult to pay the expenses involved in giving birth.

In principle women who wish to use this service must be from a family whose income for the year is not taxable.

Note 1 Depending on the city, ward, town or village the application office and application procedures, the kinds of service available and the naming of these services may vary.

For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office or immigration bureau for your area.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

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Health services for babies– Vaccinations

At city, ward, town and village offices there are health examinations and health guidance services available to match the development of your child.

Besides the services mentioned here, each district operates its own services, so please enquire at the city, ward, town or village office where you have registered as an alien.

Health services for babies

Health guidance through home visits by a public health nurse, 3-4-month, 8-10-month, 1-year-6-month, 3-year baby's development and medical examinations as well as health guidance are provided.

Vaccinations

In Japan, vaccinations are given to protect against infectious diseases and prevent the spread of such diseases among citizens.

Note 1 Depending on the city, ward, town and village, application office and application procedures, the kinds of services available and the naming of these services may vary.

For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

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Day nurseries (Crèche) (*Hoikuen / Hoikusho*)

Day nurseries (Crèche) (*Hoikuen / Hoikusho*)

Day nurseries are for children under school-going age whose parents cannot take care of them because they are working or because of illness, etc.

Applications to enter approved day nurseries (*ninka hoikuen*) are accepted from January for entrance in the next school year. However, if there are vacancies, entry is possible at anytime. Depending on the nursery, the entry-age may differ. Please enquire at your city, ward, town or village office.

Nursery fees are calculated on the family's income, citizen tax and income tax of the previous year and decided on by the city, ward, town or village.

For information on day nurseries see 7-2 Child Welfare.

- Note 1 Depending on the city, ward, town and village, the application office and application procedures, the kinds of service available and the naming of these services may vary.
For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office.
- Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

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Railways

Kinds of railways

There are JR railway lines managed by JR (Co. Ltd.) and private railway lines managed by private railway companies. There are also various other lines including subways, monorails, etc.

Points to note when using a railway

- Tickets for regular and short/middle distances can be bought at vending machines. Tickets for long distances and limited express trains, etc. must be bought at ticket counters (windows).
- Children under 12 years old are half-fare. However, even if the child is 12 years old but a junior high school student, he/she must pay the adult fare.
- A child under 6-years old accompanied by an adult may ride for free. (The number of children that may ride for free varies depending on the company.)
- Besides regular tickets, there are multiple-tickets, commuting passes, prepaid cards, etc.

Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at a railway company in your city, ward, town or village.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

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Buses

When you want to ride a bus

The destination of the bus is indicated on the upper-front part of the bus.

Bus routes and bus stops vary depending on the bus company and bus route, so it is important to check this before getting on a bus.

Before getting on a bus, try to have enough change for the fare ready.

Points to note when riding a bus

- There are single-fare routes and routes on which fares vary depending on the distance.
- Fares must be paid either when getting on the bus or when getting off.
- Elementary school children are half-fare, but junior high school children must pay an adult fare.
- A child under 6 years old accompanied by an adult may ride for free. (The number of children that may ride for free varies depending on the company.)
- Besides regular bus tickets, there are commuting passes, multiple-tickets, prepaid cards, and discount service for the aged.

Note 1 Depending on the district the kinds of services may differ.

For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at the bus company you wish to use.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

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Taxis

When you want to use a taxi

There are usually taxi stands in front of major railway stations.

You hail (stop) a taxi that is driving along a road by raising your hand.

You can also call a taxi by telephone. However, you will have to pay an additional charge.

Taxi doors open automatically, so when you are getting into and out of the taxi, let the taxi driver open the doors for you.

Taxi fares (rates)

The taxi fare is indicated on the meter in the cab. This is the fare you must pay.

Tips are not necessary.

There are additional charges for early-morning and late-night rides and highway toll charges must be paid separately.

If you left (forgot) something in a taxi

If you left (forgot) something in a taxi, you should enquire with the taxi company.

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Driver's license

To drive an automobile

A driver's license is required to drive an automobile. You should go to a driving school and learn to drive then obtain a driver's license. If you have a driver's license that you obtained in your country (abroad), it can be exchanged for a Japanese license if an application is made.

International Driver's License [*Kokusai Unten Menkyo-sho*]

Only international driver's licenses issued in accordance with the Geneva Conventions are valid in Japan. An international driver's license is valid for one year from the day of entry to Japan, however, if the validity of the license expires within the year, the license is valid only until the expiration date of the license.

Note: Persons who are registered residents (have a *juminhyo*) of Japan or are registered aliens in Japan and have obtained an international driver's license after leaving Japan and then reenter the country, must have been out of the country for a period of more than 3 months to have the license accepted.

Foreign Driver's License

A person holding a German, French or Swiss driver's license with a Japanese translation of the license can drive for 1 year in Japan. After one year has passed, persons who are registered residents (have a *juminhyo*) of Japan or are registered as aliens in Japan and have left Japan and reentered the country, must have been out of the country for a period of more than 3 months in order to drive.

* Only translations by the consular offices of the country where the license was issued or by the Japan Automobile Federation (JAF) are accepted.

Exchanging your license for a Japanese license

It is possible to apply to exchange your (foreign) license for a Japanese license. Application procedures should be made at the Driver's License Center / Driver's License Examination Center of the prefecture you live in.

- For information on exchanging foreign licenses
JAF Homepage http://www.jaf.or.jp/inter/f_index5.htm
English, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Thai, Korean

(1) Required items

For details on what documents are required to be presented, enquire at the Driver's License Center / Driver's License Examination Center

- (i) Driver's License Application Form (available at the Examination Center)
- (ii) 1 Photograph (3cm high X 2.4cm wide). Can be taken at the application office for a fee.
- (iii) Certificate of Alien Registration
- (iv) Foreign Driver's License (If expiration date is not stated, proof of expiration date is required)
- (v) Passport (with record of entry and departure from relevant countries)
- (vi) A Japanese translation of the foreign driver's license
Only translations made by the administrative agency that issued the license, by foreign embassy and consular offices in Japan, or by the Japan Automobile Federation (JAF) are accepted.
- (vii) Fees vary depending on the type of license.

(2) The process involved in a regular application

- (i) Make application for exchange, (ii) Suitability test, (iii) Check of one's knowledge of the rules of the road, (iv) Driving skills test (Practical driving test on a course at the Driver's License Examination

Center), (v) Obtain a Japanese license

- (3) People who hold a license from a country which is a member of the international treaty on exemption from driving knowledge and skills tests need take only the Suitability Test (*Tekisei Shiken*). However, a practical driving test is required for large two-wheel vehicles.

The validity period of a driver's license

A newly obtained Japanese driver's license is valid until your third birthday after obtaining the license. After that, renewal is every 3 years or 5 years. If the validity period expires, the license becomes invalid.

Remember to renew your license.

If you change your address

If you change your address, it is necessary to apply to change the address on your driver's license.

Make an application by bringing your driver's license and proof of your new address (Certificate of Alien Registration (card), etc.) to the police station or Driver's License Examination Center of your new address.

The suspension and cancellation of a driver's license

A points system is implemented in Japan to urge driver's who have broken the law or caused an accident to improve their driving safety thereafter. The points system is a system whereby points are imposed for a traffic accident, neglecting traffic signals, speeding, illegal parking, etc. When the total number of points reaches a certain number, the individual's driver's license may be suspended or cancelled as punishment. In particular, drunk driving is severely punishable. A license may be cancelled for a single offense. If there are casualties as a result of an accident you have caused, you may be sent to a prison for traffic law offenders.

Note 1 Depending on the district, application office and application procedures, the kinds of services available and the naming of these services may differ.

For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your nearest Driving License Center.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after that date.

To Japanese language page of this information

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JAF (Japan Automobile Federation)

Translation of foreign driver's licenses

When you want to exchange your foreign driver's license, a Japanese translation of the foreign license is required. Only translations by JAF, foreign embassies in Japan and foreign government department (the administrative agency that issued the license) are accepted.

* For details, see the JAF Homepage http://www.jaf.or.jp/inter/f_index5.htm

Application procedures for a Japanese translation

- (1) Where to apply: JAF Regional Offices counters across the country
- (2) How to apply: Apply directly at the JAF counter, or mail your application to a JAF counter by registered mail for cash (Genkin Kakitome).
- (3) Required documents: A photocopy of the foreign driver's license (original licenses cannot be accepted).
- (4) Application fees: ¥3,000 per license. Extra fee of ¥290 for return postage (delivery-recorded mail) when an application is made by mail.

* The Japanese translation will not be reissued in principle. The translation may be reissued only when it is deemed necessary under unavoidable circumstances. Reissues are carried out as a new application, therefore a ¥3,000 fee is charged. Please note that fees will not be refunded even if the application for Foreign License Exchange (Gaimen Kirikae) has been rejected.

* The period of validity of the Japanese translated version is the same as that of the original license.

Revised edition of the foreign languages version of “Rules of the Road”

To encourage safe driving and prevent traffic accidents among foreign residents in Japan, JAF provides a foreign language version of its “Rules of the Road” which explains in easy terms Japanese Road Traffic Law. The manual is available in 6 languages: English, Spanish, Portuguese, Persian, Chinese and Korean for ¥1,000 per copy (consumption tax incl. / delivery charges separate)

Contact

- (1) The Japan Automobile Federation (JAF)
<http://www.jaf.or.jp/index.htm>

- Note 1 Depending on the district, the application office and application procedures, the kinds of services available and the naming of these services may vary.
For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your nearest JAF office.
- Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

Automobiles / Large motorcycles

The registration (*Toroku*) and inspection (*Shaken*) of vehicles and large motorcycles (with a displacement of more than 400 cc)

With regard to vehicles and large motorcycles the following must be reported to the District Land Transport Bureau for your district: purchase, sale, disposal, change in owner's name, etc. Vehicle and large motorcycle owners are legally obliged to have periodical vehicle inspections (*shaken*).

Proof of parking space certificate (*Shako shomei*)

To register a private automobile, its owner must have a document (*Shako Shomei*) to prove they have a place to park their automobile. You should apply for a Proof of Parking Space Certificate (*Shako Shomei*) at the police station with jurisdiction over the area where the parking space is.

(Regarding light-vehicles (*kei-jidosha*), depending on the city, ward, town and village, a Proof of Parking Space Certificate (*Shako Shomei*) may not be required.)

Items required for an application

- (1) An application form
- (2) An application form for a Badge (*Hyosho*)
- (3) A map showing the location of the parking space
- (4) A map showing the layout of the parking space
- (5) A document showing you have the legal right to use the parking space

Automobile insurance

Automobile insurance includes Compulsory Automobile Liability Insurance (*Jidosha Songai Baisho Sekinin Hoken*) which you are required to have by law, and optional insurance.

Note 1 For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at the Regional Land Transport Bureau or police station for your area.

Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

Middle-class motorbikes / *Gentsuki-bikes* / Bicycles)

Registering middle-class motorbikes, *gentsuki-bikes* and bicycles

Middle-class bikes (126 cc – 250 cc displacement), *gentsuki-bikes* class 1 (under 50 cc displacement), *gentsuki-bikes* class 2 (51 cc – 125 cc displacement) and bicycles should be registered in your city, ward, town or village.

Gentsuki-bikes 1-class (under 50 cc displacement), bicycles

In principle *gentsuki-bikes* class 1 and bicycles should be ridden on the left side of the road. Before riding your vehicle, check that the brakes are working properly. Riding without your lights on at night and riding with 2 people on such bikes is against the law. Don't do it.

Theft-prevention registration (*Bohan toroku*)

Theft-prevention Registration (*Bohan Toroku*) of bicycles is compulsory.

When you purchase a bicycle, check with the store and register the bicycle.

No bicycle / bike parking zones

Bicycles and bikes left in a “no bicycle / bike parking zones” (marked with signs) in front of railway stations, etc. will be removed and held in storage.

If your bike or bicycle has been removed, you should go to the storage center within 1 month to claim your bike or bicycle. A removal fee (storage fee) is charged.

- Note 1 Depending on the city, ward, town and village, the application office and application procedures, the kinds of service and the naming of these services may vary.
For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office.
- Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.

Traffic accidents / Automobile insurance

In the event of a traffic accident

- Move the vehicle to a safe place and switch off the engine.
- If there is an injured person, call for an ambulance (Tel: 119).
- Contact the police and describe the accident (Tel: 110)
- Confirm the other person's name, address, telephone number and vehicle registration number.
- If there is a witness, ask for their name and where they can be contacted.
- Notify your insurance company.

Compulsory automobile liability insurance (*Jidosha songai baisho sekinin hoken*)

It is required by law (compulsory) to have automobile liability insurance.

Optional (automobile) insurance

As liability costs have risen, optional automobile insurance helps compensate for the liability costs which go over the compensatory limits of the compulsory liability insurance.

Traffic accident mutual aid association (*Kotsu saigai kyozaï*)

In some districts there is a mutual accident aid association system provided for citizens. Premium payment is ¥600 per person with a 1-year insurance term.

Anyone can join at anytime.

- Note 1 Depending on the city, ward, town and village, the application office and application procedures, the kinds of service available and the naming of these services may vary.
For details, ask a person who understands Japanese to enquire for you at your city, ward, town or village office.
- Note 2 The information given is that confirmed as of July 2002. Note that a new system or system revisions may have been introduced after this date.