

1 Garbage

1-1 Basics of taking out garbage

In Japan, how garbage is taken out is determined based on the region in which you live.

Generally, the location and day on which garbage is taken out is determined based on the type of garbage. Take out the specified type of garbage in the specified location on the specified day.

In general, garbage should be take out the morning of the day it is collected. Inquire with your municipality as to when, where and what type of garbage to take out.

1-2 Garbage sorting

When taking out garbage, there are rules for sorting each type of garbage. Although the sorting method differs depending on where you live, fundamentally,

- Recyclable waste : Glass bottles, PET bottles, aluminum cans/steel cans, newspaper, magazines, cardboard, used cloth, white Styrofoam trays, plastic packaging containers such as tofu and egg containers, etc.
- Burnable waste : Food waste from cooking such as vegetable scraps, paper waste and plastic waste other than recyclable waste, etc.
- Non-burnable waste: Metal, glass, containers, etc. other than recyclable waste
- Oversize waste : Categorized broadly into large electrical appliances, furniture, comforters, bicycles, etc. Each type of waste is taken out on specified days. Sorting of such waste and disposal methods are determined by your municipality. In addition, there may be cases where you have to purchase designated trash bags to take out the waste. Take our your waste by following the rules of your municipality.

One Point



Oversize waste

In contrast to the method for taking out regular waste, contact your municipality beforehand and submit an application for collection (your municipality may collect such waste from your residence, or you may have to directly transport your oversize waste to the disposal facility).

As mentioned later, among oversize waste items, those that are subject to the Home Appliance Recycling Act, such as A/C units, TVs, refrigerators/freezers, washing machines/dryers, etc. cannot be accepted as oversize waste.

In principle, it is illegal for a contractor without a permit from the municipality to take away waste from a household. Do not request a waste collector that does not have a permit to collect your garbage (there will also be issues such as hefty charges).



Home appliance waste

Fundamentally, waste from households is collected and disposed of by each municipality. As home appliances include those that are heavy and large, as well as those that contain extremely hard components, some are difficult to dispose of as oversize waste. Components used for household appliances also contain those that can be reused as parts or materials.

Thus, it was decided that for certain home appliances, components and materials that can still be used will be recycled to reduce waste and effectively use resources.

As a result, it is necessary to pay a recycling fee to dispose of the following.

- A/C units
- TVs (cathode-ray tubes, LCD/plasma)
- Refrigerators/freezers
- Washing machines/dryers

(1) If replacing an old product with a new one

Have the store where you are buying the new product take away your old home appliance. As the collection method varies for every store, inquire with the store for details.

(2) If you are not replacing and simply getting rid of your old appliance

Ask the store where you purchased the appliance you want to discard to take away your appliance. If you do not know where you purchased the product, you can dispose of it through a method proposed by your municipality. As the collection method is different for each municipality, please inquire with the one in which you live.

1-3 Unlawful dumping, etc.

In Japan, it is prohibited to throw away waste without due cause anywhere other than in designated locations, regardless of where you may be, and you may be fined for doing so. Throw away trash by following the rules established by your municipality.

Even on garbage collection days, do not take out any garbage other than the type(s) specified and do not place garbage anywhere other than the specification locations, otherwise they will not be collected.

In many municipalities, there is also a “littering” ordinance that prohibits you from littering empty cans or cigarette butts in the street. Do not litter, as you may be fined.

2 Community Organizations (Neighborhood Councils/Community Associations)

In Japan, local residents voluntarily form and run organizations with the objective of developing a town where the residents can live easily and with peace of mind. The costs required to run such organizations are borne voluntarily by member residents.

Through various activities, community organizations promote mutual friendship and exchanges while holding discussions and cooperating with each other; there are also expectations for such organizations to ensure safety and peace of mind for children and the elderly.

As examples of activities, there are disaster prevention activities such as disaster prevention training, watching children on the way to and from school, welfare activities for the elderly and disabled, activities such as local cultural activities and sports activities, and circulation of notices from the ward office, etc.

3 Services Necessary to Lead a Daily Life

3-1 Electricity

(1) Starting electricity service

When you arrive in Japan and start living in a new residence or move to a separate residence, it is necessary to request electricity service from the electricity company. When the date on which you will start using electricity is decided, please contact the electricity company as soon as possible.

On the day that you will be turning on electricity service, you should be able to start using electricity by turning on the breaker switch. Depending on your contract and the facilities at your residence, however, it may be necessary for someone from the electricity company to visit. In such a case, you will be informed by the electricity company.

(2) Electricity charges

Depending on the electricity company, there are different electricity cost options that you can choose, depending on the lifestyle of the electricity user. Choose a contract that matches your own lifestyle. Fundamentally, electricity charges are determined based on the amount of electricity used, but there is also a monthly flat fee regardless of how much electricity you use. This is called the “basic fee”.

The amount of electricity that you use is checked once a month by an employee from the electricity company, who inspects the electricity meter installed at each residence. Then, a notice is sent every month to people who use electricity in the form of “Electricity Service Statement”.

Methods for paying your electricity bill include automatic deduction from your bank account, payment at a convenience store or bank, credit card payment, etc.

(3) Discontinuing electricity service

If you are going to move and need to discontinue your electricity, contact the electricity company as soon as possible once your move-out date is decided.

On the date that you are going to discontinue electricity, it is fundamentally not necessary for the person who was using the electricity to be present; however, if it is not possible for the employee from the electricity company to check the electricity meter from the outside, you will need to be present. In this case, you will be informed by the electricity company.

3-2 Gas

(1) Types of gas

There are several types of gas that can be used at general residences depending on components and combustion characteristics. Examples include 13A town gas and LP gas.

Select the appropriate gas appliances to be used in your home depending on your gas type.

When gas appliances that do not correspond to the gas type are used, it is dangerous, as fires or incomplete combustion may occur.

(2) Starting gas service

Once the date that you want to start gas service is decided, request gas use from a gas retailer or an LP gas sales company in your residential area.

An employee from the gas company will pay you a visit on your service start date, inspect the facilities, start gas service, and teach you how to use gas appliances.

(3) Gas charges

The gas retailer in your residential area will have available different gas charge options depending on your lifestyle.

Fundamentally, gas charges are calculated and billed every month, based on the total of the basic fees, which is a fixed amount, and the commodity charge, which increases or decreases depending on your gas usage amount.

Methods for paying your gas bill include automatic deduction from your bank account, payment at a convenience store or bank, credit card payment, etc.

The details of your gas contract can be confirmed on documents given to you by the contractor before or after concluding the agreement.

(4) Discontinuing gas service

If discontinuing gas service due to a move, etc., contact the gas company beforehand.

You can request discontinuation of gas service on the Internet or by phone. When doing so, prepare the meter reading slip that is sent to you every month and tell the gas company your "Customer Number" to make the entire process smooth.

On the final day of gas service, an employee will stop your gas meter. If the employee cannot access your gas meter, the gas customer or an agent must be present.

3-3 Water

(1) Using water

When starting water service due to a move, etc., it is necessary to request the Waterworks Bureau of your municipality or the department in charge of water to start water service.

(2) Water charges

Based on regulations by your municipality, water charges are billed by your municipality upon checking the water usage amount on your meter.

Water charges are a total of the basic fee and the fee that is based on your usage amount.

The basic fee is determined based on the diameter of your water meter and is not related to how much water you use. As you are also charged depending on how much water you use, you will be charged more if you use more water.

Methods for paying your water bill fundamentally include automatic deduction from your bank account, payment at a convenience store or bank, credit card payment, etc.

3-4 Opening a Bank Account

You can open a bank account by directly visiting a bank. For some banks, it is also possible to carry out these procedures by postal mail, smartphone app, or on the internet.

If you are accompanied by an interpreter when opening a bank account, the interpreter may be required to be available for continuous support, such as someone related to your workplace or school.

In order to open a bank account, you will need an original photo identity verification document issued by a public agency (residence card, My Number card, passport, or driver's license) to verify your name, address and birthdate, as well as your seal.

* Passports and driver's licenses are limited to those that show your address.

* Some banks allow you to use a signature instead of a seal.

When opening a bank account, you can carry out the procedure for issue of a cash card. Normally, however, the cash card will be mailed to your residence at a later date.

Sale or transfer of a bank account (cash card, bankbook) is a crime, with a penalty of imprisonment for up to 1 year, or fine of up to 1 million yen. When you are going to return to your home country and no longer need to use your bank account, carry out bank account closure procedures at your bank beforehand.

3-5 Mobile Phones

(1) Mobile phone contracts

When making a mobile phone contract, you are required to show a document that indicates your name, birthdate and address or to submit a copy by mail or through the Website to confirm your identity. For this, you can use your residence card, driver's license, My Number card, etc.

*Passports and driver's licenses are limited to those that show your address.

If a minor is to make a contract, a document that confirms the identity of the minor, an agreement form from the parent or guardian, and a document that confirms the identity of the parent or guardian are required.

To pay for your mobile phone charges, you need a credit card, cash card or bankbook for a Japanese bank account, etc.

Depending on the mobile phone company, foreign language support may be available on the homepage, via telephone or at a store. If you have questions related to services or need to check the documents required for making a contract beforehand, please use these resources.

(2) What to keep in mind when signing an agreement or using a mobile phone service

There are malicious brokers who may approach you, saying that they will sign a mobile phone agreement on your behalf. They will use your identity verification documents to make a mobile phone contract for themselves without your permission, so that they can commit a crime. Therefore, when requesting someone else to sign an agreement, make sure to verify the contents of the agreement yourself.

In addition, transferring a mobile phone under contract to a third party without obtaining approval from the mobile phone company will be punished as a breach of law.

3-6 Post offices

The symbol for post offices and postboxes in Japan is a red “〒” sign.

At post offices, services such as banking and insurance are also available in addition to sending postal mail within Japan and to foreign countries. You can also conduct bank transfers and remit payment for public utility charges, enroll in life insurance, etc.

4 Public Transportation

4-1 Rail

In Japan, there is a robust railway network made up of the *shinkansen* (bullet train), JR, private railways, subways, streetcars, etc. As a result, by using the railway system, you can safely arrive at your destination relatively fast. When riding a train, check your destination on the route map, purchase a ticket for your destination, and pass through the ticket gate. If you have an IC card for a transportation system, you do not have to buy a ticket. Simply hold your IC card over the IC card reader to pass through the ticket gate.

Depending on the train that you ride, it may be necessary to separately pay an express fare, reserved seat fare or green fare, in addition to the normal ticket fare.

One Point



Types of train tickets

Ordinary train ticket: Ticket that is required when riding a train. The tickets that you can purchase using a ticket vending machine are fundamentally for distances up to 100 km. If your destination is more than 100 km away, purchase your ticket from a station staff member at the counter.

Train fares are determined based on the distance.

Round-trip ticket : You can purchase tickets for going to and returning from your destination as a set. A 10% discount will be applied to round-trip tickets for distances of 601 km or more.

Reserved seat ticket : When you purchase a reserved seat ticket, you will be able to sit in a pre-determined seat. Purchase by paying a separate fee on top of your ordinary train ticket. Reserved seat tickets indicate the date of travel, train name and seat number. It is not valid on any trains other than the one that is specified.

Limited express ticket/

express ticket: Purchase by paying a separate fee from the train ticket. You will use this ticket together with the train ticket. Necessary when riding a limited express train or express train.

Green car ticket : It is necessary to purchase a green car ticket when riding in the green car of a train. It is normal to use this ticket together with an ordinary train ticket and limited express ticket/express ticket.

Commuter pass : Used when repeatedly traveling between a given interval for a specific period of time for commuting to/from work or school. Prices are set at a discount compared to when purchasing ordinary train tickets for the same interval. You can purchase a new commuter pass up to 14 days in advance of when you will start using the pass. You may also be able to purchase one using a ticket vending machine.

4-2 Bus

There are two types of buses in Japan—one that fundamentally travels for long distances (long-distance bus) and one that travels set routes within a local area (fixed-route bus).

When riding a long-distance bus, it is necessary to pay first, such as by purchasing a bus ticket before getting on the bus.

Fares for fixed-route buses may be the same fare regardless of where you get off, or they may be different depending on the distance you travel. If the fare is the same regardless of where you get off the bus, place money inside the fare box when you get on the bus, or if paying using an IC card for transportation systems, hold the card over the fare box and pay before getting on.

If the fare changes depending on your distance, take a numbered ticket when you get on the bus. When you leave the bus, check the number written on your ticket with the board located above the bus driver, and pay the fare indicated underneath your number.

5 Manners and Customs in Daily Life

In daily life and work situations, rules, customs and manners in your home country may be different from those in Japan. This may be rooted in the different cultures and traditions in each country and region, but there may be times when even the same gesture or action has a different meaning.

Not understanding such differences may cause hindrances to human relationships and communication. Understanding others' cultural backgrounds and customs is important when living in a foreign country.

5-1 Words

For people learning the Japanese language, Japanese characters may be one of the things of great interest. There are 4 types of characters in Japanese—*hiragana*, *katakana*, *kanji* characters, and Roman characters. The basics of learning Japanese characters start with being able to write and express the 50 sounds in *hiragana* and *katakana*.

Although there are some difficult *kanji* characters, start learning those that you see frequently, as they are convenient to remember. In addition, Roman characters are often used when typing documents on computers, such as e-mails, and thus they are convenient to learn.

When living in Japan, it is very important to learn the names (pronunciation and *kanji* characters) of locations and roads in the area where you live. In addition, there are many words that are specific to regions in Japan (regional dialects), and these are also important for living in the region. It is recommended that you learn such words through your local Japanese language classes or through exchanges with locals.

There are also honorifics in the Japanese language. By learning the differences among the honorific language, humble language and polite language, and using these languages, you will be able to have skillful exchanges of words.

5-2 Associating with neighbors

Recently, due to the growth of nuclear families, an increase in the number of people living in apartment buildings or condominiums and the importance of privacy, relationships with neighbors have become sparse.

However, associating with neighbors, such as by exchanging greetings on a regular basis, makes it more difficult for problems to arise among neighbors, and it also allows for exchange of information, such as what to look out for in the area. Also, when a disaster, etc., occurs, it is possible to help each other out.

As it is important to communicate with your neighbors regularly, make efforts to actively participate in local events, etc.

5-3 Baths

Generally, in Japanese households, the bath area consists of a bathtub and a washing area. Families fill the bathtub with hot water and take a bath.

It is customary for the hot water in a bathtub to be kept in the bathtub until all family members have finished taking a bath. If there is someone after you who will be taking a bath, do not drain the hot water from the bathtub after you have taken a bath.

When using a public bath that is used by the general public, wash your body first before entering the bathtub. Do not use towels inside the bathtub. You must also not use soap or shampoo to wash your body or hair inside the bathtub.

5-4 Toilets

When using a flushing toilet in Japan, make sure to flush used toilet paper.

Although there are some countries where it is customary to throw away used toilet paper in a garbage bin near the toilet, used toilet paper rarely clogs flushing toilets in Japan. Do not discard used toilet paper in the garbage bin; flush it down the toilet instead. Make sure, however, to use the toilet paper that is provided next to the toilet.

5-5 Using mobile phones and smartphones

You may not operate your mobile phone or smartphone while walking, or while riding a bicycle. Doing so may cause you to bump into other passersby and cause injury to them, or you may hurt and injure yourself.

Talking on your mobile phone on the train or bus is a breach of etiquette in Japan.

5-6 Noise

The Japanese have the awareness that loud noises and voices are a nuisance to others. When it comes to loud voices, parties, and TV and radio sounds, make sure that you are not causing a nuisance to your neighbors.

5-7 Crime prevention

In daily life, be careful not to become the victim of a crime, such as theft. When going outside, make sure to lock your windows and doors. When parking vehicles, motorcycles and bicycles, make sure to lock them as well.

For inquiries and concerns regarding crime prevention, consult with your nearest police department.