

JET Program Tips for Parents

How Can I Keep in Contact With My Child?

1. Parents should not be alarmed if their child does not call them the day they arrive in Japan. Jet lag, time differences, unfamiliar phone systems, the excitement of arriving, and many other things interfere with remembering to call home. In our experience, no news is almost always good news. Remember that you can track your child's flight on the airline's website and verify that it has landed in Tokyo.
2. To call Japan from the United States, you must first dial 011-81 and then drop the first "0" if present in the phone number. When calling, don't forget that there is a 16-hour time difference with Japan in summer and a 17-hour time difference in winter (US PST), as Japan does not practice daylight savings time. Japan is ahead of the United States.
 - ① Check with your **long distance phone service carrier** to determine the best rate plan for calling Japan. New JETs will also obtain information on cheap ways of calling home during the orientation provided in Tokyo.
 - ② You can also try **Internet calling**, which enables you to call Japan for free.
 - ③ You can also have **phone calls come in to your regular phone over the Internet**, which allows for unlimited long distance from such companies as Vonage.
 - ④ You can also buy **pre-paid international calling cards**, which allow you to call Japan for as little as 2 cents per minute.
3. Many JETs are able to communicate with their parents via email, but email may not be available in some rural locations in Japan.
4. Make sure to get the contact information for your son or daughter's host institution before he or she leaves. Discuss how you will handle any family emergencies that may arise while your son or daughter is out of the country. It is best to have a plan in place on how you can contact your son or daughter and how they can contact you in the event of an emergency.

What about Healthcare/Insurance Coverage in Japan?

All JETs participants are covered under four types of insurance:

1. National Health Insurance
2. Pension Insurance
3. JET Accident Insurance
4. Employment Insurance

All JET participants are required to be covered by Japanese insurance policies. All non-regular government employees (i.e. JET participants), regardless of nationality, are required by law to be insured under both the National (Government) Health Insurance System and Pension Insurance policies. The premium for National Health Insurance and Pension Insurance is approximately 70,000 yen per month, in total. The JET participant pays half and the Contracting Organization pays the other half.

Please note that:

- None of the insurance policies stated above covers personal belongings, even in circumstances of natural disaster
- When medical benefits are provided by the national government or local authorities under the Communicative Diseases and Medical Care Law, benefits will be limited or adjusted accordingly.
- Repatriation costs are not covered

Benefits for the Insured Under National Health Insurance:

- 70% of medical expenses are covered for illness and injuries.
- In the event of injury or sickness due to non-occupational causes, the insured person is entitled to medical services with presentation of the insurance card at any insurance medical care facility,

or the medical institutions which conduct the social insurance medical examinations in accordance with a contractual agreement with the insurer. The insured person pays 30% of the medical care cost as partial cost-sharing.

Medical Care benefits INCLUDE:

- Medical examination
- Provision of medicines or medical care supplies
- Emergency treatment, surgery and other medical treatment (including dental treatment)
- In-home medical care
- Hospitalization and nursing

Medical Care benefits DO NOT INCLUDE:

- Preventative medicine
- Physical check-ups
- Cosmetic surgery
- Dental check-ups or cleaning
- Eye exams and eyewear
- (Normal) pregnancy exams

JET Program Accident Insurance Policy (Overseas Travel Accident Insurance):

The JET Accident Insurance Policy covers treatment of illness and injury in Japan for the portion of costs not covered by the National Health Insurance System. Claims can also be made in the event that the JET participant dies or sustains residual disability. It does not cover medical treatment for pre-existing conditions and treatment which began prior to arrival in Japan, or treatment received overseas for an illness or injury sustained in Japan. The JET Accident Insurance Policy is a policy that CLAIR contracts with insurance companies on behalf of all JET participants. Consequently, the contents of the policy are identical for all JET participants, and there is no need for enrollment. The insurance premiums are paid entirely by the Contracting Organization. As this insurance policy is for group coverage, no changes or additions can be made to the insurance coverage.

Period of Coverage:

For new participants, the policy is valid from either two days before your arrival in Japan, or the date on which you leave your home to come to Japan, whichever is later. The date of termination of the contract will be the earlier of the following two dates:

1. The date the JET participant returns to their home country (=the country of which you are a national or any other country in which you have a place of abode), after completing their JET Programme contract, or
2. On August 31 of the following year.

Exclusions:

The following costs are NOT covered by the JET Accident Insurance Policy (this is not exclusive):

1. Medical treatment not recognized by National Health Insurance
2. Loss or damage to personal belongings and household effects
3. Treatment for illnesses or injuries to family members
4. Treatment for pre-existing conditions; illnesses or injuries which began before arrival in Japan (including conditions such as asthma and diabetes)
5. Treatment received overseas for an illness or injury sustained in Japan
6. Dental treatment (cavities, gum disease, etc.)
7. Non-prescribed medicine(s)

8. Treatment received 180 days after an illness or accident injury
9. Liability involving or arising from the use of automobiles
10. Treatment for injuries sustained in an accident when driving under the influence of alcohol or without a valid driver's license

All JETs should have a general physical, gynecological (women) and dental exam prior to departure. All necessary or routine medical and dental care should be completed prior to departure.

What are the customs rules and regulations?

A guide to Japanese customs is available online at: www.customs.go.jp/zeikan/pamphlet/tsukan_e.pdf. Please read it carefully before packing.

Basically you are *exempt* from paying importation duties on the following items:

1. Clothes, toiletries, and other personal effects for your personal use, as well as portable professional equipment that you will use during your stay in Japan, are all free of duties and/or taxes, if they are considered quantitatively appropriate and are not for sale.
2. Three (760 cc) bottles of alcohol
3. 400 cigarettes
4. 2 oz perfume
5. Any other items totally less than ¥200,000.
6. There is no limit on the total amount of money and other means of payment that may be brought into or taken out of Japan.

The following articles are *prohibited* from entry by law:

1. Opium, cannabis, hallucinogenic mushrooms, and other narcotic drugs and utensils for opium smoking; stimulants (including Vicks inhalers and Sudafed); psychotropic substances (excluding those designated by Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare Ordinance);
2. Firearms (pistols, rifles, machine guns, etc.), ammunition (bullets) thereof, and of pistol parts;
3. Explosives (dynamite, gunpowder, etc)
4. Precursor materials for chemical weapons
5. Counterfeit, altered, or imitation coins, paper money, bank notes, or securities, and forged credit cards.
6. Books, drawings, carvings, and any other articles which may harm public safety or morals (obscene or immoral materials, e. g., pornography);
7. Child pornography
8. Articles which infringe upon rights protected by patent, utility model, design, trademark, copyright, neighboring right, layout design of integrated circuits, or plant breeders' right

The following articles are *restricted* from entry by law:

1. Plants and animals must be presented to the plant or animal quarantine officer for quarantine inspection prior to Customs examination.
2. There is a quantity restriction on the import of medicine and cosmetics etc for personal use. (e.g., Internal medicine: amount required for a period of 2 months(as a general rule) ; External medicine : 24 pieces or less per one item ; Cosmetics: 24 pieces or less per one item) However, those which may cause health damage are restricted regardless of their quantity.
3. No person shall bring hunting guns, air guns, swords, etc. into Japan without a permit to possess.

Additional information is available at www.customs.go.jp/english/index.htm. You should also read the US Customs pamphlet, "Know Before You Go," at www.customs.gov/xp/cgov/travel/vacation/kbyg which details restrictions and regulations for bringing goods back into the US.

Importing Medication to Japan

Please note that you are **prohibited** from bringing the following medicinal products into Japan:

- Sudafed® and Vicks® brand inhalers (if they contain l-desoxyephedrine), and other stimulants including amphetamine, methamphetamine, and any product containing more than 10% pseudophedrine
- Psychotropic substances (e.g. Ritalin and Ativan): prohibited unless it contains 1.8 g or less of methylphenidate; in that case, 1 month supply is acceptable without permission
- Syringes/Narcotics: prohibited except with advance permission from the Ministry of Health

You are **allowed** to bring into Japan up to the following amounts of:

- Prescription medicines: 1 month supply
- Non-prescribed medicines: 2 month supply
- Vitamins: 4 month supply
- Cosmetics & quasi-drugs: 24 pieces (quasi-drugs include hair dye, permanent waving agents, bath preparations, disinfectant agents for contact lenses, cotton products for sanitary usage, etc.
- Asthma inhalers except Vicks 24 units or 1 month supply
- Medical devices for home use: 1 set
- Contact lenses: 1 spare pair or 2 months supply disposable lenses

If you wish to bring syringes, narcotics, or more than the above amounts, you must apply to receive a permission certificate (*yakkan shomei*) from the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labor & Welfare. The Consulate has details.

Remind your child not to forget to:

- Register with the U.S. Department of State at www.travel.state.gov.
- Make a photocopy of the first page of his/her passport and a photocopy of his/her visa and leave it with you in case of loss/theft
- Give you his/her credit card numbers and phone numbers to call if cards are lost or stolen
- Tell you the contact information for hotel in Tokyo and host institution in case of emergencies
- Request an absentee ballot if they plan to vote. Details available at www.fvap.gov
- File income taxes
- Pay monthly credit card bills

What about sending packages overseas?

- Surface mail (by boat) can take up to eight weeks or, in some cases, longer.
- Airmail packages move more quickly but are considerably more expensive.
- Post office or parcel service personnel can provide information on rates, suggested packing techniques, time for delivery, etc.
- Ask about labeling packages for passage through Customs, and make sure your return address is on the package.
- If the contents are valuable, you may want to insure them.

Safety Tips

Japan is considered to be one of the safest countries in the world. However, this does not mean that it is impossible for anything to happen. Therefore, all JETs should practice common sense and follow these guidelines:

- Know where you are going. Do your homework before traveling: read guidebooks, look at maps, check with local staff, etc.
- Do not flaunt wallets, purses, cell phones or cameras.
- Avoid unlit places and walking alone. Stick to well-traveled streets and walk in groups at night. Be especially cautious when you are new to a city and know little about what parts of town may be less safe.

Safety Suggestions for Women:

- Follow the example of Japanese women in terms of culturally appropriate dress and demeanor.
- Trust your instincts. If you do not feel safe in a situation or someone's behavior is making you uncomfortable, get out of the situation immediately.
- Travel in groups of at least two, especially when you are unfamiliar with a city or town.
- Lock hotel rooms when traveling.
- Always lock your apartment door, even when you are home.
- Walk with purpose and avoid eye contact with strangers.
- Firmly say "no" to any invitation you do not want and turn away. Ignore persistent overtures.
- Do not drink alcohol in excess

How will I ever be able to say good-bye?

There is no right or wrong way to say goodbye to your child. Some parents find it a relatively easy step, while for others, it is quite difficult. Some look forward to it, while others dread it. Some laugh, while others cry. Parents whose children have already been away for extended periods may find the good-byes easier than those parents who have seldom been separated from their children for more than a day or two. Parents and students have sometimes reported that the last few days or even weeks prior to the child's departure were difficult times that strained the parent/child relationship. It is not uncommon that each party begins to feel angry with the other, leading to harsh words and hurt feelings. People often think subconsciously that it will somehow be easier to say good-bye at the airport if everyone is angry. ("Boy, am I glad she is going. She has been impossible to live with recently!") Remember that as nervous as you may be, it is your child who is taking a very big and important step in life and needs your support.

Should lots of friends go to the airport?

Since the good-bye between family members may be a very emotional time for all, it is often best if the good-byes between your child and his or her friends take place on the day before he or she says good-bye to you at the airport. Of course, this is ultimately a matter of individual family discretion.

Visiting Your Son/Daughter in Japan

- Try to visit during school breaks because it will be easier for your son/daughter to take time off during these breaks
- Certain times of the year are cheaper to visit Japan, so shop around for various dates
- In general, spring and fall are ideal for visiting Japan because of the weather
- Visitors to Japan should be aware of the peak times of the year for booking travel and accommodation reservations, which are: (1) Year-end and during New Year holidays — December 27 to January 4 and adjacent weekends; (2) "Golden Week" holiday season — April 29 to May 5 and adjacent weekends; and (3) Obon festival season — the week centering on August 15. Travel in Japan during these time periods is very expensive and crowded, and therefore best avoided.
- It is advisable to get travel insurance before you go
- Visas are not required for American citizens traveling to Japan for 90 days or less for tourism. Please check www.portland.us.emb-japan.go.jp/en/index.html for information on other nationalities or for any changes to this policy before you go to Japan.

Additional Japan Travel Information:

- Japan National Tourist Organization www.jnto.go.jp
- Tokyo Tourism Info www.tourism.metro.tokyo.jp
- Japan Rail Pass www.japanrailpass.net
- Japanese Inn Group www.jpinn.com
- Visit Japan Campaign www.jnto.go.jp

How Can I Help My Child Deal With Culture Shock?

It is helpful to be familiar with culture shock and the effect it may have on your child. As a parent, it is difficult to maintain a level of emotional distance to your child's ups and downs. However, part of the experience of living abroad is overcoming the challenges associated with living in a foreign country. Most children rise to new levels of independence. It is important for parents to avoid the temptation to become too involved.

Phases of culture shock:

1. **Preliminary stage:** This phase includes awareness of the host culture, preparation for the journey, farewell activities.
2. **Initial euphoria:** The initial euphoria phase begins with the arrival in the new country and ends when this excitement wears off.
3. **Irritability:** During the irritability phase your child will be acclimating to your setting. This will produce frustration because of the difficulty in coping with the elementary aspects of everyday life when things still appear so foreign to him/her. Sometimes insignificant difficulties can seem like major problems. In most cases, your son or daughter won't want you to solve the problems, just to listen and be a sympathetic audience.
4. **Gradual adjustment:** When your child becomes more used to the new culture, he/she will slip into the gradual adjustment stage. The culture will become familiar to him/her.
5. **Adaptation and biculturalism:** Eventually your child will develop the ability to function in the new culture. His/her sense of "foreignness" diminishes significantly. Your son or daughter should try to establish routines that incorporate both the difficult and enjoyable tasks of the day or week, treat himself to an occasional indulgence such as a American magazine or newspaper, a favorite meal or beverage, or a long talk with other Americans experiencing the same challenges. This is the time when those care packages from Mom are needed!
6. **Re-entry phase:** The re-entry phase occurs when your son or daughter returns to the U.S. For some, this can be the most painful phase of all. He or she will be excited about sharing his or her experiences, and will realize that he or she has changed, although he or she may not be able to explain how.

How Can I Stay Informed?

- www.state.gov/travel - State Dept info on traveling and living abroad
- tokyo.usembassy.gov - United States Embassy in Tokyo
- www.portland.us.emb-japan.go.jp/en/index.html - Consulate General of Japan in Portland

Important Contact Information

- Consulate General of Japan in Portland JET Program Coordinator Matt Turner: 503-221-1811 ext. 14; matthew@cgjpdx.org
- CLAIR (Organization that manages JET Program): 011-81-3-3591-5489; jet@clair.or.jp
- United States Embassy in Tokyo: 011-81-3-3224-5000