

Advice to the New JET teacher

To do:

- Bring *omiyage* for the teachers you will work with and sit near. Bring **food**, not things. Ask your predecessor for the list of people to bring things for.
- Bring *omiyage* for the office(事務)! They'll be helping you throughout your entire time in Japan.
- Be proactive. If something is not right, speak up. If you are confused, ask for help.
- Be active. If you can, ask to help or see what you can do.
- Join *souji* if possible. Find a teacher you are close with and ask if you can do *souji* with them. This will give you a good chance to talk with students outside of the classroom without pressure.
- Don't be afraid to make mistakes.
- Try to generally follow the same rules as the students. If the students can't wear scarves (in the classroom) in the winter, neither should you. If the students can't use their phones during class, neither should you (unless it's part of the lesson).
- Ask questions to your predecessor. He/She is a huge resource.
- Communicate! If you're feeling overworked/underworked/etc. tell the JTE or supervisor assigned to you and figure out how to make things better.
- Study Japanese! You can ask coworkers for help, but make sure you're not taking up too much of their time.
- Be observant. If everyone is leaving the office, ask what's up and see if you should attend the meeting/ceremony/event too.
- Ask your supervisor to tell you which days are "suit days" or "sports clothes days" (Graduation, Opening Ceremony, Sports Day, etc.) Ask what "suit days" means. For Graduation, that may mean a black suit and white shirt, or more casual and any suit/color is okay. And check that your sports clothes are appropriate. Short shorts and tank tops are probably frowned upon.

Not to do:

- Don't assume that every school in your area follows the same rules. Each school is unique.
- If you speak Japanese, be careful how much you use with the students. Using too much (or when you first meet the new students) may tell the students that it is okay to speak Japanese to you, though your job is to teach English. You can practice your Japanese with the other teachers in your staffroom and other friends you make.
- Don't assume that just because it's this way in America it should be the same in Japan. There will be many times that you don't understand the Japanese system and that's okay, just be patient.
- Don't procrastinate! If only you are affected by the procrastination, that's fine, but you're team-teaching, that means you must have meetings and things done in advance. Make sure you're not doing everything the day before, every time. Of course, sometimes it can't be helped but try to do things as soon as possible. Japanese teachers are busy and often can't meet at the drop of a hat so be proactive about meetings and getting things done.

- Gossip...News travels fast in staff rooms. Just know that if you tell one thing (or it's overheard...your coworkers know more English than they let on) it will move around the office very quickly.
- Don't brag about your time off. You get more chances to take time off than 99% of your coworkers. You shouldn't feel guilty for taking it, but bragging about your fun weekend while everyone else was at school for sports or tests is not the best and won't lead to friends very quickly.
- Don't talk about your salary, unless you're explicitly asked, and still be careful. You make more money than some of your coworkers, though you work less. Just be conscious of this.
- Don't use Facebook or play on your phone all day. Try not to do personal things while at school (ie plan trips).
- Don't take time off if it interferes with your classes. If you must miss a day with classes, talk to teachers well in advance and figure out what you should do.