

WORKSHOP #1 Before you Leave: Preparation for Japan (June 9, 2026)

Questions & Answers in the Presentation Chat

Visa Application

What are your office hours for visa application and passport drop-offs?

From Grace (JET Program Office):

Dropoff is generally possible between 9:30 AM - 12:30 PM and 2:00 PM - 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday. But please reach out to our office to get your visa application drop off confirmed. However, please note that we are also closed on June 19th for Juneteenth.

Upgrade-related Items

How long after being upgraded from alternate to shortlist does it typically take to hear about placement? I was wondering because the placement information is required before I can submit the visa application.

From Grace (JET Program Office):

For recently upgraded JETs, it can take a few weeks for placements to be determined, but our office sends them to you as soon as we receive your placement from our head office. If you have recently been upgraded, you are on a different visa application deadline timeline, so you may not be assigned the same June 26th deadline. In short: If you do get your placement in the next week or two, the June 26th deadline may still be applicable, but if it comes later, an alternate submission deadline will be determined for you.

Flight Itinerary and Information: Upgrading

I have a question about potentially upgrading flights. I am bringing my violin as my carry on and am worried about not having overhead space and being forced to check it in. Would it be possible to upgrade to be in an earlier boarding group? Thanks

I am a particularly tall person and having extra leg room would make the journey much more comfortable. Should we reach out to CLAIR or NTA about this?

From Grace (JET Program Office)

This will be a question for NTA, Nippon Travel Agency. You can reach out to the email that sent you the questionnaire :)

Tokyo Orientation

Will Group A JET departees be in Tokyo during the same time as us in Group B?

From Grace (JET Program Office): They will not, they arrive in Japan a week earlier and have their Tokyo Orientation a week earlier as well.

Contracting Organization Communications

What level of English do High School Supervisors usually have?

From Grace (JET Program Office):

Supervisors usually have pretty good English! As for the other English teachers, the older English teachers I worked with generally had pretty good English but the recent college graduates never used English with me.

For registering contact information, my contracting organization hasn't contacted me yet. Is it alright if I was only able to put my email as of right now?

I also have not yet heard back from my contracting organization. I know every situation is different, but is there a rough timeline I should expect to hear from them by?

From Grace (JET Program Office):

Since it's only been about a week and a half since they have been allowed to contact you, I would not worry! It's not uncommon to hear later and sometimes not hear very much. For registering your contact information through CLAIR's questionnaire in the meantime, if you are employed by a town or city's board of education, you can look up their phone number and building address through a quick online search.

Phone and Data

With regard to telecommunications, will network-based messaging and calls work? I am thinking specifically of WhatsApp, Discord, and others like them, as opposed to airtime calls?

From Grace (JET Program Office): You can definitely still use WhatsApp, Discord, Messenger etc. just on Wi-Fi or data with a Japanese data plan on your phone.

Can I keep my American mobile phone number while I am in Japan?

All answers from fellow 2026 DC Cohort members:

You can store your number in Google Voice or use a number parking service like number barn, but they are paid

Call your carrier directly to see if they can save your number. T-Mobile will park your number I think. I believe that's what my wife did, paying a small amount a month

I was a Peace Corps Volunteer in South Africa. For us, we swapped over our phones, and I was able to call my carrier (Verizon) and have them hold it.

Clothing / Packing for Japan

What should we do about suit jackets? When I've gone to Japan I've brought a suit in a separate clothing bag, together with a carry-on and personal item, and been fine on the plane. How should we handle this also considering the bus restrictions? Thanks!

From Grace (JET Program Office): Unfortunately, I think a clothing bag may be considered as an additional personal item of baggage on the bus.

From fellow DC Cohort member: If you are looking for ways to safely transport your suit for Post-Arrival Orientation in Tokyo, look for garment bags for suits! Brooks Brothers has a great one that folds nicely, or Amazon. Any formalwear store should have options as well

I am an ALT that was placed at an elementary school and I learned that my co-teachers do not wear formal attire and that clothing will differ from ALTs working at junior high schools and high schools. Any ideas of what I should pack?

From Grace (JET Program Office): I'd google "トラックスーツ先生" for visual examples! But still arrive in formal attire and start off formal before going more casual. We will also talk more about shoes and attire in a later DC Workshop on Daily Life as an ALT!

Where can I buy clothes in Japan, especially when it comes to getting work clothes for cheap?

From Grace (JET Program Office): Devon mentioned a bit earlier about Japanese discount and resale stores like Second Street (thrift store) and Book-off. In Japan, these stores had a lot of good picks for work clothing.

Omiyage Ideas

From Grace (JET Program Office):

If anyone has any ideas on what they'll be bringing to Japan as omiyage or souvenirs, please feel free to share. (You can steal each other's ideas!)

From fellow DC Cohort members:

- I'm definitely bringing Trader Joe's bags (from Delaware)
- Trader Joe's brand snacks work as well as bags :)
- Considering See's candies!
- I'm considering individually sized Virginia peanut packets
- I may bring Mexican candies, I have to watch out for their spice tolerance!

Self-Introduction Lessons

Question: For the PowerPoint (and for other lessons in general), will we need to use Microsoft applications, or will others be fine as well?

From Grace (JET Program Office):

You can always use Google Slides, I was also given a work tablet that had all Microsoft applications on it. People also use things like Canva!

Japanese Home / Apartment Life

Where to buy cheap home items?

From a fellow DC Cohort member: Absolutely go to Daiso and 3COINS.

Will we have both washers and dryers in our apartments?

From Grace (JET Program Office): Japanese apartments almost never have dryers, most people air dry. Your apartment will most likely have a washer, and certainly a place to put one.

Should I be worried about electricity or gas for my future apartment?

From Grace (JET Program Office): I have never had a problem with electricity! I knew a JET that once had their electric turned off because their supervisor didn't give them the correct information about how to pay the bills, but that situation was quickly resolved.

From a fellow DC Cohort member: Apartments often don't come with a gas range for cooking. But your predecessor may sell it to you or leave it for you if you're inheriting an apartment. Also, standard baking ovens don't come with Japanese apartments either. You may have a very small fish oven attached to your stove.

Bringing Money to Japan

Should I bring cash with me to Japan? Or can I just pull out the money I need from the ATM?

From Grace (JET Program Office): I brought about \$2,000 in cash, but the ATM was very easy to use. Regardless, bringing some cash is a good idea as Japan is very cash-based.

From fellow DC Cohort member: At 7-11 most debit cards will work, if it's a larger bank. I actually never bring cash, I take cash out at 7-11 AND I have Suica on my iPhone. You can charge up Suica which is an IC card, basically a transit card that works to buy many other things