

III-7 Daily Life

1. Manners for Living in Japan

Adapting to Japanese Society

The observance of Japanese manners and customs, as well as an understanding of the Japanese way of living will make things easier when living here. It is recommended that you gain an understanding of these little by little.

- When you have an appointment with others, you should keep to the time agreed. If you might be late or need to cancel, you should make contact in advance.
- Japanese people bow in many situations by bending over and lowering their head.
- It is rude to ask personal questions (regarding occupation, income, family matters etc.) if you are not very close to the person you are speaking with.
- When making a request emphatically demanding or being overly self-assertive may offend people.

Communicating with neighbors

(1) Greetings

It is important to occasionally communicate with people in your neighborhood. Your regular greetings will help facilitate subsequent communication. In addition to this, it is also said that exchanging greetings with each other can be effective in preventing crimes in the area.

(2) Noise complaint

In urban areas, there may be some people who are particularly sensitive to daily noises. They may not even tolerate the noise of children. You should be particularly careful if living in communal housing such as an apartment building. Generally, please refrain from making noises audible to your neighbors after 10pm. Some people work nights, and therefore spend daytime hours at home sleeping.

The structure of wooden buildings often found in Japan may transmit sound relatively easily. Therefore even small noises you unintentionally cause can annoy your neighbors even though you believe you are being quiet. In particular, take special care and avoid using vacuum cleaners or washing machines late at night. When possible, avoid closing and opening doors with noise – especially late at night/very early morning.

If you are bothered by loud noises and live in communal housing, it is suggested that you consult with the real estate agent with whom you have made a contract. If your residence is not a communal one, it is recommended to consult with a board member of the neighborhood committee or a fellow neighbor.

(3) Neighborhood Committee (Town Community Association)

In your local area, a local community association may hold autonomous activities in an effort to promote ties among neighbors, clean up public areas and prevent crimes. Participation in such activities and registering for the neighborhood committee is completely voluntary. However, if you become a member, you can easily obtain information about the administration of your local municipality, and your membership will be appreciated by your neighbors. Thus it can be beneficial to you. Furthermore, if you and your neighbors get acquainted with each other, it can be useful for crime prevention, so please join in these activities as much as possible.

(4) Information circulation in the community

After you join the neighborhood association, you will receive a circular notice board (“Kairanban”). The typical circular notice board contains a leaflet notice from the municipality office, which is bound to a clipboard. After you read the circular notice brought by your neighbor, please affix your hanko (personal seal) or signature on it and pass it on to the next household. If you’re unsure of whom to pass it to after you, it is probably best to ask the person who gave it to you.

(5) Cleanup activities

Some communities in towns or apartment buildings have set a day as cleanup day, where residents join a cleanup activity in public areas near their house, roads, nearby parks or other

places. On these days, at least one member from each household is expected to participate in cleaning or weeding activities. You are advised not to miss participation in such cleaning events since it is a good opportunity to improve ties with your neighbors, and get to know more about those who you rarely see on a daily basis for reasons such as differences in working hours.

2. Consumer Affairs

Nowadays, consumers are purchasing products and services as well as signing agreements online, and not only at actual shops. Either way, when you subscribe to a mobile phone or Internet service, buy a car on loan, sign an agreement for a property transaction and so on, you are entering a legal contract as a consumer. Due to different business customs and language barriers, you may face trouble when buying a product or signing a contract. In such cases, you can receive information and advice from a nearby consumer center. Consumer centers are consumer advocate bodies that offer free information and advice about products and services.

URL http://www.kokusen.go.jp/map/ncac_map27.html