

APARTMENT SEARCH GUIDEBOOK



This is a guidebook for those who are planning to start a new life in Japan. It contains basic information regarding searching for an apartment. You will for sure need such information in your search for your new home.

First, let's look at the procedure of searching and moving into an apartment by consulting the content in this guidebook. We hope you will find an apartment which meets your needs and you can enjoy your life here in Japan!

Tokyo Real Estate Companies Association of Japan

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Available in the following four languages

Japanese

English

Chinese

Korean

Finding an apartment and moving in

Procedures of renting an apartment

Japan's lease contracts are very unique and most likely are very different from lease contracts in your own country, so we recommend that you get a good understanding of Japan's apartment rental system before searching for an apartment.

2



Visit a local real estate agent and talk to the representative

Check the listings and find an apartment which meets your needs.

4



Reserve an apartment by filling in a "moving-in application."

An application fee and/or a cosigner for the application might be required. Please check in advance.

6



Moving-in procedure

Receive the keys to your apartment and confirm the usage rules.

Move in

Move your luggage into your new apartment.

1



Organize your needs

Create a checklist (p3).

3



Viewing the room

Find an apartment you like and view it

5



Sign an agreement

Sign a contract and pay the necessary fees such as deposit, key money, agency fee, property insurance, one month's rent and a common service charge.

7



To proceed smoothly, an apartment search checklist will come in handy. This checklist should include information regarding your desired conditions and basic information. If you cannot speak Japanese we recommend that you consult with a friend who can speak the language.

Occupation	☐ Company employee	☐ Self employed	☐ Student	☐ Other
Japanese fluency	☐ Fluent	☐ Daily conversation level	☐ Cannot speak	
Japanese reading level	☐ Can read	☐ Can read Japanese hiragana and katakana	☐ Cannot read	
Friends who can speak Japanese	☐ I have such friends	☐ I do not have such friends		

① Desired moving in date	From	YY	MM	DD
② Planned renting duration	Year(s)			
③ Desired rental fee	From	Yen To		Yen
④ Desired area	Near station			
	Within a () minute walk to the station			
⑤ Desired category of building	☐ Apartment ☐ Condominium ☐ House			
⑥ Desired size of apartment	More than () m ²			
⑦ Room layout	☐ One room ☐ 1K ☐ 1DK ☐ 1LDK ☐ 2LDK ☐ Others			
⑧ Desired type of apartment	☐ Western style ☐ Japanese style ☐ Either is fine			
⑨ Desired toilet	☐ Western style ☐ Japanese style ☐ Either is fine			
⑩ Desired bath and shower	☐ Apartment that has a bath ☐ Apartment that does not have a bath			
	☐ Shower only is fine			
⑪ Air conditioner	☐ Apartment that has an air conditioner ☐ Apartment that does not have an air conditioner			
⑫ Parking lot	☐ An apartment that has a parking lot ☐ An apartment that does not have a parking lot			
⑬ Bicycle parking	☐ An apartment that has bicycle parking ☐ An apartment that does not have bicycle parking			
⑭ Other requirements				
⑮ Roommate	Number of roommates () ☐ Family ☐ Friend ☐ Others			
⑯ Guarantor	☐ I have a guarantor ☐ I do not have a guarantor ☐ I want to use a guarantor company			

03

Q&A regarding finding an ideal apartment

Finding an apartment 1



How can I find an apartment?

A. Ask at a real estate office located near the area where you want to move to.

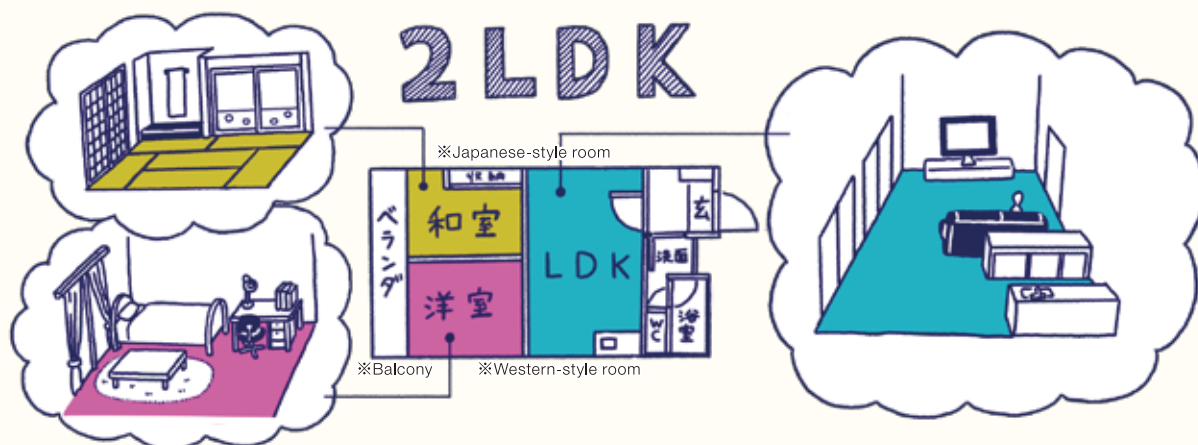
Visit a real estate office located in the area where you want move to after organizing your desired conditions. It is recommended that your visit this office with a friend who can speak Japanese. View the rooms which you are interested in.



Is there a way to check the floor plans? Is there something unique about apartment floor plans in Japan?

A1. Apartment rooms can be divided into Japanese-style rooms with tatami floors and Western-style rooms with flooring or carpet.

In addition, the floor plans are noted with letters and numbers, for example “2LDK”. The letter “L” indicates living room, the letter “D” indicates dining room and the letter “K” indicates kitchen. “DK” indicates a room which has a dining room adjoined to a kitchen. “LDK” indicates a room which includes a living room along with a dining room and a kitchen. Try to understand the floor plans of the rooms and consider whether this layout matches with your lifestyle.



A2. Apartments and condominiums are different.

“Apartment” in general indicates a not so many storied collective housing unit made with materials such as light-gauge steel. “Condominium” indicates a collective housing unit made with reinforced concrete.

A3. Learn about the room size unit used to talk about apartments and property

Room size is stated as “Jou” or “Tubo” in addition to __m² in Japan. “Jou” indicates a single tatami which is about 180cm × 90cm in size. “Tubo” is used when representing the size of a tract of land. One tubo is about 3.3m².

Finding an apartment 2



When viewing an apartment, what things should you look out for?

A. Check the facilities, both inside and outside as well as the surrounding environment.

Order of priority (For example, storage space, facilities inside and outside, sunlight, bearing, duration of sunshine, distance to the closest station and user-friendliness) differs according to the person. Don't forget to check the surrounding environment in addition to the inside and outside of the apartment!



Things you should take with you when viewing an apartment

Layout

Don't forget to take the documents given to you by the real estate agent. Confirm that the condition of the apartment matches the contents of the document.

Map*

Check the conditions of the surrounding area using the map of the area.

Tape measure

A tape measure will be useful in order to decide the layout of your furniture and consider space for your electrical appliances. Check whether your furniture and electrical appliances will fit in the room you are viewing.

Stop watch*

A stop watch is useful to check the time needed to walk from the nearest station to the apartment you are viewing.

Camera*

Take photos of the apartment rooms and the surrounding environment so that you can compare it with other apartments later on.

Checklist and something to write with

Take a notepad so you can take notes and avoid becoming confused when viewing several apartments.

* smart phones can also be used.

Signing the contract



What should I prepare before signing a contract?

A. Prepare identification and the necessary fees

After completing the application to rent an apartment, you will be screened after which you can move into your new apartment. You will need a guarantor to cosign your documents. If you don't have a guarantor, you can choose to use a rental guarantee service provided by a rental guarantee company. Please ask the personal of the real estate office regarding details.

Documents and fees that you will need when signing a contract

Check!

Documents needed when signing a contract	Residence card Special permanent residence card Passport Certificate of annual income School certificate Guarantor's certificate of annual income and seal registration certificate
Fees needed when signing a contract	Deposit money, key money, intermediary fee, non-life insurance premium, first month's rent, public fee (such as administrative fee). Four to seven months worth of monthly rent is a rough estimate of the amount needed upfront when moving into a new apartment. However, the fees differ depending on the area. Fees can be paid by cash or bank transfer.



What should I be aware of when signing a contract

A. Do not sign the contract until you have a good understanding of the important matters.

It is important to confirm important matters before signing a contract. Ask a friend who can speak Japanese to come along with you and sign the contract after you thoroughly understand the content. First of all, confirm whether the contract is a normal rental contract or a fixed term rental contract and also confirm if a renewal fee is required at the time of renewal if the contract is a normal rental contract. Before moving into your new apartment, do not forget to check the conditions of the wear-and-tear fees so as to avoid troubles when leaving your apartment.

Procedures for moving in



What should I do when moving into the apartment?

A1. Receive your apartment key

First, receive your apartment key. Do not lose the key because it has to be returned to the landlord in the event that you cancel the contract.

A2. Check the condition of the apartment in the presence of the landlord.

Check for scratches and stains on the wall and floor and make a list so it can be used as a document when the apartment is restored to its original state. An operation check of all equipment and instruments installed in the apartment is also important.

A3. Application for electricity, gas and water services is necessary

Ask the person in charge at the real estate agency for contact information regarding electricity, gas and water services. You might have to apply for electricity, gas and water services in advance. With regards to gas service, call the gas company in advance and ask them to begin servicing gas.

A4. Confirmation of the apartment's communication environment, connecting a fixed-line phone and Internet service.

It is necessary to confirm the communication environment beforehand since such environments differ according to each apartment. As well as confirming the connection procedures of a fixed-line phone, the Internet and television, make arrangements such as calling the phone company or provider so as to carry out the address registration.



Is there any habitual practice in Japan that I should be aware of when moving in to a new apartment?

A. Communication with neighbors.

In Japan, it is normal to say hello to the neighbors (neighbors on both sides of your apartment and apartments above and below you) when one moves into a new apartment. In some locations neighborhood association and residents' association are hold events and meetings. It is recommended to check out such events and meetings.



Rules while living in the apartment ①



How should I pay my rent and public fees?

A. Your rent and public fees should be paid based on the designated method confirmed when the contract was made.

Rent and public fees have to be paid based on the rules designated (by cash or bank transfer) by a fixed deadline. Please note that a letter of warning will be sent to you and your contract might be canceled if you do not pay your rent by the fixed deadline.



What things do I need to be careful about while I reside in my apartment?

A1. Confirm the banned matters before using the apartment.

Indoor conditions change because there are four seasons in Japan. Keep your apartment clean and tidy especially during the rainy season and the hot and humid summer so as to keep your apartment from becoming moldy. Please confirm beforehand whether it is allowed to drive a nail into or color the walls since most rental apartments in Japan prohibit such actions. Also, living with somebody else or renting your apartment out to somebody else without getting permission from the landlord is a breach of contract.

A2. Extra care should be taken for rooms in your apartment in which water is used, such as the bathroom, the toilet and the kitchen.

Turn on the vent when cooking so that strong smells and smoke will not be left behind in your apartment. Do not dump cooking oil or garbage into the sink because the drain pipes might become clogged. Also, do not wash hair down the drain in the sink or the bathtub. Do not try to flush things other than toilet paper in the toilet.

A3. Use shared space and the balcony with caution.

Putting garbage or personal belongings in shared space such as hallways and stairs is prohibited because hallways and stairs are used as evacuation routes in the case of an emergency. Storing stuff on your balcony is also banned since many balconies have emergency exits.

A4. Loud noises late at night may bother your neighbors

Be careful not to make loud noises late at night and in the early morning hours as such noises may bother your neighbors. Noises are easily transmitted to nearby rooms in collective apartment units. For instance, sounds from loud conversations, music, vacuum cleaners and washing machines, noises from footsteps, door noises, and noises made when taking a bath might bother your neighbors.



※Stomp! Stomp!

Rules while living in the apartment ②



Please tell me about important manners and rules

A1. Observe the rules when disposing of your garbage.

Rules for garbage disposal differ by area. Please confirm the designated ways of separating your garbage, and the time and place of garbage collection with your real estate agent, neighbors, administrative institution in your area and trash-collecting companies. Your garbage will not be collected if you don't follow the rules and this might cause troubles with your neighbors. Please be careful.



A2. Entering your apartment with your shoes on is prohibited.

In Japanese houses, it is normal to take off your shoes before entering.

A3. Bicycles and cars must be parked in designated parking lots.

Bicycles must be parked in a bicycle-parking lot. Furthermore, it is often necessary to rent a parking lot for a car.



Is having a pet allowed?

A. Having a pet without getting permission is not allowed.

Confirm about pets with the person in charge since having a pet is not allowed in most apartments in Japan. Having a pet without getting permission is considered a breach in the contract.

Procedures when leaving the apartment



What should I do when I want to move out?

A1. A notice of termination should be submitted one or two months prior to moving out.

You must follow the content of the contract document in which it states that you must submit a termination notice to the landlord or the person in charge at the real estate office to notify them that you will terminate your contract one to two months prior to moving out.

A2. Cancel your contract for electricity, gas and water services

Inform each contracted company that you will leave the current apartment, one week before your actual move-out date. Terminate your contract for electricity, gas and water services on the day that you move out and have them adjust the fees.

A3. Telephone and Internet cancellation procedures and the changing of your postal address

With regards to a fixed-line phone, cell phone and the Internet, call each company and tell them that you want move. As for changing your postal address, please go to your nearest post office and complete and submit a postal address change document. All letters to you will be redirected to your new address for a designated period of time.



Is there anything that I should be aware of when I evacuate my apartment?

A1. Pack and confirm the amount of all of your belongings.

If there are things you want to throw away and if those things are considered to be over-sized garbage you will have to make arrangements ahead of time.

If you have oversize garbage, call the contact personal of your local administrative office and confirm how you should discard of such garbage. Consider the date of your moving out and arrange a pick-up date for this over-sized garbage.

A2. Confirm the wear and tear of your apartment. It is necessary to restore your apartment to its original state.

After removing all your belongings and things from your apartment, throw out all garbage and clean up your apartment. Confirm that your apartment is restored to its original state. Confirm the scratches and stains on the walls with the landlord and confirm what the wear and tear fees will add up to. Finally, return your apartment key(s) and evacuate your apartment.



Who is responsible for paying the wear and tear fees?

A. The wear and tear fee will be subtracted from the deposit you paid when you entered your apartment.

Restore work will be done by the landlord. The necessary fee will be subtracted from the deposit and the remaining amount will be returned to you. Depending on how much the wear and tear fee comes to, in some cases you will have to pay the shortfall.

Real estate glossary

All technical terms in this pamphlet are listed below in this glossary

Real estate office

An office that intermediates between the landlord and the person looking for an apartment. They also provide purchase/selling services of real estate. Real estate experts work here.

Guarantor

A person who agrees to make payment instead of the person who rented an apartment in case when the rent and/or the wear and tear costs cannot be paid. This person must be financially stable and have an income of over a certain amount.

Application fee

Money you deposit with the real estate agent when you want to reserve an apartment.

The money will be returned if the contract is not signed.

Deposit money

Money kept by the landlord in the case that rent or the wear or tear fee cannot be paid. Often this will be two-months worth of rent. The fee will be adjusted when leaving the apartment and the remaining deposit will be returned.

Intermediary fee

Money that will be paid to the real estate agent as a charge for services rendered. The intermediary fee has to be below one month's rent. This fee is also call the real estate agent fee.

Non-life insurance premium

Taking out non-life insurance is required in general as a provision for fire disaster and water leaks. Non-life insurance premium is a fee which will be needed in such cases.

Rent

Monthly rent which has to be paid in order to rent a room. It is normal to pay the upcoming month's rent by the end of the previous month in Japan. The rent will be calculated "by day" when one is moving in or moving out in the middle of the month.

Public fee

Fee which will be needed to maintain/repair the public spaces such as the entrance, hallway or elevator in your apartment building. In Japan, a public fee is generally paid in addition to the rent. Generally, public fee payment is made once a month just like rent.

Roommate

A person who lives in the same apartment. You need to let the landlord know that you wish to live with your friend in the same apartment. If you do not get permission beforehand, in some cases you will be asked to leave your apartment.

Rental guarantee company

Companies which guarantee payment in the case that you, the tenant, cannot pay the landlord. When using such a company, you will need to pay a certain guarantee fee. Such a fee must be paid upfront for your two year contract. The fee is usually between 35%~50% of one month's rent. However, the company will take a tab later on since it is not an insurance company.

Normal rental contract

General rental contract in Japan. Landlords cannot cancel such a contract unless there is a good reason. the contract will be renewed if the agreement cannot ba made.

Fixed term rental contract

A rental contract which will be canceled conclusively when the fixed term is over. Renewing such a contract is possible if the tenant and the landlord agree.

Confirming important manners

The real estate agent will explain in detail to the tenant about the contract conditions and the situation of each apartment building and services. A document explaining important matters will be given to the tenant.

Deposit money subtraction

At the time of termination of the contract a wear and tear fee will be subtracted from the deposit money and the balance will be returned. However, in this system it is agreed that a certain amount will not be returned regardless of the total repair and wear and tear fee.

This system is often used in the Tokai, Kansai and Kyusyu areas.

Renewal charge

The contract term for renting an apartment is 2 years in general and a renewal charge must be paid to the landlord by the tenant when renewing a contract. This charge is decided by a special agreement.

Repairing

In the case where you break or deface your apartment intentionally, by fault or by not feing cautious enough, the apartment must be repaired to its original state. The fee needed in such a case is called "repairing fee" and it will be deducted from your deposit when evacuating your apartment.

Notice of termination

A notice of termination must be submitted to the landlord or the real estate agent in the case that you plan to leave your apartment in the middle of the contract period.

Preparations for emergencies and disasters you should know about

Case

1

Earthquakes

Four important preparations

① Things you should prepare

Food and commodities are essential when a disaster occurs. Other than stocking emergency goods in your home you should prepare a bag filled with emergency goods so if need be you can take such commodities with you in an evacuation. Keep this bag somewhere near the entrance of your apartment.

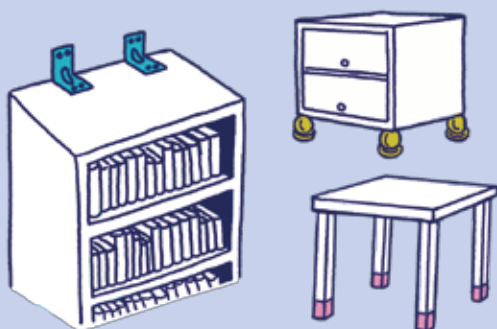
Things you should put inside this “emergency bag” (examples)



Flashlight • Portable radio • Helmet •
Accident prevention hood •
Cotton work-gloves • Blanket •
Battery/Private electric charger •
Lighter • Candle • Food • Instant noodles •
Can opener • Knife • Clothes • Cash •
Emergency set • Bank passbook •
Personal seal • Valuable items (such as
passport or residence card) •
Large size plastic bags

② Preparations inside your apartment

30~50% of injuries are caused by furniture falling over dropping of obstacles when earthquakes occur. Layout your furniture so that you won't be pinned down. It is also necessary to stabilize furniture. Check each piece of furniture.



③ Confirming information

Confirming how dangerous your region is, is also important. First, obtain a hazard map created by your local city or town office so as to reduce damages caused by disasters and learn about disaster-prevention measures. Check damage-anticipated areas, area for fire evacuation and evacuation routes.

Disaster message dial “171” offered by NTT

A dial up message board service is offered by NTT so that persons can leave a message here and notify relatives and friends of your whereabouts and your present condition.

Disaster message board

A service offered by cellphone companies. Registering and confirming information about the well-being of family or friends using cellphones and smart phones is possible.

Accident prevention application for smart phones

Confirm various applications which can be used in a time of disaster such as Internet radio, disaster-prevention prompt report, local information application.

Disaster-prevention information provided by each autonomy (Tokyo-version)

Tokyo disaster-prevention twitter/ Tokyo disaster prevention home page / Tokyo disaster prevention map

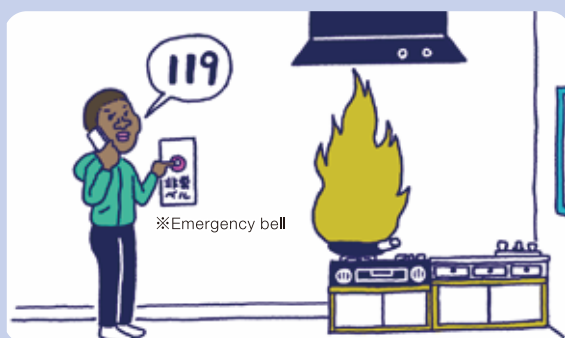
④ Preparation for communication

It is also important to discuss in your family about what to do if a disaster occurs. You should confirm how you will get in contact with each other and where is the nearest evacuation site. Also, we recommend that you greet your neighbors on a daily basis and participate in any disaster drills held in your community.

So as to avoid panic one needs to always be prepared for disasters such as earthquakes, fires, blackouts and water leakages.

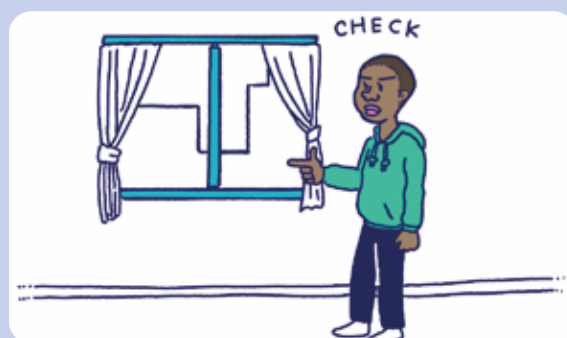
Case 2 Fire

In the case of a fire inside your apartment follow the following steps; 1.call the police, 2.call the fire department, 3.evacuate your apartment. Let your neighbors know that a fire has occurred by shouting or pressing the emergency bell and call 119. Although a small fire can be extinguished manually, evacuate immediately if the flames reach the ceiling. To prevent the fire from spreading, shut the windows and doors of the room where the fire is so as to shut off the air.



Case 3 Black out

When you experience a sudden power failure, first confirm whether this blackout, is just your own apartment or is affecting your apartment building or your neighborhood. Check whether the breaker in your apartment has shut down or not. If it is shut down, unplug some electric appliances in use and turn on the breaker switch. If the electricity of other apartments and houses is also shut down, confirm what is the situation on the web site of your electricity power company.



Case 4 Gas leakage

When you smell gas, ventilate your apartment by opening doors and windows and turn off the gas at the main valve. Don't use fire or electricity and call the gas company. There are cases where gas appliances malfunction because of an earthquake, Gas appliances can be restored sometimes by pressing the restoring button located on the gas meter. First, call the gas company.



Case 5 Water leakage

Water leakage can be caused by rain infiltration or drainage problems and occurs in places where large amounts of water are used such as in the toilet, bathroom and the room where your washing machine is installed. Confirm that water is discharging smoothly.



Supportive information

The following are groups and associations which provided information for foreigners who are planning to live in Japan. Find your ideal apartment by consulting with the "foreign resident consultation service" run by your local government office.

Information about places where foreigners can reside

Council of Local Authorities for International Relations

Multi-language every day information web site
<http://www.clair.or.jp/tagengo/>

Non-profit organization Kanagawa Housing Support Center for Foreigners

TEL 045-228-1752
<http://www.sumasen.com>

Information regarding foreign students and scholarship students.

Japan Educational Exchanges and Services

TEL 03-5454-5275
<http://www.jees.or.jp>

Chiba International Center

TEL 043-297-0245
<http://www.mcic.or.jp>

Handy memo

Write the contact information for the following places below so that in time of need you can contact these offices immediately.

	TEL number	Remarks column
Real estate office		
Electric company		
Waterworks department		
Gas company		
Post office		
Administrative institution		
Cleansing department		
Telephone company		
Cellphone company		
Provider		
Others		