

Host Family Handbook



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JAPANESE CULTURE AND PEOPLE

Japan is located off the east coast of Asia and is at approximately the same latitude as the United States. Its total area is 147,000 square miles; it is composed of four main islands, Okkaido, Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu, and more than 3,300 smaller islands. Most of the country consists of hills and mountains, a number of which are active volcanoes. Japan's unstable geological position beside the Pacific Ocean depths accounts for the numerous earthquakes felt throughout the islands.

Temperatures on the southern island of Kyushu are subtropical, similar to northern Florida. The northern island of Hokkaido has a cooler temperature similar to that of southern Maine. The climate of most of Japan is dominated by the Asiatic monsoon, which brings a pronounced summer rainy season (most intense in early July) and mild, sunny winters. Rainfall throughout the country is more than 40 inches per year and greatly in excess of this amount in certain areas.

Japan has an estimated population of over 126 million and has exhibited a phenomenal rate of growth during the past 100 years as a result of scientific, industrial, and sociological changes. This is the equivalent of almost half the population of the United States living on only four percent of the land area. Japan is the third most densely populated country in the world. Close to one-half of the total population is concentrated in three major metropolitan areas: Tokyo, the capital and second largest city in the world, Osaka, and Nagoya.

The general attitude toward religion is humanistic. Most Japanese practice a combination of Buddhism and Shinto. Meditation, ancestor worship, ritual cleansing, and a respect for nature's beauty and man's part in it are traditionally emphasized. Christianity has between one million to two million baptized adherents, including a relatively high percentage of important persons in educational and public affairs, which gives them an influence far beyond their small numbers.

The Japanese educational system is based on free public schooling for all children through 6 years of elementary school and 3 years of junior high school. Most students go on to a 3-year senior high school, and those able to pass the stiff entrance examinations enter the 4-year universities or 2-year junior colleges. Japan's literacy rate has been at 99 % for many years.

The family is still the foundation of Japanese society and is bound together by a strong sense of obligation and duty. The current trend is away from the traditional large, multi-generation families, but many aged parents still live with their married children.

The Japanese diet consists largely of rice, fresh vegetables, seafood, and fruits. Although rice and Japanese tea are part of almost every meal, many people enjoy breakfast and lunch in Western style (toast and coffee, etc.). Sashimi (uncooked fish) and sukiyaki (sliced meat and vegetables) are popular Japanese dishes.

HOST FAMILY/STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Host Family:

- * Provide room and board for student during the home stay period.
- * Provide daily transportation to and from activities (carpooling may be possible)
- * Participate in orientation meeting and farewell party.
- * Provide a stable environment conducive to international understanding.

Student:

- * Provide complete insurance coverage.
- * Provide his/her own spending money.
- * Agree to abide by the rules of the host family.

Cultural Gateways, Inc.:

- * Overall program management as outlined in the itinerary.
- * Act as liaison between host family and the Japanese school and/or agency.

A TYPICAL DAY

8:00 a.m.	Breakfast with host families.
8:30-9:00 a.m.	Students travel to academic center via host family car or car pool. An opportunity to make car pool arrangements is provided during the host family orientation prior to the group's arrival.
9:00-12:00 noon	English classes.
12:00-1:00 p.m.	Students have lunch at their leisure at academic center (usually a sack lunch provided by the host family).
1:00-5:00 p.m.	Field trip to local points of educational, cultural, or recreational interests. Sometimes, sports and games will be organized on the academic campus.
5:30 p.m.	Families pick up students at academic center.
6:00 p.m.	Dinner with host families.
7:00 p.m.	Students enjoy free time with their host families.

HOST FAMILY ORIENTATION

Host families are required to be present at the orientation meeting – about two weeks prior to the beginning of the program. At that time, families will meet the CGI staff and receive specific information about the program. Also, families will have the opportunity to meet one another and, perhaps, choose to arrange carpooling.

SAYONARA PARTY

A Sayonara (farewell) party will be held one of the last nights of the students' homestay. The students usually have a number of presentations, often including such things as songs, dances, Japanese tea ceremony, origami, Japanese games, and sometimes foods for tasting for their host families. Occasionally, the American staff may also take part in this program as well. Attendance by host families is mandatory.

MEETING YOUR STUDENT

Japanese students and host families anxiously look forward to the time they first meet one another. For the students, their apprehension often gives way to tears of joy and happiness at being welcomed by their host families. At first, most of them will be fearful of talking, embarrassed by their limited English speaking abilities. Within a short time, however, the students become more at ease and are eager to share about themselves and life in Japan.

Sometimes host families and students have communicated with one another (through letters or emails) prior to their arrival in America. It is always interesting for us, as staff, to watch students and families try to “pick one another out” of the crowd based on photos, exchanged signs being held up or curious American children guessing which is “their” student.

It is **EXTREMELY IMPORTANT** for host families to arrive at the designated meeting place **ON TIME!** Though emergencies can happen, it does put everyone in a difficult situation. The Japanese student thinks the worst - - her family has forgotten, or maybe they've just changed their minds and can't host, etc. Your Japanese student will take it very personally if his/ her name is called, and the host family is not there. So please make every effort to be prompt.

Prior to meeting your student, you will be given an envelope with your per diem check, current program schedule, copies of updated informational materials that might have changed since the orientation, and brief reminders of your responsibilities while the students are with you. If you have a problem either delivering or picking up your student at the designated location, let the Program Director know at this time. We will help you make alternate plans for those times/days in advance.

Remember that we are just a phone call away! If you experience ANY problems or situations not easily resolved, call us. Most of all, **HAVE FUN!**

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HELPFUL HINTS FOR HOST FAMILIES

THE BATHROOM: When taking a bath in Japan, a person lathers up with soap, showers off (the water runs down a drain in the floor) and then steps into a very deep tub of hot water to soak and relax. The room has no other functions, and toilet facilities are usually located outside the bathing area. Your students may prefer using a shower to a bathtub. If they do use the tub, you may hear “the water go on” and the “water go off” for lengthy periods. A gentle reminder that we Americans have a limited supply of hot water may be necessary at this point. In Japan, the hot water is endless since it is constantly heated by gas jets.

SERVING FOOD: The students are here to experience “the real America,” and you should serve the type of food that you normally prepare. They may also be shy about taking a second helping, so pass it to them the first few meals, and soon they will get the idea that they can have a second serving. In Japan, a student often will not accept a second serving of food until offered twice, so make certain you offer them additional servings more than one time. Japanese meals concentrate more on rice, fresh vegetables, and fish than on large quantities of meat. Students are often surprised at the sizable quantities of food that are served here.

BEDTIME: For some families in Japan, it has been the custom not to go to bed until the father does. Let your student know that it is all right to go to bed when he or she is tired. Students may leave a light on in their room while they are sleeping. If you notice that the sheets have not been turned down, it may be because the student is not used to sleeping in a bed between top and bottom sheets. Turn the sheets down yourself and show him/her how to get under the covers. Having an extra blanket available is a good idea.

PHONE CALLS: It is unlikely that students will ask to make overseas calls from your home phone as many will use the internet and some will have an international cell phone or calling cards. In the event that a student does ask to call Japan from your home phone, you should contact the overseas operator and tell them you would like to get the charges when the call is complete. That way, your student can pay you before he/she leaves. Many Japanese schools discourage phone calls between parents and children during the homestay. Some schools have websites whereby parents can logon daily to learn what their children did that day and see pictures their teachers have posted

PRIVATE TIME: Because of the emphasis on academic study in Japan, students are used to retiring to their rooms after dinner instead of interacting with the family. For some of them it is simply a relief from the very taxing process of translating English to Japanese all day long. Others need time to write to their friends or to write in a journal. Allow the student to have this time alone, but do encourage him/her to participate in your evening activities.

LANGUAGE: All the students have studied English to some degree. However, they are usually not accustomed to conversational English. Try to speak to them slowly and simply. If you use an expression, colloquialism, or inside joke, please take time to explain it to your student. Be careful about pronunciation (e.g., do you wanna.....we’re gonna go). If all else fails, write down your question or statement. Your visitor probably has a Japanese/ English dictionary. Remember, even overcoming difficulty in communication can be fun!

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FAMILY SCHEDULES: If you have appointments or commitments away from the home, and it wouldn't be appropriate to take your student, make sure s/he is not left alone or under the supervision of minors. Sometimes events have been planned whereby the family has to find someplace for their student to go for a day, evening or overnight. This is normally not difficult to accommodate if we know ahead of time. Please be certain to inform the CGI staff, so appropriate steps can be taken.

THINGS TO DO WITH YOUR STUDENT

Inexpensive or free activities:

Picnics or barbecues	Tennis, baseball, or frisbee
Roller skating	Berry picking
Ice skating	Make a pie
Bowling	Bake bread
Holiday celebration with another host family	Attend free community concerts or sports events

Share:

Your wedding album	Home movies
Baby books	Family hobbies
Family pictures	Arts/crafts projects you can do together

Visit:

Your church or synagogue	Local college
Flea markets	A disco
Museums	County fair
Local tourist spots	Zoo
Library	Saturday market
Sports games	

Go:

Horseback riding	Sailing or swimming
Shopping at a mall	Golfing
A ballet, symphony, concert	Baseball or football game

It's fun to:

Go to the movies	Walk in the woods
Rent videos	Go camping
Visit the beach	Plan picnics and bike rides
Play games, cards, checkers, scrabble, monopoly, etc.	Go to unknown spots in the city
	Ask your student to cook Japanese food

Most important for the student's learning is to accompany you to:

The supermarket

Your children's activities

Your religious activities

Your weekend activities

Remember, there is no need to overspend on entertainment. It is most desirable to maintain a normal family routine. If you are able to show your student around, feel free to do so. Host families will often assist each other by inviting one or more other students to join them for various outings. Most host families enjoy getting to know more than their own student and are happy to take others along with them.

MEDICAL INFORMATION

Medical emergencies are rare, but they can happen. If a situation should arise that requires a doctor's attention, the host family should be aware of the following information and procedures:

1. All students are fully insured with travelers' insurance. Each student has an insurance card with all pertinent information that they should carry at all times.
2. The host family should contact the Program Director or other Cultural Gateways staff immediately
3. The host family should then take the student to the nearest doctor, hospital, or dentist as needed, and meet a Cultural Gateways staff person there.
4. Under no circumstances, unless it is a life or death situation, should the host family sign any financial statement or release.
5. If the student visits a doctor or dentist and a cash office fee is required, the student is to pay for it, keeping all receipts and papers to turn in to the insurance company.
6. Be sure the student (or family on behalf of the student) retains a copy of any medical and/or insurance form to give to the student's insurance company in Japan.
7. If the student visits a hospital emergency room, the host family member should not have to sign anything or pay any money. The CGI Program Director should be contacted immediately to deal with such issues. The first concern, of course, is for the student.

JAPANESE CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS

While it is not possible (and certainly unfair) to generalize about an entire nation, Japan has evolved in more than 13 centuries as one of the most homogeneous societies in the world. The country was closed to virtually all foreign influence during the years 1638 to 1853. This period of isolation allowed its unique and fascinating culture to emerge.

1. In Japan, people often use hashi (a pair of chopsticks) to eat their food. Most people are also familiar with knives, forks and spoons, and might use them in European style with the fork in the left hand and the knife in the right.
2. In Japan, both hands are sometimes used for eating. Bowls are lifted close to the mouth with the left hand and hashi are held in the right hand.
3. Each item of food is usually placed in a separate dish. Food is often presented in a very colorful and artistic way, designed to please the eye.
4. When eating a bowl of hot noodles or soup, slurping is acceptable and almost expected.
5. Yawning in informal situations, blowing one's nose in public, and eating on the street are considered impolite in Japan.
6. In Japan, people take off their shoes before entering a house.
7. Japanese rooms are usually lit by an overhead light rather than with just lamps.
8. Doors to the rooms in a Japanese home are usually kept closed.
9. In Japan, people generally bathe only in the evening. Bathroom plumbing is quite often different from that in America.
10. It is customary for a guest to bring a gift to their hosts when visiting a home. Never tell them they shouldn't have (brought you a gift). Also, your student will likely bring some small gifts for each person in the home. Make certain the CGI staff knows about all of the people who will be living in or visiting the home while your student is there. We will include this information when we send the Host Family Matching List to Japan.
11. If you give a gift to your Japanese student, it need not be lavish, but in good taste and nicely wrapped. When you meet your student for the first time, you might want to consider bringing a flower, balloon, welcome sign or other small gift to show them how happy you are to have them as your host student.
12. Ladies in Japan sometimes wear silk KIMONOS for special occasions. A cotton YUKATA is a lighter weight summer version of a kimono and is worn by both men and women.

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13. The Japanese family name is always mentioned before the given name. A person has only two names in Japan--family name and given name.
14. Normally the Japanese write from top to bottom, but they do also sometimes write from right to left.
15. A bow is the traditional greeting in Japan.
16. The Japanese put emphasis on “the group” rather than on the individual.
17. Reserve, modesty and harmony are traditionally emphasized virtues in Japan.
18. In Japan, people generally show respect to those who are older than they are. In a group activity, the leadership positions will often be given to the older people in the group.
19. Dogs in Japan do not say “bow-wow”; they say “wan-wan”! It is fun to compare other differences in animal sounds with your student.
20. Japanese students will probably not ask questions because in Japan to ask a question is to risk being considered rude, ignorant or stupid. You will need to encourage your student to ask questions.
21. Japanese show respect by humbling themselves. They may say a gift they have brought for you is nothing, or a meal they have prepared is lacking, but it is for you.
22. Japanese tend to consider body parts and functions very normal and natural. They may surprise you by speaking openly of them.
23. Tell your student what they should call you. Japanese students may find it difficult to call an older person by their first name. Japanese names are often stated last name first, so ask your student which is her family name and which is their first name.
24. Don't be afraid of silences and of long periods of silence during discussions. Silence is a means of buying time or of feeling out the next step. Or, it may be that the students need time to formulate their thoughts in English.

JAPANESE LANGUAGE

We want students to practice and use English. However, you may learn a little Japanese. Here are some words to help:

1. Hai (high): YES; I UNDERSTAND; I'M LISTENING
2. Iie (ee-ay): NO
3. Arigato (ah-ree-gah-toe): THANK YOU
4. Doitashimashite (doy-i-tash-ee-mash-tay): YOU'RE WELCOME
5. Ohayogozaimasu (o-hi-o-go-zi-e-mas): GOOD MORNING (until about 11:00 a.m.)
6. Konnichiwa (ko-knee-chee-wa): HELLO (Good day after about 11:00 a.m.)
7. Wakarimasu Ka? (wah-cah-ree-moss-kah): DO YOU UNDERSTAND
8. Wakarimasu (wah-cah-ree-moss): I DO UNDERSTAND
9. Wakarimasen (wah-cah-ree-moss-sen): I DON'T UNDERSTAND
10. Ikimasho (ee-key-mah-show): LET'S GO
11. Hayaku (hah-yah-koo): HURRY
12. Yookoso (*yo-oh-ko-so*): WELCOME TO OUR HOME
13. (your name) to yonde kudasai ([your name] toe-y'own day kooda sigh): PLEASE CALL ME (your name)
14. Gohan ga dekimashita (go-hawn-ga-deckie-mawshta): DINNER IS READY.
15. Kaimono ni ikimasu (*ky-mo-no-knee-ee-ki-moss*): WE ARE GOING SHOPPING.
16. Kyoo wa doo deshita ka? (k'yo-wa-dough-deshta-ka?): HOW WAS YOUR DAY?
17. Tsukaremashita ka? (tska-ray-mashta-ka?): ARE YOU TIRED?
18. Onaka ga itai desu ka? DO YOU HAVE A STOMACH ACHE? (o-nawka-ga-ee tie-des-ka?)
19. Atama ga itai desuka? DO YOU HAVE A HEAD ACHE? (ah-tawma-ga-itai-desuka?)