

Office Etiquette Guidelines

Reading the air

- A lot of information will be thrown at you. If there's only one thing you remember, remember to take note of your surroundings. You are not expected to become Japanese, but you are expected to be respectful and be cognisant of your new working environment.

Greeting

- If you don't know any Japanese, these are your three life savers:
 - Greeting loudly when you walk into the office: Ohayou gozaimasu; konnichiwa
 - Meeting teachers in the hallway: Greeting or *otsukaresama desu*
You're working hard
 - Leaving in the afternoon: *otsukaresama deshita*; *osaki ni shitsurei shimasu* *otsukaresama deshita* (if you're leaving before everyone)
You worked hard excuse me for leaving before you
- Entering / leaving an office different to your own:
 - Entering: *Shitsurei shimasu*
Excuse me - I'm entering your room
 - Leaving: *Shitsurei shimashita*
Excuse me - I'm leaving your room

Yays

- Being punctual.
- Standing up when someone comes to your desk for business (especially if they're older or a principal/vice principal) because it shows you're giving them your full attention
- Going directly to someone's desk to ask a favor or talk business with them, even if they sit right across from you.
- Crouching down next to someone's chair when you go to their desk to talk (not ideal for the principal's room or vice-principal's desk, though... lol...) because it shows you don't expect them to have to stand up for you i.e you put yourself in a lower social position
- Bringing omiyage from your trips
- Keeping a clean desk/work area
- Parking your car in the spot furthest away from the main door
- Offering to mark tests for teachers because you know they're busy
- Helping with clean up after school ceremonies (graduation/entrance ceremony/sports day/culture festival)
- Cleaning during cleaning time! It's a chance to chat to the students or just clean silently with them.

Nays

- Talking loudly
- Talking loudly when a parent is present
- Talking loudly across the room
- Taking or making personal phone calls in the teacher's room or using the schools' phones
- Leaving unfinished food out on your desk
- Being passive-aggressive
- Bad-talking someone the people present have never met
- Taking up too much space in the fridge
- Making fun of students
- Pointing out all the ways your country is better than Japan

The Office

- **Punctuality**
 - Arriving 5 minutes before your scheduled time is, on time.
 - It is however best to arrive a little before that in case you were not told about a schedule change for that day
 - If you're running late, inform your supervisor. Note that you may have to sign nenkyu for the time you missed
- **Meetings**
 - *Look* alert and attentive even if you don't understand what's being said
 - Fiddling with your cell phone during the meeting is a definite no no...ANYWHERE, not just in Japan
- **Guests**
 - Follow what the other teachers are doing.
 - Generally, standing and greeting is sufficient.
- **Snack basket or snacks on a communal desk or table**
 - If you haven't been offered, ask before you help yourself
 - This is generally where you would place your omiyage as well. It's always best to leave a note with the omiyage. Most teachers would be willing to help you write it.
 - If you're not sure what to do, ask your supervisor.
- **Omiyage (souvenirs) from your trips**
 - Japanese people do this as well, whether they've travelled for business or pleasure
 - The speciality snack of that region is usually best
 - If you can't get snacks; trinkets, little branded notepads or post-its are also options.
 - If you have multiple schools, it can become expensive. Some ALTs buy omiyage for the school where they missed lessons/visits or if they spoke about their holiday.
- **Eating in the office**
 - Eating snacks and your lunch at your desk is acceptable.
 - Eating your breakfast at your desk seems to be frowned upon. It's probably best to have your breakie before you get to work.
- **Contributions**
 - Some schools have a fund that all teachers contribute to either monthly or annually for special occasions or for coffee and tea, others contribute as and when the need arises. Ask your supervisor what generally happens at your school.
 - If your school contributes as the need arises and you would like to contribute, ask your JTE how much teachers are giving. Give the same amount if you can (not more). The principal and vice-principal are likely giving more. There are special envelopes and certain ways of doing it. Ask for help!
- **Leaving the office during the day**
 - Always inform your supervisor and your vice-principal when you leave the office.

General

- **The forgotten soul:** sometimes you're just left alone in the office because someone genuinely forgot to tell you what's happening. Don't take it to heart, just ask what's happening / happened. As time goes on, you'll learn to read the atmosphere and be able to ask before the "event".