

The 職員室

Welcome to your new home, the staff room or 職員室 (shoku in shitsu). Here is where you can hang out at your desk and spend your free periods at school.



While no two schools are the same and some may be more laid back, generally, the 職員室 is a formal office environment and the teachers are all busy. Although this doesn't stop the students from visiting all the time!

The layout of your schools will obviously vary but in most ES, JHS and SHS ...

- Teacher's desks are grouped together by the grade they teach.
- All the important people i.e. the principal, vice principal and school management staff have desks at the front of the room.
- The principal has his own office to chill out in, conduct meetings and greet school visitors.

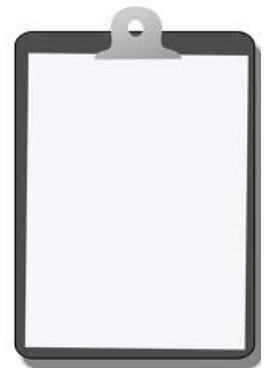


Communication in the 職員室

Internal email is great for communication in the work place... unfortunately no-one seems to use it in Japanese schools. So, how does anyone know what's going on?

The clipboard

This is passed around the office for non-urgent notifications. Put a circle next to your name to say that you've seen it and pass it on. It's not vital that you actually read everything (or anything!) but, if something catches your eye, ask someone.



The board

Has the daily schedule and lists any teachers that are on work trips or absent, changes or cancellations to club activities and cleaning time etc...



Paper, paper, paper...

Mountains of it are handed out at every opportunity with various schedules, surveys and important looking things. Don't panic! Most of these won't apply to you and can be safely ignored or put back for recycling.



But what about me!?



Communication and the ALT

Unfortunately the board, the clipboard and the heaps of paper are all in Japanese. It's a good idea to keep an eye on these even if you can't read them, just to see if anything looks different to normal. But how does the ALT know what's going on? Sometimes they don't! This is mainly because some schools assume the ALT doesn't want/or need to know about schedule changes unless they affect English class. In most cases it's up to the ALT to ask if it seems like there's a special event on. If something escapes your notice, try to go with the flow and not take it personally that the school forgot to tell you!

Need to Know

Kanji for work

Not an extensive list but here are a few of the most common and useful Kanji that you'll encounter at work. Hopefully they'll help a bit!

がっこう
学校

School
Gakkō

ぶかつ
部活

Club activities
Bukatsu

じかんわり
時間割

Timetable
Jikan wari

ねんせい
年生

Year/ grade
Nen sei

こうちょうせんせい
校長先生

Principal
Kōchō sensei

きょうしつ
教室

Classroom
Kyōshitsu

そうじ
掃除

Cleaning
Sōji

じかんめ
時間目

Class period
Jikan me

ねん くみ
~年~組

Grade and class
~nen~kumi

きょうとうせんせい
教頭先生

Vice Principal
Kyōtō sensei

じむしつ
事務室

Office
Jimushitsu

きゅうしょく
給食

School lunch
Kyūshoku

えいご
英語

English (!)
Eigo

2年1組
2nd grade, class 1
Ni nen ichi kumi

きょうむしゅにん
教務主任

Administrative
Manager
Kyōmu shunin

たいいくかん
体育館

Gym
Taikukan

しょくいんかいぎ
職員会議

Staff meeting
Shokuin kaigi

きょうか
教科

Subject
kyōka

がつ
~月~日

Month and date
~gatsu ~ nichi

8月12日

August 12th
Hachi gatsu
Jyūichi nichi



The SHS 職員室

Essentially the SHS 職員室 is not that different from ES or JHS but as students progress into senior high school the pressure of university entrance examinations builds. As such you might find that that the atmosphere in SHS tends to be more serious and a little stricter overall. Luckily, as ALTs we are not expected to conform as much as the other teachers but bear in mind that it may take you a little while to adjust to the office atmosphere.



Saying 'Hi!'

A lot of importance is placed on げんき あいさつ 元気な挨拶 (enthusiastic greetings) at school. Whether your Japanese skills are pretty good or largely non-existent, a loud (ish) greeting and a smile in the 職員室 will get you far.



'Good morning' say this with as much genki as you can muster when you walk in.

Bit of a filler greeting really with no definite translation but it's said a lot at work. Used as a hello and bye, it can be said at any time of day.

'Bye' when you're leaving the staff room for the day.

Other rooms

Thought that was everything? Ah but there's so much more... the shokuinshitsu usually features a few other handy surprise rooms. There may be more than listed here but you'll just have to explore them yourself.



Photocopy room

So much more than the name suggests! You'll find a high speed copy machine for making a lot of copies as well as paper cutters and the laminator. Other handy supplies like glue, coloured paper, sellotape and felt tip pens live here too. If you can't find these, they could be in the school office instead (or your school doesn't have the budget for fancy extras!) You can put paper that's blank on one side here for recycling too.



Changing room

Self explanatory but pretty useful if you need to change into a suit, sportswear or (for the cyclists) out of a wet raincoat at school. Other teachers have lockers here to keep their stuff but ALTs might not. It's usually a small room attached to the staff room and sometimes there's different rooms for males and females so find out first! In my schools it's polite to knock once quickly before walking in.



Kitchen and snack table

This is a good place to hang out as it's where you'll find omiyage and snacks and you can have a chat with any teachers who are having a break. (This is rare but it does happen sometimes!) You can put anything you've brought to share on the table – just write a note to say it's from you. Bring in your own mug for tea or coffee as every teacher has their own and will probably not tell you if you've accidentally been using theirs!

