

“Home is the nicest word there is.”

— Laura Ingalls Wilder

“The ache for home lives in all of us. The safe place where we can go as we are and not be questioned.”

— Maya Angelou, All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes

Making a home

The importance of a home

For most of us, home is where one can relax and recharge, a place we have control over. The psychological importance of having a good one can vary between people, but it is generally a cornerstone in our wellbeing. Whether this is the first time living away from family, living abroad, or just first time living in Kumamoto Prefecture, chances are that you will have to spend some resources getting settled in. A tip is to do yourself a favor and try to make conscious choices from the beginning, whenever it is possible.

What kind of home do you want?

You do you. How would you like your home? What are your needs? Your home might be a place just for sleeping, and the only furniture of importance a comfortable bed. Or it might be a place to get immersed in your hobbies for hours, with a proper workspace. You might be someone who thrives having guests over a lot – in which case a bigger table could be a necessity, or prefer not to have guests over at all. The majority of Japanese families does not have the culture of inviting guests over to one's own home and usually only have a basic set of dishes; one rice bowl/pair of chopsticks/plate/cup/etc. per member. Instead people often go out and eat together at restaurants. This might be your style as well, and that's OK.

Planning ahead and furnishing

If you already know that you're going to leave Japan after one year or some more, or you might just like the idea of not owning almost anything, what can you make without? If you know you want to stay for a long time here, what are some good investments in regards to household appliances and furniture? Though it can be impossible to know, to think about; how long you want to stay, if you will stay in the country after your time on JET or not, what practical belongings you have to own now and what forever things you want to keep - can make a big difference in how you manage your own space and belongings.

When arriving at one's residence here in the prefecture it is pretty much ESID. You might find yourself in an empty shell, a fully furnished home, or anything in between. If you inherit old things – great, you have a starting base. If not, you might have to start spending time and money straight away but it's in your hands. What is your most pressing need, and what is a priority? To furnish freely and make the perfect home is not always practical or possible, but one can try to work with what one has and can acquire.

The importance of knowing your address

Life will be easier if you can say and write your address in Japanese by heart. You will have to state and write it more times than what seems reasonable, and it is of great importance that you get it correct on all of the different kinds of contracts, documents, forms, etc. that you get handed to you. In the beginning it can be smart to carry a card or a note with your address written in kanji, hiragana, romaji and English in your wallet and/or phone.

Getting and getting rid of stuff

It can be a lot cheaper, easier, and less wasteful to utilize second hand platforms to acquire and dispose of belongings, than to buy new and throw away. Places where one can buy/sell/donate include Facebook groups and pages, LINE-chats, flea markets, second hand stores, friends, etc. But sometimes you want to buy somethings new and unused. When dealing with most furniture stores, shipping is available for a small cost. It can take from days to weeks to get the items home, and often one has to be present to accept the packages, but it can be worth it if you don't have a car – or if the items are too large for your cute kei-wagon. Many stores also offer online shopping, which can be really convenient.

If the items you want to get rid of is in unsellable condition, and you'd rather not even donate them, it's time to throw them away. The trash handling system is different in every town, so make sure to look up your areas procedures; through the town webpage, the local newspaper, your BoE, your neighbors or the information put on the cages for burnable. It is important to follow the trash rules, so it's better to ask one time too many. If you're in need for a big dump, and you're lucky, your town has a bigger garbage station to where you can drive your car for weigh-ins and weigh-outs and pay per kilogram trash disposed. Otherwise most areas have a collection system wherein one can buy a sticker to put on big things to pay for garbage truck pick-up service.

Problems

There is an infinite amount of problems that could arise regarding one's living situation.

- If you get pests, like ants, termites, etc. talk to your BoE and/or your landlord. You might have to pay for extermination services if needed. Try to detect pests early, and save yourself some headache.
- Neighbor problems is as frequent in Japan as back home; a difference can be the passive aggressive way of dealing with it that many Japanese has. To invest in relations early can give good pay out later, often in forms of small gifts, friendly help and an extra dose of patience toward basic mistakes.
- If you suspect the existence of a stalker, or have been a victim of a crime, immediately contact your PA, BoE and the police. Even **if** nothing comes of it, people can become more attentive and might be able to prevent future crimes.
- Kumamoto is humid, especially so during the rain period, and mold is a natural part of life. Keep on top of it and use whatever drying methods that you prefer – be it moisture collectors, dehumidifiers, AC, airing, or something else.
- If worst comes to worst, a natural disaster could destroy or inflict damage on your home. Is the apartment insured? Who would be liable if anything happens? Talk with your BoE and/or landlord to figure it out instead of having to find out too late.
- Complaints are normal to get via a third party instead of directly. Keep in mind that this can be to save face for both parties, and not necessary with bad intent.
- Etc.