

Chapter 3 Housing



Saitama's Prefectural Mascot
Kobaton

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1 Private Housing

When looking for a place to rent, you should consult a real estate agent in the area in which you want to live. Once you have decided where you want to live, you will sign a lease contract with the landlord. An understanding of Japanese customs is essential to ensure that your move goes as smoothly as possible.

A Guide to Rental Housing and Rules for Living in Japan
(Saitama Prefectural Government International Division website: In Japanese, English, Chinese, Portuguese, and Spanish)

URL: <http://www.pref.saitama.lg.jp/a0306/tabunkakyousei/sumaisupport.html>

(1) Information on Private Housing

Rent and Management Fee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ① Rent is paid monthly in advance. ② A management or common service fee for common facilities used with other tenants, such as a cleaning service and shared lighting, is added to the rent.
Size of House and Rooms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ① The size of a house is indicated by the total floor space, including not only living areas, but also the toilet, bathroom and kitchen. It is usually measured in square meters (e.g. 30m²). ② The size of each room is indicated by the number of tatami mats that can be laid on the floor. One <i>jo</i> (tatami mat) is about 1.6m². The rooms are categorized as either Japanese or Western style.
Utilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ① Basic wiring and piping for utilities such as electricity, water and gas are supplied. However, to use these utilities the tenant must contact the respective companies. ② Houses do not come furnished, nor are gas ranges or light fixtures provided.
Location	Location is usually indicated in number of minutes from the nearest station (e.g. A 15-minute walk from Urawa Station).

(2) Before Entering into a Lease Contract

A lease contract clearly specifies the rights and obligations of both the tenant and landlord. Your signature on such a contract is legally binding and indicates that you agree to and will abide by the terms and conditions listed therein. It is therefore imperative that you understand the contents of the contract before signing. When entering into a lease contract, you are required to present an official copy of your Resident Record and Residence Card, a certificate of income and your name seal certificate. A guarantor or written oath is also usually required.

(3) Types of Lease Contracts

Regular lease contract	When the term of the contract terminates, in principle, the same contract will renew (continue). Contract renewal commissions and other fees may be charged.
Fixed-term lease contract	Once the term of the contract expires, the same contract will not be renewed. You may enter into another contract (a new contract) to rent the same apartment. To sign another contract, you will need to pay a realtor's fee, etc.

(4) Payment Required when Entering into a Lease Contract

Rent (<i>yachin</i>)	Rent is paid in advance. Therefore, when first moving into a property, you have to pay 2 months' rent (the current and the following month). Rent is usually paid by bank transfer.
Deposit (<i>shikikin</i>)	A deposit of 1-3 months' rent is given to the landlord when you sign the lease contract. This money is used to pay any outstanding rent and expenses for repairing the property. The balance, if any, is refunded to you when you move out.
Key Money (<i>reikin</i>)	Generally, 1-2 months' rent is paid to the landlord as key money. This money is non-refundable.
Realtor's Fee (<i>chūkairyō</i>)	This is the commission paid to the real estate agent. In principle, the tenant and landlord each pay the equivalent of half a month's rent, total 1 month's rent. However, if both parties agree, the proportion paid by each party may be changed.

(5) General Terms and Conditions of a Lease Contract

Guarantor	Often you need to have a guarantor when applying for an apartment. If you do not have a guarantor, you may discuss with the real estate agent the option of using a company that supplies guarantors.
Payment of Rent	Rent must be paid 1 month in advance by the date stated in the lease contract.

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Occupants	You cannot allow anyone other than family members to live with you without the prior consent of your landlord.
Subletting	You cannot sublet any or all of the property to a third party.
Renovating and Redecorating	You must obtain your landlord's permission before installing or changing fixtures such as gas piping or electric wiring, renovating, or redecorating the premises.
Lease Termination	When terminating a lease prior to its full term, you must notify your landlord of your intention to do so. This notification must comply with the time frames stated in your lease contract. If you terminate the lease without notifying your landlord, your deposit will not be refunded.
Conditions at the End of the Lease	Be aware that there are instances where deposits are not returned and exorbitant cleaning charges are made at the end of leases. You should agree as to what fees will be required at the end of the lease before you sign.
Pets	Most landlords do not allow pets. Therefore, if you wish to keep a pet, please clarify this point with the real estate agent and check if the contract allows a tenant to keep a pet before entering into the lease contract.



Consultation and Inquiries

Finding a Real Estate Agent to Help You Find a Home

Website	URL
Saitama Prefecture Housing Support Network (A list of real estate agents supporting foreigners, etc.)	http://www.sasn.jp/search/mise.php
Saitama Prefectural Government International Division (Lists of real estate agents supporting foreigners, etc., one in Japanese with <i>furigana</i> and another in English)	http://www.pref.saitama.lg.jp/a0306/sumaisupportlist.html

Consultations on Lease Contracts

Problems	Office	Telephone	Hours (Except National Holidays and during the New Year's Holiday Period)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rental contracts • Advice on problems related to living in or leaving a housing unit 	Housing Consultation Plaza, Saitama Housing Supply Corporation	048-658-3017	Daily (Closed for New Year's Holidays) 10:00 - 18:30
	Saitama Real Estate Transaction Association	048-811-1818	Mon, Wed, Fri 10:00 - 12:00 13:00 - 15:00
	Saitama Headquarters, All Japan Real Estate Association	048-866-5225	Mon - Fri 9:00 - 16:00
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rental contracts • Real estate agents 	Construction Safety Division, Saitama Prefectural Government	048-830-5488	Mon - Fri 9:00 - 11:45 13:00 - 16:30

2 Public Housing

Saitama provides public housing for low-income residents. Tenants are chosen by way of lottery, due to the extensive number of applications. Applications are accepted during the months of January, April, July, and October.

Individuals meeting the following requirements are able to apply:

- If you are a foreign resident, you need to have an appropriate status of residence (mid- to long-term resident, etc.).
- You must be able to demonstrate that you are in need of a residence.
- You have family (i.e. a spouse, parent, child or child-in-law) living with you (except if applying for individual residence).
- You reside or work in Saitama.
- The income of your household is at or below the designated amount.
- You have paid your prefectural and municipal inhabitant tax.

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- You are not behind in payment regarding rent or damage compensation owed to public housing (housing developed by regional public groups, Urban Renaissance Agency, or a local housing corporation).
- You or your family is not part of a crime syndicate.

For further details, please contact the Saitama Housing Supply Corporation at 048-829-2875.

Some of the municipalities within Saitama also offer public housing. For details, contact your nearest municipal or ward office.



Consultation and Inquiries

Office	Telephone	Hours (Except National Holidays and during the New Year's Holiday Period)
Prefectural Housing Division, Head Office, Saitama Housing Supply Corporation	048-829-2875	Mon - Fri 8:30 - 17:15
Housing Consultation Plaza, Saitama Housing Supply Corporation (At the concourse of JR Omiya Station West Exit)	048-658-3017	Daily (Closed for New Year's Holidays) 10:00 - 18:30

3 Moving

Below are some of the various matters you need to consider when moving. In order to make your move go smoothly, please read over the list and take care of any of the necessary procedures.

Matter	Before Moving	After Moving
Moving In/Moving Out Notification	Before moving, file a Moving Out Notification at the municipal (ward) office of your current residence, and obtain a Moving Out Certificate.	File a Moving In Notification to the municipal (ward) office of your new residence within 14 days of moving.
Electricity	Contact your current power supply company and the company you will be using at your new place of residence.	Turn on the main switch of the circuit breaker, ground-fault interrupter, and wiring breaker.
Water	Contact the water divisions of your current and new municipal or ward offices.	N/A
Gas	Contact your current gas company to shut off the gas valve. Contact the gas company that you will be using at your new place of residence.	Ask the gas company to turn on the gas main and to conduct necessary safety inspections.
Telephone	Inform your current telephone company of your move.	N/A
Post	Submit a mail forwarding form to a post office. The post office will forward all mail with your previous address on it to your new address for 1 year from the date you specified.	N/A

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Matter	Before Moving	After Moving
Driver's License	N/A	Register your change of address with the Drivers' Licensing Center or any police station (except for Konosu Police Station). Refer to page 10-4. Saitama Prefectural Police Department Drivers' Licensing Center ☎048-543-2001
Name Seal Registration	N/A	If you move to a different municipality, register your name seal at the municipal (ward) office of your new residence.
Elementary and Junior High School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you file a Moving Out Notification, notify your local municipal office that your child is attending elementary or junior high school. • Request a school certificate (<i>zaigaku shomeisho</i>) and a textbook list from your child's current school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you file a Moving In Notification, notify the office that your child is attending elementary or junior high school. • Submit the school certificate and the textbook list to the new school.
NHK Broadcast Subscription Fee	For people who have a TV Have you made a contract with NHK broadcasting? URL: http://pid.nhk.or.jp/jushinryo/multilingual/english/index.html ☎0120-151515	

4 Buying Real Estate

For specific details about buying real estate or obtaining a home loan, talk to your nearest real estate agent or financial institution.



Consultation and Inquiries

Matter	Office	Telephone	Hours (Except National Holidays and during the New Year's Holiday Period)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contracts for selling/buying real estate • Housing construction 	Housing Consultation Plaza, Saitama Housing Supply Corporation	048-658-3017	Daily (Closed for New Year's Holidays) 10:00 - 18:30
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contracts for selling/buying real estate 	Association of Real Estate Agents of Japan	03-5733-2271	Mon-Fri 9:00 - 17:00 *Answering machine 11:30 - 12:30
	Saitama Real Estate Transaction Association	048-811-1818	Mon, Wed, Fri 9:00 - 12:00 13:00 - 15:00
	Saitama Headquarters, All Japan Real Estate Association	048-839-5225	Mon-Fri 10:00 - 16:00
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contracts for selling/buying real estate • Real estate agents 	Construction Safety Division, Saitama Prefectural Government	048-830-5488	Mon - Fri 9:00 - 11:45 13:00 - 16:30