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英語版

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賃貸住宅の借り方・住むときのルール

# A Guide to Rental Housing and Rules for Living in Japan



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## Foreword

As a foreign national, securing rental housing can be quite frustrating at times—perhaps you are unfamiliar with the ways in which Japanese real estate agencies conduct business or the terms of the contact are difficult to understand.

Even after you have moved into a new home or apartment, trouble can arise between you and your landlord and/or neighbors if you are not familiar with and follow the formal and tacit rules regarding life in Japan.

The purpose of this booklet is to explain, in simple terms, how to go about securing rental housing and what rules you need to be aware of when living in Japan.

Please use this booklet as a reference when securing rental housing or living in Japan.

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# I Rental Housing in Japan

When you wish to rent a home or apartment, you should go to a real estate agency (*fudosan torihiki gyosha*). Procedures regarding leases are somewhat different from those in other countries. It is important to be familiar with Japanese manners and customs in order to avoid problems after you move.

## (1) An Overview of Rental Housing

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Rent and Management Fee</b>                    | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rent is paid monthly in advance.</li> <li>A management or common service fee is added to the rent. These fees pay for the cleaning and electric bills of common facilities.</li> </ol>   |
| <b>Size of House/Apartment And Types of Rooms</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The size of a house/apartment is indicated by the total floor space, including not only living areas, but also the toilet, bathroom, kitchen, etc. (e.g. 30 m<sup>2</sup>).</li> <li>The size of each room is indicated by the number of tatami mats that can fit in it (e.g. 6 <i>jo</i>). One tatami mat is about 1.6 m<sup>2</sup>.</li> <li>Rooms are categorized as either Japanese style (tatami rooms) or Western style (rooms with floorboards). The terms DK (dining space + kitchen) and LDK (living room, dining space + kitchen) are also often used.</li> <li>The size of a house or lot is often measured in "<i>tsubo</i>". One <i>tsubo</i> is about 3.3 m<sup>2</sup>.</li> </ol> |
| <b>Facilities</b>                                 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Virtually all rental housing units in Japan are equipped to provide electricity, water, and gas, but it is up to the resident to follow the procedures required to start using these utilities.</li> <li>Light fixtures, tabletop ranges, ovens, or furniture are not usually provided. You will need to obtain these items yourself.</li> </ol>   |
| <b>Access</b>                                     | <p>Access is usually indicated in number of minutes from the nearest station (e.g. a 15-minute walk from Urawa Station).</p>  |

## (2) Before Entering into a Lease

When you rent a house or apartment in Japan, you must sign a lease or rental contract (*chintai keiyaku*).

The lease clearly specifies the rights and obligations of both the lessor (the owner) and the lessee.

Your signature on such a contract is legally binding and indicates that you agree to abide by the terms and conditions listed therein. You should read the contract carefully and have anything you do not fully understand explained to you. Remember that it is imperative that you understand all the contents of the contract before you sign.

When entering a lease, you are required to present a copy of your *juminhyo* (Resident Record), Residence Card, a certificate of income, and name seal registration certificate. A guarantor (a co-signer that will be responsible for the rent, etc. should you fail to pay) or a written oath is also usually required.

## (3) Types of Lease Contracts

|                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Normal Lease Contract</b>     | As a rule, the same contract is renewed (continued) after the contract period expires. When you renew this type of contract, you may be required to pay a contract renewal fee and other fees.                    |
| <b>Fixed-term Lease Contract</b> | After the contract period expires, this type of contract is not renewed automatically. You can enter into a new contract to rent the same unit, however, which typically involves a realtor's fee and other fees. |

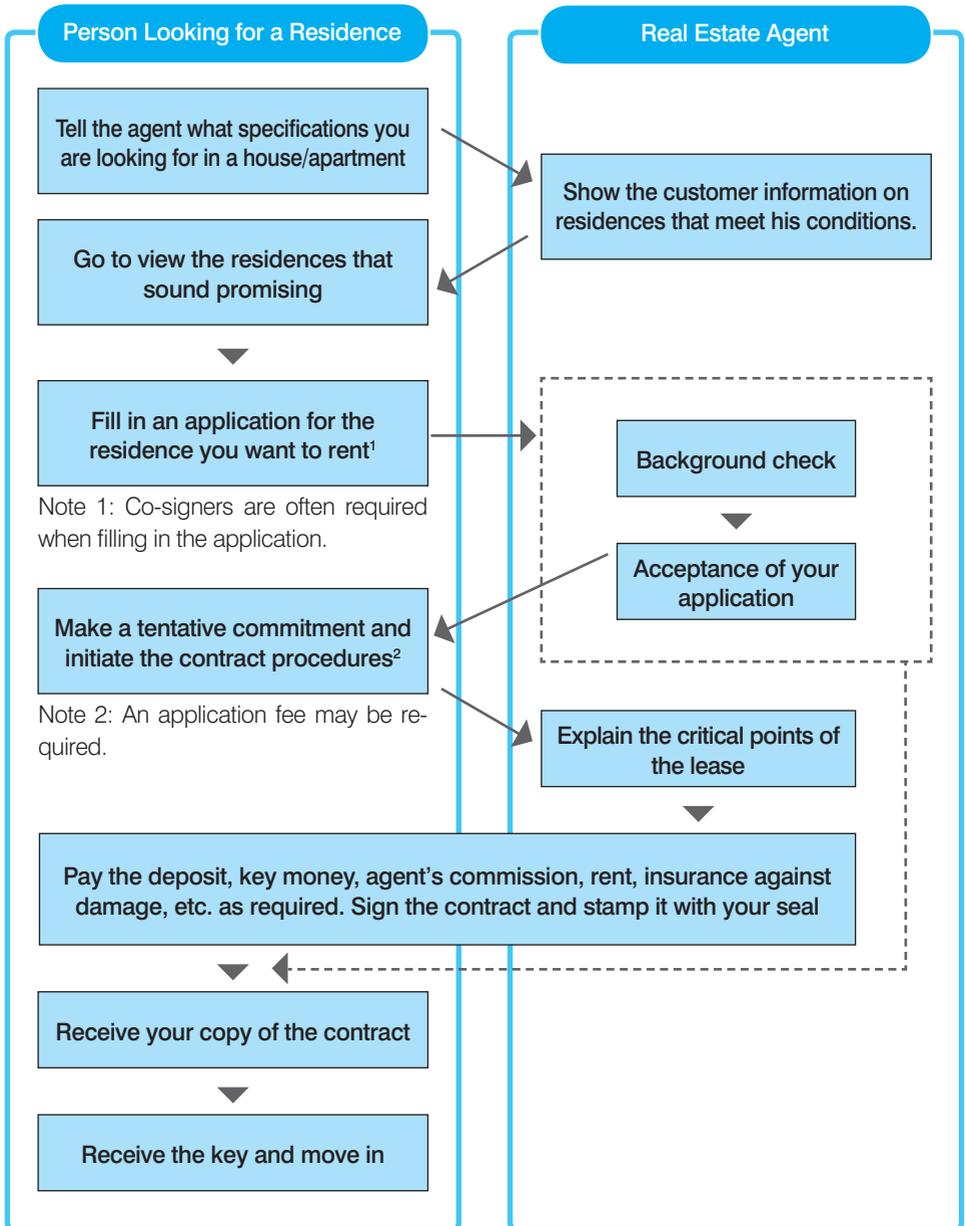
## (4) Payments Required When Entering into a Lease

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| <b>Rent</b>          | Rent is paid in advance. Therefore, when first moving into a residence, you have to pay 2 months of rent (the current month's and following month's rent). Rent is usually paid by way of bank transfer.   |
| <b>Deposit</b>       | A security deposit equivalent to 1–3 months' rent is given to the landlord. When you move to a new residence, the money is used to pay any outstanding rent, make repairs and clean the house/apartment as necessary. The balance, if any, is refunded to you when you move out. |
| <b>Key Money</b>     | Generally 1–2 months' rent is paid to the landlord as key money. This money is non-refundable.   |
| <b>Realtor's Fee</b> | 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, making a total of 1 month. However, if both parties agree, the proportion paid by each party may be changed.                         |

**(5) General Terms and Conditions of a Lease**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Guarantor</b>                          | In most cases you will need a guarantor when you apply for an apartment. If you do not have one, you may be able to utilize a company that provides guarantors. Please discuss it with the real estate agent.   |
| <b>Payment of Rent</b>                    | Rent must be paid one month in advance by the date stated in the lease.   |
| <b>Occupants</b>                          | You cannot allow anyone other than family members to live with you without the prior consent of your landlord.  |
| <b>Subletting</b>                         | You cannot sublet the property or any part thereof to a third person.   |
| <b>Renovating and Redecorating</b>        | You must obtain permission before renovating (e.g. installing electrical and gas lines, demolishing walls, or boring holes in walls) or redecorating (e.g. replacing wallpaper).  |
| <b>Lease Termination</b>                  | Should you want to terminate the lease prior to its full term, you must give your landlord advanced notice. If you move without informing the landlord of your intention to do so or wait until just before you move, your deposit might not be refunded. |
| <b>Conditions at the End of the Lease</b> | 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.                               |
| <b>Pets</b>                               | Most landlords do not allow pets. If you want to keep one, please tell your real estate agent before you enter into a rental agreement, and make sure that the rental agreement allows pets.  |

## II Procedures for Securing Rental Housing



### III Finding a Real Estate Agent to Help You Find a Home

| Website   | URL   |
|---|---|
| Welcome CHINTAI (Japan Property Management Association)<br>(A website that helps foreigners who want to stay in Japan find a place to live)                                   | <a href="http://www.welcome.jpm.jp/">http://www.welcome.jpm.jp/</a>   |
| Saitama Prefecture Housing Support Network<br>(A list of real estate agents supporting foreigners, etc.)  | <a href="http://www.sasn.jp/safety/27/">http://www.sasn.jp/safety/27/</a>   |
| International Division, Saitama Prefectural Office<br>(Lists of real estate agents supporting foreigners, etc. [one in Japanese with <i>furigana</i> and another in English]) | <a href="http://www.pref.saitama.lg.jp/page/sumaisupportlist.html">http://www.pref.saitama.lg.jp/page/sumaisupportlist.html</a> |

### IV Consultations on Lease Contracts

| Subject of Consultation   | Organization  | Phone Number | Hours<br>(except national holidays and during the year-end/New Year holidays) |
|---|---|--------------|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rental contracts</li> <li>Advice on problems related to living in or leaving a housing unit</li> </ul> | Housing Consultation Plaza,<br>Saitama Housing Supply Corporation | 048-658-3017 | Daily<br>(open on national holidays)<br>10 a.m. to 7 p.m.                     |
|   | Saitama of Real Estate Transaction Association                    | 048-811-1820 | Monday to Friday<br>9 a.m. to 5 p.m.  |
|   | Saitama Headquarters,<br>All Japan Real Estate Association        | 048-866-5225 | Monday to Friday<br>9 a.m. to 5 p.m.  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rental contracts</li> <li>Real estate agents</li> </ul>  | Construction Safety Division,<br>Saitama Prefectural Office       | 048-830-5488 | Monday to Friday<br>9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.                                       |

## V Procedures for Moving

There are various procedures and tasks you must accomplish when moving. In particular, you should be mindful of the following items.

| Procedure                                     | Before Moving  | After Moving   |
|---|--|--|
| Notifications of moving in and moving out     | Submit a notification to the office of the city, ward, town, or village that you are moving out of about two weeks in advance, and receive a moving-out certificate.   | Submit a notification to the office of the city, ward, town, or village that you have relocated to within 14 days of moving in.  |
| Electricity                                   | Call the electric power company you currently have a contract with and the company you plan to use after moving.   | Turn on any breaker or fuse switches.  |
| Water   | Contact the water division of the office of the city, ward, town, or village that you are moving out of and of the area that you are moving into.  |  |
| Gas   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Call the gas company you currently have a contract with, and have them shut the gas off.</li> <li>• Also call the gas company you plan to use after moving.</li> </ul>  | Have the gas company open your main gas valve for you, do a safety inspection, etc.  |
| Telephone                                     | Call the telephone company you currently have a contract with.   |  |
| Mail  | If you notify the post office that you are moving, they will forward your mail to your new address for one year.   |  |
| Driver's license                              |  | Follow the procedure for changing your address at the driver's license center or a police station (except for Konosu Police Station).<br>You can contact the Saitama Prefectural Driver's License Center at 048-543-2001.  |
| Personal seal registration                    |  | When you move to a new municipality, you should re-register your personal seal at the office of your new city, ward, town, or village.   |
| Children in elementary and junior high school | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When you submit a notification that you are moving out, please inform the person receiving it that you have a child or children in elementary or junior high school.</li> <li>• You will receive a school certificate (<i>zaigaku shomeisho</i>) and a textbook certificate (<i>kyokasho kyuyo shomeisho</i>) from your child or children's current school(s).</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When you submit a notification that you have moved into an area, please inform the person receiving it that you have a child or children in elementary or junior high school.</li> <li>• Present your child's school certificate (<i>zaigaku shomeisho</i>) and textbook certificate (<i>kyokasho kyuyo shomeisho</i>) to the school(s) that your child or children will be attending.</li> </ul> |

## VI Rules for Living in Japan

When you live in housing complexes such as apartments you will deal with many different people in your daily life. Therefore, it is important to adhere to the following rules and guidelines in order to maintain amicable relations with others in your neighborhood.

### (1) Rubbish Disposal

The method of rubbish disposal varies from one municipality to the next. Also the day and time of collection depends on the type of rubbish. For details specific to where you live, please ask your real estate agent, a neighbor or staff in the relevant division of your municipal office.

#### Questions You Should Ask

1. What days and times you should put out the rubbish.
2. Where you should put the rubbish.
3. Which items are considered combustible and which are non-combustible.
4. Which items are considered recyclable (bottles, cans, plastics, newspapers, etc.)
5. How to dispose of bulky refuse.<sup>1</sup>

Notes:

1. Some bulky refuse and items that are difficult to dispose of will require a fee in order to have them collected otherwise they may not be collected at all. Please ask the relevant division of your municipal office for details on how to dispose of such items.  
Examples: Items such as furniture, bedding, electrical appliances, kitchenware, household goods, and the like that are bigger than a certain size, including drawers, tables, chairs, futons, carpets, bicycles, microwaves, stoves, gas stoves, and golf equipment.
2. Your local municipality will not collect refrigerators, air conditioners, televisions, or washing machines. You will have to pay a fee to a store that sells such items to dispose of them. Contact the manufacturer or store that you purchased an item from to find out how to dispose of it.

### (2) Using the Kitchen

You should keep the kitchen clean.

You must not flush any rubbish or grease down the sink drain, as doing so can cause the drain to clog.

Pouring oil down the drain pollutes rivers and the sea. When disposing of oil, use newspaper, etc. to soak it up and dispose of it along with the combustible rubbish.

### (3) Being Aware of Making Noise

In apartment complexes, noise can be easily heard by your neighbors, including those living above or below you. Therefore, it is important to make sure you do not make loud noises especially at night and in the early hours of the morning.

#### Examples of Noises that are Nuisances

Televisions and radios, musical instruments, loud voices, vacuum cleaners and washing machines, drainage from showers, and the opening and shutting of doors.

### (4) Using the Bath and Toilet

Floods can occur when the toilet or the bathroom drain backs up. If the apartment below you suffers damage due to such flood, you will have to pay for the damage (i.e. the charges for the repair work.)

#### To Avoid Drainage Back Up

1. Do not flush hair, etc. down drains.
2. Do not flush items other than toilet paper (e.g. tissue paper, sanitary napkins) down the toilet.

### (5) Using Common Areas and Facilities

In apartment complexes, walkways, hallways and stairs that are located outside of your apartment are considered common areas. During times of emergency, such as an earthquake or fire, they serve as evacuation routes. Therefore, you are forbidden to store your personal items in them.

### (6) Car and Bicycle Parking

Please be sure to leave your bicycle only in areas designated as bicycle parks in an orderly fashion.

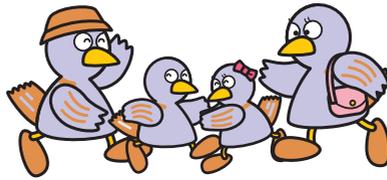
If you own a car, you will be required to rent a parking space—parking on the side of the road is illegal.

## VII Neighborhood Associations

Nearly every city, town and village in Japan has its own Neighborhood Association (*cho-nai-kai* or *jichi-kai*). Activities vary from association to association, but some of the major ones include putting out memorandums (containing information from municipal offices and public health care centers), conducting crime-reduction activities and disaster prevention training, as well as holding festivals and events that create opportunities for people in the neighborhood to socialize with each other.

Neighborhood Associations operate and provide these services with the funds accumulated from membership fees.

Foreign residents can also join Neighborhood Associations. To learn more, ask your neighbors or contact your local municipality.



Prefectural Mascot: Kobaton  
さいたまけん  
埼玉県マスコット 「コバトン」

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