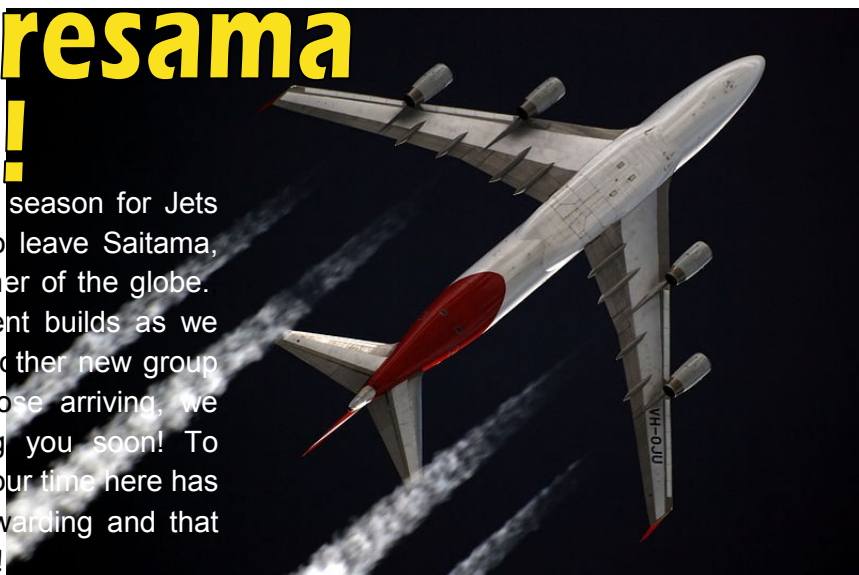




# Otsukaresama Deshita!

Summer is a bittersweet season for Jets as our friends prepare to leave Saitama, often going to every corner of the globe. But meanwhile, excitement builds as we get ready to welcome another new group to the prefecture. To those arriving, we look forward to meeting you soon! To those leaving, we hope your time here has been meaningful and rewarding and that our paths will cross again!



### 2013 Leavers

#### 2008

Denise Schlickbernd  
Fernando Ramos  
Stephanie Gormek  
Teresa Gee  
Simon Free  
Bryan Darr  
Olga Czyzak

#### 2009

Stefanie Benham

#### 2010

Karl Hoeschen  
James Batson

#### 2011

Craig White  
Michelle Tian  
Trishana Sewsunker  
Becca Ros

Rupert Rogers

Chloe Rew  
Jessica Pham  
Debbie Ma  
Sabina Lawrie  
Kate Kinsella  
Greg Hysted  
James Horne  
Warka Ghirmai  
Justin Espineli  
Elizabeth Emery  
Dan DiGiovanni  
Elly Clinton  
Tanya Clark

#### 2012

Hanna Tonegawa  
Daniel Sakamoto  
Tripp Odom

### 2013 Arrivals

Chi Xiong

Bridget Wynne Willson  
Krystle Suzuki  
Salima Shabazz  
Jacqueline Schmeda  
Samuel-Thomas Sain  
Maggie Robi  
Emilie Omi  
Nazzer Nicerio  
Yuko Nakajima  
Spencer McGill  
Ashley-Marie Maxwell  
Narayan Mani  
Andrew Leistensnider  
Jeremy Khoo  
Jason Katz  
Cassandra Jacobs  
Joanna Inwards  
Jane Hommerding

Nicholas Hake

Julia Girke  
Hamed Ghafarshad  
Ariana Fischer  
Sergio Elias-Wilson  
Clara Della Queva  
Stephanie De La Rosa  
Gerardo Cortez Bernabe  
Ryan Chinn  
Raymond Chen  
Leo Bieneman  
Omar Al-Hani  
Sara Bacouros  
Claire Skillman  
Jesse Talarico  
Joshua Webster  
Butterfly Hu (Apr)  
Aaron Sualog (Apr)

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# The JET ALT Achievement Experience List

## (A Different Kind of Approach to Staying Sane While Living in Japan)

Karl Hoeschen

Games today often come with achievement lists to enhance the experience they provide to their users. The lists do this by providing a framework that effectively previews the experience and creates a community for its participants. (Can you see where I'm going with this?) People playing a game, or who are perhaps immersed in an amazing international experience, can use these lists to plan a pathway that best fits their preferences. The goals also give players that must-have satisfaction with every unlocked achievement being checked off the list and fostering discussion/bragging rights with friends while comparing and encouraging each other's progress.

So if you haven't guessed by now, what if we had something similar for the JET Program? We've all heard far too many times that everyone's situation is different. What's far more interesting are the points where our different job expectations, school cultures, and lives in Japan intersect. Each of us has had to, or very likely will, meet similar challenges during our tenure in Japan. This kind of framework could also be a fantastic, if somewhat nerdy icebreaker, as Jets continue to meet and network with one another. Below are some of the experiences and challenges I believe many JET ALTs share while living and working in Japan:

### Japanese Studies

Tools of the Trade: Install *Anki* on your computer, smart phone, or other device to study Japanese.

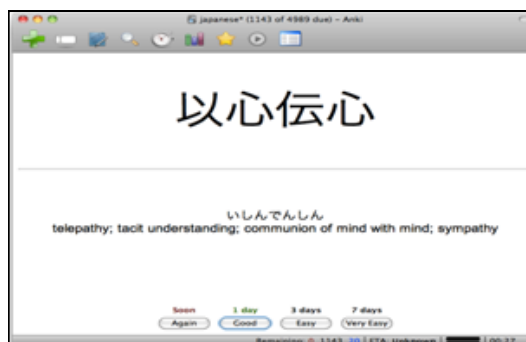
Baby Steps: Master Hiragana.

Be-bi Su-te-pu-su: Master Katakana.

Retro Benkyo: Study Japanese by playing Kana Invaders ([learnjapanesepod.com/kana-invaders](http://learnjapanesepod.com/kana-invaders)).

Level up: Increase your total kanji comprehension by 50.

Powering Through It: Memorize 20 new kanji readings in one week.



Getting Serious: Pass a Japanese Language Proficiency Test.

Officially Literate: Master Hiragana, Katakana, and the (2136) jōyō kanji.

### The Japanese Workplace

Exchange goes both ways: Receive a sincere "jōzu!" after having a lengthy conversation in Japanese.

Raising the bar: Communicate a suggestion during a meeting and oversee its successful implementation.

Butsuke honban (no plan): Unexpectedly and successfully lead an activity without support.

Shōganai: Unexpectedly have to stay at work “Irasshai!”. Become a regular at one of your two or more extra hours due to schedule local venues changes.

“Eh, honto??!”: Correctly answer a trivia question at an enkai drinking party in Japanese.

It speaks!: Successfully deliver a speech in Japanese either in a meeting or at an enkai drinking party.

### Life in Japan

Gomen ne, Atkins-san: Try more than 10 different kinds of ramen, udon, or soba.

Japan's sangria: Successfully create a batch of plum-infused wine (ume-shu).

Rōnin: Visit someplace in every prefecture in Japan. Just passing through does not count!

Samurai's Blessing: Visit all 12 of Japan's best-preserved castles: Matsue, Kochi, Matsumoto, Himeji, Matsuyama, Uwajima, Maruoka, Inuyama, Bitchu Matsuyama, Hikone, Marugame, and Hirosaki.

Learn by Doing: Start a Japanese hobby.



Photo: Jérôme Sadou

I'm sure there are other challenges we have faced and milestones we have passed that could go on this list. What I want to ask of you now is, how can we make this more interactive to bring new Jets together? Is there someone willing to take ownership of and develop this idea to unlock a yet-unnamed achievement for themselves? Could we post this into a JET forum topic and add to the list? And what would the CIR and PA versions look like?



Photo: artnoose

Sharing and “unlocking” these experiences together is the kind of energy that creates a stronger JET community. To close, and officially hand this idea to those who are staying, imagine the ultimate effect this could have on the new Jets arriving and seeing *this* in their orientation packets! Now what would you call that achievement?

## Thoughts on Students Not Answering Questions in Japan

Bryan Darr

So between reading *This Japanese Life* (an outstanding blog), *Teach Like a Champion* (an outstanding book), and an introduction lesson in some random textbook, I can finally explain to myself the problem of students not answering questions in class.

First, the background: Japan is a group society. Standing out and making a difference is how you get ahead and receive praise in the US. Enduring and being harmonious within the group – that’s what gets you that gold watch when you retire from Mitsubishi. In short, being a showoff doesn’t work in Japan. This alone explains much of the reluctance to volunteer, and why it is often far easier and pedagogically sound to ask a question, give the entire class time to think about it, and then call on one student to answer.

But that doesn’t quite explain the reluctance to answer questions when called on – something that has frustrated possibly every ALT to ever come to Japan. In the West, culturally, not answering a question when asked equates to defiance or idiocy. But when I surveyed my students today to find out “Why do you think some students are quiet when a teacher asks questions?” none of them answered, “Because they hate the teacher,” or “Because they don’t want to answer.” All of the answers hit at “They don’t understand the question,” “They don’t know the answer,” “They’re afraid to answer/ lack confidence” or “They don’t understand some words [either in the question or the answer].”

Of course every Japanese teacher knows what their students’ silence means. But the students were shocked to learn what it looks like to Western eyes (defiance, dislike of the teacher, etc.).

So how did I solve the problem of students not answering? Well, first I became more sensitive to and patient with my students’ silences. I make sure I am asking very clear questions, only one question at a time, and speak clearly. And on their side, a quick explanation of “I don’t understand,” “I don’t know,” “I don’t remember,” “How do you say \_\_\_ in English?” and “One more time please,” along with a requirement that they answer within five seconds worked like a charm. That cured 98% of my problems.



Of course, sometimes students still don’t answer. A “Do you understand?” is just too vague, so I have to gauge where the confusion is occurring. It works well to ask “What does the question mean in Japanese?” followed by “What is the answer in Japanese?” or some other taxonomy of errors. Knowing

how far back from the answer to start questioning the student is something I'm still figuring out, but it's getting easier with experience.

And finally, if they still don't answer, *Teach Like a Champion's* #1 technique, No Opt-Out, finishes them off Mortal-Kombat style. I'll



even if it's handed to them. I should add though that this isn't for everyone, and if the student is already socially isolated, this technique will only isolate them more.

The one time a student still couldn't answer, rather than getting angry like I used to, I very calmly told him to copy exactly what I was saying. That worked, too. The important thing, and it's very hard to remember sometimes, is that they're still kids, and non-native English speaking ones at that. They are together, I go back to make mistakes—heck, if they were perfect already they wouldn't need to come to school—and they deserve a patient and emotionally-stable teacher. I'll ask another student to have to answer,

Welcome (back) to school!  
Hopefully you all got to go to some  
*hanabi taikai* (fireworks displays) and *matsuri*!



Photo: Saitama City

# Introducing the new PAs!

## With Bonus Trivia

Jane Hommerding

Hello and *hajimemashite*, Saitama Jets! I'm Jane, one of your new PAs. Though filling in for the wonderful Denise seems an impossible task, I will try my best to be a good PA. (You all can help me cultivate this "good PA" image by not asking me complicated insurance questions that I will fail at answering, et cetera!) I can't wait to get to meet and come to know all of you. Odds are I will have to ask you what your name is or how to spell it about three (thousand) times, but I will get it right eventually!

For your entertainment, I have compiled some New PA Trivia:

1. Where is your New PA from?

- a) Ohio,
- b) Iowa,
- c) Idaho,
- d) Where are those places anyway?

2. What is your New PA's current favorite Japanese food? (The perennial question...)

- a) Yakiniku,
- b) Takoyaki,
- c) Okonomiyaki,
- d) Hamburgeryaki

3. What is your New PA's current favorite Japanese store? (Alternatively, where is your new PA most likely to throw yen at innocent cash register personnel?)

- a) Book-Off,
- b) FamilyMart,
- c) 109 (Ichi-Maru-Kyuu),
- d) the Pokemon Center

4. What is your New PA most looking forward to finding/buying at Costco?

- a) Real cheese,
- b) Real pizza,
- c) Both a and b,
- d) Real escargot(s)

A hint for question one:



Photo: Wikipedia

Yay geography!

5. How can you contact your New PA for any questions, comments, concerns, overtures of friendship, your own awesome MemoRandom article and/or trivia, complicated insurance questions, etc?

- a) Phone (048-830-2708),
- b) Email (hommerding.jane[at]pref.saitama.lg.jp),
- c) In person (hi!),
- d) All of the above, plus
- e) Psychic brainwaves

Answers: 1b, 2c, 3a, 4c, 5d

# Introducing the new PAs!

## With a Bonus Anecdote

Matthew Young

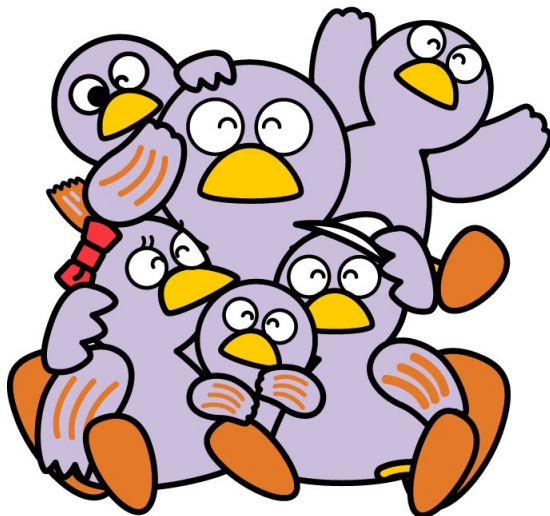
I think I have met most of you in person, but if not then hello from me too. I am also a new PA here at the prefectural office. Prior to becoming a CIR/PA, I was a municipal ALT for two years in our lovely Saitama, so if you are new to our community please feel free to ask me any ALT/school related questions along with any other concerns that you may have.

Jane has asked me to write something amusing here, so I'll leave you with a rousing poem.

Set sail, he did for Japan  
On a government ALT plan  
"I'll just stay a year  
Be back soon, I swear"  
That was 3 years ago, man

I know that it doesn't quite rhyme for Americans, but not bad for a beginner, hmm?

Questions, comments, feedback, or even just a wee chat can all be directed to me at [matthew.young@pref.saitama.lg.jp](mailto:matthew.young@pref.saitama.lg.jp) or by phone on [048-833-0548](tel:048-833-0548).



A wee anecdote for the perplexed...

I arrived in Saitama during the greasy slickness of summer, 2011. After a sweaty (but blessedly brief) welcome ceremony, I was whisked away sweatily to my little town of Tokigawa (pop. 12,000 and plummeting). Being a busy (sweaty) man, my supervisor dropped me off at my new digs, tossed me a sweaty key and left me on my ownsome until a promised 6pm dinner. Sweaty.

Tokyo Orientation had done a number on my new linens (sweat again!), so I decided to try out my new washing machine, which was *outside* my front door by the steps. I was about to plop in an armful of sweaty duds when I noticed a flash out of the corner of my eye. Upon peering into the washer, I noticed a pool of rippling brown water coming about halfway up the drum. Rippling, I discovered upon tilting the machine on its side a little, because it was filled with frogs.

Frogs. So many frogs. Small frogs, big frogs, live frogs, dead frogs, old frogs, new frogs.

You know what I did until 6pm that day? Took the whole bloody thing apart and cleaned the everloving frog out of it. Pulled out handfuls of the buggers and biffed them into the rice paddies behind my house. Found some bleach under the sink, poured it in, and scrubbed till my hands were red. I took the drum out with an improvised 1-yen coin screwdriver only to find a *mountain* of wriggling frogs underneath it. I scoured it until I was covered to my elbows in frog slime like an amphibian Jack the Ripper.

If you are new to Saitama and feeling a little homesick, then at least you can be thankful that you didn't spend your first day evacuating Kermit from your washing machine.

## Destination: Saitama

### Events in and around the prefecture

- **Saitama Min'you (Folk Dance) Festival and Saitama Yosakoi Festival** Sept. 7 (Sat.) at the Saitama Super Arena (Community Arena). **Folk Dance**, 9:30-10:45; **Yosakoi**, 11:00-17:30. Ever wanted to witness some of the most energetic dancing of your life, or maybe try to do something a little more low-key yourself? This joint event is the answer! In the morning, watch five folk dances from various regions of Saitama, and (if you want) learn to dance along to six other folk dances! The afternoon features high-energy Yosakoi dancing, a modern dance style that evolved in the 1950s from Awa Odori, a traditional summer dance. Performed by teams large and small from across the prefecture, witnessing Yosakoi is guaranteed to be a *genki* way to spend an afternoon! Feel free to stop by for an hour or two, or stay the whole day. (Note that the finals, featuring the best 12 Yosakoi teams of the day, run from 15:20-16:35; a large group dance performed by all the teams at once runs from 16:35-17:00.) Oh, and did we mention that all of this is free? **Access:** immediate access from Saitama Shintoshin Station (さいたま新都心駅) on the Keihin Tohoku (京浜東北), Utsunomiya (宇都宮), or Takasaki (高崎) lines (all JR), or a 7-minute walk from Kita-Yono Station (北与野駅) on the JR Saikyo (埼京) line. **More Info** [here](#) (Japanese).
- **Iwahiba Bonsai and Garden Sale** Sept. 6-8 (Fri.-Sun.) at the Kawaguchi Green Center. Kawaguchi has been a botanical center for several hundred years, and the city's Green Center has periodic markets and display events throughout the year. Did your garden fall victim to your summer travels? Want to liven up your veranda or balcony with native and wild flowers and plants? This is the place to go! **Access:** Multiple options; see [www.jurian.or.jp/info/access.html](http://www.jurian.or.jp/info/access.html). **More Info** [here](#) (Japanese).



Photo: TANAKA Juuyoh

- **Mizuoshi River Red Spider Lilies** Sept. 8-20 (approx.) along the Mizuoshi River (水押川) in Honjo. Red Spider Lilies, known as *manjushage* (曼珠沙華) in Japanese, bloom every year as summer ends and fall begins. Hidaka may be the best known location in Saitama, but in Honjo, brilliant vermillion flowers mark the change of the seasons as they bloom along a kilometer of the banks of the Mizuoshi River. **Access:** 5 min. by taxi (2 km) from Kodama (児玉) Station on the Hachikō (八高) Line. **More Info** Honjo City Tourism Association: 049-572-1331.



## Recipe Corner

After a long day of sweating, the last thing many people's are looking forward to is cooking dinner over a piping hot stove. Here are a couple of recipes to keep you fed, on budget, and stop the vicious cycle of summer sweating

### **Tofu with Minced Eggplant** (*Nasu-soboro tofu ae*; serves 2)

This recipe can be done in the microwave or on the stove. Simply top some fresh tofu with the minced eggplant (hot or chilled), and you have a quick, easy, and cooling meal.

(from [saitama-wassyoi.jp/modules/wordpress3/index.php?m=201107](http://saitama-wassyoi.jp/modules/wordpress3/index.php?m=201107))

- 2 large eggplants (ca. 200g)
- 1 dried red pepper (*tōgarashi*)
- 150 g ground meat
- 1 block tofu (*silk/kinudofu*)
- 1 Tbsp miso
- 2 tsp soy sauce
- 1/2 tsp. sesame oil

- 1) Chop eggplant into chunks about 1 cm in size. Chop red pepper into small pieces (remove seeds to make less spicy). Mix with ground meat
- 2) Cover in a microwavable bowl and cook at 500W for 4 minutes.
- 3) After ensuring the meat is cooked, stir in miso, soy sauce, and sesame oil. Cook at 500W for 30 seconds. Serve at desired temperature on top of tofu. You can also try it with *sōmen* noodles, over rice, or over other vegetables.

### **Chilled Spiced Potage** (serves 4)

This soup can be made in batches and frozen to eat later, making it a fast and simple dinner for a little work.

- 1 onion, diced
- 1 stalk celery, finely sliced
- Kernels from 2 ears corn
- 1 tomato, peeled, chopped  
(or, 1/2 cup chopped canned tomato)
- 3 Tbsp olive oil
- 1~1 1/2 Tbsp. curry powder
- 1 cube soup stock
- 2 c. milk
- 1 tsp salt
- pepper (to taste)

- 1) Heat olive oil in pan and briefly cook onion, celery, and corn. Add curry powder. When the fragrance of the curry becomes strong, add tomato and stir well.
- 2) Add soup stock, 1/2 c. water, salt, and pepper. Simmer on low for about 20 minutes until vegetables are soft.
- 3) Cool until soup can be easily handled, then puree in a blender. Let soup cool, then add milk. Top with parsley if desired.

※ If putting into freezer immediately, do not add milk. When defrosting and add milk to thawed potage.



# PA Corner

## Information for Leaving Jets

CLAIR's [After JET Guide](#) is available online and is full of information for Jets leaving the Programme. The PAs in the International Division have also prepared the *Out on a High Note* guide, a Saitama-specific supplement with information about status of residence, moving in Japan, and much more. Please read both as you prepare for your summer move.

There is also the Predecessor's Guide to Saitama, a custom worksheet for you to fill out for your successor and give them all the information they need for their new home, and the handy-dandy end-of-appointment expenses worksheet so that you can start budgeting now for your final bills.

All of these Saitama JET documents are available on the International Division page for Jets [here](#).

## 4th Year Jets: Check your foreigner cards



If you will be in Japan for another year, check the expiration date on your alien registration card; it will probably be up before you finish your fifth year. Because of the new residency management system, you will need to apply for your new residence card (*zairyū kādo*) at the regional immigration bureau. The procedure can be finished in a day; click these links for [details](#) and [directions](#). Jets can generally take special leave for this; check your terms and conditions. Double check your card for the expiration date and be sure to have it updated in time.

## 3rd Year Jets: Don't Forget to Extend Your Status of Residence!

If you're staying for a fourth year in Japan, don't forget that your status of residence (also colloquially referred to as visas) is only good for three years; to stay for longer you'll need to apply to extend your period of stay. Immigration can begin processing your application up to two months before your current status of residence expires, and processing usually takes 2-4 weeks. Applicants will need to visit the regional immigration bureau twice (special leave may be given at the discretion of schools or COs). It costs ¥4000 and you will need to prepare documents in advance. For details, go to [www.immi-moj.go.jp/english/tetuduki/kanri/shyorui/03.html](http://www.immi-moj.go.jp/english/tetuduki/kanri/shyorui/03.html). For directions to the bureau, go to [www.immi-moj.go.jp/english/keiziban/happyou/20100903\\_saitam\\_en.pdf](http://www.immi-moj.go.jp/english/keiziban/happyou/20100903_saitam_en.pdf).

※ If you haven't already received your residence card (*zairyū kādo*), you will receive it when you go to extend your status of residence.

## 1st and 2nd Year Jets:

Actually we have no announcements specifically for 1st and 2nd year Jets except to tell you how awesome you are (we didn't want to leave you out of the PA Corner). Carry on!



## Editor's Note

While doing a bit of in-country travel, a friend and I happened to meet a man named Imai-san who is a salt maker. Until then, the most thought I had ever given to salt was when I needed to pick some up at the store, and my purchase was selected based only on price; after all, salt is just salt, right? But Imai-san explained the salt-making process, showing us the steaming tubs where the sea water slowly boiled away, the barrels where the crystallized salt and minerals separated from the *nigari* (magnesium chloride, used to make tofu), and the room where it dried and impurities were painstakingly removed by hand. The composition and flavor of the brine, he told us, change depending on the weather and time of year, and it must be carefully watched to prevent it from becoming too bitter or losing too many of the other minerals. All of this he learned from one of the only traditional salt makers who survived a 92-year long government monopoly that ended in just 1997.

It was fascinating to learn this small part of the history of his work, but it was just as fascinating to see the world that lay behind something so apparently simple. It was a reminder that behind the things we pass over as minor and inconsequential may lie new worlds awaiting our discovery.

—Denise Schlickbernd

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