

How Japanese Schools Work

Scheduling 101

- Generally 6 classes a day at Elementary and Junior High, 6 or 7 at Senior High
- ES lessons are usually 45 mins, JHS/SHS are 50 mins. Classes usually start around 8:30-8:45.
- At ES/JHS, homeroom classes will have a morning meeting and a meeting just before going home.
- There's usually a staffroom meeting once a week, and possibly sometimes a subject meeting too.

Must do better
next slide



Sloppy work Changes to Scheduling for Dummies

©

- There's often the normal schedule, and a special/shortened schedule. You may need to make sure you arrive slightly earlier these days.
- Schedule disruption seems fairly common. Changes can happen quite abruptly and you may be the last to know.
- The monthly/weekly/daily schedule should be on a board at the front of the staff room.
- Every ALT has had a day where they've turned up for work and everyone else is wearing a suit.
- There are also various observation lessons, where teachers from the school/your city will come and watch a class.

Advanced Staff Room Studies

- You'll likely get your own desk (though possibly shared with another teacher).
- I was given a work laptop too. SHS ALTs have a prefectural email address.
- My city have implemented time cards, where we clock in and clock out each working day.
- There'll probably be a printing room full of materials you can use.
- The staff room usually has a small communal kitchen, with a refrigerator, microwave, kettle etc.

Citation needed.

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USB Sticks: A Discourse

- Most schools don't like you moving files via USB from computers outside of the network onto your work laptop.
- Generally if I work on something at home or vice versa, I email it to myself.
- There's also a school/city-wide intranet where I can save files and access them at all my schools.
- If I need to access these in class on the electronic blackboard, I connect it to the internet/intranet via an Ethernet cable.
- Don't rely on technology!



I think I need to speak to your parents...

Cleaning Time, and the Industrial and Social Revolutions in 19th Century Europe

- There's a 15 minute spell every day, usually after the lunch break, when students clean a set area in their assigned groups. The teachers all help out too.
- SHS ALTs may be in charge of who gets to clean their classroom.
- The ALT may not actively be asked to clean, but they can help if they want.
- However, I know some ALTs have busy schedules and prefer to take a breather then.
- There's also a big clean up at the end of term.

Needs more references
to Marxism!

B-

Complex Shoe Theory

- You'll need a pair of indoor shoes for each of your schools. I picked up some cheap pairs of plimsolls from H&M. Or, if you have no self-respect, you can wear Crocs. Pick something light and comfortable.
- You'll get a locker at the front entrance. Stick your outside shoes in there and wear your indoor ones, erm, indoors.
- You might be familiar with toilet slippers already, or you've accidentally been wearing them everywhere for the last three weeks. But obviously don't wear these outside of the toilet, or your indoor shoes in the toilet.

Will change the way we all look at shoes forever. Outstanding!



School Lunch: A Critical Study

- Mostly applicable to ES/JHS. SHS bring their own lunch.
- In my town, approximately ¥4400 a month, which works out at about ¥200 per day. Though it doesn't run when the kids aren't there.
- SHS may have a bento ordering service or a store on-site, where you can buy snacks and drinks.
- If you have any dietary requirements, it might be wise bringing these up before term starts, likewise, if you're a picky eater. Generally dishes rotate throughout the year (not literally)

School Lunch: A Critical Study

- Some schools want you to eat with the kids, others leave it up to the ALT to decide. SHS ALTs eat in the staffroom.
- Your lunch break may be shorter than stipulated at SHS, maybe around 35-40 mins.
- At SHS, it seems like sometimes this break time can be curtailed or altered
- Another thing to note is school lunch portion size AKA I am now hopelessly fat.

This was like food...
but for MY BRAIN.



School Tests: A Test

- You may have heard about Japan's four seasons. They are: the start-of-term ability tests, the mid-term tests, the end-of-term tests and the end-of-unit tests.
- TESTS
- You may have certain responsibilities for these. Sometimes it's marking the tests, checking them for errors, recording the listening part etc. At SHS you may have to even make some parts yourself.
- Some schools let you stay in the staff room when the tests are taking places. Others expect you to go. Work off those carbs walking up and down the rows of desks while mentally projecting yourself elsewhere, Luke Skywalker-style.

School Tests: A Test

- The third year students take their university entrance exams from mid-January through March. Be prepared to help out, especially through December and early January. The Center Exam is held on a weekend in mid-January. For most of these students, this will be the biggest test of their lives.
- There will be a week in March when students study at home while JHS students come to take entrance exams at the high school. After that, the JTEs have to correct them. Be on hand to answer questions. They check and double-check and triple-check these exams, often staying until 10pm at night.



Please review. There's a test on this too next week.

A Beginner's Guide to Assemblies

- There's often an opening ceremony and a closing ceremony at the start/end of each term.
- This opening ceremony is likely going to be your first day. Wear a suit and have a Japanese/English speech ready.
- You won't usually need to wear a suit, bar maybe the opening one in at the start of the school year in April and...
- Graduation. You'll need to wear a suit with a white tie. Be quiet. Don't cross your legs. Pretend to cry. Or actually cry.



*This made me
actually cry.*

A Short History of Class Discipline

- Generally discipline is “good”, in the sense that even the youngest kids are pretty self-reliant – serving lunch, cleaning, walking to school on their own.
- Class structure, routine and discipline are quite rigid, and the kids are often just expected to follow it.
- When they don't follow the rules, discipline can be a bit... lacking. Often the kids are just told to “ganbare” or something.
- The big thing that seems to surprise new ALTs is kids sleeping in class.
- Another thing that is distinctly Japanese, is “misbehaving” through the ancient technique of silent resistance.

C-

You need to be severely disciplined for making me read this trash.

An Approach to "Aistatsu"

- Can vary from class to class. Some have a very formal Japanese-style opening, others Westernize it for English.
- Normally a kid is assigned to be the leader for that subject, they'll go to the front, say the class aim and everyone bows. At the end of the class, they'll make a comment or praise someone and bow again.
- For English class, there may be some variation on this.
- At my schools, we ask what day it is, what date it is and how the weather is. For some classes I ask this, in others it's the English leader or JTE. The teachers might also get asked "how are you?".

Copied from
Wikipedia. SEE ME.



School Vacation: A Postcolonial View

*I need a vacation
after reading
this...*



- Even when the kids aren't there, we still have to go in. We get public holidays off and a about 4 or 5 designated holidays around New Year.
- You may get holiday in lieu if you work on a weekend. This seems much more common for SHS ALTs.
- For Sports Days etc. if they are on a Saturday, generally the following Monday the kids are off. I didn't have to go in on that day (though if you're at a different school on the Monday/replacement day, ask!)

Asking for Holidays: Basic Quantitative Methods

- We get 20 days of paid vacation (nenkyuu) a year. SHS ALTs may accumulate days in lieu (daikyuu)
- On your holiday sheet, you'll need your own stamp, and usually stamps from the principal, vice-principal, head of the school and the secretary. The other stamps are done by the Board of Education.
- I have never been refused holidays BUT this isn't gospel. Your predecessor may have told you about your own situation.
- For SHS, sometimes it's more inconvenient to take holidays during term time. Try and be considerate about what dates you ask for off, how long and how far in advance.

Showing no signs of improvement



Extreme Weather and YOU

- On days when the weather is too extreme for the kids to go in, classes are usually cancelled. It's often due to typhoons, heavy rain, or snowfall.
- A lot of the support staff/part-time staff don't go in on these days. However, generally the ALT is expected to be at work regardless.
- If there are a few days disrupted by the weather, sometimes the general schedule changes to accommodate this.



For "Extreme-ly disappointing".

Health, Safety, Earthquakes in a Post-Modern Society

- All school employees have a health check each summer. Your first one will be most likely be next summer, should you recontract. Some SHS ALTs might have their health check this fall.
- Disaster/earthquake training happens 2 or 3 times a year. It may be written on the staffroom blackboard as “inochi wo mamoru kunren” 命を守る訓練.
- You'll need to follow the evacuation procedures, which usually involve covering your mouth and running to the evacuation area (often the school yard). Some schools have you go under the desk.
- There's also what I can only call “the dirty old man drill”.

This slide was bad for my health.



References

- M. Parkes, "Some thoughts wot I had just now", 2018

Thank God
it's finally
over.

