

## Finding Housing in Japan

### Rental Contract

If you want to rent an apartment introduced to you by a real-estate agent, you must enter into a rental contract with the owner of the apartment. Make sure you understand all of the content of the contract before you sign it. If you don't understand something, ask the real estate agent to explain it to you. Make sure you agree with everything before signing the contract.

The rental contract always has a rental period (usually 2 years). If you would like to continue to rent the apartment after the contract expires, you can renew the contract. However, you may have to pay a contract renewal fee (usually 1 or 2 months rent), or the rent may increase when you renew the contract. Some residences have "designated time contracts" where you cannot renew your contract, so make sure you read the contract carefully.

When you enter into a contract you will have to pay rent, communal fees, a deposit, key money, and a finder's fee for the real estate agent. The definition and amount of these fees may change a little bit depending on the owner and real estate agent, however the following is usually the norm. In addition, you will need to have a guarantor that will take responsibility for you if you cannot pay rent or other fees. You can ask your school to do this, or there are companies that provide a guarantor service, so please talk to the real-estate agent about this.

- 1)Rent- The fee for use of a building or room and other facilities in one month units. When you enter into a rental contract, you must pay rent for the month corresponding to the month you enter the contract. It is common to pay the next month's rent at the end of the month. The method of payment varies greatly from contract to contract, so be sure to find out about it when entering into a contract. It is uncommon for changes in rent in the middle of a contract.
- 2)Communal Fees- Fees for lighting, water, heat and cleaning in common areas and maintenance fees.
- 3)Deposit- Money that the owner of the apartment keeps in case the apartment is damaged or rent is not paid. It is usually 1 to 3 months worth of rent. When you leave the apartment, costs for damages or unpaid rent is deducted from the deposit. If there is any left, it is returned.
- 4)Key Money- It is a gift to the owner of the apartment thanking them for renting it to you. It is usually 1 to 3 months worth of rent. It is not returned.
- 5)Finder's Fee- Paid to the real-estate agent when you enter a contract. It is equivalent to one months rent or less.

## Rules and Customs

### 1) Greeting neighbors

It is customary in Japan to greet people who live next to you when you move in.

### 2) Electricity, Gas, Telephone, Water

Contact electricity, gas, telephone, and water companies to start service.

### 3) Use of the apartment

Use of the apartment should be covered in the rental contract. Pets, remodeling or residents not listed in the contract are not allowed without the owner's permission.

### 4) Garbage Disposal

Collection days and times are set for different types of waste. Please put your garbage at the collection place at the correct time and day. Garbage is usually broken in to the following groups: burnable garbage, unburnable garbage, oversized garbage, paper, bottles and cans.

### 5) Noise

Many people live in apartment buildings so noise sounds extremely loud. Please don't be loud, especially late at night and early in the morning.

### 6) Common Areas

Common areas are areas used by everyone in the building, so don't leave your belongings in those areas. Please don't leave things in entranceways, hallways, stairways, or in front of elevators. In case of earthquake or fire, those belongings could become a hazard.

### 7) Moving

#### Before moving in

Contact the owner and real estate agent and tell them that you will move.

Inform electricity, gas, telephone and water companies about the move.

Fill out a *tenso to doke* form at the post office in order to forward your mail.

Pack your belongings, and clean your old apartment

#### On Moving Day

Check the apartment you are leaving for damages with the owner or real estate agent. Give them the key.

#### After Moving In

Pay electricity, gas, telephone and water bills

Collect any left over deposit money from the last apartment

Change the address on your alien registration card within 14 days after you move.

Also change the address for your insurance.