



After



Guide



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Foreword

What's next for me after JET?

This is probably the question on all of your minds as you approach the end of your final year on the JET Programme. Where will the road ahead lead me? What should I do next? How can I use this cross-cultural experience that I've gained? Some of you may already have an idea of what you want to do next, while others of you may still be searching for that next step.

Since the JET Programme began in 1987, there are now approximately 54,000 JET alumni who have made Japan their home for a period of one year or more. Some alumni remain in Japan, while the majority return to their home countries.

This guidebook, published by the Department of JET Programme Management at CLAIR, is one resource available to those who are completing their tenure on the JET Programme. It has been compiled with the help of the Association for Japan Exchange and Teaching (AJET), numerous JET Alumni Association (JETAA) chapters, and former JET participants from around the world. Although this is not the definitive guide to what is out there, we sincerely hope that it will prove to be a useful resource to those of you who are leaving the Programme this year.

There are also many other resources available to participants completing their tenure on the JET Programme, the largest being the JET Alumni Association (JETAA). Through local JETAA chapters, JET alumni have the opportunity to maintain ties with Japan and the JET Programme, and to interact with other former JET participants. JETAA chapters also hold events such as career fairs, Japanese language and culture sessions, and also help with interviews and pre-departure orientations for new JETs.

Another resource offered by CLAIR to returning JETs is the annual email newsletter entitled *JET Streams*, which features interesting stories, essays and pictures from local chapter activities, as well as information from CLAIR and JETAA International. In addition, CLAIR holds the Conference for Returning JETs in either late February or early March every year to assist JETs in preparing for life after completing the JET Programme. The conference offers everything from how to write resumes and C.V.s, to presentations from embassy representatives as well as speakers from different business fields and backgrounds.

To all of you who are completing your tenure this year, we hope you enjoyed your time as a JET Programme participant, and would like to wish you every success in your future endeavours.

Department of JET Programme Management
Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR)



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Chapter 1:

Preparations for Going Home

Chapter 1: Preparations for Going Home

The last few months leading up to the end of your tenure on JET are likely to be very busy. With packing and preparing to leave, you might not have time to visit all those people and places you will miss if you leave it until the last minute. There are also many things that you will need to organise before going home, so it is best to set aside enough time to do it all.

Saying goodbye can be difficult, but it is one of those things that you should not procrastinate. Planning ahead does not only help you with closure, but it also helps to make the transition better upon returning home. This chapter provides some suggestions for things you will need to do before leaving the JET Programme.

Countdown

May

- Start going through your apartment and decide what you will take back, what you will sell, what you will give away and what you will discard.

June

- If you are being replaced by a new JET, contact them as soon as possible to sort out arrangements such as transfer of apartment, payment for items to be sold, etc..
- Start making arrangements for shipping items home, if necessary.
- Confirm with your contracting organisation what the necessary procedures will be, and/or start making arrangements with your landlord for handing over your apartment. One month's notice is required. Clarify what final payments need to be settled and how, and whether you will need to make any arrangements for a successor.
- Start organising bills and other finances for your supervisor's, or proxy's, reference.
- If you require any adjustments in your Status of Residence, including extension or change of status, or obtaining a temporary visitor permit, contact the nearest immigration office early to get a clear understanding of what is required and start the application process with enough time (at least a month is usually recommended) before the expiration of your current Status of Residence.

July

- Start writing thank you letters and saying goodbyes.
- Organise to have your mail forwarded at the post office to a friend's address.
- Finalise details about who will serve as your proxy for bill payments, designate and complete the paperwork for a tax representative if you are leaving Japan. Ensure that you have each others valid contact information.
- Consult with utility companies to agree on a desired date and on procedures for shutting off utilities and making final payments.
- If you are still here when your successor arrives, take care of any business transactions you have with them and assist them to get acquainted with their new placement.

1. PAY ALL YOUR BILLS

Make sure your utilities are disconnected and/or final bills are paid, as follows:

Electricity	Telephone
Gas	Internet Provider
Water	Newspaper/Magazine subscriptions
TV (NHK/CATV/Sky PerfecTV, etc)	Rent/Cleaning and Repair Costs
Credit Card	Local Inhabitant Tax

- Electric, gas, and water services can usually be discontinued on the day of departure with settlement of outstanding bills made on the same day. Contact the electricity, gas and water companies a few days in advance and have the metres checked on your last day. You will need to be home when the company representative checks the metre. Your last bill can be paid on the spot.
- Your home telephone can be disconnected on the date you request. However, payment cannot be made at that time as billing and payment are usually a month after. If you are leaving Japan and closing your bank account, you may apply to have a representative pay on your behalf at the local office of the telephone company. Be sure complete this application to the telephone company and make adequate arrangements with a friend or colleague before you leave to take care of this payment.

2. FORWARD MAIL

If you will be staying in Japan after JET, inform the post office of your move and new address. If you are leaving Japan, Japan Post will forward your mail to a friend's address in Japan (who can then redirect important mail or packages to you) for one year, if you complete a Change of Address Notification Card. The card is available from all post offices in Japan and the service is free of charge. Japan Post will not forward your mail to an overseas address, unless the mail itself has come from overseas. Any packages forwarded to an overseas address will incur an additional charge to be paid on delivery. Also, be sure to notify the city/town office of your move and your new address at the Alien Registration counter.

3. CANCEL MOBILE PHONE

It is possible to cancel your mobile phone anytime up until the day you leave Japan by visiting any location of your mobile phone company's retail outlets. You will need to visit the store in person to cancel your mobile phone contract (cancellation procedures cannot be handled over the phone).

Please bring the following items:

- Your ID (alien registration card and passport)
- Your personal seal (*inkan*)
- Your mobile phone (*keitai*)

Basic monthly fee and charges for optional services will be calculated on a prorated basis. Charges will include outgoing calls and messages sent/received on the day of cancellation.

4. CONTACT YOUR LANDLORD

Your landlord or rental agency need to be informed at least one month in advance with regards to your moving plans. If you know the exact date of your departure now, contact them and let them know. They will then arrange for an apartment inspection on a date and time to which you both agree. They can also calculate prorated costs if you plan to stay only for a part of the last month. Be aware that most of your original deposit will be used up to cover costs for damages and professional cleaning.

5. CLOSE YOUR BANK ACCOUNT

If you no longer plan to use your bank (or post office) account, take your account book, bank card, and *inkan* to your branch to close the account (*kouza kaiyaku*). It is not possible to close your bank account from overseas. You may incur handling charges if you close the account at a branch other than the one where the account is held. If you need to close your account before your final pay-check or before paying for public utilities and other charges, make sure that adequate measures are taken for payments to be handled in cash.

6. BUDGET FOR MOVING

Your final pay cheque may be less than the amount you normally receive. This is because your final month on the JET Programme is less than a full working month and there may also be a deduction of 2 months worth of insurance/pension premiums. Check with your contracting organisation to confirm the exact amount.

Your contracting organisation may also ask that you leave behind some money to cover any unpaid bills, or for cleaning and repair costs. Clarify your contracting organisation's expectations well in advance of leaving, so that you will have some idea of the expenses you may incur in the last weeks of your time on the JET Programme.

7. DISPOSAL/TRANSFER OF CAR

Disposing of Your Car

If you are unable to sell your car to another individual, and car dealerships judge that it has no re-sale value, you will have to dispose of the car (*haisha*). You can choose to process the paperwork yourself, but this and the physical disposal of the vehicle are usually taken care of by a vehicle sales or disposal company. There is a disposal fee. The following items will be required:

- Vehicle Inspection certificate (*shakensho*)
- Front and back license plates
- Certificate of disposal from the disposal company
- Your *inkan* and registration of it (*inkanshoumeisho*), which is less than 3 months old, from your local city office/town hall
- A letter of attorney (*ininjou*) if you are authorising a company to take care of the paperwork. If you dispose of the vehicle yourself you will also have to complete the appropriate documents from the licensing centre
- Tax certificate (*jidoushazei noufu shoumeisho*), depending on the office or company processing the paperwork

Selling Your Car

Selling your car requires more than just an agreement between you and the purchaser. You'll have to officially transfer the ownership, which requires getting hold of all of the items above, but instead of a certificate of disposal you will need a certificate of transfer (*jyouto shoumeisho*). The procedures for transferring ownership need to be carried out in the jurisdiction of the Land Transportation Office of the new owner. If number plates are re-issued a portion of the vehicle tax will be refunded. Procedures must be carried out within 15 days of the transfer. Please note that forms may vary by municipality, so check if you must follow any additional local regulations.

Cancelling Voluntary Insurance (*Nin i hoken*)

If you have paid for a year's worth of insurance, even if you cancel the policy mid-term, you will not receive a refund. However, if you are paying by the month you will not be charged after you cancel your policy. For detailed information, contact your insurance agency.

8. SHIPPING GOODS HOME

Courier Services & Private Freight Shipping Companies

There is a number of options for shipping goods home. These include courier services (*takuhaibin*), private freight shipping companies, and Japan Post.

Takuhaibin is an affordable option, which can be accessed through most supermarkets, convenience stores and gift shops, and provides both domestic and international shipping services. Detailed information about these services can be had from the nearest convenience store, or online.

Private freight shipping companies offer both air and sea freight services at a range of prices, depending on destination, volume and the services deployed. Information for a host of companies can also be found online. Please bear in mind that these services may take up to three months to complete a delivery and plan accordingly.

Shipping via JAPAN POST

Japan Post is perhaps the most economical and convenient way to ship things back home. Parcel post can be sent by surface mail, Economy Air (SAL) or airmail which vary in rate and transit speed. Economy Air (SAL) is a method in which parcels, printed matter and small packets are air-transported to the country of destination using open space on airplanes. Depending on the post office from which you send and the country of destination, it is also possible (and advisable) to insure the contents of your dispatch. Details about the aforementioned services, including package types, prices, cheaper rates for parcels containing printed matter and other discounts, etc., are available on the Japan Post website, or via telephone as follows:

www.post.japanpost.jp/english/index.html
 Postal Services Information in English TEL : 0570-046-111
 Hours of Operation: 8:00a.m.-10:00p.m. (Monday to Friday)
 9:00a.m.-10:00p.m. (Saturdays, Sundays and Public Holidays)

9. PREPARING FOR YOUR SUCCESSOR

The following is a list of information you should try to provide to your successor:

Self-Introduction:

- Brief self-introduction
- Contact details (your home and work telephone numbers, email and mailing addresses in Japan and the best times to contact you)
- If you will still be in Japan when your successor arrives, arrange to meet

Pre-Departure:

- What to pack
- What not to pack
- What to send ahead
- What you will need during Tokyo Orientation

About your city, town or village:

- Location, size and geography of the region
- Facilities available and the distance to them
- Availability and approximate cost of goods: food, clothing, books, etc.
- Activities and groups in the area
- Proximity of other foreigners, including other JET participants
- Any local events and festivals throughout the year, and around when
- Where you travelled, good places to relax
- Recommended restaurants and bars in your area

About your house or apartment:

- Rent and key money/deposit
- Furnishings supplied and what you want to sell (they are under no obligation to buy)
- What they should bring or buy for the apartment
- Description (how many rooms, floor plan, etc) and photos
- Average gas, electricity, phone and water bills and how they are paid
- Who owns the apartment and your relation to the owner, how your rent is paid, etc.
- Rules: pets, overnight guests, etc.

About your office or base school:

- Introduction of supervisors, colleagues and teachers (photos)
- List of who to give presents to
- List of who speaks English
- What to expect in the first few days and weeks
- Rules for taking annual leave, sick leave, time in lieu for working after hours, etc.
- Dress code
- How your salary is paid
- Setting up a bank account, getting a personal seal (*inkan*), etc.

About your job (ALT):

- Teaching situation: type of school, regular, base school, teaching at multiple schools, etc.
- School visit schedule
- A typical day/ lesson (number of classes, lesson planning, teaching materials, club activities, etc.)
- Teaching materials to bring
- Transportation to schools and office
- What to expect from students: attitude, language ability, etc.
- What to expect from teachers/colleagues
- School/office activities you take part in: sports, school trips, meetings, homerooms, etc.

About your job (CIR):

- Office situation: prefectural, city, town; relations with other offices
- Transportation to and from work
- A typical day: the time you arrive at the office, procedure, regular work
- What to expect from your colleagues: attitudes, language ability, etc.
- The amount and level of Japanese you are expected to use
- Materials to bring for speeches, teaching, translating
- How much of your work is after hours and whether you will receive time off in lieu
- Your responsibilities in the office
- Work or projects in progress or anticipated
- How you are involved in office life: office trips, etc.

About your job (SEA):

- Office situation: are you based in a sports centre, school, sports section of the BOE, etc.
- Transportation to and from work
- Your typical work schedule: when the inter-school competitions are held, training camps, where you coach and when
- An outline of the level of the groups you coach and how often you see them
- Outline of colleagues in your office and coaches you work with
- What type of equipment is available for you and your students at each place you coach
- What equipment/materials of their own they should bring
- Advice regarding Japanese language skills
- How involved you are in office/community life: office trips, local festivals, etc.
- Details of any other duties, e.g. seminars, newspaper articles, taking a team on exchange/hosting a visiting team from overseas, etc.

What to leave for your successor:

- Town map (mark supermarkets and so on)
- Bus and train schedules
- List of emergency and work phone numbers
- Instructions on how to use the appliances
- Garbage arrangements: times and categories
- Copies and explanations of your bills
- Office/school seating chart with names, job titles, responsibilities, etc.
- Office/school schedule: breaks, cleaning, clubs, community centre events, lunch (where, what and with whom), etc.
- Notes on projects, team teaching, class levels, lesson plans, etc.
- Anything else you wish your predecessor had left for you!
- Your contact information

In some cases you might not have a successor, but you could be asked by your contracting organisation or the prefectural office to provide information about your town and area to an incoming JET. Please modify this guide accordingly. Also, CLAIR advises predecessors to choose their language carefully when communication with an incoming JET. Present the information based as much on fact and as little on opinion as possible, and keep the tone positive. Good advice is always welcome, but even if your experience was not overwhelmingly positive, it is always best to let others form their own opinions.

10. STATUS OF RESIDENCE

If you stay in Japan, you must update your Status of Residence at immigration. You also must visit the local ward or city office within 14 days to update your alien registration information to reflect any changes to your Status of Residence, employer and home address on your alien registration card.

If you try to leave the country after your Status of Residence has expired (even if it is just a day over), you will be classed as an illegal alien and interrogated, possibly detained, at your port of departure. Overstaying is subject to punishment or deportation under Japanese immigration laws and CLAIR or your contracting organisation will not be able to provide you with any assistance under those circumstances, so please ensure that your Status of Residence is in order.

Which situation applies to you?

- **Status of Residence expires before the end of your term of appointment**

Up to 3 months before your expiry date, you can apply for an **Extension of Period of Stay**. Please be sure to address this as overstaying your time could carry serious consequences as mentioned above.

- **Status of Residence expires on the same day your term of appointment ends**

Up to 2 weeks before the expiry date, you must apply for a **Temporary Visitor Status of Residence** to begin from the day after your current Status of Residence expires. See below for more information on Temporary Visitor Status of Residence.

- **Your Status of Residence remains valid after your term of appointment ends but before you leave Japan**

Up to 2 weeks before the expiry date, you must apply for a **Temporary Visitor Status of Residence** to begin from the day after your current visa expires. See below for information on Temporary Visitor Status of Residence.

- **Status of residence remains valid after your term of appointment ends and you decide to remain in Japan (without working)**

If your Status of Residence has not expired after your term of appointment ends (e.g. your Status of Residence is valid for 3 years, but you have used up 1 or 2 years) then you may stay for up to 90 days for the purpose of sightseeing after your term of appointment ends without changing your Status of Residence. (Note: your contracting organisation is only required to provide your return air fare if you leave Japan within 30 days of the end of your term of appointment). If you stay beyond 90 days, even though your Status of Residence has not expired, it is only considered valid if you are still working in a job that falls within the category covered by your current Status of Residence.

- **Status of residence remains valid after your term of appointment ends and you decide to remain in Japan for work**

Depending on the type of work you do, you may be required to apply for a **Change of Status of Residence**, to one that matches your new employment. Confirm the details of this with your new employer and the Immigration Bureau and complete the necessary procedures before the start of your new job and before the expiry date of your current Status of Residence. You will need to change your Status of Residence if you become a student.

For applications you need:

- Application form for Change of Status of Residence to Temporary Visitor
- Reasons for Requesting a Change of Status (explanation of reasons for staying in Japan, including an itinerary, prepared by you)
- Letter supporting your travel itinerary and the starting and ending date of your contract and your intended date of departure (Ask your contracting organisation to issue the letter)
- Others: A copy of the airline ticket for passage out You must also be able to show that you have sufficient funds for travel and living in Japan until your date of departure.
- Valid passport and Alien Registration Card
- ¥4000 Revenue Stamp

Change of Status of Residence**For applications you need:**

- Application for **Change of Status of Residence**
- Curriculum Vitae or Resume
- JET Programme Terms and Conditions (Documentation that clearly shows conditions such as work content, length of appointment & remuneration)
- Statement of earnings (*gensenchoshuhyo*) and proof of tax payment for the time you were on JET
- A copy of the company's registration, profit and loss statement, and a brochure. Where the contracting organisation is a private school, documentation that illustrates specific information about the school is necessary.
- A release letter (*zaishokushomeisho*) from your contracting organisation
- A valid passport and Alien Registration Card
- ¥4000 Revenue Stamp

DISCLAIMER: CLAIR assumes no responsibility for the accuracy of the information provided above. It is meant only as a guide. It is your responsibility to obtain accurate information directly from the Immigration Bureau as to what applies to your specific case and to ensure that your Status of Residence is updated accordingly.

11. CUSTOMS

What you bring back with you (accompanied or unaccompanied) will most likely be inspected by customs for control of restricted or prohibited items, or assessed for the payment of duties. Also, your home country might have special provisions in place for citizens returning from long-term stays overseas. To avoid fines or prosecution, or to benefit from any special provisions, familiarise yourself with what may apply to you. You may obtain information online from the relevant customs and/or immigration department, or seek advice from your home country embassy or consulate. CLAIR strongly recommends that you research this well in advance and plan accordingly.

12. INSURANCE & PENSION**JAPAN HEALTH INSURANCE ASSOCIATION ADMINISTERED SOCIAL (HEALTH) INSURANCE**

Your National Health Insurance coverage ends on the last day of your term of appointment, so your health insurance card must be returned to your contracting organisation on your last day.

JET ACCIDENT INSURANCE

Your JET Accident Insurance Policy covers you until the day you arrive back in your home country, or until August 31, whichever comes first. You'll need to make your own arrangements after this date if you want personal insurance when you return to your home country.

PENSION REFUND

All participants on the JET Programme pay into Japanese Pension Insurance from their monthly salaries. When a foreign employee who has been paying Pension Insurance gives up residence in Japan, that person may claim a refund of up to 36 months of the premiums paid.

Filing for the pension refund, officially called the "Lump-sum Withdrawal Payment", and the tax refund associated with its payout is a 7-step process:

1. **Before leaving**, get the necessary forms and **designate a tax representative**.
2. After leaving Japan, mail necessary forms for refund.
3. Receive Lump-sum Withdrawal Payment into overseas bank account.
4. Mail notice of refund to tax representative in Japan.
5. Tax representative files for refund of tax on lump-sum withdrawal.
6. Tax representative receives tax refund.
7. Tax representative transfers money to you.

In order to be considered for the Lump-sum Withdrawal Payment, you must fulfil the following conditions:

- Apply within two years of leaving Japan
- Not possess Japanese citizenship
- Have paid Employees Pension Insurance premiums for at least six months
- Do not have a place of residence in Japan (i.e. only those former foreign residents who have cancelled their Alien Registration and left Japan)
- Never qualified for pension benefits (including Disability Allowance)

Upon payment of the Lump-sum Withdrawal Payment, the period of enrolment corresponding to the paid amount is nullified. Therefore, participants from countries having Social Security Agreements with Japan will need to assess the benefit of receiving the refund or combining the coverage periods in Japan and their home country.

Countries with Social Security Agreements with Japan as of January 2011 are: Australia, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Ireland the Netherlands, South Korea, Spain, the UK and the USA. The agreements with South Korea and the UK do not have pension enrolment measures in place that allow for combining of coverage periods. Please check with your home country's social insurance agency for details about the options that are available to you.

Amount Refunded

Those who have been insured under the Employees' Pension Insurance shall be granted an amount according to the period of coverage. The following chart is an estimate of the amount refunded. Please note that the amount refunded will vary according to your monthly remuneration and/or premium rate.

Period of Coverage (VSL)	Estimated amount refunded*
6—11 months	140,000 yen
12—17 months	280,000 yen
18—23 months	420,000 yen
24—29 months	560,000 yen
30—35 months	700,000 yen
over 36 months	840,000 yen

**Calculated on a monthly remuneration of 300,000 yen (before tax). This information is correct as of February 2011.*

Process for Filing for Lump Sum Withdrawal

Before leaving Japan, obtain the "Claim Form for the Lump-sum Withdrawal Payments (for National Pension and Employees' Pension Insurance)" (*Dattai ichijikin seikyu-sho (Kokumin Nenkin/Kousei Nenkin Hoken)*) from the Japan Pension Service (*Nihon Nenkin Kikou*) office nearest you, or download the form at:

http://www.nenkin.go.jp/main/individual_02/pdf/english.pdf

Fill in the necessary information and mail the completed form and accompanying documents to the Japan Pension Service after leaving Japan. You must attach the following items:

- Pension Book (the book will be returned to you at a later date. If you do not have your pension book, be sure to fill in all required information in the appropriate section of the form.)
- A photocopy of your passport (page(s) showing your name, date of birth, nationality, signature, work visa, and the date of departure from Japan)
- A document (copy of your bank statement, bank passbook, etc.) verifying the bank name, branch office name, branch address, bank account number, and the full name of the account holder (must be your own). Make sure that you have the correct bank stamp before sending it.

Note: The Claim Form allows for four different types of pensions numbers, but ALL JET Programme participants **only** need to supply the "**Basic Pension Number**". The other three types of pension numbers can be left blank.

Please mail the claim form along with the accompanying documents to:

Japan Pension Service
3-5-24 Takaido Nishi
Suginami-ku, Tokyo 168-8505 JAPAN
TEL 03-6700-1165 (*Japanese Only*)

If granted, the Lump-sum Withdrawal Payment will be deposited directly into your bank account overseas. The amount of the Lump-sum Withdrawal Payment remitted to the account will be calculated at the currency exchange rate on the date of transaction.

Tax Refund on Lump Sum Withdrawal

When the Lump-sum Withdrawal Payment is made by the Japan Pension Service, that payment will be subjected to a 20% tax called Alternative Taxation. Those who are eligible to file for the Lump-sum Withdrawal Payment on the Employees' Pension Insurance, which includes most JETs, may also qualify to receive a refund on the 20% flat tax placed on the Lump-sum Withdrawal Payment in accordance with Article 171 of Income Tax Law. The process for claiming a refund on the tax is described below.

1. Designate a person to file your tax paperwork

Before leaving Japan, get a copy of the *Nozeikanrinin no todokedesho (gaikokujin-yo)* [Declaration Naming a Person to Administer the Taxpayer's Tax Affairs (For use by aliens)] form, appoint a Tax Representative and submit the form to your local tax office, i.e. the tax office for the jurisdiction where your residence is located. When designating a Tax Representative, find someone you trust (a colleague, friend, etc.) with financial matters and whom you can easily correspond with once you return to your home country. A Tax Representative must be a resident of Japan, but does not have to be Japanese.

2. File for the Pension Refund

After leaving Japan, file for the Lump-sum Withdrawal Payment. Once you have received your Lump-sum Withdrawal Payment, send the original *Dattai ichijikin shikyu kettei tsuchisho* [Notice of the Lump-sum Withdrawal Payment (Entitlement)] to your Tax Representative.

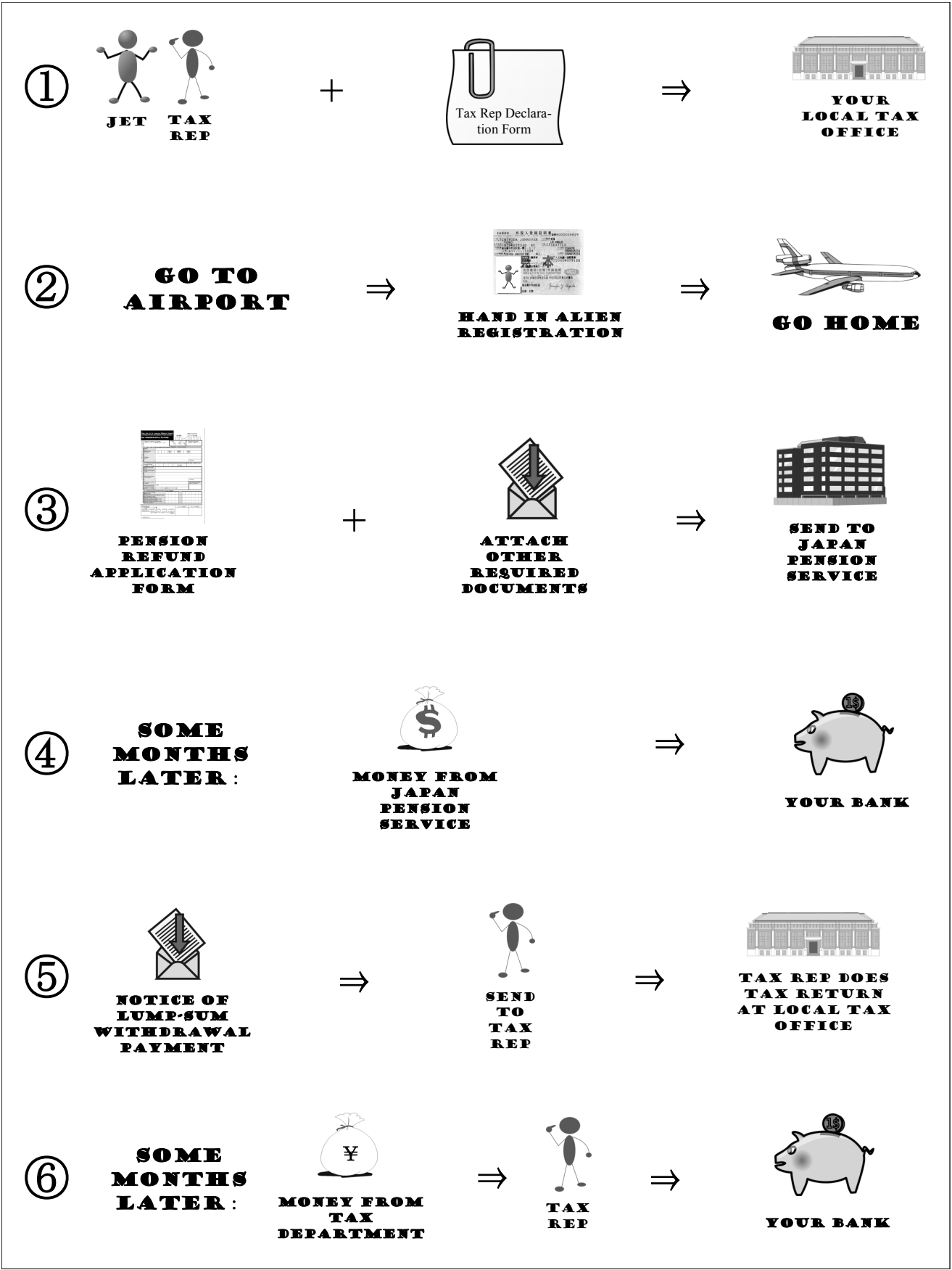
3. Designate a bank account and file for the Tax Refund

Have your Tax Representative go to the same tax office as step 1 above and file the *kakutei shinkokusho* on your behalf. The refund will be deposited into your Tax Representative's bank account in Japan. Then have your Tax Representative transfer the refunded amount into your own bank account. You may file for the Pension Tax Refund as soon as you receive your Notice of the Lump-sum Withdrawal Payment (*Dattai ichijikin shikyu kettei tsuchisho*). Application must be made within 5 years after leaving Japan.

It can take up to 6 months or more from the processing of your application to the time that money is deposited in your bank account. The process could take longer if there are insufficient or unclear documents.

DISCLAIMER: CLAIR assumes no responsibility for the accuracy of the information provided above. It is meant only as a guide. All specific questions and concerns must be addressed directly to the Japan Pension Service (using the contact information above) as they remain the exclusive authority on pension refund matters. Consultations in English are accepted in writing only.

Pension Refund Procedures
Flow Chart



useful vocabulary related to the pension refund

厚生年金	kousei nenkin	Employees' Pension Insurance
日本年金機構	Nihon nenkin kiko	Japan Pension Service
脱退一時金	dattai ichijikin	Pension Refund
年金手帳	nenkin techou	Pension Book
納税管理人の届け書(外国人用)	nouzei kanrinin no todokesho, gaikokujin you	Declaration Naming a Person to Administer the Taxpayer's Affairs (for foreigners)
脱退一時金請求書	dattai ichijikin seikyuusho	Claim Form for the Lump-sum Withdrawal Payments
脱退一時金支給決定通知書	dattai ichijikin shikyuu kettei tsuchisho	Notice of Lump-sum Withdrawal Payment
納税管理人	nouzei kanrinin	Tax Representative
住民税	jyuuminn zei	Local Inhabitants Tax
確定申告	kakutei shinkoku	Payment Confirmation, tax return
脱退一時金の源泉所得税の還付	Dattai ichijikin no gensen shotokuzei no kanpu	Tax Refund on the Lump Sum Withdrawal Payment of the Pension

13. RETURN AIRFARE

JET participants are eligible to receive a travel allowance for the passage back to their home countries as stated in the JET Programme Terms and Conditions. This is on the condition that JET participants complete their period of appointment, do not enter into a subsequent contract with their contracting organisation or a third party in Japan, and that the JET is leaving Japan to return home within one month of the completion of said term of appointment.

If you plan to stay in Japan for over one month from the date on which your term of appointment ends, your contracting organisation is not obligated to pay for your flight home. Similarly, if you are not returning home directly, but are travelling to a third country, as per the JET Programme Terms and Conditions, the contracting organisation has no obligation to provide the return ticket.

A JET who fulfils the above conditions will receive a one-way economy-class ticket from Japan directly to the designated airport from which he/she departed in his/her home country. The contracting organisation is also responsible for the passage from the contracting organisation to the international airport in Japan from which the JET will depart.

The following two conditions are attached to the provision of the ticket:

- In principle, the return ticket should be for a direct flight. If a direct flight is not available, a ticket requiring the least number of transfers should be provided. In such circumstances, the travelling time should not be unreasonably longer than a direct flight.
- In the event that the JET unavoidably has to cancel the reservation (due to an unforeseen accident or illness) the contracting organisation is to provide a ticket for another flight.

It is up to the contracting organisation to decide whether to provide an actual ticket or the equivalent amount in cash and also, to decide on the type of ticket to be provided.

useful vocabulary related to return airfare

航空券	koukuu-ken	Air ticket
予約	yoyaku	Reservations
見積書	mitsumori-sho	Quotes
JET参加者帰国予定書	JET sankasha kikoku yotei sho	JET Return Airfare Itinerary Form
搭乗券	toujou-ken	Boarding pass

So, you're going home...

Contributed by Karah Howard, CIR, Mie Prefecture 2001-2004

The following is a list of suggestions for what you should do to prepare for leaving Japan. This information draws on my experience of being a Prefectural Advisor (PA) for three years, and on the ideas of other former JETs and PAs.

1. Preparing to Leave

- Make a list of things you want to do before you leave Japan in order of priority
- Give yourself a false deadline of 2 weeks earlier so that you will actually get everything done on time rather than panic when you realise you are unprepared
- Be prepared for a rise in stress levels in yourself and the other JETs around you (both JETs returning home and those being re-appointed)
- Take time to reflect on your life in Japan. Preparing information for your successor will help you with this.
- You have a support network here in Japan – talk to your friends about what you are going through. The chances are that they are thinking similar things. You can always call your PA if you want to talk over anything, or you can call the JETLINE at CLAIR or the Peer Support Group, as well.
- Try to leave your last month free of too many commitments. Enjoy the time you have remaining in Japan – live in the now while preparing for your return

2. Saying Goodbye to Friends and Colleagues

- Start planning your goodbyes now! Make a list of the people who mean the most to you here and reflect on what kind of ongoing relationship you realistically plan/want to have with them in the future.
- Say goodbye in a way that does your relationship justice – some people avoid this difficult goodbye scenario completely – either by suddenly forming unrealistically strong bonds or by alienating themselves. Don't make the same mistake.
- Be aware of the "we'll keep in touch" promise. Think beforehand of the people you actually want to stay in touch with.
- Remember that your students may want some kind of closure, too. Preparing a farewell speech for them is a great way to leave them with a positive and motivational message. Encourage them to continue studying English, to chase after their dreams and to look forward to welcoming the next JET.
- While you may have built up a close enough relationship with some of your Japanese colleagues and friends to give them a hug goodbye, think twice before embracing your supervisor or principal! In these situations, a deep bow is the best solution.
- You may want to give thank you letters to people who have been particularly helpful to you. You may also want to send special people a note or a card from your home country so that they know you did not forget about them. Below is an example of how to write a goodbye letter in Japanese.

3. Writing Goodbye Letters in Japanese

As I'm sure you're all aware, in Japanese culture, when anything starts or finishes, it is important to mark the occasion with some pomp and ceremony! For this reason, thank you letters and goodbye letters really ought to be written, at least to your *kocho senseis* and your Board of Education. Perhaps some other teachers and your landlord etc would also be pleased to receive one.

Writing letters in Japanese can be time-consuming, as most of the formal rules of traditional Japanese still apply. Here is a crash course just for you – a model on which you may base your own. It is pretty simple, so if you want something more difficult, take a look at one of the many books available on Japanese letter writing, such as *Writing Letters in Japanese* by Kikuko Tatematsu, et al., or search the internet for some more examples.

拝啓
暑い毎日が続いておりますが、先生はいかがお過ごしでしょうか。
さて、私は去年より、XX中学校で英語教師としての仕事を続けてまいりました。
これまで何かとお世話をいただきまして、本当にありがとうございました。帰国後はオクスフォード大学で、更に勉強を続けることになっておりますが、今後ともよろしくご指導くださいますようお願い申し上げます。
最後に先生のご健康とご発展を祈り申し上げます。
敬具
七月三十日
トム・ジョーネズ
知念聡子校長先生
追伸・・・帰国後の住所は次の通りです。
25 Oxford Rd, Oxford, OXF 123, UK

It says:

It's still hot everyday at the moment. How are you faring *sensei* in the continually hot weather?

Since last year I've been working here at XX Junior High School as an English teacher.

I wish to thank you for your great assistance up till now. After my return I am going to continue my studies as a postgraduate student at Oxford University. I hope you will continue to favour me with you guidance in the future.

Sensei, I want to wish you continuing health and every success.

Regards,

Tom Jones July 30

To Principal Satoko Chinen

P.S. This will be my address after I return:

25 Oxford Rd, Oxford. OXF 123 UK

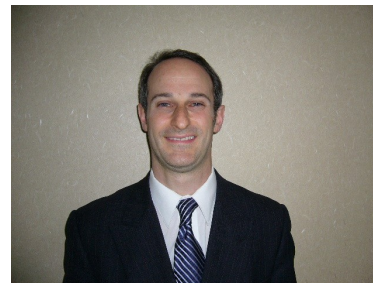
Chapter 1 Preparations for Going Home	Chapter 2 Reverse Culture Shock and Re-entry	Chapter 3 Further Education	Chapter 4 Post-JET Employment	Chapter 5 JET Alumni Association (JETAA)
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Chapter 2:

Reverse Culture Shock and Re-entry

Reverse Culture Shock: Surviving and Thriving

Contributed by Adam Komisarof
Associate Professor & Director of Academic and Student Affairs
Reitaku University
ALT, Saitama Prefecture 1990-1992



When I arrived in Japan on the JET Programme, just like so many other participants, I was living large - having my flight paid to Japan, being feted by government officials, and earning a respectable salary for a recent college graduate that made me financially self-sufficient for the first time in my life. Times were good. I made many new friends - both JETs from all over the world and local Japanese. Fast forward two years later after my return to the U.S. I was living at home with my parents, jobless, and getting used to those dear words from my mother which I hadn't heard in many years, "Adam, it's time to take out the trash." Like so many other JETs, I found getting used to my "home" country a tricky proposition. I missed Japan more than ever - my Japanese colleagues, my students, and my JET friends. I yearned to eat truly fresh sushi again, bask in an *onsen* bath, and have people bow to me in a department store instead of greeting me with a scowl and saying testily, "What do you want?"

This article is designed to bust a couple of myths about reverse culture shock (RCS) and also to give some hot hints on how to handle returning home. Hopefully, you all can benefit from my experience not only as a former JET who has returned to my culture of origin, but also my insights as an intercultural communication trainer who has been giving workshops on RCS and advising JETs for the past ten years on how to gracefully, gently transition back home.

What Is RCS?

According to Nancy Adler, a world-renowned expert, RCS occurs during the transition from living in a foreign culture (for a significant amount of time) back into one's native culture. It is the cousin of culture shock, or the frustration and confusion that result from being bombarded by cues, signs, and symbols with different meanings from those in one's home culture. With RCS, the cues and meanings that one expects to encounter upon returning home are nowhere to be found.

During RCS, people often experience similar stages to culture shock:

1. "Honeymoon Period" in which you are elated to see old friends and family, visit your favourite restaurants, and soak in your hometown's atmosphere
2. "Disintegration Period" in which the stress of readjusting to home accumulates
3. "Deep Reverse Culture Shock," or when people often feel depressed, angry, and/or alienated from their "home" surroundings
4. "Autonomy," in which you finally begin to feel readjusted and some equilibrium.

As this process involves an emotionally deflating time after the Honeymoon Period and a positive rebound during Autonomy, it is referred to as a U-Curve during culture shock. When these stages are repeated during RCS, it can be visualised as a W-shaped curve, or W-Curve.

Busting a Few Myths of Reentry

When it comes to RCS, most people who have not yet experienced it wince when they hear about it. "Ooh, that sounds horrible," their worried countenances say. Yes, RCS can be tough. However, the first myth about RCS, as well as culture shock, is that it is *not* a sickness. For example, culture shock is a positive sign that you are actually involved in the cultural milieu surrounding you. If you lived in Roppongi, worked and socialised only with people from your home country, and enjoyed your favourite foods from back home every day, then you would probably never experience culture shock. Nor would you ever learn anything new from being exposed to people with values, communication styles, and customs different from your own. Therefore, a healthy case of culture shock means that you are actually learning something while abroad. It can be painful, but your perspective on the world and self-understanding are expanding.

Congratulations!

Likewise, RCS is usually positive (as long as you do not become irreversibly depressed and/or want to harm yourself or others - then it is important to seek professional help). Your discomfort from RCS not only indicates that you changed while abroad, but that you are actively involved in making sense of the difference between who you are now and your former self.

Another myth is that coming home is easier than going abroad. Often, this is not the case. All JETs hear about culture shock during the Post-Arrival Orientation, if not far sooner. We all expect some bumps as we adjust to Japan. But when we return to our native cultures, we often expect to slip into our former lives like an old, comfortable set of clothes. It doesn't usually work. Furthermore, because we don't expect to have trouble readjusting to home, the "shock" becomes intensified and can be far more difficult to traverse than the culture shock that we experienced in Japan. Who would expect that seeing family, former friends, and roaming our old neighborhood would be difficult? It becomes challenging because we have changed in Japan, and more often than not, home, and all of the people living there, have changed, too.

Hot Hints for Mollifying RCS

So what can you do not only to make RCS pleasanter, but also to maximise its potential benefits? Here are my hot hints:

1. Realise that people will not always be as good at listening as you need them to be.

You will want to share many stories of your adventures abroad, but not everyone will take interest after the initial "Honeymoon Period" of being home. Even sympathetic listeners may have difficulty truly understanding what you've been through in Japan. Instead of trying to share all of your stories with each special person in your life, try to share one story, and every time a different one, with each person. Then, you can tell all of your stories without testing the resolve of your confidants.

2. Use the distance as an excuse to keep in close touch with the people you left in Japan - and to master kanji!

When I returned home, ironically, I felt home sickness for the people and places I'd left in Japan. Since I was jobless at first, phone calls were out of the question. So I wrote a letter a day. Also, I wrote in Japanese to my Japanese friends. Although I could only write in hiragana and a few basic kanji at the time, I bolstered my writing skills to the point where I was teaching Japanese one year later. Through letter writing, I still felt close to my friends in Japan, and I also developed new language skills.

3. Give yourself plenty of time.

Not everyone experiences RCS, but among those who do, it typically lasts from six to twelve months. It is important that you understand its peaks and valleys (remember the W-Curve!) and give yourself the time that you need to traverse it.

4. Relearn your home culture.

While you were in Japan, your significant others may have changed. Also, popular culture has moved on without you: new movies, catchwords, music, and political events have shaped both what people are saying and how they are speaking about their surroundings. Practice the skills that you used to decode Japan's foreign culture: ask questions, observe what people do and talk about (as well as what they don't), and be patient as you decode your new environment.

5. Seek support networks.

Of course, you will rekindle some old friendships, and others will fizzle. But this is a perfect time for meeting people - people who understand the "new you." Take this chance to volunteer in organisations and seek out community events where you can find both Japanese and internationally-minded non-Japanese who can relate to your experiences abroad and of being a global nomad. The JET Alumni Association (JETAA) likely has a chapter either located in your city or nearby and can put you in touch with a large community of people.

6. Don't compartmentalise your JET experience.

This is perhaps most important. First, you need to figure out the aspects of the “new you” which you value. It may be a skill you developed in Japan - such as speaking Japanese, practicing ikebana, or public speaking. It could be subtler; you may pride yourself in being able to work with diverse types of people or have a newfound interest in diplomacy. The key is to identify these new skills, interests, or attitudes - whatever they are - and find a regular time, place, and people with whom you can actualise them. Finding this silver thread in your experience and continuing to weave it through your reentry will guarantee that you create value from having been abroad. Those who do not may feel as if their time in Japan has no connection to their lives' next chapter. For me, this continuity came from finding a Tai Chi teacher and meeting other former JETs and local Japanese through JETAA activities. Also, in my next job, I taught Japanese and Asian studies, which allowed me to share my newfound knowledge and all of the stories that I'd been dying to share since I got home. In a broader sense, I was promoting intercultural understanding - this time by teaching Americans about Japan, rather than the opposite as I'd done on the JET Programme. By identifying the aspects of myself which I'd developed in Japan and treasured most, and then finding the means to enjoy them back in my home country, I could transform RCS from a tribulation to an experience that promoted my growth. You can do it too. Just follow these hot hints!

Advice: Leaving JET and Returning Home

Contributed by Okinawa JET Alumni

What was good about leaving JET?

- Going back home, seeing old family and friends, catching up with everyone. The Pubs too, they are the best. Getting a large fruity tax rebate 6 months down the line is nice too!
- Seeing family and friends again was great and having access to all my old familiar stuff (food, routine, fitness, recreation, clothes, shopping) felt good!
- You are free to do whatever you want. You can finally move on and do new things. Also seeing friends and family after so long was really nice.
- Leaving and coming home, not missing the job, finding clothes that fit, having those odd flashes where you start grinning like an idiot because you are happy to be home. Listening to people talking in English around you. Realising how you have changed and how much you learned from the JET experience.

What was bad about leaving JET?

- I guess I wished I had stayed another year. Life in Japan is so much easier than trying to get into the UK job market. And after a month back home, I was tired of it already!
- I miss the carefree camaraderie of my school. I never thought I felt a part there but I still miss it. I miss the fresh air, warm seas, heat, laughing with/at my kids and...THE MONEY! Good god I miss that!
- Saying good-bye to a great experience and people and family and friends that you had gotten to know and love. This was definitely the hardest bit.
- The job rejection letters. Missing the people that you left behind. That one, old, dear friendship that is different and you realise that your time in Japan probably cost you that friendship. Missing tofu chanpuru. Being back in a closed off, non-multicultural boring place.

What were you glad you did?

- I made plans and dates to catch up with all the people I wanted to before I left. It takes a long time, so I'm glad I started early. I'm also glad I organised what I wanted to do when I got back home. I began studying right after the summer. That kept me from getting lost in the transition of it all.
- The goodbyes were pretty exhausting and went on longer than I thought possible. I was glad I started those early.
- I'm glad I knew the tax back system inside and out. We ran into a few glitches but since I knew it so well, it worked out fine. I'm really glad I picked a responsible and reliable tax representative, but even she got confused with all the paperwork. I'm glad I knew it myself.
- Saying good-bye to everything and everybody. That was really important and made me feel like that part of my life was really over. Closure.

What do you wish you had done differently in your preparations to leave?

- Also a note for Brits, there are stringent weight limits on baggage so don't get caught trying to bring too much home. My friend was made to empty her wallet and give all the money she had to get her too plentiful bags home. SEND STUFF HOME EARLY! Save yourself the airport headache.
- I forgot to send a copy of my passport to prove that I had left the country but that was only a minor hitch. I got the 80% pension refund in January and the 20% in April. KEEP TRACK OF YOUR SCHOOLS' ADDRESSES AND FAX NUMBERS! You will probably need to contact them in sorting out the tax stuff.
- I wanted to get out FAST! I wish I had taken more time in the preparation to leave. It would have made the closure more complete. I should also have done more regarding a job when I got home. I should have done more research on that.

Did you experience any re-entry shock? If so what was it like?

- No re-entry shock but if you go back without any plans of what to do, the job market gives you a slap in the face. JET tends to lend too much weight to "transferable skills" that you may have learned while on the Programme. In reality it's different. People here are not going to over praise you, as they tend to do in Japan. Be realistic about what you can do.
- I had a few pangs of "man I could have stayed another year." That was pretty hard at times but then a lot of good things started happening at home and it balanced itself out.
- I experienced a lot of re-entry shock. Most striking was meeting friends once again and realising the extent to which their lives and mine had diverged. Even through email and mail contact, we were not able to keep up to date with each other. I was really out of the loop and that was really hard. I also had to guard against Japan talk. People don't want to hear about Japan, they are not interested in more than a few short stories. Take a SMALL photo album with you to friends and family, if they want to see more, bring out the big ones. I also found people to be rude and macho and boorish. I felt so out of place in clubs, it was funny...I found that the country I had so longed to come back and be a part of, was not suited to me anymore. It was a bit disturbing.

Do you have any advice for people preparing to leave?

- Get help writing your farewell speech. It may be the last thing people hear you say. Leave a good impression.
- Make sure you have your tax stuff sorted out with your tax rep. If they've never done it, they will be very confused and it takes awhile to get all the forms done.
- Don't give up on your schools, do your best to still get involved. Some of my best memories come from those last few months. Don't pack your suitcases two months in advance and watch the calendar. Your home country is NOT as great as you remember it to be.
- Make sure to have a plan or focus for your life when you return home to help carry you through the rough, re-entry shock times. If you don't have this, you can feel quite lost.
- Prepare now, getting rid of cars and stuff is always more difficult than you think! Get to know your Tax Back system really well. Choose a representative that you KNOW will do a good job and who you can contact from overseas. Maybe a teacher who will be at your old school for at least another year would be good. Don't expect career options to be suddenly open to you because you speak a little Japanese. Most places want certification. Expect the best but plan for the worst. I made copies of EVERYTHING and kept track of everything. Things went wrong and I was able to figure it out and fix them.
- Get an idea of what you want to do when you get home, school? Work? Nothing? Having a plan helps! Also, start sending stuff home in boxes! Don't wait till the end and have to lug it home with you on the plane...it's a pain and it costs a lot!
- Be prepared to miss Japan. You will!

Results from the 2010 JETAA Survey *

Reverse Culture Shock/Settling into Life After Returning Home

Did you experience reverse culture shock after leaving Japan?	
Yes	65.7%
No	20.5%
Not Certain	8.4%
Still living in Japan	5.4%
When did reverse culture shock occur?	
Within the first two months	71.2%
Within two to six months	21.2%
Within six months to a year	5.8%
After one year	1.9%

*The JETAA Survey asks former JET participants questions about their life after completing the JET Programme. 269 former JET participants responded to the 2010 online survey, which was accessible on the JET Programme website from 15 October 2010 to 15 January 2011.

Reverse Culture Shock/Settling into Life After Returning Home

What form did your reverse culture shock take? (Comments of Survey Respondents)

- I noticed that I became uncomfortable with the rudeness of my culture.
- I missed Japanese food and customs and I missed spending time with my Japanese friends.
- It took a little while to adapt to being back in the UK, and suddenly not having a job to start with. I am still constantly surprised by poor service, the loudness and relative rudeness of people. I have struggled linguistically since returning home and a lot of my prior language abilities were lost.
- Adjusting to a new culture and language as well as a new working situation and colleagues was difficult.
- Felt nervous around large groups of English people in public places.
- Getting used to American culture again, everybody speaking English, not being a foreigner surrounded by Japanese, being able to "blend in." Also, Had difficulty dealing with my future plans.
- A feeling of being out of place. Irritable with some aspects of Canadian culture. Feeling out of place at times. Everything was so different and boring. I felt a great sense of dissatisfaction coming home. Life was different back home. Friends had moved away, couldn't get a job etc
- Comparing everything to way things were done in Japan. Largely it was when shopping, especially in the supermarkets. Sometimes also in the informality of American culture (for example, I found myself bowing to everyone). Trying to figure out my new identity - I was no longer an ALT, or a JET, and being an "Australian" didn't matter.
- Having different foods and different cultural practices to follow. I miss Japan. Nothing serious, just odd moments of "oh I need to hand people cash directly at the till, there's no little tray for me to put it in". And other similar moments. I was homesick for my life in Japan. While I was happy to reconnect with family and friends, I missed the new friends I had made. I was different and life was different.
- A desire to return to Japan. Expecting things to be a certain way and being off-put when they weren't - simple things like the lack of politeness from clerks in stores. Not being on the same level as old friends.
- I really want to go back. Anxiety, frustration dealing with everyday communication Very extreme. I was gone for 3 years, and only visited back once for 1 week. Every thing was very different. They way people talked, did business, ate, etc. Many of the customs I learned in Japan I still use every day, like taking off shoes in the house, "itadakimasu", even bowing into the phone (yes sometimes). Plus I feel I have a higher tolerance for things that are different than my co-workers.
- I did not return to South Africa immediately after my JET year. What happened when I returned is that I was no longer used to the way most things are done back in South Africa. e.g. having to wait for a long time at the bank or post office. Also, most of the conveniences in Japan were a thing of the past. e.g. transport, stores, etc. A car let me cross the road in front of it, and instead of waving to thank the driver, I bowed!
- I was also very much in shock when I saw how people were not conservative in the way they dress here. When i got off the plane I was shocked at what everyone at the airport was wearing. I thought they were exhibitionists.

Chapter 1
Preparations for Going Home

Chapter 2
Reverse Culture Shock and Re-entry

Chapter 3
Further Education

Chapter 4
Post-JET Employment

Chapter 5
JET Alumni Association (JETAA)

Chapter 3:

Further Education

Going Back to School

From Teacher to Student:

Making the Decision to Pursue an Advanced Degree

Contributed by Leah J. Gowron
ALT, Saitama Prefecture 1990-1991
(Manitoba-Saskatchewan JETAA/San Francisco JETAA)



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For most JETs, the question of “So, now what?” clouds their last months on the JET Programme. Leaving a familiar lifestyle, relocating to another part of Japan, returning to your home country, relocating to a new location, coupled with the potential loss of income if you are not immediately transitioning from JET to a new job, are all factors and concerns shared by departing JETs.

Some JETs address these challenges by reflecting on their time in Japan from an educational standpoint: Was there something unique and fascinating culturally/linguistically/historically that I want to continue to study? Have I discovered, through my teaching, language or management experiences, a possible new professional path to explore? Was JET a break between the completion of my first degree and the eventual continuation in that same path of study?

No one answer fits, but the idea of furthering your education after JET is one response to that “now what?” question. In the 2001 survey of non-renewing JETs, more than 32% of the 317 who responded made the decision to pursue further education. You are in good company if you spent part of your last year either researching university programmes, seeking higher education funding, and applying for programmes, or are planning to start the process once you are settled post-JET.

The real goal should be to make the best use of your time and energy to ensure two things: that the reason you have decided to pursue an advanced degree is based on facts and some personal reality checks; and that you feel as prepared as possible to offer the strongest application to a given programme/university as you can, including a thorough understanding of when and how to address your JET experiences.

The Value of an Advanced Degree: Myths and Realities

Making the decision to attend a graduate programme takes time – time to reflect on why you feel there is a need or desire to obtain that next level of education, and time to research the market – nationally and internationally – to understand not only why you want to study a particular topic, but also where.

Additionally, the “where” question may also have a significant impact on both being accepted (many universities place limits on the number of international students they accept per programme), and in receiving funding. You may or may not qualify for certain types of funding either as an international student at a university outside of your country of residence, or via loans and bursary programmes from your country of residence or the country you will be in while you study. The “where” part of this question could even impact your likelihood of being employed in the future. Finally, the timing of the “I am going to graduate school”, or “I plan to now study XX topic” may affect your ability to apply for national and international fellowship programmes, which have the potential to offer successful candidates significant funding, but only if you meet their application cycle.

Every year, a few months before my students complete their MA degrees, and are frantically working on their job search, I witness a sudden spurt of interest in students wanting to pursue another degree. I am a strong supporter of advanced degrees; I have two MA-level degrees myself, and work at a university that focuses on professional advanced degrees. But, education for the sake of avoiding the job search is not something I support! And, while I wish we were in an environment where we could all afford education for the simple pleasure of education itself, sadly that is seldom the case. Some examples of the questions I hear from my students, and have also heard over the years at a number of JET conferences I have spoken at, include:

- I am planning to get my Master's/ Ph.D. because I know that with an advanced degree I am guaranteed to earn much more money;
- My family expects me to get another degree;
- The idea of searching for a job scares me, so going back to school postpones that concern;
- If I go to the "right" school, I will not have to search for a job upon graduating; the jobs will come to me;
- How long can a Ph.D. really take – you are just writing about something you like to study; and
- I cannot possibly get into XX field/career if I do not have an advanced degree.

Let's bust some myths about what an advanced degree does and does not do. An advanced degree is not some miracle job-magnet. While our parents' generation may have assumed that those with Master's- or Ph.D.-level degrees automatically had a plethora of high paying jobs to choose from, that is no longer the case. In many professional fields, an advanced degree is an expectation, not something unique that makes you stand out. In fact, there is the reality of being "overeducated, yet underemployed" in specific fields. For some of my students, the "career kiss of death" would be completing their MA and Ph.D. by the time they are in their mid-late 20's. Yes, they are highly educated, but they have not had the opportunity to actually work in their fields, and thus their "experience" is merely academically focused, and not applied. Imagine going through 7-10 years of university study to become a teacher (with a Ph.D. in linguistics perhaps), but having never spent even a few hours in front of a class of students? No amount of research will have prepared you for the workplace reality you are about to face, and few schools will take the risk to hire you.

Ph.D. programmes, depending on your dissertation topic, the Ph.D. programme format in your country of study (i.e.: PhDs in North America average 5-6 years, whereas in Europe they are often incorporated into a combined MA/Ph.D. format and can be completed in 4-5 years for both), and if you need to do field research/language acquisition as part of your dissertation, can take up to eight years to complete. That's a long, long time to be in school, not earning income (or much income, as Teaching Assistants are seldom paid what they are worth!), simply to do something because you thought it was a good way to transition from JET, or because the idea of being unemployed scared you!

Individuals entering a graduate-level programme tend to fall into one of three categories:

- They have done extensive research, not only on the university programmes they are applying for, but also in the profession. These applicants are confident that there is both a need for a specific type of advanced education in their career plan, and that they are in a degree of study that "fits" that career field;
- They have a strong feeling that "now is the time to continue my studies", and usually have some understanding within themselves of a particular interest, focus or direction, but not necessarily where that education will lead them professionally;
- They feel that so far they have not been able to "figure it out", the "it" being what they want to do, but hopefully something will happen during the course of their studies where "it" will come together and viola!...the answers to the questions they haven't yet researched on what they want to do professionally will appear.

Hopefully, as you transition from JET to the next great adventure, you find yourself checking boxes #1 or #2; if not, then postponing a graduate programme may be a good investment of your time and money.

Making the Best Decision: Reflection and Research

Making the decision to enter a graduate or any type of additional education programme (you may be returning to complete another Bachelor's level degree, or pursuing certification in a specific field) takes reflection and requires answering some potentially difficult questions:

- Do I have a particular passion for a certain issue, topic, or field? Am I willing to engage in academic research in this field? Will this issue still be as exciting if I am learning about it in a formal versus informal manner?
- Will I mind if my personal time and other interests (including employment and family) may end up coming in second to my studies?
- Can I afford the education I know I deserve and need? Are there alternative types of education that I can afford? Am I willing to enter into education debt? (fortunately not the case for many non-US JETs)
- What is the best place for me to study this topic? Why? Faculty? Reputation? Connections? Name recognition? Resources and services to students?
- Is there flexibility in the programme, i.e. will I be supported in inter-disciplinary studies, or must I take only what the programme requires?
- What results can I expect from this education? A specific career? Inroads to more educational opportunities? Greater professional and financial success?

Each person considering an advanced degree will have their own questions to address, but the questions of *what will I do*, *where will I do it*, *what support is there for me as a student*, and *what are the potential results* are all key issues. Often, reflection on these types of questions leads a prospective graduate student to a further definition of their interest areas(s) and their expectations of the programme and the university.

Research, research, research...that's the key word when it comes to deciding where to go for the education you deserve. Fifteen years ago, researching graduate programmes meant hours of discussion with professors, writing countless letters to schools asking for recruiting brochures, and significant time in the library reading from university guides. Today, there is no excuse other than slow dial-up speed! A wealth of Internet resources are available for the individual seeking basic information on advanced degrees. Other avenues to research university opportunities include professional association lists (if interested in a specific field, find the association to which those working in this field belong....there are networking opportunities or related ways to find out where individuals in this field get educated!), national and international education resources (the Japan Foundation's education links, for example, or the Fulbright Fellowship information on the Institute for International Education's website), and reviewing employment announcements to determine whether in XX field you seem to need YY degree(s). With the hard decisions made – understanding why it is time to get that advanced degree, and where – the next step is addressing how you will present yourself to an application selection committee.

Your Application is Your "Face" to the Selection Committee

It amazes me when I meet with prospective students on our campus and, when asked the questions, "What do you want to study, and why do you want to study here?" many cannot answer. It also makes me wonder what their applications must look like.

University applications, and the potential funding that a powerful application can lead to, are time-consuming processes for both the prospective student and the selection teams. All too often applicants assume that selection committees/scholarship committees will "read between the lines" and "get" why the applicant is a good fit for the programme. All too often, these are the candidates who are rejected.

With tuition and personal expenses increasing, and the number of slots for applicants at top universities not equal to the number of potentially qualified applicants, the application is often all that a committee has to go on when making admissions decisions. Portions of the application are static data – your GPA (Grade Point Average), scores for standardised tests (for the US and Canada, to include GMAT for business schools, LSAT for law schools, and the GRE for many graduate programmes), and other basic information. And while these scores and grades do tell a

committee something about you, they often do not tell the “interesting” story....that part is left up to you.

The Story of You

Consider the letters of recommendation, the personal statement and often a few, modest, sections of the application form as the places to paint the picture of you...why entering this programme, at this school, is the next logical step for you professionally, what you bring to the programme in the way of experience and understanding of the world, and what you hope to achieve (every school likes successful alumni) because of the opportunities you will pursue while completing your degree.

Most applicants make the mistake of repeating their resume/C.V. in the personal statement. If someone on the committee really wants to read again when you graduated from XX university and what you did next, it's in the application and on the enclosed resume. Quit wasting the time of the committee and space on the statement page. Use this space instead to demonstrate to the committee that you are the kind of individual who has done the reflection mentioned earlier, who is committed to making every opportunity count, and who will take a proactive, creative, and positive approach to their education.

You can also use this as a place to define any issues or questions that you know the committee may have. “Why is it that Brian thinks that he’s qualified to become an engineer, when he failed every science class he ever took?” will be asked. Trust me, these committees expect to hear how you were working four part-time jobs to help support you and your family while going through your first degree, and thus your GPA is not quite what it could have been, etc. However, do not try to play on the emotions of the committee. State your case, explain how you learned from that experience, and how “life” since then has also prepared you for academic success in ways that cannot be readily evaluated by grades or test scores.

Letters of recommendation may, depending on the type of degree field you are pursuing, have enormous impact on a selection committee. Applicants often make the mistake of including a letter because of the prestige of the writer or the organisation to which they are affiliated. Selection committees read thousands of letters of recommendation each application cycle, and can tell a generic letter from someone saying very little about you as a qualified candidate for a specific field of study, within 5 seconds of reading it. A great letter of recommendation addresses specifically (based on the writer’s qualifications on both knowing you and possibly because of them knowing your field of interest/having a reputation in that same field) how you are guaranteed to be successful, hard-working, and inspiring to those around you, and thus a great addition to a school’s incoming class. Take time educating your referees in what they should address in these letters...it’s time well spent. Recycling is a great thing to save the environment, it should never be done with letters of recommendation, that’s enough said about using past letters for current applications!

Funding: So How Do You Pay for Graduate School?

Making the decision to take the next few years of your life and enter an academic programme is one thing, finding the cash to actually get to the school, and stay there, can be another. Taking a small amount of time, well in advance of when you need the funding, to research and prepare can make all the difference to your long-term education debt.

Most JETs come from countries where education is at least partially subsidised. Cost is still a factor (living expenses, books, etc), and can be significant if entering programmes in another country. For US JETs, and to some extent Canadian JETs, private university tuition for 2-7 years of graduate study can run upwards of \$US 200,000, with most MA-level students entering into \$US50,000-\$US75,000 of debt for a two year programme. Yes, your *dattai ichijikin* (Lump-Sum Withdrawal Payment) can help defray costs, but it will not be enough to make a significant difference. As the section on reflection mentioned, taking some time to think seriously about the realities of developing and maintaining a level of education debt is an important part of the “prep” for graduate study.

Which leads me to my next point: when in doubt, try to get someone else to pay for your education. This makes sense, and yet many potential students fail to consider funding beyond traditional student loans, and hopefully some much-needed scholarship allocation from the university. Looking beyond these basic funding resources often means that you will need to expend time and energy in researching additional fellowship opportunities, completing lengthy applications (and being observant of deadlines!), and talking to a range of people to find “hidden money”.

Hidden money is not raiding your young niece’s piggybank, or selling your miscellaneous Japanese gifts and trinkets at a yard sale....it is about researching who has funding and if you realistically qualify. For example, if you are a new American (i.e. a naturalised citizen), then you potentially qualify for the Paul and Daisy Soros fellowship for New Americans—including tens of thousands of dollars towards graduate tuition. If you completed an internship at certain US government organisations, you may qualify for scholarship and internship funding as a graduate student. For those who have an interest in Germany, the Carl Duisberg Society (www.cdsintl.org) has a variety of educational funding experiences and related scholarships and fellowships.

Another example is seeking funding from community service programmes, usually because of a family member who is a member. Groups (USA and Canada) can include Kinsmen, Lion’s Club, Kiwanis, and religious-based organisations. Perhaps you participated in a high school exchange programme – there could be funding for additional education as an alumnus. Finally, take advantage of the outstanding scholarship funding available at more than twenty universities around the world for JET alumni.

For JET alumni attending Ph.D. programmes in North America, if you are paying for your education, then it is the wrong education. A “good” Ph.D. candidate will be offered either a full tuition waiver, a teaching assistantship during their Ph.D. programme, or, ideally, both. If you are accepted into a Ph.D. programme without any funding, then a larger question needs to be asked...are you at the right school, in the right programme? It is likely the case that the university doesn’t think so, otherwise they would have offered you financial support.

Saving the Best for Last: Linking the JET Experience with Your Interests in Higher Education

You’ve made the decision, done the research and are ready to move on professionally, including some period of time in an educational setting. Now you are wondering how JET plays a role in this. When speaking with JETs, I often hear them dismiss their experiences as they are not interested in being a teacher, or dealing with issues related to Japan. Is that really all you think you acquired during your years on the Programme? What about the project and event management experience CIRs obtain? What about the communication skills (multi-lingual for many) ALTs acquire? Mediation and negotiation techniques, translation, interpretation, writing and editing skills, leadership talents, story-telling, travel...these are all skills and experiences that can move a JET forward to a range of exciting and rewarding careers that are not specific to Japan, Japanese, or teaching.

At the Monterey Institute we have, on average, 25-40 JET alumni on campus pursuing a range of MA degrees. While a small number of these JET alumni are in the MA TESOL programme, a far greater number are pursuing degrees in policy, management, business, and translation and interpretation. Most made those degree decisions based on some experience, or series of experiences through JET. If you see yourself as a manager in an international company, working with underprivileged youth in a community-based non-profit, acting as an education administrator for international students, or working for a government’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs or Foreign Service, chances are your experience on JET offers transferable skills and experiences, especially when (and often required) coupled with an advanced degree.

Making the decision to go back to school after JET should happen once you have done a level of research and reflection to determine the professional value of that education, by knowing what you hope to acquire through that education, and treating the application process and funding search with the commitment and attention you deserve to get the funding you need.

Go out and take the next step...you were a great teacher, now it is your turn to be a great student!

The Adventures of Going Back to School after JET

Contributed by Micah Cousins
ALT, Shiga Prefecture 2002-2004
JETAA Great Lakes (Detroit) Chapter



While I was in Japan as an ALT, I finally realised after all my experiences in life that teaching was my calling. I began to think about what qualifications might be required for teaching, and pursuing a master's degree at first seemed like the right thing to do. After you get an undergraduate degree, the traditional next step is to get an MA. But I benefited from the expertise and advice of my parents, who are both in higher education, and I learned that it is more important to get a teachers certification before pursuing a masters. If you want to become an elementary, secondary or even K-12 educator, an undergraduate degree and certification should normally be sufficient to find employment at a good school. Some schools will pay towards further education, and I recommend you find a school that offers this.

Whatever subject you wish to pursue, if you are considering going back to college or university, it is important to start your search early. Make sure you give yourself time to take the GRE, GMAT, LSAT, or any other exams needed. Most institutions require GRE or GMAT scores but there are many testing centres in Japan, so it would be a good head start to take your exams there if you have the opportunity. Another thing is making sure when applications need to be turned in, as deadlines are early if you are hoping to apply for the fall semester. Don't procrastinate and wait for the last minute; remember if you are applying from abroad, the application process can take much longer than you might expect. If you are late in your application, either you will be charged a fee or you will have to wait for the next term, or even longer.

Even though I wasn't able to visit colleges/universities while I was in Japan, I was able to search through the web. Additionally, I had my family and friends visit the schools I was interested in and gather information for me. I felt comfortable having my friends and family visit campuses; since they know me well, they know what schools would be a good fit for me. However, I did take the winter vacation to go home and visit some schools and advisors personally and I highly recommend doing this.

While looking for a university, I found several that would allow me to transfer my undergraduate credits and therefore make it easier for me to pursue a teacher's certification. I chose Eastern Michigan University which produces the largest number of educational educators in the nation and which has a good reputation due to the numerous awards these teachers win. This school also offers certification in a wide range of areas, including Japanese Language and Culture. Furthermore, the Michigan teacher's certification is very reputable throughout the United States. I knew that with my accreditations I would not have any problems being certified to teach in other states. In making your own choice, while the stature and name of the school is important, you have to consider the programme and whether it is a comfortable fit for you and your interests and aspirations.



As an alternative to returning to my home country to study, I also considered studying in Japan, so that I could learn more of the Japanese language while pursuing a degree. Sometimes you can find Japanese universities and branches affiliated with institutions from your home country.

I thought I would not have any problems coming home and starting my life as a student again, but I was wrong. It took me a good two months to reacclimatise to life in America. I started school a month after I came back while still working out the kinks, especially realising I didn't need to take a train everywhere I went. I remember going into class my first day and the professor had everyone introduce themselves to the class. I bowed, began my introduction and bowed at the end. Just like any typical introduction in Japan. My classmates thought I was weird or perhaps had back problems. I remember chuckling and having to hit myself over the head to remind myself I was home. Cultural habits you learned in Japan will stay with you when you arrive back in your home country and you may find yourself in similar situations.

I was able to use the money I saved while working in Japan and use it towards my studies. Try to save as much money for school as possible! A strict budget will help here. Many of us still have to get loans for tuition, but having that extra money really helps in the long run. For me, it helped pay for books, rent, and even utility costs.

Finding a place to rent was not too difficult, since I could happily live in any type of accommodation after living in a cubicle apartment in Japan. I was fortunate to find a house in walking distance of campus, but had to live with three other roommates. I didn't mind sharing a kitchen and bathroom, plus it was nice meeting new people. I was lucky to find three great roommates to share a house with and we have all become good friends. You get those days when you have a conflict over something stupid, and sometimes not so stupid, but most of the time we enjoy each other's company. Sometimes you hear dreadful stories about going in blind with strangers, but it worked out well for me. It would be nice living alone because of privacy and having your own space, but it can get really pricey living in a college town.

Living the college life again, things have not changed much since we were all undergrads: still trying to do all-nighters for exams and papers, still struggling to make money as a student and still trying to strike the difficult balance between study and socialising. However, as we get older and become more focused on our career goals, our motivation to study increases accordingly. Looking back on my time in Japan, I feel that it has made me more independent and has given me the motivation to look to the future and concentrate on my career. Don't get me wrong though, I still love student life and having fun!

I am so grateful for having had the opportunity to teach in Japan as an ALT, because in my future profession I will be able to share my Japanese experiences with my students and teach a wonderful language. Working, studying and teaching in Japan has helped me attain a high level of proficiency in Japanese language and culture, which will be essential during my remaining time at the university and for my future teaching career.



JET is Only Part of the Puzzle (or why going back to school isn't for everyone)

Contributed by Gwyneth Hall
ALT, Tokushima Prefecture 1992-1994

Let me start by telling you how passionate I am on this topic – that going back to school isn't the answer for every ex-JET. As I write this article, my spouse is renovating our bathroom thereby rendering our only shower out of commission. We are currently starting week two of showering outside under a hose. With my help I am sure that the renovations would proceed a little more quickly, however, I am taking time to share my thoughts because I clearly remember the difficulty of returning home after JET.

Going back to school post-JET may be a great career move for those of you who know what it is that you want to do with the rest of your life. If you're that lucky, then you might as well stop reading here. But many of us went to Japan on JET because we had no idea what we wanted to do and when our tenure was over our career aspirations weren't any clearer. So what did I do and what did I learn along the way that will hopefully help you to find your optimal career path?

1. Go with your gut

After two years as an ALT I knew I wanted to stay in Japan and study Japanese. Many of my family and friends were confused and dismayed by this decision. I hadn't studied Japanese before going to Japan so my knowledge of the language was rudimentary at best. And no one, including me, could foresee how this would lead to a respectable and well-paying job.

But I knew that was what I wanted to do and so I did it. After a year of studying Japanese at Keio University and living with a wonderful Japanese family I still wasn't ready to leave. I went on to organise weddings at a hotel in Karuizawa so I could practice my new Japanese language skills. Following a year in that position I knew I was ready to come home and find something to do back in Canada.

2. Take stock of your skills. Think of what you have learned. Make a list of what you DON'T want to do with your life

Upon my return to Canada I had a slightly better idea of what I didn't want to do. Teaching was out and I hoped I would never see another wedding for the rest of my life! My experiences prior to JET had helped me to eliminate blue-collar labour and I didn't have the resources or drive to start my own company. Furthermore, without a clear idea of a future career path I couldn't justify spending my meager resources to go back to school.

So I took a low-paying, Japan-related job. I filled in for a maternity leave at the Japan External Trade Organisation (JETRO). This gave me funds to sustain existence over the short-term and a chance to take stock of the skills I had learned in Japan.

Probably the most valuable skill that all JETs have learned is networking. Networking upon my return to Toronto allowed me to meet other ex-JETs and learn what jobs were available in the area. I also began to think about what I had learned in Japan and how that could translate into a career. When I asked my friends how they thought I had changed as a result of my experience in Japan they were quick to point out that my self-confidence and public speaking skills had greatly improved. I am always surprised by what you can learn when you ask for direct feedback.

A few books that helped me with this step along my path to career enlightenment include: "What Color is Your Parachute?", "Wishcraft: How to Get What You Really Want" and "Jumping Ship".

3. Go out on a limb

When you left for Japan you didn't know where you would be living, with whom you would be spending your time or what you would be eating, but you went anyway. Taking chances also applies to the real world.

The first full-time job opportunity that came my way in Canada was as an interpreter for a Japanese automotive plant that was starting up business in Stratford, Ontario. I went to the interview as a favour to a head-hunter and came home with a job offer. Did I want to be an interpreter? I hadn't a clue but I was certainly willing to give it a try. In addition, the Human Resources Manager who hired me suggested I would be able to assist him with Human Resources in my spare time. Now this sounded interesting...

4. Keep learning and evaluating

I hated interpreting; although it took me more than two years to figure that out! I thought I should like it so I kept ignoring my daily dissatisfaction with that aspect of my job. Meanwhile I was spending more and more time on the Human Resources functions which I thoroughly enjoyed. Finally, I went to a counsellor who took only a few sessions to help me conclude that the interpreting aspect of my job was making me miserable.

I quit my job to complete the Human Resources training that I had started at night school and I have never looked back. But wait – didn't I just suggest that not everyone should go back to university upon their return from JET? Yes, but no one should ever stop expanding their knowledge. In addition to full-time formal schooling you can learn through on-the-job training opportunities, part-time courses at community college and even volunteer positions.

Eventually, I did go on to full-time formal schooling but up to that point my employer had paid for the night school courses and on-the-job training that helped me decide what I really wanted to do. Not to mention that I was making money along the way!

5. Be patient

I am sure you have acquired some measure of patience in Japan?! Don't lose it. It will be an invaluable asset along whatever career path you eventually choose.

2007 marks the tenth year of my return from Japan and the thirteenth since I finished JET. I can finally say that I have found a career in Human Resources that I enjoy. It wasn't easy but all the effort definitely paid off.

And like networking, patience is a skill that can also be beneficial in your personal life. I would explain this to my spouse but I sense through my well-honed skill of "wa" that it would be better just to go to Canadian Tire and pick up the paint roller he is currently requesting.

I hope that the points I have outlined above will help you find your optimum post-JET career. Either way, I would love to hear your feedback and experiences. Feel free to visit us in St. Mary's – we should even have a functional shower in the near future!

Results from the 2010 JETAA Survey*

For those who are students

To what level are you currently studying?		Are your studies related to Japan?	
Doctors	10.8%	Yes	11.3%
Masters	60.2%		
Teaching certification	12.9%	No	63.2%
Other professional degree	10.8%		
Other professional diploma	1.1%	Partially	25.5%
Language school	4.3%		

*The JETAA Survey asks former JET participants questions about their life after completing the JET Programme. 269 former JET participants responded to the 2010 online survey, which was accessible on the JET Programme website from 15 October 2010 to 15 January 2011

Educational Institution Links

Graduate Schools Information

- www.gradschools.com - U.S. and non-U.S. Graduate Schools; search by subject or school
- www.petersons.com - U.S. Graduate school information; private service
- www.ed.gov/students/landing.jhtml?src=pn - US Network for Educational Information
- <http://camp.ff.tku.ac.jp/tool-box/japanuniv/JUindexABCAF.html> (index of Japanese universities)

EFL/TESL Qualifications

With TEFL/TESL qualifications, you can teach abroad or work with people in your home country. Options in your home country could include working with exchange students, citizenship programs, refugees and even adult literacy classes. Jobs are also available at language schools, international business firms, or in contract training.

- **TESOL International** www.tesol.org (TESOL Education Programmes)
- **TEFL Professional Network** www.tefl.com
- **ESL Jobfinder** www.esljobfinder.com

Worldwide Teachers Development Institute

American-based certification www.bostontefl.com

Columbia University's Teachers' College

offers TESOL courses in Tokyo www.tc-japan.edu

School for International Training

www.sit.edu/tesolcert
offers certification courses worldwide, including Kyoto and Tokyo
Their TESOL certificate can later be applied toward a Masters of Education

Scholarships and Fellowships

Grants and Scholarship Opportunities for American citizens

www.cies.org

Monbukagakusho Scholarship

offers graduate scholarships www.studyjapan.go.jp/en/toj/toj0302e.html

Monterey Institute of International Studies (California)

<http://www.miiis.edu/admissions/financialaid/scholarships>

The University of Hawaii's College of Business Administration

offers scholarships to JET Alumni www.shidler.hawaii.edu

Japan America Institute of Management Science

www.jaims.org

McGill University

www.mcgill.ca
<http://www.mcgill.ca/desautels/mbajapan/> (Japan MBA)

Chapter 1
Preparations for Going Home

Chapter 2
Reverse Culture Shock and Re-entry

Chapter 3
Further Education

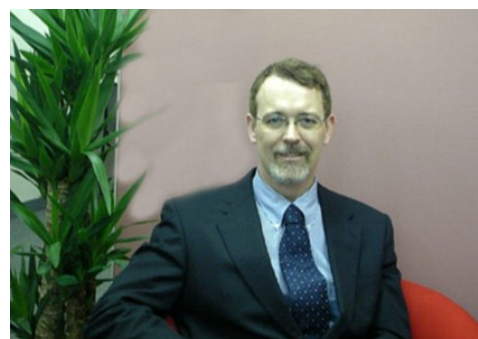
Chapter 4
Post-JET Employment

Chapter 5
JET Alumni Association (JETAA)

Chapter 4:
Post-JET Employment

Outrunning the Lion

Contributed by Jeremy Sanderson
CEO
Icon Partners KK
CIR, Saitama Prefecture 1998-1999



Outrunning the Lion

A wildlife film unit lay in the long grass at the edges of a nature reserve in Africa filming a pride of lions tucking into the warm flesh of their latest kill. Taking great care not to disturb the animals, they lay downwind with their powerful zoom lens and rifle microphone trained on the scene. As the cameraman shifted to focus his equipment a beam of sunlight reflected off his lens, momentarily giving away their position to the largest of the lions. It turned its great head slowly to look in the direction of the intruders, and as it made eye contact, stopped eating and eased into a supine crouch. The film crew, as one felt a chill off fear run down their spines. The cameraman felt a rustle in the grass behind him, and turned to see the sound technician had laid down his microphone, pulled a pair of Nike trainers from his bag and was busily lacing them up. Incredulous, the cameraman said “Don’t be stupid, you’ll never run faster than that lion!” To which the sound technician replied “I don’t need to run faster than the lion, I just need to run faster than you……!”

I served as a CIR in Saitama from 1998 to 2000, leaving JET at the age of 37 with no money, no business experience and no qualifications other than my university degree. By any reckoning the future did not look particularly rosy, and until a few weeks before the end of my time on JET I had no idea what I was going to do for a living, or indeed who would want to hire someone with such an unimpressive resume. Today I manage and own substantial shares in several companies in Japan: My main career since JET has been in the recruitment business. I am currently an owning partner and CEO of Icon Partners KK, a recruitment firm based in Tokyo. Additionally I am Chairman of Compass Offices Japan KK, a serviced-office business headquartered in Hong Kong, and Owner of Sanderson Icon Ltd. an importer and retailer of American motorcycle accessories. I am currently incorporating a fourth company, Encore Japan KK., a BPO (business process outsourcing) company. My income is comfortable, by anyone’s standards, and I have a great degree of control over how I spend my time, both in and out of work. In short, despite the very unpromising beginnings of my life post-JET, I have been extremely fortunate, and yes, financially successful.

I mention the above not from any sense of self congratulation whatsoever, but purely in order to illustrate that however inauspicious the starting point of your career, certain learnable attributes and attitudes will help you outrun the other guy, and avoid ending up as lion food! After many years experience of both coaching candidates through the interview process with hiring companies, and training my own staff, I can say with confidence that there are never enough talented and motivated people to go around! It becomes clear then, that hiring staff is not usually a case of finding the “perfect” candidate, but more a case of finding the one who can put some significant distance between him or herself and the others in the race. In marketing terms this is called a “brand difference”. This article is about helping you to build your brand difference, and become more competitive in the workplace. Your future as a professional, regardless of where and how you chose to deploy your talents, will be determined less by what job you start off in, and more by what you do once you’ve started working.

I would like to pretend that financial or career success is down to some kind of innate genius, but in my case at least, the evidence (and my family and friends) would argue otherwise! The following is a breakdown of some of my personal policies that have made a difference in my life, and if you chose to employ them, or at least give them house room, I believe they will make a positive difference in yours too. The following are things I have learned not just from being an employee, but more from being an employer, trainer and mentor to many ex JETs and other

young adults over the years. Some of my ideas may sound counterintuitive, but they work, so bear with me and read on....

Embrace Your Insecurities

Students of 8th and 9th century European history will recall how the Viking invaders burned their ships on the beaches when they first arrived on a mission of conquest, so that they would have no avenue of retreat, and must therefore conquer or die. Insecurity about the consequences of failure can be a powerful motivator. It is for precisely this reason that immigrants survive and prosper the world over, where the locals drift through life often unable to compete. I am an immigrant to Japan, and from day one I was willing to sleep in a park or under a railway arch rather than admit defeat and go back to the UK. I have always worked with the sense that I had to do more than the locals, and do it better if I was going to be competitive. If asked to do something outside of my comfort zone, the answer is always “yes, I can do it”. Then I go and buy a bunch of books and figure out how to do it! I have taught myself everything from sales, marketing, business finance and web programming to carpentry, gas welding and motorcycle mechanics in this way.

I have a constantly lingering sense of insecurity that makes me an avid collector of skills, so that I can survive and prosper in almost any situation. Most businessmen and entrepreneurs are the same. The constant knowledge that our competitors are snapping at our heels keeps us running forward. Insecurity is something that has been a great friend to me over the years as it keeps me from ever becoming complacent. I’m not suggesting you need be neurotic about life to the point of paralysis. Quite the opposite. Another way to express this is a “sense of urgency”. This is something that all good sales people are familiar with. It means the need to drive forward, hit targets, deliver results and move on to the next deal. A sense of urgency will set you apart from the crowd in any field of endeavor. If you, like me end up living in a foreign country this will come fairly naturally (at least at first). If you can sustain this drive it will give you a serious competitive advantage. If you plan to return to your own country, then take this skill back with you as one of the things you learnt from your JET experience. Even in your own country it will help you outrun the other natives! People who work with a sense of urgency achieve more, are less wasteful of their time, and that of others, and are a dream to manage. If you allow a natural sense of insecurity to drive self betterment and achievement without allowing it to diminish your ambition you will have a powerful formula for success at your command.

Lose Your Sense of Entitlement

Without doubt one of the most insidious and self destructive traits I come across when interviewing, hiring and training people is a sense of entitlement. Most people are careful to hide this form of petty mentality in interviews, but unless they have erased it from their souls it quickly surfaces once they get into the workplace. “The world owes me something”, or “I’m only being paid this much so I’m only going to work this much” type attitudes are typical examples. Comparing your self to others and feeling bitter because they derived some benefit that you didn’t, is another example. If you can get it into your head that the other guy’s gain does not mean it’s your loss you will have taken a huge step in liberating yourself from a lot of destructive anguish and heartache. If someone else gains a benefit that you don’t, your position actually remains totally unchanged. If you congratulate them on their good fortune rather than getting all bent up about it though, your standing in their eyes will go up and you’ll save yourself some stress too. Net effect: Simply by choosing not to be small minded you derive an indirect benefit too from their good fortune. This is the kind of positive thinking that will earn you appreciation from your boss and colleagues, and improve your chances of advancement.

I’ll give you an example: Recently a former business partner of mine pulled of a magnificent coup by selling his company for a huge amount. I had worked for him in the early years of the company, and done a lot to help him scale it up and grow it into a saleable asset, but we parted company after a management fall out, meaning I never reaped the financial rewards I had worked for at the time. A lot of people later asked me if I was bitter that he made millions out of the deal and I made nothing out of it. To me the question of envy or bitterness never arose. He worked very hard to make his company a success, and whilst I worked with him I learnt the skills that have led to success in my current business ventures. I didn’t make millions off the sale of his business like he did, but he helped me gain the skills to go on to do it for myself. His gain was not my loss. To the contrary, I put it all down to ‘tuition fees’. If you can free yourself from the

strangling effects of a sense of entitlement you will work more diligently and with greater passion, creativity and originality. As a manager and employer I am so excited when I observe these traits in my staff, and if your future bosses and employers are warm and breathing they will feel the same too. As an employer I am always on the lookout for people who I can mentor up through the ranks and promote to positions of responsibility. The lack of a sense of entitlement is pretty high on the list of requirements for future leaders!

Dream (really) Big, and set Goals

In 1988 Paddy Ashdown (now Lord Ashdown), an ex Royal Marine and military intelligence officer, became leader of the Liberal Democrat Party in the UK. At the time he was unknown outside party circles and his sudden rise to prominence caused a great stir in the British press. He remained in the post until 1999. I remember watching him being interviewed years later by a reporter who alluded to his audacity running for the job. When asked “where did you find the courage to take on such an important job with so little experience?” he replied “That’s simple, I was too naïve to know that I couldn’t do it!” (meaning of course that fear of failure wasn’t even a factor in his decision). I’m sure the same sense of “naivety” played some part in President Kennedy’s challenge to the American people to put a man on the moon. The point is, neither of these men stopped to think about and agonize over all the things that could go wrong, or stop them from achieving their goals. They both put doubt aside and committed to what Jim Collins in his book ‘Good to Great’ calls a BHAG: A Big Hairy Audacious Goal. I thoroughly recommend that you start considering your own BHAG.

One thing that all the successful people I know have in common is an entirely improbable and unrealistic sense of what is achievable, but they usually achieve it! My wife laughed at me when I started my first sales job in 2000, indeed this was the first time I had ever dipped my toe into the world of business at all, because I bought and read a book called “How to Become CEO”. I was the most junior guy in the company yet I was already eyeing the top job. She thought I was mad. 5 years later I was a CEO. I was too naïve to know I couldn’t do it, but I was also willing to ignore all the naysayers and negative people I met along the way, and stay focused on achieving my BHAG. To be blunt, most people in life who try to give you advice are people who have never achieved much or taken any risks themselves. If you want advice about how to succeed don’t seek it from those who haven’t. Instead, read the biographies of those who have, like Richard Branson, Alan Sugar, Jack Welch, Robert T. Kiyosaki and so forth. They all had massive audacious goals based on nothing more than their capacity to dream really big and a willingness to live with the inherent risks.

While we’re on this subject I really have to recommend the idea of taking a systematic approach to personal goal setting. A good starting point is to sit and think of what, specifically, you want to achieve in one, three and five years time. A nice car? Your own house? Your own business? Your goals may be less earthly and more altruistic of course, such as helping your parents pay off their mortgage, or building a school in a developing country. The goal itself is not important as long as it’s something that matters to you. Once you have decided what you want to achieve, create an image in your mind that you can associate with the goal, and mentally put detail on the image. (I even set pictures associated with my goals as the desktop wallpaper on my computers). Constantly revisiting these images has the effect of driving your goals down into your subconscious, which works away in the background on your behalf to help bring about the achievement of these goals.

To take this a step further, the use of “verbal affirmations” is also very effective. A verbal affirmation is a phrase linked to your goal that you repeat to yourself regularly, e.g. “In five years from now I’ll be drinking gin and tonic with my wife on the deck of our yacht in the Bahamas”. This one is a bit tongue in cheek (I prefer Hawaii) but I’m sure you get the point. The dirty little secret of many successful people is that they’ve been talking to themselves like this for years! In the past it has been called “Imagineering”, “dream crafting” or “image training” depending on which books you read, but today the technique is better known as NLP, or Neuro-Linguistic Programming. So now it has a scientific sounding name you can do it without feeling like some sad old hippie! All I can say is, I’ve tried it and it works, so put it in your tool bag.

Read ‘till Your Eyes Bleed

Lifelong learning is a mantra I've been preaching to my staff (and anyone else who will listen) for years, yet it never ceases to amaze me how few people read books and educate themselves about the fields in which they work. Many see reading a book about their job as some kind of extra unpaid work. How shortsighted! It's an investment in one's own future. I recently hired four people, two of whom asked if they could borrow books about the job, or purchased books themselves, to prepare for the job before starting. Of the two who didn't, I quickly had to fire one and the other is struggling. The two book readers are soaking up information and doing great. Go figure! Remember, a dwarf sitting on the shoulders of a giant sees the farther of the two. The answers to nearly all of life's problems and the 'secrets' of success are all there in print, laid out for your benefit by those giants of our societies who have gone before and made the mistakes for you. Do yourself a favor and try sitting on their shoulders, you'll be amazed at how your vision changes.

Not only does reading give you ideas and stimulate creative thought, it also improves your vocabulary and overall ability to communicate. Unless you are planning on a career as an ascetic monk, your verbal and written communication skills will be one of the greatest determinants of your future success (or failure). Just about every resume I see has something in it alluding to the candidate's "outstanding communication skills". The only "outstanding" thing is how few can back this claim up with real skills. There are of course many cases of successful people who have hopeless communication skills, but unless you can box like Mike Tyson or have a daddy who owns oil wells and was the former President of the USA you're going to need every advantage you can get!

Be an Optimist and Take Risks

It has often been said that "fortune favors the bold". History and evolution provide ample evidence of this. Those who are willing to put themselves outside of their comfort zone, take audacious risks and take the path less traveled by frequently fall flat on their faces and mess up of course, but the point is that they learn by doing so and improve their skills. As anyone who has ever taught knows, making mistakes is part of any learning process. One of the toughest risks I ever took was to give up a secure, well paid job as a Police Officer in London to become a self employed registered bilingual tour guide. I had a big mortgage and many responsibilities at the time, and others in the tourist business told me I was crazy. As a Police Officer I made 26,000 pounds a year and I was told that as a tour guide I would struggle to bring in 10,000 pounds in my first year. I quit the Police Force in May 1993. Over the following year I earned nearly 40,000 pounds and became one of the top five earning guides in London (out of over 1000 registered guides). Remember, when someone tells you something you want to do is "impossible" or "too tough", they are invariably judging the situation relative to their abilities, not yours. Only you should determine what you are capable of.

Sometimes you just have to believe in yourself and take a leap in the dark. I have repeated this pattern many times since, and continue to live on a knife edge, but life is always interesting and rewarding this way. Taking risks is certainly scary but whiling away your life in a job you hate while others are promoted over your head is a far more terrifying prospect. You only have one life (unless you're a cat or a Bhuddist) so live it with passion, determination, optimism and courage and you will vastly enhance your chances of success. Every really successful person I know is a great optimist. They radiate positive energy and people are naturally drawn to them. To achieve anything substantial in life you need to be able to attract good people and get them to cooperate with you to get things done. Nobody wants to hitch their wagon to a negative loser with no ambition. Positive energy in the face of challenges or adversity is one thing that really differentiates leaders from followers, and is indeed a very attractive quality in anybody, leader or otherwise.

Coming back to the point I made at the start of this article. To do well in any job, or indeed to get the job in the first place, you don't need to spring perfect and fully formed from the head of Zeus, most of the time you just need to be better than the competition. Follow my advice and you will be!

Jeremy Sanderson
CEO, Icon Partners KK

Post-JET Employment

Contributed by William Swinton

Director

Undergraduate Business Program & Special Management Program
Temple University, Japan Campus



For many of you, finding a job back home, rather than going back to school, is what's on your mind at the moment. How will you move to the next level of your career? How will you move to the next stage of your life? You have learned a lot. Through JET you have tangible international experience. But what does this mean?

Putting your skills into action

As more and more businesses expand across borders they will increasingly look to hire people with proven international skills. You have learned how to respect, observe and learn from cultural differences. The world is your classroom. These are critical skills in a world looking for economic prosperity and peace.

By having lived in Japan, you have been exposed to a culture different than your own. Not just “a culture”, but people, friends that you have come to think of as family. Hopefully this has given you not only insights on Japan; but a new way to look at yourself. That ability to step outside your own set of “norms” will be a key asset as you shape a career and a life for yourself. You are unique – in your families, in your community and, most importantly, in the job market.

Facing unknown situations, you have had to learn to think quickly on your feet as well as to take initiative and troubleshoot – that you can do these things in an “alien” environment makes you all the more valuable to expanding business in a variety of industries. You can also help train others who aren't used to dealing with cultural difference.

While you were in Japan, you had to adjust in many subtle and not-so-subtle ways: from the pace and volume of your speech to your feelings about communal bathing. Depending on your personality and where you are from these and dozens of other adjustments were either easy or challenging. The point is that when necessary, you met that challenge.

A global skill mindset that is with you

Being bilingual or multi-lingual is also valuable. Even if you did not fully master Japanese or if your future does not require that particular language, having studied Japanese will make you more expressive and more sensitive to the way other people express themselves.

Having a global mindset means the ability to scan the world from a broader perspective. It means looking for unexpected trends that may provide the opportunity to achieve personal, professional or organisational goals.

Today, companies *and* individuals from different corners of the planet are more integrated than at any other time in human history. And, we live in a world where all the major business functions in the value chain are highly global and deeply integrated. According to McKinsey and Company, 80 percent of the world's GDP will be sold across international borders by 2027, compared to about 20 percent in 2001. Multinational business activity will grow from approximately \$5 trillion to \$70 trillion by 2027. You are well positioned to grow with it.

Here are some of the skills you take with you:

Independence

You had to learn to fend for yourself in a foreign culture and adapt to a new way of doing things.

Awareness of international issues

You have stepped outside the protective comfort of home to see that people in the world have

many concerns that folks at home are not at all aware of. You may be better at determining the completeness and objectivity of news reports, which are often steeped in cultural bias.

Sensitivity to differences among people

Having immersed yourself in life in Japan, you have seen that there are many different ways of interacting, thinking, and communicating. You understand that values and customs that are different from yours are not any less valid or "normal" than yours.

Finding the Right Job

Contributed by JETAA US13 – Northern California, JETAA US2 – New York

Basic Tips for Finding a Job: (courtesy of JETAA)

- Start early
- Consult newspaper classified ads, the internet and organisations such as chambers of commerce, alumni associations, etc
- Let people know what you are looking for
- Follow up leads with a cover letter and resume
- Informational Interviewing
- Reference Letters
- Update your resume

Informational Interviewing

What is informational interviewing?

Yes, you're back from Japan, a renowned expert on bowing to a 91.5 degree angle when meeting government officials, gracing the floors in slippers half your foot size and speaking in simple English at ten words per minute. You've been practicing the art of cultural exchange for at least a year now, so why not use informational interviewing to learn more about your home country's employment and educational cultures?

Many of us return from Japan knowing little about current job and academic opportunities at home. Informational interviewing allows you to gather information and obtain advice and insight on work/study that you are considering. The more resource information you have at your disposal, the better equipped you will be for taking the right steps toward your goal. People who do the work that you are considering can offer first-hand accounts of what it's really like out there. You can't get such a personal perspective with a resource publication from the library. Beware though! Informational interviewing is NOT asking for a job, but seeking advice and/or information from a player in the field. An important distinction to remember.

Establishing an informational interview

How do you go about establishing an informational interview? Start at the roots by contacting family and friends who may have knowledge of your fields of interest. You are not making a commitment to a path in life yet, so don't be afraid to explore the areas which appeal to you and have fun in the fact-finding process. Even if those initial contacts with family and friends don't prove enlightening, they may know of other people who may be able to answer some of your questions. They may offer to introduce you to others or you can simply ask for suggestions. The branches will begin to sprout.

Many JETs go to Japan directly after college graduation and may have forgotten that they hold the prestigious title of alumni/ae of their university. As an alum, you are able to use your university's career and educational resources. Most universities would be happy to provide you with names and addresses of alumni/ae who are involved in your fields of interest. First, ask a college career counsellor if these alumni/ae would mind being contacted by a fellow alum. Alumni are often extremely generous in offering advice related to their field, even if you have never met before. You both share at least one common experience of attending the same university which is an immediate connection. The informational interview can also be a great opportunity to talk about the good old college days.

Other ways of establishing informational interviews include contacting former employers and professors as well as chance meetings with people at recreational and social functions. A note on impromptu informational interviews - be polite and do not demand too much time running through 101 questions at a cocktail party. Test the air and first ask if that person wouldn't mind answering a few questions (after proper introductions, of course). If there is not enough time for all your queries, perhaps that person would be able to meet with you on another occasion. If not, at least you've learned a little more than you knew before and you have experienced how easy and natural an informational interview can be.

Some pointers for the actual interview:

- Dress appropriately – professional attire when meeting that person during office hours
- Actively listen to your interviewee. Your sincere interest or lack thereof will show in your body language
- Be prudent in keeping the length of time for the interview. If you have asked for 15 minutes of the interviewee's time, keep your promise. Your interviewee may be eager to add more information than the scheduled time allows, which is great. However, you should not pressure him/her to answer ALL of your questions.
- Ask for referrals of other people you may be able to contact. Again the branches should always extend outward in your research. Another person may have a deeper insight into the area of your interest.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- How did you get into this work?
- What is a typical day like?
- What are the frustrations?
- What are the rewards?
- What type of education is necessary for entry-level positions?
- How much flexibility do you have regarding dress, working hours, vacation time, place of residence?
- If you were starting again, would you do anything differently?
- To what professional organisations do you belong? Should I join now?
- What is the potential for the industry?
- Where do you see the most growth potential?
- What are the typical job titles in the field?
- Who hires people to do this kind of work?
- Would you recommend graduate or professional school training immediately after college/university?
- What are the opportunities for advancement?
- How would you advise I go about looking for an entry-level job?
- If you were to leave the work you are doing today, what other kind of work would attract you?
- If you were hiring someone at this time, what would be the most critical factors in determining your selection?
- What are entry-level salaries in this field?

You should thank the person at the end of the informational interview for sharing his/her precious time with you and always send a thank you letter or email as soon as possible.

Reference Letters

Your next employer is likely to request a reference letter from you when you apply, so it is in your best interest to have a letter explaining your work in Japan and just how well you did it. Your supervisor or one of your English teachers are ideal candidates to draft that letter for you. But remember:

Ask the right person.

In Japan, often offices will think the title of the person who writes the letter is more important than

the capacity in which they knew the person. If your office tries to have your *Kacho* or *Kocho* write the letter even if you didn't ever really say more than hello to him or her, stand your ground. Explain that you'd like to have a letter that comes from someone who knows you well and can say meaningful things about your work.

Explain the focus of the letter.

Are you applying to graduate school? What programme? What kind of a job are you looking for? Are you continuing with your English teaching? It's important to give whoever is writing your letter as much information as possible on the focus.

Provide the person writing your letter with the format used to write such letters in your country.

He or she may not be aware that they should write the date at the top of the letter and so on. Provide them with the proper forms, envelopes, etc.

Explain what you want.

Japanese do not usually "brag" about merits and accomplishments like we do in western countries. You may want to point out that the letter should boast the skills, talents and characteristics that make you valuable. If possible, provide them with a sample reference letter so they will have a model to follow.

Offer your assistance in any way possible.

Maybe they'd like you to check the spelling or grammar. They are doing you a favour so make their task as easy as possible.

Provide your selling points.

The person writing your letter cannot possibly remember every event, activity accomplishment etc. It helps to sit down and list all of your duties and accomplishments in Japan. Be sure to list any successful ideas you implemented. Do it now before you have forgotten everything!

- Day-to-day school and office duties – elementary/nursery school visits, exam writing
- Extra-curricular Activities
- Study groups, adult English classes, speech contest coaching, etc
- Articles you've written for local papers
- Articles about you in local papers
- Participation in festivals and events
- Proofreading or translating
- Projects you've helped with or executed
- Your Japanese skills (proficiency exams)
- Participation in JET conferences as a speaker/moderator
- Your relationships with your colleagues or students
- PSG, AJET, Habitat for Humanity, or any other volunteer positions held

An example of a reference letter is provided on the following page. There is also an example in the Contracting Organisation Manual (*Ninyo Dantai-yo* Manual) which is given to all contracting organisations.

update your resume!

Besides all the wonderful things you have included in your reference letter, don't forget that you have also developed some important and impressive skills that are perfect for your resume. Simply having worked overseas says a lot about you, and your JET experience is going to look good, so don't forget to put it in your resume! When writing, think ACTION, think KEYWORDS! How about:

adaptability, flexibility, durability, patience, can work well as a team member, cultural sensitivity, diplomacy, persistence, independence, proficiency and the ability to rise to a challenge?

Example Reference Letter

Employer's Street Address
City, State, Zip code/ Postcode

Date

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN
Reference for XXXX

I am the Principal at XXXX Senior High School in XXXX Prefecture and have had a working relationship with XXXX in this capacity since he/she arrived here in August 20XX.

XXXX was placed as an Assistant Language Teacher as a participant of the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme, in the town of XXXX in XXXX Prefecture, where his/her **positive and bright attitude** helped him/her to both adapt himself/herself to the Japanese culture and fit in to his/her host-community with surprising speed.

XXXX met with a number of difficult hurdles during his/her year-long stay, but showed **great initiative** in dealing with them and overcame the vast majority of them with **maturity** and **good judgment**. He/She showed **open mindedness** in resolving cultural differences at his/her workplace and maintained very positive working relationships with his/her peers and fellow teachers throughout his/her stay.

XXXX threw himself/herself into his/her teaching role with great enthusiasm and **went beyond his/her designated responsibilities** to develop activities and events to make the learning experience more enjoyable for the junior high school children he/she was teaching. He/She also worked hard to **promote intercultural understanding** through building friendships with the Japanese people in various activities outside of his/her working hours. XXXX's natural **enthusiasm** carried across to the children he/she taught and the people he/she worked with and he/she has been extremely successful in his/her work as a **cultural ambassador** for his/her country.

It was a pleasure to work with XXXX during his/her stay and I have no hesitation in recommending him/her to anybody who is seeking the above-mentioned qualities.

Tanaka Taro
English Teacher/ Principal
XXXX Senior High School

TEL:
FAX:

Your resume should be a portrait of yourself, highlighting your capabilities and accomplishments. Employers are looking for individuals that can handle written communication effectively and persuasively.

Your resume should be tailored towards the job you are applying for. Print out the job posting or advertisement and have it beside you when you are creating or editing your resume for the specific position. Pay attention to the required and preferred skills, and characteristics that the employer has determined are necessary for the successful candidate to have. Emphasise those skills and experiences in your resume.

Most authorities on resume writing recommend that your resume be limited to only one page. This is not only a test of your writing skills, but also a favour to employers who have to review

numerous resumes everyday. You will find, however, that careers asking for certain technical qualifications will require additional information and this will add a second page to your resume. Remember that your resume is a tool to get you in the door for the interview. Once you are sitting down with the interviewer, you can elaborate on how your background, experience, and qualifications make you the best fit for the position.

When writing your resume, take your time and be concise. Once your first draft is finished, put it away for a day or two. When you pick it up again you will be more objective about what you have written. Let your friends and family read your resume for clarity and purpose. Do not be afraid of constructive criticism!

Format

The two most common formats for resumes are the Chronological Resume and the Functional Resume. The main divisions of the two resumes are as follows:

Chronological Resume

This is more common for those who are just out of school or have less diverse work experience

Identification Items

- Name/Address/Telephone number

Career Objective

- Highlight the skills you have to offer and your immediate goals

Educational Background

- College/University education
- List high school only if it has a national reputation or a unique programme specific to your interests

Honours/Courses

- Merit scholarships, prizes

Employment Experience

- Reverse chronological order
- List title, name of company and the city and state of the company location
- Describe responsibilities using action words in the active past tense

Skills and Interests

- List only skills that add value to you in the workplace

Extracurricular Activities

- Student organisations, community associations, clubs, hobbies

Reference Statement/ Referees

- State: "References: Available upon request" OR
- List people who they can contact and their contact details

Functional Resume

The Functional Resume contains the same information as the Chronological Resume, but the order of items is different. In this resume you define your skills toward a specific area. This is more commonly used by those who have a more extensive and/or diverse work history.

Identification Items

- Name/Address/Telephone number

Career Objective

- Highlight the skills you have to offer and your immediate goals

Experience

- List your areas of competence and interest – management, finance, communications

Employers

- List only the name of the company and the city and state where it is located

Educational Background

- College/University education
- List high school only if it has a national reputation or a unique programme specific to your interests

Extracurricular Activities

- Student organisations, community associations, clubs, hobbies

Reference Statement/ Referees

- State: “References: Available upon request” OR
- List people who they can contact and their contact details

Layout

Clean, simple and consistent! Employers are not looking for a Hollywood production on paper. Use good quality stock paper and establish margins of 1” at the top and sides and 1½” at the bottom. The file should be 12 point sans serif font (i.e. Arial on white paper with little or no formatting). Also, consider that many companies will use various technologies to scan or search on resumes. What this means is that you should use key words for your area of interest or experience.

Note that when employers read resumes, they skim through them very fast. When designing the layout of your resume, look at what areas you want to emphasise. Use bold type for key information like the name of your university or a previous employer. Try different options and let your friends and family comment on the visual presentation.

Most authorities on resume writing recommend that your resume be limited to only one page. This is not only a test of your writing skills, but is also a favour to employers that have to review numerous resumes everyday. You will find, however, that careers asking for certain technical qualifications will require additional information and this will add a second page to your resume. Remember that your resume is a tool to get you in the door for the interview. Once you are sitting down with the interviewer, you can elaborate on how your background, experience, and qualifications make you the best fit for the position.

Resume Check – Things to Avoid!

- Spelling/grammatical errors – including inconsistent tenses
- Using “I” and “my”: use past-tense action verbs related to your target job to describe your job responsibilities
- Use of unusual colours/ fonts
- Use of pictures or drawings (unless you are an architect or artist)
- Use of a bad printer or an inferior copy
- Long lists of skills/attributes
- Unimportant information (such as listing every subject you studied at university) just for bulk
- Including your transcript in your resume
- Lying

A lot of information about resumes, including examples, is available online. Research this thoroughly so that you can be well prepared. A good place to start would be this site, specially created for JETs by CRJ presenter Vince Ricci: <http://jetresumes.blogspot.com/>

Interviews

The key to a successful interview is preparation. Just as you would prepare for a major college examination or a sporting event, you must start the process well before the actual event. The main purpose of an interview is to exchange information. The interviewer is interested in looking at the real person behind the paper resume in order to make recommendations for hiring.

Interviews come in all shapes and sizes, from the very formal to the informal gathering. In most cases you will encounter a formal situation where you will be required to wear appropriate business attire. Once you enter the interview room, the interviewer will generally shake your hand and ask you to have a seat. Just follow his or her lead and you will begin to feel more comfortable. The “ice-breaker” question usually follows and your interviewer will attempt to start some type of lively conversation to get you to relax and to establish some rapport.

From this point forward, the interview will become a question and answer session. You will find that most of the questions are designed to gain information that is not apparent from your resume. If you are well prepared, this will be a great opportunity to show your communication skills.

Once the interviewer has covered the basic qualifications, the questions will shift emphasis and focus on career goals and personal characteristics. Be prepared for and pre-think answers to the following common questions:

- Tell me about yourself.
- What are your goals?
- Why do you want to be a _____?
- What can you add to our organisation as an employee?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?

Additional questions to consider:

- Greatest success?
- Greatest failure?
- Why are you more qualified than my other candidates?
- Least favourite task in your last job?
- What is your current salary?
- What salary are you looking for?
- Do you require any special accommodation (ie physical/mental limitations) for employment?
- Why do you want to work for this company?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 to 10 years?

All of these questions will enable the interviewer to make judgment about you as a potential employee.

After all the questions, you will be given the opportunity to ask some of your own. During your preparation before the interview, you should think of questions that display your knowledge of the company. Some possible approaches include:

- What are the people who held this position previously doing now?
- How much responsibility is given a new employee in this department?
- What financial responsibility is accorded the holder of this position?
- Upon what criteria are employees in this department evaluated?
- With whom would I work closely in this job?
- What are the opportunities for advancement in this organisation?
- What is the company philosophy?
- What are the company and/or department goals for the next five years?
- What types of people succeed in this environment?
- Describe your training programme.

These additional questions from your side should give you a very clear picture of the company and your potential fit with the organisation.

Once you have completed the interview, it is a good idea to send a thank you/ follow-up letter or email. This should be directed to the interviewer and it should be brief and concise. You will want to thank the individual for the opportunity to interview and most importantly, emphasise your interest in the position(s) available.

Accepting a Job Offer

Congratulations! In today's difficult labour market, a job offer is something to celebrate. Though you have an offer of employment, there are a few items that need to be considered before your final decision is made:

- Job responsibilities
- Salary
- Advancement opportunities
- Job security
- Training
- Working conditions
- Employee benefits

The salary offer that usually comes with the job offer is a matter to be taken seriously. Entry-level positions that require training will generally leave very little room for negotiating. If you are in a more technical field, you may command some bargaining power, but remember the state of the economy and the job market. There are many qualified job seekers in the market today, so be careful when asking for more.

You will also want to ask about your fringe benefits. Often, these amount to 25% to 40% of the total salary package. What benefits are most important to you at this time in your career? What is the cost of living like in the city where you will be employed? These are some of the questions to consider when you respond to the job offer.

If not supplied, ask for the terms of employment in writing. This avoids any misunderstandings. Some companies routinely do this and most will comply when requested.

Most employers will give you a deadline when they will need to know your decision. If you do not respond by the deadline, the job will most likely be given to another individual. Always honour the dates the employer has set forth. If you should need an extension, some employers are known to give more time to decide. This will all depend upon your particular case.

International Volunteer Opportunities

These days, volunteer organisations are becoming pickier about whom they recruit and solid qualifications are a must. Your JET experience will work to your advantage. Most contract periods run anywhere from two months to two years, depending on the agency. Expect to fill out an extensive application form and go through several interviews just to volunteer! Moreover, application processing can take up to six months, so apply early. On the positive side, volunteer work is a great experience. Also, you are never too old to volunteer, so if you think you are getting up there, you will probably find yourself working alongside people of all ages. A number of international organisations that recruit volunteers are listed on the following page.

Peace Corps	www.peacecorps.gov
Volunteer Service Overseas	www.vso.org.uk (United Kingdom) www.vsocan.org (Canada) www.vso.ie (Ireland)
United Nations Development Programme	www.undp.org
United Nations Capital Development Fund	www.uncdf.org
UN Development Fund for Women	www.unwomen.org
United Nations Volunteers	www.unv.org
Service Civil International (SCI)	www.sci-ivs.org
Japan-US Community Education and Exchange	www.jucee.org
International Volunteer Programmes Association	www.volunteerinternational.org
Global Citizens Network (GCN)	www.globalcitizens.org
Global Routes	www.globalroutes.org
Visions in Action	www.visionsinaction.org
World Teach	www.worldteach.org

Results from the 2010 JETAA Survey*

I believe my participation on the JET Programme assisted in:

Answer Options	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Increasing the international outlook of the people in my local community.	96	92	40	7	7
Improving foreign language education in my local community.	46	108	59	22	7
Promoting international exchange activities in my local community.	65	97	48	22	10
Facilitating ties between my country and my local community.	47	85	66	29	15
Forging relationships between myself and other JET participants.	120	81	26	9	5

To what degree do you believe the JET Programme has allowed you to realise the following:

Answer Options	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Improved Japanese language skills and increased understanding of Japanese culture	176	58	4	2	2
Improved public speaking skills	104	89	36	7	6
More self-confidence	116	90	24	7	5
More patience	127	80	28	4	3
An international outlook	156	58	20	5	2
The chance to demonstrate your initiative	80	94	37	22	8
Ability to see beyond stereotypes	101	89	39	4	7
A wider circle of friends	156	65	11	7	2
Open-mindedness	129	78	26	3	3

*The JETAA Survey asks former JET participants questions about their life after completing the JET Programme. 269 former JET participants responded to the 2010 online survey, which was accessible on the JET Programme website from 15 October 2010 to 15 January 2011

For those who are currently employed full or part-time, or self-employed:

Please select the industry area below which best represents your current occupation.		
Accounting/ Finance	5.0%	8
Administration/ Secretarial Services	6.9%	11
Agriculture	0.0%	0
Architecture	0.6%	1
Armed Forces	0.0%	0
Computer/ Info Sciences	4.4%	7
Education/ Childcare	40.0%	64
Engineering	1.9%	3
Fine Arts/ Performing Arts	2.5%	4
Volunteer Work	0.6%	1
Government/ Diplomatic Service	9.4%	15
International Relations	1.9%	3
Journalism/ Communication/ Media	6.3%	10
Law/ Legal Services	3.1%	5
Manufacturing/ Industry	2.5%	4
Marketing/ Advertising/ Sales	5.6%	9
Medical/ Dental/ Nursing	0.0%	0
Politics	0.0%	0
Psychology/ Psychiatry	0.0%	0
Publishing/ Editing	1.3%	2
Real Estate	0.6%	1
Religion	0.0%	0
Sciences	0.6%	1
Social Sciences/ Humanities	1.9%	3
Sport	0.0%	0
Student	0.0%	0
Tourism/ Hotel	1.3%	2
Trade (import/export)	0.6%	1
Translation/ Interpreting	3.1%	5

Did employers give favourable consideration to your JET Programme experience in interviews?	
Yes	68.5%
No	2.2%
Never heard of JET	16.8%
Don't know	12.5%

Did your experience on the JET Programme assist you in finding employment?	
Yes, very much	27.0%
Yes	23.2%
Yes, slightly	26.5%
No	16.8%
I don't know	6.5%

*The JETAA Survey asks former JET participants questions about their life after completing the JET Programme. 269 former JET participants responded to the 2010 online survey, which was accessible on the JET Programme website from 15 October 2010 to 15 January 2011

JOB LINKS

Worldwide

www.jetalumni.org – JETAA Job Bank

www.overseasjobs.com – find jobs in countries across the world

www.academic360.com – a collection of job resources for the academic job hunter

www.tesol.org – A global education association with TESOL job listings

www.edulink.com – posts international jobs, on-line recruitment fairs and other services

AUSTRALIA

www.newsclassifieds.com.au – lets you search opportunities by keyword across Australia from one site

www.careersonline.com.au – offers career advice and has job listings in Australia

www.seek.com.au

www.jobsearch.gov.au – government-run site

www.workplace.gov.au – has links to graduate recruitment procedures for each government agency

www.mycareer.com.au

www.careerone.com.au

www.traveljobs.com.au – the travel industry's main online job directory

www.anzccj.jp – Australian and New Zealand Chamber of Commerce

www.australianvolunteers.com – Australian volunteers

www.graduatecareers.com.au - Graduate careers and employment, job-seeking and interview tips

CANADA

www.workopolis.com – lists jobs available throughout Canada; also includes career advice, career profiles and links to MBA programmes

www.jobsineducation.com – advertises education jobs throughout Canada

www.educationcanada.com – lists teaching opportunities throughout Canada with links to provincial sites

www.tesl.ca – lists job postings for English as a second language positions

www.jobs.gc.ca – advertises current jobs and programme opportunities with the federal government

www.canadajobs.com – has links to databases, job banks, employment agencies and newsgroups

NEW ZEALAND

www.workingin-newzealand.com – working in New Zealand

www.anzccj.jp – Australia and New Zealand Chamber of Commerce

www.nzjapan.org – Auckland's NZ-Japan Society

www.jsa.org.nz – Japanese Society of Auckland

UNITED KINGDOM

www.jobsearch.co.uk – lists jobs of all kinds throughout the UK

www.jac-recruitment.co.uk – JAC recruits Japanese speakers for jobs in the UK/Europe

www.timeplan.com – Time Plan Education Group; places teachers in UK schools

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

www.higheredjobs.com – higher education jobs

www.ccjobsonline.com – Community College Jobs On-line

www.jobhuntersbible.com – is a search site maintained by Richard Bolles (author of *What Color Is Your Parachute?*); Includes career profiles, personality tests and links

www.csa-teach.com – Carney, Sandoe and Associates posts positions for independent and private schools in the US and internationally

www.academploy.com – Academic Employment Network posts jobs for teachers in the US and internationally

www.truecareers.com – lists jobs for professionals

www.careers.wsj.com

www.us-japan.org – National Association of Japan-America Society is a Japan related job bank

www.careers.state.gov – government jobs

www.jobs.doc.gov

<http://japanesejobs.com> – Japanese Jobs

www.ciee.org – The Council on International and Educational Exchange lists a variety of work, intern, volunteer and study abroad opportunities

<http://jobstar.org>

Chapter 1
Preparations for Going Home

Chapter 2
Reverse Culture Shock and Re-entry

Chapter 3
Further Education

Chapter 4
Post-JET Employment

Chapter 5
JET Alumni Association (JETAA)

Chapter 5:
JET Alumni Association (JETAA)

JET Alumni Association (JETAA)



The JET Alumni Association (JETAA) has 52 chapters in 17 participant countries, and boasts over 25,000 members. It was established voluntarily by a member of AJET (The Association for Japan Exchange and Teaching) in the early days of the Programme, and is comprised of MEF (Monbusho English Fellows), BET (British English Teacher's Scheme) and JET (Japan Exchange and Teaching) Programme alumni. JETAA chapter activities include:

- assisting the local Japanese Embassy or Consulates with JET Programme applicant interviews and pre-departure orientation
- promoting the JET Programme in their local area
- offering support and providing information in the form of career fairs and resource guides to those Programme participants returning home
- organising Japan related events, etc.
- JETAA Job Guide
- JET Mentor Network

Chapters maintain their own homepages, publish newsletters and also hold annual meetings. CLAIR, in support of JETAA, assists in areas such as funding and publishes a number of alumni-related resources including the JET Streams newsletter. The JET Streams newsletter provides a forum for alumni to share their activities and experiences with one another internationally as well as updates alumni on changes to the JET Programme.

Membership forms are sent to all JET participants completing their tenure on the Programme prior to the expiration of their contract. All JET alumni are strongly encouraged to join the association chapter in their respective area.

For further information on JETAA, please check the JETAA International website:
www.jetalumni.org

Results from the 2010 JETAA Survey*

Are you a member of a JETAA Chapter?	
Yes I am a member of the JETAA chapter committee	29.5%
Yes I am a member and am actively involved	22.5%
No but I would like to be	25.6%
No I am not interested	12.8%
There is no JETAA Chapter close to where I live	9.7%

*The JETAA Survey asks former JET participants questions about their life after completing the JET Programme. 269 former JET participants responded to the 2010 online survey, which was accessible on the JET Programme website from 15 October 2010 to 15 January 2011

In what ways have you been able to keep up your interest in Japan?*

(Comments of Survey Respondents)

- I still take a strong interest in Japanese culture and try to integrate it into my life -- still eat the same foods etc, keep the same habits I had in Japan, go to exhibits or events related to Japan, keep up with the JET alum community
- TV shows, Japanese courses, and when I become a teacher I will try to teach Japanese
- I am a Japanese teacher in a UK secondary school. I also still practise Shodo, read Japanese manga, and watch Japanese films.
- Married a Japanese man from the city where I was an ALT.
- After a period out of Japan post-JET, I have been back in Japan for more than ten years.
- I continue studying Japanese calligraphy, iaido, haiku/haibun, and teach occasional informal lessons alongside my wife (not Japanese).
- Involvement in the Japan Society in my own hometown; Living in a sharehouse with many different Japanese working holiday makers and students over the past 6 years; interaction with Japanese citizens visiting Australia and those working there and more...
- I joined a Japanese conversation class
- My partner is Japanese and I have several lifelong friends I made in Japan. I also attend Japanese language and cultural events
- I work in a Japanese restaurant where only Japanese is spoken while I finish a masters before returning.
- I teach Japanese to middle school students and talk with Japanese housewives in Pittsburgh, PA
- I still study Japanese and use it in my job. I have continued practicing kendo, which I did during my whole stay in Japan and I try to attend Japanese cultural events often.
- I returned to Japan this year to visit friends in my community there. I've also found work in the travel industry and I hope to teach Americans about Japan through tourism.
- My friends have made 6 trips to come see me after I left Japan. I also return at least 3 times a year. I recently went back to attend a wedding of a couple I introduced. The teachers also email me frequently as well as my former students.
- I have many souvenirs which are hanging on the walls; I dressed in a yukata for Halloween last year; I participated in Japanese culture activities in the US, which I had NEVER done before.
- Joined a Japanese Friendship club in the local community, and made a Japanese Conversation Club at the local college campus
- I met my Japanese husband on the JET programme; I also work in international exchange with Japanese universities

*The JETAA Survey asks former JET participants questions about their life after completing the JET Programme. 269 former JET participants responded to the 2010 online survey, which was accessible on the JET Programme website from 15 October 2010 to 15 January 2011

The following pages contain a directory of local JETAA chapters around the world.

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The New Kid On The Block: JETAA Singapore

(Contributed by Koh Yun)

The year 2009 is special as it marks the 10th anniversary of Singapore's participation in the JET Programme. For former Singapore JET participants, it is double the celebrations as 2009 also marks the official formation of JETAA Singapore Chapter on 26th May.

Today, JETAA Singapore is a one and a half year old 'toddler', still learning the ropes of growing up. The sharing in this article is about the learning journey of the setting up and running of JETAA Singapore and the insights gained during the 1.5-year process. It is written with the hope that the sharing can make the learning curve less steep for future JETAA Chapters and at the same time promote the sharing of ideas between JETAA Chapters at the international level.

Looking Inwards...

Being a very new JETAA chapter, creating an active membership base is our main concern. As such, our vision for the formative years is: **Visibility, Participation, Excitement**.

A. Visibility: As a new alumni without our own website in the beginning, we had to explore alternative methods to increase our visibility. Three strategies were used:

- 1) Partnership with the Embassy of Japan in Singapore and JETAA International to include our alumni email contact link on the JET page of these organisations' websites to make it easier for potential members to contact the alumni.
- 2) Proactive approach in sending email invitations (to join alumni) to returning ex-JETs after obtaining the list of returnees from the Embassy of Japan in Singapore.
- 3) Use of popular social media such as Facebook and Yahoo Group to set up alumni groups for photo sharing and communication etc.

B. Participation: As most of the alumni members are very busy working adults, they are more "unable" than "unwilling" to participate in alumni activities. To facilitate more active participation, we conducted a simple survey to find out about the day/time/type of activity preferences of our members. The results of the survey served as input for our event planning so that more convenient times could be chosen to maximise participation.

C. Excitement: To create more excitement in our alumni activities, we have in place the following systems:

- 1) Partnership System - Whenever possible, we pair a non-board member up with a board member to organise each alumni event, taking into consideration the areas of interest expressed by respective members in the "Members' Survey". Besides ensuring a closer partnership between board and alumni members, potential future board members can be scouted in the process.
- 2) Feedback System - At the end of each alumni event, there is a feedback channel for participants to give feedback and suggestions. JETAA Singapore successfully organised a "Pasir Ris Beach Clean Up" event to celebrate Sea Day, thanks to the suggestion of one of the alumni members who also helped co-organise the event.

3) “Activities Buffet” - To ensure that the alumni caters to the varied interests of our members, we present them with a buffet spread of activities. Over the past year and a half, JETAA Singapore has successfully organised a variety of activities that promote Japanese and Singaporean cultures while facilitating networking among our members and associate partners.

- ⇒ *Networking activities*: Farewell Reception for new JETs, Welcome Home Reception for returning JETs, Buddy System for ex-JETs and new JETs, *shinnenkai* celebration
- ⇒ *Japanese Language activities*: “Oshaberi Cafes” (communicating in Japanese through board games and themed conversations)
- ⇒ *Cultural activities*: Japanese Home Cooking Workshop, Japanese Summer Festival
- ⇒ *Clean & Green activities*: Pasir Ris Beach Cleanup

Stories of JETAA Singapore

(contributed by Koh Yun, Chen Jianwen & Olivia Wee)

Story 1: Beach Clean Up Community Project 2010 (contributed by Koh Yun)

In celebration of Umi-no-hi (Sea Day), JETAA Singapore organised a beach clean-up at Pasir Ris beach on June 27.



Armed with gloves, rakes, trash bags and pails, 15 volunteers comprising JETAA Singapore members and friends started their race against time to pick up litter along the beach at 8.30 am before the onset of high tide. During the two-hour period, the volunteers picked up all kinds of rubbish, ranging from snack packets, cups, bottles to straws and more.

Unfortunately, the precious window period for clean-up was shortened by a heavy downpour that forced the volunteers to stop before the scheduled time. Despite the rain, the volunteers enjoyed the community event and expressed interest in taking part in another beach clean-up.

The event was a collaboration between JETAA Singapore and the National Environment Agency.

Story 2: Oshaberi Café (contributed by Olivia Wee)

JETAA Singapore started our very own “Oshaberi Café” to provide an avenue for our members to practise Japanese.

With the support of our Japanese friends, JETAA Singapore members spent two lazy afternoons in November and December at a cosy cafe playing board games and chatting in Japanese.

While playing board games such as Squint, Pictureka and Hit/Miss, members used Japanese as the language of communication throughout the game. We plan to add more variety to the “Oshaberi Café” programme in order to engage the interest of our members seeking opportunities to continue using Japanese.

On November 27, members exchanged opinions with Japanese friends about what they found peculiar in each other's countries. Besides the opportunity to use Japanese, everyone gained interesting

insights into deepening their understanding of Singaporean and Japanese cultures.



On December 19, as a pre-Christmas celebration, Japanese friends taught members how to sing familiar Christmas carols, Silent Night and Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer, in Japanese. It felt like we were transported back to Japan, minus the snow and wintry cold.

Story 3: Cooking Up A Storm (contributed by Koh Yun)

JETAA Singapore members and some of our Japanese friends played chef on November 17, whipping up three Japanese dishes in a cooking workshop held at the Japanese Association.

During the three-hour session, the 15 participants learnt how to make *okonomiyaki*, potato salad and *miso* soup.

The workshop was conducted by Araya-sensei, a certified cooking instructor.

This was the first cooking workshop organised by JETAA Singapore and the participants expressed keen interest in taking part in such classes in the future.



Story 4: Summer FUN! (contribution by Chen Jianwen)

Singaporean games such as Bola Tin, chapter and cone and rings were a hit with the mostly Japanese crowd at the Japanese Summer Festival.

Held on August 21 at the Japanese Primary school in Changi, the Festival was a one-day food and games carnival.

Over 300 visitors tried their hands at the games at the booth ran by JETAA Singapore members and Republic Polytechnic students.

Friends cheered each other on as they tried to keep the chapter in the air and children competed with each other to be the first to topple the tin can stacks. The booth was a hubbub of constant excitement and peals of laughter.

Other than the games, the participants had to answer a simple quiz based on the JET Programme information that was put up around the booth. As a result, we were inundated with lots of positive feedback and interest about the JET Programme from the visitors.

Upon completing all six games, the participants walked away with a lucky draw prize each.

During the second half of the day, the Republic Polytechnic students put up a story-telling performance - "The Singapore story: Sang Nila Utama" at the booth.

Decked up in their traditional costumes and homemade props, the actors charmed the audience with their consummate acting and comic punch lines. They delivered an enriching cultural show for the crowd at the event.

The summer festival was an important networking opportunity for JETAA Singapore members to meet and catch up with one another. Furthermore, it was a chance for the Japanese youths in Singapore to learn more about Singaporean culture.

The event was a great success thanks to the efforts of the volunteers from JETAA Singapore and the students of Republic Polytechnic and the support from the Embassy of Japan (Singapore), CLAIR, the Japanese Association (Singapore) and Japanese School in Changi (Singapore).



Looking Outwards...

As a brand new JETAA chapter, JETAA Singapore was privileged to learn good ideas from other well established JETAA chapters through the networking sessions at the JETAA International Meeting in Edinburgh in 2010. Even though the meeting has ended, this learning has been ongoing through the sharing of invaluable online resources contributed by various JETAA Chapters on the JETAAi website (<http://www.jetalumni.org/1514/index.php/resources.html>). For ex-JETs who are contemplating to set up a new JETAA chapter, JETAAi website is a good starting point to get great ideas and resources.

With the newly launched JETAA Singapore website, (<http://jetaasg.wordpress.com/about/>), we hope to share and exchange more ideas with other JETAA Chapters at the international level.

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JET Alumni Article 1

When You're A JET, You're a JET All The Way

Contributed by Susan Gundersen
ALT, Hokkaido 1997-2000



"You're moving to Japan? Why?" I can still hear the wonder in the voices of my friends and family as I prepared to embark on my JET Programme adventure nine years ago. Their bewilderment was understandable; having grown up in Kentucky and gone to college in rural Indiana, most of my peers had a fairly localised view of the world. Japan seemed like another planet to many people. Nevertheless, I would venture to say that my nervousness when I left for Japan in the first place was almost surpassed by my apprehension upon returning home from my four year stint in Japan. "Will I fit in? Will I still get along with my friends? Will I understand American culture? Will I be able to find a job?" Questions like these were, I admit, stressing me out as I left Japan and returned to my home in the United States.

Undoubtedly, many of you have the same fears and concerns right now. If you're anything like me, knowing that others are in the same situation will help immensely. Possibly my biggest piece of advice to you is to get involved with your local chapter of JETAA. Other JET alumni can provide an incredible network of support, advice, and friendship. Reflecting back on your reasons for going to Japan in the first place, as well as your reasons for leaving now, and how the experience has changed you can help as well.

For me personally, I can honestly say that my decision to move to Japan after graduating from college was probably the best decision of my life. My time on JET and my career since then have led to my dedication to public service and international exchange, and I currently find myself in a job that combines the two. Having started my JET career as an ALT in a small town in Hokkaido, I then had the opportunity to change to CIR for my third year. After my three years living in Hokkaido, I moved to Tokyo to work in the JET Programme Management Department at CLAIR in Tokyo.



Since I spent four years living in Japan immediately after graduating from college, I had no idea what to expect next. I was a bit of a drifter and self-described lost soul for awhile. I spent several months travelling on my way back to Japan, as so many JETs are prone to do, and then I moved back to my hometown in Kentucky to take advantage of the free room and board generously provided by my parents. I knew perfectly well that I did not want to stay there, though, and I quickly grew restless. I found that, while my friends and I still cared for each other, we had all changed over the last several years, and we no longer had as much in common. I wanted to live in a more international and cosmopolitan city, and I wanted to follow the only career path I knew... that of international education and exchange.

It was at this point that I decided to move to Washington, D.C., after only a few months back home in Kentucky. I had not yet found a job, but I was confident that I would find something sooner or later. I found a temporary job initially working for a very small non-profit organisation that runs short-term study abroad programmes for Japanese students. I was later hired to work in the JET Programme office at the Embassy of Japan in D.C. One step led to another, and I now find myself working at the Institute of International Education (IIE), a non-profit organisation that is a leader in the field of international education.

My current position is the perfect combination of public service and international exchange for me. I manage two different programmes that send full-time teachers from across the United States to Japan and Korea on short-term study tours. These programmes are incredibly valuable opportunities for the teachers who participate and even for their students who learn so much vicariously, and it feels good to know that I am helping change their lives and broaden their horizons.

I could not have planned my career better. Doors seemed to open for me every step along the way. (I seriously considered returning to the U.S. after my first year as an ALT, and I cannot help but wonder sometimes where I would be today had I done so.) It hasn't always been smooth sailing. It was certainly frustrating and challenging to move to a new city and struggle in the job market. I was unemployed for several months, and it was hard to stay optimistic sometimes. It was an important step for me to take, though, and through perseverance and a positive outlook, I got through that period, and I have landed on my feet.

One thing that has helped me adjust to Washington and find my niche is my involvement in the Japan community, including but not limited to JETAA. I knew that in this tough economy and job market, networking is crucial, and I was also eager to adjust to my new home. Elections for JETAA-D.C. were held only a few months after I moved here, and I thought holding office would be the perfect way of getting involved and giving back in a small way to the JET Programme, which had done so much for me. I became the Social Chair, and a year later I took on the role of President as well. I have now retired from both positions, but remain an active and involved member of the organisation. JETAA is an excellent way to make new friends and to relive memories from Japan that your old friends might get tired of hearing about. JET alumni make a great audience when you're telling your story about scaring all of the *obasan* out of the *onsen*, or being forced to sing the Carpenters in front of your *kyouikuinkai* just because you're the token *gaijin*.

As far as advice goes for those of you who are or will be looking for jobs, as I said before, I cannot emphasise enough the importance of networking. I encourage you all to get involved in your local communities – not just JETAA but other organisations as well. Being able to refer to someone within the organisation when applying for a job will go a long way. (Never reference someone without their knowledge, though. Always ask for your contact's permission.) Do not expect people you meet to automatically give you a job, but don't be shy about asking for advice or information about their organisation. Informational interviews are excellent ways of learning about a field that might interest you. Research the field you're interested in to get an idea of the level of position and salary someone with your qualifications should expect. Be sure to have several people look over your resume, especially someone who works in Human Resources, if possible. And, as obvious as it may sound, make sure there aren't any spelling or grammatical errors in either your cover letter or resume when you apply for jobs. There is no faster way to have your resume thrown out than to submit one with errors.

My advice for readjusting culturally is similar. You do have a bumpy road ahead of you, but getting involved with the Japanese or Asian communities will certainly help. When your friends and family tire of your stories about Japan, try to look at things from their perspective. Take an interest in what they've been doing for the past few years, and then reciprocate by sharing some of your stories.

Good luck, and always remember that there are others out there in the same boat as you. CLAIR has established an incredible support network for both JET participants and JET alumni, so be sure to take advantage of it. Keep a positive outlook, be proactive, and make the most of your opportunities.

JET Alumni Article 2

Life After JET

Contributed by Bobby Taylor
ALT, Fukushima Prefecture 1999-2002



Is there life after leaving the JET Programme? One alumnus was doubtful, but has searched the world over from Patagonia to Iceland, working varied jobs from a fish policeman to a Paralympic double medalist, and found it staring him in the face.

So where to go from here? This is the question that echoed in my head in the months that preceded the end of my term of appointment. I wasn't too concerned, after all, serendipity carried me to Japan with the JET Programme in the first place and I presumed that chance would again cast me away on a new career. After a flurry of *sobetsukai*'s and *sayonara*'s the question of what to do loomed more and more ominously in my thoughts. Soon I found myself sitting on a train as it chugged out of the small *inaka* town that was for three years my home. I didn't want to leave, but somehow staying didn't seem right for me either. My time was up. Bandai Machi in Fukushima-ken had grown to become my home in Japan and now it was time to grow back into my home in Canada. Vancouver was calling me home and my plan was to return to my home country and set some roots there.

But even the best laid plans can go awry.

I thought with my new proficiency in Japanese and a thorough understanding of Japanese culture, finding a job in a Pacific Rim city like Vancouver would be as simple as sending out a few resumes and attending an interview or two. I thought it would only be a matter of time before I would be gainfully employed again. However fate had plans for me otherwise.

My wistful ambitions of floating into a new job were complicated by several factors. Firstly there was the simple fact that jobs in Vancouver are hard to come by. Of course there was ESL teaching that I could have taken up, but if I had wanted a career in ESL, I would have stayed in Japan. I was looking for a job that would make use of my Japanese ability, a job where something of what I had learned in Japan, be it the language or teaching skills, could be put to good use. I wanted to work in something that had to do with Japan. This led me to my second obstacle – I was yearning for Japan. I deeply missed the country, the people, the food, and just about everything about the culture in general. I was previously warned of reverse culture shock and unbeknownst to me this is what I was experiencing. I was more Japanese than I was Canadian. Reverse culture shock was hard to deal with. I was supposed to know what Canada was like because I grew up there – I am Canadian. But I felt strangely foreign in my home and native land. Fortunately I am not the first person to have experienced this and thanks to other JET alumni, a fantastic organisation in British Columbia called the JET Alumni Association of BC was there to act as a support and networking group for me and other newly returned JETs. JETAABC was immensely helpful in connecting me with JETs who had been through, or were experiencing the same trials and tribulations as I had upon returning to our home country. JET Alumni Associations are located throughout the world and are a fantastic way of reconnecting with Japan close to home. Still, even with this support, it took me almost 6 months before I felt like I was again becoming Canadian.

So with no job, a feeling of disorientation in my "own" country, and a strong desire to be back in Japan, *Where to go from here?* resonated even louder in my head.

I am not one to give in to temptations, usually. During school lunch in the junior high school staff room, I would not be the one to take the last piece of tempura though tempted I was. However,

when an uncle enticed me with the notion of returning to Japan with him for a holiday, I jumped at the opportunity. We travelled all over Japan to places I didn't get to see when I was on JET. But to cap off the trip we went to my *inaka* placement, Bandai Machi, where I surprised the locals with a visit. I told no one that I was coming, save Mrs. Yamano, my homestay *okaasan* with whom my uncle and I stayed. My *otousan* didn't even know. The look of shock on Mr. Yamano's face when he got home from work one day was priceless. He casually changed out of his office clothes then slovenly slid the *shoji* door open to the room in which I was sitting. He then stared at me dumbfoundedly on the edge of the *tatami* for an instant before reeling with laughter and repeating my name over and over. It took him 20 minutes to settle down and actually believe that I was actually there.

The reaction at the junior high school graduation, for which I had timed to attend, was much the same. The students were practicing the school song one last time before the graduation ceremony. Upon my entering the classroom where they were singing, again the shock of disbelief then elation flooded the room. A recorded piano from the cassette player droned in the corner of the classroom while the students' vocal accompaniment dropped out one by one as they burst into tears of joy. There was not one dry eye in the classroom as the usually reserved disciplining head teacher joined the rest of us and welled up on this occasion too. It was a moment that I will never forget and belongs near the top of my list of most memorable experiences from JET.

I then realised that life does not end after leaving the JET Programme.

With a new found travel bug deeply planted in my head, I again came across the opportunity for travel. Upon returning back to Canada I whisked myself away to the forests and mountains of the Andes in South America. Relatives were living in Chile at the time and recommended that I join them. For lack of anything better to do and with the momentum of travel already on my side, I hopped on a plane to the bustling city of Santiago.

Before I knew it, a simple 4 week vacation turned into 4 months of exploring in South America. I walked the eerily quiet walkways of the "lost city" of Macchu Pichu which had an aura not unlike temples of Kyoto. I homestayed with families who opened their doors and hearts to me by showing and teaching me their languages and cultures. And similarly to Japan, festivals abounded with food, clothing and music pouring onto streets creating a jovial atmosphere easy to get lost in. It was like experiencing JET all over again only this time in Latin America.

Soon however it was time to trek home and again my mind returned to the question of *Where to go from here?*

It was not until several months later that I landed a job working for a marine research company in Vancouver. I would take the job as a *dockside fisheries observer*, monitoring the species and amount of commercial fish catches hauled from Canadian waters. This job would complement my years working as a fisherman on commercial fish boats through high school and university. Though it was good as a temporary job and allowed me to play a part in curbing the pattern of overfishing, in no way did it provide the enjoyment that I had teaching on JET.

That enjoyment was partially filled by another opportunity that arose. When I was a kid, unlike most of my friends who took up hockey, I took up the sport of ski racing. Dreams to race for the Canadian National Ski Team and represent Canada on the world stage have been with me for as long as I have strapped two skis to my feet. Those dreams faded in university as my life seemed to take a turn in another direction. But the thought of racing for Canada never really left and was rekindled when an old ski racing friend of mine asked if I would consider racing again, only this time with the Canadian Disabled Alpine Ski Team. He asked if I wanted to be a guide for a blind racer.

Blind racer? I knew nothing about the sport of disabled skiing and was curious as to how a blind man could race. Apprehensions as to whether I could even ski and guide a blind man simultaneously worried me. As communication is so important, especially when leading a blind skier at speeds over 100 kilometres per hour, being able to understand how the other person thinks is key. I feel I learned how to do this when working with my students during JET. The head

coach was convinced that with my previous ski racing accomplishments and time teaching/communicating in Japan, I would have no problem guiding. After a training camp in the Canadian Rockies, I too was convinced that my blind teammate Chris Williamson and I would ski well together.

As a team, Chris and I had a great first season together. We won seven medals on the World Cup circuit including 3 gold, and clinched the overall title in the Super G event. We were on a roll and the biggest season in 4 years was yet to come.

We began a training programme for the Torino Paralympics immediately as our first season ended. Through previous arrangements I was committed to a volunteering opportunity at a university aquarium in northern Iceland for the summer. I thought that this would put a dent in my training regime but as fortune would have it, Iceland proved to be the perfect training ground for me and my programme. The long cool nights of summer were ideal for training after days at work. And Iceland is a beautiful country with lovely people, again showing me that there is life after JET.



My time in Iceland came to an end and, not unlike my experience finishing JET, it was difficult to leave friends behind. This time though, I had other plans on my mind.

The ski team started preseason training in France in October. Our first races of the season were filled with excitement in Austria. Chris and I started strongly and we continued our streak skiing fast in races throughout Europe as well as in Korea and Japan. We stood on the podium in all of the races we entered and on top of the podium for six gold medals. We also clinched the overall title in all 3 disciplines, Slalom, Giant Slalom and Super G, which gave us the overall World Cup title for the year. The feeling of being world champion on a blind men's team with Chris is a feeling only rivalled by having watched our nation's flag rising in our honour at an awards ceremony at the Paralympics.

It was in Torino that Chris and I won a hard fought silver medal in the Downhill and a bronze in the Super G. It was then that I knew my lifelong dream of representing Canada on the world stage had come true.

There is life after JET.

With these anecdotes, one may shrug them off to chance or to being lucky enough to have been in the right place at the right time. But that is exactly my point. The precious time I had on JET came to a conclusion, but not to termination. It simply paved the way for other experiences to unfold.

Now as my life twists and bends its way through another chapter I find myself worrying less and less about *Where to go from here?* There are always opportunities that seem to come out of the woodwork whether one is looking for them or not. And as I am certain many JET alumni have found, life may have changed after JET – but it definitely hasn't ended.

JET Alumni Article 3

If it ain't cooked, I'm not eatin' it, and if it ain't Sco'ish, it's crap!

Contributed by Claire Brender
CIR, Yokohama 1987-1989

I loved *sushi* before ever going to Japan for my two years on JET in Yokohama, but once there, I found myself inexplicably drawn to the Colonel, going to KFC as often as 3 times a week. After around two years I had so fully adjusted to life in Japan that it felt more like my homeland than Michigan, and working at a Japanese bank in Tokyo after JET greatly impacted my work ethic. Even today, nearly 20 years later, my work style feels more Japanese than American. I ultimately stayed in Japan more than 4 years. When I started liking *natto*, I knew something strange was up with my identity.

I finally came home at the end of 1991 because my mother had cancer and I missed my family. I was thrilled to be so close to everyone, yet I felt like a fish out of water. Co-workers at the Chicago branch of the Japanese company where I worked were split into two camps: Japanese employees who would only speak English to me, which felt something akin to eating *sushi* with a knife and fork, and Americans who, while polite, were somewhat distant. Three American women who became friends later told me everyone initially thought I was sent from the company's head office to keep tabs on the Americans. Some colleagues constantly repeated strange phrases, the most common of which was "If it ain't Sco'ish, it's crap!" It took several weeks to realise these were cultural references from the experts at Saturday Night Live. I said sorry all the time and thank you too much. Americans misinterpreted my learned verbal modesty as low self-esteem.

Ultimately, my closest friends ended up being other American returnees from Japan and Japanese immigrants to the U.S. The JET Alumni Association in Chicago quickly became my lifeline, and I stayed active with the group for several years after returning to the U.S. Also within a few months of my return from Japan, I reconnected with an American friend from Yokohama; we became engaged that first year and married the next. Because of our Japan experience, marrying a monocultural American would have been stifling to either of us. We still use Japanese as our "secret" language, handy for defence against aggressive salespeople, or cutting out from an event early.

Working in an all-Japanese context was challenging and fulfilling, and I leveraged my JET experience in several ways. My experience with translation and interpretation on JET served as a bridge to the job with the bank. The broad interpersonal skills developed in a cross-cultural environment, combined with the financial and business experience gained, led to my eventual entrance to business school in Chicago. After earning my M.B.A. I was determined to make my career in a context independent of Japanese language, and worked in the engineering, construction and design/build industries. Nonetheless, I've found myself drawn to international corporate situations, which a few years ago led to my job in corporate and community outreach and development for Wayne State University, Michigan's third-largest public university.

I've been involved with the Michigan-Ohio Great Lakes JETAA since early 2001. It's challenging to grow membership in a region where alumni are so geographically dispersed, but we've had a jolt of new life in our chapter through a wonderful new chapter president, Scott Norman, and a new board. You can find information on Scott and the rest of our board, as well as updates on cultural activities around the two-state region, at greatlakes.jetalumni.org.

AfterJET Guide

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