

ALT JOB SKILLS

Congratulations! You are about to embark on a very exciting adventure. Here are some tips to get you started when you get to work.

First things first, the “golden rule”:

E.S.I.D. (Every Situation Is Different) -This is a phrase that you will hear over and over again in Japan, from your contracting organization and other JETs, *because it is true*. The information provided here is partly based on my personal experience and that of other JETs. For every situation described, you will find numerous JETs for whom it wasn't the case, ESID.



You are going to some very different types of schools

- High School (very similar, one staff room)
- Junior High School
- Elementary School
- One-shot ALTs and “visit schools”
- Rural / Urban / “Surburban”
- Super English, Science (etc) Schools

... but all schools follow some general rules:

☆ Play it professional/safe in the beginning

1. ESID

- Today: general overview- tailor to your school

2. DO NOT Re-CREATE THE WHEEL

- Don't feel bad about using your resources
- JET community, predecessor, JTEs, websites, books
- Foundational - we're all different as with ESID



3. OWN IT

- Make the experience yours- rely on your preds & community, but feel free to change
- J-schools are different (teachers move rooms, not kids) but you might have your own room ==> ask about decorating it (like a US school) even if it hasn't been done before
- play on your strengths (art, excel, speaking, dance)
- *Remember*: important in the beginning to sit back and observe etiquette, hierarchy, how your colleagues behave... you are still have an “ALT advantage” but (ex: going to school meetings)

4. GET TO KNOW PEOPLE

- ALTs (they're NOT as busy as they look... probably...)
- Teachers (ditto)
- Students (summer clubs, classes, lunch in the caf, etc)
- **✓ HOT TIP: Bring a LOT of stuff from home (about home)**
 - More than “omiyage” – think icebreakers and class prep
 - Examples: pictures, maps, pamphlets, bribes like sticker-stamps or pennies, stuff from the local tourism office, even family videos and pictures of every day life now
 - I promise you will be GLAD YOU DID
 - Before classes, teachers will like to look at this stuff (*think of it like mailing your life story to a penpal... and the penpal is the ALT-you!*)
 - Ask teachers about themselves, too

5. J-Manners

- Co-workers and the A in ALT: approach can mean everything
- Process: (recognize culture shock can/will affect your work life, too, but you can prepare for it)

6. Essential TEACHING Skills (*lesson plans will follow...*)

- Patience & Endurance
- Flexibility
- Listening/Observation Skills
- Creativity and thinking on your feet
- Communication Skills (clarity)
- Be well-prepared
- Professionalism (patience with kanchos...)
- Enthusiastic / energetic / “genki”
- **To get you started:**
 - **Think about and plan your self-introduction** (“jikoshokai”) when you arrive
 - ask other JETs and JTEs if you need help



- Bring a USB with pictures and materials for the presentation (don't rely on using the internet when you first arrive)
- Expect to give this presentation *a LOT*; consider having alternate versions (different games, questions, etc)

◇ **ALT Advice from a Japanese Teacher** ◇

1. It is important to get along with everyone at work
2. Be flexible and friendly to everyone, students, teachers, staff at the school, the PTA etc.
3. Morning Greetings
4. Punctuality, to class, to school. etc
5. Use your real world experience, if you have it.
6. Be a little bit independent, try to plan lessons yourself, research and learn if you have no idea. Also, try to do things in Japan yourself if you have some Japanese language ability.
7. Sometimes it's better to keep your mouth shut than complain/argue with someone directly.



Interesting / Helpful / Useful Websites

- Official JET Program Website: <http://www.jetprogramme.org/>
 - Old JET Website: http://www.mofa.go.jp/j_info/visit/jet/index.html
 - 2011 General Information Handbook: http://www.jetprogramme.org/documents/pubs/GIH2011_eng.pdf
- Official Discussion Forums: <http://www.jetprogramme.org/forums/viewtopic.php?f=26&t=5487>
 - Unofficial Discussion Forum (Warning: take stories/complaints/arguments with a grain of salt... but some good "insider" info): www.bigdaikon.com
 - **I Think I'm Lost (popular forum for JETs in Japan):** www.ithinkimlost.com
- Japanese Train Schedules made easy: <http://www.hyperdia.com/>
- US Embassy in Japan: <http://japan.usembassy.gov/>
- "Hyogo Living Guide" = USEFUL information: http://www.hyogoajet.net/wiki/Living_Guide

- The Association for the JET Program (AJET):
 - **National AJET** – does books, high level reports, conferences, connects the larger community, has forums/RESOURCES: www.ajet.net
 - **Your Local AJET Chapter** – does events, provides support, some prefectures have libraries, trips (see sites like www.kumamotojet.com)
- Your local **International Friendship Association (IFA)** or community center (here's an example: <http://www.bb.banban.jp/harimacho-ifa/>)
 - *NOTE: these organizations often have free/cheap language classes!*
- Japanese Phrase of the Day: <http://japanese.about.com/library/blpod.htm>
- Japan Today – be in the know: <http://www.japantoday.com/>
- Japan Times – more good stuff: <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/>
- Japanzine Magazine: <http://www.seekjapan.jp/japanzine.php/>
- Tokyo Free Press (Japanese News Sources): www.tokyofreepress.com
- Let's Japan (About life as an English Conversation School Teachers like GOES, NOVA, etc): <http://letsjapan.org/>
- Multicultural Japan: <http://www.chanpon.org/>
- More than Sushi: <http://www.facebook.com/JAPUNDIT>
- Quirky Things in Japan: <http://www.quirkyjapan.or.tv/>
- ESID (parody comic strips about the JET Program): <http://www.angelfire.com/comics/esid/>
- GENKI English: <http://www.genkienglish.net/start.htm> (great for Elementary School teachers)
- Check out your School's Homepage (ask your contact if they have one; here's an example: <http://www.hyogo-c.ed.jp/~takaminami-hs/>)
- Prefecture Tour Guides (<http://www.hyogo-tourism.jp/english/>)
- Blogs by former JETs / blog sites for your own blog (ex: blogspot.com)
- Mie Guide (International web community for English speakers living in Mie Prefecture... or just Japan ☺): <http://www.miejets.org/>
- Check out EFL journals (for teaching techniques): www.iteslj.org
- Popular JET Alumni e-zine and career center: jetwit.com/wordpress/

AJET does... Lesson Planning

- AJET has lists of resources: <http://ajet.net/lang/en/teaching-resources/prefectural-ajet-teaching-resources/>
- Local AJET (for example, Hyogo posted lesson plans & resources from mid-year conferences: <http://www.hyogoajet.net/forum/viewtopic.php?f=4&t=33> & http://www.hyogoajet.net/wiki/Lesson_Plans)
- AJET Books & Guides (ask your *pred.* or buy at orientation / from local AJET chapt.)
- Creative Resourcing: Teach for America, TESOL programs, teacher's blogs, kids sites

Some Final Random Shortcuts / Tips / Tricks:

- **KANA** (learn hiragana and katakana as soon as possible; will make your life easier AND help you at work)
- **Study Japanese** (= more appreciation language-learning process & your school appreciates it)
- i-Phone apps and DS J-go Programs (= cheaper, helpful Japanese study)

JET Pre-Departure Orientation (June 25, 2011, New York)
Workshop with Brenda McKinney (Hyogo '06-09, brendamckinney@gmail.com)

- **English Books** (Ask your history/English teachers what stories they are teaching, then read the Eigo version, Keep up your native language and vocabulary / slang)
 - **“study what the students are learning”**
- **Visit Clubs** (undiscovered love for kendo or tea ceremony? Be polite, but don't be shy – visit 'em all!)
- **FORMALITIES, First Impressions & Manners** go a long way
 - It might sound funny but business cards and bows matter at work, too
- **Bribes** (pennies, stickers) work, use **multimedia** (PPT) & **animate** it



The business card culture in Japan is different from the US - many housewives even have them. They can be considered an extension of oneself. You are not expected to have these, but will likely impress if you do.

* Note: This presentation includes advice and feedback from current & former ALTs. They offered much more information, including on driving, how to “REALLY plan before school starts, in summer”, why it’s so important to talk to your teachers... it goes on. Feel free to contact me with any questions or follow-up. Yoroshiku!

Good luck and have an awesome time in Japan!