

Make your life easier – Understand the Japanese!

Municipal Housing Living in Harmony

~Two points, ten rules~



Understanding the Japanese spirit = living a fulfilling life in Japan



● Welcome to Kanazawa, city of tradition and culture!

Everyone has different lifestyles. Making an effort to understand and respect other people's lifestyles is the best way to make life easier and more fun for both you and your neighbor. We made this brochure hoping that, after reading it, you can gain some understanding about the Japanese mind and lifestyle. Hoping that, through better understanding, meaningful connections can be established between you and your Japanese neighbor. Because we think that communication and mutual respect are the keys to a fulfilling everyday life in harmony.

The Japanese
spirit

Peaceful and
harmonious

Moderate
and reserved

1. Getting to know the Japanese spirit

Point 1 The Japanese: moderate and reserved

You've probably heard it before: the Japanese are moderate, reserved, obedient, mild-mannered, etcetera. These characteristics can be connected by one concept the Japanese people love: the spirit of harmony. Since old times, various conditions have led the Japanese to emphasise cooperativeness, to the point of subduing their own feelings and actions, in order to meet the expectations of their surroundings. Not meeting those expectations or deviating from the norm is often perceived as shameful and embarrassing, leading most people to comply to the actions of the people around them.

● Whispering conversations?

In public places, Japanese people may seem especially quiet. Japanese is a relatively quiet language without much intonation, and considering the Japanese spirit of caring so much about their surroundings, it's no wonder Japanese people are not used to loud voices. It might be good to try to keep your voice down whenever possible in Japan to avoid startling your neighbors. It is a fact that Japanese apartments have thin walls that carry sound easily, so let's keep that in mind while going about your everyday life. What you consider to be minimal noise may already unintentionally bother your neighbor.

● Afraid of contact with foreigners?

Japanese people, especially Kanazawans, are often said to be shy. They are not very used to speaking with foreigners. Therefore, when you learn some Japanese and try to make contact with them in their own language, it immediately pays off! Even if you're not fluent, simply introducing yourself to your neighbors does wonders; just show them your face and stick a name on it and they will be far more likely to feel at ease and connect with you. It benefits you, too! Your neighbors may give you all kinds of practical tips and various interesting information.



Point 2 Emphasis on peace and harmony

Living together on a small island nation, the Japanese have come to understand the importance of peace and harmony, and have traditionally valued the group over the individual. As such, to be able to function as a group, they tend to adhere strictly to rules and manners. They also go by the principle of “when in Rome, do as the Romans do”, trying to respect the rules and customs of other regions and countries when travelling.

● Rules and manners followed by all

Japanese people like rules and usually follow them, whether they are the law or just social customs. Above all, they like to keep the peace in the neighborhood. One can assume that they value social rules so much because of this caution not to cause trouble to anyone in their environment.

● Punctuality, a valued virtue

One of the key rules to social peacekeeping and being a part of a group is timekeeping. If there's one thing the Japanese are annoyed by, it's their schedule going haywire. Please, when you make appointments with Japanese people, don't be late.

● About Chōkai

In Japan, most municipalities have something called a *chōkai* or town association. In Kanazawa specifically local residents actively participate in these *chōkai*. These associations are governed by the residents themselves and sponsored by their membership fees. They serve all kinds of purposes, such as circulating city notifications, managing the garbage stations, tidying up the streets and organizing events and festivals. Since all residents, including you, can be a member, these associations and their events are a great way to be involved in the community! Getting your face out there is one of the best ways to gain the trust and friendship of your Japanese neighbors.



2. Rules for a pleasant life in Kanazawa 【The Basics: About Japanese Apartments】

The total area of Japanese apartments is measured in square meters (m²) and includes the rooms, toilet, bathroom, kitchen, etcetera. The area of individual rooms is often expressed in *jō*, where 1 *jō* equals the area of one Japanese tatami.

The number of rooms an apartment has, and what kind of rooms it is composed of, can be expressed with a number-letter code.

[For Example]

3LDK 3 separate rooms plus one room combining living room, dining room and kitchen

3= number of rooms

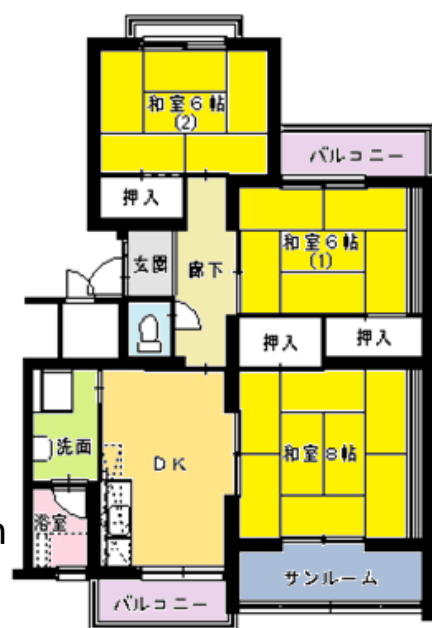
L= Living

D= Dining room

K= Kitchen

LDK= combined living room, dining room and kitchen

DK= combined dining room and kitchen



Example of a 3DK

●Column: Size of Tatami in different regions

The size of one tatami is not the same everywhere. In Kanazawa, we most commonly use the “Edoma” size, which is 176x88cm and is used mostly in prefectures east of Shizuoka. Other regions use slightly different sizes: Kansai has the “Kyōma” size, and Aichi the “Chūkyōma” size. Behind each size lies a different historical trajectory, you can look up the details if you’re interested! By the way, eastern sizes are usually smaller than in the west.

Kyōma > Chūkyōma > Edoma



2. Rules for a pleasant life in Kanazawa

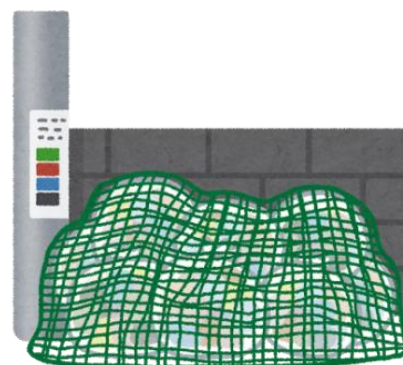
① Everyday life rules: putting out garbage

In Japan, garbage collection is managed by local governing entities, and the rules for putting out garbage are different everywhere. Furthermore, very specific rules for sorting the garbage and when to put it out must be followed. Sometimes, there is a fee to collect trash that is hard to process (large or dangerous goods etc.), and some trash can't be collected at all. Be sure to check the specifics for Kanazawa City in the multi-lingual pamphlet you can find through the link below.

In Kanazawa, garbage stations are managed by resident-run *chōkai*. If garbage cannot be collected properly, the local residents have to deal with it, which causes complaints and trouble between neighbors that could have been avoided.

【Take care!】

- Properly sort and put out your garbage by the rules in order to avoid trouble.
Many products and packages carry labels like these to help you know how to recycle.
For example, plastics that carry a プラ (*pura*) or PET label are recyclables. If there's no such label, they are burnables.
- Taking home other people's garbage is theft!
Don't assume you are entitled to take what someone else put out as trash.



Kanazawa City's Official Trash Guide

「How to Separate and Dispose of Household Garbage」

http://www4.city.kanazawa.lg.jp/25003/recycle/about_gomi/index_gomi.html

Kanazawa City Website ⇒ [Environment • Urban Development] ⇒

[Environment • Garbage disposal/recycling] ⇒ [Garbage collection, recycling] ⇒ scroll down to find the multi-lingual brochure

For more detailed info, contact the Recycling Promotion Section

TEL 076-220-2302 recycle@city.kanazawa.lg.jp

② Everyday life rules and manners: noise

In Japan's wooden houses, the walls and floors are thin and sound travels easily. In the city housing, noise from the upper neighbor often creates problems. How much noise is too much depends on the person, but at night, when everything is quiet, even soft sounds can be perceived as bothersome. A nuisance like this can easily lead to bitter feelings towards one another. Let's try to limit loud noises as much as possible, especially at night, to avoid trouble in the neighborhood.

【Take care!】

- Don't do this at night or in the early morning
 - Parties
 - Vacuum cleaning, laundry
- Turn down the sound at night
 - TV, radio, music, ...
- Limit and be reasonable
 - Don't shout or yell, and limit loud conversations
 - Don't slam the doors, instead open and close softly while holding the knob
 - Use soft footwear like socks or slippers to avoid stomping noise



● Column

In general, elderly people are said to rise early and go to bed early. According to a government survey, 27% of Japanese 65+ go to bed by 9 pm, and 50% wake up by 6 am. Meanwhile, the percentage of young people (between 25 and 34 years) that go to bed at 9 pm is only 5%, while 70% are still sleeping soundly at 6 am.

Source: Social Living Conditions Comprehensive Survey 2011



③ Everyday life customs: kitchen

Let's try not to flush trash and oil down the kitchen drain. It causes clogging, creates odors and pollutes our rivers and seas.

【Take care!】

- Kitchen waste is burnable trash, so dispose of it in a plastic bag after draining excess water.
- Absorb oil with paper or rags and dispose of as burnable trash.



④ Everyday life customs: bathroom

In most Japanese houses, the bathroom consists of a bath tub and a washing space. The custom is to first use the washing space to thoroughly clean the body and hair, and then soak in the hot bath tub for relaxation. Try to prevent clogging of the drains, since flooding can cause major damage to your apartment. Furthermore, if the damage extends to your downstairs neighbor, you may need to compensate for it. Japanese air is very humid, so mold easily forms in the bathroom. Mold causes odors and is bad for your health, so be sure to ventilate sufficiently and clean regularly.

【Take care!】

- Keep hair out of the drains to prevent clogging.
- Ventilate and clean thoroughly to prevent mold.



⑤ Everyday life customs: toilet

The Japanese love for cleanliness of course also manifests itself in the smallest room. Overflowing toilets caused by clogged drains are a nightmare! If the damage extends to your downstairs neighbor, you may need to compensate for it. Don't flush anything but toiletpaper that is specifically designed to melt away in water. No tissues or other paper.

【Take care!】

- Clogging the bathroom or toilet drains causes overflow.
- Don't flush anything other than designated toilet paper. No tissues, sanitary napkins, etc.



⑥ Everyday life customs: indoor rules

In general, Japanese people take off their shoes upon entering their house. Keeping on your outdoor shoes makes your floor dirty and can cause a lot of stomping noise. In most rooms, it's okay to wear slippers, but in a tatami room it is better to wear socks or go barefoot. Tatami are delicate and stains are hard to remove. To clean the tatami, brush or vacuum regularly, and wipe with a damp cloth every once in a while.

⑦ Balcony and veranda

Your balcony has a very important part to play in case of sudden evacuation. Make sure you don't obstruct our escape route with big objects. Also, when drying your futon or clothes, make sure nothing can fall down from the balcony. The same goes for flower pots and other things!

【Take care!】

- Make sure no objects can fall down off your balcony.

⑧ Common spaces

Apartment buildings have common spaces outside your private room, such as the staircase and corridors, that everyone uses. Don't put any personal belongings here as they may obstruct escape routes in case of emergencies.

⑨ Parking for cars and bicycles

Place your bicycle neatly at the designated bicycle parking of your housing complex. If you need a parking spot for your car, you need to rent it! Parking your car on the street is not allowed. Pay your parking spot fee every month and don't use any other space just because it happens to be open.

⑩ Local Japanese classrooms for better mutual understanding

Japanese people are generally shy and not used to speaking with foreigners. However, if you learn some Japanese and proactively approach them, they will surely open up to you and give you all kinds of useful tips. The Ōkuwa and Tagami districts have Japanese classrooms specifically for international students and their families. Take the opportunity to learn about Japanese culture and customs by exchanging with the volunteers there!

● Local Japanese Classrooms

When:

(Ōkuwa district) Every 2nd and 4th Saturday of the month
11:00~13:00

(Tagami district) Every 4th Saturday of the month
13:30~15:00

Where:

(Ōkuwa district) Ōkuwa Town Municipal Housing Convention Space

(Tagami district) Ishikawa International Student Exchange Hall

Contact: Kanazawa International Exchange Foundation (KIEF)

TEL 076-220-2522 kief@kief.jp



【Notes】

Municipal Housing Living in Harmony



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For more detailed info, contact the Housing Policy Section

Address : 〒920-8577 Hirosaka 1-1-1 Kanazawa City

TEL : 076-220-2333 (* in Japanese if possible)

Mail : jyuutaku@city.kanazawa.lg.jp