



Quick Guide to Etiquette and Manners in Japan

Business:

Business Meeting Etiquette

1. Casual American-style attire is still uncommon in the Japanese business place. Dressing appropriately for the occasion when meeting counterparts on business is suitable.
2. When sitting down to a business meeting with Asian counterparts, the seating arrangement will be determined by the status of the participants. Rather than sitting anywhere, the guest is usually guided to the appropriate seat.
3. As a general rule, the highest ranking person from the host side will sit at the head of the table. Then other people will take their seats starting from the seats closest to him and working to the other end of the table. Those of higher status sit closest to the "head honcho".
4. Standing at one's seat and waiting for the most senior person to tell the others to be seated is common. When the meeting is finished, everybody waits until the most senior person has stood up before standing up oneself.
5. Non-alcoholic drinks will probably be served at the beginning of the meeting and they will be distributed in the order of descending importance of recipients. One might want to wait for the most senior person to drink from his glass before starting on one's own.
6. Gifts are always appreciated. Please consider bringing a small souvenir that represents well your hometown or Switzerland to give to your host. Your hosts might give you something from their country, too. If the gift is wrapped, it is the custom not to open it until having left. If the gift is not wrapped, one expresses plenty of appreciation (whether one likes it or not). It might be a good idea to ask some questions about the gift to show interest.
7. Taking notes during a meeting is welcome, as it will show that interest and will be appreciated by the hosts. However, please keep in mind that in Japan nobody's name is written in red ink (even not own one). It is recommended to carry a black or blue pen.



Name /Titles

The Japanese commonly address each other by last name. Only close friends and children are usually addressed by first name. In addition, people rarely address each other just by name, but usually attach an appropriate title to the name. There is a large number of such titles depending on the gender and social position of the person one is addressing. Some of the most frequently used titles are:

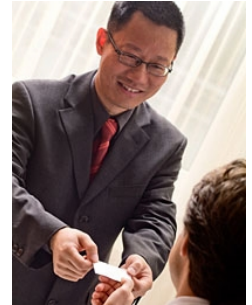
- **san:** (for example Sato-san). This form is the most neutral and famous title, and can be used in most situations. Only in formal situations, san may not be polite enough.
- **sama:** (for example Sato-sama). This form is a more polite form of san, commonly used in formal situations and letters, but too polite in a casual context or in conversation.
- **sensei:** (for example Sato-sensei). This form is a title used for professors, teachers, doctors and other people with a higher education and from whom you receive a service or instructions.
- **kun:** (for example Yusuke-kun). This form is an informal title used for boys and men that are younger than yourself.
- **chan:** (for example Megumi-chan). This form is an informal title used for young children and very close friends or family members.

Business Card Exchanges Guidelines

If visiting Japan on business double-sided business cards in Japanese and English are recommended. They show potential partners the seriousness, understanding and respect towards their culture. This small effort establishes trust and maximizes opportunity for excellent results.



1. Cards are exchanged at the beginning of a meeting; it's advisable to make sure to have enough cards available for everyone.
2. It is best to stand up when exchanging cards with those of higher rank.
3. Facing the counterpart, one bows slightly and hands over the card (with the Japanese side pointing up) either with the right hand or both hands. The same rule applies when receiving a card from someone else.
4. One takes time to review the counterpart's card carefully. Especially as a foreigner, one might want to speak his/her name and position to be sure of correct pronunciation. If the meaning of his/her job position is in any way unclear, it would not hurt to ask for an explanation. Basically, it's a way to show interest in and respect to the other party.
5. It goes without saying that shoving the card into the back trouser pocket is never recommended.
 - If you are meeting in passing, then the card may just carefully be placed in a shirt pocket or in a wallet or notebook.
 - If seated at a meeting, please place the card gently on the table in front of you. Thus they are at one's disposal at one glance during the meeting in order to correctly refer to the counterpart's name and position. If meeting more than one person and have received many cards, they are arranged neatly in front of oneself.
6. The Japanese hand out their business card at the drop of a hat. In the same manner, foreigners can give their card to anyone that they want to hear from again. It is likely to go through a lot more cards during the trip to Japan than one would back home.



Food / Eating out:

Entering and sitting down

In Japan, one says "itadakimasu" ("I gratefully receive") before starting to eat, and "gochisosama (deshita)" ("Thank you for the meal") after having finished the meal.

Many restaurants in Japan display plastic or wax replicas of their dishes at the entrance. They usually look very similar to the real dishes.

When entering a restaurant, one will be greeted with the expression "irasshaimase" ("please come in"), as it is usual in any Japanese store. Waiters and waitresses are generally trained to be extremely efficient, polite and attentive, and will usually immediately lead you to your table. If they don't, it is assumed that it is okay to sit at any table. While a majority of restaurants in Japan are equipped exclusively with Western style tables and chairs, restaurants with low traditional tables and the customers sitting on cushions on the floor, are also common. Some restaurants feature both styles. In case of a traditional Japanese interior, it is usually required to take off the shoes before stepping onto the seating area or even at the restaurant's entrance.



Eating

After sitting down, a glass of water or tea will be served for free and later refilled. You also receive a wet towel (oshibori) for cleaning your hands. If chopsticks are not already set, there are usually some to be found in a box on the table. Most often, they are wooden chopsticks that need to be separated into two before use.

In case of some restaurant types, for example izakaya (Japanese style pub) or Chinese restaurants, it is common for all people at one table to order and share various dishes. At restaurants that serve set menus, bowl dishes (e.g. domburi – rice served in a bowl or noodle soups) or Western style dishes, on the other hand, each person usually orders and eats one separate dish.

Table rules

- Blowing one's nose in public, and especially at the table, is considered bad manner.
- It is considered good manner to empty one's dishes to the last grain of rice.
- Unlike in some other parts of East Asia, it is considered bad manner to burp.

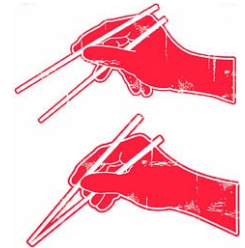


- After having finished eating, please, place all the dishes in the same way as they were at the start of the meal. This includes replacing the lid of dishes which came with a lid and replacing the chopsticks on the chopstick holder or into their paper slip if applicable.

Chopsticks rules

Some of the most important chopstick rules are:

- Please hold the chopsticks towards their end, and not in the middle or the front third.
- When not using your chopsticks and when having finished eating, please lay them down in front of you with the tip to left.
- Please never stick chopsticks into food, especially not in a bowl of rice. It is commonly done at funerals.
- The following actions are considered im polite:
 - to spear food with the chopsticks
 - to point with chopsticks to something or somebody
 - to move chopsticks around in the air too much
 - to play with chopsticks
 - to move around plates or bowls with chopsticks.
- To separate a piece of food in two, one needs to exert controlled pressure on the chopsticks while moving them apart from each other in order to tear the food. This takes some practice. With larger pieces of food such as tempura, it is also acceptable to pick up the entire piece with the chopsticks and take a bite.
- Once having already started eating with the chopsticks, please use the opposite end of the chopsticks in order to take food from a shared plate to your own plate.



Knife and fork are used for Western food only. Spoons are sometimes used to eat Japanese dishes that are difficult to eat with chopsticks, for example some domburi dishes or Japanese style curry rice. A Chinese style ceramic spoon is sometimes used to eat soups.

Drinking rules

When drinking alcoholic beverages, it is a Japanese custom to serve each other, rather than pouring the beverage into one's own glass. It is supposed to periodically check your friends' cups, and serve them more once their cups are getting empty. Likewise, if someone wants to serve you more alcohol, ones glass might be quickly emptied and held towards that person.

While it is considered bad manner to become obviously drunk in some formal restaurants, for example in restaurants that serve kaiseki ryori (Japanese haute cuisine); the same is not true for other types of restaurants such as izakaya, as long as no other guests are bothered.

One doesn't start drinking until everybody at the table is served and the glasses are raised for a drinking salute, which usually is "kampai".

Paying

The bill will be handed over upside-down when receiving the meal or after having finished eating. In most restaurants guests are supposed to bring their bill to the cashier near the exit when leaving in order to pay. Some restaurants, especially cheaper ones, have different systems for ordering and paying. At some restaurants it may be required to pay right after ordering, while in others one is supposed to buy meal tickets at a vending machine near the restaurant's entrance and to hand them over to the staff in order to receive a meal.

In restaurants in Japan it is not necessary to pay a tip. When leaving, it is polite to say "gochisosama deshita" ("thank you for the meal").

Religion:

Religions do not play a big role in the everyday lives of most Japanese people nowadays. The average Japanese just follows the religious rituals at a few ceremonies such as births, weddings and funerals.

Japan's two most important religions are Buddhism and Shinto. The two religions co-existed for several centuries and even complemented each other to a certain degree. The feeling of duty to belong to just a single religion as it is widespread among followers of the three large occidental religions, is therefore uncommon in Japan, and many Japanese consider themselves Shinto-Buddhists or marry in a Christian style even though they are not Christians.