

Sendai Multicultural Center News

Etiquette in Japanese Daily Life (日本の生活マナー)



Q. I've been told by the people in my neighborhood and local community that I'm not following societal rules. I don't mean to cause trouble, but I also don't know what I'm doing wrong.

A. While your actions may be normal in your home country, they may be an issue in Japan. Keeping this information in the back of your mind can help prevent future problems.

I am not particularly loud but yet I still get complaints from my neighbors.

Q. I've been told that "you're loud late at night and early in the morning" and "I hear you talking loudly from the balcony and hallway." I don't think I have been especially loud in any way, so why am I being told that I am being loud.



A. Japanese people tend to think that making loud sounds or talking loudly will cause trouble to those around them. Walls in apartments can be on the thin side, causing more sound to pass through them than you would think. It's especially an issue early in the morning and late at night, where the root of the issue may stem from your neighbors' feeling that the noise you make has affected their sleep schedules. For everyone's sake, it's important to keep the amount of noise you make as low as possible, especially if you live right next to others in apartments and in similar housing situations.

Why am I being told to follow bike rules when everything I am doing is acceptable in my home country?

Q. I've been told "don't ride side-by-side" and "don't park your bike on the sidewalk."

These are normal things to do in my home country; why is this not ok here?



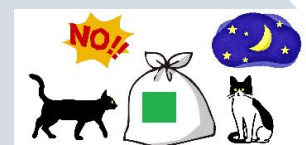
A. Due to the narrowness of sidewalks in Japan, riding side-by-side may cause you to hit a pedestrian or have a head-on collision with another biker. Following rules creates a safe, accident-free environment for everyone; while breaking them will cause you to pay fines.

Additionally, sidewalks are an important road that allows pedestrians to safely move about. Parking your bike on a sidewalk makes it difficult for the elderly to navigate around and can cause accidents. Parking your bike outside of a designated parking area is not allowed and may result in your bike being impounded.

Why can't I take my trash out when I feel like it?

Q. Why can I not take the trash out at night and have to do so early in the morning on designated days?

A. Taking the trash out too early will attract cats and crows, who rip open the bags and cause a mess. The mess then needs to be cleaned up by someone from the neighborhood association or a neighbor. Taking the trash out the night before will emanate foul odors all night long, causing a lack of cleanliness, which is not just unpleasant but may also cause people to become sick.



Why is sorting trash so complicated?

Q. The neighborhood association told me that I have to sort my trash before throwing it away. Why is the sorting system so complicated?

A. Mixed in your trash is a lot of paper, metal and plastic that can be recycled and reused.

Reusing natural resources reduces the amount of trash we throw away. Be aware that the rules for separating your trash from recyclables will differ depending on where you live.



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Publications in Seven Languages

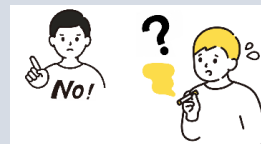
In addition to English, we also have publications in Japanese / 日本語, Chinese (Simplified) / 简体中文, Chinese (Traditional) / 繁體中文, Korean / 한국어, Vietnamese / Tiếng Việt, and Nepali / नेपाली.

They can also be viewed on our website, or found at the Sendai Multicultural Center.



Why am I not allowed to smoke anywhere I want?

Q. When I smoke outside, I get told "that's not allowed here." There is nothing flammable around me, so why is it not allowed?



A. Depending on the area you are in, there may be rules that prevent smoking outside of designated areas or smoking while walking. These rules are in place to keep second-hand smoke from affecting non-smokers. Also, walking with a lit cigarette in hand puts fire in the area of a child's face and can be dangerous if contact is made. For these reasons, refraining from smoking while walking is graciously asked.

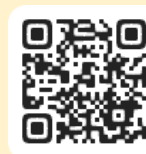
Why can't large trash be thrown out with the rest?

Q. When I was getting ready to return to my country, I took my furniture to the collection spot and was told "you can't throw it away here." Why is that?



A. There are rules for disposing of large items. If the largest part of the item measures over 30 cm, it is considered "bulky waste" and will require you to put in a request to get it disposed of. If you try to dispose of bulky waste without making a request, it will be left out and block up the walkway. Bulky waste is picked up approximately twice a month, on designated days. Please hold onto your bulky waste until the scheduled day and don't forget to make the request.

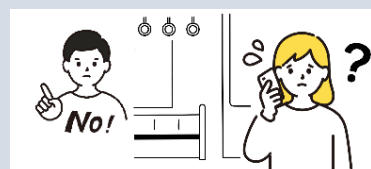
To dispose of your bulky waste, call the "Bulky Waste Disposal Center" (022-716-5301) or apply online: <https://www.sendai-sodai.jp/eco/view/sendai/top.html>



Bulky waste disposal video: "Guide on How to Dispose of Bulky Waste in Sendai City" (English only): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jWKQGHq5IRI>

I can talk on the phone while on trains and buses back home, why can't I here?

Q. Why am I told not to speak on the phone when I am on a train or bus?



A. Trains and busses are public services and as such, speaking while riding one is a violation of Japan's societal etiquette. Even without using your phone, talking loudly with a friend sitting next to you will cause a ruckus and catch the attention of those around you. Even if you are refraining from talking and listening to music with earbuds, be careful not to listen to music too loudly, as the sound can leak through and catch the attention of others around you.

The City of Sendai has written a "Manner Manual for Foreign Residents" available in different languages (English, Simplified and Traditional Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Nepali, and Easy Japanese).

<https://www.city.sendai.jp/shiminsekatsu/kurashi/anken/anken/machi/documents/r8eigo.pdf>



Check out the "Life in Sendai" handbook for more useful information on living in Sendai.

"Life in Sendai" handbook: <https://int.sentia-sendai.jp/foreigner/>



Let's create a happy and healthy environment by following Japan's social etiquette. Contact the Sendai Multicultural Center (SenCUL) if you need interpretation support.



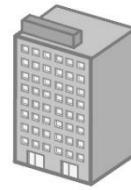
Notices: SenCUL's updated days of operation and who to contact when you need help



【SenCUL's days of operation have changed from April 2026 onwards】

Hours of operation are 9:00-17:00.

<https://int.sentia-sendai.jp/e/exchange/index.php>



Now closed on
Sundays

【Who to contact when you need help】

▶ Please call the following numbers only in emergencies, not for questions or consultations.

- Police: 110 (Accidents and incidents)
- Ambulance/Fire: 119 (Sudden illnesses and fires) (Multilingual support available in 24 languages)

▶ Please contact the Sendai City General Call Center "Mori-no-miyako Teach Me Helpline" if you have questions about procedures or related topics at City Hall or Ward Offices.

022-398-4894

Reception Hours: Open year-round 8:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m. (8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. on weekends, national holidays, and from December 29 to January 3)

Languages available: Japanese, English, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Nepalese

<https://guide.callcenter.city.sendai.jp>



Advisor Corner "New Country, New Common Sense"

Thoughts and experiences from advisors on this issue's theme.

Since moving to Japan, I've often been caught off guard by manners and etiquette in daily life. Compared to the rest of the world, I think that Japan and my home country (the UK) have a lot of similarities, but I still had a lot of things to get used to, and frequently experienced culture shock.

For example, although the UK also has a recycling system, the Japanese system has different waste categories and is much more complicated, so I found it very difficult to understand at first. On top of that, even though I did an exchange year in Tokyo beforehand, I still had to get used to the different rules here in Sendai, such as having to use designated garbage bags. But thanks to all of the helpful resources provided by Sendai City and SenTIA, I was able to get my head around those quickly.

Another piece of Japanese etiquette I was surprised by was taking off your shoes when entering a building. Although I knew this was common when entering houses and apartments, I was surprised that, unlike in the UK, you also have to take your shoes off when entering places like changing rooms in shops, some traditional restaurants, and gymnasiums.

Manners and etiquette in daily life in Japan might be very different and difficult to understand at first for foreigners. However, simply just by going about your daily life in Japan, you'll quickly absorb, get used to and understand these things. Just try your best, and don't worry if you sometimes get it wrong!

(Consultant H)

Each advisor writes in the "Advisor Corner" each issue in all language versions.

The Japanese translation for each is on our blog. Please have a look.

Sendai Multicultural Center

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仙台多文化共生センター (SenCUL)



Open 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Close Sundays, holidays, second Monday of each month, Year End and New Year holidays. If a holiday falls on the second Monday, we will be closed the following Monday.

Address 1F, Sendai Park Building, 6-1 Kokubuncho 3-chome, Aoba Ward, Sendai-shi, 980-0803

TEL (022) 265 - 2471

FAX (022) 265 - 2472

Email tabunka@sentia-sendai.jp

URL <https://int.sentia-sendai.jp/e/exchange/>



■ Advice in foreign languages

We provide multilingual consultation on worries and problems about daily life. Please call the Interpretation Support Hotline: (022) 224-1919.

Languages available: English, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Nepali, Tagalog, Thai, Portuguese, Spanish, Russian, Indonesian, Italian, French, German, Malay, Khmer, Burmese, Mongolian, Sinhala, Hindi, Bengali, and Urdu.

Specialist Consultations for Foreign Residents

We periodically hold specialist consultations with lawyers, administrative scriveners and so on. Please schedule a consultation if there are any matters affecting your life in Sendai.

Consultations are confidential and limited to 30 minutes per person.

Consultations are held from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

You can check the consultation dates on our website.

<https://int.sentia-sendai.jp/e/exchange/consultation.html>



Administrative
Scrivener



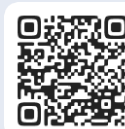
Lawyer



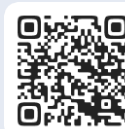
Labour
Bureau



Immigration
Bureau



Tax
Accountant



Sendai City
Entrepreneurship Support Center
ASSISTA



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