

Japan etiquette cheat sheet

The ten-second version, for American and Australian visitors. One screen per page, so it works as a screenshot too.

- 1 **Don't tip.** Anywhere. Ever.
- 2 **Shoes off** where there's a raised floor, a rack or slippers.
- 3 **Keep quiet** on trains and buses: low voices, no calls.
- 4 **Carry cash.** Some places take cash only.
- 5 **Carry your trash** until you find a bin. They're rare.
- 6 **Line up** where the floor markings say. Don't cut.
- 7 **Don't eat while walking.** Finish at the stall or sit.
- 8 **Wash before** you get into any hot spring or bath.
- 9 **Check your medicines** before packing. Some are banned.
- 10 **Don't stress.** A smile and "sumimasen" (sorry, excuse me) fixes most slip-ups.

Where Americans and Australians differ

TIPPING

US: The big one. Tipping isn't customary, and leaving cash can send staff running after you.

AU: Same as home. No tipping.

PRICES

US: Prices are posted tax-included. No sales tax added at the register.

AU: Like GST: usually included.

DRIVING

US: Traffic keeps left. Bring an International Driving Permit from home.

AU: You drive left already. Still bring the permit.

POWER

US: Same flat two-pin plugs, at 100V. Check hair dryers.

AU: Plugs won't fit. Bring a Type A adapter. Chargers marked 100–240V are fine.

CASH

US/AU: Cards work in cities, but small restaurants, rural buses and taxis can be cash only. Carry yen.

MEDICINES

US/AU: Adderall and products with over 10% pseudoephedrine (some Sudafed, Vicks inhalers) are banned. Carry meds in original packaging with a doctor's letter, and check the official health ministry page before you pack.

On the move, at the table, and a few words

- **Trains:** queue at the sides of the doors; the middle is for people getting off. Let them off first.
- **City buses:** usually in at the rear door, out at the front. Intercity buses often have one front door.
- **Escalators:** stand still and hold the rail. Which side to stand on varies by region, so copy locals.
- **Chopsticks:** never stand them in rice or pass food chopstick to chopstick. Slurping noodles is fine.
- **Izakaya:** the little starter dish is a table charge, not a freebie.
- **Onsen:** wash first, no swimwear, towel out of the water. Tattoos may be restricted: check first.
- **Carry:** tissues, wipes and a small trash bag.

Sumimasen	Excuse me / sorry
Arigato gozaimasu	Thank you
Onegaishimasu	Please
Eigo no menyu wa arimasu ka?	Do you have an English menu?
Gochisosama deshita	Thanks for the meal

Full guide with sources: theengineeredescape.com/blog/japan-etiquette-guide-for-americans-and-australians.html