

Are you sure you...

# wanna be an ALT?



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Do you feel excited yet overwhelmed by your dream or desire to be an ALT in Japan?

Do you have endless questions regarding the `hows` of living in Japan?

Do you feel qualified yet so limited in terms of your resources to take off from your present situation?

Are you worried if being an ALT in Japan is your calling or not?

Have you been thinking if this new career is worth all your effort and resources?

Say no more!

Free yourself from worries.

Educate yourself through this simple ebook.

This product of my few months here in Japan is intended for you.

Yes, `you` who can't wait to fly to Japan.

Specifically, this is intended for my fellow Filipinos (Filipinas) who have been looking for greener pastures for their families.

Are you ready?

Then, turn the page now! ;-)

## 2. WHAT IS ALT?

ALT stands for Assistant Language Teacher.

This position is unique in the Japanese educational system.

As an ALT, you rarely play the role of a T1 or Teacher 1.

This means that you will assist either the Homeroom Teacher (or HRT in elementary schools) or the Japanese English Teachers (or JTEs in Junior High Schools) in facilitating English classes.

Hence, Assistant Language Teacher.

Sounds pretty easy, right?

Well, that's actually true.

Your main role is more on assisting the HRTs or the JTEs.

Especially starting 2020 academic year, HRTs are taking the role of T1 and ALTs are becoming more of T2s.

In my situation, I always play the role of T2 because my HRTs and JTEs prepare the lessons.

Usually, my role is to read the listening parts and then after that I just stand at the side and keeps on smiling.

So easy!

In Chesham`s orientation seminar and during the initial training here in Japan, you will learn the details about the dual role of an ALT.

First, as a language teacher; and second, as a cultural ambassador.

The details are available on the handout provided by Chesham and further explained during the initial training in Japan.

A piece of advice: prepare yourself to be bored because as an ALT, your work is so minimal.

Everything has been prepared either by Interac or by the HRTs/JTEs.

All you have to do is be familiar with those materials so that you can add your own flavor as you implement them.

Be free also to add more creativity to make the lesson more fun and interactive.

### 3. THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Although those applying from abroad may directly apply to Interac, applicants from the Philippines may not.

This is due to the many requirements that can only be handled by an agency in the Philippines. And perhaps Interac wants to be spared from the hassles of completing those requirements, especially the legal ones.

Interac is a Japanese company that hires and dispatches ALTs in Japanese schools.

In the Philippines, the official partner of Interac is Chesham Recruitment Inc.

Almost all of the Filipino ALTs from the Philippines went through the processes with Chesham.

To start the application process, check this agency's website

<https://cheshamrecruitment.com.ph/>.

Then click the `English Language Teacher for Japan`.

Read the extensive descriptions that include the compensation package and the requirements.

You will realize that the writer of that job position is very organized.

I would say, very Japanese.

Japanese system in general is very precise and systematic.

Surely, you will feel intimidated by the requirements.

BUT, that's just normal.

When I first read that in 2015, I immediately disregarded it because I felt so disqualified.

Besides, I could imagine the tedious process.

Then in 2017, I also came across with Chesham's advertisement through [www.workabroad.ph](http://www.workabroad.ph).

Again, I skipped that because I felt overwhelmed by the requirements.

Instead, I applied to another agency that helps applicants be hired as English teachers in Oman.

Unfortunately, I was not hired due to my non-arab appearance. (Huhuhu!)

Then, desperate to make a change in my career, I tried to submit my resume to Chesham via email.

I sent my resume in October 2019.

After a week, I received an invitation from Chesham to attend an orientation.

In that orientation, I learned a lot.

I met many applicants from near and far who were also determined to be an ALT.

I met Chesham's awesome staff and their founding father - Mr. Dennis Ryan.

He is an incredible and admirable guy who gives endless words of encouragement.

After his speech, which of course incorporated already almost all the necessary information you can read in Chesham's continuously-updating handouts (smile), I have made a decision that I would pursue this.

I decided that I would continue investing on it and pouring all my effort until I get it.

That time, I was really tight financially.

I travelled all the way from Legazpi City (Bicol) to Manila.

Then, in the evening, after the orientation, I travelled back to Legazpi City.

I didn't mind the 12-hour trip by bus because I still had to go to my class in the morning.

I should come to work, or else no work, no pay.

You can imagine me budgeting the little savings I have, just to attend the orientation, the interview, and then the final demo.

And of course, the requirements were overwhelming.

I needed an extra penny for them.

But still, if there's a will, there's always a way!

I became a BDO that time because I was always telling myself: "I will find ways!"

Not to mention how I became religious again because I started praying again and again like a little child.

Prayer has been my constant companion ever since I started thinking of my work in Japan.

Surprisingly, when I began completing the requirements one by one, everything seemed to fall into place.

I learned to ask for help from my mother, sisters and brothers, cousins, former teachers, school secretaries, and even my former formators in the seminary.

The completion process was not really a smooth one, but definitely filled with little awe-inspiring miracles.

Now, let's get to business.

What are the steps I have gone through in becoming an ALT here in Japan as far as becoming an ALT in Japan is concerned?

Check the following steps or stages of my journey as an ALT.

1. **Send the resume** (Chesham-formatted) to Chesham via email (wait for their response and invitation). If you are short-listed, they will get back to you within a week. I received a reply within a week.
2. **Attend the orientation seminar** - This is to set your expectations properly and understand clearly what you are applying for. This is very important since it will answer many of your questions. Wear business attire. No perfume guys! Hahah! Relax and enjoy the orientation. Don't worry, it's free! If you are coming from a province, make sure you have enough time to get to Chesham's office. Be mindful of the landmarks. Check google map. Take public transportation to save your precious penny. But if you have more than enough, you may take a taxi but don't be surprised with the fare.
3. **Take the written and oral examinations** (after the orientation seminar) - This is very easy. Do not allow yourself to be prevented by your useless worries and nervousness. You are bigger than your butterflies!

Chesham (Mr. Ryan) will inform you immediately whether you passed or not. He will even help you fix your accent to pass the test. (Remember how to pronounce the word `culture`) (Hahah!).

Then, the final interview and the final demo will be scheduled.

4. **Final interview** - This is a long interview. (At least in my case.) My interview lasted for two hours. So, make sure you attended already to your physiological needs before entering the interview room. Make yourself a favor, read the handouts that Chesham sent to you beforehand via email. You will get ideas and some answers from those handouts, especially the roles of ALTs.
5. **Final demo** (video demo) - Before doing your final demo, make sure to practice your lessons many times in front of the camera. If your phone has a camera, try to record yourself. Watch your performance. Listen to your voice. It sucks? I know! I hated myself for few minutes because I didn't like my performance when I tried to record myself. But try anyway. Believe me, you will get used to watching yourself. And eventually, you will like your performance. Then, rehearse again and again and again.

On the actual demo, be patient with yourself when you keep on repeating your video demo. It's all right. We Filipinos are one of the most camera-conscious people in the world. So, making mistakes and taking first, second, third, fourth or even fifth take will be fine. Just make sure you do not reach tenth take, or else Ms. Marghie will be impatient with you!

(Hahah! Peace Ms. Marghie! You were so patient during my demo. Thank you so much! God bless you!)

In my case, it took me until seventh take before I perfected my demo. (I think there were still some minor mistakes but Mr. Ryan accepted them already.)

It was a little bit frustrating and embarrassing, but I needed to be patient with myself too. You too, be patient with yourself and practice practice practice.

**NOTE:** For those who are travelling from afar, final interview and final demo may be done consecutively. Just make sure that you are well prepared especially for the demo.

In my case, I focused my preparation on the interview. Hence, I messed up with the video demo. Fortunately, I was given a second chance to perform that.

(That meant another thousand pesos since I had to go back to Manila again. But that's fine! I found ways!)

6. **Required documents completion** - This step took me more than three months. I thought I could finish this in one month, but I was wrong. Lesson: listen to Chesham. As soon as you decide to be an ALT, start processing your documents.

I did not have a problem with my passport or driver's license.

My time was consumed by my elementary and high school transcripts and the elementary and high school medium of instruction certifications. Moreover, the process of obtaining a red-ribboned document took me a few weeks too.

(I heard that red ribbon is now being removed from the government's requirements. I am not sure of its veracity.)

To give you an idea of the requirements, see the following requirements below:

- a. BA or BSc Diploma (see *Chesham's list of accepted college degree*)  
[https://docs.google.com/viewer?url=http%3A%2F%2Fcheshamrecruitment.com.ph%2Fdocs%2F20191221\\_ALT.pdf](https://docs.google.com/viewer?url=http%3A%2F%2Fcheshamrecruitment.com.ph%2Fdocs%2F20191221_ALT.pdf)
- b. Chesham-formatted resume
- c. Non-DFA authenticated documents
  - i. Colored copy of passport
  - ii. NBI clearance
  - iii. Copy of non-professional driver's license
  - iv. TESOL Certificate (*if you have one*)
  - v. Japanese language Certificate (*I just sent my self-study plan. If you would like to see the sample, download this [sample course outline](#).*)



- vi. 4 pieces of 4.3 x 4.3 colored photograph compliant with Chesham`s dress code
- d. DFA authenticated documents
  - i. College diploma and college transcript of records
  - ii. High school diploma and high school transcript (Form 137)
  - iii. Elementary school diploma and transcript (Form 137)
  - iv. English medium of instruction letter (*follow Chesham`s format*)
  - v. Marriage Certificate from PSA (*if married*)
  - vi. LTO certification of your driver's license
- e. Medical certificate (*follow Chesham`s certification*)
- f. POEA`s online PEOS

**Note:** See Chesham`s handout #4 for more details.

7. **Application for certificate of eligibility** (*with Chesham`s help*)
8. **Contract signing** - Finally Chesham sends you its congratulatory email informing you of the arrival of your contract and your availability to sign it ASAP. In my case, they sent my contract through LBC but I made a mistake in writing the date with some erasures. So, Interac, re-sent the contract to Chesham. To avoid making mistakes again, I had to travel to Manila from Legazpi City just to sign the contract. (Another thousand pesos again. But again, I found a way!)
9. **Waiting period for visa approval and COE approval** - Waiting period can be a little bit exciting. After all the processes you have gone through, you are now sitting and relaxing and enjoying your last days in the Philippines. It makes you nervous and worried from time to time. But again, enjoy the process. Always remember if it is yours, it will be yours... in His perfect time!

In my case, I waited for five months.

Since I was teaching in UST-Legazpi prior to my ALT career, I did not renew my contract after May 2019. So, from June to October, I was an online ESL teacher. I actually made more money being an ESL teacher than a university assistant professor (hahah!).

10. **Interac`s initial communication with you** - This time, Interac (your respective branch in Japan) sends you email regarding many things. Again, do not be overwhelmed by the numbers of email they send you in a day. Basically, they are just welcoming you. The different departments of your branch will send you an email regarding your placement,

housing, phone rental, google account, and flight details. Just respond to them accordingly. If you do not know what to say, do not panic. Shoot Chesham an email or call them. They are there to help you. Besides, you need to inform them regarding the emails you receive from Interac.

11. **Confirmation of your flight** - Definitely, you will almost cry for joy at Chesham`s email regarding your flight details. Do not get too excited. Read the details and do not forget to send the details to your Interac branch in Japan. Check the baggage allowance and the date and time of your flight. You never want to miss your flight!
12. **Pay the placement fee** - For the exact placement fee, you need to call Chesham before doing the payment.
13. **PDOS Seminar** - As required by our sympathetic and sensitive government, do not miss your PDOS seminar. You will not only obtain your PDOS certificate here, but also some essential lessons that you can bring with you to Japan. Enjoy this seminar.
14. **Chesham`s final briefing** - Finally, you can now hug Mr. Ryan! Some inspiring words from Chesham and final reminders will be given here. You will realize here that Chesham is your teammate in accomplishing the many challenges you faced on the road to becoming an ALT in Japan. It is right and just to give them thanks. Wear your business attire. There will be a photo op after the final briefing. And do not forget to get the important documents that Chesham prepared for you.

Then, you can now post your photos on social media if you wish!

#### **4. DO YOU REALLY NEED TO LEARN NIHONGO?**

In my case, I made a [sample course outline](#) in the form of a table with several columns. The columns are day, time, content, target language, sources, and number of minutes. My sources are mainly YouTube.

So, do you really need to learn nihongo?

Answer this question after you read this article:

[Do you really need to learn nihongo as an ALT?](#) so that you will be helped to decide whether you will pursue the study of nihongo or not.

## 5. ORGANIZE YOUR LUGGAGE WELL

You now come to one of the most exciting parts of your preparations prior to your departure to Japan.

Surely, by this time, you must have already received tons of email from Chesham with the letters from the ALTs who have already crossed the sea.

You can read them and think about what they say: their joy, regrets, complaints, suggestions and recommendations.

Feel free to follow their suggestions or recommendations, but never feel obliged to do as they say.

Why?

That's because Every Situation Is Different (ESID).

[You will hear this a lot on your training days with Interac.]

I am sure you have already read about the suggestions to bring two luggages, one for your clothes and one for your food that will last for two months.

You have the options to do this or not.

But if you do follow this, you must be aware of its implications.

First, you will surely add payment for your extra baggage.

Second, make sure you can pull your luggages when you arrive in Japan (Narita Airport).

Be aware that there will be some walkings that you need to do.

That means you need to walk with your luggages.

Many ALTs expressed their suffering due to their heavy luggages.

Is there a solution to this?

Of course YES.

Remember, you will be in Japan and that means a life of convenience.

But you must also understand that convenience always comes with a price.

So, prior to your arrival in Japan, you can already arrange an appointment with individual or independent car rental that may pick you up at the airport and take you to your hotel.

This is highly recommended if you are arriving with some ALTs from the Philippines because this means you will divide the rental cost.

If you are arriving alone, taxis are available, but truly expensive for an ALTs who are cost-conscious.

On the other hand, if you are planning to take a bus or subway or train, you can definitely save a good amount of money that can already fill your small refrigerator in your apartment.

But then, if you are planning to take a bus or train, you should consider your luggages.

Can you pull and lift your luggages?

Can you hold your luggages while standing in a possibly-packed train or bus?

Do you have enough strength to pull your luggages from the station or bus stop to your hotel?

Let me share my own experience here.

Upon reading the stories of the ALTs who have gone before us, I decided that I will only bring one suitcase and a backpack.

I did some research.

I checked the transportation cost from Narita airport to (our accommodation) Koraku Garden Hotel (in Tokyo) via google map.

If I would take a bus, it would only cost me as low as 1,470 yen.

But if I would take a limousine or a taxi, it would cost me from 20,000 to 27,000 yen.

I would shoulder them all if I was alone.

But if I would have other ALTs, we could divide the cost.

So, I decided that I would not bring another suitcase loaded with food.

Instead of paying expensive transportation to our accommodation, I decided that I would just bring one suitcase and a backpack and I would take a bus or a train or subway.

And I was thinking that the money I could save from the transportation would be used to buy food and groceries in Japan.

I carefully thought about the items that would constitute the weight of my suitcase.

It's like the ark of Noah that must contain the really basic things I need.

Basically, I just put in my long sleeves, coat, pants, shorts, socks, underwear, t-shirts, two sweaters, and an extra pair of shoes.

I also bought some toiletries like toothpaste, facial wash for men and anti-dandruff shampoo (which are NOT actually difficult to find here in Japan).

In my backpack, I just had my important documents, my laptop, headset, and a thin jacket.

Actually, I did not weigh my luggage, I just estimated it.

Hence, I was nervous at the airport during the check in time when it was weighed.

Thanks be to God, it was 20.21 kilograms only.

No excess baggage!

A week before my flight, I was all set.

When I got my IDP (International Driving Permit) and when I attended the PDOS (Pre-deployment Orientation Seminar), I met my fellow ALTs (four ladies and a gentleman) who were also bound for Japan.

We shared our plan about getting to our accommodation from Narita airport.

We learned that five of us would stay in the same hotel.

The other one would go straight to Hokkaido.

So, one of my fellow ALTs asked us if we would like to join her in the vehicle that she had already arranged to pick her up.

If we would join her, the cost per head would be 3,600 yen.

Since that sounded not very expensive, the other three ladies, who also had two luggages each, agreed to join her.

Well, feeling the anxiety of being separated from them and the pressure from them, I also gave in and joined them.

That was actually a good decision because the owner of the van was so nice to give us a free tour around Tokyo before dropping us at the door of Koraku Garden Hotel.

If you guys need his services, let me know.

He was so nice that I want to give him free advertisement here.

Surely, we were saved from the long walk and the struggle to pull our luggages.

I could imagine the struggle of my fellow ALTs, especially the ladies, if we did not get a vehicle.

## **6. EXPECT THESE ON YOUR ARRIVAL TO JAPAN**

For more detailed stories, you may read my blog article

[What should you expect when you arrive in Japan?](#)

## 7. ENJOY YOUR TRAINING DAYS

Quick fact: your training days are paid.

Sounds good?

Well, of course!

Your official employment starting day is indicated in the contract which you will sign here in Japan.

Not the one you signed (or will sign) in the Philippines.

That is because the contract you signed (or will sign) in the Philippines does not indicate the first day of your employment.

It only says "... commencing from the employee's first day at the site of employment".

This means that your starting date is not the day you signed the contract in the Philippines nor the first day of your training.

In my opinion, they make you sign a contract in the Philippines for legal purposes.

That is for you to be allowed to leave the country and travel to Japan.

After the training days, you will be dispatched to your respective branch (if you will attend the training in Tokyo).

Then, after a short orientation in your branch, you will sign the so called 'addendum' to the first contract you signed.

In this addendum, you will learn the 'real' starting date of your employment.

In my case, I arrived in Japan on October 20, 2019.

Our training days in Tokyo were from the 21st to the 24th of October.

On the 25th, I travelled to Nagoya City (Aichi-ken) via shinkansen (bullet train/high speed train). (That was actually an awesome experience!)

I arrived at 10:30 in the morning and went straight to the Interac branch in Nagoya for another orientation until 4:00pm.

When I travelled, I was alone.

My constant companion was the google map.

I found the way to Tokyo station and to Interac's branch in Nagoya City.

Take note: you will also travel alone and you need to find the addresses given to you all by yourself.

Make sure you know how to use google maps especially when you use public transportation.  
And don't be afraid to ask, especially when you are in the train station.

Check which platform you should take and which train.

I once took the wrong train because I stood at the wrong platform.

(Fortunately, that was Saturday. And that wrong train brought me to a beautiful place in Nagoya! HUGOT: Sometimes, a wrong train can bring you to the right place!)

Going back to Interac's branch in Nagoya, the contract indicated that my starting date was November 5th.

After two weeks, I received a call from the manager that they were transferring me to Hamamatsu City Branch.

On November 28th, I moved to Hamamatsu, attended another orientation day on the 29th, and signed another addendum which indicated that the starting date of my employment was December 2nd.

Was I paid for my November employment? Yes, I was, but of course prorated.

Having said all those things, what do they have to do with training?

Well, one of the best things about training is that you meet new friends who could be your support group.

In our training days, we were 12 ALTs.

There were five Filipinos, three from the UK, three from Australia, and one from the USA.

It was not difficult to get along with them since most of them were so friendly.

We enjoyed each activity in the training.

We learned many things, especially those related to teaching and living in Japan.

The training facilitators were fantastic.

We laughed a lot.

We shared stories, ideas and teaching strategies.

We ate lunch together.

We had so much fun.

We exchanged numbers, Line, and Facebook accounts.

And we had photos after the training and we felt sad on the day we had to part our ways.

Nevertheless, most of them became my friends.

Whenever I have a question, there are several opinions that pop up in our Line group chat. Their opinions and experiences are also important whenever I have questions about my apartment, electricity and gas bills, and even about the interesting activities for my lessons.

Enjoy your training and make the most out of it.

Ask questions and take notes.

And of course enjoy the free time after each day during the training.

Roam around the area and be familiar with the place.

Be at peace.

Your training days are paid.

I believe it's more than 1,000 yen per hour.

You will receive the training fees on the 20th day of the following month.

If not, you will receive them with your first paycheck.

My friends received their training fees on the 20th of November.

But mine, I received it on the 20th of December.

Bear in mind that Interac pays its employees once a month.

That is every 20th day of the month.

I arrived in October.

This means that I would not receive a paycheck in November since I did not work in October.

My work in November was paid in December.

My work in December was paid in January.

Hence, my first paycheck was in December together with the training fees.

It is correct when you read that you will not have a paycheck for the first two months.

Make sure then that your allowance will last until your first paycheck.

Be aware of other things that may cause you unexpected expenses.

## **8. BE AWARE OF YOUR HOUSING EXPENSES**

Remember this: you always have the right to choose your apartment.

When Interac sends you your apartment details, do not be afraid to decline if the price ranges from 55,000 yen and above.

This is because there are many apartments that are lower than 55,000 yen.



When I received the email from Interac Nagoya Branch regarding my housing, of course I checked the details.

I was afraid to ask for a cheaper apartment.

I was also afraid to decline.

The apartment cost 60,400 yen per month. It was a shared apartment. That means, there were two rooms in the apartment.

The kitchen, bathroom, living room, and all the appliances are common or shared.

For more details, kindly check my first apartment video on this link

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7h5wyNXoMEs>.

When Interac transferred me to Hamamatsu City, they offered me an apartment with the same cost.

But I had the courage to ask for a cheaper one.

Surprisingly, they gave me an apartment that costs more or less 39,000 yen with internet and water inclusion.

The electricity and gas bills are separated.

This is a lot cheaper than my previous apartment in Nagoya.

And this new apartment is not shared.

This price range starting from more or less 39,000 yen is already furnished with necessary appliances.

This is a good thing though since I don't need to buy a washing machine, TV, refrigerator, microwave, and stove.

They are already available in my apartment.

On the other hand, there are also apartments that are lower than 39,000 yen, but the apartment is empty.

This means you have to buy appliances that you need.

By the way, my apartment has no futon (the thing I use to sleep instead of a bed with foam).

I bought my futon.

Don't worry, you can always find a cheaper futon.

My IC brought me to a department store where I bought an inexpensive yet good futon.

The price is about 5,000 yen.

I also bought a second-hand rice cooker and a second-hand bicycle.

You may also experience a person from Japan TV Company.

He will ring at the gate in an unexpected days.

He or she will convince you to have a subscription with them.

Disregard him or her.

Do not entertain any unexpected visitors.

The first time I heard a bell rang in my room, I was so excited to check the small monitor where I could see the person outside the gate.

I saw a guy.

I hurriedly ran outside.

I forgot to wear my jacket.

It was so cold.

The guy was speaking in Japanese.

After a long long sentence, I just said “ahhh, sumimasen, wakarimasen”.

He scratched his head and took a paper with English advertisements.

I saw it.

It was about Japan TV.

He was convincing me to have a subscription since he said it was necessary.

I once again said, “ahhh, sumimasen, wakarimasen”.

I became impatient.

He just said, “arigatou gozaimashita! Ja, atode” (I will see you later).

And I never saw him again.

When this happens to you, you may just disregard them.

They may try to convince you that subscription to their TV channel is necessary, but don't worry because that's not actually necessary.

If you do not expect anyone ringing at your door, don't bother opening.

## **9. KNOW THE MOBILE PHONE PACKAGE THAT SUITS YOUR NEEDS**

**Important reminder:** the IMPR (Interac Mobile Phone Rental) packages that Interac sends you is NOT RELATED TO YOUR EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT.

Hence, you have all the rights to accept or decline their offer.

When I received the IMPR packages and was asked to choose which package I wanted to avail, I cautiously chose the cheapest one.

I wanted to decline the offer, but I thought it would affect my employment contract.

I actually chose the cheapest one, phone (Digno J) and sim with 20g data per month.

It costs 4,199 yen plus tax per calendar month.

The data resets every first day of the month.

This package works well for me.

Since I also have internet connection in my apartment, I only use the mobile data when I am outside.

I turn on the hot spot and use my phone from the Philippines to connect to Digno's wifi.

Digno J is a very basic phone.

I seldom use it for emails, social networking, photography and even internet browsing.

Most of the time I use it for calling within Japan (since it has a valid Japan number) and for checking the daily weather and temperature.

I rarely consume the 20g data since I use the internet at home.

This package at 4,199 yen plus tax is already cheap in Japan.

It is actually cheaper than a package with sim card only.

Of course, the packages with high end phones and with more data are more expensive than my subscription.

If you think you don't need 20g every month or you don't need to rent a phone here in Japan, you are always free to decline the offer.

Some of my ALT friends decided not to get any package from Interac offers.

They just bought a sim card (when they arrived here in Japan) with cheaper package.

They use their phone from the Philippines (just make sure your phone is open line).

My advice?

Since we are required to have a Japanese phone number, it is good to avail one of IMPR's packages.

Their network partner is Softbank.

Then, later, you may cancel your subscription or you may choose not to renew your contract with them at the end of your contract.

Usually, the contract with Softbank ends on the last day of March (last month of school year).

Then, it starts again in April.

The IMPR sends a survey on re-contracting intention as early as January.

At this point, you have the options to re-contract or not.

As soon as you are already settled in Japan, you may already start doing your own research regarding the package that suits your needs. You can search and compare Softbank, Docomo, AU and other cheaper mobile networks.

Another option you have is to order a sim package or phone+sim package from any of the sales agents available on Facebook.

Just search Japan Mobile, Japan Sim+Phone Package, Japan Wifi, and so on.

You can save more with their package because their sim and data packages have no strict contract terms

Moreover, you can get a package with a free phone.

Just do a little research and inquire with any of the agents who accommodate you.

They accept COD (cash on delivery).

## **10. BUDGET YOUR PRECIOUS YEN FOR THE NEXT 60 DAYS**

For more details about this, you may read this article in my blog

[Five ways how I budgeted my precious yen for my first 60 days in Japan](#)

For more insights about buying things here in Japan,

you may read my article about [Impacts of stuff accumulation in Japan](#).

## 11. DEALING WITH YOUR JAPANESE COLLEAGUES

For more tips on this, see this article on [How to deal with your Japanese colleagues](#)

In this article, I describe my experiences as an ALT in my 3 schools in Japan.

## 12. BEAT THE FAMOUS HOMESICKNESS AND THE EXCRUCIATING BOREDOM

Have you ever experienced the feeling of homesickness?

What is it like?

Can you describe it?

Do you know what homesickness really is?

All right, let`s rationalize it just a bit.

First, homesickness is not really a sickness.

This is according to John Kaplow, a clinical psychologist and professor at the University of Alabama.

Homesickness is about attachment.

It is not just about our home or family.

It's about missing what is routine or normal in our lives.

We are missing what is familiar, known, stable, consistent, and predictable.

For instance, for almost ten years, your routine is home and work and vice versa and taking care of your family or kids.

When we go abroad, we suddenly lose the routine and we start to create a new routine by ourselves.

This process of creating a new routine is somehow stressful for us not only because we start a new routine without those people we love, but also we start in a new environment, which for many ALTs is overwhelming.

When things get rough, especially in the first few months, we begin to long for that which is routine and normal. Thus, we begin to think of our home.

Is it normal?

Absolutely YES!

Tamar Chansky, a psychologist and author of *Freeing Yourself from Anxiety*, clarifies to us that homesickness is a very normal part of human experience.

In fact, feeling this homesickness is an indicator that you have a good relationship with those you leave behind - or you may call it home.

On the other hand, if you don't feel homesick, it doesn't follow that you do not have a good relationship with those you leave behind. Perhaps you have already prepared for this or you have a very effective strategy to deal with it.

While homesickness is not a sickness in itself, it can cause serious sickness to us if we frequently give in to that.

So, whether you are already in Japan or just about to depart from your home country, it is highly suggested to have a clear mindset on how to deal with homesickness in case it strikes you.

Each person has his or her own ways to deal with homesickness.

If you still have no ideas, scan my suggestions below and you are free to do anything that you think applicable to you.

1. Acknowledge what you feel
2. Keep in touch with your loved ones but NOT TOO MUCH
3. Don't call home too often and take a break from social media
4. Make new friends
5. Appreciate what you have now
6. Stay positive and work on positive thinking
7. Focus on your dreams not on your problems
8. Develop your skills like writing, online selling, designing graphics, vlogging, photography, etc.
9. Document your positive moments in a form of vlog or blog or create your own FB Page
10. Treat yourself to McDonalds or other Japanese restaurants
11. Send gifts or packages back home
12. Exercise regularly and have a healthy habit
13. Try local food
14. Plan a trip
15. Learn something new everyday
16. Do something you love
17. Do something scary or crazy that you can afford (I did 10-kilometer biking)
18. Find good friends
19. Talk to others how you're feeling
20. Don't spend too much time in your room or on your bed, get out and enjoy life!
21. Explore your surroundings
22. Keep your expectations realistic
23. Ask for help
24. Have an attitude of gratitude
25. Find a Filipino community
26. Go to church
27. Pray

Ricks Warren, an associate professor in the department of psychiatry at the University of Michigan, suggested that `self-compassion` is the key to homesickness. According to him: `People who are self-compassionate are less likely to be homesick and lonely. If you're self-compassionate, you have always got yourself. You are like your best friend. But if you are really hard on yourself, you don't have that.`

### **13. STAY FOCUSED YET OPEN TO POSSIBILITIES**

Focus on your profession as an ALT.

See the [beauty around you](#), especially in your school/s.

Enjoy each day that you spend in your school assignments.

Learn as much as you can, especially things related to culture.

If you plan to stay for a longer time, make a decision if you will learn nihongo.

Make new friends.

Be good to your employer.

Always do your best.

Surprises are always available for those who do their job well.

In our branch in Hamamatsu City, I feel so proud knowing that a Filipina teacher has been awarded as a motivational teacher due to her dedication and creativity.

Actually, this school year (2019-2020), it is her second time to receive that award.

Believe in yourself and give your best everyday.

But I highly suggest that you also open yourself to possibilities.

When I say possibilities, when you already gave your highest quality services to Interac, you must begin thinking of your future in Japan.

Bear in mind that there are countless better companies waiting for you in Japan should you decide to stay for good and settle here. Don't get me wrong.

There is nothing wrong with discontinuing your job with Interac.

But always have a graceful exit.

Finish your contract and maintain your best performance.

Interac knows that very few ALTs stay with them for longer years.

As much as I would like to talk more about this matter,

I suggest that you discover the rest when you come to Japan.

And surely, you will have your own explanations of things.

Every situation is different.

Hence, every ALT's situation is different.

Thank you for reading this up to this point.

I would appreciate it if you could share this with other ALTs that you know.

For more information and articles, you can visit my website <https://teacherdoms.com>

The articles directly related to you as an ALT are found in **My Blog** under **ALT SERIES**.

You can also follow my facebook page @teacherdoms (Teacher Doms) where I post daily food for thought.

THANK YOU FOR READING!

MY PRAYERS FOR YOU:

**May all the odds be in your favor.**

**May God grant you your heart's desires.**

**May he bless you so that you can also bless the world in Jesus name. Amen.**

ALL THE BEST,

**Teacher Doms**