

TIPS FOR *OMIYAGE* (GIFTS)*

There are many important customs and etiquette that one must follow while in Japan—bowing properly, exchanging business cards, removing shoes upon entering a home and gift giving. Gift giving is probably one of the most important aspects of Japanese social life and one of the ways that people show their appreciation, respect and continued good relations. You should bring gifts for your host family and host siblings to show your appreciation for letting you into their homes.

General

1. You will receive specific information about the members of your host family before departure. You may choose to buy a specific gift for each member or one gift that can be shared by all.
2. Because you must carry your gifts to Japan, they should be SMALL, LIGHT, AND NON-BREAKABLE or NON-PERISHABLE. They need not be expensive.
3. Keep in mind that Japanese homes tend to be much smaller than American homes -- there is much less space either for display of decorative objects or for storage of any large objects.
4. Avoid any gift with complicated instructions in English.
5. Take care that the gifts you select are NOT made in China, Taiwan, Korea, or Japan. Your gifts should be made in the USA!

Omiyage Suggestions

Appropriate gifts are those that represent where they came from in some special way and are not things that can be bought just anywhere. This could be something special or unique from your city, county, state, or the USA.

1. Food: local specialties such as candies, dried fruit, nuts, spices, smoked fish, etc. which are in the original, vacuum-sealed packaging. Try to avoid chocolates as they melt too easily. Beef jerky is currently not allowed in Japan.
2. Books: Paperback “tourist” books with lots of big, color pictures and a minimum amount of text. These picture books may show a cross-section of Boston, Harvard/MIT, Massachusetts, a famous nearby national park or monument, Fenway Park, a well-known local area (e.g. Cape Cod), a well-known local artistic tradition (e.g. quilting), etc.
3. State quarters: these make great “extra” gifts because they are so small and light. Also, Sacawajea dollar coins are quite unusual in Japan.
4. Baseball caps of the Red Sox. Baseball is extremely popular in Japan and the Japanese closely follow the careers of their fellow citizens (Uehara, Tazawa, etc.) who play on American teams.
5. Keychains, magnets, pens, pencils etc. with a design or logo from Boston, BHS, Red

- Sox, etc.
6. T-shirts: Anything written in English is good--Boston, Harvard U., MIT, Brookline shirts. Smaller sizes will probably be better.
 9. Golf paraphernalia: golf balls, towels, tees, etc.
 10. Stationary or cards
 11. New England specialties: Boston baked beans, lobster stuff; think of the stuff they sell at Logan for last minute souvenirs from Boston ...

Presentation of *Omiyage*

1. The actual presentation of gifts in Japan is very important. Since you will not be able to wrap your gifts (either for carry-on or checked luggage) before arrival in Japan, be sure to bring nice tissue paper and gift bags. If you have gifts for each member of your host family, be sure to bring some kind of labels or stickers to mark each gift.
2. Giving gifts on the Friday after you arrive is best but wait for an appropriate time. Wait for a time when the family members are not busy, e.g., in the morning after breakfast, in the evening after dinner, etc. Remember, how you present your gift is just as important as the gift itself so don't rush things.
3. Offer the gift with both hands and bow slightly as you present it. It is possible that your host family will not open your gift right away; don't worry as this is perfectly normal and does not mean that you've done anything wrong.
4. Prepare to say one or two sentences in Japanese about your gift to help your host family to understand its significance. It is appropriate to say "*tsumaranai mono desu ka, douzo.*" (It is an insignificant gift, but please have it.)"