

Your Travel Journal

Once you have been accepted for the exchange, you need to get a journal. It can be any size or shape that you'd like: maybe a spiral notebook, a hardbound book, or something you make yourself. Make sure it has at least 50 pages, or enough pages to write several paragraphs per day, plus another 15 pages.

A travel journal has many uses. It's a great record of your trip that you can read again and again. It's a place to write things that you want to remember, such as names, places and other information you will need for any presentations you make when you return from Japan. It's also a reference for you to use on your trip, with addresses of your friends, shopping lists and the record of your purchases you will need for filling out customs forms on the way home.

Don't worry about your handwriting or spelling. This journal is required, but you don't have to show it to anyone else. Past delegates have regretted not writing more. Believe it when we say that if you write a lot in your journal now, in the future you will thank yourself for keeping this journal of your trip to Japan!

Here are your writing "assignments". Please start them now, and finish before May 1. You can add to them later, if you wish.:

1. Use an address label or write your name and address, email and phone number on the inside front cover of your journal. When you receive contact information for your host family, put their address and phone number under your address. This will help get your journal back to you, should you lose it someplace. If there is no place to write, due to the design of your journal, put this information on the first page.
2. Leave the first page of your journal blank, in case you need to amend your address or add other important information. On the second page of your journal, write down Why I Want to go to Japan. Try to write more than just one paragraph answering this question. You can write as many pages as you want.

Why are you interested in Japan?

Reflect on how you first became interested in Japan, and what attracted you to Japanese culture.

Why do you want to take advantage of this great opportunity?

How do you think you will benefit from international travel and living in a new culture?

3. Your next writing goal will be to make a list, on a new page, of all the things that you hope to learn about or experience while you are in Japan. You could be staying anywhere in Japan, so think about what you could see or do in many places, such as "see a temple", "learn how to cook Japanese food" or "learn about Japanese religion". When you find out where you will be staying, you can research that area and add to the list.

4. Skip a few pages and write down all the ways you will share culture with your host family, the kids in your Labo Party and at Camp, and other new friends. This will be where you write the recipes for the food you will cook, the directions for games, and all the other ways you plan to share with your new Japanese "family and friends". This could include reading a story, sharing a craft project, bringing music, snacks, books, magazines and of course, showing your photo album.

5. Your next task (don't worry, they are getting shorter) is to make a page titled What to Write About. This is a reminder page for information you want to have for your Japan presentation in Alaska, and for when you are in Japan and get stuck about what to write. Write these down, then add to the list, depending on what else you want to remember: Date. Where I went. Who was there. What I did. What I saw. What I learned. How I feel about it. How others might feel about it. What I would like to know and how could I find out. What I would like to tell others.

6. Now, go to the back of the book. On the next-to-last page of your journal, label a page for writing down GIFTS AND PURCHASES. This is where you will write down items you buy or receive, and their approximate value. (for gifts, you may have to guess). You will be referring to this when you fill out customs forms.

7. A few pages before that, label a page SHOPPING LIST. This is where you will write down all items you hope to buy and the people you want to bring gifts home to.

8. A few pages before that, label a page for ADDRESSES. This is where you will write the mailing addresses of family, friends and supporters to whom you plan to send postcards and letters.