

Going through Customs

See your delegate handbook and the USA and Japan Customs web sites for up-to-date customs information.

When you arrive in Japan, you will go through Japanese Customs. You will receive a customs form while you are still on the jet. This is one reason why you need to have a pen in your carry-on bag. Be sure and fill out both sides of the form or you may lose your place in the customs line. The form asks for information such as your host family's address (which you wrote in your journal), your passport number and your flight number (which is on your ticket and your itinerary). You are traveling as a tourist. You are only bringing personal items and gifts, with nothing to sell. If you have a question about filling out the form, ask your chaperone. If you need a new form, ask the flight attendant.

Do not take any fresh food off the plane. This would include any leftovers from your meals or any fruits or vegetables that you may have in your carry-on bag for snacks.

When you land in Tokyo, you will show your form and your passport to a customs official. You may be asked why you are in Japan--which is a tourist homestay. If anyone asks if you are sick, it does not mean a headache, sore stomach, etc. This is to screen out people who are carrying major contagious diseases and need to be quarantined or denied entrance to Japan. If you aren't feeling well, talk to your chaperone about it.

You will claim your luggage and bring it and your carry-on bags to another customs area. Your bags may be searched. You may be asked if you are bringing in any shells, seeds, dirt, furs, feathers, meats, ivory, fruits, vegetables or other prohibited items.

When you land back in the USA, you will do the same thing. You will be given a customs form on the airplane. In addition to travel information, you have to make a list of the items you obtained in Japan and are bringing back into the USA. This will be any items you purchased, plus any items you received as a gift. For the items you purchased, you should have the prices listed in the back of your journal. For the gifts, you will have to guess the values.

There is blank space on both the front and the back of the customs form, but there is not enough room on the customs form to write down each item. The standard procedure is to combine them into categories and add up the total for all the items in the category. (You still have the record of each item in your journal if there are any questions.)

For example, if you bought a magazine for 1000 Yen, a video for 2000 Yen, a CD for 2000 Yen and a manga book for 2000 yen, you might write:
Books, magazines, music and videos 7000 Yen (or convert to dollars if you wish)

Other categories might be:

Clothing and Shoes

Jewelry

Dolls, Toys, Models and Keychains

Stationery, pens, paper

Kitchen items, chopsticks

Wrapping cloths and Fans

Candy and Commercially-packed snack foods (no meat)

Camera

Sporting goods