

K12 ACADEMICS — TEACHING ABROAD SERIES

Teaching in Japan

A guide for aspiring & qualified teachers — how teaching in Japan works, the routes and requirements, visas, pay, and how to find the right role.



Find Your Community
2026 EDITION

ABOUT K12 ACADEMICS

The world's largest education resource.

Online since 2004, K12 Academics has helped millions of families, students and educators **find the right school, college, camp, business and program in their community** — for every kind of learner.

AN ICONIC DESTINATION THAT WELCOMES NEWCOMERS

Japan is one of the world's **most iconic teaching destinations**, with high demand that **welcomes newcomers** (via government assistant programs and conversation schools). Roles span **public-school assistant programs, conversation schools, international schools, and tutoring**. This program-neutral guide covers the **routes, requirements, visas, and pay**, and points you to the K12 Academics directory to find roles.

General guidance, not legal, immigration, or employment advice. Japanese rules, pay, and requirements change and vary by employer. The details here are recent examples and **must be confirmed with Japan's immigration authorities (the Immigration Services Agency / Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and each employer**. K12 Academics does not run or endorse any specific program — use the K12 Academics directory to find and compare your options.

Understand Why Teachers Choose Japan

WHAT TO KNOW

Japan offers **an iconic cultural experience, steady demand, and roles that welcome newcomers** (government assistant programs and conversation schools), with a comfortable lifestyle — though its **high cost of living** means savings are more modest than in some Asian markets.

BY THE NUMBERS

Iconic

cultural experience

Welcomes newcomers

+ steady demand

High cost

modest savings

HOW TO HELP

Weigh Japan's **culture and accessibility** against modest savings — for the experience of living in Japan (and an easy entry via assistant programs), it's hard to beat.

WATCH OUT

Many roles **welcome teachers new to the profession** — particularly government assistant programs and conversation schools.

Understand the Types of Teaching Roles

WHAT TO KNOW

Route types include: **government-run programs** (placing assistant teachers in public schools), **private conversation schools (eikaiwa)**, **dispatch/placement companies** (staffing schools), **universities** (usually requiring a master's), **international schools** (for licensed teachers), **corporate/business English**, and **private tutoring**. Browse and compare options in the **K12 Academics directory**.

BY THE NUMBERS

Assistant programs

public schools

Conversation schools

+ dispatch companies

Int'l schools / universities

higher bar

HOW TO HELP

Match the **route to your profile** — an assistant program or conversation school for entry, a university (master's) or international school (licensed) for more — then find options in '.

GOOD TO KNOW

Find and compare **specific programs, schools, and recruiters** in the K12 Academics directory — this guide stays program-neutral.

Check the Requirements

WHAT TO KNOW

A **bachelor's degree (any subject)** is mandatory for the work visa; a **120-hour TEFL certificate** is increasingly expected (though not always required); and a **clean criminal background check** is needed. Native English is often preferred but **fluent non-native speakers can qualify**. Universities usually require a **master's**, and international schools a **teaching license and experience**.

BY THE NUMBERS

Degree

mandatory (any subject)

TEFL

increasingly expected

Universities

master's; int'l schools license

HOW TO HELP

Line up your credentials — a **degree (mandatory for the visa)** and, increasingly, a **TEFL**, with a master's for universities and a license for international schools.

GOOD TO KNOW

A bachelor's degree is **mandatory for the work visa**, regardless of subject — confirm you have one before applying.

Understand the Visa & Work Authorization

WHAT TO KNOW

Teaching in Japan requires an **employer-sponsored work visa**, in one of two main categories: the **Instructor visa** (common for public-school and assistant roles) and the **Specialist in Humanities / International Services visa** (common for conversation schools, private roles, and business English). Both are valid for **1, 3, or 5 years and are renewable**. Confirm current rules with Japan's immigration authorities.

BY THE NUMBERS

Instructor visa

public schools / assistant roles

Specialist in Humanities

conversation schools / private

Valid

1, 3, or 5 years

HOW TO HELP

Know your route — an **employer sponsors your work visa** — the **Instructor visa** for public-school/assistant roles, or the **Specialist in Humanities visa** for conversation schools and private roles.

GOOD TO KNOW

Both work visas are **valid for 1, 3, or 5 years and renewable** — your employer sponsors the application.

Know the Pay & Benefits

WHAT TO KNOW

Pay typically runs ~¥220,000–280,000/month (~\$1,380–1,755), with ~¥250,000 a common **average**; universities and international schools pay more. Benefits often include **reimbursed or subsidised airfare, housing support, a commuting allowance, and health insurance**. Because the cost of living is high, **typical savings are ~\$400–1,000/month** — lower than in Korea or China.

BY THE NUMBERS

Typical

~¥220,000–280,000/mo

Benefits

housing support, airfare, insurance

Savings

~\$400–1,000/mo (modest)

HOW TO HELP

Set expectations — ~¥220,000–280,000/month (universities and international schools more), with benefits like housing support and airfare; high living costs keep savings modest.

GOOD TO KNOW

Japan's **high cost of living** means savings are more modest than in Korea or China — the draw is the experience, not the savings.

Understand Contracts & What to Watch For

WHAT TO KNOW

Confirm the essentials in writing: **salary, hours, housing support, holidays, and visa sponsorship**. Note the difference between **direct-hire** roles and **dispatch** roles (where a company places you in schools, sometimes with lower pay or split hours). A **bank account** is needed to receive your salary. Favour written terms.

BY THE NUMBERS

In writing

salary, hours, housing, visa

Direct vs dispatch

know which

Bank account

needed for salary

HOW TO HELP

Read every offer for **salary, hours, housing support, and visa sponsorship**, and understand whether it's a direct-hire or a dispatch role.

GOOD TO KNOW

Dispatch roles place you through a company (sometimes with lower pay or split hours) — weigh them against direct-hire positions.

Get Qualified & Prepared

WHAT TO KNOW

Ensure you have a **bachelor's degree** (mandatory) and, ideally, a **120-hour TEFL certificate**. Prepare your **documents (degree, background check), and a strong CV**. A master's opens universities, and a teaching license opens international schools. Some Japanese language ability helps daily life, though it isn't required to teach.

BY THE NUMBERS

Degree

mandatory

TEFL

ideally 120-hr

Master's / license

open more doors

HOW TO HELP

Get your **degree and a TEFL** ready (a master's for universities, a license for international schools), prepare your documents, and a little Japanese helps daily life.

GOOD TO KNOW

A master's opens **university roles** and a teaching license opens **international schools** — plan your credentials around your target.

Plan the Hiring Timeline

WHAT TO KNOW

Government assistant programs recruit on an **annual cycle** (apply months ahead); **conversation schools and dispatch companies** hire more **year-round**; **international schools** recruit **January–May** for an April or September start. Apply early for the assistant-program route, which is competitive.

BY THE NUMBERS

Assistant programs

annual cycle (apply ahead)

Conversation schools

year-round

Int'l schools

Jan–May

HOW TO HELP

Plan around the calendar — government assistant programs recruit annually (apply ahead), conversation schools year-round, international schools Jan–May.

GOOD TO KNOW

The **government assistant-program route is competitive** and runs on an annual cycle — apply months ahead.

Prepare for the Move

WHAT TO KNOW

You **don't need Japanese to teach** (classes are English-only), but **basic Japanese helps daily life** considerably. Roles exist **nationwide**, from Tokyo and Osaka to smaller cities and towns (which can be cheaper and more immersive). Japan is safe, efficient, and endlessly rewarding to explore — budget for a high cost of living.

BY THE NUMBERS

Japanese

not needed to teach

Basic Japanese

helps a lot

Nationwide

Tokyo, Osaka, & beyond

HOW TO HELP

Prepare practically — teach in English, but learn **basic Japanese** for daily life; roles are nationwide (smaller cities are cheaper and more immersive), and budget for high costs.

GOOD TO KNOW

Smaller cities and towns can be **cheaper and more immersive** than Tokyo or Osaka — and often just as rewarding.

Find Your Role & Thrive

WHAT TO KNOW

Once you know your route, **find and compare specific programs, conversation schools, international schools, and recruiters in the K12 Academics directory**. Apply to several, verify each contract and visa sponsorship, and build toward universities or international schools. Confirm current rules with Japan's immigration authorities.

BY THE NUMBERS

Find & compare

programs & schools

Apply

to several

Build

toward higher roles

HOW TO HELP

Use **the K12 Academics directory** to find and compare programs, schools, and recruiters, apply to several, verify each contract and visa sponsorship, and build toward universities or international schools.

WATCH OUT

Browse **the K12 Academics directory** to find the specific programs, schools, and recruiters that fit your route and goals.

Teaching in Japan: The Essentials

A snapshot — program-neutral. Confirm details with Japan's immigration authorities.

The market

One of the world's most iconic teaching destinations, with steady demand that welcomes newcomers through government assistant programs and private conversation schools.

The routes

Government-run assistant programs (public schools), private conversation schools (eikaiwa), dispatch companies, universities, international schools, and tutoring — find and compare specific ones in the directory.

Requirements

A bachelor's degree (any subject) is mandatory for the work visa; a 120-hour TEFL is increasingly expected; universities require a master's, international schools a license and experience.

Visa

Teaching requires an employer-sponsored work visa: the Instructor visa (public-school and assistant roles) or the Specialist in Humanities visa (conversation schools, private roles); both are valid for 1, 3, or 5 years and renewable.

Pay & move

~¥220,000–280,000/month (~\$1,380–1,755; universities and international schools more), with benefits like housing support and airfare; high living costs keep savings modest; no Japanese needed to teach (nationwide).

YOUR TEACHING-IN-JAPAN JOURNEY STARTS HERE

Find Your Community.

Explore our other Teaching in [Country] guides, and find and compare programs, schools, and recruiters in the K12 Academics directory — among **1,297 free resources**.

tools.k12academics.com →

