

Hello everyone! My name is Molly and I am really excited to be working in your office this year. Since this is my first journal entry, I want to tell you a little bit about myself so you can get to know me and my interests. I'm happy to finally be living in Japan, and I hope that over the course of the next year I can get to know all of you too.

I am from the United States, and my family lives in Cleveland, Ohio. Some Americans think that Ohio is boring and call it "cow country." There are farms in some parts of Ohio, but Cleveland is a big city right next to Lake Erie, where there are not many farms and there are many things to do! It is a very nice place to live, where summers are not too warm and winters are cold with lots of snow.

In May of this year, I graduated from Georgetown University in Washington, DC, the capital of the United States. When I started college I didn't know what career path I wanted to follow, so I decided to study French and Business and see what happened. I studied for two years and then I had the chance to live in Lyon, France for one year and study in the university there. Studying abroad was a great experience for me, and when I returned to the United States I knew that I was interested in learning more languages and living in other countries. I have visited Japan twice before, but this is my first time living here.

The first time I came to Japan I was 15 years old, and I came with my mother for two weeks to stay with her Japanese friends that live in Nagoya. We traveled to Nagano and Kyoto with our friends and saw many tourist sights, but I was overwhelmed by Japanese culture. I was a little bit shocked by the food that is so much different from what I ate at home. It was the first time that I had traveled to another country and I was also frustrated by the fact that I couldn't speak Japanese. This is one of the reasons that I became interested in learning foreign languages. The second time I came to Japan, my older brother, Kevin, was living in Gifu and I stayed with him for two weeks. Kevin studied Japanese for several years and lived with a host family in Nagoya for one year while he studied at Nanzan University. After graduating from college, my brother came to Japan with the JET Program too, and that is when he was living in Gifu. I was very excited to come to Japan for the second time, visit his school and see his old host family in Nagoya.

In my last year of college, after studying in France, I was very interested in learning foreign languages. I continued to study French and also studied Spanish and Japanese. Even though it was difficult and required a lot of studying, Japanese was my favorite class. I really enjoy studying kanji but I still have a hard time remembering all the different readings. Since coming to Japan, I am both surprised at

how much I can sometimes understand and frustrated that I cannot speak my ideas clearly in Japanese. It is important to me to be able to speak with people in Japanese, so I am going to study and try to practice speaking as much as possible. For this reason, please talk to me in Japanese, even if at first I don't understand. My parents always tell me, "practice makes perfect!"

When I was in college, I didn't have much free time because I was so busy with classes, homework and studying. It is nice to have a job now and actually have free time in the evenings and on the weekend! I have many interests, and I especially like the arts. When I was younger, I enjoyed taking art lessons at our art museum every summer. Now I particularly enjoy knitting. For about a year I have been knitting regularly, and I am looking forward to having the time to knit a lot this winter. I also love to read. Right now I am reading "Atlas Shrugged," a book that is more than 1000 pages long—it should last at least a few weeks! I only brought a few English books with me from home because I want to find some good Japanese novels that are somewhat easy to read too. If you have a suggestion of a good book or author to read, please let me know.

It can be difficult to settle into life in a new country, but so far I am not having any major problems in Japan. Now, I really like Japanese food and other aspects of Japanese culture that was such a shock to me the first time I visited. Sometimes I miss my family and friends at home, but I would not say that I am homesick. It is easy to stay in touch with my friends at home through the internet, so it doesn't seem like we are so far away. I am quite surprised at how quickly a month has passed! If you have any questions about the differences between life in Japan and life in America, please let me know. I am looking forward to writing this weekly journal, and I will be happy write about any topics that are of interest to you. See you next week!