

I know that when I write this journal, I often use the expression “I can’t believe...” But I *really* can’t believe that by the time you read this, I will have been in Japan for 2 years! Last summer, I was so excited to see my brother, travel to Hokkaido, go to a friend’s wedding and take a long trip home to the United States that I didn’t take much time to reflect on my first year here. But this summer, I’m not going home to visit. Instead, I’m going to Tokyo for five days, to welcome ALTs in the JET Program that will be living and working all over Japan.

Like many ALTs around Japan, I work for the JET Program, which is funded by the Japanese government. When I was applying to come to Japan and teach English, I went to the Japanese embassy in Washington, DC for my interviews, and then some government officials in Japan decided about my application. When I was accepted, and finally came to Japan, I went to an orientation with about 2,000 other people in Tokyo. I had been to Japan before, but for many people, that orientation is the first exposure they have to this new world. We were told about school life, how to be a good ALT, what the inside of a Japanese grocery store looks like, and warned about things like natto. This year, I was chosen to represent Mie at that orientation, so I will get to speak to all those bright-eyed new ALTs and give them my tips about life in Japan—specifically how to study Japanese on your own and some tips for cooking. I’m really excited!

As much as I enjoy my life in Japan, I am looking forward to this orientation to give me more energy and enthusiasm for the things I do on a daily basis. Sometimes I can forget how great my job really is, especially during summer vacation when I usually sit alone in the LL office all day without much to do. It’s also sad because all of the friends I made when I first came to Japan two years ago are leaving this year. Of course I have some new friends, and lots of new people will be coming soon, but things will be very different starting in August. I know that when we have our bunkasai, our school’s bounenkai, when I see Sakura or when I do just about anything, I will be a little bit sad that it’s the last time. As much fun as these two years have been, and as much as I will be ready to go home next summer, it’s will still be hard to see this great experience come to a close. Hopefully I can absorb some of the energy of the new ALTs so that my last year in the JET Program, and working here with all of you, will be as meaningful as the first two. よろしくお願ひします！