



2021-2022

# Niigata Prefectural Orientation



[condensed version]

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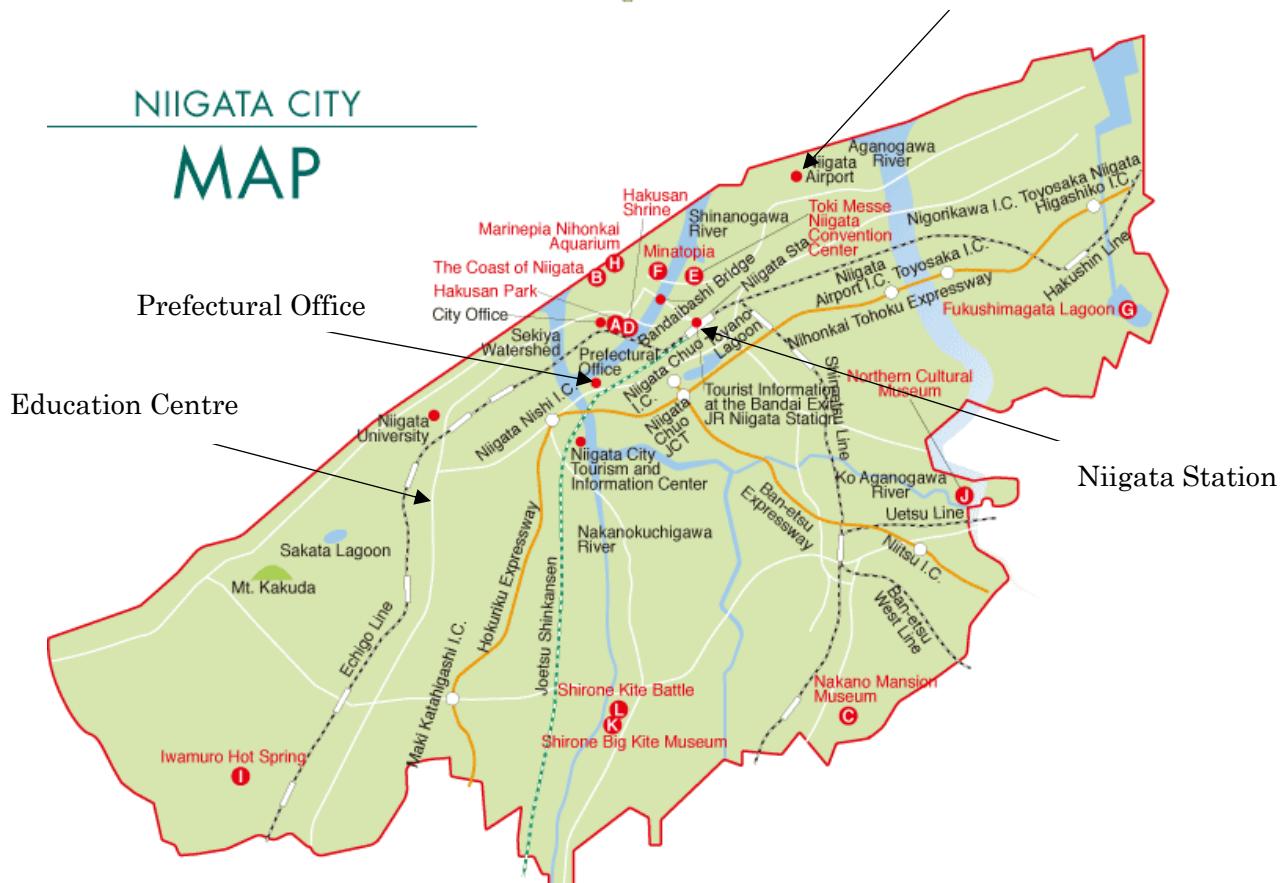
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# Niigata Prefecture & City Map

Niigata Prefecture  
Map



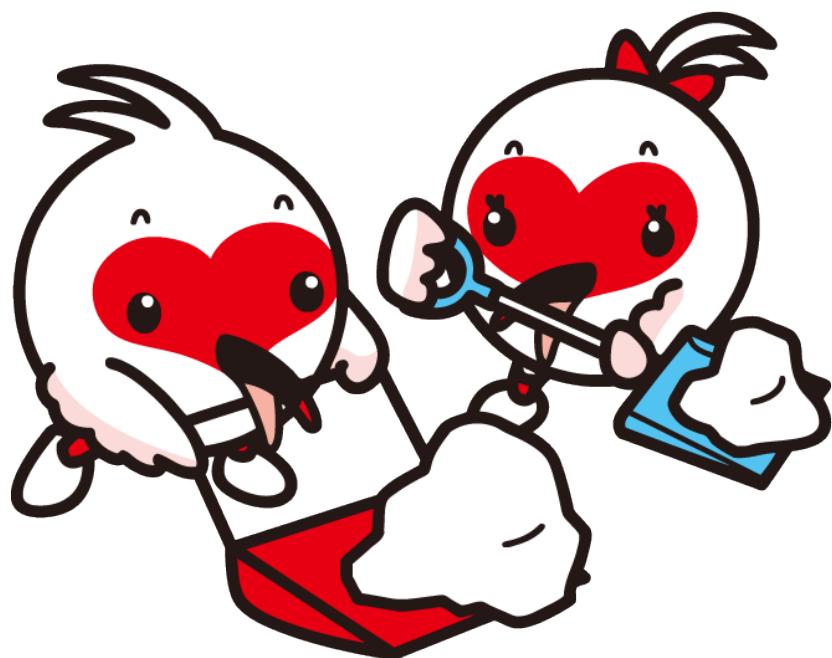
NIIGATA CITY  
MAP



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# Working in Niigata

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# Advice for Working in Niigata

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Some JET Programme participants who arrive in Japan may have experience teaching in their home country or may even have a teaching degree or qualification. But for many, their first experience of teaching and teaching English as a foreign language is right here in rural Japan. The thought of teaching for the first time in a foreign country whose language you don't know, whose culture you don't understand and whose education system you're unfamiliar with can be terrifying. If you're feeling this way, just remember to keep the following **three points** in mind.

## **1. Be Responsible**

- You are now a public servant, an ambassador for your home country, and the face of foreigners in Japan. So think before you act.

## **2. Be pro-active and take the initiative.**

- This is what separates the “OK” teachers from the brilliant teachers.

Don’t sit around waiting for something to happen. Take the reins, get out there, and start doing it.

- Improve yourself
- Improve your lessons.
- Improve your experience.

### **3. Don't be afraid of making mistakes.**

- Don't worry, we all make them. Just remember to learn from them and grow. Countless JETs have embarked upon their new job and have all lived to tell the tale, and you will too! These veteran JETs have pooled their knowledge for you, so make sure you read the following pages carefully for countless tips and pieces of advice about your new job and life in Niigata.
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## Advice for in Schools

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### **Dealing with your role as an ALT**

- If you feel like a teacher is putting too much pressure on you, you need to talk to them about it. You are supposed to be team teaching, which includes sharing responsibilities for lesson planning, making materials, the time spent and the division of roles in the classroom.
- Alternatively, if you feel like a teacher is not giving you enough work, you should also talk to them about it. If they are very reluctant for your help, start by asking if you can help them with their usual warm-up activity (e.g criss-cross questions, alphabet game), or as to do a one-off lesson on a particular topic.

- It can be difficult to do spur-of-the-moment activities in some schools, particularly in elementary school where the teachers' English level may be very low. For this reason, it can be helpful to figure out what your teaching role will be with a particular class, so that you can plan accordingly before your next visit.
- If you are having serious problems, speak to your supervisor. This is important, as it will not only help you, but also your teachers, and students, as well as any fellow future ALTs.
- In short, defining your role comes down to what you are comfortable with, it's important to speak to and plan with your teachers so that you can meet each other in the middle, and so that you can both figure out what you hope to get out of teaching together.

## **Interacting with Students**

- Speak in English in the classroom. A few years ago, 'The New Course Of Study' was introduced into Elementary, Junior High and High School in an attempt to improve English language instruction and acquisition in Japan. English must be therefore be the main, if not sole language spoken in the classroom. Unless you've been asked to speak in Japanese, speak in English in the classroom.

- Let your inhibitions go. Kids, especially teenagers can be very shy and unsure of themselves, and if you are also shy and unsure of yourself, it might be difficult to break the ice in the classroom. Try to be as open and friendly as you can where possible, and if it's appropriate, incorporate activities into the lesson where you can be silly, act, play, even sing and dance. Eventually your students might become more open and friendly, too!
- Make a list of lunch topics to talk about with the kids. Sometimes it's really hard to think of topics, and the teachers don't always help. Good examples of things to do include favorite (animals, anime, book, color, food, etc.) animal noises, and getting students to teach you Japanese words/you teach them English words.
- Accept that you can't always win. You will have bad classes, bad days and maybe bad weeks. Sometimes your students might not cooperate, but it's important not to get frustrated with them. All of your students will have their own distractions, problems and worries which are much more important to them than English class, and some days you just have to accept that.

## Getting to know JTEs

It goes without saying that some JTEs will be easier to get on with than others.

The placement of teachers and ALTs is a lottery for everyone, and sometimes you'll find a perfect match, while other times it will feel like a struggle to get through a conversation. There's also the problem of not having an awful lot of time to speak to your teachers during the day, as everyday seems to be busy all the time. Here are some ideas to try and help you improve and build on relationships with your JTEs.

- Go to 'enkais'. You've probably been told this by a lot of people but 'enkais' are a great way to get to know your teachers, it's a relaxed setting and you can talk about all kinds of things, so get stuck in!
- Take time to talk with them during the day. If you both have a free period, if you're eating lunch in the same place, or if you have time after school, have a chat with your JTEs. Anything can be the topic – you can ask each other questions about your cultures, talk about your favorite movies or places you'd like to go. It's a good way for the JTE to practice their English conversation and it really strengthens your relationship and makes your time in that school more enjoyable.
- Teach them things! There is a whole host of things about English, and about your own culture, that your JTE won't know. You shouldn't think that the students are the only ones who are there to learn things – people never stop learning, and it's likely that your JTE will be very happy to learn some interesting facts about grammar, tongue twisters, idioms or and interesting

culture fact, from you. In return, they can teach you similar things in Japanese!

- Most importantly, **be patient**. The arrival of a new ALT is exciting for everybody, but it can also make things more difficult. Just like it will take time for you to settle in, it will take time for your JTEs to get used to working with you, understanding you, and trusting you. Remember that all JTEs will have different styles of working, and different levels of English, so it's important to be patient until you figure out how you can work together.

## Dealing with Multiple Schools

So many new and unfamiliar faces and environment can make things very confusing, and really can make you feel swamped before you're adjusted. Below you'll find ways to navigate some of the worries and problems ALTs face when dealing with multiple schools.

- **Don't worry if you forget people's names.** Obviously, there are some people whose names you really should remember, like your JTEs, supervisor, principals etc. People won't get offended if you need to ask again!
- **If you make a mistake, apologize and get on with things.** Schedule changes, going to the wrong school, calling somebody by the wrong name, bringing the wrong lesson plan – the opportunities for things to go wrong when you have a lot of schools are endless. Acknowledge your mistake,

apologize and try not to do it again.

- **Schedules will change.** You might be very lucky and get plenty of warning with every schedule change. However, it's possible that schedule changes will be made and you might not find out about them until last minute, which could leave you unprepared. If this happens, it's important to keep your cool, try to do as much as you can, and let your teachers know if you're unprepared. If schedule changes happen often without you knowing, it's highly recommended that you speak to your supervisor as soon as possible to get it sorted.

## Ideas for keeping track of your schools

- Make sure you ask for a yearly school schedule of events (*nendo keikaku/年度計画*) from your supervisor and the head JTEs at your other schools. It's not only important to keep track of your class schedules but also keep in track with the school events that students participate in such as sports festival, culture festival, ball games, graduation, closing and opening ceremonies.
- **Mark your schools' location on a map.**
- **Buy a diary/planner** and use it to note down which school you're at next and what you need to prepare for your next set of classes.
- **Make a brief note of each lesson**, including the class number, date and what you did.
- **Make a 'school sheet'** with the name of the school, the principal, vice principal, and your JTEs.

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# Annual School Events

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## 1. Second Semester Opening Ceremony

This assembly marks the beginning of the school term after summer break (usually in September). The principal will make a speech and you will more than likely be asked to give a short self-introduction speech, so please be prepared for that!

- Some schools will be happy for you to speak only in English, but many might prefer you to speak in both English & Japanese.
- You should wear formal clothing for this event, as it will be the first time the whole school meets you.

## 2. Entrance Ceremony (nyūgaku-shiki, 入学式)

Along with graduation (see #3), this is an important formal event. It is an assembly to welcome new students into the school, and is attended by parents.

It is held at the beginning of April.

- You should wear formal clothing for this event. A dark suit and smart shirt or top, or traditional Japanese formalwear (i.e. kimono) is acceptable.
- To leave room for visitors, you may need to park in a different location to usual. You should ask about this in advance.

### **3. Graduation (sotsugyō-shiki, 卒業式)**

Along with the entrance ceremony (see #2), this is an important formal event in the school year. It is a ceremony during which people listen to speeches, and leaving students receive their certificate of graduation. It is held in March.

- You should wear formal clothing for this event. A black suit with white shirt and tie for men, and black suit with white shirt or black top or dress for women is appropriate. Women also often wear pearl jewelry and a fake flower corsage or brooch.
- Important members of the school community, as well as parents, will be in attendance, so be professional at all times.
- To leave room for visitors, you may need to park in a different location to usual. You should ask about this in advance.

### **4. Sports Day (undōkai, 運動会)**

On Sports Day, all students are put into teams to compete in a variety of fun events that will likely differ from the events you participated in as a student. You may be expected to attend this event. However, even if you don't have to go, it's highly recommended that you attend! In general, Sports Day in High School and Elementary School is in May/June, and in Junior High School is in September.

- If it is held on a weekend and you are required to attend, you should get

compensatory leave (daikyū, 代休). Make sure you check about this with your supervisor.

- You should wear school-appropriate sports clothes for this event. Remember you will be outside, so a cap and water bottle are also recommended.
- You may be asked to participate in some events, so be prepared to join in!
- Parents attend this event. To leave room for visitors, you may need to park in a different location to usual. You should ask about this in advance.

## 5. Sports Day for Ball Games

In addition to Sports Day, some senior high schools hold a ‘Sports Day for Ball Games’. The students choose four ball games and hold a school-wide competition for one or two days. These are usually held at the end of the school semester.

## 6. Cultural Festival (bunkasai, 文化祭)

This is a very important day for students. It is a chance for the different school clubs to show off their work in various ways, and for homerooms to host a variety of events. Cultural Festivals are usually held in autumn, and are really fun events that you shouldn’t miss!

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# Useful Teaching Websites

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The internet is a teacher's best friend. Not only is it a fantastic source of inspiration, but it'll also save you from having to reinvent the wheel for every class, as well as help you save valuable lesson planning time. To maximize your searching in the minimum time, remember to use the right keywords, for example: ESL/EFL, elementary/junior high/high school, lesson plan/activity/game, and topic/grammar point.

Recommended Websites:

- **ALTopedia** - <https://www.altopedia.org/> ALTopedia is a great resource, and the go-to option for many ALTs. It is the spiritual successor to Englipedia, that trusty website of wholesome goodness and usefulness.
- **AJET websites** - [http://akitajet.com/wiki/Main\\_Page](http://akitajet.com/wiki/Main_Page) Most prefectural AJET websites will also have their own set of lesson planning ideas. Akita AJET's "Akita-wiki" is a particularly user-friendly format, and has a lot of ideas and resources.
- **Busy Teacher** - <http://busytteacher.org> This is a fantastic online resource, especially for those who teach at JHS and SHS. 'Busy Teacher' provides a variety of different activities and lesson plans for almost every topic and grammar point imaginable, making it a great website to use and to gain

inspiration from.

- **Teach This** - <http://www.teach-this.com> Teach This is a general EFL/ESL website, and it's a great place to find grammar-based activities, as well as explanations of grammar points. The website is quite user-friendly with a good search function, and activities have a rating of their level of difficulty, and a time frame.
- **Wild Mushroomland** - <http://wildmushroomland.com/category/teaching/> ‘Wild Mushroomland’ is more of a blog/fandom site, but it’s got two really useful resources in the Teaching section. The first is the whole of the ‘Hi, Friends!’ 1 & 2 textbooks, for students and teachers. This is great if you misplace your copy or want to print out individual sheets. The second is the ‘Hi, Friends!’ clipart section of the website. Pictures for all parts of the textbooks, plus more, are arranged under useful headings, allowing you to make class materials easily.

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# Support Network

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# Prefectural Advisors

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Niigata Prefecture has 3 prefectural advisors (PAs) in total. If you have a serious issue, you are welcome to consult directly with the assistant language teacher (ALT) PA, the coordinator for international relations (CIR) PA, or both.

## 2021-2022 PAs:

- 1) **Grant Friedheim**, ALT PA [altpaniigatagrant@outlook.com]
- 2) The CIR PA
- 3) The Japanese PA (JPA)

## PAs...

- Act as confidential consultants for JETs with serious issues
- Distribute vital information via e-mail (and other means, as necessary) to JETs
- Work with relevant groups to hold annual work events (e.g. Orientations)
- Contact RAs to confirm safety of all JETs after a natural disaster or other emergency event has taken place
- Etc

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# Regional Advisors

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Our regional advisors (RAs) are members of our JET community who represent their regions and act as a local source of help. Living in a foreign country comes with challenges, and we have RAs in place who are ready to help Niigata Prefecture JETs.

## RAs...

- Welcome new JETS and try to help them acclimate
- Answer questions and provide information about daily life in the region.
- Help JETs get the help they need when the RA cannot handle the issue personally.
- Contact JETs to confirm their safety after a natural disaster or other emergency event has taken place and report the results to the PAs.
- Etc.

## **2021-2022 RAs:**

<b>Region</b>	<b>RA</b>
Murakami / Shibata	Kim Fitzgerald
Sado Island	Katherine Reida
Niigata City	Jordan Nowlin
Aga / Gosen	Stacie Cuadro
Tsubame / Sanjo	Valerie Spreeman
Tokamachi / Ojiya	Cj Irby
Nagaoka / Kashiwazaki	Hannah Wells
Joetsu / Itoigawa / Myoko (1)	Christine Yen
Joetsu / Itoigawa / Myoko (2)	Coralie Jenny

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# Niigata AJET

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Niigata AJET is a volunteer organization of JET participants from around Niigata. Their role is a social one. Niigata AJET serves our community by creating and promoting local events and charities in and around Niigata. They are the ones who help maintain the tight-knit community that we have here. Niigata AJET has also created and compiled a broad range of material and information for JETs and non-JETs that is all available on their website. Please keep in mind that Niigata AJET is not affiliated with the JET Programme or any governmental organizations.

**Website:** [www.ajetniigata.com](http://www.ajetniigata.com)

## 2021-2022 Niigata AJET council members

<b>President</b>	Claire Nacanaynay
<b>Social Media Director</b>	Zoe Nugent
<b>Treasurer, Musical Director &amp; Yukiguni Rep</b>	Nisa Sabdarali
<b>Webmaster &amp; Kaetsu Rep</b>	Kim Fitzgerald
<b>Niigata City Rep</b>	Jordan Nowlin
<b>Tsubame-Sanjo Rep</b>	Talia Valazquez

# National AJET

The National Association for Japan Exchange and Teaching (AJET) is a volunteer organization of JET Program participants. AJET serves the JET community by building support networks, organizing useful information, and offering resources to enhance the lives of the Program participants in Japan and abroad. It maintains a **counseling service** and an **online magazine**, and voices the opinions and concerns of JETs to CLAIR and the Japanese government ministries that manage the JET Program. National AJET has existed since the inception of the JET Program; at the national level, it is headed by the AJET National Council, a body of twenty elected and appointed current JETs from across Japan.

## **Counseling service (AJET Peer Support Group)**

- The AJET Peer Support Group (PSG), at **050-5534-5566** (or voice call (not IM) via Skype at **AJETPSG**), is a listening and referral service, which operates on the principles of confidentiality and anonymity. We are open to all JET Program participants every night of the year, from **8:00 pm to 7:00 am**—a period when other services such as the Tokyo English Life Line (TELL) are not in service, and when Prefectural Advisors (PAs) are often unavailable.
- Their service is free. However, if cell service fees apply, contact us via

Skype. Callers will hear a short message in Japanese before connecting.

Also, callers do not have to friend request on Skype. In fact, we recommend that users do not friend request us, in order to protect their privacy. Just search and call us.

## **Online magazine (Connect Magazine)**

- Connect magazine is a publication created entirely by the English-speaking community in Japan, and sponsored by National AJET. Whether you're currently on the JET Programme, an alumni, or just a wonderful person living in Japan, Connect magazine strives to bring you engaging content about what the ex-pat community is doing, loving, and thinking about every single month.
- <http://ajet.net/ajet-connect/>

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# Other Sources of Support

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## **JET Mental Health Counseling Assistance Program**

- With the aim of enhancing mental health support for JET participants, CLAIR offers the JET Mental Health Counseling Assistance Program. This program provides a partial subsidy (50%, up to ¥20,000 per year) for counseling costs incurred through consultation with mental health professionals in Japan not covered by health insurance. The coverage period is from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020. For further information, please ask your contacting organization.

## **JET Online Counseling Service**

- JET participants are also able to receive professional counseling for free through Web Mail and Skype, as part of the JET Online Counseling Service established by CLAIR. Your PAs will distribute more information about this service soon.

## **TELL (Tokyo English Life Line)**

- TELL is a nonprofit organization that was created in 1973. It offers free and anonymous phone counseling and information at 03-5774-0992 daily from 9:00am to 11:00pm.
- <http://telljp.com/>

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# Contributors

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A special thanks to those who have contributed to this welcome booklet.

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