

Leaving Your School

When leaving schools, due to transfer or retirement, teachers in Japan often do some or all of the following things. You may have noticed them before the staff transfers at the end of March. For ALTs, it can be helpful to be aware of what is expected of a leaving teacher, as it will give you more time to prepare during what is often a hectic time!

Speeches

You will be asked to make speeches. Most teachers will have at least three speeches to give, maybe more. Needless to say, speeches should be tailored to your audience and the occasion. I do not recommend writing one speech and using it for everyone.

Speech to the whole school (usually in the gym)

Address it to the students. Talk about things you did with them that you remember (field trips, sports day, etc.). Tell them what you will do next. Tell them you will always remember them fondly. Introduce your successor and ask the students to help them out. Wish them luck with their school careers/lives.

Speech to the teachers (in the staffroom)

Thank the principal/vice-principal. Thank the teachers as a whole and any teachers who particularly helped you out. Talk about what you learned from working at the school. Talk about any memorable moments. Tell them what you will do next. Introduce your successor and ask the teachers to support them.

Speech to the teachers (at your leaving party)

Thank the principal, vice-principal, and everyone who helped you. Talk about things you did at the school. Talk about other teachers (make jokes if appropriate). Talk about your memories of the school/Japan. Say what you will be do next.

Gifts and Thank You Notes

Small gifts and thank you notes (it is fine to type the note and just write the names by hand) should be handed out or given to teachers either on your last day or sometime in the week before. Handkerchiefs are the traditional leaving gift, but feel free to be creative!

Letter/Postcard

This is not something that Japanese teachers do, but I think it would be a very nice gesture to send a letter or postcard to your school, and/or teachers who helped you or you got on well with once you get home or to your next destination.