

@MATTJHANNAN PRESENTS

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# Japanese Manners Cheat Sheet

## マナーガイド

*For Real Chillers Only*

12 MOVES

KEY PHRASES

FULL ETIQUETTE

*Don't think of these as some ten commandment-like, intense set of rules where you'll be deported if you make any errors. Just study up a bit, try your best, and you'll be fine. Intention and effort matter, no one expects perfection.*

— Matt

## THE HOMIE-MAXXING STRATEGY

### Become a Regular (the humble local gift)

If you like a place and want to come back: bring a small, humble treat next time. Small is key. Expensive gifts can make people uncomfortable. Buy a small local snack in the same neighborhood as the izakaya or bar.

#### つまらないものですが...

*tsumaranai mono desu kedo* — "It's nothing special, but..."

Most humble line. 11/10 Japaneseness. Massive flex.

#### いつもありがとうございます

*itsumo arigatō gozaimasu* — "Thanks always."

Perfect for regulars.

## THE 12 MOVES

### Do These Everywhere

- 1 Hand important things with two hands**  
Passport, money, cards, tickets. Offer + receive with two hands and a small nod.
- 2 Use the tray when paying**  
If there's a little tray, put cash/card on the tray, not directly into someone's hand.
- 3 Point + angle the menu toward staff**  
When ordering, tilt the menu toward them while pointing. Reads as "I'm helping you."
- 4 Wipe your "evidence" before you leave**  
Crumbs, water ring, mess around your spot. A quick wipe = huge respect.
- 5 Shoes off? Line them up facing the door**  
Toes toward the exit. Bonus: do it for your partner too.
- 6 Let people get off first**  
Train doors: stand to the sides, then enter. This one is non-negotiable.
- 7 Backpack goes to the front before you board**  
Not when you're already crushing someone.
- 8 Talk quieter than you think you need to**  
Especially on trains, in small restaurants, in temples/shrines, and in Kyoto vibes.
- 9 Cheers lower than your guest**  
When clinking glasses, your glass goes slightly lower. It's a humility signal.
- 10 Pour for others, let them pour for you**  
Watch cups. If someone's cup is empty, pour. Also let them return the gesture.
- 11 Seat etiquette: give the best seat**  
If you're with someone: offer the inside seat (away from aisle/door) when reasonable.
- 12 Finish your rice if you can**  
Not "stuff yourself," but don't leave a bunch behind casually.

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## EATING & DRINKING MICRO-MANNERS

### "Itadakimasu" and "Gochisousama" (instant respect)

#### いただきます

*itadakimasu* — "I humbly receive"

Say before eating. Every time.

#### ごちそうさまでした

*gochisousama deshita* — "Thank you for the meal"

Say after eating. To the staff too.

### POURING BEER (yes, people notice)

Keep the label facing the other person. Don't aggressively top off their drink.

### SHARED PLATES

Rotate the plate so the best piece faces others. Add: どうぞ (douzo) = "go ahead"

### SUSHI / NIGIRI SOY SAUCE MOVE

Dip the fish side, not the rice. Rice soaks and falls apart.

### CHOPSTICK BASICS

- Don't stick chopsticks upright in rice (funeral ritual).
- Don't pass food chopstick-to-chopstick (also funeral ritual).
- Use the chopstick rest if it exists. If not, set them neatly across your bowl/plate.

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## KEY PHRASES FOR ORDERING

#### すみません

*sumimasen* — "Excuse me / sorry"

Use to get attention politely.

#### これ、お願いします

*kore, onegaishimasu* — "This, please."

Point at the menu while saying it.

#### おすすめは何ですか？

*osusume wa nan desu ka?* — "What do you recommend?"

Works everywhere. Staff love this question.

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## TRAIN & STREET ETIQUETTE

### Platform + doors

Line up. No cutting. Stand to the sides so people exit first.

### Inside the train

Phone on silent. Calls are a no-no. Backpack to the front or down.

### Escalators

Tokyo: stand left. Osaka: stand right. Follow the flow.

## SHOES / HOME / RYOKAN

- Shoes off? Turn them toward the door.
- Don't step on tatami with shoes. Even barefoot, avoid stepping on the border/edge between mats.
- Toilet slippers stay in the toilet area. Don't walk them around the house.
- Keep bags off beds and futons when possible.

### 失礼します

*shitsurei shimasu* — "Excuse me (for entering / interrupting)"

Use when entering a private space or squeezing past.

## SHRINE / TEMPLE BASICS

- At the entrance: a small bow is normal.
- Cleansing fountain: rinse hands, then mouth (don't drink directly from the ladle).
- Don't be mad loud, dork.

*If unsure: copy the chilliest salaryman dude.*

— Matt

## "ACTIVE LISTENING" (AIZUCHI)

In conversation, small verbal cues show you're engaged:

はい

*hai*  
"yes"

そうですね

*sou desu ne*  
"right"

なるほど

*naruhodo*  
"I see"

タイプシット

*type shit*  
"type shit"

ありがとう

# You're All Set.

Study up, try your best, and have the best trip of your life. Y'all got this.

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From Tokyo. Intention and effort matter.

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