

2-8 Telephone Service

Telephones are widely available in Japan. Private telephones and even Fax machines are found in nearly every home and office, while pay phones are easy to find in public. NTT's telephone service covers all of Japan, while other companies' services depend on each area. Ask at the local electronics shop or your realtor when signing the contract for your apartment what services are available. There may also be phone services that are included in internet packages.



Please refer to the NTT website below for further information:

http://www.ntt-east.co.jp/en/?link_eastid=ins_h004

Japan is also a leader in mobile phone technology and use, which is why mobile phones have become a big part of Japanese society. In addition to calling, email and messaging, Japanese mobile phones were some of the first to widely adopt features such as internet browsers, games, cameras, televisions, electronic wallets, train passes, gps navigation and music players.

The biggest Japanese mobile phone companies are Softbank, NTT Docomo and au by KDDI. While most new mobile phone models can be used in Japan, many older phones may not work due to different technologies. Most importantly, there is no GSM network in Japan, so GSM-only phones do not work. But many phones that are sold in Japan can operate on 4G, 3G and GSM networks (only in certain countries) with the appropriate international roaming plans. This means that a person with a handset and service provided by a Japanese mobile phone carrier can use their phone when traveling outside of Japan. Although some Japanese carriers will unlock certain phone models, it still may not be possible to use a Japanese phone with a foreign service provider due to network differences.

Prepaid Phones

Due to past criminal abuse of prepaid phones, phone sellers are required to verify the identity and place of residence of their customers. Typical proof can be in the form of your Residence Card or Certificate of Residence (*jumin-hyō*). Prepaid phones start around 2,000 yen. Credit, which is used for outgoing calls, email, internet etc. depending on what features your phone supports, must be purchased in advance. At Softbank, for example, you can choose between 3,000 yen or 5,000 yen prepaid cards. Whichever you choose, the card will expire after 60 days and not all prepaid phones support mobile internet. Phone numbers remain active as long as you have valid credit in your account, but will expire after three months to a year without use. Credit can be bought at cell phone stores, convenience stores or online, and is typically valid for 60 days from activation.

SIM cards

If you want to use a smart phone from your country with a SIM card that you purchase here in Japan, you have to present a credit card that is under the same name as the contractor. Even if you made your credit card under your name before moving to Japan, credit cards from overseas are sometimes rejected by the machine when a staff at the shop tries to get the authorization from the credit card company. You may not want to choose a SIM card for a mobile phone in Japan right after arriving.

Mobile Phones

All three companies mentioned previously provide various mobile phones and smartphones. Most of the mobile phones require you to sign up for a two-year plan, or pay for the phone up front, so be sure you understand the details of the phone and plan before you decide to purchase one. A typical mobile phone plan starts at approximately 2,000 yen for a two year contract and with no discount on the handset cost. You should know that talking on the phone in Japan is far less common than in other countries, so talk time is rather expensive compared to data. Most smartphone plans cost approximately 6,000 yen for unlimited data.

If you want to purchase a mobile phone with a contract, you will need to fill out a registration form and bring your Residence Card and/or Passport to show proof of residence. If you wish to make direct payments from your bank account, also present your bank book (*tsucho*) and personal seal if you used one on your bank documents. Otherwise you have to present your credit card which must be under the contractor's name.

Please note that if you have a one-year-residence status, you may not be able to pay the cost of the phone each month (usually 1,500-2,500 yen per month, for a 2 year contract) and then the amount you are calling and using data for on top of that, but have to pay cash up front for the phone. You have to bring 20,000-80,000 yen to purchase a phone depending on the model you want to buy.

Persons under the age of 20 must bring a parental consent form filled out by the legal guardian and the identification documents of the legal guardian such as a passport copy including the passport number, name, date of birth and current address if there is one in the passport or certificate of residence. Please download the parental consent form, let your guardian fill it out (make sure that it is signed and has the date he/she signed on it) and bring it with you to Japan. The details of the contract can be filled out afterwards.

Docomo: https://www.nttdocomo.co.jp/english/support/procedure/document/form_download/index.html

Softbank: <http://www.softbank.jp/en/mobile/shop/buy/id/>

Au: <http://www.au.kddi.com/english/support/contract/>

All three companies mentioned above have shops close to Shonandai Station. Even if they might not have English speaking staff, all three companies provide phone interpreting services. This means that the staff members will call human interpreters via telephone and explain the terms and conditions with help of the interpreter. Please keep in mind that signing a contract and getting a phone will take about 90 min.

