

It is a good idea to bring along annual reports, a company profile, product brochures and samples to show to a new business prospect. If Japanese language documents are not available, a short summary printed in Japanese should be prepared.

A good supply of business cards (meishi) is indispensable and their exchange at the start of the meeting is an important formality which helps establish the relative status of the parties. Some airlines will arrange to have your own cards translated and printed in Japanese on the reverse side and delivered to you in-flight or at your hotel. Treat meishi with respect (do not make notes on them - at least not in the presence of their owner) and study them courteously to demonstrate interest. Expect to distribute half a dozen or more at each meeting.

The Japanese never use first names except between intimate friends and care should be taken to always use the formal form of address. The English "Mr./Mrs./Miss" (e.g. Mr. Tanaka) is perfectly acceptable, although some visitors prefer to use the Japanese form of surname plus the honorific suffix "san" (e.g. Tanaka-san).

Much is often made of the need for foreign business visitors to learn Japanese customs and protocol. While a sensitivity to customs is necessary, one can overdo it. The business at hand will be foremost in the minds of the Japanese and your sincerity and commitment is much more relevant than your ability to eat raw fish. Relax, listen carefully, adopt a low key and patient approach and keep an open, but shrewd, mind. You will soon feel at home.