

Japanese addresses

Japan is divided into 47 prefectures, 43 of which carry the suffix *ken*. The remainder use different suffixes. Hokkaido is a *do*, Osaka and Kyoto are *fu*, while Tokyo is a metropolis (*to*).

Prefectures are subdivided into cities (*shi*) or counties (*gun* or *shicho*). *Gun* and *shicho* are further divided into towns (*machi* or *cho*) and villages (*mura* or *son*), which may be split into large sections (*oaza*), sections (*aza*) or small sections (*koaza*).

The 15 largest cities—Chiba, Fukuoka, Hiroshima, Kawasaki, Kitakyushu, Kobe, Kyoto, Nagoya, Osaka, Saitama, Sapporo, Sendai, Shizuoka, Tokyo and Yokohama—are subdivided into wards (*ku*). *Ku* are further divided into *machi* or *cho*, which are separated into city districts (*chome*), city blocks (*banchi*) and building numbers (*go*).

A typical Japanese address (in this example, the Minato Ward Office) is 1-5-25, Shiba-koen, Minato-ku, Tokyo 105-8511, where “1” is the *chome* number; “5” is the city block number; “25” is the building number; “Shiba-koen” is the town; “Minato” is the ward; and “105-8511” is the postal code.

When written in Japanese, addresses begin with the large (prefecture) and end with the small (building number). When written in English, this order is reversed.

Major thoroughfares, like Tokyo's Yasukuni Dori, have names, but most streets do not. In old neighborhoods, building numbers often reflect the order in which the structures were erected. In newer areas, building numbers may be sequential. Kyoto and Sapporo use variations on the addressing scheme outlined above.

Tokyo includes 23 special wards, 26 cities, three towns, a village and the Izu and Ogasawara islands. Located in the Pacific Ocean, the islands have two towns and seven villages. The Tokyo Metropolitan Area, which is also known as the Greater Tokyo Area, comprises Tokyo and Saitama, Kanagawa and Chiba prefectures.

From *Landed: The guide to buying property in Japan*,
www.landedbook.com, ISBN: 978-988-17147-3-2.

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