

MAEBASHI FOCUS

Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) Newsletter

Howdy y'all!

This month, I had the opportunity to teach English lessons to firefighters from the Maebashi Fire Department. I have also been fortunate enough to serve on the planning committee for the 2026 Gunma Orientation for new JET participants; the program that brought me to Japan and the reason I'm working as a CIR at Maebashi City Hall. The committee is made up of fellow JETs, and our goal is to help newcomers settle into life in Gunma. The orientation covers a wide range of topics, including driving, taxes, shopping, and Japanese etiquette. I'll be giving presentations on learning Japanese, fun things to do in Gunma, and what it's like to work as a CIR.

Before I arrived in Japan, my predecessor told me that one day I'd have the chance to teach English to members of the Maebashi Fire Department. This month, that opportunity finally arrived. Since I have very little teaching experience, I was a bit nervous. Thankfully, my predecessor had left behind excellent teaching materials, which gave me a solid foundation for creating a lesson that the firefighters found both interesting and useful.

The class itself consisted of six veteran firefighters. After introducing ourselves, we jumped straight into the lesson. By the end of it, I had developed a whole new appreciation for teachers and ALTs who do this every day. It's not that the lesson went poorly; in fact, I think it went pretty well, but I quickly realized just how difficult it is to explain concepts clearly and keep everyone engaged at the same time.



I hope that over the coming months, I'll be able to help the firefighters of Maebashi build practical English skills that they can use while assisting both residents and visitors, whether here in Japan or abroad.

Outside of teaching, I've also been busy working as a member of the 2026 Gunma Orientation Committee. Our goal is to prepare new JETs for life in Gunma by introducing them to local customs, important procedures, and some of the many enjoyable things the prefecture has to offer. Organizing a two-day event comes with its own unique challenges.



Everything from the schedule for each presentation to something as simple as when to put up and take down paper signs needs careful planning. I'll be giving three presentations: one on working as a CIR, one on fun things to do in Gunma, and one on studying Japanese.

The presentations about being a CIR and enjoying life in Gunma came together fairly naturally. The Japanese-learning presentation, however, proved much more challenging than I expected. Although I used to tutor Japanese while in university and can still remember what it was like to be a beginner, thinking about the language from a beginner's perspective has become increasingly difficult as my own proficiency has improved. Many things that once required conscious thought have become second nature.

As a result, my first draft ended up reading more like a college lecture than a friendly introduction to learning Japanese. Fortunately, my co-presenter, who is an ALT with plenty of classroom experience, pointed this out. Thanks to their feedback, I was able to reshape the presentation into something much more approachable and practical.

I'm really happy with how it turned out. In fact, it's become the kind of guide I wish I'd had when I first started learning Japanese. Bringing things full circle, I hope I can apply the lessons I learned while creating this presentation to my next English lesson with the firefighters of Maebashi.

Overall, June has been a productive month, and I hope to utilize the experience I've gained during this time in future projects and throughout my work going forward.

