In Japan, the address is generally written on a single line, beginning with the largest geographical area and ending with the smallest one. In the Roman alphabet, this would be transcribed as follows:

JAPAN 112–0001 TOKYO Bunkyo–Ku Hakusan 4–Chome 3–2

However, according to the latest information, automatic sorting equipment used by the Japanese Post is only able to sort items on which the address is in kanji, hiragana or katakana characters. Items whose address is in Roman script are sorted manually. Addresses may therefore also be laid out as they are in the West, from the smallest geographical area at the top to the largest at the bottom:

3–2, Hakusan 4–chome
Bunkyo-ku, TOKYO
112-0001 JAPAN

*NOTE from the International Bureau of the Universal Postal Union: reserving the last line of the address for the country name ensures greater automated processing accuracy at origin and in transit.

In recent years, the following is the increasing trend:

4-3-2, Hakusan
Bunkyo-ku, TOKYO
112-0001 JAPAN

The largest geographical subdivision is the prefecture: there are 47 in Japan. Prefecture names end in –ken, except for Tokyo–to, Kyoto–fu, Osaka–fu and Hokkaido.

Prefectures are divided into large towns (~shi) and rural areas (~gun). These large towns and rural areas are themselves divided into ~mach, ~cho or ~son (villages, only in rural areas). In very large cities there may be an additional subdivision (~ku) between ~shi and ~mach~cho.

~mach and ~cho are divided into zones (~chome), which are themselves divided into blocks (~ban), which are in turn divided into houses (~go). Houses are therefore not numbered sequentially along a street, but rather within a block. There may be several houses with the same number within a block, in which case an apartment number should be added to identify the correct building.
Address format (cont.)

Most businesses operating internationally are called corporations or Kaisha in Japanese, and most often Kabushiki Kaisha, shortened to K.K. The name of a company will often be translated partially or fully. So, for example, Aoba Trading Co. Ltd is the same company as Aoba Boeki K.K. and Electric Power Development Co. Ltd will certainly be a translation rather than the legal name of the company in question.

Large buildings generally have names ending in the suffix –biru, but Building or Bldg is frequently used.

Examples

Rural zone:
Mr Taro Tanaka
2338 Shiokawa
Maruko-machi
Chisagata-gun, NAGANO
386–401 JAPAN

(2338 is the building number)

In towns:
The address generally contains all the successive subdivisions of a zone, including the prefecture:
Mr Taro Tanaka
10–23, Mitsugi 1-chome
Musashi-Murayama-shi, TOKYO
208–0032 JAPAN

The prefecture may be omitted in the following two cases: when it is one of the 12 principal cities of the country (Fukuoka, Hiroshima, Kawasaki, Kitakyushu, Kobe, Kyoto, Nagoya, Osaka, Sapporo, Sendai, Tokyo, Yokohama):
Mr Taro Tanaka
2–17–10, Aicicho
Naka-ku, YOKOHAMA
231–0012 JAPAN

(2–17–10 means 2–chome 17–ban 10–go; the order is important; this could also be written 17–10 2–chome; in some cases, an apartment number needs to be added, which would give us 2–17–10–153 or 17–10–153 2–chome);

and when the name of the prefecture and that of the city are the same:
Mr Taro Tanaka
10–23, Kotobukiicho
NIIGATA
951-8073 JAPAN

(10–23 means 10–ban 23–go; the order is important)

List of prefectures

Aichi-ken  
Akita-ken  
Aomori-ken  
Chiba-ken  
Ehime-ken  
Fukui-ken  
Fukuoka-ken  
Fukushima-ken  
Gifu-ken  
Gunma-ken  
Hiroshima-ken  
Hokkaido  
Hyogo-ken  
Ibaragi-ken  
Ishikawa-ken  
Iwate-ken  
Kagawa-ken  
Kagoshima-ken  
Kanagawa-ken  
Kochi-ken  
Kumamoto-ken  
Kyoto-ku  
Kyoto-fu  
Mie-ken  
Miyazaki-ken  
Nagano-ken  
Nagasaki-ken  
Nara-ken  
Niigata-ken  
Oita-ken  
Okayama-ken  
Okinawa-ken  
Osaka-fu  
Saga-ken  
Saitama-ken  
Shiga-ken  
Shimane-ken  
Shizuoka-ken  
Tochigi-ken  
Tokushima-ken  
Tokyo-to  
Tottori-ken  
Toyama-ken  
Wakayama-ken  
Yamagata-ken  
Yamaguchi-ken  
Yamanashi-ken
Japan (cont.)

Glossary

-**Ken** = suffix indicating a prefecture (except prefectures of Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto and Hokkaido)
-**To** = suffix used for Tokyo prefecture
-**Fu** = suffix used for Osaka and Kyoto prefectures
-**Shi** = suffix indicating a large town
-**Gun** = suffix indicating the rural part of a prefecture
-**Ku** = suffix indicating a district of a large town
-**Machi** = suffix indicating a small town
-**Cho** = suffix indicating a neighbourhood
-**Chome** = suffix indicating an area of a neighbourhood
-**Ban** = suffix indicating a block
-**Go** = suffix indicating a building number
-**Kita** = north
-**Minami** = south
-**Nishi** = west
-**Higashi** = east
-**Chuo** = centre

Contact

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Postal Services Policy Planning Bureau
Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs
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