

HIRAGANA!

www.thejapanesepage.com

a i u e o

あいうえお -

かきくけこ k

さしすせそ s

たちつてと t

なにぬねの n

はひふへほ h

まみむめも m

や ゆ よ y

らりるれろ r

わ を w

ん



ひらがな

A beginner's guide to the wonders of
written Japanese!

So you want
to learn hiragana? Congratulations!
Japanese is a fascinating language to study, and by
learning hiragana you will be well on your way!

By the end of this booklet you should know how to read and
write all hiragana, know interesting facts, know some
eighty essential words and more!

If you look at the chart on the front cover you will notice the
hiragana are divided into sections by row. At the end of each
section of this book, there are quizzes, games, and more to aid
memorization.

If you study one or two pages a day for ten to thirty minutes you
will learn hiragana in a few short weeks! AND begin reading
Japanese (real Japanese) the first day!

You will have to work of course! But that's all part of the fun!
Let's begin the adventure —

Find other resources at our store: <http://www.TheJapanShop.com>

HIRAGANA

There are a few “rules” that will help make your learning process easier:

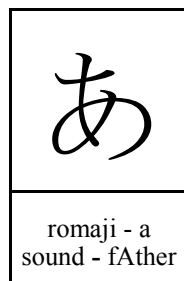
- Written Japanese is made of **kanji** (Chinese characters), **katakana** (Hiragana’s sister which is used mainly for foreign words and names), and **hiragana**.
- Forty-six characters represent the Japanese sound system and, except for a few cases, each character’s sound is unique [unlike English where five vowels (aeiou) represent fifteen vowel sounds!]
- A few additional sounds are made by combining two hiragana and by adding a “ or a °.
- Every hiragana, katakana, or kanji has a specific stroke order. This book shows the stroke order for all hiragana. [sometimes in the book, characters with one stroke are shown with two strokes for ease of understanding]
- Stroke order usually **starts from the upper left** corner down to the lower right. **Vertical lines** are drawn from **top to bottom** and **horizontal lines** are **left to right**. **Knowing this, you can guess how to write *most* characters.**

ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

Studying regularly fifteen minutes each day is far more effective than two hours once a week. Atop each page there is space to record how much time you spend studying each day. Use it to encourage regular study time.

In the hiragana box, its *romaji* (romanized / alphabet letters) and its sound is shown. There are also squares to practice writing. Please follow the stroke order shown. Even if your goal is simply to read, knowing the correct stroke order will help you in other areas such as learning kanji and writing better overall.

We also give memory tips for each character. Admittedly some of them are pretty silly; but the sillier they are, the easier they stick. Give them a try, but feel free to come up with different memory tricks that work best for you.



Gambarimashou!

(Let’s do our best!)

Clay & Yumi Boutwell

www.TheJapanesePage.com

www.TheJapanShop.com

ねこ&ねずみ


Cat & Mouse



DATE: _____ TIME SPENT: _____

あ	<p>This is the first of the vowels. There are only FIVE vowel sounds. All the other characters are made of a consonant + a vowel (except the “n” sound)</p> <p>Usually, you draw horizontally and then vertically, from top to bottom.</p>
romaji - a sound - fAther	


MEMORY HELP
 A “t” with a slanted “g” makes an “ah” sound



あ	あ								
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い	<p>Now we come to our first real word. Let’s put あ together with い and see what happens!</p> <p>あ + い = あい ai which means “love!”</p> <p>Not a bad first day’s work!</p>
romaji - i sound - fEEt	

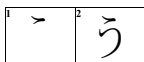
MEMORY HELP
 It looks like two dangling fEEt!!



い	い								
---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

DATE: _____ TIME SPENT: _____

This hiragana is sometimes used to make other characters longer in duration. Actually, all the vowels work in this capacity, but う is probably the most used. You will see this later so don't worry about it now *but don't forget it either!*



う

romaji - u
sound - fOOD

MEMORY HELP

It looks like an open mouth looking for “fOOD”

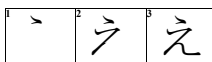
う

う

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It may seem difficult at first, but learning these first few hiragana will be the base for your Japanese future! So learn these important ones well.

Also, learn these in order [a, i, u, e, o].



え

romaji - e
sound - bEt
or sometimes
like the letter
A

MEMORY HELP

hEY, it's a man running

え

え

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TIP: Hiragana and Katakana are “syllabaries” and not alphabets; the symbols represent syllables: “ma” is one character in Japanese, but two in English.

お

romaji - o
sound - Oh nO!

Don't confuse this with
あ!

ー お お

You are on your last hiragana vowel! Congratulations!

MEMORY HELP

It looks like “あ a” but **Oh!** it's different.



お

お

You are doing fine! Now write the following in romaji.

HERE ARE SOME REAL JAPANESE WORDS

How do you pronounce them? Copy the hiragana.

あい

_____ This means *love*

あおい

_____ This means *blue*

え

_____ This means *picture, painting*

いえ

_____ This means *house*

おい

_____ This means *a lot or much* [Long お sound]

いえ

_____ This means *no* [Long い sound]

いう

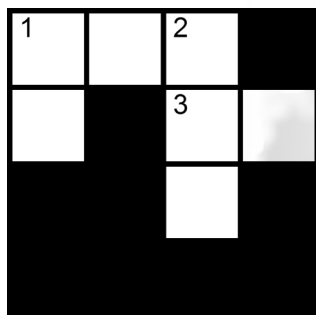
_____ This means *to talk*

いい

_____ This means *good* [Long い sound]

CROSSWORD CHALLENGE!

Practice writing the hiragana (not romaji)!



Across

1 This means “blue” (3)

3 This means “good” (2)

Down

1 This means “love” (2)

2 This means “no” (3)



Now, try to answer the following questions from memory. (Of course if you must peek to above.)

Q&A:

- 1) あい means _____
- 2) How do you write “blue” in Japanese? _____
- 3) How would you say “blue house” in Japanese? [hint “blue” + “house”] _____

TRUE OR FALSE: (circle one)

- 1) いえ means “no” T F
- 2) あおい means “red” T F

Answers in back

DATE: _____ TIME SPENT: _____

か

romaji - ka
sound - CAr

っ か か

Now that you have learned the vowels [あいうえお], let's build from them! The remaining hiragana (except one) are sounds we would write with two or more letters in English. This chapter begins the "k" row and this one [か] is "k" + "a" or "ka." (two letters but one hiragana character)

MEMORY HELP

It looks like a "K" with the top falling off

か

か

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き

romaji - ki

ー ニ キ き

Continuing with the "k" section and adding the second vowel sound "i" we get "ki." The sound ki means "tree" in Japanese.

MEMORY HELP

It looks like a skeleton **KEY**



き

き

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Katakana, hiragana's sister, is used primarily to write foreign words and names. Your name would be written in katakana.

Now we have “k” and the 3rd vowel “u” to make “ku” better known as the “less than” mark. When drawing this character, start at the top (right) go down left then finally down right.



romaji - ku
sound - COOL

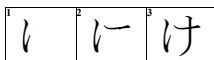
MEMORY HELP

It looks like pa**KU** man (Pac-man™)



く	く								
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Perhaps now you can see how the rest of hiragana is constructed: a consonant + one of the 5 vowel sounds. No problem! The sound KE means “hair” in Japanese.



romaji - ke
sound - KEttle



MEMORY HELP

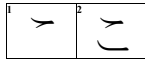
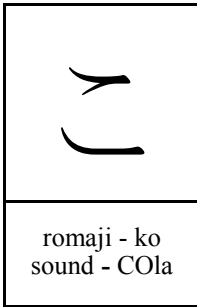
It looks like a broken old KEttle

け	け								
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TIP: Practice writing & recognizing hiragana here:

<http://thejapanesepage.com/hiragana>

DATE: _____ TIME SPENT: _____



Now that you have learned the vowel sounds and have studied the first consonant + vowel line, you should have a basic understanding of hiragana. But don't worry if you are still a bit confused... Take it one step at a time.

MEMORY HELP

It's obviously a "COla can" with no sides...

こ	こ								
---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Let's get moving...

HERE ARE SOME REAL JAPANESE WORDS

How do you pronounce them? Copy the hiragana.

かお

_____ This means *face*

えき

_____ This means *train station*

おおきい

_____ This means *big* [pronounce the O long]

いく

_____ This means *to go*

くうこう

_____ This means *airport* [the う makes the く and こ a longer sound. You don't actually pronounce it.]

こい

_____ This means *love* or *carp (fish)*

かき

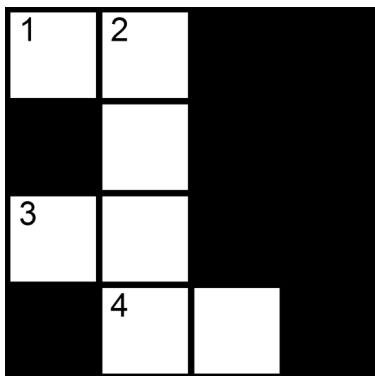
_____ This means *persimmon*

いけ

_____ This means *pond*

CROSSWORD CHALLENGE!

Practice writing the hiragana (not romaji)!



Across

- 1 This means “face” (2)
 3 This means
 “persimmon” (2)
 4 This means “to go” (2)

Down

- 2 This means “big” (4)



Now, try to answer the following questions from memory. (Of course if you must peek look on the previous page.)

Q&A:

- 1) How do you write “big (train) station” [big + station]
 _ _ _ _ _
- 2) Which writing system is used for foreign names, hiragana or katakana? _____ [p.8]

TRUE OR FALSE: (circle one)

- 1) く う こ う means “airport” T F
- 2) To make some sounds longer add an う T F

Answers in back

DATE: _____ TIME SPENT: _____

	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> 1 2 3 </div>	<p>This looks similar to き [p. 8] but with one less line.</p> <p>Make drawing hiragana fun! The more you draw them the quicker you will remember them.</p>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> MEMORY HELP It looks like a Sargeant barking orders. </div>		
		<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 40px; width: 100%;"></div>

	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">1</div>	<p>This is one of the least complicated to draw! Remember to always start at the top and go down when drawing Japanese characters. You may be expecting “si” but it is pronounced “shi.”</p>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> MEMORY HELP SHE has hair flowing in the wind. </div>		
		<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 40px; width: 100%;"></div>



TIP: You can immediately recognize hiragana from katakana by its more fluid form.

DATE: _____ TIME SPENT: _____

一 す

For the second stroke: Start from the top and as you go down, loop it to the left and then end with a tail.

す

romaji - su
sound - SUE

MEMORY HELP

It looks like a girl named **SUE** wearing a hat.

す

す

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一 十 せ

Are you writing each character many times?
Try to use more than one sense: seeing, speaking, and writing aids memorization more than just seeing.

せ

romaji - se
sound - SET

MEMORY HELP

An opened mouth person wearing a hat
SAYing something

せ

せ

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When writing romaji, many Japanese write "si" for し. However, for the non-Japanese, "shi" is much closer to the pronunciation.

DATE: _____ TIME SPENT: _____

<div style="font-size: 4em; margin: 0;">そ</div>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"><div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">ー</div><div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">㇏</div><div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">そ</div></div>	<p>Another way to write this one is そ</p> <p>Just remember that they are the same.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin-top: 20px; text-align: center;">MEMORY HELP It looks SO abstract it could be PicaSO</div>
<div style="font-size: 2em; margin: 0;">そ</div>	<div style="font-size: 2em; margin: 0;">そ</div>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; height: 40px;"><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

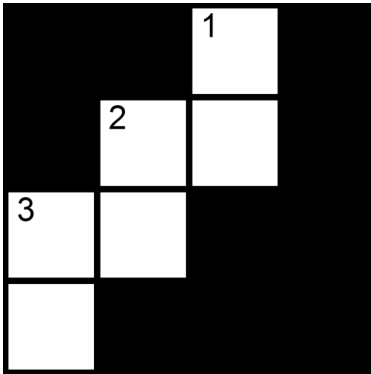
HERE ARE SOME REAL JAPANESE WORDS

How do you pronounce them? Copy the hiragana.

- | | | |
|----|--|---------------------------------------|
| さけ | | This means <i>Japanese alcohol</i> |
| うし | | This means <i>cow</i> |
| すし | | This means <i>sushi</i> |
| あさ | | This means <i>morning</i> |
| すき | | This means <i>to like (something)</i> |
| うそ | | This means <i>a lie</i> |
| かさ | | This means <i>umbrella</i> |
| せき | | This means <i>chair or seat</i> |

CROSSWORD CHALLENGE!

Practice writing the hiragana (not romaji)!



Across

2. This means “to like”

3. This means “cow”

Down

1. This means “chair”

2. This means “sushi”

3. This means “a lie”



Now, try to answer the following questions from memory.

Q&A:

1) How do you write sushi in hiragana? ____

2) How is かさ pronounced? _____

TRUE OR FALSE: (circle one)

1) さ is “*ki*” and き is “*sa*” T F

2) There are two ways to write そ T F

Answers in back

DATE: _____ TIME SPENT: _____

た	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> 1 ー 2 ㇏ 3 た 4 た </div>	<p>You are now beginning the “t” row. You will encounter two irregular pronunciations. Until now, it has been pretty easy: one consonant + one vowel with no irregularities.</p>							
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> MEMORY HELP It looks like a TOddler reaching for a toy </div>									
た	た								

ち	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> 1 ー 2 ち </div>	<p>You should be congratulated! You have reached your first “irregular” hiragana pronunciation. Yeah! Ahem... This is pronounced as “<i>chi</i>” and not “<i>ti</i>” as you would think.</p>							
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> MEMORY HELP A CHEap version of the number 5 </div>									
ち	ち								

There are a few irregular pronunciations in hiragana. The front and back charts show these in red.



TSU. This one is a bit difficult to pronounce. The sound is NOT found in English. But if you say the words “cat” and “soup” fast you get a caTSOUp. This is the sound you want. Later we will see a small つ. This causes a short pause between syllables.

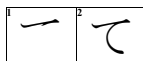


romaji - tsu
sound - caT SOUp

MEMORY HELP

A wave from a **TSU**nami (tidal wave)

つ	つ								
---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--



Taking a break from the irregular, let's continue on with the regular guys! By the way, “hand” in Japanese is *te*. (KaraTE—empty hand)



romaji - te
sound - TErrible



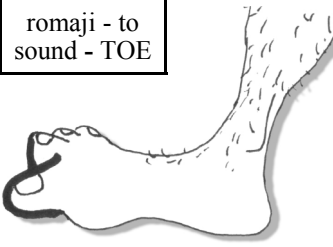
MEMORY HELP

A **TE**rrible 7

て	て								
---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Listen to a native speaker or a sound file at thejapanesepage.com to hear the つ *tsu* sound.

DATE: _____ TIME SPENT: _____

と	1	2							
と		<p>You have finished the 4th row. Getting close to the mid mark. Don't give up. You are doing just fine!</p>							
romaji - to sound - TOE					<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; background-color: #f0f0f0;"> <p>MEMORY HELP</p> <p>It looks like someone's big TOE</p> </div>				
と	と								

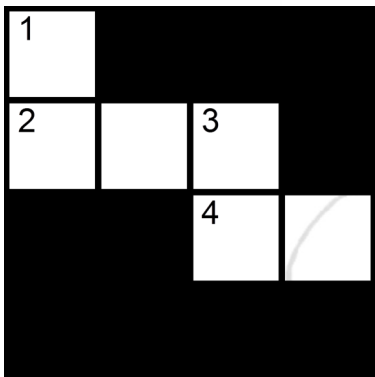
HERE ARE SOME REAL JAPANESE WORDS

How do you pronounce them? Copy the hiragana.

- | | | |
|-----|--|---|
| おと | | This means <i>sound</i> |
| とおい | | This means <i>far</i> |
| いち | | This means <i>the number 1</i> |
| ちち | | This means <i>father</i> |
| すてき | | This means <i>nice</i> |
| さとう | | This means <i>sugar</i> (the う makes と longer in sound) |
| くち | | This means <i>mouth</i> |
| うた | | This means <i>song</i> |

CROSSWORD CHALLENGE!

Practice writing the hiragana (not romaji)!



Across

- 2 This means “far” (3)
- 4 This means “father” (2)

Down

- 1 This means “sound” (2)
- 3 This means “1” (2)



Now, try to answer the following questions from memory.


Q&A:

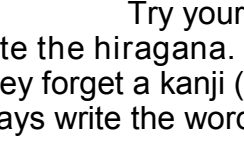
- 1) Write the two hiragana with irregular pronunciations in this chapter — —
- 2) How do you write “song” in Japanese? _____

TRUE OR FALSE: (circle one)

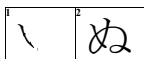
- | | | |
|----------------------|---|---|
| 1) いち means “2” | T | F |
| 2) すてき means “steak” | T | F |

Answers in back

な	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> 1 一 2 ナ 3 ナ 4 な </div>	<p>There are 3 characters that have a <small>よ</small> part. They are all in the “n” section.</p>
romaji - na sound - kNOt		MEMORY HELP It looks like a rope all tangled in a kNOt
な	な	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="width: 30px; height: 30px; border: 1px solid black;"></div> <div style="width: 30px; height: 30px; border: 1px solid black;"></div> <div style="width: 30px; height: 30px; border: 1px solid black;"></div> <div style="width: 30px; height: 30px; border: 1px solid black;"></div> <div style="width: 30px; height: 30px; border: 1px solid black;"></div> <div style="width: 30px; height: 30px; border: 1px solid black;"></div> <div style="width: 30px; height: 30px; border: 1px solid black;"></div> <div style="width: 30px; height: 30px; border: 1px solid black;"></div> </div>

に	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> 1 丩 2 に 3 に </div>	<p>Try your best to learn to read and write the hiragana. Even Japanese, when they forget a kanji (Chinese character) can always write the word in hiragana.</p>
romaji - ni sound - knee		MEMORY HELP It looks like a person sitting on his kNEEs (as seen from above)
に	に	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="width: 30px; height: 30px; border: 1px solid black;"></div> <div style="width: 30px; height: 30px; border: 1px solid black;"></div> <div style="width: 30px; height: 30px; border: 1px solid black;"></div> <div style="width: 30px; height: 30px; border: 1px solid black;"></div> <div style="width: 30px; height: 30px; border: 1px solid black;"></div> <div style="width: 30px; height: 30px; border: 1px solid black;"></div> <div style="width: 30px; height: 30px; border: 1px solid black;"></div> <div style="width: 30px; height: 30px; border: 1px solid black;"></div> </div>

Here is the second ヌ character. We are pointing this out as there are several characters that are somewhat similar.



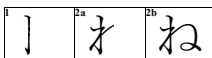
romaji - nu
sound - NEW

MEMORY HELP

It looks like a あ but with a tail and no hat— a **NEW** nu

ぬ	ぬ								
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There will be two more hiragana that look similar to ね. Be sure to get straight that “ne” is the one with the tail— ヌ



romaji - ne
sound - NEck

MEMORY HELP

If you look carefully you will see a “1,” “+,” and a “2,” but, **NAY**, no “3.”

ね	ね								
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ね is also used as a sentence ending particle. It is very versatile meaning things like, “isn’t it?”, “don’t you?”, and “you know...”

DATE: _____ TIME SPENT: _____

<div style="font-size: 48px; margin: 10px 0;">の</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> romaji - no sound - NO </div>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">1</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">2</div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 5px;"> / の </div>	<p>This hiragana is used as a particle [grammatical marker] as well as parts of words. As a particle, it means the apostrophe S [marks the possessive]</p> <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;"> ねこ の えさ cat 's food </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px; text-align: center;"> MEMORY HELP </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px; margin-top: 5px;"> A 9 on its side. [German for NO is “nein” pronounced “nine”] </div>										
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td style="width: 12.5%; height: 40px; vertical-align: middle;">の</td> <td style="width: 12.5%; height: 40px; vertical-align: middle;">の</td> <td style="width: 12.5%; height: 40px;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%; height: 40px;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%; height: 40px;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%; height: 40px;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%; height: 40px;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%; height: 40px;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%; height: 40px;"></td> <td style="width: 12.5%; height: 40px;"></td> </tr> </table>			の	の								
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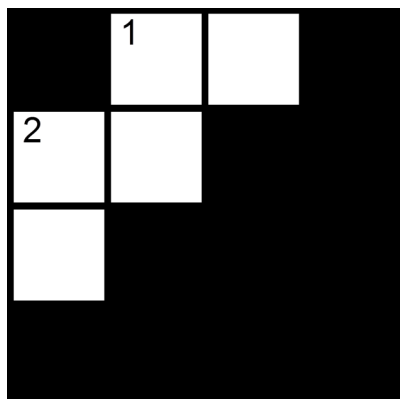
HERE ARE SOME REAL JAPANESE WORDS

How do you pronounce them? Copy the hiragana.

- | | | |
|----|--|--------------------------|
| ねこ | | This means <i>cat</i> |
| この | | This means <i>this</i> |
| ねっ | | This means <i>fever</i> |
| いぬ | | This means <i>dog</i> |
| にし | | This means <i>West</i> |
| なつ | | This means <i>summer</i> |
| なに | | This means <i>what</i> |
| なな | | This means <i>seven</i> |

CROSSWORD CHALLENGE!

Practice writing the hiragana (not romaji)!



Across

1. This means “cat”
2. This means “summer”

Down

1. This means “fever”
2. This means “what?”

Find home: Follow the hiragana in order to get out of the maze

	い	き	し	つ	の	お	な	つ
の	と	て	に	ぬ	お	さ	あ	う
ね	な	つ	ち	い	す	こ	け	お
ぬ	に	う	た	と	ぬ	の	に	て
て	け	し	そ	あ	う	え	お	さ
い	こ	ね	せ	あ	い	に	か	ね
ぬ	き	お	す	し	な	と	き	そ
あ	く	な	に	さ	こ	け	く	す
し	の	と	さ	す	の	と	つ	ぬ

は

romaji - ha
sound - HA!

1	2	3	4
い	ー	け	は

This and “*he*” [see page 25] are the only hiragana that have two sounds for one character. When “は” is used to make up words like はし *hashi* (chopsticks) it is pronounced “**ha**.” However when used as a grammatical marker (as a “topic” or “main idea”) it is pronounced “**WA**”

MEMORY HELP

It has two parts to make memorizing **H**ArD.

は

は

ひ

romaji - hi
sound - HE

1	2	3
ー	て	ひ

Nearly every letter in the English alphabet has two or more possible sounds, but remarkably, Japanese sounds and characters are very regular.

<big sigh of relief heard here>



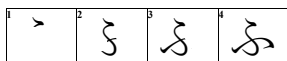
MEMORY HELP

It looks like a big smiley face saying “**HEE HEE**”

ひ

ひ

NOTE: Japanese children learn hiragana before learning katakana or kanji.

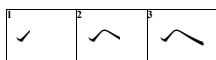
romaji - fu
 sound - FOOd


This can also be written as ふ. Just remember that the middle line can be drawn or not. Also the pronunciation of this is not “*hu*” as you would expect but “*fu*.” As in *とうふ* *toufu*—tofu. Although, the sound is sometimes in-between “*hu*” and “*fu*.”

MEMORY HELP

It looks like a snake looking for some **FOO**d

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

 romaji - he
 sound - [a short] HEAd


“*へ*” can be pronounced as “*he*” or “*e*.” Usually, when used as part of a word, it is pronounced as “*he*” as in *へそ* *heso* (belly button). And when used as a grammatical particle (to show direction) it is pronounced “*e*” - but not always!


MEMORY HELP

HEY! It's an upside V (*almost*)

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

You may see some hiragana drawn differently. English also has this [a or ʌ] [M or **M**].

DATE: _____ TIME SPENT: _____

<div style="font-size: 4em; margin: 0;">ほ</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;">romaji - ho sound - HOle</div>	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"><table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center; width: 150px;"><tr><td style="width: 25px;">1</td><td style="width: 25px;">2</td><td style="width: 25px;">3</td><td style="width: 25px;">4</td></tr><tr><td>い</td><td>ー</td><td>に</td><td>ほ</td></tr></table><div style="margin-left: 10px;"><p>This comes after は so it has a top bar. Notice the second bar is slightly longer than the first.</p><div style="text-align: center;"></div></div></div>	1	2	3	4	い	ー	に	ほ		
1	2	3	4								
い	ー	に	ほ								
<div style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">MEMORY HELP</div> <div style="background-color: #e0e0e0; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 5px;">HO OH! It is more complicated than は <i>ha</i></div>											
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"><tr><td style="width: 12.5%; text-align: center;">ほ</td><td style="width: 12.5%; text-align: center;">ほ</td><td style="width: 12.5%;"></td><td style="width: 12.5%;"></td><td style="width: 12.5%;"></td><td style="width: 12.5%;"></td><td style="width: 12.5%;"></td><td style="width: 12.5%;"></td><td style="width: 12.5%;"></td><td style="width: 12.5%;"></td></tr></table>		ほ	ほ								
ほ	ほ										

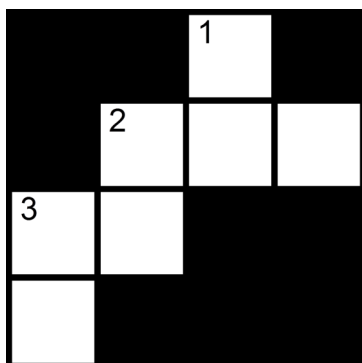
HERE ARE SOME REAL JAPANESE WORDS

How do you pronounce them? Copy the hiragana.

- | | | |
|-----|--|---|
| はこ | <hr style="border: 1px solid black;"/> | This means <i>box</i> |
| ひと | <hr style="border: 1px solid black;"/> | This means <i>person</i> |
| ふね | <hr style="border: 1px solid black;"/> | This means <i>boat</i> |
| へた | <hr style="border: 1px solid black;"/> | This means <i>bad at, or unskilled</i> |
| はと | <hr style="border: 1px solid black;"/> | This means <i>dove</i> |
| ひたち | <hr style="border: 1px solid black;"/> | This means <i>Hitachi</i> (the company) |
| ほし | <hr style="border: 1px solid black;"/> | This means a <i>star</i> |
| とうふ | <hr style="border: 1px solid black;"/> | This means <i>tofu</i>
[the う just makes the と longer.
You don't actually pronounce the う
-- but a long と] |

CROSSWORD CHALLENGE!

Practice writing the hiragana (not romaji)!



Across

2. This means “Hitachi”

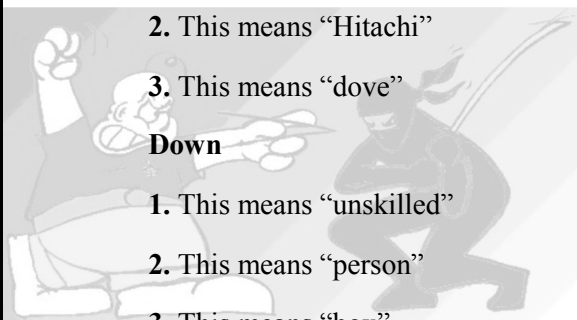
3. This means “dove”

Down

1. This means “unskilled”

2. This means “person”

3. This means “box”



Now let’s play a traditional Japanese game—Shiritori. “shiri” means “butt” and “tori” means “to catch.” Someone starts with a word and the next player says another word that begins with the last letter of the previous word. Let’s play Shiritori with a few words you have studied:

“box” —

は こ

[p. 26]

“love” or “carp” —

こ _____

[p. 10]

“to go” —

[p. 10]

“airport” —

[p. 10]

“cow” —

_____ し _____

[p. 14]

Answers in back

DATE: _____ TIME SPENT: _____

ま	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> 1 一 2 二 3 卅 4 ま </div>	<p>At first you may have to think of each memory help in order to say each pronunciation, but after a while, you will be able to simply look at the character and, <i>skipping the memory help</i>, your mind will jump right to the sound. This is real progress.</p>
romaji - ma sound - MA MA		

MEMORY HELP

Look **MA!** I caught a dragonfly. (Imagine a dragonfly)

ま	ま								
---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

み	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> 1 ㇇ 2 ㇆ 3 み </div>	<p>Also, there may be some hiragana you know better than others. Don't let this worry you. In time as you read more and more, the bumps will be smoothed out.</p>
romaji - mi sound - ME		

MEMORY HELP

It looks to **ME** like a 2 over a 4

み	み								
---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Hiragana (and katakana) originally came from kanji (Chinese characters).

む

romaji - mu
sound - MOvie

一 ず む

Getting this far, you have accomplished quite a lot.

Go on a treasure hunt on the internet. Start at a Japanese site such as *kids.yahoo.co.jp*. Find and sound out the hiragana you have studied.(Also with *Yahoo Japan*, when you put your mouse over any link and look at the bottom, you will see the directory name in English!)

MEMORY HELP

It looks like an old film projector showing a **MO**vie

む

む

め

romaji - me
sound - MEN

\ め め

Here we have the last of the look-a-likes. め [me] looks

a lot like ん [nu], の [no],
and even あ [a].

MEMORY HELP

It looks like a half closed eye. [in Japanese "eye" is "め"]

め

め

DATE: _____ TIME SPENT: _____

も

romaji - mo
sound - MOWer

し も も

Now that you are finishing your seventh row, be sure to spend some time reviewing what you have studied.



MEMORY HELP

A man with a hat resting after MOWing his yard

も

も

HERE ARE SOME REAL JAPANESE WORDS

How do you pronounce them? Copy the hiragana.

もも

_____ This means *peach*

まめ

_____ This means *bean*

ひみつ

_____ This means *secret*

しまうま

_____ This means *zebra* [the う does NOT make the ま longer - pronounce it as a u]

たま

_____ This means *ball*

まち

_____ This means *town*

こめ

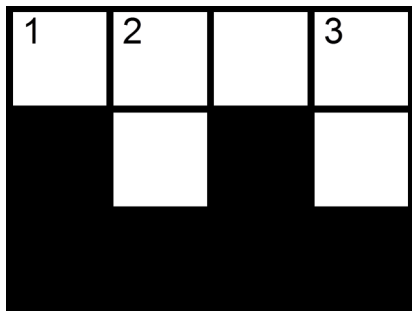
_____ This means *rice*

さめ

_____ This means *shark*

CROSSWORD CHALLENGE!

Practice writing the hiragana (not romaji)!



Across

1. This means “zebra”

Down

2. This means “beans”

3. This means “town”



Now, try to answer the following questions from memory.

Q&A:

- 1) How do you pronounce む ____ & how do you pronounce め ____?
- 2) Write *shimauma* [zebra] in Japanese. _____


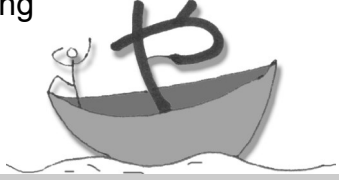


TRUE OR FALSE: (circle one)




- 1) Hiragana came from kanji
T F
- 2) The correct order for the m's is もめむみま
T F



Answers in back

DATE: _____ TIME SPENT: _____

	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> 1 つ 2 ち 3 や </div>	<p>If you look at the order of hiragana on the front of this booklet, you will see that the やゆよ row is missing a few sounds.</p>
romaji - ya sound - YAcht		
MEMORY HELP		
A YA cht with its sail blowing in the wind		
		<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 40px; width: 100%;"></div>

	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> 1 い 2 ゐ 3 ゆ </div>	<p>There is no <i>yi</i> or <i>ye</i> sound. That is why we are on <i>yu</i> now.</p>
romaji - yu sound - YOU	MEMORY HELP	
If you look closely you may see a y , o , and a u		
		<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 40px; width: 100%;"></div>

The “y” row has only *ya*, *yu* and *yo*.

よ	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> 1 2 3 </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 5px;"> - ト よ </div>	<p>It may seem easier to write the down stroke first, but learn it in the correct order from the start. Stroke order is very important to the Japanese and, yes, it can make a difference in the appearance sometimes.</p>										
romaji - yo sound - YO-YO	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">MEMORY HELP</div> <div style="background-color: #e0e0e0; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid black;">A fancy trick on a YO-yo</div>											
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td style="width: 10%;">よ</td> <td style="width: 10%;">ゆ</td> <td style="width: 10%;"></td> <td style="width: 10%;"></td> <td style="width: 10%;"></td> <td style="width: 10%;"></td> <td style="width: 10%;"></td> <td style="width: 10%;"></td> <td style="width: 10%;"></td> <td style="width: 10%;"></td> </tr> </table>			よ	ゆ								
よ	ゆ											

The や, ゆ, and よ can be used in 2 ways:

- 1) as "letters" to make words
- 2) or...

Take a look at the lower back cover where it says "plus small や ゆ よ." Remember not to panic and then come back here. It looks scary but, really, it isn't too complicated.

There is a pattern.

In every case a consonant sound is combined with a small や *ya*, ゆ *yu*, or よ *yo*. And the consonant sound has already been decided for you! It is always those under the "i" column. Look at the chart on the front or back (left) cover. Starting with the "k" row, we see き, し, ち, に, ひ, み, and り are used. (all i's)

Now notice the sound changes. き *ki* + や *ya* = きゃ *kya*

Easy isn't it? You can think of the smaller や, ゆ or よ as taking away the "i" sound in the first character. You may be saying, "What is the difference between きゃ *kiya* and きゃ *kya*?" First, the sound is different. "KI YA" (two syllables) versus "KYA" (one syllable). Second, the meaning can be totally different.

DATE: _____ TIME SPENT: _____

HERE ARE SOME REAL JAPANESE WORDS

How do you pronounce them?

はやい	_____	This means <i>fast</i>
いきましょう	_____	This means <i>let's go!</i>
へや	_____	This means <i>room</i>
かいしゃ	_____	This means <i>company, business</i>
おちゃ	_____	This means <i>Japanese tea</i>
きょう	_____	This means <i>today</i>
ひゃく	_____	This means <i>hundred (100)</i>

Copy the following words to make a [*not so useful*] sentence in Japanese:

きょう、 _____ [the 、 is a comma]

きょう、あなた _____

きょう、あなたは _____

きょう、あなたは ひゃく _____

きょう、あなたは ひゃく さい。

きょう-today
あなた-you [pronoun]
は *wa*-makes the preceding word or phrase the "topic" or "main thought" [not translated] (p. 24)
ひゃく-100
さい-years old

Now use the glossary to the left to figure out the meaning in English: [add an "are" in there]

Answer in back

Let's practice the small やゆよ

The following table shows all the hiragana you have learned with a small や, ゆ or よ. The last line [r line] will be studied next.

き+y	きや <i>kya</i>	きゆ <i>kyu</i>	きよ <i>kyo</i>
し+y	しや <i>sha</i>	しゆ <i>shu</i>	しよ <i>sho</i>
ち+y	ちや <i>cha</i>	ちゆ <i>chu</i>	ちよ <i>cho</i>
に+y	にや <i>nya</i>	にゆ <i>nyu</i>	によ <i>nyo</i>
ひ+y	ひや <i>hya</i>	ひゆ <i>hyu</i>	ひよ <i>hyo</i>
み+y	みや <i>mya</i>	みゆ <i>myu</i>	みよ <i>myo</i>
り+y	りや <i>rya</i>	りゆ <i>ryu</i>	りよ <i>ryo</i>

NOTE: We didn't write the し and ち rows with a "y" in the romaji. If we were to write *sha* (as many Japanese people do) the sound to the foreigner will be different. Both ways are correct—One being more "correct" to the Japanese understanding of the writing system and the other being more "correct" to the pronunciation.

Write "190" in Japanese

To write 190 in Japanese, you need to write **100** and **9** and **10**.

100	9	10
<i>hyaku</i>	<i>kyuu</i>	<i>juu</i>

[Remember to use ん to make the *kyu* and *ju* longer]

hya ku

kyu u

ju u

ら	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> 1 2 3 </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> </div>	<p>You will notice there is no sound given for the “r” section. That is because the Japanese R sounds are different from any English sound. In this chapter, we will try to explain how to make the sounds [p 39], but be sure to listen to the sound files on the web. [see bottom]</p>
romaji - ra		

MEMORY HELP

A 5 with a **R**otten top

ら	ら								
---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

り	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> 1 2 </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> </div>	<p>The R sound is in between the R and L sounds in English. Sometimes it sounds like a “D” to English ears. Pronunciation-wise this is the most difficult section, so learn it well. But don’t worry too much about it. Once you get the hang of it you will be understood.</p>
romaji - ri		

MEMORY HELP

It looks like two arms **RE**aching for something


り	り								
---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

る	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> 1 2 3 </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 5px;"> ー ろ る </div>	<p>If you have Japanese friends, ask them to help you with the “r” sounds. Listen carefully and mimic the sounds.</p>
romaji - ru		

MEMORY HELP

It looks like a **ROOT**

る	る								
---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

れ	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> 1 2 3 </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 5px;"> 1 れ れ </div>	<p>Don't confuse this with <i>ね ne</i> [p. 21]</p>
romaji - re		

MEMORY HELP

It is a snake **RE**sting on a stick

れ	れ								
---	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

See next page for an overview on making “r” sounds.

DATE: _____ TIME SPENT: _____

Congratulations!

ろ

romaji - ro

ろ ろ

You have survived the last of the dreaded "r's"

Spend some time listening to the sound files [see page 36 bottom] and reading page 39 to get your pronunciation down.

MEMORY HELP

Think of a man **ROW**ing a boat

ろ

ろ

HERE ARE SOME REAL JAPANESE WORDS

How do you pronounce them? Copy the hiragana.

りか

_____ This means *science*

らく

_____ This means *easy*

くり

_____ This means *chestnut*

りす

_____ This means *squirrel*

あり

_____ This means *ant*

あれ

_____ This means *that*

れつ

_____ This means *line*

ろうそく

_____ This means *candle*

Overview of R sounds

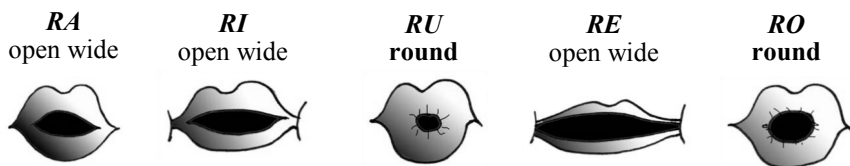
There are two considerations for mastering the R's: **Tongue** and **Mouth**

PART ONE: The Tongue...

The sound is made by lightly slapping your tongue just behind your upper teeth. Think of making an L sound, like LOVE. That is the approximate place. The only difference between the Japanese R and the English L sound is how long the tongue is held there. In English the tongue is held a while so air can go around it. In Japanese, the tongue is immediately dropped. All of the R sounds are made the same way with the tongue.

PART TWO: The Mouth...

The mouth takes a little practice to make it natural, but it is also easy, really. Very simply, for RA RI & RE the mouth is more open and for RU & RO the mouth is more rounded and shut. [NOTE: actually for perfect pronunciation, ALL 5 sounds have unique mouth positions -- we will look at this, but remember basically for RA, RI & RE the mouth is more opened and RU & RO it is rounded and smaller.]



Again the most important thing is that RA, RI & RE have a kind of open, wide mouth and RU & RO have a more rounded, small mouth. Practice saying them in order -- (open mouth) RA RI (round mouth) RU (open mouth) RE (round mouth) RO.

Lastly remember, slap the tongue with a wide mouth for RA, RI, RE and slap the tongue with a round mouth for RU & RO.

わ

romaji - wa
sound - WAsh

1	2	3
丨	㇀	わ

There are only two letters under the “w” section. This is the only character that has a “w” sound. The next hiragana を is technically a “wo” but most of the time it is pronounced “o.”

MEMORY HELP

It is a **W**Ashing machine

わ

わ

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

を

romaji - o
sound - OH

1	2	3
一	㇀	を

This character is only used as a grammatical particle. It will never be found as part of a word. You have studied the character that does that (お). を is placed right after the direct object. (see exercise at bottom of page 41)

MEMORY HELP

It looks like a person carefully stepping into a cold pond—**OH!** It's cold!

を

を

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

を is the only hiragana that cannot be used to make words.

<div style="font-size: 4em; font-family: cursive;">ん</div>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> 1 ん </div>	<p>Finally the last one! This is the only one that has just one consonant sound—n. Also the ん cannot be used at the beginning of a word.</p>										
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> MEMORY HELP </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px; text-align: center; margin-top: 5px;"> It looks like a cursive “n” — <i>n</i> </div>												
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">ん</td> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">ん</td> <td style="width: 10%;"></td> <td style="width: 10%;"></td> <td style="width: 10%;"></td> <td style="width: 10%;"></td> <td style="width: 10%;"></td> <td style="width: 10%;"></td> <td style="width: 10%;"></td> <td style="width: 10%;"></td> </tr> </table>			ん	ん								
ん	ん											

Copy the following words to make a sentence in Japanese:

わたし _____

わたしは _____

わたしは ほん _____

わたしは ほんを _____

わたしは ほんを よみたい。



watashi—I (pronoun)
 は *wa*—makes the preceding word or phrase the “topic” or “main thought” [not translated] (p. 24)
hon—book
 を *o*—marks the Direct Object of the sentence [not translated]
yomitai—want to read

Now use the glossary to the left to figure out the meaning in English: [verb is last]

Answer in back

The “i” column [きしちにひみり] is combined with a small や, ゆ or よ to make additional sounds.

Write the hiragana for the following words:

- 1) *kyu u ri* _____ [cucumber]
- 2) *sho u ri* _____ [victory]
- 3) *o cha* _____ [Japanese tea]
- 4) *ryo u ri* _____ [cooking, food]
- 5) *kyo u* _____ [today]
- 6) *sha shi n* _____ [photo]

Answers in back

The small っ

Way back on page 17, we mentioned sometimes a small っ *tsu* is used to cause a short pause or break between syllables. For example, in English we have a slight pause after “black” in “black car.” Here is a good example to show how important this small っ is.

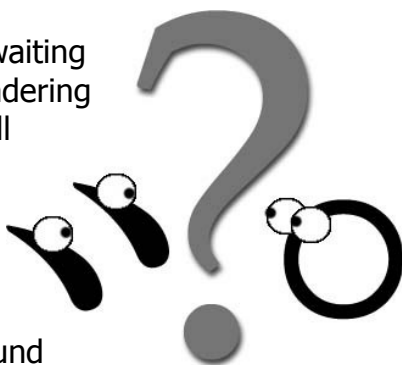
がっき *gakki* - musical instrument [with a slight pause]
- and -

がき *gaki* - brat, annoying kid [without the pause]

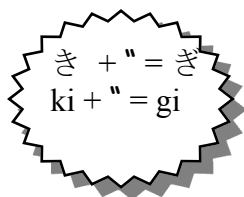
Remember:

The small っ is not pronounced, but causes a short hiccup
between sounds

Now here is what you have been waiting for. I am sure you have been wondering what those “ and ° things are all about. Although it isn’t as easy as the little や, ゆ or よ’s, again there is a pattern that can be followed.



- “ The “ or “*ten ter*” makes a soft sound harder. For example, it makes a “k” sound a hard “g” sound (“g” as in **g**ood). “s” becomes “z,” “t” becomes “d,” and “h” becomes “b.”
- ° The ° or “*maru*” makes the “h” become a “p” sound. The other consonant sounds are not affected by the *maru*, only the “h” group. That’s all there is to it!



See how easy it is? All you have to remember is:

k	→	g	s	→	z	t	→	d
h	→	b	h°	→	p			

Before doing the practice below, look at the chart on the back cover until you understand how it works.

Let’s practice writing words with the “ and the °

- ① Here is き *ki*. How do you make a *gi*? _____
- ① Here is ふ *fu*. How do you make a *pu*? _____
- ① Here is き ゆ *kyu*. How do you make a *gyu*? _____
- ① Here is し ょ *sho*. How do you make a *jo*? _____ [look at chart]
- ① Now write *bi ji n*. This means “beautiful woman”: _____

DATE: _____ TIME SPENT: _____



When か is given a *ten ten* [が], it can be a grammatical particle. (it can also be a regular "letter" to make up words...) As a grammatical particle it marks the subject of the sentence. Very often the usage of the particles は and が are similar. は usually covers a broad topic while が is more narrow.

Other particles:

は	<i>wa</i> —topic marker	[as a regular "letter" it is pronounced " <i>ha</i> "]
へ	<i>he</i> or <i>e</i> —directional marker	
を	<i>o</i> —direct object marker	
が	<i>ga</i> —subject marker	

There are two sets with the same pronunciation with the *ten ten*.

じ & ぢ are both pronounced *ji* and ず & づ are both *zu*.

While all 4 characters do appear in words (and are not interchangeable) the じ is more common than ぢ and the ず is more common than づ. Think of *ji* as じ and *zu* as ず.

What's this in romaji?

じ = *ji*

1. ぶ = _____
2. ふ = _____
3. だ = _____
4. びや = _____
5. づ = _____

What's this in hiragana?

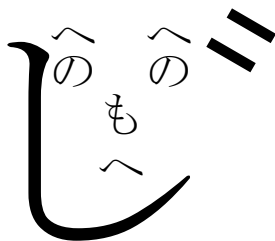
ji = じ or ぢ

1. *ba* = _____
2. *do* = _____
3. *gu* = _____
4. *cho* = _____
5. *myu* = _____

Answer in back

I want you to meet Mr. *Henohenomoheji*

The name sounds impossible to remember, but it is simply reading the hiragana that makes the character. The eyebrow is "he." The eye is "no." The nose is "mo." the mouth is "he." And the face is made by "ji." (*ji* = *shi* + ") Do you see it? Try to draw it. Impress your friends.



.....



Here's another one. Can you read it? It is also *henohenomoheji* but as a cat.

SHIRITORI - A traditional Japanese game which you have already seen (p. 27) is called *Shiritori*. If you remember, the game starts with someone saying a word. The next player takes the last "letter" of that word and uses it to begin the next word. *Shiritori* is an excellent way to have fun while gaining a larger vocabulary.

KAIBUN (Japanese palindrome) - This is a word play where a sentence can be read from the left or right and still make sense.

わたしまけましたわ *watashi makemashita wa*—Reading from either the left or right it means "I lost." [*watashi* = I; *make-mashita* = lost; *wa* = sigh or exclamation sound] Notice this doesn't work looking at the romaji, but only with hiragana.

たけやぶやけた *takeyabu yaketa*—Again reading from the left or the right, it means, "the bamboo grove burned." [*takeyabu* = bamboo grove; *yaketa* = was burned]

Yumi's challenge

Here is your chance. Yumi has prepared a few sentences based mainly on words found in this booklet. See if you can sound out the words **and** understand them.

- ① りすは くりが すき。
- ② うしは かおが おおきい。
- ③ おおきい くうこうへ いきましょう。
- ④ しまうまは はやい です。
- ⑤ わたしは えが へた です。

Some hints

- は, へ and が are used also as grammatical particles. [p. 44]
- Japanese verbs are at the end of the sentence.
- Think of です as "to be" [is, am, are]

Here are the page numbers for each word, if you need to look them up:

- 1) 38, 38, 14
- 2) 14, 10, 10
- 3) 10, 10, 34
- 4) 30, 34, *desu*
- 5) 41, 6, 26, *desu*

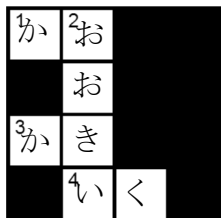


ANSWERS: Crosswords

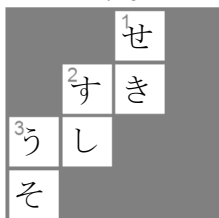
P. 7



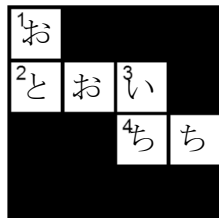
P. 11



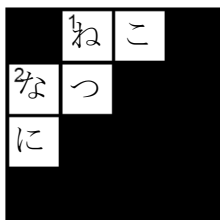
P. 15



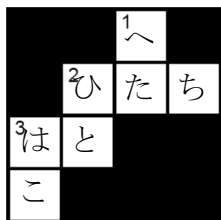
P. 19



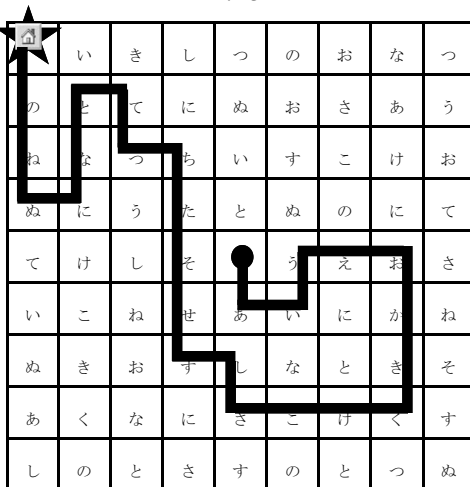
P. 23



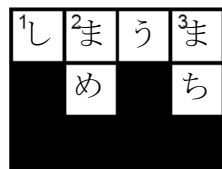
P. 27



P. 23



P. 31



ANSWERS: Questions

P. 7 - Q&A 1) love 2) あおい 3) あおい いえ T/F 1) F [いいえ is no] 2) F [あおい is blue]

P. 11 - Q&A 1) おおきい えき 2) katakana T/F 1) T 2) T

P. 15 - Q&A 1) すし 2) *ka sa* [means “umbrella”] T/F 1) F [さ is “sa”; き is “ki”] 2) T

P. 19 - Q&A 1) ち *chi* & つ *tsu* 2) うた T/F 1) F [いち means “1”] 2) F [すてき means “nice”]

P. 27 - box = はこ; love or carp = こい; to go = いく; airport = こうこう; cow = うし

P. 31 - Q&A 1) ん *nu* め *me* 2) しまうま T/F 1) T 2) F [まみむめも]

P. 34 - きょう、あなたはひゃくさい。 means “Today, you *are* a hundred years old.”

P. 35 - ひゃく きゅう じゅう

P. 41 - わたしはほんをよみたい。 means “I want to read a book.”

P. 42 - 1) きゅうり 2) しょうり 3) おちや 4) りょうり 5) きょう 6) しゃしん

P. 43 - 1) ぎ *gi* 2) ぷ *pu* 3) ぎゅ *gyu* 4) じょ *jo* 5) びじん *bijin*

P. 44 - romaji 1) bu 2) pu 3) da 4) bya 5) zu hiragana 1) ば 2) ど 3) ぐ 4) ちょ 5) みゆ

QUICK

HIRAGANA CHART

Plus *ten ten* or *maru* [p. 43]

a i u e o

あいうえお -

かきくけこ k

さしすせそ s

たちつてと t

なにぬねの n

はひふへほ h

まみむめも m

や ゆ よ y

らりるれろ r

わ を w

ん

Only affected rows shown
Red denotes sounds different from pattern

が ga ぎ gi ぐ gu げ ge ご go

ざ za じ ji ず zu ぜ ze ぞ zo

だ da ぢ ji づ zu で de ど do

ば ba び bi ぶ bu べ be ぼ bo

ぱ pa ぴ pi ぷ pu ぺ pe ぽ po

Plus *small ya yu yo* [p. 33]

Only affected rows shown

き+y きゃ kya きゅ kyu きょ kyo

し+y しゃ sha しゅ shu しょ sho

ち+y ちゃ cha ちゅ chu ちょ cho

に+y にゃ nya にゅ nyu によ nyo

ひ+y ひゃ hya ひゅ hyu ひょ hyo

み+y みゃ mya みゅ myu みょ myo

り+y りゃ rya りゅ ryu りょ ryo

The **blue rows** may be combined with the *ten* or *maru* to make more sounds:

[p. 43]

じゃ jya (or ja)

ぴゅ pyu

