

2

The Japanese Script 日本語の書き方

Katakana
片仮名

Christian Külker

ひら		が		ぶ	
と		日本語は簡単である。 「日本語は難しいですね」と日本人がよく言う。確かに自分の言語は簡単であると考えた人は少ないだろう。日本語は難しいのか？ 日本語は大きく分けると「読む日本語」「書く日本語」があるが、中でも最も日本語学習にとって困難なことは「書く日本語」と「読む日本語」である。なぜなら、日本語には3種類の文字「ひらがな、カタカナ、漢字」があるからだ。しかし、それは反対に、日本語を聞き、話す事は良いのだ。日本語の発音や文法は他の言語と比較しても単純で、ドイツ人にとっても日本語を正確に発音することは簡単であろう。			
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September 2014, v-0.9

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The version v0.1 - v0.8 of this book 日本語を書こう! (German: *Lasst uns Japanisch schreiben!*) was developed as reference and training book for the language course at the VHS Halle (Ravensberg) in Germany starting year 2000. It was published 2003, 2004 and 2006 under the GNU FDL.

In 2014 (v0.9) the part of Katakana was made a book on its own. The title was changed to 日本語の書き方:片仮名 (English: *The Japanese Script - Katakana*) and adopted to a self study approach.

To obtain an original copy see: <http://christian.kuelker.info/nihongo/> For questions use christian.kuelker@cipworx.org.

Christian Külker, Tolmezzo, September 2014, v-0.9

v0.9: Initial version as Katakana only book.

In case you have the original book, please write to christian.kuelker@cipworx.org for hints, suggestions, thanks, complains.

to Francesco Belletti

Contents

1	Japanese Writing System	3
2	The Way to Write Katakana	7
2.1	Pronunciation and Intonation	8
2.2	Writing Katakana Letters	9
2.2.1	Stroke Order Matter!	11
2.2.2	Example /u/	12
2.2.3	Stroke Types	14
2.3	Special Katakana Characters	14
2.3.1	Doubling Vowels in Katakana	14
2.3.2	Seldom Used Katakana	15
3	Katakana Training	17
3.1	Katakana /a/ Row	20
3.1.1	/a/	22
3.1.2	/i/	24
3.1.3	/u/	26
3.1.4	/e/	28
3.1.5	/o/	30
3.1.6	/a/ Row Training	32
3.2	Katakana /ka/ Row	34
3.2.1	/ka/	36
3.2.2	/ki/	38
3.2.3	/ku/	40
3.2.4	/ke/	42
3.2.5	/ko/	44
3.2.6	/ka/ Row Training	46
3.3	Katakana /sa/ Row	48
3.3.1	so , ri and n Ambiguity	49
3.3.2	/sa/	50
3.3.3	/shi/	52
3.3.4	/su/	54
3.3.5	/se/	56
3.3.6	/so/	58
3.3.7	/sa/ Row Training	60
3.4	Katakana /ta/ Row	62
3.4.1	shi and tsu Ambiguity	63

3.4.2	/ta/	64
3.4.3	/chi/	66
3.4.4	/tsu/	68
3.4.5	/te/	70
3.4.6	/to/	72
3.4.7	/ta/ Row Training	74
3.5	Katakana /na/ Row	76
3.5.1	/na/	78
3.5.2	/ni/	80
3.5.3	/nu/	82
3.5.4	/ne/	84
3.5.5	/no/	86
3.5.6	片仮名ナ行練習	88
3.6	Katakana /ha/ Row	90
3.6.1	u , fu and wa Similarity	91
3.6.2	/ha/	92
3.6.3	/hi/	94
3.6.4	/fu/	96
3.6.5	/he/	98
3.6.6	/ho/	100
3.6.7	/ha/ Row Training	102
3.7	Katakana /ma/ Row	104
3.7.1	/ma/	106
3.7.2	/mi/	108
3.7.3	/mu/	110
3.7.4	/me/	112
3.7.5	/mo/	114
3.7.6	/ma/ Row Training	116
3.8	Katakana /ya/ Row	118
3.8.1	Yōon	119
3.8.2	/sa/	120
3.8.3	/yu/	122
3.8.4	/yo/	124
3.8.5	/ya/ Row Training	126
3.9	Katakana /ra/ row	128
3.9.1	so , ri and n Ambiguity	129
3.9.2	/ra/	130
3.9.3	/ri/	132
3.9.4	/ru/	134
3.9.5	/re/	136
3.9.6	/ro/	138
3.9.7	/ra/ Row Training	140
3.10	Katakana /wa/ Row	142
3.10.1	u , fu and wa Similarity	143
3.10.2	va Ambiguity	143

3.10.3 /wa/	144
3.10.4 /wo/	146
3.10.5 /wa/ Row Training	148
3.11 Katakana /n/ Row	150
3.11.1 so , ri and n Ambiguity	150
3.11.2 /n/	152
4 Terminology	155
4.1 Dakuten	155
4.2 Diphthong	155
4.3 Furigana	155
4.4 Gojūonzu	156
4.5 Handakuten	157
4.6 Hentaigana	157
4.7 Hepburn System	158
4.8 Hiragana	158
4.9 Homophone	158
4.10 Iroha	159
4.11 Katakana Iteration Marks	159
4.11.1 Double a Vowel	159
4.11.2 Double a Character	159
4.11.3 Double two (or more) Characters	160
4.12 Kana	161
4.13 Kanji	161
4.14 Katakana	161
4.15 Kunrei System	162
4.16 Manga	162
4.17 Man'yōgana	163
4.18 Mora	164
4.19 Okurigana	165
4.20 Phonetic Character	166
4.21 Radical	166
4.22 Rōmaji	167
4.23 Space Character	168
4.24 Syllable	169
A Katakana Tables	171
A.1 Katakana Reference	171
A.2 Katakana Writing Reference	172
A.3 Empty Gojūonzu for Training	173
A.4 Katakana Gojūonzu	174
A.5 Katakana Font Dejima	175
A.6 Katakana YOzFont	176
A.7 Katakana YOzFontA	177
A.8 Katakana YOzFontC	178
A.9 Katakana YOzFontE	179

A.10	Katakana YOzFontF	180
A.11	Katakana YOzFontM	181
A.12	Katakana YOzFontP	182
A.13	Katakana MikachanPB	183
A.14	Katakana Total Table	184
B	Rōmaji Tables	185
B.1	Base Rōmaji Table	185
B.2	All Rōmaji	186
C	List of Japanese Technical Terms	187
	Indices	188
	English: Terms	189
	Japanese: Index	191
	Deutsch: Fachbegriffe	193
	GNU Free Documentation License	195
1	APPLICABILITY AND DEFINITIONS	195
2	VERBATIM COPYING	196
3	COPYING IN QUANTITY	196
4	MODIFICATIONS	197
5	COMBINING DOCUMENTS	198
6	COLLECTIONS OF DOCUMENTS	198
7	AGGREGATION WITH INDEPENDENT WORKS	198
8	TRANSLATION	198
9	TERMINATION	199
10	FUTURE REVISIONS OF THIS LICENSE	199

Japanese: Contents - 目次

0	前書き	1
1	日本語の書き方	3
2	片仮名の書き方	7
2.1	発音とイントネーション	8
2.2	片仮名を一つずつ書く	9
2.2.1	書き順事項	11
2.2.2	「ウ」の例	12
2.2.3	筆画の種類	14
2.3	特別カタカナ	14
2.3.1	カタカナでの倍増母音	14
2.3.2	めったに使われない片仮名	15

3	片仮名練習	17
3.1	片仮名ア行	20
3.1.1	「ア」	22
3.1.2	「イ」	24
3.1.3	「ウ」	26
3.1.4	「エ」	28
3.1.5	「オ」	30
3.1.6	片仮名ア行練習	32
3.2	片仮名カ行	34
3.2.1	「カ」	36
3.2.2	「キ」	38
3.2.3	「ク」	40
3.2.4	「ケ」	42
3.2.5	「コ」	44
3.2.6	片仮名カ行練習	46
3.3	片仮名サ行	48
3.3.2	「サ」	50
3.3.3	「シ」	52
3.3.4	「ス」	54
3.3.5	「セ」	56
3.3.6	「ソ」	58
3.3.7	片仮名サ行練習	60
3.4	片仮名タ行	62
3.4.2	「タ」	64
3.4.3	「チ」	66
3.4.4	「ツ」	68
3.4.5	「テ」	70
3.4.6	「ト」	72
3.4.7	片仮名タ行練習	74
3.5	片仮名ナ行	76
3.5.1	「ナ」	78
3.5.2	「ニ」	80
3.5.3	「ヌ」	82
3.5.4	「ネ」	84
3.5.5	「ノ」	86
3.5.6	/na/ Row Training	88
3.6	片仮名ハ行	90
3.6.2	「ハ」	92
3.6.3	「ヒ」	94
3.6.4	「フ」	96
3.6.5	「ヘ」	98
3.6.6	「ホ」	100
3.6.7	片仮名ハ行練習	102
3.7	片仮名マ行	104
3.7.1	「マ」	106

3.7.2	「ミ」	108
3.7.3	「ム」	110
3.7.4	「メ」/	112
3.7.5	「モ」	114
3.7.6	片仮名マ行練習	116
3.8	片仮名ヤ行	118
3.8.1	拗音	119
3.8.2	「ヤ」	120
3.8.3	「ユ」	122
3.8.4	「ヨ」	124
3.8.5	片仮名ヤ行練習	126
3.9	片仮名ラ行	128
3.9.2	「ラ」	130
3.9.3	「リ」	132
3.9.4	「ル」	134
3.9.5	「レ」	136
3.9.6	「ロ」	138
3.9.7	片仮名ラ行練習	140
3.10	片仮名ワ行	142
3.10.3	「ワ」	144
3.10.4	「ヲ」	146
3.10.5	片仮名ワ行練習	148
3.11	片仮名ン行	150
3.11.2	「ン」	152
4	専門用語	155
4.1	濁点	155
4.2	二重母音	155
4.3	振り仮名	155
4.4	五十音図	156
4.5	半濁点	157
4.6	同音異語	157
4.7	ヘボン式	158
4.8	平仮名	158
4.9	同音異語	158
4.10	伊呂波	159
4.11	片仮名繰り返し記号	159
4.11.1	長音	159
4.11.2	踊り字	159
4.11.3	くの字点	160
4.12	仮名	161
4.13	漢字	161
4.14	片仮名	161
4.15	訓令式ローマ字	162
4.16	漫画	162
4.17	万葉仮名	163

4.18	モーラ	164
4.19	送り仮名	165
4.20	表音文字	166
4.21	部首	166
4.22	ローマ字	167
4.23	空白文字	168
4.24	音節	169
A	平仮名図	171
A.1	片仮名のレファレンス	171
A.2	片仮名の書くレファレンス	172
A.3	練習のため五十音図	173
A.4	片仮名五十音図	174
A.5	出島フォント片仮名	175
A.6	「YOzFont」の片仮名	176
A.7	「YOzFontA」の片仮名	177
A.8	「YOzFontC」の片仮名	178
A.9	「YOzFontE」の片仮名	179
A.10	「YOzFontF」の片仮名	180
A.11	「YOzFontM」の片仮名	181
A.12	「YOzFontP」の片仮名	182
A.13	「MikachanPB」の片仮名	183
A.14	全部片仮名	184
B	ローマ字図	185
B.1	ローマ字	185
B.2	全部ローマ字	186
C	日本専門用語リスト	187
索引		188
	英語専門用語索引	191
	日本語専門用語索引	193
	独逸語専門用語索引	195

Conventions Used in this Document

(1) The reading of Japanese characters (**Kanji**) are **not** given in the section or chapter heading but as soon as possible. If the reading is given it will be given in **Hiragana** script. To mark this reading it will start with a Japanese bracket [and end with a Japanese bracket].

Example:

Kanji 漢字【かんじ】

(2) If readings of Japanese are also given in **Rōmaji** according to the **Hepburn system**, this is indicated by a slash '/' at the beginning of the reading and a slash at the end.

Example:

First Katakana letter ア /a/

(3) External hyperlinks are marked with an blue arrow.

Example:

Please look at the download page for this document, if there is a new version
→ <http://christian.kuelker.info/nihongo>

Warning!

This work is a **draft**. It is not complete and contains errors. Please report.

Introduction

The book is the second volume of *The Japanese Script* with the focus to teach *Katakana*. As a matter of fact it is assumed that the reader already mastered volume one *The Japanese Script - Hiragana* before continue learning *Katakana*.

Being able to read and write Japanese is a core skill when learning Japanese. And *Katakana* is one of the two very basic scripts of Japanese to be learned. This book is written with the aim to help in that, based on self experience as a learner of *Katakana* as well as from teaching experience and with feedback of many students. This is the first edition as a book for self leaning approach. So please report suggestions or problems.

The [first chapter \(Japanese Writing System\)](#) will introduce the Japanese writing system and different alphabets. If you are already familiar with it, you can safely skip this chapter. In any case all terms are explained in the [last chapter](#).

The [second chapter \(The Way to Write Katakana\)](#) starts with the introduction of writing and reading single *Katakana* letters. The chapter ends with special *Katakana* letters. It is advised to read this chapter before starting the training.

The [third chapter \(Katakana Training\)](#) goes right into action by offering row based training sessions for each character as well as simple training for writing some Japanese *Katakana* words.

The [last chapter \(Terminology\)](#) provides an alphabetically ordered glossary about the most important key words. It is recommended to read one article at a time to deepen the understanding of the Japanese language in general and the way of writing Japanese in particular. The order do not matter. However it is not mandatory to read this chapter to learn *Katakana*.

The appendix contain tables of all important *Katakana* and *Katakana* written in different fonts in the [Katakana Tables](#) part. Even though this is not explicit mentioned in the following chapters it is important to have a look at this tables from time to time when learning *Katakana* to understand the margin (how much can be diverted from the standard and the character is still recognized) of the character to learn. The second part included [two tables with Latin letters](#) to memorize the pronunciation. In the forth part a list of used [main technical terms in Japanese](#) can be found with references to the text where they are explained. The last part of the appendix offer three indices: in [English](#) (Index) and [German](#) (Fachbegriffe) for the learner and in [Japanese](#) (索引) for the teachers.

1. Japanese Writing System

From the perspective of an European the Japanese script (how Japanese is written) looks strange and difficult at the first sight and many people mistake Japanese for Chinese¹ writing. For Japanese the Japanese script is just ordinary. On the other side the writing system of an European language is also not easy to a Japanese. Most Japanese will not notice the whole difficulty because they are introduced to English at an early age and school English is just a subset of every day written English. The difficulties starts where Japanese are exposed to every day written English or any other European language with all it different graphical representations. Most Europeans believe that they are using only one writing script. At a closer look that is wrong.

Example of 4 different representation of the reading "a":

Character	Alphabet	Reading	Remark
<i>a</i>	Italic	a	printed script, small letter "a"
a	Typewriter	a	printed script, small letter "a"
A	Serif	a	printed script, capital letter "a"
𝄞	Fraktur ²	a	Fraktur, capital letter "a"

Some of this writing scripts where used active in the beginning of last century, while is is more common to only read them now.

For an European adult³ the "kinship" of the above graphic elements is obvious. However it is a cultural achievement to associate them to each other and it is by no means obvious from a foreign (or learner's) perspective.

In a similar way the equality of 「あ」 and 「ア」 is obvious for a Japanese, but not for an European. When got used to it, it will become not strange or difficult any more.

As in European text also in Japanese text a number of different scripts can be found. Next to the known scripts in Europe⁴ there are two Japanese alphabets [Hiragana](#) and [Katakana](#), both are referenced as *Kana* and the letters derived from Chinese characters called [Kanji](#).

Example:

Character	Alphabet	Reading	Remark
あ	Hiragana	a	no meaning, just the letter "a" in Hiragana
ア	Katakana	a	no meaning, just the letter "a" in Katakana
阿	Kanji	a	angle, to please, part of roof, hill, Africa

¹In German language the word "Fachchinesisch" (Lit.: profession Chinese, Engl.: gobbledygook, Amer.: gobbledegook) for example is synonym of something that is not understandable. The perception to understand Japanese is almost the same.

³European children have to learn that "a" is the same as "a". And even adults have difficulties to read "𝄞" out of context as "A".

⁴German for example: Fraktur, Latin, special characters like umlauts or eszett (the German symbol for a voiceless "s" after a long vowel (such as in "großer Mann") or a diphthong (such as in "weißer Hai"). ('ß')), Indian numbers

Japanese can be written in two directions. First, old fashioned from up to down - vertically with columns from right to left. And second, modern (as in English) from left to right - horizontally with rows from up to down. Within this four alphabets are used: Roman-Indian letters (our letters), **Kanji** (Chinese derived letters) **Hiragana** (Newer Japanese characters) and **Katakana** (also newer Japanese characters). This mixture of alphabets is named *Kanji-Kana-Majiri-Bun* (Kanji-Kana-Mixed-Text). The most common are **Kanji** and **Hiragana**. Each of the scripts are introduced in the following sections.

Kanji

1300 years ago the first endeavours were undertaken to display the Japanese language with the only known alphabet in the region, the Chinese writing system. While the Japanese language was hardly suited for the writing system it was an economical choice since the Chinese characters were well developed at that time and introduced many new ideas in lexis. The 'borrowing' of Chinese characters was not a one shot operation it took centuries and more than one attempt. This long winded process led to the fact that some characters were imported more than once from China from different times and different regions. And because of this one Chinese character can have more than one pronunciation. We hope that this will consolidate over the next centuries. Today this imported characters are known as **Kanji** in Japan. **Kanji** is written *Hanzi* in Chinese and referencing the character from the Han period of China. Even though today all Chinese based characters (and even some self invented) are referenced nowadays as **Kanji**, it does not strictly mean that they are only from the Han period.

A standard Japanese text do contain **Kanji**. To master the Japanese language over a certain level and to overcome the problem of personal illiteracy (in Japan) it is highly encouraged to learn at least 600 to 800 characters. To become a fully literate member of the Japanese society 2000 to 2300 **Kanji** should be learned.

Today **Kanji** in written Japanese language are used for substantives/ nouns, verbs, adjectives and names.

Katakana will be introduced in detail in the next chapter [The Way to Write Katakana](#).

Hiragana

Approx. in the 9th century the **Hiragana** script - written in Japanese as 平仮名【ひらがな】 - was developed by simplifying Chinese characters used for pronunciation. The number of contemporary **Hiragana** were reduced and today 46 are used. **Hiragana** is a **morae** alphabet which is mostly constructed out of syllables. In modern Japanese language **Hiragana** is used for **Okurigana** like verb endings, other endings as well as for phonetic transcription and for all other words which can or should not be written with **Kanji**, except words which are written in **Katakana**. In simple words: if it is not known whether the word should be written in **Kanji** or **Katakana** write in **Hiragana**.

Katakana

At the same time as [Hiragana](#), also **Katakana** letters were invented by simplifying the same Chinese characters used for pronunciation. However the look and feel of **Katakana** is more 'square' not so 'rounded' as [Hiragana](#).

Katakana is used today for writing words of foreign origin and for emphasizing (in commercials or [Manga](#)) as well as words in the fauna or flora.

Roman/ Latin/ Indian-Arabic Characters

In temporary Japan words written in western letters become more popular and some parts of the written language is already westernized, like (Indian/ Arabic) numbers written in horizontal text almost per default. This western Latin letters are called **Rōmaji** and are written in Japanese as ローマ字【ろおまじ】, even though some of them are from different origin like Indian numbers for example.

2. The Way to Write Katakana

The second¹ Japanese **Kana** script a -- **mora** based writing system -- is called **Katakana** and this is written in Japanese as 片仮名【かたかな】 but sometimes also as カタカナ【かたかな】. It consists of a little less than 50 letters, as it is usual for **morae** or **syllable** based systems. **Katakana** derived from Chinese characters, called **Kanji** (漢字 【かんじ】 in Japanese). All **Katakana** together form a complete phonetic script.

The collection of **Katakana** is usually displayed in the **Gojūonzu** (lit. Table of Fifty Sounds), a grid of 10x5 in which the characters are displayed. Even though nominally the **Gojūonzu** is containing 50 characters the grid is not completely occupied. Additionally there is also one character added to the end. So with five gaps and one extra letter, the current number of **Katakana** is 46. If we would count also the character for doubling a vowel (which is not displayed in the **Gojūonzu**) we have 47 distinct characters, still below 50.

	a	i	u	e	o
-	ア	イ	ウ	エ	オ
k	カ	キ	ク	ケ	コ
s	サ	シ	ス	セ	ソ
t	タ	チ	ツ	テ	ト
n	ナ	ニ	ヌ	ネ	ノ
h	ハ	ヒ	フ	ヘ	ホ
m	マ	ミ	ム	メ	モ
y	ヤ		ユ		ヨ
r	ラ	リ	ル	レ	ロ
w	ワ				ヲ
*	ン				

This document is structured according to the **Gojūonzu**, five **Katakana** will be introduced in one section to be learned together.

Even though **Katakana** can be used by its own to express the complete content of the Japanese language it is almost never used as such. This is due to the fact that the other two scripts **Hiragana** and **Kanji** exists and that there was traditionally no **space character** to separate words. So a **Katakana** sentence with **Katakana** only and no **spaces** is hardly understandable also due to

¹The first is **Hiragana**

many **homophones**. But even if there are **spaces** it is difficult. Therefore the letter type boundaries of **Kanji**, **Hiragana** and **Katakana** are the most significant indicator for word boundaries. In the Japanese² written language **Katakana** has a distinct role. It serves for:

1. writing words of foreign origin
2. words that need to be emphasized
3. often indicate on-yomi in dictionaries
4. names of minerals
5. geological names
6. names of fauna (animals)
7. names of flora (plants)
8. partly onomatopoeias in **manga**
9. sounds, like animal sounds or sounds made by humans
10. telegrams (before 1988)
11. banking system account names
12. In literature (eg. **manga**) words being spoken in a (foreign) accent or "robotic" speech
13. sometimes used as Furigana
14. uncommon **Kanji**, eg. 皮膚科【ひふか】 "dermatologist" written as 皮フ科
15. computer output (in 80th, before introduction of multi byte characters)
16. some personal names (especially female) (common in the past: eg. セツ (setsu))

Therefore in commercials, **manga** and literature describing foreign concepts **Katakana** has a over proportional usage.

2.1. Pronunciation and Intonation

The *pronunciation* of **Katakana** is the same as for **Hiragana**. Therefore every **syllable**, more precise every **mora** corresponds to a **Katakana** character and is constructed as 'consonant' + 'vowel' with the exception of |n|. This system of letter for each **mora** makes *pronunciation* absolutely clear with no ambiguities. However the simplicity of **Katakana** does not mean that *pronunciation* in Japanese is simple for English speakers as it is for Germans. The rigid structure of the fixed **mora** sound in Japanese creates the challenge of learning the proper intonation and duration of Japanese *pronunciation*.

Almost each Japanese word can be chunked into **morae** of high and low pitch witch is a crucial aspect of the spoken language. Compared to Chinese, Japanese luckily have only two pitches: hi and low. Sometimes this difference can be even important for the lexis. Homophones can have for example a difference in pitch which make them distinguishable. The intonation of high and low pitches is a crucial aspect of the spoken language. One of the biggest problems for obtaining a natural sounding *pronunciation* is the incorrect intonation. Many European or American learners speak without paying attention to the correct pitch. That makes the speech sound non-natural for Japanese. In some language course try to let the learner memorize the natural pitch of a word or even teach rules for memorization. While there is clearly a possibility for linguistic rules, they are

²Until the end of World War II **Katakana** was used differently. Official documents used a mix of **Kanji** and **Katakana** in a similar way then **Hiragana** and **Kanji** today. **Katakana** was used for Particles and **Okurigana**.

hard to remember and master. Also because they can remember the rules it is still possible to learn the correct intonation by resorting to language learning techniques used by infants or small children: mimicking native Japanese speakers. Therefore it is highly advised to expose oneself to as many Japanese spoken language as possible and to mimic it. Radio, podcasts, drama and television to name a few. However, it is not advised to listen too much artificial sources like anime or commercials.

- every (yes **every**) *mora* is *pronounced* with the same length
- there is no short and long *mora* or letters
- every *mora* has a pitch: high or low
- every pitch matters
- the pitch can change sometimes with its context
- the pitch can change with a dialect - however standard Japanese has well defined pitches

The *pronunciation* of *Katakana* is exactly the same as for *Hiragana* and most sounds are very close to the Latin *pronunciation* but in general are *pronounced* a little shorter without any stress. Only the /ra/ sounds, like in /ra/, /ri/, /ru/, /re/ and /ro/ have no similarity in European languages. The sound of the Japanese /r/ is neither a central nor a lateral flap, but may vary between the two. To an English speaker, its pronunciation varies between a flapped 'd' (as in American English buddy) and a flapped 'l'. ([Wikipedia Japanese Phonology](#)). The following table displays the *pronunciation* in the *Gojūonzu*.

	a	i	u	e	o
-	a	i	u	e	o
k	ka	ki	ku	ke	ko
s	sa	shi	su	se	so
t	ta	chi	tsu	te	to
n	na	ni	nu	ne	no
h	ha	hi	fu	he	ho
m	ma	mi	mu	me	mo
y	ya		yu		yo
r	ra	ri	ru	re	ro
w	wa				o
*	n				

2.2. Writing Katakana Letters

Writing *Katakana* words start with writing single *Katakana* letters. Knowing the writing and reading of *Katakana* letters is essential to pronounce foreign words in Japanese correctly. And that is

even more important for learners who have good English knowledge, because it is very tempting to pronounce English words in Japanese with original English pronunciation, which is seldom understood³ by Japanese people who are used to their Japanese-English pronunciation. By learning *Katakana* the understanding of morae and syllables will also help to improve the pronunciation and understanding of Japanese.

Katakana as most letters are a joint combination of strokes. For the writing of *Katakana* some rules are important, which are presented here out of order.

Order: The order of strokes is important. In section 2.2.1 on page 11 more can be found.

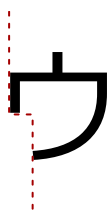
Fasted Method of Writing: Often the fastest possible method of writing or order of strokes is the correct one. Often from left upper corner to right lower corner. But exceptions do exist.

The characters (letters) are *not* symmetric.

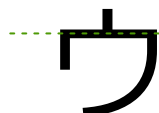
All characters (letters) occupy a square.

The aesthetic: What make the character to a beautiful character? The answer is different for each character.

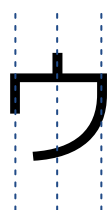
Following some possibilities of rule generation for the character "u" 「ウ」:



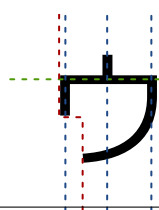
The most important feature is that the second and third line do not align. This is not an accident.



Except many *Hiragana* for some *Katakana* the base line is aligned with horizon. As with this character.



Also the start (or turning) points of all other lines are aligned vertically. Which gives this *Katakana* its unique square look.



All together some lines need to be remembered to write the letter beautiful.

³The reader might try to order a cheeseburger at a fast food restaurant instead of a /chiizubaagaa/ (チーズバーガー).

A different logic: A little bit less the [Hiragana](#), but also in *Katakana* there are some lines that do not align horizontally or vertically. Or to say it differently some characters are not stright on purpose.

On top of this the following is most likely valid: Only if one can write a letter it is (easier) possible to faster learn and memorize it.

2.2.1. Stroke Order Matter!

Some European individualists might ask them self *"Why do I have to remember the order of strokes - I don't obay this in my language - and who defined this in the first place (if not me)?"* and this seems obvious in Europe. However some reason for order exist.

1. **Impression:** It make a unprofessional impression to Japanese, if one writes characters in the wrong order. Some laughs can be observed at least.
2. **Tests:** In some tests/ exams (in Japan) the order of strokes will be tested and one got 0 points for the wrong order.
3. **Time Savings:** In the most cases the predefined order is the fastest way to write a character. Overall once save (life) time.
4. **Readability:** In some cases characters become readable only (or beautiful) of the order is correct.
5. **Confusion Danger:** For only some characters the order is utmost important. If not obeyed it is very likely (almost certain) that this characters become a candidate for a wrong interpretation.

2.2.2. Example /u/

The *Katakana* /u/ is written as 「ウ」 in Japanese. The character is composed out of the following three components:



This is stroke 1

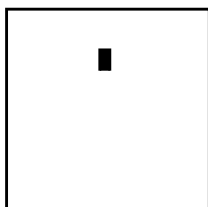


This is stroke 2

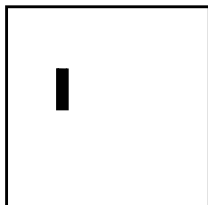


This is stroke 3

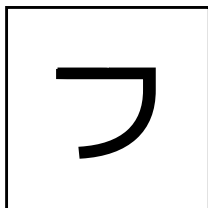
Of course the strokes need to be at the right place. So better always think or draw a frame around. Or even better write the strokes into a frame from the beginning!



This is stroke 1 in a square frame



This is stroke 2 in a square frame



This is stroke 3 in a square frame

This components have to be written in the above mentioned enumeration order one after another.
(The first example is without frame)



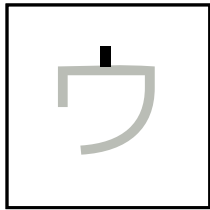
This is stroke 1 in context



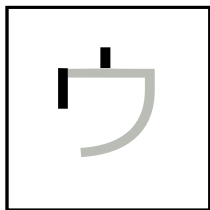
This is stroke 2 in context



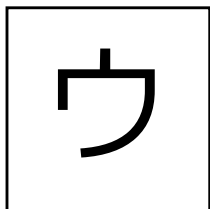
This is stroke 3 in context



This is stroke 1 in context in a square frame

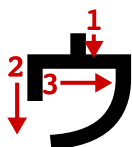


This is stroke 2 in context in a square frame



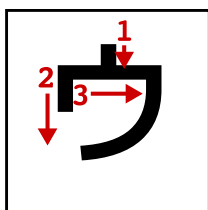
This is stroke 3 in context in a square frame

In the *Katakana* training section in this document the order will be introduced as red numbers and arrows which give the approximate direction where to place the writing device.



Write the first short strokes straight from up to down. Then - and this is difficult place the second stroke in the correct distance from the first one. Luckily this is also a straight stroke from up to down.

Of course the perception changes if the character is written in a square. Remember that it is better to write the character in a square, because the correct spaces between the character and the frame also determinates its beauty.



The first stroke in the frame is not difficult as mentioned before from straight up to down. However the frame helps because now we understood that it is centered. The second stroke become also easier in a frame because it is written at the edge of the character. After some time and experience this is better understood. The last stroke has to join the first and second stroke. That is still difficult with or without a frame.

2.2.3. Stroke Types

In European language there is no idea to have different *stroke* types unless one enter the field of calligraphy. In Japanese there are different kind of *strokes*. Most important for [Kanji](#), second important for [Hiragana](#) and least important for *Katakana* since *Katakana* is also used for a bold replacement. Due to this fact the five different type of Japanese *strokes* (筆画の種類【ひっかくのしゅるい】) will not repeated here. For now it is perfectly fine to make all *strokes* equally thick.

2.3. Special Katakana Characters

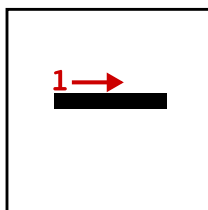
As mentioned before [Katakana](#) is almost like Hiragana. This is true for the [Gojūonzu \(50 sound table\) 五十音図【ごじゅうおんず】](#) This section will show the special characters, some are different from the Hiragana set.

Special in some sense are characters used for punctuation, like 「 。」, 「 ! 」 and 「 ? 」。 These are similar to the western counterparts but differ a little bit. While it is obvious for the small circle 「 。」, also 「 ! 」 and 「 ? 」 differ from the western equivalent in that sense that they are **centerd** and occupy more (white) space. This characters among other characters are used equally among Hiragana, [Katakana](#) and Kanji. Therefore this section will not further mention them.

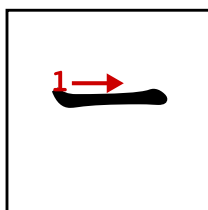
2.3.1. Doubling Vowels in Katakana

Special [Katakana](#) characters do also exists. The most important character is Chōon 長音【ちょうおん】 the plain iteration character 「 ー 】, written as a stroke. It is one of the very few which changes orientation according the writing orientation. When writing [Katakana](#) from left to right the iteration character is horizontal, while writing [Katakana](#) from up to down it is vertical. The function of this

character is to double the previous mora. This is also different from Hiragana. (For doubling als other [Katakana](#) character, refere to section [Katakana Iteration Marks](#) on page 159.)



In standard gothic fonts the [Katakana](#) iteration character is just a straight line and it is not possible to understand in which direction it has to written.



However if it is written with a different font or with a brush it is clearly visible that in horizontal writing it is written from left to right.

Example:

Katakana:

カード /kaado/

Hiragana:

かあと /kaado/

This character is very often used and makes [Katakana](#) for this easier then Hiragana. The long vowel ambiguity do not exist.

As mentioned above the orientation of the [Katakana](#) iteration character changes with the direction of writing. The above example with different writing orientation.

Example:

horizontally

カード

vertically

カ
ド

2.3.2. Seldom Used Katakana

Even though |wo| 「ヲ」 is part if the standard letters. But since all particle are written in Hiragana and in this case |wo| is written 「を」 the learning of 「ヲ」 can be skipped. Unless it is important to read old texts, like telegrams.

3. Katakana Training

Every person is learning in a different way. What works well for one does not need to work well also for the other. Because of this an ultimate receipt to learn Katakana can not be given here. However the introduction to this chapter would like to try to give some hints gathered from learning and teaching experience.

Not too less: If one learns one character per day, it will take for Katakana roughly 46 days. If you restrict this to working days it will take approximately two month. If you restrict it to a 2h lesson per week it will take a year to learn Katakana. It is obvious that one is likely to forget the first characters when learning the last. However, even with this method it is not impossible, but not likely.

Not too much: To learn Katakana in one day is unlikely possible. At least parts will be forgotten the next day.

From the practice the best results have been seen when learners have tried to learn Katakana in one to three weeks. The suggestion is to learn one line (five characters) per day in a cumulative way. Means, repeat every day the already learned characters and that up to 10 days until all are learned. And then repeat this exercise until they hardly can not be forgotten any more. So for at least 14 consecutive days without break.

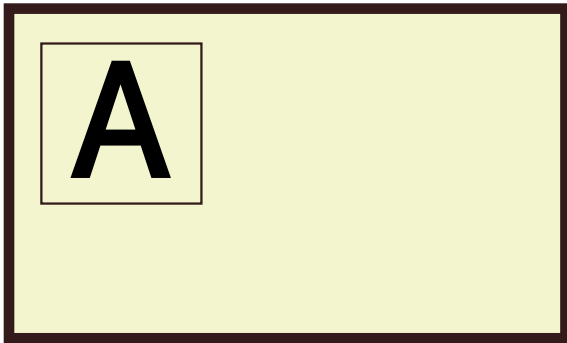
Develop your own style: Learning one character at a time or a row (five characters at a time) or learn the whole table of Katakana is possible. With some method it can take 3 weeks or with an other method 1 week. That does not matter. What do matter is that oneself is comfortable with the method and that oneself extract fun out of it, even when forced to learn Katakana. Decide by yourself how often you repeat. But decide. And write down your decision. Maybe even plan it in your daily plan. A good practice is to learn Katakana 20 times a day for five minutes rather then one time for three hours a day or one time a week for 10 hours.

Search for aid: Aid can come in may manifestations. Of course it is useful to ask a Japanese to help. But there are many other ways for helping yourself. One example are flashcards. Of course it is easy to print them in this book. However as said before: find your own way. And if you create flashcards by yourself you already learn the content up to a certain level.

Use Squares: Some European languages uses lines to teach letters. In Japanese you should use a square and draw the letter in the middle. If uncertain about the shape and orientation of the character use a square and look at the squares filled with Katakana in this section to understand the alignment and orientation.

Here are some examples for flashcards. But feel free to invent your own.

front site Katakana

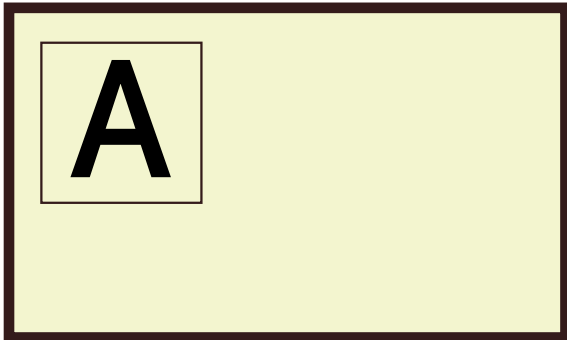


back site Rōmaji

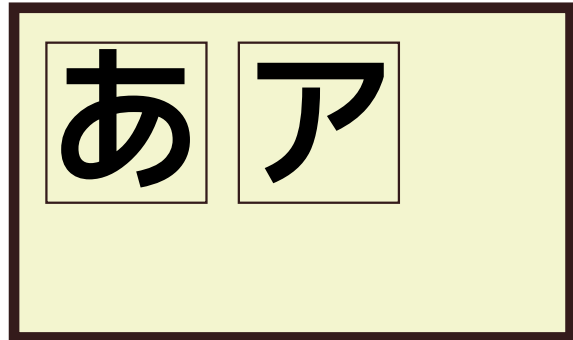


Or to learn both:

front site Rōmaji

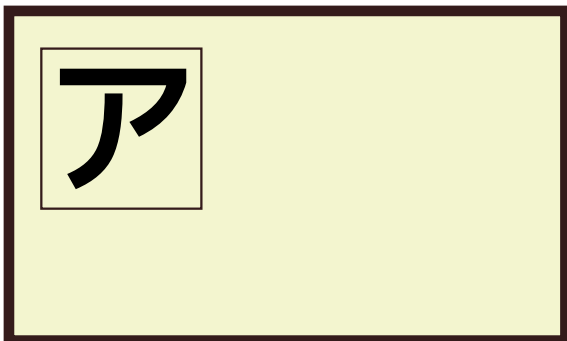


back site both

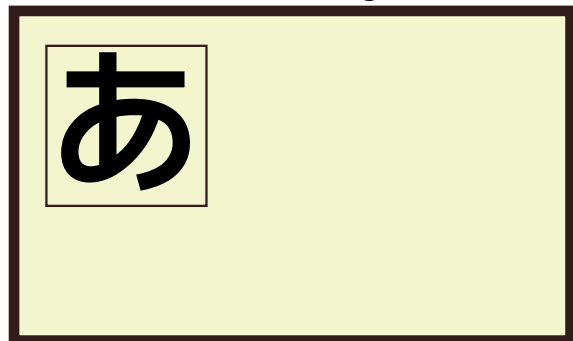


To dive deep into Japanese of course skipping Rōmaji is the preferred method:

front site Katakana



back site Hiragana



This training chapter can be used as an additional aid to learn Katakana. And also here it is important to develop ones own method. However some hints on learning with this training chapter can be given.

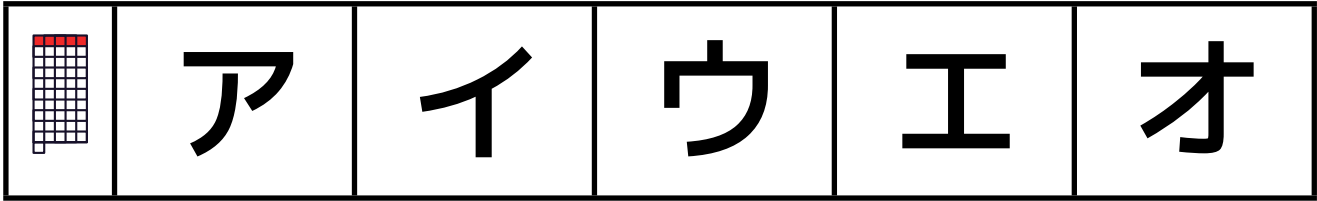
Reading Loud: While writing a Katakana character in this book (and probably also later), read out loud the sound of the character. Always.

Invent your own cribs: One can (maybe should?) invent one crib per character by oneself. Especially if the character is difficult to remember. It might be useful to write it down on the self-created flashcard for that specific character.

Regular Repetition: It is of course possible to fill out all fields for one character in a very short time. The learning effect should be minimal though. Better is to fill out one row and then the second row an hour later, the third row the next day and so on. Oneself has to decide the rhythm of the repetition.

Transcription: Search for a Katakana text and read it. Write for every Katakana word the Roman letters. If this is possible without looking up the Katakana, then the transcription should be reversed. Find some Japanese text written in Rōmaji and transcribe them on Katakana on a different piece of paper.

3.1. Katakana /a/ Row



ア

The 片仮名「ア」 derives from the [Phonetic Characters \(radical\)](#). A smaller version 「ア」 is used in combinations with other letters as 「ファ」 and is pronounced as /fa/ in [Hepburn](#) transcription.

イ

The 片仮名「イ」 derives from the [Phonetic Characters](#) 「伊」 left element ([radical](#)). A smaller version 「イ」 is used in combinations with other letters and represents a [diphthong](#).

ウ

The 片仮名「ウ」 derives from the [Phonetic Character](#) 「宇」. A smaller version 「ウ」 is used in combinations with other letters and represents a [diphthong](#) and is written as "w". Even though the combination 「トゥ」 /tu/ exist, it is relatively new and many words do not use it. In this cases 「ツ」 /tsu/ is used. 「ウ」 can take [Dakuten](#) to form 「ヴ」 /vu/, which is relatively new and can replace 「ブ」 /bu/.

Note

Be aware that the characters 「フ」, 「ワ」 and 「ウ」 look very similar. Make sure that you spend extra training on distinguish them.

エ

The 片仮名「エ」 derives from the [Phonetic Characters](#) 「江」 right element ([radical](#)). A smaller version 「エ」 is used in combinations with other letters and express [morae](#) of foreign origin. For example 「ヴェ」 as pronounced /ve/.

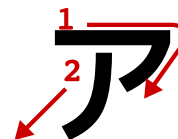
オ

The 片仮名「オ」 derives from the [Phonetic Character](#) 「於」. A smaller version 「オ」 is used in combinations with other letters and express [morae](#) of foreign origin. For example 「フォ」 as pronounced /fo/.

3.1.1. /a/



The Katakana 「ア」 is written with two strokes. The first stroke starts horizontal. The second stroke is a curve with can be attached to the first stroke in hand writing, but not at the horizontal part - at the end of the first line.




Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

	ア	ア	→	

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

									ア
									ア
									↓

Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

	ア	ア	→						

Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

									ア
									ア
									↓

3.1.2. /i/







The Katakana 「イ」 is written with one stroke. The first stroke is a curve from upper right to lower left. The second stroke is a vertical line attached to the first at the top.






Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

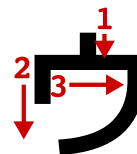
Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

3.1.3. /u/



The Katakana 「ウ」 is written with three strokes. The first stroke is a small vertical line. The second is a small vertical line again and the third line is a horizontal line connecting the two others.




Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

	ウ	ウ	→	

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

									ウ
									ウ
									↓

Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

	ウ	ウ	→						

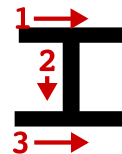
Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

									ウ
									ウ
									↓

3.1.4. /e/




The Katakana 「エ」 is written with three strokes. It is very geometrically consisting only out of horizontal and vertical lines connected together.



Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

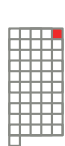
Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

	I	I	→						

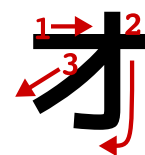
Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

									I
									I
									↓

3.1.5. /o/



The Katakana 「オ」 is written with three strokes. The first line is horizontal and together with the second stroke it constructs a perfect crossing. The third stroke beginning lies at the center of the crossing.




Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

	オ	オ	→	

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

									オ
									オ
									↓

Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

	オ	オ	→						

Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

									オ
									オ
									↓

3.1.6. /a/ Row Training

<i>Katakana</i>	<i>Rōmaji</i>	<i>Original</i>	<i>Remark</i>	<i>Origin</i>
ウエア	wuea	ware		English
エア	ea	air		English
エイ	ei	A	the letter	English

Please transcribe the following words from **Katakana to Rōmaji**:

1. ウエア	_____	wear, ware
2. エア	_____	air
3. エイ	_____	A (the letter)
4. アイ	_____	I (the letter)
5. オウ	_____	O (the letter)

Please transcribe the following words from **Rōmaji to Katakana**:

1. ea	_____	air
2. ai	_____	I (the letter)
3. ou	_____	O (the letter)
4. ei	_____	A (the letter)
5. uea	_____	wear, ware

<i>Katakana</i>	<i>Rōmaji</i>	<i>Original</i>	<i>Remark</i>	<i>Origin</i>
アイ	ai	I	the letter	English
オウ	ou	O	the letter	English
イア	ia	ear		English

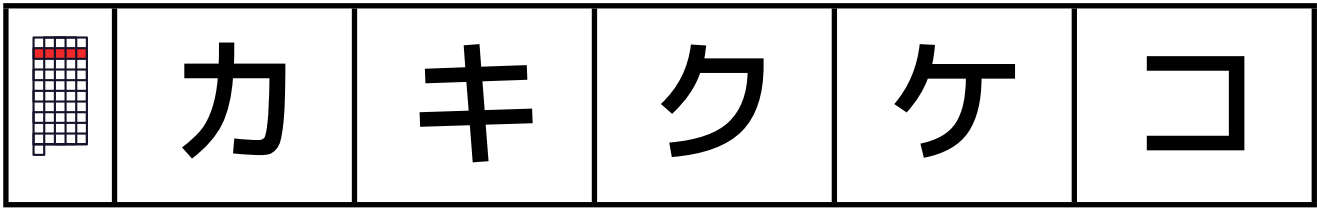
Please transcribe the following words from **English to Rōmaji**:

1. ear	_____
2. I (the letter)	_____
3. air	_____
4. O (the letter)	_____
5. wear, ware	_____

Please transcribe the following words from **English to Katakana**:

1. I (the letter)	_____
2. O (the letter)	_____
3. air	_____
4. ear	_____
5. wear, ware	_____

3.2. Katakana /ka/ Row



カ

The 片仮名「カ」 is pronounced /ka/ and derives from the [Phonetic Characters](#) 「加」 left [radical](#). A [濁点](#) version exists and pronounced as /ga/.

Note

A smaller version 「カ」 is rare but used in combinations with number particles. For example in 「一カ月」【いっかげつ】 (one month) and others. This cases can also be written 「一ヶ月」【いっかげつ】 (one month). Please see also [/ke/](#). → [カ](#)

キ

The 片仮名「キ」 derives from the [Phonetic Characters](#) middle part of either 「機」 or 「幾」. It is pronounced as /ki/. A [濁点](#) version exists and pronounced as /gi/.

ク

The 片仮名「ク」 derives from the [Phonetic Characters](#) left upper part of 「久」. It is pronounced as /ku/. A [濁点](#) version exists and pronounced as /gu/. A smaller version exists, but is used for the Ainu Language.

ケ

The 片仮名「ケ」 derives from the [Phonetic Characters](#) upper and left part of 「介」. It is pronounced as /ke/. A [濁点](#) version exists and pronounced as /ge/. The smaller version 「ヶ」 is explained in the following note.

Note

A smaller version 「ケ」 is rare but used in combinations with number particles. For example in 「一ヶ月」【いっかげつ】 (one month) and others. This cases can also be written 「一カ月」【いっかげつ】 (one month). There are cases where only 「ケ」 can be written 七ヶ宿【シチカシユク】 (Place at the south west border of the prefecture Miyagi). In other rare cases this character can be pronounced different 「関ヶ原」【せきがはら】 (Place at the south border of the Gifu prefecture, known by the battle at 1600.). Please see also [/ka/](#). → [カ](#)

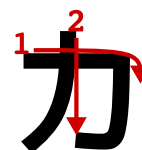


The 片仮名「コ」 derives from the [Phonetic Characters](#) upper part of 「己」. It is pronounced as /ko/. A 濁点 version exists and pronounced as /go/.

3.2.1. /ka/



/ka/ is written with 2 strokes. Basically the same way as the Hiragana 「か」 it looks like a squarish version, but without the last stroke. The hook at the second stroke is less significant or important.



Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

	カ	カ	→	

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

									カ
									カ
									↓

Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

カ	カ	カ	→						

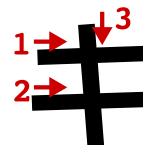
Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

									カ
									カ
									↓

3.2.2. /ki/







The shape alignment of the 「キ」 character is not straight towards its environment. However the junctions are more or less 90 degrees.






Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

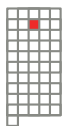
Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

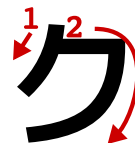
Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

3.2.3. /ku/



The first stroke is similar the stroke of 「ケ」 is a curve. While the second stroke start aligned and straight.




Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

	ク	ク	→	

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

									ク
									ク
									↓

Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

	カ	カ	→						

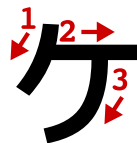
Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

									カ
									カ
									↓

3.2.4. /ke/



The 「ケ」 is written with 3 strokes and the first stroke is similar to the 「ク」. The second stroke is aligned and straight. While the last stroke is a curve.



Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

	ケ	ケ	→	

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

									ケ
									ケ
									↓

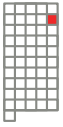
Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

ケ	ケ	ケ	→						

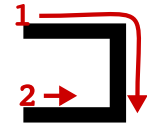
Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

									ケ
									ケ
									↓

3.2.5. /ko/







This character is almost a geometric figure composed out of two strokes. However unless in European languages this are only 2 strokes and not 3. The first stroke is the longest one and done similar with all 漢字.






Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

3.2.6. /ka/ Row Training

<i>Katakana</i>	<i>Rōmaji</i>	<i>Original</i>	<i>Remark</i>	<i>Origin</i>
カキ	kaki	kaki	柿 persimon	Japanese
ケア	kea	care		English
ケイ	kei	K	the letter	English

Please transcribe the following words from **Katakana to Rōmaji**:

1. カキ	_____	persimmon
2. ココア	_____	cocoa
3. ケア	_____	care
4. コア	_____	core
5. ケーキ	_____	cake

Please transcribe the following words from **Rōmaji to Katakana**:

1. kokoa	_____	cocoa
2. kēki	_____	cake
3. kea	_____	care
4. koa	_____	core
5. kaki	_____	persimmon

<i>Katakana</i>	<i>Rōmaji</i>	<i>Original</i>	<i>Remark</i>	<i>Origin</i>
コア	koa	core		English
ココア	kokoa	cocoa	hot chocolate	English, from metathesis of Spanish cacao, from Nahuatl cacahuatl
ケーキ	kēki	cake		English

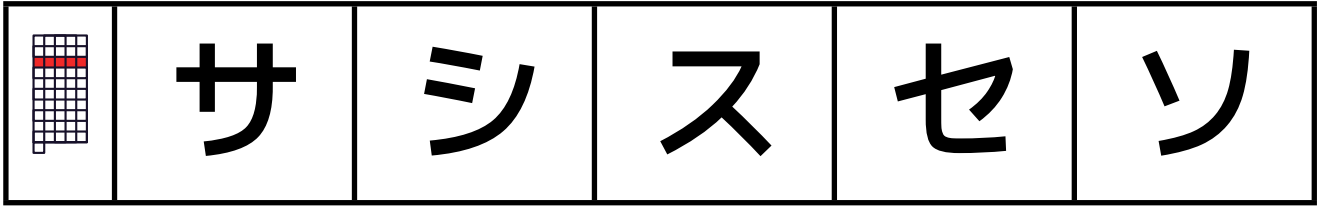
Please transcribe the following words from **English to Rōmaji**:

1. persimon	_____
2. cocoa	_____
3. care	_____
4. core	_____
5. K (the letter)	_____

Please transcribe the following words from **English to Katakana**:

1. cocoa	_____
2. cake	_____
3. care	_____
4. persimon	_____
5. K (the letter)	_____

3.3. Katakana /sa/ Row



サ

The 片仮名「サ」 is pronounced /sa/ and derives from the [Phonetic Characters](#) 「散」 upper left corner [radical](#). A [濁点](#) version exists and pronounced as /za/.

シ

The 片仮名「シ」 derives from the [Phonetic Character](#) 「之」. It is pronounced as /shi/. A [濁点](#) version exists and pronounced as /ji/.

Note

Please see section [|shi| and |tsu| Ambiguity](#) for the explanation how to write and distinguish /shi/ and /tsu/.

ス

The 片仮名「ス」 derives from the [Phonetic Characters](#) right lower part of 「須」. It is pronounced as /su/. A [濁点](#) version exists and pronounced as /zu/.

セ

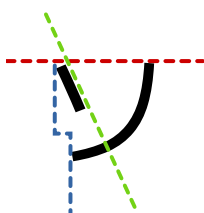
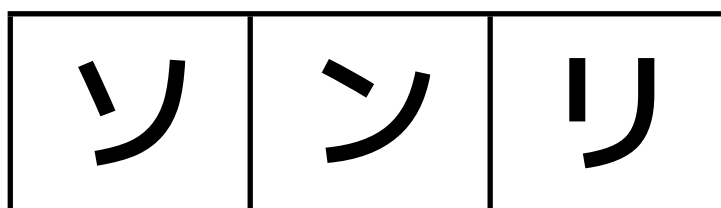
The 片仮名「セ」 derives from the [Phonetic Characters](#) middle left part of 「世」. It is pronounced as /se/. A [濁点](#) version exists and pronounced as /ze/.



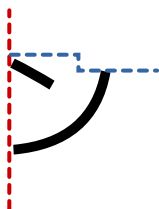
The 片仮名「ソ」 derives from the [Phonetic Character](#)s upper right part of 「叀」. It is pronounced as /so/. A 濁点 version exists and pronounced as /zo/.

3.3.1. |so|, |ri| and |n| Ambiguity

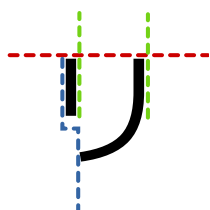
The Katakana characters 「ソ」, 「リ」 and 「ン」 can be difficult to distinguish. All three are made out of only 2 strokes. And especially |so| and |n| can be hard to tell. In a sentence of course the context can help a lot. But what are the rules for this characters to write properly and distinguish?



To write the letter |so| it is important to align both lines **horizontally** (red line) and to **non-align** the ends (blue line). In this way it is possible to distinguish |so| from |n|, but not from |ri|. To also distinguish it from |ri| you have to write the first stroke not horizontally nor vertically.

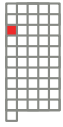


To write the letter |n| it is important to align both lines **vertically** (red line) and to **non-align** the ends (blue line). In this way it is possible to distinguish |n| from |so|. If both lines are aligned there should not be a problem to distinguish it from |ri|.

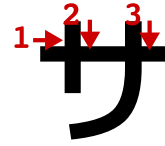


To write the letter |ri| it is important to align both lines **vertically** (red line) and to **non-align** the ends (blue line). The difference between |so| and |ri| is that |ri| need to start with two **parallel** lines while |so| does not. Please see green lines for explanation.

3.3.2. /sa/



Katakana 「サ」 is written with three strokes. All crossings of strokes are in a 90 degree angle. The starts of all strokes are aligned either horizontally or vertically. The last stroke has a curve.



Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

	サ	サ	→	

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

									サ
									サ
									↓

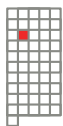
Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

サ	サ	サ	→						

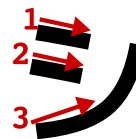
Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

									サ
									サ
									↓

3.3.3. /shi/







The Katakana 「シ」 is written with three strokes. All three strokes are aligned vertically in the beginning. Please see section [|shi| and |tsu| Ambiguity](#).






Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

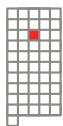
Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

3.3.4. /su/



The Katakana 「ス」 is written with two strokes. The first stroke starts horizontally aligned. The second stroke touches the first stroke at the beginning.



Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

	ス	ス	→	

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

									ス
									ス
									↓

Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

ス	ス	ス	→						

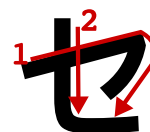
Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

									ス
									ス
									↓

3.3.5. /se/



The Katakana 「セ」 is written with two strokes. The crossing has **no** 90 degree angle. The curve of the second stroke as almost a 90 degree angle.




Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

	セ	セ	→	

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

									セ
									セ
									↓

Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

	セ	セ	→						

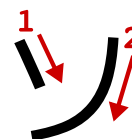
Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

									セ
									セ
									↓

3.3.6. /so/







The Katakana 「ソ」 is written with two strokes. The first stroke is not aligned verticall but it is aligned horizontally with the second stroke. Please see section [|so|](#), [|ri|](#) and [|n| Ambiguity](#).






Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

3.3.7. /sa/ Row Training

<i>Katakana</i>	<i>Rōmaji</i>	<i>Original</i>	<i>Remark</i>	<i>Origin</i>
エクス	ekisu	ex(tract)	extract	Dutch
スカイ	sukai	sky		English
スキー	sukī	ski	noun for skiing	English

Please transcribe the following words from **Katakana to Rōmaji**:

1. エクス	_____	extract
2. スカイ	_____	sky
3. スキー	_____	ski
4. アイス	_____	ice
5. ガーゼ	_____	gauze

Please transcribe the following words from **Rōmaji to Katakana**:

1. sukai	_____	sky
2. ekisu	_____	extract
3. aisu	_____	ice
4. suki	_____	ski
5. iesu	_____	Jesus

<i>Katakana</i>	<i>Rōmaji</i>	<i>Original</i>	<i>Remark</i>	<i>Origin</i>
アイス	aisu	ice	water ice, ice cream	English
ガーゼ	gāze	Gaze	gauze	German
イエス	iesu	Jesus	Jesus	Portuguese


Please transcribe the following words from **English to Rōmaji**:

1. extract	_____
2. sky	_____
3. Jesus	_____
4. gauze	_____
5. ice	_____

Please transcribe the following words from **English to Katakana**:

1. sky	_____
2. gauze	_____
3. ice	_____
4. Jesus	_____
5. extract	_____

3.4. Katakana /ta/ Row

	タ	チ	ツ	テ	ト
---	---	---	---	---	---

タ

The 片仮名「タ」 is pronounced /ta/ and derives from the [Phonetic Characters](#) 「多」 upper or lower [radical](#). A [濁点](#) version exists and pronounced as /da/.

チ

The 片仮名「チ」 derives from the [Phonetic Character](#) 「千」. It is pronounced as /chi/. A [濁点](#) version exists and pronounced as /ji/.

ツ

The 片仮名「ツ」 derives from the [Phonetic Characters](#) 「州」 or 「川」. It is pronounced as /tsu/. A [濁点](#) version exists and pronounced as /zu/.

テ

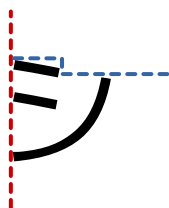
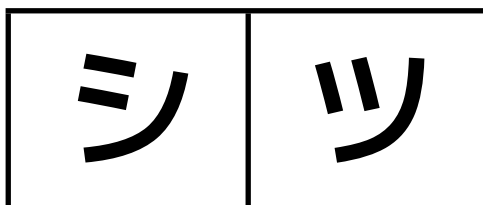
The 片仮名「テ」 derives from the [Phonetic Characters](#) lower left part of 「天」. It is pronounced as /te/. A [濁点](#) version exists and pronounced as /de/.

ト

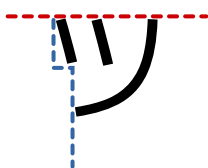
The 片仮名「ト」 derives from the [Phonetic Characters](#) right part of 「止」. It is pronounced as /to/. A 濁点 version exists and pronounced as /do/.

3.4.1. |shi| and |tsu| Ambiguity

The Katakana characters 「シ」 and 「ツ」 are difficult to distinguish. Both are made out of 3 strokes and even the length are equal. In a sentence of course the context can help a lot. But what are the rules for this characters to write properly and distinguish?

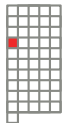


To write the letter |shi| it is important to align three lines **vertically** (red line) and to **non-align** the ends (blue line). In this way it is possible to distinguish |shi| from |tsu|. Of course also the angle of the first two lines are different, but in handwriting this is difficult to match. As a rule of thumb make the third line double as long as the first two but short enough to not align it at the end.



To write the letter |tsu| it is important to align all three lines **horizontally** (red line) and to **non-align** the ends (blue line). In this way it is possible to distinguish |tsu| from |shi|. Of course also the angle of the first two lines are different, but in handwriting this is difficult to match. As a rule of thumb make the third line double as long as the first two but short enough to not align it at the end.

3.4.2. /ta/




Katakana /ta/ is written with three strokes. The first stroke is a small curve. The second stroke starts horizontally attached to the first stroke. The third stroke ends at the second stroke.



Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

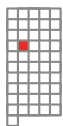
Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

	タ	タ	→						

Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

									タ
									タ
									↓

3.4.3. /chi/




Katakana /chi/ is written with three strokes. The first stroke is a light curve. The second is horizontally straight line. The third line is a curve that joints the first and the second.



Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

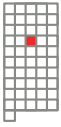
Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

	タ	タ	→						

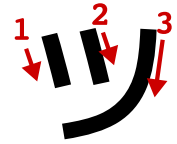
Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

									タ
									タ
									↓

3.4.4. /tsu/







Katakana /tsu/ is written with three strokes. The first and second stroke are short. And the beginning of all three strokes is aligned horizontally. The third stroke is the longest, but the end is not aligned with the beginning of the first stroke.






Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

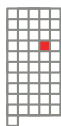
Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

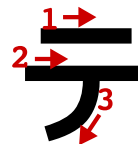
Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

3.4.5. /te/



Katakana /te/ is written with three strokes. The first stroke is the shortest and horizontally. The second stroke is not aligned vertically in the beginning, but also perfectly horizontally. The third stroke is a small curve attached to the middle of the second stroke.



Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

	テ	テ	→	

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

									テ
									テ
									↓

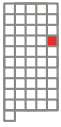
Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

テ	テ	テ	→						

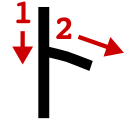
Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

									テ
									テ
									↓

3.4.6. /to/




Katakana /to/ is written with 2 strokes. The first stroke is a vertical line. Attached to this line there is short straight line to the right. In some hand writings this line is a small curve to the right.



Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

	ト	ト	→						

Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

									ト
									ト
									↓

3.4.7. /ta/ Row Training

<i>Katakana</i>	<i>Rōmaji</i>	<i>Original</i>	<i>Remark</i>	<i>Origin</i>
エステ	esutei	esthé(tique)	beauty salon, esthetic clinic	French
サイト	saito	site		English
タスク	tasuku	task		English

Please transcribe the following words from **Katakana to Rōmaji**:

1. エステ	_____	esthé(tique)
2. サイト	_____	site
3. タスク	_____	task
4. テスト	_____	test
5. スーツアクター	_____	suit actor

Please transcribe the following words from **Rōmaji to Katakana**:

1. saito	_____	site
2. tasuku	_____	task
3. esute	_____	esthé(tique)
4. sūtsuakutā	_____	suit actor
5. tesuto	_____	test

<i>Katakana</i>	<i>Rōmaji</i>	<i>Original</i>	<i>Remark</i>	<i>Origin</i>
テスト	tesuto	test		English
スーツアクター	sūtsuakutā	suit actor	wearing cartoon-character costume	English
テキスト	tekisuto	text		English

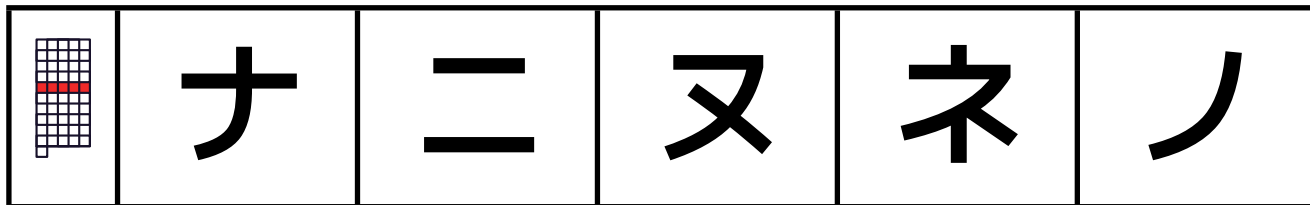
Please transcribe the following words from **English to Rōmaji**:

1. task	_____
2. esthé(tique)	_____
3. text	_____
4. test	_____
5. suit actor	_____

Please transcribe the following words from **English to Katakana**:

2. esthé(tique)	_____
4. test	_____
5. suit actor	_____
3. text	_____
6. site	_____

3.5. Katakana /na/ Row



ナ

The 片仮名「ナ」 is pronounced /na/ and derives from the [Phonetic Characters](#) 「奈」 upper left corner part. A 濁点 version or 半濁点 do not exist.

ニ

The 片仮名「ニ」 is pronounced /ni/ and derives from the [Phonetic Characters](#) 「奈」 upper right part. A 濁点 version or 半濁点 do not exist.

ヌ

The 片仮名「ヌ」 is pronounced /nu/ and derives from the [Phonetic Characters](#) 「奴」 right part. A 濁点 version or 半濁点 do not exist.

Note

The characters 「ノ」, 「ヌ」 and 「ネ」 are similar and it is easy to make a mistake. To distinguish 「ヌ」 it is important to make all strokes long enough.



The 片仮名「ネ」 is pronounced /ne/ and derives from the [Phonetic Characters](#) 「衤」 upper left part. A [濁点](#) version or [半濁点](#) do not exist.

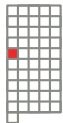


The 片仮名「ノ」 is pronounced /no/ and derives from the [Phonetic Characters](#) 「乃」 upper left part. A [濁点](#) version or [半濁点](#) do not exist.

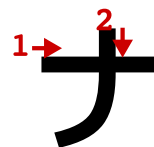
Note

The characters 「ノ」, 「メ」 and 「ヌ」 are similar and it is easy to make a mistake. To distinguish 「メ」 it is important to make all strokes long enough.

3.5.1. /na/



Katakana /na/ is written with two strokes.



Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

	ナ	ナ	→	

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

									ナ
									ナ
									↓

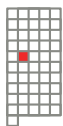
Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

ナ	ナ	ナ	→						

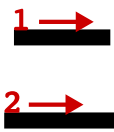
Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

									ナ
									ナ
									↓

3.5.2. /ni/







Katakana /ni/ is written with two strokes.








Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

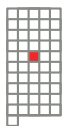
Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

3.5.3. /nu/



Katakana /nu/ is written with two strokes.



Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

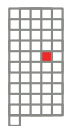
Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

	な	な	→						

Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

									な
									な
									↓

3.5.4. /ne/




Katakana /ne/ is written with three strokes.



Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

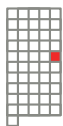
Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

	ネ	ネ	→						

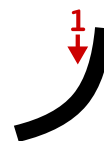
Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

									ネ
									ネ
									↓

3.5.5. /no/







Katakana /no/ is written with one stroke.






Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

3.5.6. 片仮名ナ行練習

<i>Katakana</i>	<i>Rōmaji</i>	<i>Original</i>	<i>Remark</i>	<i>Origin</i>
ナース	nāsu	nurse		English
ネット	netto	net(work)		English
アニス	anisu	anise	pimpinella anisum	

Please transcribe the following words from **Katakana to Rōmaji**:

1.	ネット	_____	net(work)
2.	ナース	_____	nurse
3.	アニス	_____	anise
4.	ニート	_____	NEET
5.	ナイトー	_____	night + -er

Please transcribe the following words from **Rōmaji to Katakana**:

1.	nōto	_____	note
2.	netto	_____	net(work)
3.	anisu	_____	anise
4.	nāsu	_____	nurse
5.	naitā	_____	night + -er

<i>Katakana</i>	<i>Rōmaji</i>	<i>Original</i>	<i>Remark</i>	<i>Origin</i>
ニート	nīto	NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training	English
ナイター	naitā	night + -er	a night game	English
ノート	nōto	note	note, notebook	English

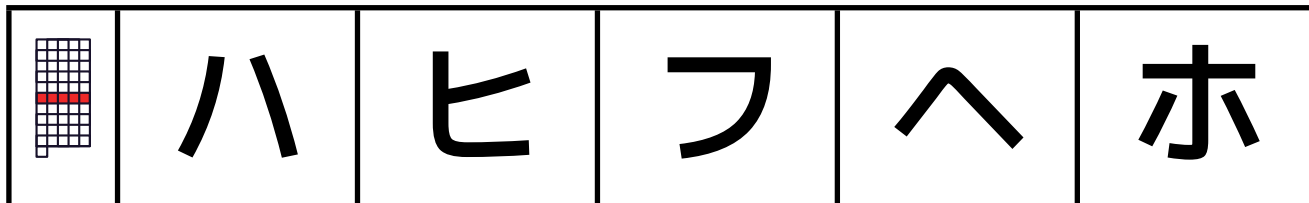
Please transcribe the following words from **English to Rōmaji**:

1. anise	_____
2. net(work)	_____
3. note	_____
4. nurse	_____
5. NEET	_____

Please transcribe the following words from **English to Katakana**:

1. nurse	_____
2. note	_____
3. net(work)	_____
4. anise	_____
5. night + -er	_____

3.6. Katakana /ha/ Row



ハ

The 片仮名「ハ」 is pronounced /ha/ and derives from the [Phonetic Character](#) 「八」. A [濁点](#) version exists and pronounced as /ba/.

ヒ

The 片仮名「ヒ」 derives from the [Phonetic Characters](#) 「比」 right It is pronounced as /hi/. A [濁点](#) version exists and pronounced as /bi/.

フ

The 片仮名「フ」 derives from the [Phonetic Characters](#) upper left part of 「不」. It is pronounced as /fu/. A [濁点](#) version exists and pronounced as /bu/.

ヘ

The 片仮名「ヘ」 derives from the [Phonetic Characters](#) right 「部」. It is pronounced as /he/. A [濁点](#) version exists and pronounced as /be/.

Warning

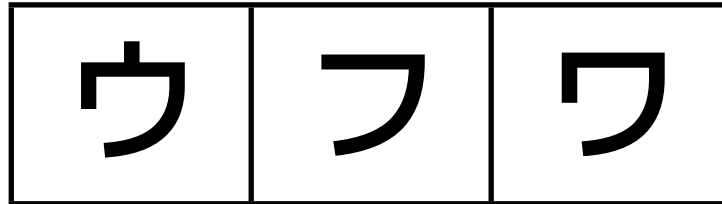
The Katakana 「ヘ」 is the same character as the [Hiragana](#) 「へ」. In some documents they can be distinguished because the font is different. However in genral they are the same.

ホ

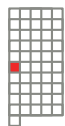
The 片仮名「ホ」 derives from the [Phonetic Characters](#) lower right part of 「保」 wich by itself is the [radical](#) and [漢字【かんじ】](#) of tree. It is pronounced as /ho/. A [濁点](#) version exists and pronounced as /bo/.

3.6.1. |u|, |fu| and |wa| Similarity

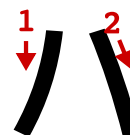
The Katakana characters 「ウ」, 「フ」 and 「ワ」 can be easily distinguished. All three have a different stroke count. However the shape is similar. Therefore they can be mistaken. Especially when they have no context.



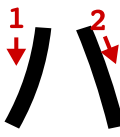


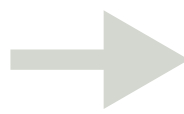
3.6.2. /ha/






The Katakana 「ハ」 is written with two strokes. Non of them is striaght.



Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

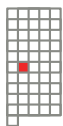
Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

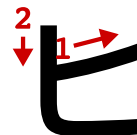
Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

3.6.3. /hi/







The Katakana 「ヒ」 is written with two strokes. One stroke from right to left. The other stroke from up to down and then a curve. The difficulty of this character is to hit the first stroke with the second.






Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

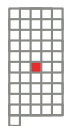
Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

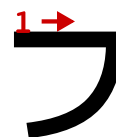
Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

3.6.4. /fu/



The pronunciation of Katakana 「フ」 is **not** /hu/ it is /fu/ and it is written with only one stroke.



Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

ハ	ハ	ハ	→						

Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

									ハ
									ハ
									↓

3.6.5. /he/







Katakana 「^へ」 is written with one stroke from left to right. This is the same character as Hiragana /he/.






Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

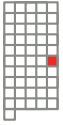
Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

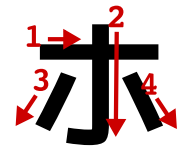
Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

3.6.6. /ho/



The Katakana 「ホ」 character reminds at the Kanji for tree and is also written in the same order and with the same amount of stroke. However the left and right 'root' is not connected to the base. In cursive writing the character is written with a hook-stroke as the second stroke. This is abstract available even in the bold form where the second stroke has a small curve at the end.




Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

	ホ	ホ	→	

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

									ホ
									ホ
									↓

Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

	ハ	ハ	→						

Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

									ハ
									ハ
									↓

3.6.7. /ha/ Row Training

<i>Katakana</i>	<i>Rōmaji</i>	<i>Original</i>	<i>Remark</i>	<i>Origin</i>
ホットケーキ	hottokēki	hotcake	a pancake	English
コーヒー	kōhī	koffie	珈琲 coffee	Dutch
ソフト	sofuto	soft(ware)		English

Please transcribe the following words from **Katakana to Rōmaji**:

1.	ホットケーキ	_____	hotcake
2.	コーヒー	_____	coffee
3.	ソフト	_____	soft(ware)
4.	ハイタッチ	_____	high five
5.	ハウス	_____	house

Please transcribe the following words from **Rōmaji to Katakana**:

1.	kōhī	_____	coffee
2.	hottokēki	_____	hotcake
3.	haitacchi	_____	high five
4.	sofuto	_____	soft(ware)
5.	hainekku	_____	high neck

<i>Katakana</i>	<i>Rōmaji</i>	<i>Original</i>	<i>Remark</i>	<i>Origin</i>
ハイタッチ	haitacchi	high touch	high five	English
ハウス	hausu	Haus, house		English, German
ハイネック	hainekku	high neck	turtle neck style sweater or shirt	English

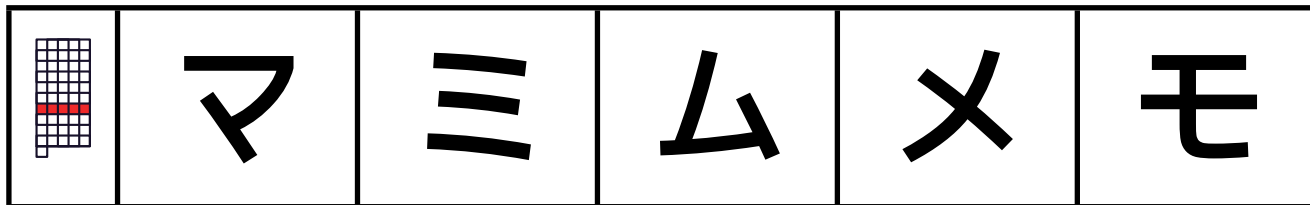
Please transcribe the following words from **English to Rōmaji**:

1. coffee	_____
2. hotcake	_____
3. high five	_____
4. software	_____
5. high neck	_____

Please transcribe the following words from **English to Katakana**:

1. hotcake	_____
2. high five	_____
3. coffee	_____
4. high neck	_____
5. house	_____

3.7. Katakana /ma/ Row



マ

The 片仮名「マ」 is pronounced /ma/ and derives from the [Phonetic Characters](#) 「末」 upper two parallel horizontal strokes. A 濁点 or 半濁点 version do not exist.

ミ

The 片仮名「ミ」 is pronounced /mi/ and derives from the [Phonetic Character](#) 「三」. A 濁点 or 半濁点 version do not exist.

ム

The 片仮名「ム」 is pronounced /mu/ and derives from the [Phonetic Characters](#) 「牟」 upper part. A 濁点 or 半濁点 version do not exist.

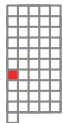
The 片仮名「メ」 is pronounced /me/ and derives from the [Phonetic Characters](#) 「女」 lower right part. A 濁点 or 半濁点 version do not exist.

Note

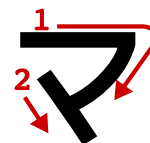
The characters 「メ」, 「ノ」 and 「ヌ」 are similar and it is easy to make a mistake. To distinguish 「メ」 it is important to make all strokes long enough.

The 片仮名「モ」 is pronounced /mo/ and derives from the [Phonetic Characters](#) 「毛」 lower part excluding the first stroke. A 濁点 or 半濁点 version do not exist.

3.7.1. /ma/







Katakana /ma/ is written with three strokes.






Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

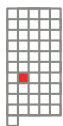
Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

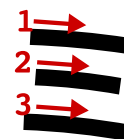
Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

3.7.2. /mi/







Katakana /mi/ is written with three strokes.






Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

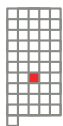
Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

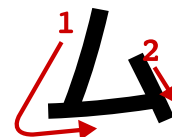
Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

3.7.3. /mu/







Katakana /mu/ is written with three strokes.






Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

3.7.4. /me/







Katakana /me/ is written with three strokes.






Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

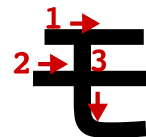
Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

3.7.5. /mo/







Katakana /mo/ is written with three strokes.






Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

3.7.6. /ma/ Row Training

<i>Katakana</i>	<i>Rōmaji</i>	<i>Original</i>	<i>Remark</i>	<i>Origin</i>
テーマ	tēma	Thema	theme	German
ママ	mama	mamá	mom	Spanish
ホーム	hōmu	(plat)form	railway platform	English

Please transcribe the following words from **Katakana to Rōmaji**:

1.	テーマ	_____	theme
2.	ママ	_____	mom
3.	ホーム	_____	railway platform
4.	アメフト	_____	American football
5.	ハモる	_____	to harmonize (singing)

Please transcribe the following words from **Rōmaji to Katakana**:

1.	mama	_____	mom
2.	tēma	_____	theme
3.	amefuto	_____	American football
4.	masukomi	_____	mass media
5.	hōmu	_____	railway platform

<i>Katakana</i>	<i>Rōmaji</i>	<i>Original</i>	<i>Remark</i>	<i>Origin</i>
アメフト	amefuto	Ame(rican) foot(ball)	American football	English
ハモる	hamoru	harmo(ny) + -ru	to harmonize (singing)	English, Japanese
マスコミ	masukomi	mass communication	mass media	English


Please transcribe the following words from **English to Rōmaji**:

1. theme	_____
2. American foot- ball	_____
2. mom	_____
3. to harmonize (singing)	_____
4. railway platform	_____

Please transcribe the following words from **English to Katakana**:

1. American foot- ball	_____
2. mom	_____
3. railway platform	_____
4. theme	_____
5. mass media	_____

3.8. Katakana /ya/ Row

	ヤ		ユ		ヨ
---	---	--	---	--	---

ヤ

The 片仮名「ヤ」 is pronounced /ya/ and derives from the [Phonetic Characters](#) 「也」 upper left part. A [濁点](#) or [半濁点](#) version do not exist.

ユ

The 片仮名「ユ」 is pronounced /yu/ and derives from the [Phonetic Characters](#) 「由」 lower middle part. A [濁点](#) or [半濁点](#) version do not exist.

ヨ

The 片仮名「ヨ」 is pronounced /yo/ and derives from the [Phonetic Characters](#) 「與」 upper right part. A [濁点](#) or [半濁点](#) version do not exist.

3.8.1. Yōon

All characters from the 「ヤ」 row can be used in it's smaller form to crate combined phonetics Yōon (拗音【ようおん】).

ヤ ユ ヨ

k - キ キヤ キユ キヨ

s - シ シヤ シユ シヨ

c - チ チャ チュ チョ

n - ニ ニヤ ニユ ニヨ

h - ヒ ヒヤ ヒユ ヒヨ

m - ミ ミヤ ミユ ミヨ

r - リ リヤ リユ リヨ

Dakuten

g - ギ ギヤ ギユ ギヨ

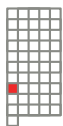
j - ジ ジャ ジュ ジョ

b - ビ ビヤ ビユ ビヨ

Handakuten

p - ピ ピヤ ピユ ピヨ

3.8.2. /sa/



Katakana /ya/ is written with two strokes.



Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

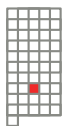
Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

	ヤ	ヤ	→						

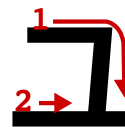
Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

									ヤ
									ヤ
									↓

3.8.3. /yu/




Katakana /yu/ is written with two strokes.



Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

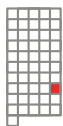
Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

	ヤ	ヤ	→						

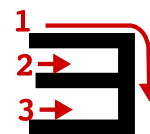
Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

									ヤ
									ヤ
									↓

3.8.4. /yo/







Katakana /yo/ is written with three strokes.






Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

3.8.5. /ya/ Row Training

<i>Katakana</i>	<i>Rōmaji</i>	<i>Original</i>	<i>Remark</i>	<i>Origin</i>
イヤー	iyā	ear, year		English
ユーザー	yūzā	user		English
ヨード	yōdo	Jod	iodine	German

Please transcribe the following words from **Katakana** to **Rōmaji**:

1.	イヤー	_____	ear, year
2.	ユーザー	_____	user
3.	ヨード	_____	iodine
4.	ユニットバス	_____	unit bath
5.	ヨット	_____	sailboat
6.	ニュー・イヤーズ・イブ	_____	new years eve

Please transcribe the following words from **Rōmaji** to **Katakana**:

1.	yūzā	_____	user
2.	iyā	_____	ear, year
3.	yunitobasu	_____	unit bath
4.	yōdo	_____	iodine
5.	nyū iyāzu ibu	_____	new years eve

<i>Katakana</i>	<i>Rōmaji</i>	<i>Original</i>	<i>Remark</i>	<i>Origin</i>
ユニットバス	yunittobasu	unit bath	prefabricated module bath	English
ヨット	yotto	yacht	sailboat	English
ニュー・イヤーズ・イブ	nyū iyāzu ibu	new years eve		English

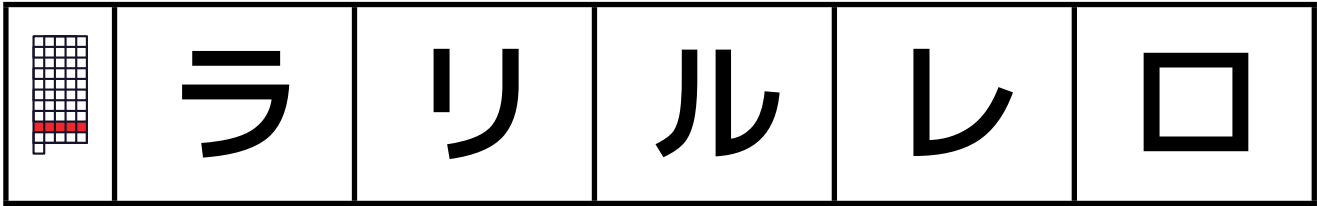
Please transcribe the following words from **English to Rōmaji**:

3. unit bath	_____
4. iodine	_____
5. new years eve	_____
1. user	_____
6. sailboat	_____

Please transcribe the following words from **English to Katakana**:

1. sailboat	_____
2. iodine	_____
3. new years eve	_____
4. unit bath	_____
5. user	_____

3.9. Katakana /ra/ row



ラ

The 片仮名「ラ」 is pronounced /ra/ (flapped 'r') and derives from the [Phonetic Characters](#) 「良」 upper right corner part. A 濁点 or 半濁点 version do not exist.

Note

The sound of the Japanese /r/ is neither a central nor a lateral flap, but may vary between the two. To an English speaker, its pronunciation varies between a flapped 'd' (as in American English buddy) and a flapped 'l'. ([Wikipedia Japanese Phonology](#)).

リ

The 片仮名「リ」 is pronounced /ri/ (flapped 'r') and derives from the [Phonetic Characters](#) 「利」 right site part. A 濁点 or 半濁点 version do not exist.

ル

The 片仮名「ル」 is pronounced /ru/ (flapped 'r') and derives from the [Phonetic Characters](#) 「流」 lower left corner part. A 濁点 or 半濁点 version do not exist.

レ

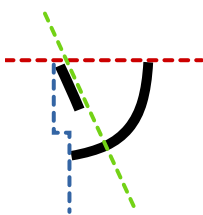
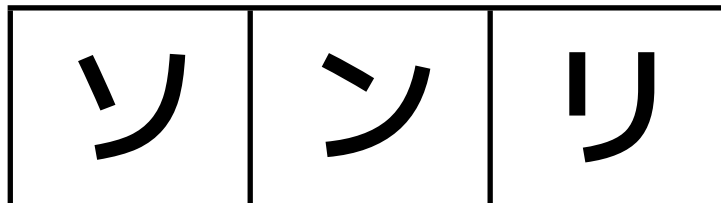
The 片仮名「レ」 is pronounced /re/ (flapped 'r') and derives from the [Phonetic Characters](#) 「礼」 upper right site part. A 濁点 or 半濁点 version do not exist.

ロ

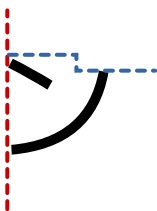
The 片仮名「ロ」 is pronounced /ro/ (flapped 'r') and derives from the [Phonetic Characters](#) 「呂」 upper part. A 濁点 or 半濁点 version do not exist.

3.9.1. |so|, |ri| and |n| Ambiguity

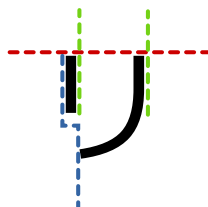
The Katakana characters 「ソ」, 「リ」 and 「ン」 can be difficult to distinguish. All three are made out of only 2 strokes. And especially |so| and |n| can be hard to tell. In a sentence of course the context can help a lot. But what are the rules for this characters to write properly and distinguish?



To write the letter |so| it is important to align both lines **horizontally** (red line) and to **non-align** the ends (blue line). In this way it is possible to distinguish |so| from |n|, but not from |ri|. To also distinguish it from |ri| you have to write the first stroke not horizontally nor vertically.



To write the letter |n| it is important to align both lines **vertically** (red line) and to **non-align** the ends (blue line). In this way it is possible to distinguish |n| from |so|. If both lines are aligned there should not be a problem to distinguish it from |ri|.

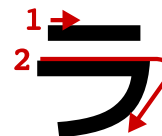


To write the letter |ri| it is important to align both lines **vertically** (red line) and to **non-align** the ends (blue line). The difference between |so| and |ri| is that |ri| need to start with two **parallel** lines while |so| does not. Please see green lines for explanation.

3.9.2. /ra/




Katakana /ra/ is written with two strokes.



Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

	ラ	ラ	→						

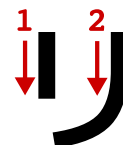
Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

									ラ
									ラ
									↓

3.9.3. /ri/




Katakana /ri/ is written with two strokes.



Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

	リ	リ	→						

Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

									リ
									リ
									↓

3.9.4. /ru/




Katakana /ru/ is written with two strokes.



Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

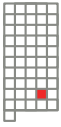
Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

	ル	ル	→						

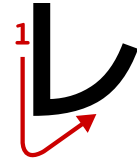
Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

									ル
									ル
									↓

3.9.5. /re/







Katakana /re/ is written with one stroke.






Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

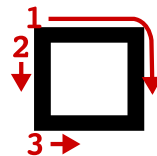
Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

3.9.6. /ro/







Katakana /ro/ is written with three strokes.






Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

3.9.7. /ra/ Row Training

<i>Katakana</i>	<i>Rōmaji</i>	<i>Original</i>	<i>Remark</i>	<i>Origin</i>
ヒステリー	hisuterī	Hysterie	hysteria	German
メール	mēru	e-mail	electronic mail	English
イラスト	irasuto	illust(ration)	illustration	English

Please transcribe the following words from **Katakana to Rōmaji**:

1. ヒステリー	_____	hysteria
2. メール	_____	e-mail
3. イラスト	_____	illustration
4. プレイガイド	_____	play guide
5. ノイローゼ	_____	neurosis
6. アロエ	_____	aloe

Please transcribe the following words from **Rōmaji to Katakana**:

1. mēru	_____	e-mail
3. hisuterī	_____	hysteria
4. noirōze	_____	neurosis
5. pureigaido	_____	play guide
6. aroe	_____	aloe

<i>Katakana</i>	<i>Rōmaji</i>	<i>Original</i>	<i>Remark</i>	<i>Origin</i>
プレイガイド	pureigaido	play + guide	(theater) ticket agency	English
ノイローゼ	noirōze	Neurose	neurosis	German
アロエ	aroe	Aloë	aloe	Dutch

Please transcribe the following words from **English to Rōmaji**:

2. play guide	_____
3. hysteria	_____
4. neurosis	_____
5. illustration	_____
6. aloe	_____

Please transcribe the following words from **English to Katakana**:

1. illustration	_____	
3. aloe	_____	
4. neurosis	_____	
5. hysteria	_____	
6. mēru	_____	e-mail

3.10. Katakana /wa/ Row



ワ

The 片仮名「ワ」 is pronounced /wa/ and derives from the [Phonetic Characters](#) 「和」 right site part. A 濁点 or 半濁点 do not exist.

Rōmaji	Katakana	Alternatives
/wa/	ワ	
/va/	ヴ	ヴァ、ヴぁ、うぁ あ
/wā/	ワー	
/vā/	ヴー	ヴァァ、ヴぁァ、うぁぁ あぁ

ヲ

The 片仮名「ヲ」 is pronounced /wo/ and derives from the [Phonetic Characters](#) 「乎」. A 濁点 or 半濁点 do not exist.

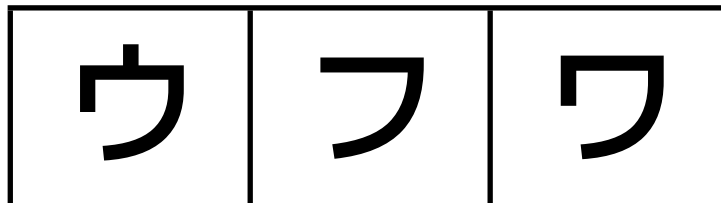
Rōmaji	Katakana	Alternatives
/wo/	ヲ	
/vo/	ヴ	seldomly used, more often: ヴォ

Note

It is safe to skip learning this character. See [Seldom Used Katakana](#) on page 15 for a detailed description.

3.10.1. |u|, |fu| and |wa| Similarity

The Katakana characters 「ウ」, 「フ」 and 「ワ」 can be easily distinguished. All three have a different stroke count. However the shape is similar. Therefore they can be mistaken. Especially when they have no context.



3.10.2. |va| Ambiguity

The Rōmaji |va| can be written in many different ways and that is true for some other characters of the 「ワ」 row too. The lack of standardization and consistency make it hard to guess how one should write a certain word with this sound.



3.10.3. /wa/




Katakana /wa/ is written with two strokes.



Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

	ワ	ワ	→						

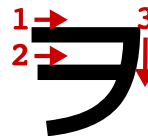
Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

									ワ
									ワ
									↓

3.10.4. /wo/







Katakana /wo/ is written with two strokes.






Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

3.10.5. /wa/ Row Training

<i>Katakana</i>	<i>Rōmaji</i>	<i>Original</i>	<i>Remark</i>	<i>Origin</i>
ホワイトデー	howaitodē	White + Day	White Day, March 14th	English
ワープロ	wāpuro	wor(d) pro(cessor)	word processor	English

Please transcribe the following words from **Katakana to Rōmaji**:

1. ホワイトデー	_____	White + Day
2. ワープロ	_____	word processor
3. ワイシャツ	_____	dress shirt
4. ヴ	_____	
5. ヴァルヴ	_____	valve

Please transcribe the following words from **Rōmaji to Katakana**:

1. wāpuro	_____	word processor
2. howaitodē	_____	White + Day
3. va	_____	
4. waishatsu	_____	dress shirt
5. varuvu	_____	valve

<i>Katakana</i>	<i>Rōmaji</i>	<i>Original</i>	<i>Remark</i>	<i>Origin</i>
ワイシャツ	waishatsu	Y shirt (from "white shirt")	dress shirt	English
ヴ	va		different writing	
ヴァルヴ	varuvu	valve		English

Please transcribe the following words from **English to Rōmaji**:

1. dress shirt	_____
2. White + Day	_____
3. valve	_____
4. word processor	_____
5. va	_____

Please transcribe the following words from **English to Katakana**:

1. valve	_____
2. White + Day	_____
3. dress shirt	_____
4. word processor	_____
5. va	_____

3.11. Katakana /n/ Row



The 片仮名「ン」 is pronounced /n/ and derives from the [Phonetic Characters](#) 「尔」 upper part. A 濁点 or 半濁点 version do not exist.

The Kana 「ン」 is the only Japanese character which do not end¹ in a vowel. The Kana 「む」 or 「ム」 with the sound /mu/ was originally² used for the /n/ sound and become an official character in 1900.

The 「ん」 character is the only Japanese letter which can not be used³ to started a word. However it is possible to start foreign words with the 「ン」 character. For example Ngorongoro as ィンゴロンゴロ.

In some computer systems (漢字片仮名変換)【かんじかたかなへんかん】 it is needed to press 'nn' (2x 'n') to get a single 「ん」 or 「ン」.

On the other hand, see the following table for notation of 'n' and 'nn':

Note

	<i>Rōmaji</i>	<i>Hiragana</i>	<i>Katakana</i>
	n	ん	ン
	nn	んん	ンン
	nh	んー	ンー

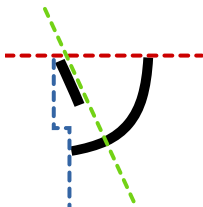
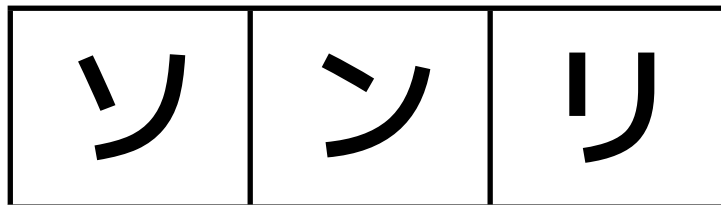
3.11.1. |so|, |ri| and |n| Ambiguity

The Katakana characters 「ソ」, 「リ」 and 「ン」 can be difficult to distinguish. All three are made out of only 2 strokes. And especially |so| and |n| can be hard to tell. In a sentence of course the context can help a lot. But what are the rules for this characters to write properly and distinguish?

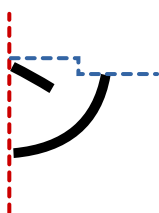
¹ | some cases the ending of other Kana (like 「す」 in the word です for example is not pronounced.

² The character 「ん」 was an exceptional character (Hentaigana) used fr /n/ and /mu/ and was declared obsolete in 1900.

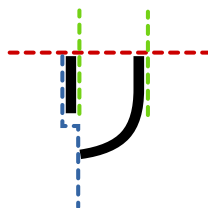
³An exception are the Ryukyu languages. For example /nnsu/ as ソース (Ryukyu: miso)



To write the letter |so| it is important to align both lines **horizontally** (red line) and to **non-align** the ends (blue line). In this way it is possible to distinguish |so| from |n|, but not from |ri|. To also distinguish it from |ri| you have to write the first stroke not horizontally nor vertically.



To write the letter |n| it is important to align both lines **vertically** (red line) and to **non-align** the ends (blue line). In this way it is possible to distinguish |n| from |so|. If both lines are aligned there should not be a problem to distinguish it from |ri|.



To write the letter |ri| it is important to align both lines **vertically** (red line) and to **non-align** the ends (blue line). The difference between |so| and |ri| is that |ri| need to start with two **parallel** lines while |so| does not. Please see green lines for explanation.

3.11.2. /n/




Katakana /n/ is written with two strokes.



Draw slowly, precise and try to make it beautiful. One line per day.

Slowly from top to bottom. Precise and take care about the stroke order. One column per hour, maximum four columns per day.

Write faster from left to right. If one character is wrong continue with slower speed.

	ン	ン	→						

Repeat the training after a week in medium pace.

									ン
									ン
									↓

4. Terminology

The following sections (ordered Latin alphabetically) can be used by itself to understand some key concepts of Japanese language by explaining keywords 専門用語【せんもんようご】.

4.1. Dakuten

The **Dakuten** - Japanese 濁点【だくてん】 - is a diacritic sign. Similar to the German Umlaut. The 濁点 is referenced colloquial as 点々【てんてん】. It is used to in 仮名 [syllabaries](#) to mark a consonant to be pronounced voiced. Two strokes 「゛ゑ」 are used near the Katakana letter. For other 濁点, please see [Katakana Iteration Marks](#) on page 159.

4.2. Diphthong

A **diphthong** 二重母音【にじゅうぼいん】 is a sound that is constructed from two different sounds that glide into each other while pronouncing and form a [syllable](#). A **diphthong** is made out of vocals. Examples for a **diphthong** in Japanese are 姪 |me.i| and 甥 |o.i|. Also 「アエ」, 「アイ」, 「アウ」, 「アオ」, 「ウエ」, 「ウイ」, 「オエ」, 「オイ」 or 「オウ」 are likely to appear as a **diphthong** in normal conversation in Japanese. However, they become vowel connections when it is pronounced slowly and it is treated as two vowels in the consciousness of the Japanese speaker.

4.3. Furigana

The Japanese **Furigana** - written in Japanese 振り仮名【ふりがな】 - is an aid for reading [Kanji](#). **Furigana** are [Kana](#), so basically [Hiragana](#) or [Katakana](#). **Furigana** are written next to the character (mostly [Kanji](#)) which reading can not be expected to be known mostly as annotative glosses. At first unknown or difficult [Kanji](#) are candidates for **Furigana** but also in books for children some if not all [Kanji](#) have **Furigana**. But even in books for learning English for example **Furigana** can be found next to words written in [Rōmaji](#).

When text is written horizontally **Furigana** are written mostly above the referenced character. In vertically written text **Furigana** are written on the right side next to the character. **Good Furigana** tries to place the reading distinguishable to each character separately. So the first example (Kanji+Hiragana) is **not** good. While the second (Kanji+Hiragana) is a good usage of **Furigana**. As a matter of fact **Furigana** is one rare case of using the [space character](#).

	とうきょう	とう きょう	トー キョー	tō kyō
over:	東京	東京	東京	東京
behind:	東京(とうきょう) 東京【とうきょう】			



Vertically written Tōkyō, as it also can be seen on many signs.
 Other names for **Furigana** are Ruby/Rubi or Yomigana 読み仮名【よみがな】. Ruby (Japanese ルビ /rubi/) is also an annotation system that can be used in L^AT_EX or HTML. Rubi are also common in China, Taiwan and Korea.

A common example for using **Furigana** for adults would be to rename (better re-read) single words to give them a specific connotation. In science fictions some astronaut could use the Japanese word ふるさと /furusato/ with the meaning of "my hometown" to refer to the planet Earth (= 地球[ちきゅう]). Or to make it more fancy and international (maybe also with connotation that Japan has no space in the future):

ふるさと
地球

Here アース refers to 'earth', but 地球 is better understandable by the Japanese audience.

アース
地球

4.4. Gojūonzu

Traditionally two ways exist to order Japanese characters. One of it is the **Gojūonzu** (50 sound table) - 五十音図【ごじゅうおんず】, which is used more often in modern times while the **Iroha**¹ was more popular in the older times.

The **Gojūonzu** is a grid of 10 x 5 squares partly filled with **Kana**. The roman letters are not part of the **Gojūonzu** and are added for the convenience of the learner.

	a	i	u	e	o
-	ア	イ	ウ	エ	オ
k	カ	キ	ク	ケ	コ
s	サ	シ	ス	セ	ソ
t	タ	チ	ツ	テ	ト
n	ナ	ニ	ヌ	ネ	ノ
h	ハ	ヒ	フ	ヘ	ホ
m	マ	ミ	ム	メ	モ
y	ヤ		ユ		ヨ
r	ラ	リ	ル	レ	ロ
w	ワ				ヲ
*	ン				

¹A poem with all **Kana** letters to remember easily. However it is not standard Japanese anymore why it would be difficult to suggest to learn.

The later adopted /n/ was added as one square or in the above example as the 11th line. Even though there less the 50 letters and more the 50 squares out of historical reason the name is still **Gojūonzu**.

For more explanation please read the chapter [The Way to Write Katakana](#) and look at the various examples of the **Gojūonzu** in the appendix starting with [Katakana Tables](#) on page 171 up to 183.

4.5. Handakuten

In Japanese two different 濁点【だくてん】 are used. The 濁点 and the 半濁点【はんだくてん】 has the marker of a little circle 「 ° 」 and is therefore colloquially described as 丸【まる】 and indicates when the pronunciation shifts from |h| to |p|.

4.6. Hentaigana

Hentaigana are historical [Kana](#) that are used seldom today. They were used until before 1900 and declared as obsolete (/hentai/ - variant) in the 1900 language reform. Rather than an addition to [Kana](#) *Hentaigana* represent alternative forms to existing [Kana](#). The usage where not formalized and every writer decides which set to use. It was even common to use two or more different *Hentaigana* (and standard [Kana](#)) with same pronunciation in the same document.

In contemporary Japan the usage of *Hentaigana* is reduced to traditional decorative elements on shop signs for example, but a few marginal uses remain: the word /otemoto/ is written in *Hentaigana* on some chopsticks.

Since *Hentaigana* are not available in Unicode it is difficult to impossible to use them in daily writing on computers. Please refer to Wikipedia to have a visual impression. → <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hentaigana>

4.7. Hepburn System

The **ヘボン式**【へぼんしき】 is one of the two most important transcription systems for Japanese written **morae** based language. The **ヘボン式** is most used system worldwide and in Japan.

The word **ヘボン** (hebon) is an old writing of the name **Hepburn**, a US American physician, translator, educator and lay Christian missionary, who used it his first Japanese English Dictionary (3rd ed.) in 1867.

There are manly two different variants. The older **標準ヘボン式ローマ字**【ひょうじゆん・へぼん・ろまあじ】 variant, which is used for signs at train stations. And the new variant the **修正ヘボン式ローマ字**【しゅうせい・へぼんしき・ろうまじ】 which is used as a revised system since 1954 in Kenkyusha dictionaries. Most western scientists are using this system. This system is also used in this book.

→ [Hepburn](#)



4.8. Hiragana

Approx. in the 9th century the **Hiragana** script - written in Japanese as **平仮名**【ひらがな】 - was developed by simplifying Chinese characters used for pronunciation. The number of contemporary **Hiragana** where reduced and today 46 are used. **Hiragana** is a **morae** alphabet which is mostly constructed out of syllables. In modern Japanese language **Hiragana** is used for **Okurigana** like verb endings, other endings as well as for phonetic transcription and for all other words which can or should not be written with **Kanji**, except words which are written in **Katakana**. In simple words: if it is not known weather the word should be written in **Kanji** or **Katakana** write in **Hiragana**.

4.9. Homophone

The linguistic term *homophone* referenced the fact that some words in language are pronounced equal but posses a different meaning. The spelling of *homophones* may be equal or different.

Language	word 1	meaning 1	word 2	meaning 2
German (same writing)	Fliege	the insect	Fliege	the bow tie
German (different writing)	aß	ate (to eat)	Aas	carrion
English (same writing)	does	to do	does	plural of doe
English (different writing)	eight	8	ate	to eat

In general the meaning of *homophones* can be deducted from the context. The is especially true if the spelling is different and if the *homophone* occurs while reading. It is more difficult but generally

in most cases possible to deduct the meaning also in spoken language.

Homophones are rare in European languages like English or German. In Japanese *homophones* are extraordinarily often. One reason² is the mass import of Chinese words centuries ago by 'neglecting' the pronunciation. While some Chinese word can be distinguished by pitch, they become true *homophones* by flattening all pitches to only two.

To give an extreme case, the following 22 **Kanji** words (two **Kanji** each) are all pronounced /kikō/.

機構 紀行 稀覯 騎行 貴校 奇功 貴公 起稿 奇行 機巧 寄港
 帰校 気功 寄稿 機甲 帰航 奇効 季候 気孔 起工 気候 帰港

Even though they sound the same, in written language they can be differentiated.

4.10. Iroha

The word *Iroha* stands for /iroha uta/ (*Iroha* song) and is a Japanese poem of the Heian era that contains all Kana words. In contrast to today it also contains more or less unuses letters, like /we/ or /wi/ and it do not contain the newer /n/. Usual the poem is written in **Hiragana** from top to down.

せみあけのなたるへい
 すしさふおられをとろ
 ゑきこくむそわちは
 ひゆえやうつかりに
 もめてまゐねよぬほ

In this book the modern **Gojūonzu** is used.

4.11. Katakana Iteration Marks

As with **Kanji** 漢字【かんじ】 also **Katakana** 片仮名 has **iteration marks**. However **Katakana** has three **iteration marks**.

4.11.1. Double a Vowel

The Chōon 長音【ちょうおん】doubles the previous vowel. Please read the section **Doubling Vowels in Katakana** on page 14.

4.11.2. Double a Character

Some general names exists for **iteration marks** in the Japanese language: 踊り字【おどりじ】 the so called "dancing mark", 重ね字【かさねじ】or 繰り返し記号【くりかえしきごう】 as "repetition symbols".

The iteration mark that can repeat any **Katakana** is 「ヽ」 and its 濁点【だくてん】 form is 「ヾ」. This can only be found in rare³ cases. For example the personal name Misuzu【みすゞ】might contain this character and therefore the Katakana transcription as well. And since the difference between the second last and the last **Mora** is only a change in pronunciation the 濁点 is added.

²except the one that people accept it and may even like it do nothing to reduce them

³**Iteration marks** where wildly used in old texts and may be used in personal writing.

4.11.3. Double two (or more) Characters

In vertical writing exist another iteration marker くの字点【くのじてん】 which consist out of two characters 「/」+「\」 and the 濁点 form is 「ゝ」+「\」. It can double two or more characters. As for the iteration mark above this is seldom used.

所々ところど

The くの字点 is the same for [Hiragana](#) and [Katakana](#). The above example shows that the change of sound 所々【ところどころ】 (Engl.: here and there) do not apply to the [Kanji](#) iteration mark 「々」.

色々いろく

If the 「/」+「\」 is not available sometimes a Japanese full wide slash and backslash is used. 「／」+「＼」

If [Okurigana](#) is present no iteration mark should be used. For example 休み休み【やすみやすみ】 (Engl.: with a lot of breaks).

The くの字点 character as such can be doubled by itself.

ト
ン
ト
ン
ト
ン
ト
ン

ト
ン
く
く
く
く

→ <http://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/踊り字>

4.12. Kana

The Japanese category **Kana** (仮名 [かな]) represents Japanese **Mōra** scripts that are part of the Japanese writing system. **Kana** is often used in contrast to **Kanji**, because **Kanji** also possesses meaning while all **Kana** have not.

Contemporary **Kana** scripts are **Hiragana** and **Katakana**. While other words in Japanese language also end with the category **Kana** but do not represent a script, like **Okurigana** or **Furigana** which just refers to **Hiragana** or **Katakana** used for certain functions or situations.

Other **Kana** like Hentaigana (変体仮名 [へんたいがな]) are obsolete and depreciated versions of **Hiragana**. Historically there have been more than one **Hiragana** for one **Mora** that were stylistic variants or distinct alternatives.

And finally **Man'yōgana** are Chinese characters that are used as phonetic characters around mid 7th century. This name is somewhat misleading since Chinese characters were not only used in the *Man'yōshū* in this fashion as well as the characters which were used over a long time and the number of where not constant.

4.13. Kanji

1300 years ago the first endeavours were undertaken to display the Japanese language with the only known alphabet in the region, the Chinese writing system. While the Japanese language was hardly suited for the writing system it was an economical choice since the Chinese characters were well developed at that time and introduced many new ideas in lexis. The 'borrowing' of Chinese characters was not a one shot operation it took centuries and more than one attempt. This long-winded process led to the fact that some characters were imported more than once from China from different times and different regions. And because of this one Chinese character can have more than one pronunciation. We hope that this will consolidate over the next centuries. Today these imported characters are known as **Kanji** in Japan. **Kanji** is written *Hanzi* in Chinese and referencing the character from the Han period of China. Even though today all Chinese-based characters (and even some self-invented) are referenced nowadays as **Kanji**, it does not strictly mean that they are only from the Han period.

A standard Japanese text does contain **Kanji**. To master the Japanese language over a certain level and to overcome the problem of personal illiteracy (in Japan) it is highly encouraged to learn at least 600 to 800 characters. To become a fully literate member of the Japanese society 2000 to 2300 **Kanji** should be learned.

Today **Kanji** in written Japanese language are used for substantives/ nouns, verbs, adjectives and names.

4.14. Katakana

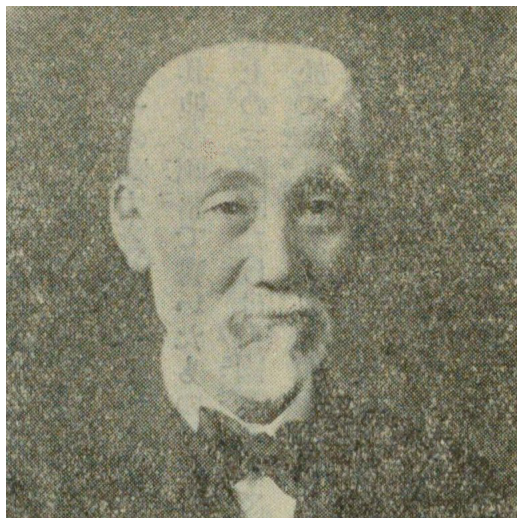
At the same time as **Hiragana**, also **Katakana** letters were invented by simplifying the same Chinese characters used for pronunciation. However the look and feel of **Katakana** is more 'square' not so 'rounded' as **Hiragana**.

Katakana is used today for writing words of foreign origin and for emphasizing (in commercials or **Manga**) as well as words in the fauna or flora.

4.15. Kunrei System

The modern **Kunrei System** 訓令式ローマ字【くんれいろうまじ】 is the official writing system of Japan. It was confirmed in 1994 by the Cabinet and is available as ISO 3602:1989. The **Kunrei System** predecessor was introduced 1985 by Dr. Aikitsu Tanakadatei (田中館愛橘) as 日本式ローマ字【にほんしきろうまじ】 (Nihon-/Nipponshikiromaji) and tries a more systematical approach to map **Hiragana** and **Katakana** to equal Roman letters. The 五十音図【ごじゅうおんず】 in the 訓令式ローマ字 is as follows:

→ [Tanakadate](#)



訓令式ローマ字 - Kunrei System

a	i	u	e	o
ka	ki	ku	ke	ko
sa	si	su	se	so
ta	ti	tu	te	to
na	ni	nu	ne	no
ha	hi	hu	he	ho
ma	mi	mu	me	mo
ya		yu		yo
ra	ri	ru	re	ro
wa				o
				n

Even though the system is official, many entities (like the train system) are not using it. They use the Hepburn System.

The 訓令式ローマ字 is not part of this book. Please see [Hepburn System](#) (on page 158) for the system in use.

4.16. Manga

The Japanese version of comics is called **Manga** (漫画【まんが】) created on Japan or by Japanese authors. Some people say that **Manga** is different from comics and deserve a name

by its own. When **Manga** is used in this book, then to distinguish it from comics in that sense that it is written in Japanese poses a dynamic writing style⁴ that is sometimes challenging to its audience.

The term **Manga** for just Japanese comics is more used outside Japan. In Japan all comics are referenced as **Manga** as well as with コミック /komikku/ for all kinds of comics. The word **Manga** itself can be translated as "whimsical drawings" or "impromptu sketches." and is used since the late 18th century.

4.17. Man'yōgana

The development of distinct Japanese writing begun 600 AD by writers and scholars reducing some Chinese characters to its bare phonetic value. The meaning of this characters were ignored. Around 760 a collection of Japanese poetry was published, the → 万葉集【まんようしゅう】, in which Chinese characters were used as phonetic letters. In regard to *Man'yōshū* 万葉集【まんようしゅう】 the characters are named 万葉仮名【まんようがな】

The origin of the **Man'yōgana** script in poetry and art lead to some problems in the understanding for the reader. Since the usage of phonetic Chinese characters were mixed with regular Chinese characters and the reasoning about which character to use was more form and shape aesthetic than pragmatic, the meaning was difficult to grasp.

However the royal household or other scholars did not see a necessity to change the status quo, because the high aim was to write poetry and other texts in Chinese and **Man'yōgana** was considered appropriate only for notes, diaries and love letters.

Note

By the end of the 8th Century 970 漢字【かんじ】 were used to pronounce the 90 morae. This directly shows that there was no bijective map between sound and character. For [ka] for example the following **Man'yōgana** can be used 「可」, 「何」, 「加」, 「架」, 「香」, 「蚊」, 「迦」.

⁴Conforming to a style developed in Japan in the late 19th century.

The number of **Man'yōgana** from which **Katakana** likely derived is smaller.

Man'yōgana used for creation of 片仮名【かたかな】

	a	i	u	e	o
-	阿	伊	宇	江	於
k	加	機幾	久	介	己
s	散	之	須	世	曾
t	多	千	州川	天	止
n	奈	仁	奴	祢	乃
h	八	比	不	部	保
m	末	三	牟	女	毛
y	也		由		與
r	良	利	流	礼	呂
w	和	井		惠	乎
*	尔				

The scientific term **Man'yōgana** is used by Western and Japanese scientists. However it is not without critique. The term **Man'yōgana** might lead to the illusion that it was a defined set of characters in use for transcribing Chinese or writing Japanese texts or the second illusion that one sound is represented by only one **Man'yōgana**. Both is not true. First, all Chinese Characters could in principle be used as **Man'yōgana** (and therefore the term is basically useless). Actually the reason to chose one character was sometimes just because out of aesthetic reasons, the shape or some additional meaning. And second, normally many different **Man'yōgana** (Chinese characters) were used for the same pronunciation in the same text. Making it efficient or easy was not the target of the scholars using this kind of **phonetic characters** at that time.

→ **Man'yōgana** → 万葉集

4.18. Mora

The concept of **mora** (plural *morae* or *moras*; often symbolized μ) is used in the science of linguistics. It describes a joint unit in pronunciation (phonology) that constructs a syllable. The definition of a **mora** can vary. In Japanese the detection of **morae** is comparably simple. The word 「チョコレート」 for example consist out of the following 5 **morae** 「チョ」、「コ」、「レ」、「ー」 and 「ト」 while it consist only out of four **syllables** (音節【おんせつ】) 「チョ」、「コ」、「レー」 and 「ト」.

4.19. Okurigana

The term **Okurigana** is written 送り仮名【おくりがな】 in Japanese, but it is *not* a script by its own as the name **Kana** suggest. **Okurigana** are **Kana** but either **Hiragana** or **Katakana** that are used to write the ending of words in most cases verbs. More precise **Okuriagna** are suffixes of **Kanji**. After 1945 only **Hiragana** are used to write **Okurigana** while before **Katakana** was used.

Okurigana are the mandatory compromise using static Chinese letters to write the Japanese language. Next to make **Kanji** flexible the other function is to mark the beginning and ending of words in sentences.

Okurigana have two purposes. (1) conjugate (a) verbs and (b) adjectives. With very few exceptions⁵ **Okuriagna** will only inflect **Kanji** as Kun'yomi. (2) Change the meaning or reading of a **Kanji** by different **Okurigana**.

Example: Okuriagna change the meaning (tense):

- (1) 見る【みる】 see
- (2) 見た【みた】 saw

In the above example the **Okurigana** of (1) is 「る」 and the **Okurigana** of (2) is 「た」.

Example: Okuriagna change the reading:

- (1) 下さる【くださる】 to give
- (2) 下りる【おりる】 to get off (a train for example)/ to descend
- (3) 下がる【さがる】 to dangle (intransitive)

So in many cases the **Okurigana** directly after the **Kanji** changes the meaning.

Example: Okuriagna change the meaning (transitivity) :

- (1) 下がる【さがる】 to dangle (intransitive)
- (2) 下げる【さげる】 to let off (transitive)

As in the above case many Japanese verbs come in transitive and intransitive pairs. The reading of the **Kanji** is often shared.

Okurigana in the Middle

Okurigana can also be found in the middle of Japanese words.

Example:

- (1) 繰り返し【くりかえし】 to repeat

Invisible Okuriagna - ノくり仮名

The term ノくり仮名【のくりがな】 was inspired by the site <http://kanjidamage.com> but the writing was changed from Rōmaji to Katakana+Okurigana+Kanji (The **Katakana** 「ノ」 derives (of course)

⁵ 皮肉る【ひにくる】、牛耳る【ぎゅうじる】 and 退治る【たいじる】.

from the English 'no', and the word as such is a violation of the Japanese **Okurigana**⁶ which describes a violation of **Okurigana**) Of course the term is not official, but quite funny in this case, that basically one should be very angry with the fact that there are some Japanese words which do have **Okurigana** but are not written (but of course pronounced!). The not so funny part with those words is that if one knows the reading of the **Kanji** it is impossible to look them up in a dictionary. So let's strike back and spread the word of the ノくり仮名.

- (1) 取引 取り引き【と(り)ひ(き)】 Transaction
 (2) 受付 受け付け【う(け)つ(け)】 Reception

→ <http://kanjidamage.com/tags/43>

4.20. Phonetic Character

In this document the term **Phonetic Character** (表音文字【ひょうおんもじ】) refers genetically to a Chinese characters reading and the usage of this character just for this purpose and *not* for its meaning. This common set expression has been used in avoidance of the term **Man'yōgana**. See the section **Man'yōgana** on page 163 to understand the critique.

The **Phonetic Character** has to be distinguished also from the linguistic term *phonogram* that describes a written character which represents a *phonem* (speech sound) such as the Latin alphabet or the Japanese **Kana**.

4.21. Radical

A **radical** 部首【ぶしゅ】 is a root particle or character of a Sino-Japanese character 漢字【かんじ】. It is the most significant part of a Sino-Japanese character. The concept was developed in China for Chinese characters and is today known under the same name 部首 (pinyin: bùshǒu). There is no general definition what a **radical** is or how many are existing and it can vary a lot. The author of a dictionary has the power to defined what a **radical** is and how much there will be in that dictionary.

In more traditional Chinese or Japanese dictionaries a number of 214 or 244 **radicals** is quite common. However some modern approaches like the → [The Kanji Dictionary of Marc Spahn and Wolfgang Hadamitzky from 1996](#) a totally different number of 79 can be found.

Note

Before buying a **Kanji** dictionary, make sure that the **radical** system used suits your taste. Sometimes it can be observed that Japanese dictionaries are stricter in the definition of a **radical** because a given **Kanji** can only be retrieved via exactly *one radical*. While in many Chinese dictionaries *every radical* of a Chinese character can be used to find it. The Japanese approach is of course good in terms of systematic and didactic for learners, however it can take significant longer to look up a character by **radical**.

⁶Because **Katakana** do not have **Okurigana**. But also in case there would be no violation the /o/ of /okuri/ would be vilify to a honorific prefix and then to be ripped out by the 'no' in a very non polite way.

4.22. Rōmaji

In temporary Japan words written in western letters become more popular and some parts of the written language is already westernized, like (Indian/ Arabic) numbers written in horizontal text almost per default. This western Latin letters are called **Rōmaji** and are written in Japanese as ローマ字 [ろおまじ], even though some of them are from different origin like Indian numbers for example.

The western characters are mainly used for writing numbers in the horizontal writing. Also for abbreviations capital and small letters are used. Sometimes they are modified. For example the measurement of distance in the metric entity "km" occupies to places in western scripts "k" + "m" while it only hold one place in Japanese 「km」 or even one place in [Katakana](#) 「キロ」. While the latter is ambiguous to us, because colloquial kilogram is referenced as only "kilo".

One Space Rōmaji

<i>Western Multiple Space Letters</i>	<i>One Space Rōmaji</i>
mg	mg
mm	mm
kg	kg
cm	cm
km	km
qm	m ²
qcc	cc

There are other shapes of Rōmaji for numbers or letters:

Roman	I II III IV V VI VII VIII IX X XI XII...
Blac circle	①②③④⑤⑥⑦⑧⑨⑩...
Withe circle	①②③④⑤⑥⑦⑧⑨⑩...
Withe double circle	ⓐⓑⓒ...
Letters	ⒶⒷⒸ...

In a number of incidents in typography multiple **Katakana** are condensed into one space, where normally only one **Katakana** would exist. In some cases the direction of writing is even diagonal. This part of exception are not part of this document and should be viewed under the peculiar aesthetic of Japanese printing.

One Space Katakana	
Western Meaning	One Space Katakana
	アー
calorie	カロ
kilo	キロ
gram	グラム
centi-	センチ
cent	セント
\$	ドル
t	トン
%	パーセント
ha	ヘクタール
pages	ページ
milli-	ミリ
mbar (millibar)	ミリバル
m (meter)	メートル
l (liter)	リットル
	ワット

Citation of foreign books are also done in western letters an can pop up without warning the middle of the text.

4.23. Space Character

The *space character* in Western (Latin letter based) languages is used to separate words. In antique texts a separation of words was **not** common and those where difficult to read. In the 7th century AD the word separation was introduced. In the beginning of printed books the space wide was fixed and to archive this the width of the letters where not fixed which produced an easy to read text body.

The invention of typewriters and computers destroyed this approach of aesthetically advanced typography. The typewriters had still a fixed (too large) space width but also fixed letters. While the computer on screen behave not better as a typewriter in the beginning and in printing, the spaces are variable and the letters are fixed, the opposite of the elegant book printing of the 15th century AD.

With the invention of Unicode the *space character* is not longer a singularity. The Unicode fonts have now many⁷ *space characters*.

The Japanese computer fonts do have a *space character*. Traditionally more than one. The most important *space character* is the double wide *space character* which is exactly as wide as a **Kanji** character. And the single wide *space character* that is as wide as **Rōmaji** or half wide **Hiragana** or **Katakana**.

However even though there is a *space character* nowadays in Japanese fonts it is **not** used to separate words from each other. Because of this the word border can only be detected by heuristics and changes in scripts, for example: **Katakana** to **Kanji**, **Hiragana** to **Kanji**, **Katakana** to **Hiragana** and so on. Detecting words is a major task in learning Japanese.

The *space character* in Japan is used to indent text to mark paragraphs. To separate functional entities in the text like author from heading.

As a matter of fact the *space character* in modern Japanese plays a very unimportant role.

This was not always so. In old Japanese there where an additional usage of *space characters* as 關字【けつじ】 to leave space in front of names of important persons or verbs to honor them.

Example:

「 上様」	【うえさま】	Mister Ue
「登 城」	【とう じょう】	registered castle

However this usage was abandoned in the Meiji era.

→ <http://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/關字>

4.24. Syllable

A **syllable** 音節【おんせつ】 is a phonetic building block for words. It influences the rhythm of a spoken language. In Western languages a **syllable** is made out of one or more letters. In Japanese it is often one character (of **Kana**), but not always. For a better understanding of the Japanese it is important to understand the concept of **mora**.

→ [Syllable](#) → [音節](#)

⁷To give an example: U+2008 Punctuation Space, U+2009 Thin Space, ..., U+FEFF Zero Width No-Break Space, to just name a few.

A. Katakana Tables

A.1. Katakana Reference

	a	i	u	e	o
*	ア	イ	ウ	エ	オ
k	カ	キ	ク	ケ	コ
s	サ	シ	ス	セ	ソ
t	タ	チ	ツ	テ	ト
n	ナ	ニ	ヌ	ネ	ノ
h	ハ	ヒ	フ	ヘ	ホ
m	マ	ミ	ム	メ	モ
y	ヤ		ユ		ヨ
r	ラ	リ	ル	レ	ロ
w	ワ				ヲ
n	ン				

A.2. Katakana Writing Reference

	a	i	u	e	o
*					
k					
s					
t					
n					
h					
m					
y					
r					
w					
n					

A.3. Empty Gojūonzu for Training

Please fill out this table (as fast as possible) 10 - 20 times a day in the active learning phase.

	a	i	u	e	o
*					
k					
s					
t					
n					
h					
m					
y					
r					
w					
n					

A.4. Katakana Gojūonzu

	a	i	u	e	o
-	ア	イ	ウ	エ	オ
k	カ	キ	ク	ケ	コ
s	サ	シ	ス	セ	ソ
t	タ	チ	ツ	テ	ト
n	ナ	ニ	ヌ	ネ	ノ
h	ハ	ヒ	フ	ヘ	ホ
m	マ	ミ	ム	メ	モ
y	ヨ		ユ		ヨ
r	ラ	リ	ル	レ	ロ
w	ワ				ヲ
*	ン				

A.5. Katakana Font Dejima

	a	i	u	e	o
-	ア	イ	ウ	エ	オ
k	カ	キ	ク	ケ	コ
s	サ	シ	ス	セ	ソ
t	タ	チ	ツ	テ	ト
n	ナ	ニ	ヌ	ネ	ノ
h	ハ	ヒ	フ	ヘ	ホ
m	マ	ミ	ム	メ	モ
y	ヨ		ユ		ョ
r	ラ	リ	ル	レ	ロ
w	ワ				ヲ
*	ン				

A.6. Katakana YOzFont

	a	i	u	e	o
-	ア	イ	ウ	エ	オ
k	カ	キ	ク	ケ	コ
s	サ	シ	ス	セ	ソ
t	タ	チ	ツ	テ	ト
n	ナ	ニ	ヌ	ネ	ノ
h	ハ	ヒ	フ	ヘ	ホ
m	マ	ミ	ム	メ	モ
y	ヨ		ユ		ョ
r	ラ	リ	ル	レ	ロ
w	ワ				ヲ
*	ン				

A.7. Katakana YOzFontA

	a	i	u	e	o
-	ア	イ	ウ	エ	オ
k	カ	キ	ク	ケ	コ
s	サ	シ	ス	セ	ソ
t	タ	チ	ツ	テ	ト
n	ナ	ニ	ヌ	ネ	ノ
h	ハ	ヒ	フ	ヘ	ホ
m	マ	ミ	ム	メ	モ
y	ヨ		ユ		ョ
r	ラ	リ	ル	レ	ロ
w	ワ				ヲ
*	ン				

A.8. Katakana YOzFontC

	a	i	u	e	o
-	ア	イ	ウ	エ	オ
k	カ	キ	ク	ケ	コ
s	サ	シ	ス	セ	ソ
t	タ	チ	ツ	テ	ト
n	ナ	ニ	ヌ	ネ	ノ
h	ハ	ヒ	フ	ヘ	ホ
m	マ	ミ	ム	メ	モ
y	ヨ		ユ		ョ
r	ラ	リ	ル	レ	ロ
w	ワ				ヲ
*	ン				

A.9. Katakana YOzFontE

	a	i	u	e	o
-	ア	イ	ウ	エ	オ
k	カ	キ	ク	ケ	コ
s	サ	シ	ス	セ	ソ
t	タ	チ	ツ	テ	ト
n	ナ	ニ	ヌ	ネ	ノ
h	ハ	ヒ	フ	ヘ	ホ
m	マ	ミ	ム	メ	モ
y	ヨ		ユ		ョ
r	ラ	リ	ル	レ	ロ
w	ワ				ヲ
*	ン				

A.10. Katakana YOzFontF

	a	i	u	e	o
-	ア	イ	ウ	エ	オ
k	カ	キ	ク	ケ	コ
s	サ	シ	ス	セ	ソ
t	タ	チ	ツ	テ	ト
n	ナ	ニ	ヌ	ネ	ノ
h	ハ	ヒ	フ	ヘ	ホ
m	マ	ミ	ム	メ	モ
y	ヨ		ユ		ョ
r	ラ	リ	ル	レ	ロ
w	ワ				ヲ
*	ン				

A.11. Katakana YOzFontM

	a	i	u	e	o
-	ア	イ	ウ	エ	オ
k	カ	キ	ク	ケ	コ
s	サ	シ	ス	セ	ソ
t	タ	チ	ツ	テ	ト
n	ナ	ニ	ヌ	ネ	ノ
h	ハ	ヒ	フ	ヘ	ホ
m	マ	ミ	ム	メ	モ
y	ヨ		ユ		ョ
r	ラ	リ	ル	レ	ロ
w	ワ				ヲ
*	ン				

A.12. Katakana YOzFontP

	a	i	u	e	o
-	ア	イ	ウ	エ	オ
k	カ	キ	ク	ケ	コ
s	サ	シ	ス	セ	ソ
t	タ	チ	ツ	テ	ト
n	ナ	ニ	ヌ	ネ	ノ
h	ハ	ヒ	フ	ヘ	ホ
m	マ	ミ	ム	メ	モ
y	ヨ		ユ		ョ
r	ラ	リ	ル	レ	ロ
w	ワ				ヲ
*	ン				

A.13. Katakana MikachanPB

	a	i	u	e	o
-	ア	イ	ウ	エ	オ
k	カ	キ	ク	ケ	コ
s	サ	シ	ス	セ	ソ
t	タ	チ	ツ	テ	ト
n	ナ	ニ	ヌ	ネ	ノ
h	ハ	ヒ	フ	ヘ	ホ
m	マ	ミ	ム	メ	モ
y	ヨ		ユ		ョ
r	ラ	リ	ル	レ	ロ
w	ワ				ヲ
*	ン				

A.14. Katakana Total Table

	a	i	u	e	o	ya	yu	yo
-	ア	イ	ウ	エ	オ	ヤ	ユ	ヨ
k	カ	キ	ク	ケ	コ	キャ	キュ	キョ
g	ガ	ギ	グ	ゲ	ゴ	ギャ	ギユ	ギョ
s	サ	シ	ス	セ	ソ	シャ	シュ	ショ
z/j	ザ	ジ	ズ	ゼ	ゾ	ジャ	ジュ	ジョ
t	タ	チ	ツ	テ	ト	チャ	チュ	チョ
d/j	ダ	ヂ	ヅ	デ	ド			
n	ナ	ニ	ヌ	ネ	ノ	ニャ	ニユ	ニョ
h	ハ	ヒ	フ	ヘ	ホ	ヒャ	ヒユ	ヒョ
b	バ	ビ	ブ	ベ	ボ	ビャ	ビユ	ビョ
p	パ	ピ	プ	ペ	ポ	ピャ	ピユ	ピョ
m	マ	ミ	ム	メ	モ	ミャ	ミユ	ミョ
r	ラ	リ	ル	レ	ロ	リャ	リユ	リョ
w	ワ				ヲ			
*	ン							

B. Rōmaji Tables

B.1. Base Rōmaji Table

	a	i	u	e	o
-	a	i	u	e	o
k	ka	ki	ku	ke	ko
s	sa	shi	su	se	so
t	ta	chi	tsu	te	to
n	na	ni	nu	ne	no
h	ha	hi	fu	he	ho
m	ma	mi	mu	me	mo
y	ya		yu		yo
r	ra	ri	ru	re	ro
w	wa				o
*	n				

B.2. All Rōmaji

	a	i	u	e	o	ya	yu	yo
-	a	i	u	e	o	ya	yu	yo
k	ka	ki	ku	ke	ko	kya	kyu	kyo
g	ga	gi	gu	ge	go	gya	gyu	gyo
s	sa	shi	su	se	so	sha	shu	sho
z/j	za	ji	zu	ze	zo	ja	ju	jo
t	ta	chi	tsu	te	to	cha	chu	cho
d/j	da	ji	zu	de	do			
n	na	ni	nu	ne	no	nya	nyu	nyo
h	ha	hi	fu	he	ho	hya	hyu	hyo
b	ba	bi	bu	be	bo	bya	byu	byo
p	pa	pi	pu	pe	po	pya	pyu	pyo
m	ma	mi	mu	me	mo	mya	myu	myo
r	ra	ri	ru	re	ro	rya	ryu	ryo
w	wa				o			
*	n							

C. List of Japanese Technical Terms

Ordered by Japanese pronunciation (Hiragana).

#	Japanese	Hiragana	English	German
1	伊呂波	いろは	Iroha	Iroha
2	イントネーション	いんとねーしょん	intonation	Betonung
3	送り仮名	おくりあがな	Okurigana	Okurigana
4	送り仮名	おくりがな	Okurigana	Okurigana
5	踊り字	おどりじ	repetition mark for Kanji and Kana	Wiederholungszeichen für Kanji und Kana
6	音節	おんせつ	syllable	Silbe
7	重ね字	かさねじ	repetition mark	Wiederholungszeichen
8	片仮名	かたかな	Katakana	Katakana
9	仮名	かな	Kana	Kana
10	漢字	かんじ	Kanji	Kanji
11	空白文字	くうはく・もじ	space character	Leerzeichen
12	空白文字	くうはく・もじ	space character	Leerzeichen
13	くの字点	くのじてん	Kunojiten	Kunojiten
14	繰り返し記号	くりかえしきごう	repetition mark	Wiederholungszeichen
15	訓令式ローマ字	くんれいろうまじ	Kunrei system	Kunrei System
16	五十音図	ごじゅうおんず	Gojūonzu	50 Laute Tafel
17	修正ヘボン式ローマ字	しゅうせい・へぼんしき・ろうまじ	newer Hepburn system	neueres Hepburn System
18	専門用語	せんもんようご	terminology	Fachbegriffe
19	濁点	だくてん	Dakuten	Dakuten
20	長音	ちょうおん	Chōon	Chōon
21	同音異語	どうおん・いご	homophone	Homophon
22	特別カタカナ	とくべつかたかな	special Katakana characters	Spezielle Katakana Zeichen
23	日本式ローマ字	にほんしきろうまじ	Japan system Latin letters	Lateinische Buchstaben des Japanischen Systems
24	日本専門用語	にほんせんもんようご	Japanese technical terms	japanische Fachbegriffe
25	ノくり仮名	のくりがな	Nokurigana	Nokurigana
26	倍増母音	ばいぞうぼいん	doubling vowels	Vokalverdopplung

27	発音	はつおん	pronuciation	Aussprache
28	半濁点	はんだくてん	Handakuten	Handakuten
29	筆画	ひっかく	stroke	Strich
30	筆画の種類	ひっかくのしゅるい	stroke types	Strich Typen
31	表音文字	ひょうおんもじ	phonetic character	phonetisches Zeichen
32	標準ヘボン式ローマ字	ひょうじゅん・へぼん・ろま あじ	older Hepburn system	altes Hepburn System
33	平仮名	ひらがな	Hiragana	Hiragana
34	部首	ぶしゅ	radical	Radikal
35	振り仮名	ふりがな	Furigana	Furigana
36	ヘボン式	へぼんしき	Hepburn system	Hepburn System
37	変体仮名	へんたいがな	Hentaigana	Hentaigana
38	漫画	まんが	manga	manga, Comic
39	万葉仮名	まんようがな	Man'yōgana	Man'yōgana
40	万葉集	まんようしゅう	Man'yōshu	Man'yōshu
41	モーラ	もーら	mora	Mora
42	読み仮名	よみがな	Yomigana	Yomigana
43	ルビ	るび	rubi	Rubi
44	ローマ字	ろーまじ	Rōmaji	Rōmaji

English: Terms

- base Rōmaji tables, 185
 base table Katakana, 174--183
 base table Rōmaji, 185
- Chōon, 159
 circle, 157
 complete Rōmaji tables, 186
- Dakuten, 157, 159
 dancing mark|hyperpage, 159
 diacritic sign, 155
 diphthong, 155
 double multiple character, 160
 double vowel, 159
 doubling vowels, 14
- empty Gojūonzu, 173
- Furigana, 155
- gobbledegook, 3
 gobbledygook, 3
 Gojūon, 7, 9, 156
 Gojūonzu, 7, 8, 14, 156, 159, 162, 185
 Gojūonzu training, 173
- Handakuten, 157
 Hentaigana, 157, 161
 Hepburn System, xi
 Hepburn system, 158
 Hiragana, xi, 1, 4, 5, 8, 14, 155, 158, 159, 161, 165, 168
 homophone, 7, 158
- intonation, 8
 Introduction, 1
 Iroha, 156, 159
 iteration marks, 159
- James Curtis Hepburn, 158
 Japan system Latin letters, 162
 Japanese technical terms, 187
 Japanese Writing System, 3
- Kana, 156, 157, 161, 165, 166
- Kanji, xi, 4, 7, 14, 155, 158--161, 163, 165, 166, 168
 Katakana, 4, 5, 7--9, 14, 155, 156, 158, 159, 161--163, 165, 167, 168, 174--183
 Katakana Font Dejima, 175
 Katakana Gojūonzu, 7, 156, 174
 Katakana MikachanPB, 183
 Katakana tables, 171
 Katakana total table, 184
 katakana training, 17
 Katakana YOzFont, 176
 Katakana YOzFontA, 177
 Katakana YOzFontC, 178
 Katakana YOzFontE, 179
 Katakana YOzFontF, 180
 Katakana YOzFontM, 181
 Katakana YOzFontP, 182
 Katakana, writing, 7
 Kunojiten, 160
 Kunrei system, 162
- Man'yōgana, 161, 163, 166
 Man'yōshu, 163
 Manga, 5, 161
 manga, 8, 162
 mora, 7, 8, 159, 161, 163, 164, 169
 morae, 164
 moras, 164
- newer Hepburn system, 158
 Nokurigana, 165
- Okurigana, 4, 8, 158, 160, 161, 165
 older Hepburn system, 158
- phonetic character, 166
 pronunciation, 8
 pronunciation shift, 157
- radical, 166
 repetition mark, 14, 159
 repetition mark for Kanji and Kana, 159
 role, 8
 rubi, 156

Rōmaji, [xi](#), [5](#), [9](#), [155](#), [167](#), [168](#), [186](#)

Rōmaji Gojūonzu, [9](#)

Rōmaji tables, [185](#)

self learning, [1](#)

space character, [7](#), [155](#), [168](#)

special Katakana characters, [14](#)

stroke, [14](#)

stroke types, [14](#)

syllabe, [155](#)

syllable, [164](#), [169](#)

terminology, [155](#)

The Way to Write Katakana, [7](#)

Umlaut, [155](#)

Yomigana, [156](#)

° |hyperpage, [157](#)

Japanese: Index

James Curtis Hepburn, 158

print script, 174--183

「MikachanPB」の片仮名, 183

「YOzFontA」の片仮名, 177

「YOzFontC」の片仮名, 178

「YOzFontE」の片仮名, 179

「YOzFontF」の片仮名, 180

「YOzFontM」の片仮名, 181

「YOzFontP」の片仮名, 182

「YOzFont」の片仮名, 176

「アイ」, 155

「アウ」, 155

「アエ」, 155

「アオ」, 155

「ウイ」, 155

「ウエ」, 155

「オイ」, 155

「オウ」, 155

「オエ」, 155

「 ° 」, 157

いろは, 156, 159

いんとねーしょん, 8

おくりあがな, 4, 158

おくりがな, 8, 160, 161, 165

おどりじ, 159

おんせつ, 164, 169

かさねじ, 159

かたかな, 4, 5, 8, 9, 14, 155, 158, 159, 161--163, 165, 167, 168

かな, 156, 157, 161, 165, 166

かんじ, xi, 4, 7, 14, 155, 158--161, 163, 165, 166, 168

きのう, 8

くうはく・もじ, 168

くうはく・もじ, 7, 155

くのじてん, 160

くの字点, 160

くりかえしきごう, 14, 159

くんれいろうまじ, 162

ごじゅうおんず, 7, 8, 14, 156, 159, 162, 185

しゅうせい・へぼんしき・ろうまじ, 158

せんもんようご, 155

だくてん, 155, 157, 159

ちょうおん, 159

とくべつかたかな, 14

どうおん・いご, 7, 158

にじゅうぼいん, 155

にほんしきろうまじ, 162

にほんせんもんようご, 187

のくりがな, 165

はつおん, 8

はんだくてん, 157

ぼいぞうぼいん, 14

ひっかく, 14

ひっかくのしゅるい, 14

ひょうおんもじ, 166

ひょうじゅん・へぼん・ろまあじ, 158

ひらがな, xi, 1, 4, 5, 8, 14, 155, 158, 159, 161, 165, 168

ふりがな, 155

ぶしゅ, 166

へぼんしき, xi, 158

へんたいがな, 157, 161

まる, 157

まんが, 5, 8, 161, 162

まんようがな, 161, 163, 166

まんようしゅう, 163

もーら, 7, 8, 159, 161, 163, 164, 169

よみがな, 156

るび, 156

ろーまじ, xi, 5, 155, 167, 168

イントネーション, 8

ウムラウト, 155

カタカナの五十音図, 174--183

ノくり仮名, 165

へボン式, xi, 158

モーラ, 7, 8, 159, 161, 163, 164, 169

ルビ, 156

ローマジ, 186

ローマ字, xi, 5, 9, 155, 167, 168, 185

ローマ字五十音図, 9

ローマ字図, 185

一般ローマ字図, 185

- 万葉仮名, 161, 163, 166
万葉集, 163
丸, 157
二重母音, 155
五十音図, 7, 8, 14, 156, 159, 162, 185
仮名, 156, 157, 161, 165, 166
伊呂波, 156, 159
修正ヘボン式ローマ字, 158
- 倍増母音, 14
全部ローマ字図, 186
全部片仮名, 184
出島フォント片仮名, 175
前書き, 1
半濁点, 157
同音異語, 7, 158
同音語, 7
変体仮名, 157, 161
専門用語, 155
平仮名, xi, 1, 4, 5, 8, 14, 155, 158, 159, 161, 165, 168
平仮名図, 171
- 振り仮名, 155
日本専門用語, 187
日本式ローマ字, 162
日本語の書き方, 3
標準ヘボン式ローマ字, 158
機能, 8
漢字, xi, 4, 7, 14, 155, 158--161, 163, 165, 166, 168
漫画, 5, 8, 161, 162
濁点, 155, 157, 159
- 片仮名, 4, 5, 8, 9, 14, 155, 158, 159, 161--163, 165, 167, 168, 184
片仮名の五十音図, 174--183
片仮名五十音図, 7, 156, 174
片仮名練習, 17
特別カタカナ, 14
独修, 1
発音, 8
空白文字, 7, 155, 168
筆画, 14
筆画の種類, 14
練習のため五十音図, 173
繰り返し記号, 14, 159
- 表音文字, 166
訓令式ローマ字, 162
読み仮名, 156
踊り字, 159
- 送り仮名, 4, 8, 158, 160, 161, 165
部首, 166
重ね字, 159
長音, 159
音節, 155, 164, 169

Deutsch: Fachbegriffe

50 Laute Tafel, [7](#), [8](#), [14](#), [156](#), [159](#), [162](#), [185](#)

50 Laute Tafel trainieren, [173](#)

altes Hepburn System, [158](#)

Ausprache Verschiebung, [157](#)

Aussprache, [8](#)

Basis Rōmaji Tabellen, [185](#)

Basistabelle Rōmaji, [185](#)

Betonung, [8](#)

Chōon, [159](#)

Dakuten, [157](#), [159](#)

Diakritisches Zeichen, [155](#)

Diphthong, [155](#)

Einleitung, [1](#)

Fachbegriffe, [155](#)

Fachchinesisch, [3](#)

Funktion, [8](#)

Furigana, [155](#)

Handakuten, [157](#)

Hentaigana, [157](#), [161](#)

Hepburn System, [xi](#), [158](#)

Hiragana, [xi](#), [1](#), [4](#), [5](#), [8](#), [14](#), [155](#), [158](#), [159](#),
[161](#), [165](#), [168](#)

Homophon, [7](#), [158](#)

Iroha, [156](#), [159](#)

James Curtis Hepburn, [158](#)

japanische Fachbegriffe, [187](#)

Japanische Schrift System, [3](#)

Kana, [156](#), [157](#), [161](#), [165](#), [166](#)

Kanji, [xi](#), [4](#), [7](#), [14](#), [155](#), [158--161](#), [163](#), [165](#),
[166](#), [168](#)

Katakana, [4](#), [5](#), [8](#), [9](#), [14](#), [155](#), [158](#), [159](#), [161-](#)
[163](#), [165](#), [167](#), [168](#), [184](#)

Katakana 50 Laute Tafel, [174](#)

Katakana Font Dejima, [175](#)

Katakana MikachanPB, [183](#)

Katakana schreiben, [7](#)

Katakana Tabellen, [171](#)

Katakana Training, [17](#)

Katakana YOzFont, [176](#)

Katakana YOzFontA, [177](#)

Katakana YOzFontC, [178](#)

Katakana YOzFontE, [179](#)

Katakana YOzFontF, [180](#)

Katakana YOzFontM, [181](#)

Katakana YOzFontP, [182](#)

komplette Katakana Tabelle, [184](#)

komplette Rōmaji Tabellen, [186](#)

Konsonantenverdopplung, [159](#)

Kreis, [157](#)

Kunojiten, [160](#)

Kunrei System, [162](#)

Lateinische Buchstaben des Japanischen
Systems, [162](#)

leere 50 Laute Tafel, [173](#)

Leerzeichen, [7](#), [155](#), [168](#)

Man'yōgana, [161](#), [163](#), [166](#)

Man'yōshu, [163](#)

Manga, [8](#)

manga, Comic, [5](#), [161](#), [162](#)

Mora, [7](#), [8](#), [159](#), [161](#), [163](#), [164](#), [169](#)

Morae, [164](#)

Moras, [164](#)

neueres Hepburn System, [158](#)

Nigrierungszeichen, [155](#)

Nokurigana, [165](#)

Okuriagana, [160](#)

Okurigana, [4](#), [8](#), [158](#), [161](#), [165](#)

phonetisches Zeichen, [166](#)

Radikal, [166](#)

Rolle, [8](#)

Rubi, [156](#)

Rōmaji, [xi](#), [5](#), [155](#), [167](#), [168](#), [186](#)

Rōmaji Tabellen, [185](#)

Selbststudium, [1](#)

Silbe, [155](#), [164](#), [169](#)

Spezielle Katakana Zeichen, [14](#)

Strich, [14](#)

Strich Typen, [14](#)

Tanzzeichen|hyperpage, [159](#)

Umlaut, [155](#)

viele Zeichen verdoppeln, [160](#)

Vokalverdopplung, [14](#)

Wiederholungszeichen, [14](#), [159](#)

Wiederholungszeichen für Kanji und Kana,
[159](#)

Yomigana, [156](#)

° |hyperpage, [157](#)

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