

JP

HIRAGANA

Hiragana 1 · Chapter 13 · Ma Mi Mu

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🌸 The M Row Begins — ま み む

The sixth consonant row is **m**, with ま (ma), み (mi) and む (mu). That makes **thirty-three characters**. With ま and す you can also write the polite verb ending **ます** for the first time, so today you'll read your first polite sentences.

	a	i	u	e	o
(vowels)	あ	い	う	え	お
k +	か	き	く	け	こ
s +	さ	し	す	せ	そ
t +	た	ち	つ	て	と
n +	な	に	ぬ	ね	の
h +	は	ひ	ふ	へ	ほ
m +	ま	み	む	め	も

Thirty-three down, thirteen to go. め and も come in Chapter 14.

✨ Three New Characters — ま み む

ま

ma

like "ma" in *mama*, short
("mah")

3 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

み

mi

like "mee" in *meet*, short
("mee")

2 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

む

mu

like "moo" in *moon*, with
relaxed lips

3 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

Memory hook: a *mama* with two arms out, holding a little bundle (the loop) at her feet.

Memory hook: a squiggly musical note: do-re-*mi*.

Memory hook: a cow going "moo!", with its tail curling up at the right.

Look-Alike Warnings: ま and ほ, む and す

ま and ほ: both have two bars and a loop, but ほ has a **vertical line on the left** (and 4 strokes), while ま doesn't (3 strokes). **む and す:** they share the same bar-and-loop shape, but む has an **extra small stroke** at the right: む has 3 strokes, and す has 2. Check the count when you read or write them.

Read It — New Words

With thirty-three characters, you can read all of these. Remember that each character is one beat.

#	WORD	ROMAJI	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	うま	uma	horse	<i>u + ma</i>
2	みみ	mimi	ear	<i>mi + mi</i>
3	むし	mushi	insect, bug	<i>mu + shi</i>
4	まち	machi	town, city	<i>ma + chi</i>
5	みち	michi	road, way	<i>mi + chi</i>
6	みせ	mise	shop	<i>mi + se</i>
7	まえ	mae	front; before	<i>ma + e</i>
8	うみ	umi	sea	<i>u + mi</i>
9	きた	kita	north	<i>ki + ta</i>

#	WORD	ROMAJI	ENGLISH	NOTE
10	みなみ	minami	south	<i>mi + na + mi</i>
11	むかし	mukashi	long ago	<i>mu + ka + shi</i>
12	まつ	matsu	to wait	<i>a verb in dictionary form</i>

Real Japanese Tip — The Compass

You now know three of the four compass points: **きた** (north), **みなみ** (south) and **にし** (west, Chapter 9). The fourth, **ひがし** (east), needs **が**, which comes with the voiced sounds in the next course.



Your First Polite Verbs — ～ます

The ending **ます** (-masu) makes a verb **polite**, the style you use with people you don't know well, shopkeepers and teachers. To make it, change the final -u sound of the dictionary form to its -i sound, then add **ます**.

DICTIONARY FORM	POLITE FORM	ROMAJI	ENGLISH
いく	いきます	ikimasu	go
かう	かいます	kaimasu	buy
きく	ききます	kikimasu	listen, ask
かく	かきます	kakimasu	write
あう	あいます	aimasu	meet
まつ	まちます	machimasu	wait

Notice the Change: く → き, う → い, つ → ち

Each dictionary form ends in a *u*-row character (く, う, つ) and, in the polite form, it moves to the *i* position of the same row: く → き (*ku* → *ki*), う → い (*u* → *i*), つ → ち (*tsu* → *chi*). That's the chart doing real work: now you can see why the rows are worth learning in order. (This pattern works for the large group of "u-verbs" like these; the other group of verbs forms ます differently, and you'll meet it in the conversation courses.) Add か to the end to ask a question: いきますか? ("Do you go?").

🗨️ Mini-Dialogs

① To the Station — えきへ いきますか？

A:

えきへ いきますか？

eki e ikimasu ka?

Are you going to the station?

B:

はい、いきます。

hai, ikimasu.

Yes, I'm going.

② To the Sea — うみへ

A:

うみへ いきます。

umi e ikimasu.

I'm going to the sea.

B:

いつ？

itsu?

When?

A:

ことし。

kotoshi.

This year.

③ Will You Wait? — まちますか？

A:

まちますか？

machimasu ka?

Will you wait?

B:

はい、まちます。

hai, machimasu.

Yes, I'll wait.

Review: Reading Back

Cover the English and read these again: ほし (star) · ほか (other) · ほね (bone) · ほしい (want) · ほそい (thin) · へそ (belly button) · へた (unskilled) · いえへいく (go to the house).

Try It Yourself — れんしゅう

Say each answer out loud first, then click to check.

1. Read these aloud: ま · み · む

▼ Show answer

ma · mi · mu

2. How many strokes do ま, み and む have, and how can you tell ま from ほ?

▼ Show answer

ま has 3, み has 2, む has 3. ほ has a vertical line on the left (4 strokes); ま doesn't.

3. Read and translate: うま · みみ · むし

▼ Show answer

uma (horse) · mimi (ear) · mushi (insect)

4. Write in hiragana: mise (shop) · umi (sea) · machi (town)

▼ Show answer

みせ · うみ · まち

5. Make these verbs polite: いく・かく・まつ

▼ Show answer

いきます (ikimasu)・かきます (kakimasu)・まちます (machimasu)

6. Read and translate: えき へ いきます。

▼ Show answer

"eki e ikimasu": I go to the station.

Coming Up in Chapter 14

Two characters finish the M row: め (me) and も (mo). You'll then read あめ (rain), かめ (turtle), もも (peach) and もの (thing). Remember the warning about め: it looks very like む, so you'll compare the two side by side.