

JP

HIRAGANA

Hiragana 1 · Chapter 15 · Ya Yu Yo

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🌸 The Y Row — や ゆ よ

The Y row has only **three** characters: や (ya), ゆ (yu) and よ (yo). The "yi" and "ye" slots on the chart are empty, because Japanese doesn't use those sounds. That brings you to **thirty-eight characters**, with just eight left to learn.

	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
y +	や		ゆ		よ

Thirty-eight down, eight to go: the R row, わ, を and ん.

✨ Three New Characters — や ゆ よ

や

ya

like "ya" in yard, short ("yah")

3 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

ゆ

yu

like "you", short ("yoo")

2 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

よ

yo

like "yo" in yo-yo, short and pure ("yoh")

Memory hook: a yacht with a tall mast and a sail, heading off to the right.

Memory hook: a U-shaped hot bath with a fish swimming through it. (ゆ is also the word for "hot water".)

2 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

Memory hook: a yo-yo hanging from its string.

Look-Alike Warning: よ and ま

よ (yo) and ま (ma) share a vertical stem that ends in a loop. The test is the bars: ま has two horizontal bars (3 strokes), whereas よ has just one short bar at the top left (2 strokes). Count the bars each time.

Read It — New Words

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

#	WORD	ROMAJI	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	やま	yama	mountain	ya + ma
2	ゆき	yuki	snow	yu + ki
3	ゆめ	yume	dream	yu + me
4	やさい	yasai	vegetables	ya + sa + i
5	やすみ	yasumi	holiday; a rest; a day off	ya + su + mi
6	やすい	yasui	cheap	the opposite of たいかい (expensive)
7	よこ	yoko	side; beside	yo + ko
8	よむ	yomu	to read	a verb: the one this course is training you for
9	よく	yoku	often; well	an adverb

#	WORD	ROMAJI	ENGLISH	NOTE
10	よい	yoi	good	<i>a slightly formal alternative to いい</i>
11	ゆか	yuka	floor	<i>yu + ka</i>
12	ゆうめい	yūmei	famous	<i>four beats: yu-u-me-i</i>

Real Japanese Tip — ゆ on the Bathhouse Curtain

ゆ is the word for "hot water", and the single character ゆ hangs on the curtain (*noren*) outside traditional public bathhouses (*sentō*), so a person who reads nothing else can still find a hot bath. It's the first character in this course that you're likely to see standing alone on a real sign.

A Peek Ahead — Small や, ゆ, よ

Later in Hiragana 3, you'll meet **small** versions of these three characters, written や ゆ よ. They join the character before them to make a single combined sound, as in きゃ (*kya*), きゅ (*kyu*) and きょ (*kyo*). For now, just read each full-size や, ゆ or よ as its own sound.



More Polite Verbs — From む to み

Remember the pattern from Chapter 13: the final u-row character changes to its i-row partner and takes ます. Today's verb よむ shows the M row doing the same: む → み.

DICTIONARY FORM	POLITE FORM	ROMAJI	ENGLISH
よむ	よみます	yomimasu	read
いく	いきます	ikimasu	go
まつ	待ちます	machimasu	wait

🗨️ Mini-Dialogs

① Cheap? — やすい?

A:

たかい?

takai?

Is it expensive?

B:

いいえ、やすい!

ie, yasui!

No, it's cheap!

② To the Mountain — やまへ

A:

やまへいきますか?

yama e ikimasu ka?

Are you going to the mountain?

B:

はい、いきます。ゆき、おおいね。

hai, ikimasu. yuki, ooi ne.

Yes. There's a lot of snow, isn't there.

A:

そうね。

sō ne.

Yes, there is.

③ Often — よく

A:

よくいきますか?

yoku ikimasu ka?

Do you go there often?

B:

はい、よくいきます。

hai, yoku ikimasu.

Yes, I go often.

Review: Reading Back

Cover the English and read these again: め (eye) · あめ (rain) · かめ (turtle) · もも (peach) · もの (thing) · もち (rice cake) · くも (cloud) · もう (already) · おもい (heavy) · お

もう (to think) · いもうと (younger sister).

Try It Yourself — れんしゅう

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

1. Read these aloud: や · ゆ · よ

▼ Show answer

ya · yu · yo

2. How many strokes do や, ゆ and よ have, and how can you tell よ from ま?

▼ Show answer

や has 3, ゆ has 2, よ has 2. ま has two horizontal bars; よ has only one short bar.

3. Read and translate: やま · ゆき · ゆめ

▼ Show answer

yama (mountain) · yuki (snow) · yume (dream)

4. Write in hiragana: yasui (cheap) · yomu (to read) · yūmei (famous)

▼ Show answer

やすい · よむ · ゆうめい

5. Make よむ polite.

▼ Show answer

よみます (yomimasu): む changes to み, then add ます.

6. What does a single ゆ on a curtain outside a building mean?

▼ Show answer

"Hot water": it marks a public bathhouse (*sentō*).

Coming Up in Chapter 16

The R row begins: ら り る (ra, ri, ru). The Japanese "r" is neither an English "r" nor an "l": it's a quick tap of the tongue, a bit like the "d" in "ladder". You'll then read さくら (cherry blossom), くるま (car), そら (sky) and リス (squirrel).