

JP

HIRAGANA

Hiragana 1 · Chapter 18 · Wa Wo N

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🌸 The Last Three — わ を ん

The final three basic characters are **わ** (wa), **を** (wo, said "o") and **ん** (n). With them you've learned all **46** basic hiragana. Today you'll also meet the third particle, **を**, and you'll be able to read the everyday greetings that every learner wants first.

	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
r +	ら	り	る	れ	ろ
w +	わ				を
n	ん				

All 46 basic characters, complete. The empty cells are sounds Japanese doesn't use.

✨ Three New Characters — わ を ん

わ

wa

like "wa" in *wash* (short),
"wah"

2 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

Memory hook: a rolling *wave*,
curling over at the bottom.

を

wo (o)

said exactly like お, "oh"

3 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

Memory hook: a person
leaning forward and handing
you a parcel, because を marks
the thing being handed over.

ん

n

a full beat of "n", as in *pen*

1 stroke · [stroke order](#) ▶

Memory hook: it looks a bit
like a slanting "h", but it says *n*.
Think of "n" with a long curling
tail.

Look-Alike Warning: わ, れ and ね

These three are cousins that share a vertical stroke on the left. ね ends in a loop, れ ends in an open sweep that flicks outward, and わ has a rounder base that curls back up and doesn't flick. Compare

わ れ ね side by side, and use the stroke-order animations to see how each one ends.

ん Is a Whole Beat

ん is the only kana that isn't a vowel or a consonant + vowel: it's a **nasal "n"** that takes a full beat of its own, like a syllable. So ほん ("book") has two beats, *ho-n*, and こんにちは has five. It never starts a word. In real speech it changes slightly depending on the sound after it (it can sound like "m" or "ng"), but you can safely say a clear "n" at this stage.

Read It — New Words

With all 46 characters, you can read all of these. Remember that each character is one beat.

#	WORD	ROMAJI	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	わたし	watashi	I, me	<i>wa + ta + shi</i>
2	にほん	nihon	Japan	<i>ni + ho + n</i>

#	WORD	ROMAJI	ENGLISH	NOTE
3	ほん	hon	book	<i>ho + n: two beats</i>
4	せんせい	sensei	teacher	<i>se-n-se-i: four beats</i>
5	わかる	wakaru	to understand	<i>a very useful verb</i>
6	わるい	warui	bad	<i>the opposite of いい</i>
7	かわ	kawa	river	<i>ka + wa</i>
8	わに	wani	crocodile	<i>wa + ni</i>
9	わらう	warau	to laugh	<i>a verb</i>
10	みかん	mikan	mandarin orange	<i>mi-ka-n: three beats</i>
11	うん	un	yeah (casual)	<i>a casual "yes"</i>
12	ほんとう	hontō	really, true	<i>ほんとう? = "Really?"</i>

The Particle を — "The Thing Being Acted On"

The third particle, **を**, marks the **object** of a verb: the thing you read, buy, see or make. **A を verb = " (do the verb) to A"**. It's read **o**, exactly like お, and it's only ever used as a particle. (Spaces are added to show the word breaks.)

JAPANESE	ROMAJI (AS SPOKEN)	ENGLISH
ほんをよみます。	hon o yomimasu.	I read a book.
さかなをかいます。	sakana o kaimasu.	I buy fish.

JAPANESE	ROMAJI (AS SPOKEN)	ENGLISH
さくらをみます。	sakura o mimasu.	I look at the cherry blossoms.
くるまをつくります。	kuruma o tsukurimasu.	I make a car.

The Three Particles That Change Their Sound

You've now met all three: は is read *wa* (Chapter 11), え is read *e* (Chapter 12), and を is read *o* (today). Everywhere else, these characters are read normally. Together with の, も, に and か, which you already know, you can read the grammar skeleton of a Japanese sentence.



Greetings You Can Read — あいさつ

JAPANESE	ROMAJI	ENGLISH	WHEN
おはよう	ohayō	good morning	<i>in the morning (casual)</i>
こんにちは	konnichiwa	hello; good afternoon	<i>は is read wa here</i>
さようなら	sayōnara	goodbye	<i>a fairly final goodbye</i>
またね	mata ne	see you!	<i>casual, with friends</i>
おやすみなさい	oyasumi nasai	good night	<i>before bed (おやすみ is casual)</i>
すみません	sumimasen	excuse me; sorry	<i>to get attention or to apologise</i>
よろしく	yoroshiku	nice to meet you (short form)	<i>often with おねがいします later</i>

Real Japanese Tip — Why "Konnichiwa" Ends in は

こんにちは is read *konnichi wa*, and the final は is the particle you learned in Chapter 11, read *wa*. It began life as part of a longer greeting ("as for today, ..."), which is why the old spelling survived. The same thing happens in こんにちは ("good evening"), which you'll be able to read in the next course.

🗨️ Mini-Dialogs

① Good Morning — おはよう

A:

おはよう！
ohayō!
Good morning!

B:

おはよう。
ohayō.
Good morning.

A:

またね。
mata ne.
See you.

② Excuse Me, Teacher — すみません

A:

すみません、せんせい。これ、なに？
sumimasen, sensei. kore, nani?
Excuse me, teacher. What is this?

B:

それはほん。
sore wa hon.
That is a book.

③ Really? — ほんとう？

A:

さくらをみますか？
sakura o mimasu ka?
Will you see the cherry blossoms?

B:

はい、にほんへいきます。
hai, nihon e ikimasu.
Yes, I'm going to Japan.

A:

ほんとう？

hontō?

Really?

B:

ええ、ほんとう！

ee, hontō!

Yes, really!

Try It Yourself — れんしゅう

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

1. Read these aloud: わ・を・ん

▼ Show answer

wa・o (written wo)・n

2. How many strokes do わ, を and ん have?

▼ Show answer

わ has 2, を has 3, ん has 1.

3. Read and translate: わたし・にほん・せんせい

▼ Show answer

watashi (I)・nihon (Japan)・sensei (teacher)

4. Write in hiragana: *hon* (book)・*kawa* (river)・*mikan* (mandarin)

▼ Show answer

ほん・かわ・みかん

5. Read and translate: ほん を よみます。 How is を pronounced?

▼ Show answer

"hon o yomimasu": I read a book. を is read o.

6. What do you say to greet someone in the morning, and what do you say to get a stranger's attention politely?

▼ Show answer

おはよう (ohayō) in the morning; すみません (sumimasen) to say "excuse me".

Final Challenge — Read a Whole Paragraph

You can now read this short passage in full. Read it aloud, then check the meaning.

わたしはにほんへいきます。

さくらをみます。

それから、すしをかいます。

► Show romaji and meaning

Course Complete — あなたができること

You've finished Hiragana 1. You can now read and write all 46 basic hiragana. Here is the journey:

CHAPTERS

YOU LEARNED...

1–2 · Vowels

How Japanese writing works, and あいうえお.

3–4 · K row

かきくけこ, the softer Japanese k, and your first verbs.

5–6 · S row

さしすせそ, and the "shi" spelling; こ-そ-あ place words.

7–8 · T row

たちつてと, "chi" and "tsu", and your first mini-dialogs.

9–10 · N row

なにぬねの, the possessive の, and ね at the end of a sentence.

CHAPTERS

YOU LEARNED...

11–12 · H row	は ひ ふ へ ほ, and the particles は (wa) and へ (e).
13–14 · M row	ま み む め も, polite ます verbs, and the particle も.
15 · Y row	や ゆ よ, cheap and expensive, and reading with よむ.
16–17 · R row	ら り る れ ろ, the tapped r, ある and いる, colours and numbers.
18 · W and N	わ を ん, the particle を, and the everyday greetings.

In total that's around 200 words, seven little grammar words (は, へ, を, の, も, に, か), the polite ます ending, and the confidence to read short real sentences. Well done: よくできました! (yoku dekimashita, "well done").

What Comes Next — Hiragana 2

The next course, **Hiragana 2**, adds the marks that change sounds: the two small strokes ° (dakuten), which turn か into が, さ into ざ, た into だ and は into ば, and the small circle ° (handakuten), which turns は into ぱ. After that come the combined sounds (きゃ, しゅ, ちょ), the small っ and long vowels. Those unlock words like ありがとう ("thank you"), ごはん ("rice, meal") and ひがし ("east"). Keep reviewing the chart from this course out loud every day, and がんばって! ("good luck, keep it up!").