

JP

HIRAGANA

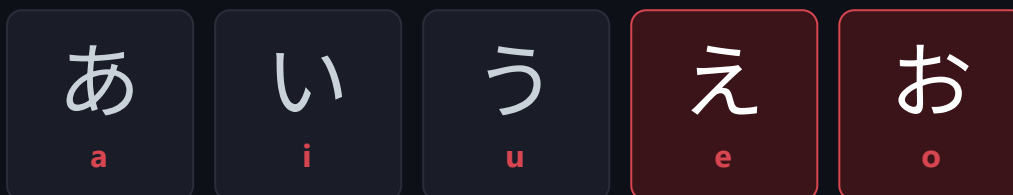
Hiragana 1 · Chapter 2 · The Vowel Row

Hiragana 1

Chapter 2 · The Vowel Row: E O

🌸 Completing the Vowels — あいうえお

In Chapter 1 you learned あ い う. Today you add え and お, which completes the first row of hiragana: the five vowels. You'll also read your first words that use them, including "yes" and "no".



The five Japanese vowels: **a · i · u · e · o**. Japanese children recite this row like English children recite their ABC.

✨ Two New Characters — え お

Remember: each vowel is short, pure and steady. Don't let it glide into a second sound the way English "ay" and "oh" do.

え
e

like the "e" in *bed* ("eh"), short, with no "ee" or "ay" glide

2 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

Memory hook: an emu in profile, with a short head at the top and a long tail sweeping out behind.

お
o

like the "o" in *more* ("oh"), short and pure, no "oo" glide

3 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

Memory hook: a surprised person saying "Oh!", with a little spark at the upper right.

Look-Alike Warning: あ and お

あ (a) and お (o) look alike: both have a horizontal line, a vertical line and a loop. The quick test is the **small dot at the upper right**: お has it, あ doesn't. Check for the dot every time you read

or write one of these two.

The Romaji "e" Is "eh", Never "ee"

In romaji for Japanese, *e* always means the "eh" in *bed*, not the English letter name "ee". So *ie* sounds like "ee-eh", and the word *ee* (ええ, "yes") sounds like "eh-eh" (two short *e* beats), not "ee". That's the one place romaji can mislead an English speaker, so trust the pronunciation hints on this page.

Read It — New Words

Every word below uses only the five vowels. Remember that each character is one beat, so a word of three characters has three beats.

#	WORD	ROMAJI	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	いえ	ie	house, home	<i>i + e, two beats ("ee-eh")</i>
2	うえ	ue	above, on top	<i>u + e, two beats ("oo-eh")</i>
3	あお	ao	blue	<i>a + o, as in "ah-oh"</i>
4	ええ	ee	yes (polite)	<i>"eh-eh", two e beats</i>
5	いいえ	iie	no	<i>three beats: "ee-ee-eh"</i>
6	おい	oi	hey! (informal)	<i>a bit rough, used with close friends</i>

The single characters are words too, little reactions you'll hear all the time:

WORD	ROMAJI	MEANING
あ	a	"Ah!" / "Oh!" (noticing something)

WORD	ROMAJI	MEANING
え	e	"Eh?" / "Really?" (surprise)

Review: Words from Chapter 1

Cover the English and read these again: あい (ai, love) · いい (ii, good) · あう (au, to meet) ·
いう (iu, to say). Regular, short review is how kana stick, so reread the previous chapter's words
at the start of each lesson.

Real Japanese Tip — あいうえお Is Japan's "ABC"

Japanese people learn あいうえお first, and it's also the first row of the order used in Japanese dictionaries and phone contact lists. The full grid you saw in Chapter 1 (*gojūon*) is read in that order: あいうえお → かきくけこ → さしすせそ and so on. Learning the characters in this order, as this course does, means you also learn the alphabetical order for free.

Try It Yourself — れんしゅう

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

1. Say the five vowels in order, with their romaji: あいうえお

▼ Show answer

a · i · u · e · o ("ah, ee, oo, eh, oh").

2. Which of え and お has 3 strokes, and what quick test tells お apart from あ?

▼ Show answer

お has 3 strokes (え has 2). お has a small dot at the upper right; あ doesn't.

3. Read these words and give their meanings: いえ · うえ · あお

▼ Show answer

ie (house) · ue (above) · ao (blue)

4. Write in hiragana: *ie* · *ee* (yes) · *iee* (no)

▼ Show answer

いえ · ええ · いいえ

5. How many beats does いいえ have?

▼ Show answer

Three (one per character: ee-ee-eh).

6. Someone points at a picture and you want to say "Is it blue? Yes." Which of the words from today would you use for "blue" and for "yes"?

▼ Show answer

blue = あお (ao); yes = ええ (ee).

Coming Up in Chapter 3

You've learned the whole vowel row. From now on every new character is a **consonant + vowel**.

Next up: the first consonant row, starting with か き く (ka, ki, ku), and words like かお (face), あか (red) and かう (to buy).