

JP

JAPANESE WRITING COURSE

Hiragana 2

Ten short chapters that teach the 25 voiced and semi-voiced hiragana: the two dots and the little circle, each character a plain one you already know plus a mark, with romaji throughout, real words and phrases from Chapter 1 on (including ありがとうございます), and notes on rendaku and mimetic words. The second course in the Japanese reading series.

10 Chapters

Philip Osztromok

Generated with Claude

Contents

Chapter 1	Ga Gi Gu	2
Chapter 2	Ge Go	7
Chapter 3	Za Ji Zu	11
Chapter 4	Ze Zo	15
Chapter 5	Da Ji Zu	19
Chapter 6	De Do	24
Chapter 7	Ba Bi Bu	28
Chapter 8	Be Bo	32
Chapter 9	Pa Pi Pu	36
Chapter 10	Pe Po	41

Hiragana 2

Chapter 1 · Ga Gi Gu

🌸 Two Tiny Dots — ゛ と が ぎ ぐ

In Hiragana 1 you learned all 46 basic characters. This course adds the rest of the everyday sounds, and it is easier than it sounds: every new character is a character you already know with a small mark added. Today we meet the first mark, ゛ (dakuten, "two dots"), and use it on the K row to make が[゛] (ga), ぎ[゛] (gi) and ぐ[゛] (gu). Romaji is shown for everything.

〜 What the Dakuten Does — 濁点

The **dakuten** is two short strokes at the top right of a character. It changes the consonant from **unvoiced** (no vibration in your throat) to **voiced** (your voice box buzzes): $k \rightarrow g$, $s \rightarrow z$, $t \rightarrow d$, $h \rightarrow b$. The vowel never changes.

PLAIN	WITH ゛	SOUND BEFORE	SOUND NOW
か	が	ka	ga
き	ぎ	ki	gi
く	ぐ	ku	gu

Feel the Difference

Put two fingers on your throat and whisper "k", then say "g". Only the "g" buzzes under your fingers. That buzz is the only difference between か[゛] and が[゛]. The mark itself is small: write it after the main character, as two quick short strokes at the top right (check the stroke-order page for the direction).

	a	i	u	e	o
k	か	き	く	け	こ
g (k + ゛)	が	ぎ	ぐ	げ	ご

The three highlighted characters are today's. が and ご come in Chapter 2.

✨ Three New Characters — が ぎ ぐ

が

ga

like "ga" in *gap*, a hard g
("gah")

5 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

Memory hook: *ka* with its two dots, like a karate fighter shouting "ga!". The three strokes of か plus two for the mark.

ぎ

gi

like "gee" in *geese*, a hard g,
short ("gee")

6 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

Memory hook: a *key* that has grown two dots: き + 丶. The hard g, never as in *giant*.

ぐ

gu

like "goo" in *goose*, relaxed
lips ("goo")

3 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

Memory hook: a *cuckoo's* beak with two dots: く + 丶 (a one-stroke く plus two strokes for the mark).

Always a Hard G

Japanese *g* is always the hard sound of *go* and *get*, never the soft sound of *giant* or *gem*. So ぎ is "gee", like *geese*, and not "jee".

A Softer G in the Middle of a Word

Many Japanese speakers, especially in Tokyo, say the が-row sounds with a soft "ng" (like the end of *sing*) when they appear in the *middle* of a word, so かぎ may sound a little like "ka-ngi". You don't need to copy this: the plain hard "g" is always understood. Just know that you may hear it.

📖 Read It — New Words

You now know all 46 basic hiragana plus three new ones, so you can read many words. Read the Japanese first, then check the romaji.

#	WORD	ROMAJI	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	がくせい	gakusei	student	<i>ga-ku-se-i: the が of ガ-ク</i>
2	ぎんこう	ginkō	bank	<i>gi-n-ko-u: the こう is a long o, more in Hiragana 3</i>
3	えいが	eiga	film, movie	<i>e-i-ga</i>
4	かぎ	kagi	key	<i>ka-gi</i>
5	がいこく	gaikoku	foreign country	<i>ga-i-ko-ku</i>
6	まんが	manga	manga, comic	<i>ma-n-ga</i>
7	めがね	megane	glasses	<i>me-ga-ne</i>
8	かがく	kagaku	science	<i>ka-ga-ku</i>
9	ぐあい	guai	condition, state	<i>gu-a-i: as in "How are you feeling?"</i>
10	がか	gaka	painter, artist	<i>ga-ka</i>

Real Japanese Tip — ん Before が

In words like まんが (manga) and ぎんこう (bank), the ん is a full beat of its own, and it is pronounced slightly differently depending on what follows it. Don't worry about this yet: just give ん a full beat, as you did in Hiragana 1.

Review: Words from Hiragana 1

A quick check that the basics are still there: ありがとう (arigatō, thank you), さようなら (sayōnara, goodbye), にほん (Nihon, Japan). Notice that ありがとう already contains a が, which you could not read as a single character until today.



Try It Yourself — れんしゅう

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

1. What does the dakuten ㇰ do to a consonant?

▼ Show answer

It makes it voiced: k → g, s → z, t → d, h → b. The vowel stays the same.

2. Read aloud: が・ぎ・ぐ

▼ Show answer

ga · gi · gu

3. Read aloud and translate: かぎ・えいが・めがね

▼ Show answer

kagi (key) · eiga (film) · megane (glasses)

4. Read aloud and translate: がくせい・ぎんこう・がいこく

▼ Show answer

gakusei (student) · ginkō (bank) · gaikoku (foreign country)

5. What is the only difference between か and が?

▼ Show answer

The voice: ka is unvoiced; ga is voiced (your throat buzzes).

6. Write in hiragana: kagi · manga · kagaku (check the stroke order).

▼ Show answer

かぎ・まんが・かがく

Coming Up in Chapter 2

The rest of the G row: **げ** (ge) and **ご** (go). You'll be able to read **げんき** (well), **ごはん** (rice, a meal), **たまご** (egg), and a polite phrase you will use often: **ごめんなさい** (I'm sorry).

Hiragana 2

Chapter 2 · Ge Go

🌸 Finishing the G Row — げ ご

Two characters complete the G row: げ (ge) and ご (go), the voiced forms of け and こ. With them you can read your first polite phrases, ごめんなさい and ごちそうさま. Romaji is shown for everything.

PLAIN	WITH ゛	SOUND BEFORE	SOUND NOW
け	げ	ke	ge
こ	ご	ko	go

	a	i	u	e	o
k	か	き	く	け	こ
g (k + ゛)	が	ぎ	ぐ	げ	ご

The two highlighted characters are today's; the G row is now complete.

✨ Two New Characters — げ ご

げ

ge

like "ge" in *get*, a hard g ("geh")

5 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

Memory hook: a *geta*, a wooden sandal: け with its two dots. The three strokes of け plus two for the mark.

ご

go

like "go" in *go*, short ("goh")

4 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

Memory hook: two stones on a board, ready to go: こ with its two dots. Two strokes plus two for the mark.

Three Meanings of ご

The sound *go* turns up all over Japanese. At the start of a word it is often a **polite prefix**, as in ごはん (rice, a meal) and ごちそうさま. In にほんご it means "**language**", as in *Nihon-go* (Japanese). And in ごご it means "**afterwards**", so ごご is the afternoon. Context tells you which one you are looking at.

Read It — New Words

Read the Japanese first, then check the romaji.

#	WORD	ROMAJI	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	げんき	genki	well, healthy, lively	<i>ge-n-ki: you'll hear it in "Ogenki desu ka?"</i>
2	ごはん	gohan	cooked rice; a meal	<i>go-ha-n: ご is a polite prefix here</i>
3	たまご	tamago	egg	<i>ta-ma-go</i>
4	りんご	ringo	apple	<i>ri-n-go</i>
5	にほんご	Nihongo	the Japanese language	<i>ni-ho-n-go: ご means "language" here</i>
6	ごご	gogo	afternoon; p.m.	<i>go-go: the opposite of ごぜん (a.m.)</i>
7	あげる	ageru	to give	<i>a-ge-ru</i>
8	げた	geta	geta (wooden clogs)	<i>ge-ta</i>
9	ごめんなさい	gomennasai	I'm sorry	<i>go-me-n-na-sa-i</i>
10	ごちそうさま	gochisōsama	thank you for the meal	<i>go-chi-sō-sa-ma: said after eating</i>

Real Japanese Tip — ごめんなさい and ごちそうさま

ごめんなさい is the standard way to say "I'm sorry", and ごめん alone is the casual form, for friends. ごちそうさま is said at the end of a meal to thank whoever made or paid for it, and you'll hear it in homes and restaurants all over Japan. The full polite version, ごちそうさまでした, needs the で from Chapter 6.

Review: Chapter 1 Words

Read these again: がくせい (student) · ぎんこう (bank) · えいが (film) · かぎ (key) · がいこく (foreign country) · まんが (manga) · めがね (glasses).

Try It Yourself — れんしゅう

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

1. Read aloud: げ・ご・が・ぎ・ぐ

▼ Show answer

ge · go · ga · gi · gu

2. Read aloud and translate: げんき・ごはん・たまご

▼ Show answer

genki (well) · gohan (rice; a meal) · tamago (egg)

3. Read aloud and translate: りんご・にほんご・ごご

▼ Show answer

ringo (apple) · Nihongo (the Japanese language) · gogo (afternoon)

4. Read aloud and translate: ごめんなさい・ごちそうさま

▼ Show answer

gomennasai (I'm sorry) · gochisōsama (thank you for the meal)

5. What is the difference between こ and こ?

▼ Show answer

こ is ko, unvoiced; こ is go, voiced, and has the two dots.

6. Write in hiragana: *ringo* · *tamago* · *genki* (check the stroke order).

▼ Show answer

りんご · たまご · げんき

Coming Up in Chapter 3

The Z row begins: ざ (za), じ (ji) and ず (zu). Together with what you know already, you'll be able to read ありがとうございます (thank you) and おはようございます (good morning).

Hiragana 2

Chapter 3 · Za Ji Zu

🌸 The Z Row Begins — ざ じ ず

The dakuten goes on the S row now, turning *s* into *z* to make ざ (*za*), じ (*ji*) and ず (*zu*). With these three, one of the most useful phrases in the language is yours: *ありがとうございます*, "thank you". Romaji is shown for everything.

PLAIN	WITH ˆ	SOUND BEFORE	SOUND NOW
さ	ざ	sa	za
し	じ	shi	ji
す	ず	su	zu

	a	i	u	e	o
s	さ	し	す	せ	そ
z (s + ˆ)	ざ	じ	ず	ぜ	ぞ

The three highlighted characters are today's. ゼ and ゾ come in Chapter 4.

✨ Three New Characters — ざ じ ず

ざ

za

like "za" in *pizza* ("zah")

5 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

じ

ji

like "jee" in *jeep*, short ("jee")

3 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

ず

zu

like "zoo", relaxed lips ("zoo")

4 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

Memory hook: a zap: さ with two sparks flying off. Three strokes plus two for the mark.

Memory hook: a fishhook in a downpour: し with two raindrops, *ji* like a *jeep*. One stroke plus two for the mark.

Memory hook: a curly-tailed animal at the zoo: ず with two dots. Two strokes plus two for the mark.

じ Is "Ji", Not "Zi"

Just as し is *shi*, not *si*, じ is *ji*: the English "j" of *jeep*, not the "z" of *zip*. So じかん is "ji-kan" and じしん is "ji-shin". Some romaji systems write it as *zi*, but you'll almost always see *ji*.

A Tiny "D" at the Start

At the start of a word, many speakers put a very light "d" in front of the Z sounds: じず is almost "dza", and ず almost "dzu". Don't worry about this: a plain "z" is always understood.

Read It — New Words

The first two entries are phrases you'll use every day. Read the Japanese first, then check the romaji.

#	WORD	ROMAJI	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	ありがとうございます	arigatō gozaimasu	thank you (polite)	<i>a-ri-ga-tō go-za-i-ma-su: the polite form of ありがとう</i>
2	おはようございます	ohayō gozaimasu	good morning (polite)	<i>o-ha-yō go-za-i-ma-su</i>
3	じかん	jikan	time	<i>ji-ka-n</i>
4	みず	mizu	water	<i>mi-zu</i>
5	じしん	jishin	earthquake	<i>ji-shi-n: a word worth knowing in Japan</i>
6	ひざ	hiza	knee	<i>hi-za</i>

#	WORD	ROMAJI	ENGLISH	NOTE
7	かざん	kazan	volcano	ka-za-n
8	ざんねん	zannen	too bad; a pity	za-n-ne-n
9	じゅう	jyū	freedom	ji-yū: the ゆう is a long u
10	きず	kizu	scratch; wound	ki-zu

Real Japanese Tip — ございます Makes It Polite

ありがとう and おはよう are the casual versions, for friends and family. Add ございます and they become polite, the form to use with strangers, shopkeepers, colleagues and anyone older than you. When in doubt, use the long version: you can hardly be too polite.

Review: Words from Chapter 2

げんき (well) · ごはん (rice; a meal) · たまご (egg) · りんご (apple) · にほんご
(Japanese language) · ごめんなさい (I'm sorry).

Try It Yourself — れんしゅう

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

1. Read aloud: ざ · じ · ず

▼ Show answer

za · ji · zu

2. Read aloud and translate: じかん · みず · じしん

▼ Show answer

jikan (time) · mizu (water) · jishin (earthquake)

3. Read aloud and translate: ひざ · かざん · ざんねん

▼ Show answer

hiza (knee) · kazan (volcano) · zannen (too bad)

4. Read aloud: ありがとうございます . When do you use it instead of ありがとう ?

▼ Show answer

arigatō gozaimasu. Use it with strangers, shop staff, colleagues and elders; ありがとう is for friends and family.

5. How is じ pronounced, and what is the plain character it comes from?

▼ Show answer

ji, like the English "j" of *jeep*; it comes from し (shi).

6. Write in hiragana: mizu · jikan · kizu (check the stroke order).

▼ Show answer

みず · じかん · きず

Coming Up in Chapter 4

The rest of the Z row: ぜ (ze) and ぞ (zo). You'll be able to read かぜ (wind; a cold), ぞう (elephant) and かぞく (family).

Hiragana 2

Chapter 4 · Ze Zo

🌸 Finishing the Z Row — ぜ ぞ

Two characters complete the Z row: ぜ (ze) and ぞ (zo), the voiced forms of せ and ぞ. With them you can read かぞく (family) and かぜ (wind; a cold). Romaji is shown for everything.

PLAIN	WITH ゝ	SOUND BEFORE	SOUND NOW
せ	ぜ	se	ze
そ	ぞ	so	zo

	a	i	u	e	o
s	さ	し	す	せ	そ
z (s + ゝ)	ざ	じ	ず	ぜ	ぞ

The two highlighted characters are today's; the Z row is now complete. Notice that じ is the only one that doesn't sound like a plain "z".

✨ Two New Characters — ぜ ぞ

ぜ

ze

like "ze" in zest ("zeh")

5 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

Memory hook: a zebra: せ with two stripes flying off its back. Three strokes plus two for the mark.

ぞ

zo

like "zo" in zone, short ("zoh")

3 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

Memory hook: a zombie's twisted arm: ぞ with two dots. One stroke plus two for the mark.

The Z Row Is Complete

You now have all five: ざ (za) · じ (ji) · ず (zu) · ぜ (ze) · ぞ (zo). Only じ breaks the pattern, because the plain し is *shi*, not *si*, so its voiced partner is *ji*.

Read It — New Words

Read the Japanese first, then check the romaji.

#	WORD	ROMAJI	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	かぜ	kaze	wind; a cold	<i>ka-ze: the same sound for both meanings, so context decides</i>
2	かぞく	kazoku	family	<i>ka-zo-ku</i>
3	ぞう	zō	elephant	<i>zo-u: the ろ makes a long o</i>
4	ぜひ	zehi	by all means; definitely	<i>ze-hi</i>
5	ぜんぜん	zenzen	not at all	<i>ze-n-ze-n: normally used with a negative</i>
6	ぜんいん	zen'in	everyone; all members	<i>ze-n-i-n</i>
7	ぞうり	zōri	zōri (straw-style sandals)	<i>zo-u-ri</i>
8	かんぜん	kanzen	complete; perfect	<i>ka-n-ze-n</i>
9	ぜいきん	zeikin	tax	<i>ze-i-ki-n</i>
10	みぞ	mizo	ditch; gutter	<i>mi-zo</i>

Real Japanese Tip — ぜんぜん Usually Goes With a Negative

ぜんぜん means "not at all" and is normally paired with a negative ending, as in **ぜんぜん わかりません** ("I don't understand at all"). You'll learn those endings in Japanese Basic Conversation 1. In casual speech young people sometimes use it positively, but a learner should treat it as a negative word.

かぜ: Wind or a Cold?

Both *wind* and *a cold* are pronounced *kaze*. When the word is written in kanji they are different (風 and 風邪), but in hiragana you tell them apart from the sentence.

Review: Words from Chapter 3

ありがとうございます (thank you) · おはようございます (good morning) ·
じかん (time) · みず (water) · じしん (earthquake) · ざんねん (too bad).

Try It Yourself — れんしゅう

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

1. Read aloud: ぜ · ぞ · ざ · じ · ず

▼ Show answer

ze · zo · za · ji · zu

2. Read aloud and translate: かぜ · かぞく · ぞう

▼ Show answer

kaze (wind; a cold) · kazoku (family) · zō (elephant)

3. Read aloud and translate: ぜひ · ぜんぜん · ぜんいん

▼ Show answer

zehi (by all means) · zenzen (not at all) · zen'in (everyone)

4. Which of the five Z-row characters is not pronounced with a plain "z", and why?

▼ Show answer

じ (ji): its plain partner し is *shi*, so the voiced one is *ji*, not *zi*.

5. What do the two meanings of かぜ have in common in speech?

▼ Show answer

They sound identical: *kaze*. Context tells you whether it's wind or a cold.

6. Write in hiragana: *kazoku* · *kaze* · *zahi* (check the stroke order).

▼ Show answer

かぞく · かぜ · ぜひ

Coming Up in Chapter 5

The D row: だ (da), ぢ (ji) and づ (zu), the voiced forms of た ち つ. Two of them are rarely used, but だれ (who) and ともだち (friend) will be readable.

Hiragana 2

Chapter 5 · Da Ji Zu

🌸 The D Row Begins — だ ぢ づ

The dakuten turns *t* into *d*, giving **だ** (da), **ぢ** (ji) and **づ** (zu). One of these is common and two are rare, so this chapter is as much about when you will actually see them as about the shapes. Romaji is shown for everything.

PLAIN	WITH ˆ	SOUND BEFORE	SOUND NOW
た	だ	ta	da
ち	ぢ	chi	ji
つ	づ	tsu	zu

	a	i	u	e	o
t	た	ち	つ	て	と
d (t + ˆ)	だ	ぢ	づ	で	ど

The three highlighted characters are today's. で and ど come in Chapter 6.

✨ Three New Characters — だ ぢ づ

だ

da

like "da" in *father* with a d
("dah")

6 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

ぢ

ji

sounds the same as じ: "jee"

4 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

づ

zu

sounds the same as ず: "zoo"

3 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

Memory hook: *dad* with his bow tie: た with two dots. Four strokes plus two for the mark.

Memory hook: a secret twin of じ: ぢ with two dots, but pronounced exactly like じ. Two strokes plus two for the mark.

Memory hook: a secret twin of ず: づ with two dots, pronounced exactly like ず. One stroke plus two for the mark.

ぢ and づ Sound Exactly Like じ and ず

In modern standard Japanese, ぢ is pronounced *ji* and づ is pronounced *zu*, the same as じ and ず. So why do they exist? Mostly for historical reasons, and for a few special cases (below). In everyday writing you'll see じ and ず about a hundred times for every ぢ and づ. Learn to *recognise* them; you'll rarely need to *write* them.

When ぢ and づ Are Used: Rendaku

When two words join into one, the first sound of the second word often becomes voiced. This is called **rendaku**. So はな (nose) + ち (blood) = はなぢ (nosebleed), and つづく (to continue) repeats つ and voices the second. Rendaku also explains many だ words: とも + たち = ともだち (friend), and て + かみ = てがみ (letter). When you see a voiced sound in the middle of a compound, rendaku is usually why.

Read It — New Words

The first two entries are phrases you will hear all the time. Read the Japanese first, then check the romaji.

#	WORD	ROMAJI	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	いただきます	itadakimasu	(said before eating)	<i>i-ta-da-ki-ma-su: said before a meal, like "let's eat"</i>
2	ただいま	tadaima	I'm home	<i>ta-da-i-ma: said when you arrive home</i>
3	ともだち	tomodachi	friend	<i>to-mo-da-chi: rendaku, とも + たち</i>
4	だれ	dare	who	<i>da-re</i>

#	WORD	ROMAJI	ENGLISH	NOTE
5	からだ	karada	body	<i>ka-ra-da</i>
6	だいがく	daigaku	university	<i>da-i-ga-ku</i>
7	だめ	dame	no good; not allowed	<i>da-me: you will hear it a lot</i>
8	つづく	tsuzuku	to continue	<i>tsu-zu-ku: つ, pronounced zu</i>
9	はなぢ	hanaji	nosebleed	<i>ha-na-ji: ぢ, pronounced ji</i>
10	ちぢむ	chijimu	to shrink	<i>chi-ji-mu: ぢ again</i>

Real Japanese Tip — いただきます and ごちそうさま

いただきます is said before a meal and ごちそうさま (from Chapter 2) after it. Together they frame every meal in Japan, at home, in restaurants and even in school canteens. And ただいま ("I'm home") is answered by おかえり ("welcome back").

Typing ぢ and づ

On a Japanese keyboard in romaji mode, *ji* gives じ and *zu* gives ず. To type ぢ you usually type *di*, and for づ you type *du*.

Review: Words from Chapter 4

かぜ (wind; a cold) · かぞく (family) · ぞう (elephant) · ぜひ (by all means) · ぜんぜん (not at all) · かんぜん (complete).

Try It Yourself — れんしゅう

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

1. Read aloud: だ・ぢ・づ

▼ Show answer

da · ji · zu

2. Read aloud and translate: ともだち・だれ・からだ

▼ Show answer

tomodachi (friend) · dare (who) · karada (body)

3. Read aloud: いただきます・ただいま. When do you say each?

▼ Show answer

itadakimasu: before eating. tadaima: when you get home.

4. How are ぢ and づ pronounced, and how common are they?

▼ Show answer

Like じ (ji) and ず (zu). They are rare: mostly rendaku (はなぢ) and repeated sounds (つづく, ちぢむ).

5. What is rendaku? Give one example from this chapter.

▼ Show answer

A joined word's second part gets a voiced first sound: とも + たち = ともだち; はな + ち = はなぢ; て + かみ = てがみ.

6. Write in hiragana: daigaku · tsuzuku · dame (check the stroke order).

▼ Show answer

だいがく・つづく・だめ

Coming Up in Chapter 6

The rest of the D row: で (de) and ど (do). You'll be able to read でんわ (telephone), どこ (where), どうぞ (please, go ahead) and おげんきですか (how are you?).

Hiragana 2

Chapter 6 · De Do

🌸 Finishing the D Row — で ど

Two characters complete the D row: で (de) and ど (do). They give you one of the most important words in Japanese, です ("is / am / are"), so from here you can start reading real sentences. Romaji is shown for everything.

PLAIN	WITH ゝ	SOUND BEFORE	SOUND NOW
て	で	te	de
と	ど	to	do

	a	i	u	e	o
t	た	ち	つ	て	と
d (t + ゝ)	だ	ぢ	づ	で	ど

The two highlighted characters are today's; the D row is now complete.

✨ Two New Characters — で ど

で

de

like "de" in *desk* ("deh")

3 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

Memory hook: a dentist's hook with two cotton balls: て with two dots. One stroke plus two for the mark.

ど

do

like "do" in *dome*, short ("doh")

4 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

Memory hook: a door's latch with two bolts: と with two dots. Two strokes plus two for the mark.

です: Your First Sentence Ending

です (*desu*) is the polite "is / am / are". *げんきです* means "I'm well", and *かぐせいです* means "I'm a student". Add *か* and it becomes a question: *おげんきですか* means "Are you well?". Notice that the final *u* of です is often barely pronounced, so it sounds like "dess".

Read It — New Words

The first three entries are polite phrases. Read the Japanese first, then check the romaji.

#	WORD	ROMAJI	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	です	desu	is; am; are (polite)	<i>de-su</i> : the <i>u</i> is nearly silent
2	おげんきですか	ogenki desu ka	How are you?	<i>o-ge-n-ki de-su ka</i> : lit. "are you well?"
3	ごちそうさまでした	gochisōsama deshita	thank you for the meal	the full polite form; <i>でした</i> is the past of <i>です</i>
4	どうぞ	dōzo	please; go ahead	<i>do-u-zo</i> : when offering or inviting
5	どうも	dōmo	thanks; hello (short)	<i>do-u-mo</i> : a short, informal thanks
6	どこ	doko	where	<i>do-ko</i>
7	でんわ	denwa	telephone	<i>de-n-wa</i>
8	でぐち	deguchi	exit	<i>de-gu-chi</i> : you'll see it on signs
9	でんき	denki	electricity; electric light	<i>de-n-ki</i>
10	おでん	oden	oden (hot-pot stew)	<i>o-de-n</i> : a winter street- food favourite

Real Japanese Tip — Answering おげんきですか

The usual reply is はい、げんきです ("Yes, I'm well"), and you can return the question with あなたは？ ("And you?"). The ですか form is the polite choice for strangers and colleagues; with friends you can simply ask げんき？.

どこですか: Where Is It?

どこ is "where", so でぐち/はどこですか means "Where is the exit?". You'll meet this pattern properly in the Japanese Basic Conversation course. For now you can recognise it, and you'll never be lost in a station again.

Review: Words from Chapter 5

いただきます (said before eating) · ただいま (I'm home) · ともだち (friend) · だれ (who) · からだ (body) · だいがく (university).

Try It Yourself — れんしゅう

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

1. Read aloud: で · ど · だ · ぢ · づ

▼ Show answer

de · do · da · ji · zu

2. Read aloud and translate: どこ · でんわ · でぐち

▼ Show answer

doko (where) · denwa (telephone) · deguchi (exit)

3. Read aloud and translate: どうぞ · どうも

▼ Show answer

dōzo (please; go ahead) · dōmo (thanks)

4. What does です mean, and what does adding か do?

▼ Show answer

です = is/am/are (polite). Adding か makes it a question: おげんきですか = Are you well?

5. Read aloud and translate: ごちそうさまでした

▼ Show answer

gochisōsama deshita: thank you for the meal (the full polite form).

6. Write in hiragana: *desu* · *denwa* · *doko* (check the stroke order).

▼ Show answer

です · でんわ · どこ

Coming Up in Chapter 7

The B row: ば (ba), び (bi) and ぶ (bu), the voiced forms of は ひ ふ. You'll be able to read こんばんは (good evening) and ぶた (pig).

Hiragana 2

Chapter 7 · Ba Bi Bu

🌸 The B Row Begins — ば び ぶ

The dakuten turns **h** into **b**, giving **ば** (ba), **び** (bi) and **ぶ** (bu). This chapter also solves a small puzzle: why the greeting こんにちは ends in a character you'd read ha but say wa. Romaji is shown for everything.

PLAIN	WITH ゝ	SOUND BEFORE	SOUND NOW
は	ば	ha	ba
ひ	び	hi	bi
ふ	ぶ	fu	bu

	a	i	u	e	o
h	は	ひ	ふ	へ	ほ
b (h + ゝ)	ば	び	ぶ	べ	ぼ

The three highlighted characters are today's. べ and ぼ come in Chapter 8.

✨ Three New Characters — ば び ぶ

ば

ba

like "ba" in *bar* ("bah")

5 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

び

bi

like "bee", short ("bee")

3 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

ぶ

bu

like "boo", relaxed lips ("boo")

6 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

Memory hook: a *bat* with two flapping wings: 𐤁 with two dots. Three strokes plus two for the mark.

Memory hook: a *bee* with two buzzing marks: 𐤃 with two dots. One stroke plus two for the mark.

Memory hook: a ghost going *boo*: 𐤅 with two dots. Four strokes plus two for the mark.

Why Is H Voiced Into B?

The H row is unusual: the dakuten turns it into **b**, not into a "voiced h". Linguists believe that in Old Japanese the H row was pronounced with a *p* sound, which explains why this row is the only one with *two* marks: 𐤁 gives *ba bi bu* (this chapter) and 𐤃 gives *pa pi pu* (Chapter 9).

Read It — New Words

Read the Japanese first, then check the romaji.

#	WORD	ROMAJI	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	こんばんは	konbanwa	good evening	<i>ko-n-ba-n-wa</i> : the last 𐤁 is read "wa"
2	ばんごう	bangō	number	<i>ba-n-go-u</i> : as in a phone number
3	ばんごはん	bangohan	dinner; evening meal	<i>ba-n-go-ha-n</i> : ばん + ごはん
4	かばん	kaban	bag	<i>ka-ba-n</i>
5	あぶない	abunai	dangerous; careful!	<i>a-bu-na-i</i> : you'll see it on warning signs
6	ぶどう	budō	grapes	<i>bu-do-u</i>
7	ぶた	buta	pig	<i>bu-ta</i>
8	ばら	bara	rose	<i>ba-ra</i>

#	WORD	ROMAJI	ENGLISH	NOTE
9	ゆびわ	yubiwa	ring (jewellery)	<i>yu-bi-wa</i>
10	さびしい	sabishii	lonely	<i>sa-bi-shi-i: the し is a long i</i>

Real Japanese Tip — Why こんにちは Ends in は

こんにちは (good day) and こんにちは (good evening) both end in は, but it is pronounced **wa**, not *ha*. These greetings were once the start of a longer sentence in which は was the particle meaning "as for", and the spelling stayed even though the sentence was dropped. The particle は (read *wa*) is coming in Hiragana 3.

A Handy Pair

こんにちは is for daytime, こんにちは for evening, and おはようございます for morning. Put them together with ありがとうございます and どうぞ and you can greet and thank anyone politely.

Review: Words from Chapter 6

です (is; am; are) · どこ (where) · でんわ (telephone) · でぐち (exit) · どうぞ (please) · どうも (thanks).

Try It Yourself — れんしゅう

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

1. Read aloud: ば · び · ぶ

▼ Show answer

ba · bi · bu

2. Read aloud and translate: かばん · ぶた · ばら

▼ Show answer

kaban (bag) · buta (pig) · bara (rose)

3. Read aloud and translate: ぶどう · ゆびわ · あぶない

▼ Show answer

budō (grapes) · yubiwa (ring) · abunai (dangerous)

4. Read aloud: こんばんは. How is the last character pronounced?

▼ Show answer

konbanwa. The final は is read wa, not ha.

5. Which consonant does the dakuten make from the H row?

▼ Show answer

B: は → ば, ひ → び, ふ → ぶ.

6. Write in hiragana: *kaban* · *buta* · *bangō* (check the stroke order).

▼ Show answer

かばん · ぶた · ばんごう

Coming Up in Chapter 8

The rest of the B row: べ (be) and ぼ (bo). You'll be able to read たべる (to eat), お弁当 (lunch box) and ぼく (I, said by a man or boy).

Hiragana 2

Chapter 8 · Be Bo

🌸 Finishing the B Row — べ ぼ

Two characters complete the B row: べ (be) and ぼ (bo), the voiced forms of へ and ほ. They give you the verb **たべる** ("to eat") and the lunch-box word **お弁当**, both of which turn up everywhere in Japan. Romaji is shown for everything.

PLAIN	WITH ゛	SOUND BEFORE	SOUND NOW
へ	べ	he	be
ほ	ぼ	ho	bo

	a	i	u	e	o
h	は	ひ	ふ	へ	ほ
b (h + ゛)	ば	び	ぶ	べ	ぼ

The two highlighted characters are today's; the B row is now complete.

✨ Two New Characters — べ ぼ

べ

be

like "be" in *bet* ("beh")

3 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

Memory hook: a beach hill with two beach balls:
へ with two dots. One stroke plus two for the mark.

ぼ

bo

like "bo" in *boat*, short ("boh")

6 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

Memory hook: a boat with two flags on its mast:
ほ with two dots. Four strokes plus two for the mark.

A Verb at Last: たべる

たべる (*taberu*) means "to eat". Like every Japanese dictionary-form verb it ends in *-u* (here る). Its polite form, たべます (*tabemasu*), is the one you'll use when speaking. Put the two together with い ただきます and ごちそうさま from earlier chapters and you can handle a whole meal.

Read It — New Words

Read the Japanese first, then check the romaji.

#	WORD	ROMAJI	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	たべる	taberu	to eat	<i>ta-be-ru: dictionary form</i>
2	たべもの	tabemono	food	<i>ta-be-mo-no: lit. "eating thing"</i>
3	お弁当	obentō	boxed lunch	<i>o-be-n-to-u: the どう is a long o</i>
4	べんり	benri	convenient	<i>be-n-ri: a favourite word for shops and gadgets</i>
5	べつ	betsu	different; separate	<i>be-tsu</i>
6	かべ	kabe	wall	<i>ka-be</i>
7	ぼく	boku	I (used by boys and men)	<i>bo-ku: casual</i>
8	ぼうし	bōshi	hat; cap	<i>bo-u-shi</i>
9	ぼうけん	bōken	adventure	<i>bo-u-ke-n</i>
10	ぼんやり	bon'yari	vaguely; absent-mindedly	<i>bo-n-ya-ri: a good word for a Monday morning</i>

Real Japanese Tip — ぼく or わたし?

ぼく is a casual word for "I" used by boys and men, and you'll hear it a lot in anime. In real life the safe choice for any learner is わたし, which is polite and neutral for everyone. Use わたし with strangers, at work and in shops, and keep ぼく for hearing, not saying, until you know the setting.

おべんとう in Everyday Life

おべんとう is the packed lunch that children take to school and workers buy at stations. The お is a polite prefix, just like the ご in ごはん. Look for them in convenience stores: おべんとう and おにぎり (rice balls) are the quickest meal in Japan.

Review: Words from Chapter 7

こんばんは (good evening) · ばんごう (number) · かばん (bag) · あぶない (dangerous) · ぶどう (grapes) · ぶた (pig).



Try It Yourself — れんしゅう

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

1. Read aloud: ベ · ぼ · ば · び · ぶ

▼ Show answer

be · bo · ba · bi · bu

2. Read aloud and translate: たべる · たべもの · おべんとう

▼ Show answer

taberu (to eat) · tabemono (food) · obentō (boxed lunch)

3. Read aloud and translate: べんり · かべ · ぼうし

▼ Show answer

benri (convenient) · kabe (wall) · bōshi (hat)

4. Which word for "I" is safest for a learner: **ぼく** or **わたし**?

▼ Show answer

わたし (watashi): polite and neutral for everyone. **ぼく** is casual and male.

5. What is the polite form of **たべる**?

▼ Show answer

たべます (tabemasu).

6. Write in hiragana: *taberu* · *obentō* · *boku* (check the stroke order).

▼ Show answer

たべる · おべんとう · ぼく

Coming Up in Chapter 9

The P row, using the other mark, the little circle ° (*handakuten*): **ぱ** (pa), **ぴ** (pi) and **ぷ** (pu). You'll be able to read **えんぴつ** (pencil), **さんぷん** (three minutes) and **ぱん** (bread).

Hiragana 2

Chapter 9 · Pa Pi Pu

🌸 The Little Circle ° — ぱ ぴ ぷ

Here is the second mark: the little circle ° (handakuten, or maru, "circle"). It works on the H row only, turning **h** into **p**, to give **ぱ** (pa), **ぴ** (pi) and **ぷ** (pu). P sounds are rarer in native Japanese words than the sounds you've learned so far, so this chapter also shows you where to expect them. Romaji is shown for everything.

PLAIN	WITH °	SOUND BEFORE	SOUND NOW
は	ぱ	ha	pa
ひ	ぴ	hi	pi
ふ	ぷ	fu	pu

	a	i	u	e	o
h	は	ひ	ふ	へ	ほ
p (h + °)	ぱ	ぴ	ぷ	ぺ	ぽ

The three highlighted characters are today's. ぺ and ぽ come in Chapter 10.

✨ Three New Characters — ぱ ぴ ぷ

ぱ

pa

like "pa" in *papa* ("pah")

4 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

ぴ

pi

like "pea", short ("pee")

2 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

ぷ

pu

like "poo" in *pool*, relaxed lips
("poo")

5 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

Memory hook: a parachute: は with a small round canopy. Three strokes plus one for the circle.

Memory hook: a pea beside a pod: び with a small round pea. One stroke plus one for the circle.

Memory hook: a poodle with a round pom-pom: ふ with a small circle. Four strokes plus one for the circle.

Two Marks, Two Jobs

The two dots ˆ (dakuten) *voice* a consonant: k→g, s→z, t→d, h→b. The little circle ° (handakuten) has just one job: h→p. Only the H row ever takes the circle. The circle is written as one small, round stroke at the top right.

Where You'll Meet P Sounds

Native Japanese words rarely start with p. You'll find it in three places: **mimetic words** that imitate sounds and looks (ぴかぴか, shiny; ばくばく, munching), **numbers and counters** after ん (さんぷん, 3 minutes) and, above all, **foreign loanwords**, which are written in katakana, as in パン (bread); the katakana versions of ˆ and ° come in Katakana 2.

Read It — New Words

Read the Japanese first, then check the romaji.

#	WORD	ROMAJI	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	えんぴつ	enpitsu	pencil	e-n-pi-tsu
2	さんぷん	sanpun	three minutes	sa-n-pu-n: ふん (minute) becomes ぷん after ん
3	よんぷん	yonpun	four minutes	yo-n-pu-n: the same change
4	ぱん	pan	bread	pa-n: usually written パン in katakana, but this is how it sounds
5	ぱぱ	papa	dad; daddy	pa-pa

#	WORD	ROMAJI	ENGLISH	NOTE
6	ぴかぴか	pikapika	shiny; sparkling	<i>pi-ka-pi-ka: a mimetic word</i>
7	ぱくぱく	pakupaku	munch munch (eating)	<i>pa-ku-pa-ku: a mimetic word</i>
8	おんぷ	onpu	musical note	<i>o-n-pu</i>
9	てんぷら	tenpura	tempura	<i>te-n-pu-ra</i>
10	ぶんぶん	punpun	fuming; angry (mimetic)	<i>pu-n-pu-n</i>

Real Japanese Tip — Minutes: ぶん or ぷん?

The word for "minute" is ぶん, but after a number ending in ん it changes to ぷん: さんぷん (3 minutes), よんぷん (4 minutes). After ご (5) and に (2) it stays ぶん: ごぶん, にぶん. You'll practise this properly when you reach telling the time in Japanese Basic Conversation 1.

Mimetic Words Are Fun

Japanese has thousands of *mimetic* words that imitate sounds and states, such as ぴかぴか (shiny), ぱくぱく (eating with big bites) and ぶんぶん (steaming with anger). They're usually repeated syllables, so they're easy to read and a good place to practise the P row.

Review: Words from Chapter 8

たべる (to eat) ・ たべもの (food) ・ おべんとう (boxed lunch) ・ べんり
(convenient) ・ かべ (wall) ・ ぼうし (hat).



Try It Yourself — れんしゅう

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

1. Read aloud: ぱ・ぴ・ぷ

▼ Show answer

pa · pi · pu

2. Read aloud and translate: えんぴつ・てんぷら・おんぷ

▼ Show answer

enpitsu (pencil) · tempura (tempura) · onpu (musical note)

3. Read aloud and translate: さんぷん・よんぷん

▼ Show answer

sanpun (3 minutes) · yonpun (4 minutes)

4. Which row can take the little circle °, and which consonant results?

▼ Show answer

Only the H row: h → p (は→ぱ, ひ→ぴ, ふ→ぷ).

5. Read aloud and translate: ぴかぴか・ぱくぱく

▼ Show answer

pikapika (shiny) · pakupaku (munch munch)

6. Write in hiragana: *enpitsu* · *papa* · *pikapika* (check the stroke order).

▼ Show answer

えんぴつ・ぱぱ・ぴかぴか

Coming Up in Chapter 10

The last two characters of the course: へ (pe) and ぽ (po), plus a **Course Complete** recap. You'll be able to read さんぽ (a walk) and たんぽぽ (dandelion).

Hiragana 2

Chapter 10 · Pe Po

🌸 Finishing the P Row — ペ ぽ

The last two characters of the course: ペ (pe) and ぽ (po), the semi-voiced forms of へ and ぽ. After this chapter you know every voiced and semi-voiced hiragana. Romaji is shown for everything.

PLAIN	WITH °	SOUND BEFORE	SOUND NOW
へ	ペ	he	pe
ほ	ぽ	ho	po

	a	i	u	e	o
h	は	ひ	ふ	へ	ほ
p (h + °)	ぱ	ぴ	ぷ	ペ	ぽ

The two highlighted characters are today's; the P row is now complete.

✨ Two New Characters — ペ ぽ

pe

like "pe" in *pen* ("peh")

2 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

Memory hook: a peak with a small round pearl on its side: へ with a circle. One stroke plus one for the circle.

po

like "po" in *pony*, short ("poh")

5 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

Memory hook: a post with a round pompom on top: ほ with a circle. Four strokes plus one for the circle.



Read It — New Words

Mostly mimetic words and everyday favourites. Read the Japanese first, then check the romaji.

#	WORD	ROMAJI	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	さんぽ	sanpo	a walk; a stroll	<i>sa-n-po: the usual word for a leisurely walk</i>
2	たんぽぽ	tanpopo	dandelion	<i>ta-n-po-po</i>
3	ぺらぺら	perapera	fluent (in a language)	<i>pe-ra-pe-ra: "He's ぺらぺら in Japanese!"</i>
4	ぺこぺこ	pekopeko	starving (stomach rumbling)	<i>pe-ko-pe-ko: おなかが ぺこぺこ = "I'm starving"</i>
5	ぽかぽか	pokapoka	nice and warm	<i>po-ka-po-ka: a lovely sunny-day word</i>
6	ぽたぽた	potapota	drip, drip	<i>po-ta-po-ta</i>
7	ぺたぺた	petapeta	sticky; patting	<i>pe-ta-pe-ta</i>
8	ぽつぽつ	potsupotsu	spots; scattered drops	<i>po-tsu-po-tsu</i>
9	ぽん	pon	pop; a light tap	<i>po-n</i>
10	ぺん	pen	pen	<i>pe-n: usually written ペン in katakana</i>

Real Japanese Tip — おなかが ぺこぺこ

おなかが ぺこぺこ ("my stomach is peko-peko") is a very natural way to say "I'm starving". The おなかが is "stomach", が marks it as the subject, and ぺこぺこ is the rumbling feeling. Mimetic words like this are everywhere in spoken Japanese and in manga.

The Full Chart Is in Your Hands

With ペ and ぽ, every cell of the voiced chart is filled. Remember the one real surprise: ぢ and づ sound like じ and ず, and じ is *ji*, not *zi*. Everything else is just a plain character you already knew plus ̀ or ゜.

Review: Words from Chapter 9

えんぴつ (pencil) · さんぷん (3 minutes) · ぱん (bread) · ぱぱ (dad) · ぴかぴか (shiny) · てんぷら (tempura).

Try It Yourself — れんしゅう

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

1. Read aloud: ペ · ぽ · ぱ · ぴ · ぷ

▼ Show answer

pe · po · pa · pi · pu

2. Read aloud and translate: さんぽ · たんぽぽ

▼ Show answer

sanpo (a walk) · tanpopo (dandelion)

3. Read aloud and translate: ぺらぺら · ぽかぽか · ぽたぽた

▼ Show answer

perapera (fluent) · pokapoka (warm) · potapota (drip, drip)

4. What does おなかが ペこペこ mean?

▼ Show answer

I'm starving: lit. "my stomach is peko-peko".

5. Which of the 25 characters you have learned sound the same as another, and which?

▼ Show answer

ぢ sounds like じ (ji) and づ sounds like ず (zu).

6. Write in hiragana: sanpo · tanpopo · perapera (check the stroke order).

▼ Show answer

さんぽ・たんぽぽ・ぺらぺら

🎓 Course Complete — おめでとう！

You have learned all 25 voiced and semi-voiced hiragana. Here is the whole chart, every one of them one of the basic characters with a mark.

	a	i	u	e	o
k → g	が	ぎ	ぐ	げ	ご
s → z	ざ	じ	ず	ぜ	ぞ
t → d	だ	ぢ	づ	で	ど
h → b	ば	び	ぶ	べ	ぼ
h → p	ぱ	ぴ	ぷ	ぺ	ぽ

Read across each row: the plain row from Hiragana 1 plus the mark gives the row shown. ぢ and づ sound like じ and ず.

CHAPTER

NEW CHARACTERS

YOU CAN NOW...

1

が ぎ ぐ

You can now explain what “ ” does and read がくせい, えいが.

2

げ ご

You can now read げんき, ごはん, ごめんなさい.

CHAPTER	NEW CHARACTERS	YOU CAN NOW...
3	ざ じ ず	You can now read ありがとうございます, おはようございます.
4	ぜ ぞ	You can now read かぜ, かぞく, ぞう.
5	だ ぢ づ	You can now read いただきます, ともだち, and explain rendaku.
6	で ど	You can now read です, どこ, でんわ.
7	ば び ぶ	You can now read こんばんは, かばん, ぶどう.
8	べ ぼ	You can now read たべる, おべんとう, ぼく.
9	ぱ ぴ ぷ	You can now explain ° and read えんぴつ, さんぶん.
10	ぺ ぽ	You can now read さんぽ, たんぽぽ, ぺらぺら.

What Next?

Next is **Hiragana 3**, the last hiragana course: the small つ (double consonants), long vowels, the combined sounds (きゃ, しゅ, ちょ ...) and the particles は へ を. After that you can start **Japanese Basic Conversation 1** with a full set of hiragana behind you.