

JP

HIRAGANA

Hiragana 2 · Chapter 1 · Ga Gi Gu

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🌸 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: ぎ + 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: ぐ + 丶 (a one-stroke ぐ 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).