

JP

HIRAGANA

Hiragana 3 · Chapter 3 · Kya Kyu Kyo

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🌸 Combined Sounds I — きゃ きゅ きょ and ぎゃ ぎゅ ぎょ

Now the third and last big idea in Hiragana 3: **combined sounds**. They look new, but they are the same trick as before: a character you know, plus a small mark of its own. This chapter introduces the rule with the K and G rows, six sounds in all. Romaji is shown for everything.

✖ The Rule — 拗音

A **combined sound** (yōon) is made from an **い-row character** plus a **small や, ゆ or よ**. The small character is written about half size, low and to the right, and the two together make **one beat**:
き + や = きゃ (kya).

	ゃ (YA)	ゅ (YU)	ょ (YO)
き (ki)	きゃ kya	きゅ kyu	きょ kyo
ぎ (gi)	ぎゃ gya	ぎゅ gyu	ぎょ gyo

Today: the K and G rows. Other rows follow in the next chapters, using exactly the same pattern.

きゃ

kya

"kya" in one beat, like the start of *Kyoto* with an "ah"

[stroke order ▶](#)

Memory hook: *kya!*, the startled cry in a manga. き + small や.

きゅ

kyu

"kyu" in one beat, like *cue*

[stroke order ▶](#)

Memory hook: *kyu*, the sound of something adorable. き + small ゆ.

きょ

kyo

"kyo" in one beat, like the start of *Kyoto*

[stroke order ▶](#)

Memory hook: *kyo* in *Kyoto*. き + small よ.

ぎゃ

gya

"gya" in one beat, a hard g
plus "ya"

[stroke order ▶](#)

Memory hook: *gya!*, a scream.
ぎ + small や.

ぎゅ

gyu

"gyu" in one beat

[stroke order ▶](#)

Memory hook: *gyū* in
gyūniku, beef. ぎ + small ゆ.

ぎょ

gyo

"gyo" in one beat

[stroke order ▶](#)

Memory hook: *gyo* in *gyōza*.
ぎ + small よ.

One Beat or Two? — きゃ versus きや

Size decides: きゃ (small や) is one beat, *kya*. きや (full-size や) is two beats, *ki-ya*. Say them out loud and tap: きゃ is one tap, きや is two. The same goes for ゆ/ゅ and よ/ょ.

TWO BEATS

SAY IT

ONE BEAT

SAY IT

きゃ

ki-ya

きゃ

kya

きよ

ki-yo

きよ

kyo

Link to Chapter 2: よう and ゆう

Combined sounds are very often followed by う, which makes a long vowel: よう = **long ō** (きょう = kyō) and ゆう = **long ū** (きゅうり = kyūri). Notice the macron in the romaji: *Kyōto*, *gyōza*, *gyūniku*.

Read It — New Words

Read the Japanese first, then check the romaji. Remember: each combined sound is one beat.

#	WORD	ROMAJI	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	きょう	kyō	today	<i>kyo-u: よう is a long o, as in Chapter 2</i>
2	きょうと	Kyōto	Kyoto	<i>kyō-to</i>
3	きゃく	kyaku	guest; customer	<i>kya-ku</i>
4	きょうしつ	kyōshitsu	classroom	<i>kyō-shi-tsu</i>
5	きょうだい	kyōdai	brothers and sisters; siblings	<i>kyō-da-i</i>
6	きょねん	kyonen	last year	<i>kyo-ne-n</i>
7	ぎゅうにく	gyūniku	beef	<i>gyū-ni-ku: ゅう is a long u</i>
8	ぎょうざ	gyōza	gyoza (dumplings)	<i>gyō-za</i>
9	きゅうり	kyūri	cucumber	<i>kyū-ri</i>
10	ぎゃく	gyaku	opposite; reverse	<i>gya-ku</i>

Real Japanese Tip — きょうはいいてんきです

きょう (today) is one of the most useful words for a beginner. きょうはいいてんきです means "It's nice weather today": きょう (today) + は (as for) + いい (good) + てんき (weather) + です. You can already read every character in it.

Review: Words from the Last Chapter

おかあさん (mother) · おとうさん (father) · せんせい (teacher) · ありがとう (thank you) · おおきい (big) · とおい (far).

Try It Yourself — れんしゅう

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

1. How many beats are in きや, and how many in きや?

▼ Show answer

きや: one (kya). きや: two (ki-ya).

2. What does the small や ゆ よ do?

▼ Show answer

It joins the character before it (an い-row character) into one combined sound: き + や = kya.

3. Read aloud and translate: きょう・きょうと・きやく

▼ Show answer

kyō (today) · Kyōto (Kyoto) · kyaku (guest)

4. Read aloud and translate: ぎゅうにく・ぎょうざ・きゅうり

▼ Show answer

gyūniku (beef) · gyōza (gyoza) · kyūri (cucumber)

5. What is the sound of ょう at the end of a word like きょう?

▼ Show answer

A long ō: kyō (kyo + a long o).

6. Write in hiragana: kyō · kyōdai · gyōza (check the small よ).

▼ Show answer

きょう・きょうだい・ぎょうざ

Coming Up in Chapter 4

The same rule on two more rows: **しゃ しゅ しょ** and **じゃ じゅ じょ**. You'll be able to read **しゃしん** (photo), **しゅみ** (hobby) and **じょうず** (skilled).