

JP

HIRAGANA

Hiragana 3 · Chapter 5 · Cha Chu Cho

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🌸 Combined Sounds III — ちゃ ちゅ ちょ and にゃ にゅ にょ

Two more rows with the same rule: ち and に plus a small や, ゅ or ょ. With these six you can read the word for tea, the country China, and the most useful word in the whole language for a learner, ちよつと. Romaji is shown for everything.

✳️ The Rule Again — 拗音

The same rule on two more rows: an い-row character + a small や, ゅ or ょ = **one beat**. Today: ち and に. Note that ち is chi, so ちゃ is cha, not "chya".

	や (YA)	ゅ (YU)	ょ (YO)
ち (chi)	ちゃ cha	ちゅ chu	ちょ cho
に (ni)	にゃ nya	にゅ nyu	にょ nyo

The pattern is always: the first sound of the い-row character, plus ya, yu or yo. With ち, the "ch" takes the place of the y.

ちゃ

cha

"cha" in one beat, like *cha-cha*

[stroke order ▶](#)

Memory hook: cha as in *ocha*, tea. ち + small や.

ちゅ

chu

"chu" in one beat, like *chew*

[stroke order ▶](#)

Memory hook: chu, the sound of a kiss in manga. ち + small ゅ.

ちょ

cho

"cho" in one beat, like *choke*

[stroke order ▶](#)

Memory hook: cho as in *chotto*, a little. ち + small ょ.

にや

nya

"nya" in one beat, like the start of *canyon*

[stroke order ▶](#)

Memory hook: *nya-a*, a cat's meow. に + small や.

にゅ

nyu

"nyu" in one beat, like *new* said with a y

[stroke order ▶](#)

Memory hook: *nyū*, like the *new* in *news*. に + small ゆ.

によ

nyo

"nyo" in one beat

[stroke order ▶](#)

Memory hook: *nyo* in *nyoro-nyoro*, wriggling. に + small よ.

Cats Say にゃあ

In Japanese a cat says にゃあ (*nyā*), not "meow". It's a good way to remember にゃ. And ちゅ is the sound of a quick kiss, ちゅっ, which you'll see in manga.

TWO BEATS

SAY IT

ONE BEAT

SAY IT

にゃ

ni-ya

にゃ

nya

ちよう

chi-yō

ちよう

chō

Long Vowels with ちゅう and にゅう

ちゅう and にゅう are long ū sounds, as you'd expect from Chapter 2: ちゅうごく (China) is *Chū-go-ku*, and にゅうがく is *nyū-ga-ku*. Both are very common in compound words.

Read It — New Words

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

#	WORD	ROMAJI	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	おちゃ	ocha	(green) tea	<i>o-cha</i> : the お is polite

#	WORD	ROMAJI	ENGLISH	NOTE
2	ちゃいろ	chairo	brown	<i>cha-i-ro: lit. "tea colour"</i>
3	ちゃわん	chawan	rice bowl; teacup	<i>cha-wa-n</i>
4	ちょっと	chotto	a little; just a moment	<i>cho-t-to: small</i> つ after ちょ
5	ちょうど	chōdo	exactly; just	<i>chō-do</i>
6	ちゅうごく	Chūgoku	China	<i>chū-go-ku</i>
7	ちゅうもん	chūmon	an order (at a restaurant)	<i>chū-mo-n: you'll use it when ordering</i>
8	こんにゃく	konnyaku	konjac (a jelly-like food)	<i>ko-n-nya-ku</i>
9	にゅうがく	nyūgaku	entering school	<i>nyū-ga-ku</i>
10	にゃあ	nyā	meow	<i>nyā: a cat's cry</i>

Real Japanese Tip — ちょっと Does Many Jobs

ちょっと means "a little", as in ちょっとまって ("wait a moment") or ちょっとください ("a little, please"). It is also a very polite way to *decline* something without saying no: if someone says ちよつと... with a pained face, the answer is probably no. Listen for it.

Review: Words from the Last Chapter

しゃしん (photograph) · しゅみ (hobby) · かいしゃ (company) · しょうゆ (soy sauce) · じゅう (ten) · じょうず (skilled).

Try It Yourself — れんしゅう

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

1. How is **ちゃ** romanised, and why is it not "chya"?

▼ Show answer

cha: ch already contains the y sound, so no extra y.

2. What does a cat say in Japanese, and what is the sound of **にゃ**?

▼ Show answer

にゃあ (nyā); nya.

3. Read aloud and translate: **おちゃ・ちゃわん・ちゃいろ**

▼ Show answer

ocha (tea) · chawan (rice bowl) · chairo (brown)

4. Read aloud and translate: **ちょっと・ちょうど・ちゅうもん**

▼ Show answer

chotto (a little) · chōdo (exactly) · chūmon (an order)

5. Read aloud and translate: **ちゅうごく・こんにゃく・にゅうがく**

▼ Show answer

Chūgoku (China) · konnyaku (konjac) · nyūgaku (entering school)

6. Write in hiragana: ocha · chotto · Chūgoku (check the small characters).

▼ Show answer

おちゃ・ちょっと・ちゅうごく

Coming Up in Chapter 6

Two more rows: ひゃ ひゅ ひょ and びゃ びゅ びょ. You'll be able to read ひゃく (hundred), ひょう
いん (hospital) and さんびゃく (three hundred).