

JP

HIRAGANA

Hiragana 3 · Chapter 9 · Particles

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Chapter 9 · Particles

🌸 The Particles は へ を — Reading Real Sentences

Three characters you already know do a second job in sentences: は is read *wa*, へ is read *e* and を is read *o*. This is the last rule you need to read ordinary Japanese in hiragana. Romaji is shown for everything.

🔗 Three Characters, Two Jobs

You already know every character on the page, and now one more rule: three of them have a **second pronunciation when they are particles**, the small words that glue a sentence together. Written the same, but read differently.

CHARACTER	NORMAL SOUND	AS A PARTICLE	JOB	EXAMPLE
は	ha	wa	marks the topic: "as for..."	わたしは がくせい です。 Watashi wa gakusei desu.
へ	he	e	direction: "to, towards"	とうきょうへ いきます。 Tōkyō e ikimasu.
を	(only a particle)	o	marks the object of a verb	ほんを よみます。 Hon o yomimasu.

The Rule: Only When It Is a Particle

は is read *wa* only when it marks the topic. In every other word it's still *ha*: はな (flower) is *hana*, not *wana*. へ is read *e* only as the direction particle, and を is **only** used as a particle: the sound is *o*, the same as お. You met this idea in Chapter 7 of Hiragana 2, where こんにちは and こんにちは end in a は read *wa*.



Read It — Your First Sentences

Every character in these sentences is one you have learned. Read the Japanese first, remembering the three particles, then check the romaji.

#	SENTENCE	ROMAJI	ENGLISH	PARTICLE
1	わたしは がくせい です。	Watashi wa gakusei desu.	I am a student.	は = wa: topic
2	きょうは いい てんき です。	Kyō wa ii tenki desu.	It's nice weather today.	は = wa: topic
3	とうきょうへ いきます。	Tōkyō e ikimasu.	I'm going to Tokyo.	へ = e: direction
4	かいしゃへ いきます。	Kaisha e ikimasu.	I'm going to the office.	へ = e: direction
5	ほんを よみます。	Hon o yomimasu.	I read a book.	を = o: object
6	みずを のみます。	Mizu o nomimasu.	I drink water.	を = o: object
7	ごはんを たべます。	Gohan o tabemasu.	I eat a meal.	を = o: object
8	しゃしんを とります。	Shashin o torimasu.	I take a photo.	を = o: object
9	おおさかへ いきます。	Ōsaka e ikimasu.	I'm going to Osaka.	へ = e: direction
10	わたしも がくせい です。	Watashi mo gakusei desu.	I'm a student too.	も = mo: "also"

The Other Particles You Already Know

の (no, "of; 's"), も (mo, "also"), に (ni), で (de) and が (ga) are particles too, but they are read exactly as written. わたしのともだち is "my friend" (watashi no tomodachi). Only は, へ and を change their sound, and you now know all three.

abc One More Thing: ん

The character ん (n) quietly changes its sound depending on what follows it. You do not need to practise this: your mouth does it automatically. But you will see it in romaji.

WORD	SAY IT	ENGLISH	WHAT HAPPENS TO ん
ほん	hon	book	at the end: a soft nasal n
さんぽ	sampo	a walk	before p: sounds like m
しんぶん	shimbun	newspaper	before b: sounds like m
えんぴつ	empitsu	pencil	before p: sounds like m
かんこく	kankoku	Korea	before k: sounds like ng
ぎんこう	ginkō	bank	before k: sounds like ng

Romaji Varies for ん

Some romaji systems write the m-sound as *m* (shimbun, sampo), and others always write *n* (shinbun, sanpo). In this course you'll usually see *n*. Both are the same Japanese word, and the character is always ん.

Review: Words from the Last Chapter

とうきょう (Tokyo) · おおさか (Osaka) · きょうと (Kyoto) · さっぽろ
(Sapporo) · りょこう (travel) · りょうり (cooking).

Try It Yourself — れんしゅう

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

1. Which three characters change their sound when used as particles, and what do they sound like?

▼ Show answer

は (wa), え (e) and を (o).

2. Read aloud and translate: わたしは がくせい です。

▼ Show answer

Watashi wa gakusei desu: I am a student.

3. Read aloud and translate: とうきょうへ いきます。

▼ Show answer

Tōkyō e ikimasu: I'm going to Tokyo.

4. Read aloud and translate: みずを のみます。

▼ Show answer

Mizu o nomimasu: I drink water.

5. Is the は in はな (flower) read wa?

▼ Show answer

No: it is read ha (hana). は is wa only as the topic particle.

6. Write in hiragana: *Hon o yomimasu.* · *Kaisha e ikimasu.* (with the right particles)

▼ Show answer

ほんを よみます。 . かいしゃへ いきます。

Coming Up in Chapter 10

The last chapter: **reading practice** with signs, a menu and a short text, using everything from all three Hiragana courses, then a **Course Complete** recap and the combined course PDF.