

JP

KATAKANA

Katakana 1 · Chapter 16 · Ra Ri Ru

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🌿 The R Row Begins — ラ リ ル

Three new characters: ラ (ra), リ (ri) and ル (ru). This is the **biggest word-list chapter** in the course: with these three you can read cameras, hotels, countries and even ice cream. Romaji is shown for everything.

🌟 Your Three New Characters — ラ リ ル

ラ

ra

a quick tap of the tongue,
between English "r", "l" and
"d", then "ah"

2 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

Memory hook: a ramp: a
short bar on top and a long
slope running down to the left.
Hiragana twin: ら.

リ

ri

the same tap, then "ee"

2 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

Memory hook: two river
banks: a short bank on the left
and a longer one curving on
the right. Hiragana twin: り.

ル

ru

the same tap, then "oo"

2 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

Memory hook: a runner's
legs: one leg straight, one leg
flicking out as it runs. Hiragana
twin: る.

KATAKANA	HIRAGANA TWIN	ROMAJI
ラ	ら	ra
リ	り	ri
ル	る	ru

The Japanese R: One Sound for Both R and L

The Japanese **r** is a single quick tap of the tip of the tongue just behind the upper teeth, a sound somewhere between English "r", "l" and "d". Japanese has no separate "l", so English words with an *l* use the R row too: ホテル (ho-te-**ru**, hotel), ミルク (mi-**ru**-ku, milk) and ルール (**ru**-u-**ru**, rule). Don't roll or curl your tongue: just tap.

Look-Alikes: リ, ソ and シ

リ (ri) is two **upright** strokes: a short one on the left and a long one on the right. The slanting characters ソ, シ and ツ lean over, so if the strokes stand up, it's リ. And watch for ル (ru) against レ (re), which you'll meet in the next chapter.

Read It — Real Words

#	WORD	ROMAJI	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	カメラ	kamera	camera	<i>ka-me-ra</i>
2	アメリカ	Amerika	America	<i>a-me-ri-ka</i>
3	ミルク	miruku	milk	<i>mi-ru-ku</i>
4	ホテル	hoteru	hotel	<i>ho-te-ru</i>
5	ルール	rūru	rule	<i>ru-u-ru</i>
6	イタリア	Itaria	Italy	<i>i-ta-ri-a</i>
7	アフリカ	Afurika	Africa	<i>a-fu-ri-ka</i>
8	オーストラリア	Ōsutoraria	Australia	<i>o-o-su-to-ra-ri-a: seven beats</i>
9	アイスクリーム	aisukurīmu	ice cream	<i>a-i-su-ku-ri-i-mu: seven beats</i>

#	WORD	ROMAJI	ENGLISH	NOTE
10	コアラ	koara	koala	<i>ko-a-ra</i>
11	ラテ	rate	latte	<i>ra-te</i>
12	リスト	risuto	list	<i>ri-su-to</i>
13	ルーム	rūmu	room	<i>ru-u-mu</i>
14	テラス	terasu	terrace	<i>te-ra-su</i>

Country Names

Notice how country names look in katakana: アメリカ, イタリア, アフリカ and オーストラリア all end in a vowel because the Japanese syllable always does. Names of most countries outside East Asia are written in katakana, so this chapter alone lets you read a good part of a world map.

Try It Yourself — れんしゅう

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

1. Read aloud: ラ・リ・ル

▼ Show answer

ra・ri・ru

2. Read aloud and translate: カメラ・ミルク・ホテル

▼ Show answer

kamera (camera)・miruku (milk)・hoteru (hotel)

3. Read aloud and translate: アメリカ・イタリア・アフリカ

▼ Show answer

Amerika (America) · Itaria (Italy) · Afurika (Africa)

4. Read aloud and translate: オーストラリア · アイスクリーム

▼ Show answer

Ōsutoraria (Australia) · aisukurīmu (ice cream)

5. Why does Japanese write the English *l* in *hotel* with the R row?

▼ Show answer

Japanese has no separate "l" sound: the R row, a quick tongue tap, covers both English r and l.

6. Write in katakana: *kamera* · *hoteru* · *koara* (check the stroke order).

▼ Show answer

カメラ · ホテル · コアラ

Coming Up in Chapter 5

Two more R sounds: レ (re) and ロ (ro), completing the R row. You'll read カレー (curry), トイレ (toilet), ロシア (Russia) and ヒーロー (hero).