

JP

KATAKANA

Katakana 1 · Chapter 3 · Ka Ki Ku

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🌿 The K Row and the Long-Vowel Mark — カ キ ク —

Your first consonant row: カ キ ク (ka, ki, ku). You'll also learn a mark that isn't a character but that katakana can't live without: the **long-vowel mark** ー. With it you'll read five real words today. Romaji is shown for everything.

🌟 Your Three New Characters — カ キ ク

カ

ka

like "ka" in *karate* ("kah")

2 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

Memory hook: a **karate** chop:
a bent arm swinging down
with a flick. Hiragana twin: か.

キ

ki

like "key", but short ("kee")

3 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

Memory hook: a **key**: two
bars across a long shaft. キ is
literally the word キー (key)
you'll read today. Hiragana
twin: き.

ク

ku

like "coo", but short and
relaxed ("koo")

2 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

Memory hook: a **cuckoo's**
head and beak: a small hook
and a big swoop. Hiragana
twin: く.

KATAKANA	HIRAGANA TWIN	ROMAJI
カ	か	ka
キ	き	ki
ク	く	ku

The Pair to Watch: カ and 力

力 looks almost identical to the kanji 力 (*chikara*, "power"), and that's its origin: 力 is a simplified piece of it. In loanwords it will always be the sound *ka*. Also, later in the course you'll meet タ (*ta*), which can look like ク. For now, ク has no extra stroke inside.

~ The Long-Vowel Mark —

In hiragana a long vowel is written by adding a vowel character (おかあさん). In katakana, long vowels are written with a single line, —. It means: hold the previous vowel for one more beat.

- キー = ki + — = "ki-i", two beats, written *kī* in romaji.
- カー = ka + — = "ka-a", two beats, written *kā*.
- In horizontal text — is a **horizontal** line; in vertical text it turns into a **vertical** line.
- It is **not** a character of its own, it has no sound by itself, and it never starts a word. It always follows a katakana and stretches it.
- Length matters: キ (one beat) and キー (two beats) are different words, just like the long and short sounds you may know from Japanese already.

Don't Confuse — with 一

The kanji 一 ("one") looks very similar to —, but it appears in ordinary Japanese text, not inside katakana words. If a horizontal line sits right after a katakana, it's the long-vowel mark.

📖 Read It — Real Words at Last

#	WORD	ROMAJI	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	キー	<i>kī</i>	key	<i>long ī: two beats, ki-i</i>
2	カー	<i>kā</i>	car	<i>long ā: ka-a; as in カーナビ (car navigation) later</i>
3	カーキ	<i>kākī</i>	khaki	<i>a colour word</i>
4	オーク	<i>ōku</i>	oak	<i>the tree (also an orc in fantasy games)</i>

#	WORD	ROMAJI	ENGLISH	NOTE
5	エーカー	ēkā	acre	<i>e-e-ka-a: four beats</i>
6	クー	kū	(drill)	<i>a drill: ku-u</i>
7	アーク	āku	(drill)	<i>a drill: a-a-ku</i>

Count the Beats

Each katakana is one beat and — adds one more. So カーキ is **three** beats (ka-a-ki) and エーカー is **four** (e-e-ka-a). Count each — as a full beat and the rhythm falls into place.

Try It Yourself — れんしゅう

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

1. Read aloud: カ・キ・ク

▼ Show answer

ka · ki · ku

2. What does the mark — do?

▼ Show answer

It lengthens the vowel before it by one beat. It is not a character and has no sound of its own.

3. Read aloud and translate: キー・カー

▼ Show answer

kī (key) · kā (car)

4. Read aloud and translate: カーキ . オーク

▼ Show answer

kākī (khaki) · ōku (oak)

5. How many beats are in エーカー?

▼ Show answer

Four: エ . ー . カ . ー (e-e-ka-a).

6. Write in katakana: *kī* · *kā* · *ōku* (check stroke order).

▼ Show answer

キー . カー . オーク

Coming Up in Chapter 4

Two more K sounds: ケ (ke) and コ (ko). You'll be able to read ケーキ (cake) and ココア (cocoa).