

JP

KATAKANA

Katakana 1 · Chapter 7 · Ta Chi Tsu

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🌿 The T Row Begins — タ チ ツ

Three new characters: タ (ta), チ (chi) and ツ (tsu). As in hiragana, the middle two are not quite the Roman "ti" and "tu": it's chi and tsu. This is also the chapter where we settle the famous katakana look-alike, シ *versus* ツ. Romaji is shown for everything.

🌟 Your Three New Characters — タ チ ツ

タ

ta

like "ta" in *taco* ("tah")

3 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

Memory hook: a **table** seen from the side: a slanted top, a leg and a support. Hiragana twin: た.

チ

chi

like "chee" in *cheese*, short ("chee")

3 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

Memory hook: a **child's** swing: a bar across the top and a rope hanging down with a bend. Hiragana twin: ち.

ツ

tsu

like the "tsu" of *tsunami* ("tsoo")

3 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

Memory hook: a **tsunami**: three drops of spray falling *down* from a wave. Hiragana twin: つ.

KATAKANA	HIRAGANA TWIN	ROMAJI
タ	た	ta
チ	ち	chi
ツ	つ	tsu

⚠ The Big One: シ versus ツ

These two trip up almost everyone, so here is the pair side by side. Both have three strokes. The difference is the **direction**.

CHARACTER	SHORT STROKES	LONG STROKE	SOUND	PICTURE TO REMEMBER
シ	nearly horizontal , lying down like sideways eyes	sweeps up from the bottom left	shi	a crying <i>she</i> , tears falling sideways
ツ	more vertical , standing upright	sweeps down from the top	tsu	a <i>tsunami</i> , spray falling down

More Look-Alikes

ツ also resembles ヌ (so), which you met last chapter: ヌ has only **two** strokes and ツ has **three**. And タ (ta) looks like ク (ku) with an extra stroke inside: タ has three strokes, ク has two. When you read, don't judge a character in isolation: the whole word usually tells you which one it must be.

📖 Read It — Real Words

#	WORD	ROMAJI	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	タクシー	takushī	taxi	ta-ku-shi-i: four beats
2	タイ	Tai	Thailand; tie	ta-i; context tells you which
3	ツアー	tsuā	tour	tsu-a-a: three beats
4	スーツ	sūtsu	suit	su-u-tsu
5	タコス	takosu	tacos	ta-ko-su
6	アーチ	āchi	arch	a-a-chi

#	WORD	ROMAJI	ENGLISH	NOTE
7	チーク	chīku	cheek (blusher); teak	<i>chi-i-ku</i>
8	ツタ	tsuta	(drill)	<i>a sound drill: tsu-ta</i>

Final Consonants

English has the sound "ts" at the end of words like *suits* and *cats*, but Japanese has no way to stop on a consonant, so it adds a vowel: *suit* becomes *sū-tsu*. Look at タイ too: it's both "Thailand" and "tie", and only the context tells you which is meant.

Try It Yourself — れんしゅう

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

1. Read aloud: タ・チ・ツ

▼ Show answer

ta · chi · tsu

2. Read aloud and translate: タクシー・ツアー

▼ Show answer

takushī (taxi) · tsuā (tour)

3. Read aloud and translate: スーツ・タコス・アーチ

▼ Show answer

sūtsu (suit) · takosu (tacos) · āchi (arch)

4. How do you tell シ from ツ?

▼ Show answer

シ: short strokes lying sideways, long stroke sweeping up. ツ: short strokes upright, long stroke sweeping down.

5. How many strokes do ソ, シ and ツ have?

▼ Show answer

ソ has two; シ and ツ each have three.

6. Write in katakana: *takushī* · *tsuā* · *sūtsu* (check the stroke order).

▼ Show answer

タクシー . ツアー . スーツ

Coming Up in Chapter 5

Two more T sounds: テ (te) and ト (to), completing the T row. You'll read テスト (test), コート (coat), トースト (toast) and スタート (start).