

JP

KATAKANA

Katakana 2 · Chapter 5 · Pa Pi Pu Pe Po

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🌸 The Little Circle ° — パ ピ プ ペ ポ

The second mark, the little circle ° (handakuten), works only on the H row and turns **h** into **p**: パ ピ プ ペ ポ (pa pi pu pe po). In hiragana, P sounds were rare. In katakana they are everywhere, because English is full of p words. Romaji is shown for everything.

PLAIN	WITH °	SOUND BEFORE	SOUND NOW
ハ	パ°	ha	pa
ヒ	ピ°	hi	pi
フ	プ	fu	pu
ヘ	ペ°	he	pe
ホ	ポ°	ho	po

	a	i	u	e	o
h	ハ	ヒ	フ	ヘ	ホ
p (h + °)	パ°	ピ°	プ	ペ°	ポ°

All five highlighted characters are today's: the whole P row in one chapter.

🌟 Five New Characters — パ ピ プ ペ ポ

パ

ピ

プ

pa

like "pa" in *papa* ("pah")

3 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

Memory hook: a *parachute*:
/\ with a small round canopy.
Hiragana twin: ぱ.

pi

like "pea", short ("pee")

3 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

Memory hook: a *pea* beside
its pod: 匕 with a small round
pea. Hiragana twin: ぴ.

pu

like "poo" in *pool* ("poo")

2 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

Memory hook: a *poodle's*
pom-pom: ㇏ with a small
circle. Hiragana twin: ぷ.



pe

like "pe" in *pen* ("peh")

2 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

Memory hook: a *peak* with a
pearl: へ with a small circle.
Hiragana twin: ぺ.



po

like "po" in *pony*, short
("poh")

5 strokes · [stroke order](#) ▶

Memory hook: a *post* with a
pompom: ㇏ with a small
circle. Hiragana twin: ぽ.

Two Marks, Two Jobs

As in hiragana, the two dots ˆ voice a consonant (h→b), while the little circle ° gives **p**, and only on the H row. Look carefully at the corner: dots mean B, a circle means P. ㇏ (bo) and ㇏ (po) are the most easily confused pair.

P Is Common in Katakana

Native Japanese words rarely contain *p*, but English, French and German words do, so P characters are all over katakana: パン (bread), ペン (pen), プール (pool), ポスト (post box).

Read It — New Words

Read the Japanese first, then check the romaji and the English word it comes from.

#	WORD	ROMAJI	ENGLISH	NOTE
1	パン	pan	bread	<i>pa-n: from Portuguese pão, not English</i>
2	ペン	pen	pen	<i>pe-n</i>
3	ピアノ	piano	piano	<i>pi-a-no</i>
4	プール	pūru	swimming pool	<i>pu-u-ru</i>
5	ポスト	posuto	post box; mailbox	<i>po-su-to</i>
6	スーパー	sūpā	supermarket	<i>su-u-pa-a: short for supermarket</i>
7	ピザ	piza	pizza	<i>pi-za</i>
8	パソコン	pasokon	personal computer; PC	<i>pa-so-ko-n: short for personal computer</i>
9	ポテト	poteto	potato (fries)	<i>po-te-to</i>
10	プラス	purasu	plus	<i>pu-ra-su</i>

Real Japanese Tip — パン Is Portuguese

パン (bread) comes from the Portuguese word *pão*, brought by traders in the 1500s. Katakana covers every foreign language, not just English, so you will meet words from Portuguese, Dutch, French, German and more.

Shortened Words: スーパー and パソコン

Japanese loves to chop loanwords: スーパー is *supermarket*, and パソコン is *personal computer* (*pa-so-kon*). When a katakana word looks short or odd, it may be an abbreviation: try to guess the full English word.

Review: Words from Chapter 4

ビール (beer) ・ バス (bus) ・ ボール (ball) ・ テレビ (TV) ・ ズボン (trousers) ・ ボタン (button).

Try It Yourself — れんしゅう

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

1. Read aloud: パ・ピ・プ・ペ・ポ

▼ Show answer

pa · pi · pu · pe · po

2. Read aloud and translate: パン・ペン・ピアノ

▼ Show answer

pan (bread) · pen (pen) · piano (piano)

3. Read aloud and translate: プール・ポスト・スーパー

▼ Show answer

pūru (pool) · posuto (post box) · sūpā (supermarket)

4. Read aloud and translate: ピザ・パソコン・ポテト

▼ Show answer

piza (pizza) · pasokon (PC) · poteto (potato)

5. How do you tell ボ from ポ?

▼ Show answer

ボ has two dots (ゝ , bo); ポ has a small circle (゜ , po).

6. Write in katakana: *pan* · *piza* · *sūpā* (check the stroke order).

▼ Show answer

パン・ピザ・スーパー

Coming Up in Chapter 6

The small ツ: the one-beat pause of katakana, exactly like the small っ in hiragana. You'll be able to read ベッド (bed), サッカー (soccer), コップ (cup) and ダイエット (diet).