

HOW TO WRITE KATAKANA

1. In Japanese, there are three writing system: Hiragana, Katakana and Kanji. Hiragana and Katakana are phonetic and the same symbol always indicates the same sound.
Today Katakana is used to represent foreign words called 'loanwords' (gairaigo).
2. One katakana represents one syllable and there are five different types of syllables.
 - a. Five basic vowels: [a],[i],[u],[e],[o]
 - b. Consonants or semivowels + vowel: [na],[ki],[yu], etc.
 - c. Syllabic consonants: [n] / [m]
 - d. Any consonant other than [n] / [m] when followed by another identical consonant: e.g. zasshi, kissaten, etc.
 - e. A contracted syllable: [ki] + [ya]=[kya],[chi] + [ya]=[cha],etc.
3. The stroke orders are usually from left to right and top to bottom.
4. There are three ways to finish a stroke.
'Tome' or 'stop' means that the pen has to make a complete stop and should be lifted off the paper at the end of the stroke.
Hane or 'jump' means that you leave a jump mark before the end of the stroke.
Lastly, with harai or 'sweeping', you finish the stroke by lifting the pen up gradually.
5. There are 46 basic symbols in Katakana. In addition, there are Dakuon, 'Handakuon' and 'Yoon' (See pages 59, 60, 61, 68, 69 & 70).
The table on page 73 illustrates 33 additional syllables. These are used only to express foreign words. The sounds that are represented by these syllables do not exist in Japanese.
6. The first five of these are vowels, [a], [i], [u], [e], [o].
7. The second five are these vowels plus the consonant *k*.
8. The third are the vowels plus the consonant *s*.
Shi is used for *si* because the latter sound doesn't exist.

9. The fourth, the vowels plus the consonant *t*.
Chi and *tsu* replace *ti* and *tu*.
10. The fifth, the vowels plus the consonant *n*.
11. The sixth, the vowels plus the consonant *h*..
Fu for *hu*
12. The seventh, the vowels plus *m*.
13. The eighth, the vowels plus *y*.
Yi and *ye* don't exist.
14. The ninth, the vowels plus *r*
The pronunciation of 'r' can be regarded as the sound between [r] and [l] in Japanese.
15. The vowel plus *w*
wi, *wu* and *we* don't exist in modern Japanese.
o [を] is used only as a particle.
16. Dakuon
There are three kinds of dakuon. Three consonants used for them are [g,z,d].
17. Handakuon is [pa, pi, pu, pe, po].
18. Yo-on
There are three kinds of yoon.
 1. *K,N,H,M,R + Y + A,U,O*
Eg. *K + Y + O = Kyo* キヤ
 2. *SH/CH + A,U,O*
Eg. *CH + YA = CHA* チャ
 3. *J+A, U, O*
Eg. *JA* ジャ

How to write words

19. Double Vowel [o] + [o]

When double o's occur, the second [o] syllable is written with an [u] in most cases. [o] + [o] → [o] + [u]

20. Other Double Vowels

When you have a long vowel in Katakana, a straight line is used as follows:

コーラ(ko o ra) スケート(su ke to) テープ(te e pu)

21. Double Consonants

Everytime two consonants take place in a row, the first one is always written with a half-sized ッ [tsu].

Tappu タップ Rokku ロック

The double consonant [n] is not to be treated as above. The first [n] is written with ン.

How to write sentences

Don't confuse the particles [wa,o,e] with ordinary [wa,o,e].

22. 33 additional syllables

Non-existence of these sounds sometimes causes trouble in writing out the possible closest sounds in Katakana. For instance, the word 'film' can be written in the following two possible ways:

フィルム ファイルム

Both are acceptable.

23. Words of Japanese origin

Recently, some Japanese origin words tend to be written in Katakana because they are much simpler than out-of-date kanji or the unconventional katakana emphasizes those words.

Words of Foreign Origin

They are mainly proper nouns such as geographic and personal names, the majority of which are imported from the English language. Katakana words can be quite often seen in the names of shops, brands and designers and recipes and commercials.

24. The voiceless TH sound in English is replaced by サ sa, シ shi, ス su, セ se or ソ so. The examples are as follows:

スリー three バースデー birthday

25. The English words 'F+vowel', which are not transcribed by フ fu, have become ファ fa, フィ fi, フェ fe, フォ fo. However, they can sometimes be represented by ハ ha, ヒ hi, ヘ he, ホ ho. Some of the examples are:

フィルム film コーヒー coffee

26. The words 'V+vowel' are expressed ヴァ va, ヴィ vi, ヴュ vu, ヴェ ve, ヴォ vo. They sometimes become バ ba, ビ bi, ブ bu, ベ be, ボ bo.

ヴァイオリン (バイオリン) violin
 ビタミン vitamin

27. The words 'T+vowel' such as *tea* and *tick* have become either テイ or チ.

ティーチャー teacher ティーム (チーム) team
 テイ is often replaced by ジ.
 エジソン Edison スカンジナビア Scandinavia

28. The other words with 'T+ vowel' becomes チュ[chu].

チューリップ tulip チューブ tube
 'D+vowel' as in *due* becomes either テュ or ジュ.

29. The following words are expressed either in ト[to] or ツ[tsu].

ジェントルマンgentleman クリスマス・ツリーChristmas tree
 The English sound [d] is replaced by ド [do]. The following are examples:
 ドライブ drive ドキュメンタリーdocumentary

30. ア is employed to show *a* if *a* follows *i*.

ピアノ piano ダイアナ Diana

31. 'Sh + vowel' as in *shelley* or *shark* sometimes require セ instead of シエ.

ミルクセーキ milk shake シャーク shark

Je or *ge* employs either ジェ or ゼ as in:

ジェリー jelly エンゼル angel

32. 'W/Wh + vowel' is expressed ウイ [u]+[i], ウエ [u]+[o] or ウオ [u]+[o].

However, for a proper noun, this is written ウィ [wi], ウェ [we] or ウォ [wo].

Proper nouns

ウィリアムズ Williams ウォーカー Walker

Words

ウエーブ wave ウイスキー whisky

33. The English sounds that includes *Qu* as in *quarter* or *quick* are shown ク.

スクエア square クォーツ quartz

Gua as in Guam is written by [gu]+[a] グア

グアム Guam グアテマラ Guatemala

34. When it is necessary to lengthen the vowel sound, please employ "ー" as in the example.

カー car サマー summer