

KATAKANA & OTHER SPECIFICITIES

Today, we are going to study the third writing system used in the Japanese language: KATAKANA → syllable sound representations of foreign words. Katakana are used for borrowing words taken from other languages (*particularly from the English language*), onomatopoeia (*word imitating sounds*) that you might read in Manga, and for foreign names. Therefore, this “alphabet” is essential to foreigners.

Do note that since Katakana are syllable-sounded, the pronunciation of foreign words might sound very different from the original language to fit the Japanese language (each syllable being pronounced): *e.g Australia → [Ō-SU-TO-RA-RI-A]*. Furthermore, foreigners pronouncing “native” words with a native accent will not be understood by the local population.

Learning Katakana sounds are easy as they are the exact same sounds as in Hiragana, but their spelling is different. See the table below:

| | A | I | U | E | O |
|---|---------------|---------|---------|--------|----------|
| | ア | イ | ウ | エ | オ |
| K | カ [ka] | キ [ki] | ク [ku] | ケ [ke] | コ [ko] |
| S | サ [sa] | シ [shi] | ス [su] | セ [se] | ソ [so] |
| T | タ [ta] | チ [chi] | ツ [tsu] | テ [te] | ト [to] |
| N | ナ [na] | ニ [ni] | ヌ [nu] | ネ [ne] | ノ [no] |
| H | ハ [ha] | ヒ [hi] | フ [fu] | ヘ [he] | ホ [ho] |
| M | マ [ma] | ミ [mi] | ム [mu] | メ [me] | モ [mo] |
| Y | ヤ [ya] | | ユ [yu] | | ヨ [yo] |
| R | ラ [ra] | リ [ri] | ル [ru] | レ [re] | ロ [ro] |
| W | ワ [wa] | | | | ヲ [wo/o] |
| N | ン [n] (**) | | | | |

-Colors above are connecting letters that look similar. Be careful when memorizing them.

-Dark grey blanks indicate that the sounds are inexistent.

(**): ン is a letter in itself. It does not need any vowel to exist and is pronounced as a proper English [n]

Exercises 1) Read the following words and guess the actual English word.

ex: アメリカ → AMERIKA (The USA)

- クラス →
- メロン →
- ハム →
- レストラン →
- クリスマス →

2) Write the Katakana of the following syllable-pronounced words.

ex: Hotel → *HOTERU* → ホテル

- Knife → *NAIFU* →
- France → *FURANSU* →
- Tomato → *TOMATO* →
- Kiwi → *KIUI* →
- (computer) Mouse → *MAUSU* →

 **Katakana with modified letters**

In Katakana as well the *dakuten* and the *handakuten* are used. Please see below:



Those 2 little signs should always be written on the **top right corner** of the letter.

| | A | I | U | E | O |
|---|-------|-------|--------|--------|-------|
| G | ガ[ga] | ギ[gi] | グ [gu] | ゲ [ge] | ゴ[go] |
| Z | ザ[za] | ジ[ji] | ズ[zu] | ゼ[ze] | ゾ[zo] |
| D | ダ[da] | ヂ[ji] | ヅ[zu] | デ [de] | ド[do] |
| B | バ[ba] | ビ[bi] | ブ[bu] | ベ[be] | ボ[bo] |
| P | パ[pa] | ピ[pi] | プ[pu] | ペ[pe] | ポ[po] |



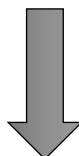
-ジ & チ and ズ & ツ have once again the same pronunciation but the Katakana is different so be careful. Here again ジ and ズ will be used most of the time.

-You may have also noticed that letters [be] and [pe] are the same in both Hiragana & Katakana.

-Many foreign words take a ー to express a longer sound; eg. *spoon is* スプーン ; ー is used here to express the long [oo] sound.

Exercise: Read the following words and translate them into their Romaji form.

- テスト → (a test)
- テーブル → (a table)
- コーヒー → (coffee)
- リモート → (remote-control)




✚ Katakana with composed letters

Same as in the previous lesson. Those Katakana will be used to make specific sounds with “ya”, “yu” and “yo”. They are very often used to reproduce foreign sounds.

ex: computer → コンピューター → ピ + ュ = pyu ; ニュース → ニ + ュ = nyu
 (pi + yu) (ni + yu)

| | A | U | O |
|----|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| ky | キヤ [kya] | キユ [kyu] | キヨ [kyo] |
| sh | シャ [sha] | シュ [shu] | シヨ [sho] |
| ch | チャ [cha] | チュ [chu] | チヨ [cho] |
| ny | ニヤ [nya] | ニユ [nyu] | ニヨ [nyo] |
| hy | ヒヤ [hya] | ヒユ [hyu] | ヒヨ [hyo] |
| my | ミヤ [mya] | ミュ [myu] | ミヨ [myo] |
| ry | リヤ [rya] | リュ [ryu] | リヨ [ryo] |
| gy | ギヤ [gya] | ギユ [gyu] | ギヨ [gyo] |
| j | ジャ [ja] | ジュ [ju] | ジョ [jo] |
| by | ビヤ [bya] | ビユ [byu] | ビヨ [byo] |
| py | ピヤ [pya] | ピユ [pyu] | ピヨ [pyo] |

 ヤ, ュ and ヨ are always smaller than the letter on the left when combined.

Exercise: Write the Katakana of the following syllable-pronounced words.

- GE—MU → (a game)
- SHATSU → (a shirt)
- PAJAMA → (pyjamas)