

Let's Learn Japanese
with Hiragana and Katakana

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CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS

P U B L I S H I N G

Let's Learn Japanese with Hiragana and Katakana,
by Masumi Kai

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PART ONE:

HIRAGANA PRACTICE ひらがな れんしゅう

JAPANESE CHARACTERS

History of Japanese characters:

The Japanese language has three kinds of characters; hiragana, katakana and kanji. The Chinese character, kanji, was brought from China. It is thought to have been introduced around the third or fourth century, although this has not been proved. Kanji, which is an ideogram character (to represent meanings), started to be used as a phonogram (to represent sounds) called *Manyo-kana*. As kanji became more widely used, it was simplified. This simplified form became hiragana. Hiragana has a roundish shape as shown below, and it was considered to be the letters for private use and female use.

ex. 安 → あ 以 → い 加 → か

Japanese word order and Chinese word order are different. Small size kanji (*kun'ten*) were placed next to kanji to indicate the Japanese word order when reading classical Chinese. Then it was simplified and became katakana. Many katakana were made from a part of kanji as seen below. Katakana has rather straight lines.

ex. 阿 → ア 伊 → イ 加 → カ



How to use the three kinds of characters:

The three kinds of characters are used in different ways. Normally katakana is used for loanwords and foreign names like *koohii* (coffee) or *nyuuyooku* (New York). Most content words are written using kanji. Functional words like *desu* (to be), particles, and some Japanese origin words like *oishii* (tasty) are written in hiragana. All three characters can be used in one sentence like below.

ex. 彼 は ミ ラ ー さ ん で す。
kanji hiragana katakana hiragana hiragana
'he' topic marker 'Miller' 'Mr.' 'is'

'He is Mr. Miller.'

Japanese period and comma:

The Japanese language uses a *maru* (circle) at the end of sentences and *ten* (dot) for semantic separation in a sentence. Traditionally Japanese does not use the question mark "?" for an interrogative sentence. Unlike English there is no space between words. Instead a combination of the three kinds of characters can indicate if it is a meaning word, a foreign word, or a functional word.

ex. 明日の朝、トムさんに会います。
tomorrow of morning Tom Mr. with meet

'Tomorrow morning, (I) will meet Tom.'

Roma-ji:

Roma-ji (romanized Japanese) is used to indicate the pronunciation of hiragana and katakana in this book. There are two types of roma-ji; *Hebon* system and Japanese system. Most are spelled the same, but a few are spelled differently. Even though they are spelled differently, their pronunciations are the same. This textbook uses the *Hebon* system.

<i>Hebon</i> system	shi	chi	fu	sha	shu	sho	ja	ji	ju	jo
Japanese system	si	ti	hu	sya	syu	syo	zya	zi	zyu	zyo


Font type:

As in English, Japanese has several font types, some of which are a bit different. Below are examples.

ex. き=き さ=さ そ=そ ふ=ふ/ふ ら=ら り=り や=や

Stroke end:

There are three features at the stroke ends of hiragana, katakana, and kanji. One is *tome* (stop), the second is *hane* (jump), and the third is *harai* (sweep).

ex.  *tome*  *hane*  *harai*

BASIC SOUNDS ♪♪

	a	i	u	e	o
	あ a	い i	う u	え e	お o
k	か ka	き ki	く ku	け ke	こ ko
s	さ sa	し shi	す su	せ se	そ so
t	た ta	ち chi	つ tsu	て te	と to
n	な na	に ni	ぬ nu	ね ne	の no
h	は ha	ひ hi	ふ fu	へ he	ほ ho
m	ま ma	み mi	む mu	め me	も mo
y	や ya	(い)	ゆ yu	(え)	よ yo
r	ら ra	り ri	る ru	れ re	ろ ro
w	わ wa	(い)	(う)	(え)	を wo (=o)
N	ん n				

VOICED SOUNDS AND P-SOUNDS

	a	i	u	e	o
g	が <small>ga</small>	ぎ <small>gi</small>	ぐ <small>gu</small>	げ <small>ge</small>	ご <small>go</small>
z	ざ <small>za</small>	じ <small>ji</small>	ず <small>zu</small>	ぜ <small>ze</small>	ぞ <small>zo</small>
d	だ <small>da</small>	ぢ <small>ji</small>	づ <small>zu</small>	で <small>de</small>	ど <small>do</small>
b	ば <small>ba</small>	び <small>bi</small>	ぶ <small>bu</small>	べ <small>be</small>	ぼ <small>bo</small>
p	ぱ <small>pa</small>	ぴ <small>pi</small>	ぷ <small>pu</small>	ぺ <small>pe</small>	ぽ <small>po</small>

Y-SOUNDS

	a	u	o
ky	きや <small>kya</small>	きゅ <small>kyu</small>	きよ <small>kyo</small>
gy	ぎや <small>gya</small>	ぎゅ <small>gyu</small>	ぎよ <small>gyo</small>
sh	しゃ <small>sha</small>	しゅ <small>shu</small>	しよ <small>sho</small>
j	じゃ <small>ja</small>	じゅ <small>ju</small>	じよ <small>jo</small>
ch	ちゃ <small>cha</small>	ちゅ <small>chu</small>	ちよ <small>cho</small>
ny	にや <small>nya</small>	にゅ <small>nyu</small>	によ <small>nyo</small>
hy	ひや <small>hya</small>	ひゅ <small>hyu</small>	ひよ <small>hyo</small>
by	びや <small>bya</small>	びゅ <small>byu</small>	びよ <small>byo</small>
my	みや <small>mya</small>	みゅ <small>myu</small>	みよ <small>myo</small>
ry	りや <small>rya</small>	りゅ <small>ryu</small>	りよ <small>ryo</small>
py	ぴや <small>pya</small>	ぴゅ <small>pyu</small>	ぴよ <small>pyo</small>



Listen to CD Lesson 1
for the sounds and the
stroke order.

PRACTICE WRITING

What is wrong?

a to o

あ	a	あ	あ	あ	あ			
い	i	い	い	い	い			
う	u	う	う	う	う			
え	e	え	え	え	え			
お	o	お	お	お	お			

あ い ぐ え お

り

Let's read and write!

あおい



blue

あ お い

うえ



above

う え

え



painting

え

いえ



house

い え

Now you can write words using hiragana. Let's try.

1) blue painting

あ お い え

a o i e

2) blue house

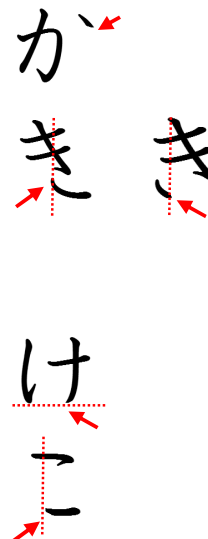
あ お い い え

a o i i e

ka to ko

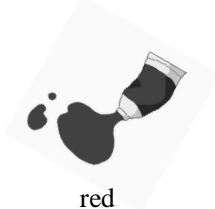
か	ka	① ② ③	か	か	か			
き	ki	① ② ③ ④	き	き	き			
く	ku	①	く	く	く			
け	ke	① ② ③	け	け	け			
こ	ko	① ②	こ	こ	こ			

What is wrong?



Let's read and write!

あかい



red

えき



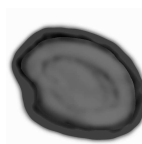
station

き



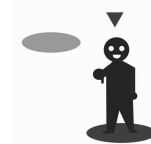
tree/wood

いけ



pond

ここ



here

あかい

えき

き

いけ

ここ

Let's write a sentence.

In the sentence below, は (*wa*) is a topic marker meaning 'as far as', and です (*desu*) corresponds to 'is' in English. は is read as 'wa' when it is used as a topic marker. The Japanese period is a small circle '。' at the lower left hand corner. Note that the Japanese word order is 'Topic は noun です。'. Also notice that the Japanese word order is 'Topic は noun です。'.

- 1) (You are showing your friend around town)
Here is the station.

こ	こ	は	え	き	で	す	。
ko	ko	wa	e	ki	de	su	



Now try CD L2 part 1 & L3 part 1.

sa to so

さ	sa	① ② ③	さ	さ	さ			
し	shi	①	し	し	し			
す	su	① ②	す	す	す			
せ	se	① ③ ②	せ	せ	せ			
そ	so	①	そ	そ	そ			

What is wrong?

さ

す

Let's read and write!

かさ



umbrella

おさけ



alcohol

いす



chair

せ



height

そこ



there

かさ

おさけ

いす

せ

そこ

Let's write words.

In the second set of words below, の (no) is a connector between two nouns.

1) red umbrella

あ か い か さ

a

ka

i

ka

sa

2) wood chair

き の い す

ki

no

i

su

What is wrong?

ta to to

た	ta	① ② ③ ④	た	た	た				
ち	chi	① ②	ち	ち	ち	ち			
つ	tsu	①	つ	つ	つ	つ			
て	te	①	て	て	て	て			
と	to	① ②	と	と	と	と			

た た
ち ち
つ
て
と

Let's read and write!

たかい

¥999,999



high/expensive

たかい

ちかてつ



subway

ちかてつ

つくえ



desk

つくえ

て



hand

て

そと



outside

そと

した



below/under

した

くつ



shoes

くつ

Let's write words.

In the second set of words below, be aware that つくえ (tsukue) 'desk' comes first in Japanese, and の (no) is a connector between two nouns.

1) expensive shoes

た	か	い	く	つ
ta	ka	i	ku	tsu

2) under the desk

つ	く	え	の	し	た
tsu	ku	e	no	shi	su



Now try CD L2 part 2 & L3 part 2.

na to no

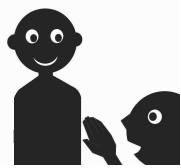
な	na	①②③④	な	な	な			
に	ni	①②③	に	に	に			
ぬ	nu	①②	ぬ	ぬ	ぬ			
ね	ne	②①	ね	ね	ね			
の	no	①	の	の	の			

What is wrong?

な な
に に
ぬ ぬ
ね ね
の の

Let's read and write!

あなた



You

あ	な	た
---	---	---

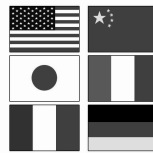
さかな



fish

さ	か	な
---	---	---

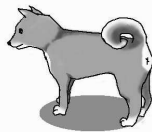
くに



country

く	に
---	---

いぬ



dog

い	ぬ
---	---

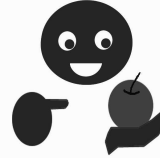
ねこ



cat

ね	こ
---	---

この



this

こ	の
---	---

Let's write words.

1) your dog

あ	な	た	の	い	ぬ
a	na	ta	no	i	nu

2) this cat

こ	の	ね	こ
ko	no	ne	ko

What is wrong?

ha to ho

は	ha	① ② ③	は	は	は			
ひ	hi	①	ひ	ひ	ひ			
ふ	fu	① ② ③ ④	ふ	ふ	ふ			
へ	he	①	へ	へ	へ			
ほ	ho	① ② ③ ④	ほ	ほ	ほ			

は

ふ

ほ

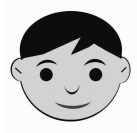
Let's read and write!

はこ



box

ひと



person

さいふ



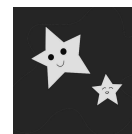
wallet

へた



be poor at

ほし



star

はこ

ひと

さいふ

へた

ほし

Let's write a word and a sentence.

In the second sentence below, be aware that the Japanese period is a small circle.

1) this person

こ	の	ひ	と
---	---	---	---

ko

no

hi

to

2) (I) am poor at (something).

へ	た	で	す	。
---	---	---	---	---

he

ta

de

su



Now try CD L2 part 3 & L3 part 3.

What is wrong?

ma to mo

ま	ma	① ② ③	ま	ま	ま		
み	mi	① ②	み	み	み		
む	mu	① ② ③	む	む	む		
め	me	① ②	め	め	め		
も	mo	② ① ③	も	も	も		

ま ま

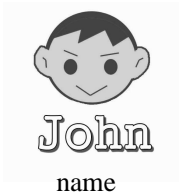
む む

め め

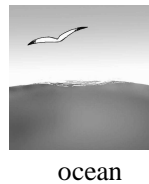
も も

Let's read and write!

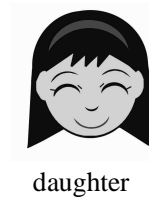
なまえ



うみ



むすめ



あめ



な ま え

う み

む す め

あ め

もも



かきます



まち



も も

か き ま す

ま ち

Let's write words.

1) daughter's name

む	す	め	の	な	ま	え
mu	su	me	no	na	ma	e

2) blue ocean

あ	お	い	う	み
a	o	i	u	mi

ya to yo

や	ya	①③②	や	や	や			
ゆ	yu	①②	ゆ	ゆ	ゆ			
よ	yo	②①	よ	よ	よ			

What is wrong?

が
ゆ
よ

Let's read and write!

やま



mountain

ゆき



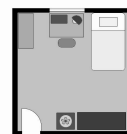
snow

よみます



to read

へや



room

やま

ゆき

よみます

へや

Let's write a word.

1) mountain snow

や	ま	の	ゆ	き
ya	ma	no	yu	ki

2) high mountain

た	か	い	や	ま
ta	ka	i	ya	ma



Now try CD L2 part 4 & L3 part 4.

What is wrong?

ra to ro

ら	ra	ら	ら	ら	ら				
り	ri	り	り	り	り				
る	ru	る	る	る	る				
れ	re	れ	れ	れ	れ				
ろ	ro	ろ	ろ	ろ	ろ				

ら
り
る
れ
ろ

Let's read and write!

おてら



temple

くすり



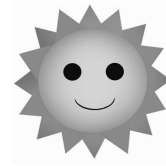
medicine

はる



spring

はれ



clear sky

しろい



white

おてら

くすり

はる

はれ

しろい

Let's write words.

In the first set of words below, be aware that はる (*haru*) 'spring' comes first in Japanese, and の (*no*) is a connector between two nouns. In the second set of words, と (*to*) means 'and' in English and connects nouns.

1) temple in Spring

は	る	の	お	て	ら
ha	ru	no	o	te	ra

2) white medicine and blue medicine

し	ろ	い	く	す	り	と	あ	お	い	く	す	り
shi	ro	i	ku	su	ri	to	a	o	i	ku	su	ri

What is wrong?

wa to n

わ	wa	わ	わ	わ	わ				
を	wo	を	を	を	を				
ん	n	ん	ん	ん	ん				

わ
を
ん

Let's read and write!

わたし



I

わ	た	し
---	---	---

かわ



river

か	わ
---	---

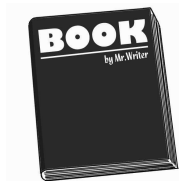
なまえをかきます



to write a name

な	ま	え	を	か	き	ま	す
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

ほん



book

ほ	ん
---	---

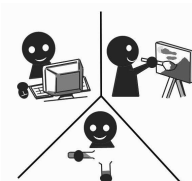
にほん



Japan

に	ほ	ん
---	---	---

せんもん



major

せ	ん	も	ん
---	---	---	---

しけん



exam

し	け	ん
---	---	---

Let's write a sentence.

In the second sentence below, を (wo) is a particle attached to an object noun. In this caseほん (hon) 'book' is an object noun. よみます (yomimasu) means 'to read'. Japanese word order is Topic-Object-Verb.

1) my major

わ	た	し	の	せ	ん	も	ん
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

wa ta shi no se n mo n

2) I read a book.

わ	た	し	は	ほ	ん	を	よ	み	ま	す	。
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

wa ta shi wa ho n wo yo mi ma su





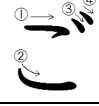


Now try CD L2 part 5 & L3 part 5.

VOICED SOUNDS AND P-SOUNDS

Voiced sounds are indicated by basic hiragana with *tenten* (two short lines on top).

ga to go

				
ga	gi	gu	ge	go

Let's read and write!



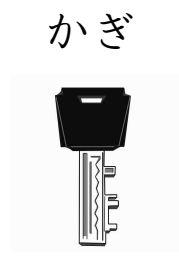
comic

ま ん が



music

お ん が く



key

か ぎ



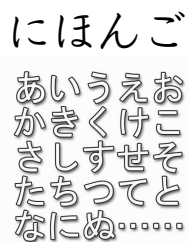
furniture

か ぐ



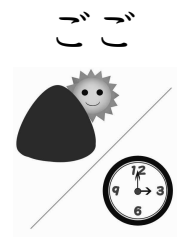
souvenir

お み や げ



Japanese language

に ほ ん ご



afternoon/PM

ご ご

Let's write words.

1) Japanese magazine (a magazine written in the Japanese language)

に ほ ん ご の ま ん が

ni

ho

n

go

no

ma

n

ga

2) Japanese souvenir (a souvenir from a trip to Japan)

に ほ ん の お み や げ

ni

ho

n

no

o

mi

ya

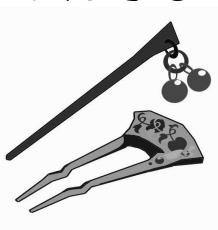
ge

za to zo

za	ji	zu	ze	zo

Let's read and write!

かんざし



hair clip

か	ん	ざ	し
---	---	---	---

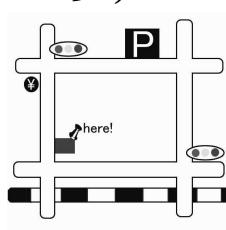
かんじ



kanji

か	ん	じ
---	---	---

ちず



map

ち	ず
---	---

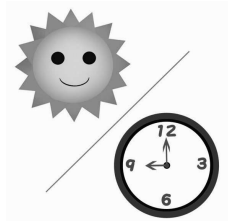
みず



water

み	ず
---	---

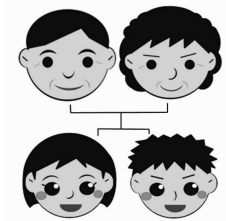
ごぜん



AM

ご	ぜ	ん
---	---	---

かぞく



family

か	ぞ	く
---	---	---

Let's write a sentence.

1) I write kanji.

わ	た	し	は	か	ん	じ	を	か	き	ま	す	。
wa	ta	shi	wa	ka	n	ji	wo	ka	ki	ma	su	



Now try CD L3 part 6.

da to do

da	ji	zu	de	do

Let's read and write!

だいがく



university

だ い が く

ともだち



friend

と も だ ち

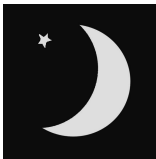
はなぢ



bloody nose

は な ぢ

みかづき



crescent moon

み か づ き

でんわ



telephone

で ん わ

どこ



where

ど こ

こども



child

こ ど も

Let's write a sentence.

In the sentence below, か (ka) is a question marker attached to the end of the question sentence. Be aware that the Japanese word order is 'telephone-where-is'.

1) Where is the telephone?

で	ん	わ	は	ど	こ	で	す	か	。
de	n	wa	wa	do	ko	de	su	ka	

ba to bo

ba	bi	bu	be	bo

Let's read and write!

かばん



bag

か ば ん

えび



shrimp

え び

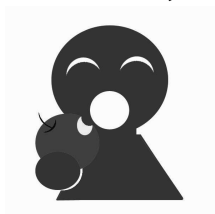
しんぶん



news paper

し ん ぶ ん

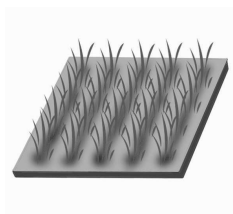
たべます



to eat

た べ ま す

たんぼ



rice field

た ん ぼ

Let's write a sentence.

1) I read a newspaper.

わ	た	し	は	し	ん	ぶ	ん	を	よ	み	ま	す	。
wa	ta	shi	wa	shi	n	bu	n	wo	yo	mi	ma	su	



Now try CD L3 part 7.

pa to po

pa	pi	pu	pe	po

Let's read and write!

かんぱい



toast

か かん ぱ い

えんぴつ



pencil

え えん ぴ つ

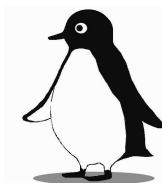
さんぶん

3 minutes

three minutes

さ さん ぶん

*ぺんぎん



penguin

Note: This word is usually written in katakana.

ぺ ぺん ぎ ん

たんぽぽ



dandelion

た たん ぽ ぽ

Let's write a sentence.In the sentence below, かいます (*kaimasu*) means 'to buy'.

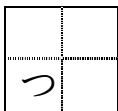
1) I buy a pencil.

わ	た	し	は	え	ん	ぴ	つ	を	か	い	ま	す	。
wa	ta	shi	wa	e	n	pi	tsu	wo	ka	i	ma	su	

➡ Now try CD L3 part 8 and L4 part 1 to part 6.

STOPPED SOUNDS

Stopped sounds are indicated by small ‘つ’ (tsu). ‘つ’ is quarter size.



Let's read and write!

がっき



musical instrument



きっぷ



(transportation) ticket



きって



stamp



きっさてん



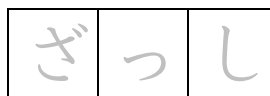
coffee shop/cafe



ざっし



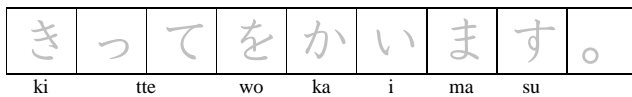
magazine



Let's write a sentence.

In the second sentence below, ひきます (*hikimasu*) means 'to play (musical instrument)'.

1) (I) buy a stamp.



ki tte wo ka i ma su

2) I play a musical instrument.



wa ta shi wa ga kki wo hi ki ma su



Now try CD L4 part 7.