

# Hiragana, part one

*How to learn hiragana with JUMP*

## OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

So, you are reading this because you want to learn Japanese and you are also a big fan of 9 adorable idiots also known as members of Hey! Say! JUMP. But how exactly can JUMP help with your Japanese studies? Well, for starters you can learn a lot of *hiragana* by learning how to write the members' name with *hiragana*.

## What is hiragana? And why do I need to learn it?

*Hiragana* (平仮名・ひらがな) is one out of three components in the writing system used in Japanese. The other two are called *kanji* (漢字・かんじ) and *katakana* (片仮名・カタカナ). I don't want to bore you with details that aren't important for a beginner, however I'd like to tell you how *hiragana* is used in Japanese. You can write anything with *hiragana* (also *katakana*, but that is for the next lesson) but it is still mainly used for writing grammatical components such as particles, conjugation, etc. or for words that we don't use *kanji* to write.

What does *hiragana* represent and why do we still use *kanji*? *Hiragana* (and *katakana*, too) are not syllables but function similarly. They can represent a vowel or a consonant followed by a vowel or in one case (*n* - ん) a consonant. Onto the other half of the question: why do we still use *kanji* if we can write anything with *hiragana*? Well, the answer is simple but has a few layers:

- Japanese doesn't really use space between words so breaking the text into *hiragana*, *katakana* and *kanji* makes reading easier because you know which part represents what
- There are many homophones (words that sound the same but have different meanings) that are written the same in *hiragana* but can be easily differentiated with *kanji*.

You need to learn *hiragana* as soon as possible because it is important to use that instead of writing Japanese words with the latin alphabet. Believe me, it makes the study more

difficult in the long run and *hiragana* are actually quite easy to learn.

### Let's start from the basics!

We have 46 basic *hiragana* to learn. [Here](#) is a link on how to pronounce them well. The boring way is to learn them by writing them out as many times as it's needed to stick. But sadly, you need to do that. But you can make it more fun by practicing them with JUMP-kun. As I'm a sucker for tables I'm going to put some here for the boring part.

		a		i		u		e		o	
		あ	ア a	い	イ i	う	ウ u	え	エ e	お	オ o
k		か	カ ka	き	キ ki	く	ク ku	け	ケ ke	こ	コ ko
s		さ	サ sa	し	シ shi	す	ス su	せ	セ se	そ	ソ so
t		た	タ ta	ち	チ chi	つ	ツ tsu	て	テ te	と	ト to
n		な	ナ na	に	ニ ni	ぬ	ヌ nu	ね	ネ ne	の	ノ no
h		は	ハ ha	ひ	ヒ hi	ふ	フ fu	へ	ヘ he	ほ	ホ ho
m		ま	マ ma	み	ミ mi	む	ム mu	め	メ me	も	モ mo
y		や	ヤ ya			ゆ	ユ yu			よ	ヨ yo
r		ら	ラ ra	り	リ ri	る	ル ru	れ	レ re	ろ	ロ ro
w		わ	ワ wa							を	ヲ wo
	ん										

This table contains both *hiragana* and *katakana* but the bigger symbols are *hiragana*.

You can modify some *hiragana* with *dakuten* ` or ° to make other sounds.

## VOWELS

		a		i		u		e		o	
CONSONANTS	g	が	ガ ga	ぎ	ギ gi	ぐ	グ gu	げ	ゲ ge	ご	ゴ go
	z/j	ざ	ザ za	じ	ジ ji	ず	ズ zu	ぜ	ゼ ze	ぞ	ゾ zo
	d/zj	だ	ダ da	ぢ	ヂ ji	づ	ヅ zu	で	デ de	ど	ド do
	b	ば	バ ba	び	ビ bi	ぶ	ブ bu	べ	ベ be	ぼ	ボ bo
	p	ぱ	パ pa	ぴ	ピ pi	ぷ	プ pu	ぺ	ペ pe	ぽ	ポ po

You can also combine two *hiragana* (a small “ya”, “yu” or “yo” and consonant+*hiragana*) to make a third sound:

	a		u		o	
ky	きゃ	キヤ kya	きゅ	キユ kyu	きょ	キョ kyo
sh	しゃ	シャ sha	しゅ	シュ shu	しょ	ショ sho
ch	ちゃ	チャ cha	ちゅ	チュ chu	ちよ	チョ cho
ny	にゃ	ニヤ nya	にゅ	ニユ nyu	にょ	ニョ nyo
hy	ひゃ	ヒヤ hya	ひゅ	ヒユ hyu	ひょ	ヒョ hyo
my	みゃ	ミヤ mya	みゅ	ミユ myu	みょ	ミョ myo
ry	りゃ	リヤ rya	りゅ	リュ ryu	りょ	リョ ryo

	a		u		o	
gy	ぎゃ	ギヤ gya	ぎゅ	ギユ gyu	ぎょ	ギョ gyo
j	じゃ	ジャ ja	じゅ	ジュ ju	じょ	ジョ jo
j	ぢゃ	ヂヤ ja	ぢゅ	ヂユ ju	ぢょ	ヂョ jo

by	びゃ	ビヤ bya	びゅ	ビユ byu	びょ	ビョ byo
py	ぴゃ	ピヤ pya	ぴゅ	ピユ pyu	ぴょ	ピョ pyo

Note that “ぢ” combinations rarely occur.

This is the stroke order of basic *hiragana* (“wi” and “we” are not really used in modern Japanese so don’t mind them):

n	w-	r-	y-	m-	h-	n-	t-	s-	k-		
 N	 WA	 RA	 YA	 MA	 HA	 NA	 TA	 SA	 KA	 A	-a
	 WI	 RI		 MI	 HI	 NI	 CHI	 SHI	 KI	 I	-i
		 RU	 YU	 MU	 FU	 NU	 TSU	 SU	 KU	 U	-u
	 WE	 RE		 ME	 HE	 NE	 TE	 SE	 KE	 E	-e
	 WO	 RO	 YO	 MO	 HO	 NO	 TO	 SO	 KO	 O	-o

[Here](#) is a printable for practice.

## Now, the fun part

So onto the fun part, shall we? I’m sure you’ve heard their names pronounced before so please when you say their name try to imitate how Japanese people (or the members themselves) say it.

**Yabu Kota** ya bu ko u ta やぶこうた

As you can see we write it as Kota but it is actually Kouta and it is supposed to be pronounced as Kōta (as in saying “o” a bit longer). Also he has a “bu” *hiragana* which is a modified version of “fu”.

**Takaki Yuya** ta ka ki yu u ya たかきゆうや

Same with Kota, Yuya is also Yuuya or Yūya so you have to stay on that “u” a bit longer.

**Inoo Kei** i no o ke i いのおけい

In Inoo's case it's not that you pronounce the "o" longer, it's that he has two "o"s in his name. So try to pronounce two "o"s after each other real quick!

**Yaotome Hikaru** ya o to me hi ka ru や お と め ひ か る

You will soon see that Hika's name is a dream because it is the easiest out of all 9 in all three types of writing.

**Arioka Daiki** a ri o ka da i ki あ り お か だ い き

Daiki has a "da" in his name which is a modified "ta".

**Okamoto Keito** o ka mo to ke i to お か も と け い と

Keito is such a sweetheart he doesn't want you to feel bad so his name is of course really easy with hiragana.

**Yamada Ryosuke** ya ma da ryo u su ke や ま だ り よ う す け

Yamada is a real tsundere I swear (kidding, people!). He has a "da" (modified "ta") and a "ryo" which is a "ri" り and a little "yo" よ AND this "ryo" is actually long so it's "ryō", so not that easy in this case. But he believes in you, you can learn his name!

**Nakajima Yuto** na ka ji ma yu u to な か じ ま ゆ う と

As with Kota, Yuya and Ryosuke, Yuuto is also long ("Yū") so you have to write an "u" after "yu". He also has a "ji" in his name which is a "shi" し with a `.

**Chinen Yuri** chi ne n yu u ri ち ね ん ゆ う り

Chinen has a "n" ん in his name. This ん can only be at the end of a syllable, never at the beginning (so there is no んお, only おん). He also has an additional "u" after "yu" making it "Yū".

Now you can see why we need *kanji*. Here we have three JUMP members with Yū in their name but of course the *kanji* they write it with is totally different.

I hope you learned a lot from this! Next time we'll learn some words and some other secrets about hiragana!