



Sora Club

空クラブ

なまえ： _____ くみ： _____

The Japanese writing system

Unlike English, Japanese consists of three writing system, which are namely Hiragana, Katakana and Kanji. Hiragana and Katakana each consist of little less than 50 characters and they both represent the same set of sounds. There are five vowels (a,i,u,e,o) in Japanese and most of Hiragana and Katakana characters are represented as combinations of a consonant and a vowel. Hiragana and Katakana charts are on the page 29.

Kanji is characters that were originally imported from China, and were developed in Japan. Each Kanji character represents one meaning and has at least two readings. Most of the words (nouns, adjectives, adverbs and verbs) in the written language in Japanese can be written in Kanji. When appropriate Kanji was unknown by the writer, Hiragana is used as a substitute. There are over 40,000 Kanji characters and about 2000 characters represent about 90% of the Kanji characters actually used in written text.

While Katakana represents the same sounds as Hiragana does, Katakana is mainly used for loan words from Western countries. Like English, Japanese has been influenced by various other languages such as Chinese, English, German or Portuguese. Words, ideas and devices that were imported by these countries are normally written in Katakana, except these words that came from China, which are normally written in Kanji. In the process of changing to Katakana, the sounds of many loan words are japanised, as a result these words often no longer sound like original words. Examples may include タクシー (takushii : taxi), ギリシャ (girisha : Greece) or デジカメ (dejikame : digital camera).

Hiragana is used for extremely difficult or rare Kanji, colloquial expression and onomatopoeia. It's also used by beginning Japanese learners and children in place of Kanji they don't know.

Remembering Hiragana with story hints

あ	A	
い	I	
う	U	
え	E	
お	O	

か	KA	
き	KI	
く	KU	
け	KE	
こ	KO	

あ	1. A				か	6. KA			
	あ	あ	あ	あ					
	あ								

い	2. I				き	7. KI			

う	3. U				く	8. KU			

え	4. E				け	9. KE			

お	5. O				こ	10. KO			

Activity 1

先生 □ 月 日

Circle the correct Hiragana words for the Romaji.

- | | | | | |
|------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1. AKAI (Red) | A)おけい | B)おかい | C)あかい | D)あかう |
| 2. EKI (Station) | A)あく | B)いこ | C)えく | D)えき |
| 3. IKA (Squid) | A)いき | B)いか | C)うけ | D)いこ |
| 4. KAO (Face) | A)こお | B)けあ | C)かあ | D)かお |
| 5. OOKII (Big) | A)ああけい | B)おあきい | C)おおきい | D)おおけい |

Activity 2

Write the following words in Hiragana.

- | | |
|--------------------|-------|
| 1. AKI (Autumn) | _____ |
| 2. AOI (Blue) | _____ |
| 3. KOE (Voice) | _____ |
| 4. KUUKI (Air) | _____ |
| 5. KIKAI (Machine) | _____ |

Activity 3

Complete the following table using the words from previous activities.

English	Hiragana
Big	
Face	
Air	
	あき
Red	
	いか
	きかい
Station	
	こえ
Voice	

さ	SA	
し	SHI	
す	SU	
せ	SE	
そ	SO	

た	TA	
ち	CHI	
つ	TSU	
て	TE	
と	TO	

さ	11. SA				た	16. TA			

し	12. SHI				ち	17. CHI			

す	13. SU				つ	18. TSU			

せ	14. SE				て	19. TE			

そ	15. SO				と	20. TO			

Activity 1

Circle the correct Hiragana words for the Romaji words

- | | | | | |
|--------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1. TSUKUE (Desk) | A) くつえ | B) つこい | C) つうえ | D) つくえ |
| 2. KASA (Umbrella) | A) こし | B) かき | C) かさ | D) さか |
| 3. ITAI (Painful) | A) あたい | B) いたい | C) えてい | D) いこい |
| 4. ATSUI (Hot) | A) あかい | B) つあい | C) あつい | D) いあす |
| 5. SATOU (Sugar) | A) きこう | B) さとう | C) さつう | D) きとい |

Activity 2

Write the appropriate Hiragana words for the Romaji

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| 1. SAKE (Sake) | _____ |
| 2. SUSHI (Sushi) | _____ |
| 3. SUIKA (Watermelon) | _____ |
| 4. SEITO (Student) | _____ |
| 5. TOKEI (Clock, watch) | _____ |

Activity 3

Complete the following table using the words from previous activities.

English	Hiragana
Umbrella	
	さとう
Painful	
	あつい
Sushi	
	すいか
	せいと
Desk	
	とけい
Sake	

な	NA	
に	NI	
ぬ	NU	
ね	NE	
の	NO	

は	HA	
ひ	HI	
ふ	FU	
へ	HE	
ほ	HO	

な	21. NA				は	26. HA			

に	22. NI				ひ	27. HI			

ぬ	23. NU				ふ	28. FU/HU			

ね	24. NE				へ	29. HE			

の	25. NO				ほ	30. HO			

Activity 1

Circle the correct Hiragana words for the Romaji words.

- | | | | | |
|------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. NEKO (Cat) | A)れこ | B)ねこ | C)ぬこ | D)めこ |
| 2. INU (Dog) | A)いね | B)いぬ | C)いめ | D)いれ |
| 3. HA (Tooth) | A)ま | B)ほ | C)よ | D)は |
| 4. HITO (Person) | A)ひし | B)てと | C)ひと | D)てこ |
| 5. TOUFU (Tofu) | A)とうふ | A)しいひ | C)とうひ | D)うとふ |

Activity 2

Write the appropriate Hiragana words for the Romaji

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------|
| 1. HANA (Flower) | _____ |
| 2. NOUKA (Farmer) | _____ |
| 3. NANI (What) | _____ |
| 4. HESO (Bellybutton) | _____ |
| 5. HOSHI (Star) | _____ |

Activity 3

Complete the following table using the words from previous activities.

English	Hiragana
	へそ
Farmer	
	はな
Tooth	
Toufu	
	ねこ
What	
	いぬ
Star	
Person	

ま	MA	
み	MI	
む	MU	
め	ME	
も	MO	

や	YA	
ゆ	YU	
よ	YO	

ま	31. MA				や	36. YA			

み	32. MI								

む	33. MU				ゆ	37. YU			

め	34. ME								

も	35. MO				よ	38. YO			

Activity 1

Circle the correct Hiragana words for the Romaji words

- | | | | | |
|----------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1. NAMAЕ (Name) | A)なめえ | B)なまえ | C)なほえ | D)なみい |
| 2. YASUMI (Holiday) | A)やすみ | B)やすうみ | C)かすみ | D)やしみ |
| 3. MUSHI (Insect) | A)むり | B)すり | C)すし | D)むし |
| 4. KOUYOU (Colored leaves) | A)こうゆう | B)こうよう | C)こうやう | D)こうこう |
| 5. AME (Rain) | A)おぬ | B)あぬ | C)おめ | D)あめ |

Activity 2

Write the appropriate Hiragana words for the Romaji

- | | |
|------------------|-------|
| 1. KAMI (Paper) | _____ |
| 2. YUME (Dream) | _____ |
| 3. FUYU (Winter) | _____ |
| 4. YUKI (Snow) | _____ |
| 5. KUMO (Spider) | _____ |

Activity 3

Complete the following table using the words from previous activities.

English	Hiragana
Name	
	やすみ
	かみ
Mushi	
Ame	
	ゆめ
Winter	
	ゆき
Spider	
Colored leaves	

ら	RA	
り	RI	
る	RU	
れ	RE	
ろ	RO	

わ	WA	
を	WO	
ん	N	

ら	39. RA				わ	44. WA			

り	40. RI								

る	41. RU				を	45. WO / O			

れ	42. RE								

ろ	43. RO				ん	46. N			

*The / r / or / l / sound in Japanese is quite different from any sound in English. It involves more of a roll and a clip by hitting the roof of your mouth with your tongue. Pay careful attention to this whole column.

Activity 1

Circle the correct Hiragana words for the Romaji words.

1. SORA (sky) A)てら B)てち C)そら D)そち
2. SAKURA (Cherry blossom) A)きくち B)きくら C)さくち D)さくら
3. Rei (Bowing) A)れい B)ねい C)ぬい D)わい
4. KONRO (Stove) A)こんつ B)こんろ C)こんる D)こんち
5. SHINKANSEN (Bullet train) A)しんやんせん B)しんやんさん C)しんかんさん D)しんかんせん

Activity 2

Write the appropriate Hiragana words for the Romaji

1. WATASHI (I/me/myself) _____
2. SAYOUNARA (Good bye) _____
3. KURUMA (Car) _____
4. HAKIRI (Harakiri) _____
5. WO (*Object marker) _____

Activity 3

Complete the following table using the words from previous activities.

English	Hiragana
I/me/myself	
*Object marker	
	さくら
Bullet train	
Good bye	
	こんろ
Bowing	
Car	
	そら
	はらきり

Activity 4 Similar characters – Write the following characters in Hiragana

A/O	TA/NA	CHI/RA	KI/SA
ME/NU	I/RI	RU/RO	MA/MO
WA/NE/RE	KE/HO/HE		

てんてん and まる

てんてん(ten-ten) and まる (maru) are small symbols that are attached on the top right of Hiragana characters from certain consonant lines. When てんてん and まる are added to Hiragana characters, the sounds of these characters change. てんてん can be attached to Hiragana characters from the K, S, T and H consonant lines. まる can only be attached to characters from the H consonant line.

When てんてん is attached to a Hiragana character, the sounds are modified as following...

K → G

S → Z (and J)

T → D

H → B

For example, when てんてん is attached to the character 「か」, then it becomes 「が」 and is pronounced as 'GA'.

When まる is attached to a character from the H consonant line,,

H → P

For example, when まる is attached to the character 「は」, then it becomes 「ぱ」 and is pronounced as 'PA'. てんてん and まる are also called as だくてん (dakuten) and はんだくてん (handakuten).

Activity

Remember the following sentence to help memorizing the consonant changes.

The King told Herb to seize the jester's harp.

Complete the following chart

K	G	S		T		H		H	
か	が								
き									
く									
け									
こ									

Combination sounds

Some syllables are created by combining an 'i' sounding character and a small-sized 「や」, 「ゆ」 or 「よ」. For example, when 「き」, the 'i' sounding character from the K line, is combined with a half-sized 「や」, then it is written as 「きや」 and is pronounced "kya".

P	B	J	G	R	M	H	N	C	S	K	
ぴや	びや	じゃ	ぎや	りや	みや	ひや	にや	ちや	しや	きや	Ya
ぴゆ	びゆ	じゆ	ぎゆ	りゆ	みゆ	ひゆ	にゆ	ちゆ	しゆ	きゆ	Yu
ぴよ	びよ	じよ	ぎよ	りよ	みよ	ひよ	によ	ちよ	しよ	きよ	Yo

Activity

Circle the appropriate letter for the following words written in Romaji.

- | | | | | |
|-------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1. DENSHA (Train) | A) てんしゅ | B) でんしよ | C) てんしゃ | D) でんしゃ |
| 2. SHASHIN (Photograph) | A) しよせん | B) しよしん | C) しゃしん | D) しえすん |
| 3. KYOU (Today) | A) きよう | B) きえう | C) きゅう | D) きょう |
| 4. KISHA (Steam train) | A) かしや | B) きしや | C) きしゅ | D) けしや |
| 5. RYOURI (Cooking) | A) りやうり | B) りよえり | C) りゅうり | D) りょうり |

Write appropriate Hiragana characters

- | | |
|---|-------|
| 1. TANJOUBI (Birthday) | _____ |
| 2. KYOURYUU (Dinosaur) | _____ |
| 3. JINJA (Temple) | _____ |
| 4. SHOUJI (Japanese sliding paper door) | _____ |
| 5. CHOUCIN (Japanese paper lantern) | _____ |

Complete the table

Birthday	
Photograph	
	りょうり
Today	
	じんじゃ
Steam train	
Japanese sliding paper door	
	ちょうちん
	きょうりゅう
Train	

Small 「っ」

When 「っ」 is written in a half size, it's no longer pronounced as 'tsu', and plays a special role in words. It doubles the consonant of the following Hiragana character.

For example,

さか (SAKA) → さっか (SAKKA)

さか means 'slope', whereas さっか means 'author'. Whether or not 「っ」 is there can change the whole meaning of the word so one may need to practise pronouncing and listening to words containing 「っ」.

Activity

Write appropriate Hiragana character

1. KAPPA (Rain coat)
2. MACCHA (Japanese powdered green tea)
3. NATTOU (Japanese fermented soybeans)
4. JUPPUN (10 minutes/ 10th minute)
5. SIPPAI (Failure)

Learn the following classroom phrases

1. たって ください。 (Please stand up)
2. すわって ください。 (Please sit down)
3. はいっても いいですか。 (May I enter?)
4. これ は あってますか。 (Is this correct?)
5. ちょっと まって ください。 (Please wait a minute.)

Complete the table below.

Failure	
	はいっても いいですか。
Japanese powdered green tea	
Japanese fermented soybeans	
	たって ください。
	これ は あってますか。
10 minutes/ 10 th minute	
Failure	
Please wait a minute	
	すわって ください。

Katakana

As mentioned earlier, Katakana is a set of 46 characters that represent the same sounds as Hiragana characters do, and was developed to incorporate foreign ideas and names for things into the Japanese language. Ideas or products that were introduced from foreign languages such as French, German, Dutch or English draw from original pronunciation.

While some Katakana characters are not very different from their Hiragana counterparts, Katakana characters basically have sharper, straighter lines in them. Moreover, the dash is used to make the long vowel sounds that often exist in European languages but not so much in Japanese. For example, if an English word has er, ar or y at the end, or a double vowel in the middle of the word, it will often substitute with a dash then the word is written in Katakana.

Example:

Guitar	→	^{gi ta} ギター
Coffee	→	^{ko hi} コーヒー

Furthermore, the vowels あ、い、う、え and お are written as ア、イ、ウ、エ and オ in Katakana. In addition to just little や、ゆ and よ, these vowels can be also written in half sized to make combination sounds.

Example:

Fork	→	^{f o ku} フォーク
Chess	→	^{chessu} チェス
Party	→	^{pa ty i} パーティー

Remembering Hiragana with story hints

ア	A	
イ	I	
ウ	U	
エ	E	
オ	O	

カ	KA	
キ	KI	
ク	KU	
ケ	KE	
コ	KO	

ア	1. A				カ	6. KA			

イ	2. I				キ	7. KI			

ウ	3. U				ク	8. KU			

エ	4. E				ケ	9. KE			

オ	5. O				コ	10. KO			

Activity

A. Guess the meaning of these Katakana words and practice writing them. The first one has been done as an example.

1. アメリカ (AMERIKA / America) アメリカ アメリカ _____
2. イギリス (IGIRISU / _____) _____
3. オーストラリア (OOSUTORARIA / _____) _____
4. トゥーンバ (TWUUNBA / _____) _____
5. エッセー (ESSEE / _____) _____
6. カナダ (KANADA / _____) _____
7. ギター (GITAA / _____) _____
8. クッキー (KUKKII / _____) _____
9. ケーキ (KEEKI / _____) _____
10. コーヒー (KOOHII / _____) _____

B. Complete the table by filling up the empty boxes.

Kanada	カナダ
Coffee	
Cookie	
Toowoomba	
Australia	
England	
America	
Essay	
Cake	
Guitar	

サ	SA	
シ	SHI	
ス	SU	
セ	SE	
ソ	SO	

タ	TA	
チ	CHI	
ツ	TSU	
テ	TE	
ト	TO	

サ					タ				

シ					チ				

ス					ツ				

セ					テ				

ソ					ト				

Activity

先生 □ 月 日

A. Guess the meaning of these Katakana words and practice writing them. The first one has been done as an example.

1. サッカー(SAKKAA /) _____
2. チーズ(CHIIZU/) _____
3. スポーツ(SUPOOTSU/) _____
4. テレビ(TEREBI/) _____
5. ソーセージ(SOOSSEJI/) _____
6. トースト(TOOSUTO/) _____
7. セーター(SEETAA/) _____
8. ドイツ(DOITSU/) _____
9. シドニー(SHIDONII/) _____
10. ダンス(DANSU/) _____

B. Complete the table by filling up the empty boxes.

Sydney	
	ダンス
Sweater	
	ドイツ
Sausage	
	トースト
Sports	
	テレビ
Soccer	
	チーズ

ナ	NA	
ニ	NI	
ヌ	NU	
ネ	NE	
ノ	NO	

ハ	HA	
ヒ	HI	
フ	FU	
ヘ	HE	
ホ	HO	

ナ					ハ				

ニ					ヒ				

ヌ					フ				

ネ					ヘ				

ノ					ホ				

Activity

A. Guess the meaning of these Katakana words and practice writing them. The first one has been done as an example.

1. トナカイ(TONAKAI /) _____
2. ニンテンドー(NINTENDOO/) _____
3. ヌーサ(NUUSA/) _____
4. ネクタイ(NEKUTAI/) _____
5. ノート(NOOTO/) _____
6. パンツ(PANTSU/) _____
7. ビール(BIIRU/) _____
8. フランス(FURANSU/) _____
9. ペット(PETTO/) _____
10. ズボン(ZUBON/) _____

B. Complete the table by filling up the empty boxes.

Reindeer	
	ノート
Necktie	
	ヌーサ
	ニンテンドー
Trousers	
	ペット
Beer	
	フランス

マ	MA	
ミ	MI	
ム	MU	
メ	ME	
モ	MO	

ヤ	YA	
ユ	YU	
ヨ	YO	

マ					ヤ				

ミ									

ム					ユ				

メ									

モ					ヨ				

Activity

A. Guess the meaning of these Katakana words and practice writing them. The first one has been done as an example.

1. アニメ (ANIME /) _____
2. モデル (MODERU /) _____
3. ハム (HAMU /) _____
4. ミルク (MIRUKU /) _____
5. マーマレード (MAAMAREEDO /) _____
6. シャーペン (SHAAPEN /) _____
7. ヤクザ (YAKUZA /) _____
8. ニュース (NYUUSU /) _____
9. ヨーグルト (YOOGURUTO /) _____
10. ニューヨーク (NYUUYOOKU /) _____

B. Complete the table by filling up the empty boxes.

Fashion model	
	アニメ
Marmalade	
	ハム
Mechanical pencil	
	ミルク
Yakuza	
	ニュース
New York	
	ヨーグルト

ラ	RA	
リ	RI	
ル	RU	
レ	RE	
ロ	RO	

ワ	WA	
ヲ	WO	
ン	N	

ラ					ワ				

リ									

ル					ヲ				

レ									

ロ					ン				

Activity

A. Guess the meaning of these Katakana words and practice writing them. The first one has been done as an example.

1. ワイン(WAIN /) _____
2. リモコン(RIMOKON /) _____
3. ワードプロ(WAAPURO /) _____
4. レース(REESU /) _____
5. レモン(REMON /) _____
6. ロンドン(RONDON /) _____
7. ズボン(ZUBON /) _____
8. ルール(RUURU /) _____
9. ペン(PEN /) _____
10. ラグビー(RAGUBII /) _____

B. Complete the table by filling up the empty boxes.

	ワイン
Rugby	
	レモン
Rule	
	ロンドン
Remote controller	
	ズボン
Word processor	
	ペン
Race	

Gairaigo and Wasei-Eigo

Gairaigo is a Japanese word for 'loan word' or 'borrowed word', and Wasei-Eigo is a Japanese word for 'Japanese made English' or 'English words coined in Japanese'. Gairaigo and Wasei-Eigo were originally from foreign languages, but they have so embedded in the Japanese language that sometimes they are re-fashioned to create different meanings from its original intended meaning.

Research task

Using the internet, find out the meanings and the original words of the following Gairaigo.

レンジ	Original word_____
	Meaning:
カラオケ	Original word_____
	Meaning:
カステラ	Original word_____
	Meaning:
コンビニ	Original word_____
	Meaning:
リストラ	Original word_____
	Meaning:
ホチキス	Original word_____
	Meaning:
ピエロ	Original word_____
	Meaning:
シャボンだま	Original word_____
	Meaning:
スーパー	Original word_____
	Meaning:
バイキング	Original word_____
	Meaning:

--	--

Creating a word bank

Using Hiragana and Katakana, and words we have learnt so far or words you already know, let's create a word bank!

Countries		Cities	
Activities		Animals	
Food I like		Food I don't like	
Household objects		Japanese cultural items	

ひらがな chart

W	R	Y	M	H	N	T	S	K		
わ	ら	や	ま	は	な	た	さ	か	あ	A
	り		み	ひ	に	ち	し	き	い	I
を	る	ゆ	む	ふ	ぬ	つ	す	く	う	U
	れ		め	へ	ね	て	せ	け	え	E
ん	ろ	よ	も	ほ	の	と	そ	こ	お	O

てんてん and まる

P	B	D	Z	G
ぱ	ば	だ	ざ	が
ぴ	び	ぢ	じ	ぎ
ぷ	ぶ	づ	ず	ぐ
ぺ	べ	で	ぜ	げ
ぽ	ぼ	ど	ぞ	ご

カタカナ chart

W	R	Y	M	H	N	T	S	K		
ワ	ラ	ヤ	マ	ハ	ナ	タ	サ	カ	ア	A
	リ		ミ	ヒ	ニ	チ	シ	キ	イ	I
ヲ	ル	ユ	ム	フ	ヌ	ツ	ス	ク	ウ	U
	レ		メ	ヘ	ネ	テ	セ	ケ	エ	E
ン	ロ	ヨ	モ	ホ	ノ	ト	ソ	コ	オ	O

てんてん and まる (カタカナ)

P	B	D	Z	G
パ	バ	ダ	ザ	ガ
ピ	ビ	ヂ	ジ	ギ
プ	ブ	ヅ	ズ	グ
ペ	ベ	デ	ゼ	ゲ
ポ	ボ	ド	ゾ	ゴ