

Counting & Pronunciation

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Cardinals, Ordinals, & Basic Pronunciation

BASIC JAPANESE COUNTING, ORDINAL NUMBERS, & PRONUNCIATION								
Cardinals		Kata & Bokuto Waza Ordinals			Basic Pronunciation			
<i>English</i>	<i>Japanese</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Kendō Kata</i>	<i>Bokutō Waza</i>	<i>Vowels</i>	<i>Voiced As</i>	<i>International</i>	
One	Ichi	First	Ipponme	Ichi	A	ah	ɑ	
Two	Ni	Second	Nihonme	Ni	E	eh	e	
Three	San	Third	Sanbonme	San	I	ee	i	
Four	Shi	Fourth	Yonhonme	Yon	I	ee (voiceless)	i̥	
Five	Go	Fifth	Gohonme	Go	I	ee (long)	iː	
Six	Roku	Sixth	Ropponme	Roku	O	oh	o	
Seven	Shichi	Seventh	Nanahonme	Nana	O	oh (long)	oː	
Eight	Hachi	Eighth	—	Hachi	U	oo	u	
Nine	Kyū	Ninth	—	Kyū	U	oo (voiceless)	u̥	
Ten	Jū	Tenth	—	—	<i>Combinations</i>	<i>Voiced As</i>	<i>International</i>	
					AE	eye	ɑi	
					AI	eye	ɑi	
					EI	ay	ei	

Consonants. Consonants are pronounced as in English. Some are altered when occurring after a vowel. A common example is changing a *k* sound to a *g* as in kakari *geiko* vs. kakari *keiko*.

Doubled consonants indicate a slight pause prior to pronunciation. Hansoku ikkai has a double *kk* in *ikkai*, giving it a pronunciation of *i-kai*.

Long, short, and voiceless vowels. Vowels can have a long, short, or voiceless sound.

A voiceless vowel is effectively silent, e.g. a voiceless *u* occurs in *tsuki*, and is voiced as “*tski*” [tsu̥βki̥]. This is similar in English to the *e* in peculiar [p^hɔ̥kjuːliə-] which is often voiced as “*peculiar*”.¹

Vowels, most commonly *i* and *u*, often become voiceless when (1) the vowel is between voiceless consonants, and (2) the vowel occurs after a voiceless consonant with nothing following it.²

Omote uses a short *o*, *oh* as in *story*, whereas *jōdan* uses a long *o* as in *toast*. The long *o* is usually written as *ou*; this guide uses the Latin convention *ō*. Other long vowels in Japanese are written with duplicate letters, e.g., *chiisai* vs. *chisai* for a long *i* sound.

Table 1: Basic Japanese counting, ordinal numbers, & pronunciation. Cardinal numbers indicate amount, ordinal numbers indicate numeric order. *Voiced as* gives an English term approximating the Japanese term, and *International* gives the International Phonetic Alphabet pronunciation.

ON-YOMI & KUN-YOMI

There are two ways to pronounce kanji; the Chinese (on-yomi) and the Japanese (kun-yomi) pronunciations. Which is used depends on context and/or tradition, e.g., *shi* & *yon* for the number four.

¹ Wikipedia (2012)

² From Living Language (2012), with a voiced letter the throat vibrates while speaking; with voiceless it doesn't. For example, touching the throat while speaking *g*, as in *great*, one feels a vibration. Speaking *k*, as in *kite*, there is no vibration.

Hiragana & Romanji: Japanese Phonetic Syllables

The following syllabary, called hiragana, lists all of the syllables used to pronounce (exclusively) Japanese words.³

Hiragana is used to represent Japanese words not represented by kanji and for grammatical inflexion, e.g., a root word has a different hiragana ending for the verb form vs. the noun, etc...

Romanji is the term used to refer to Japanese syllables written in English letters, e.g., the syllable か is written as *Ka*.

³ Hiragana is not the only syllabary, however it is used exclusively for Japanese words. The *katakana* alphabet is used to represent foreign or borrowed words, is also used as an equivalent to *italics* in English, and is used in several other situations.

STANDARD HIRAGANA SYLLABARY WITH ROMANJI										
	—	K	S	T	N	H	M	Y	R	W
A	あ	Ka か	Sa さ	Ta た	Na な	Ha は	Ma ま	Ya や	Ra ら	Wa わ
I	い	Ki き	Shi し	Chi ち	Ni に	Hi ひ	Mi み	—	Ri り	Wi ゐ ⁴
U	う	Ku く	Su す	Tsu つ	Nu ぬ	Fu ぶ	Mu む	Yu ゆ	Ru る	—
E	え	Ke け	Se せ	Te て	Ne ね	He へ	Me め	—	Re れ	We ゑ ⁵
O	お	Ko こ	So そ	To と	No の	Ho ほ	Mo も	Yo よ	Ro ろ	(W)o を ⁶
—					Nん					

EXTENDED HIRAGANA SYLLABARY WITH ROMANJI						
	G	Z	D	B	P	
A	Ga が	Za ざ	Da だ	Ba ば	Pa ぱ	
I	Gi ぎ	Ji じ	Ji ぢ	Bi び	Pi ぴ	
U	Gu ぐ	Zu ず	Zu づ	Bu ぶ	Pu ぷ	
E	Ge げ	Ze ぜ	De で	Be べ	Pe ぺ	
O	Go ご	Zo ぞ	Do ど	Bo ぼ	Po ぽ	
	K	S	C	N	H	M
Ya	Kya きゃ	Sha しゃ	Cha ちゃ	Nya にゃ	Bya ひゃ	Mya みゃ
Yu	Kyu きゅ	Shu しゅ	Chu ちゅ	Nyu にゅ	Byu ひゅ	Myu みゅ
Yo	Kyo きょ	Sho しょ	Cho ちょ	Nyo にょ	Byo ひょ	Myo みょ
	R	G	J	B	P	
Ya	Rya りゃ	Gya ぎゃ	Ja じゃ	Hya びゃ	Pya ぴゃ	
Yu	Ryu りゅ	Gyu ぎゅ	Ju じゅ	Hyu びゅ	Pyu ぴゅ	
Yo	Ryo りょ	Gyo ぎょ	Jo じょ	Hyo びょ	Pyo ぴょ	

Table 2: Hiragana syllabary: the Japanese phonetic alphabet.

^{4,5} Obsolete in modern Japanese.

⁶ “(W)o” is pronounced “oh”.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- [1] Living Language. *Voiceless Vowels*. Living Language. 2012.
URL: <https://livinglanguage.com/community/discussion/159/voiceless-vowels>.
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