

Katakana:

Because a lot of new words have been added to the Japanese vocabulary, the Japanese created a separate syllabary that would be exclusively for foreign words. Although quite similar to hiragana, this particular syllabary gives words a distinct foreign look, and unlike hiragana, it is written with mostly straight lines. Katakana is an important syllabary that will allow you to read loan words and hybrids. It's recommended to learn both katakana and hiragana. Although it is acceptable to write katakana words with hiragana, the reverse is not the case. So you can write "koo-hii" (coffee) with either hiragana or katakana, but you cannot write "watashi" (myself) with kana, because it is a native Japanese word.

Double consonants & vowels:

Like in hiragana, double consonants are expressed with a half-sized "tsu" before the syllable. Therefore, if we write "shotto" (shot), we write it: ショ ッ ト . Double vowels are different than in hiragana. In katakana, we use a short dash "ー" after the syllable to extend it. Therefore koo-hii (coffee) would be written as コー ヒー . Because of this, every vowel is extended like this, and you don't have to worry about how to extend an O or an I, like in hiragana.

Ten-ten and Maru:

Just like in hiragana, you can apply "ten-ten" (two dots) or a "maru" (circle) to the top-right corner of the character to change the sound. Ten-ten softens the sound, turning Ka into Ga, and Su into Zu. And maru will harden the sound, making Ha into Pa. Ten-ten can be applied to several series of Katakana, and maru can only be applied to the H series.

Katakana Charts:

Vowels:

A	I	U	E	O
ア	イ	ウ	エ	オ

K series:

KA	KI	KU	KE	KO
カ	キ	ク	ケ	コ

G series:

GA	GI	GU	GE	GO
ガ	ギ	グ	ゲ	ゴ

S series:

SA	SHI	SU	SE	SO
サ	シ	ス	セ	ソ

Z series:

ZA	JI	ZU	ZE	ZO
ザ	ジ	ズ	ゼ	ゾ

T series:

TA	CHI	TSU	TE	TO
タ	チ	ツ	テ	ト

D series:

DA	JI*	ZU*	DE	DO
ダ	ヂ	ジ	デ	ド

N series:

NA	NI	NU	NE	NO
ナ	ニ	ヌ	ネ	ノ

H series:

HA	HI	FU	HE	HO
ハ	ヒ	フ	ヘ	ホ

H series:

BA	BI	BU	BE	BO
バ	ビ	ブ	ベ	ボ

P series:

PA	PI	PU	PE	PO
パ	ピ	プ	ペ	ポ

M series:

MA	MI	MU	ME	MO
マ	ミ	ム	メ	モ

Y series:

YA		YU		YO
ヤ		ユ		ヨ

R series:

RA	RI	RU	RE	RO
ラ	リ	ル	レ	ロ

W series and N:

WA		WO**		N
ワ		ヲ		ン

Modified syllables (syllables with a half-sized Ya, Yu or Yo)

KYA		KYU		KYO
キャ		キュ		キョ

GYA		GYU		GYO
ギヤ		ギユ		ギョ

SHA		SHU		SHO
シャ		シュ		ショ

JA		JU		JO
ジャ		ジュ		ジョ

CHA		CHU		CHO
チャ		チュ		チョ

NYA		NYU		NYO
ニヤ		ニユ		ニョ

HYA		HYU		HYO
ヒヤ		ヒユ		ヒョ

BYA		BYU		BYO
ビヤ		ビユ		ビョ

PYA		PYU		PYO
ピヤ		ピユ		ピョ

MYA		MYU		MYO
ミヤ		ミユ		ミョ

RYA		RYU		RYO
リヤ		リユ		リョ

* Ji and Zu are already in the T series, so we don't really use these characters anymore. You might find them in older literature, but its very rare.

**Wo in Katakana is actually never used. This is because this particle is used as grammar and should therefore be written in hiragana. At rare occasions, writers might type computer or robot sentences in all-katakana, so you might see it once or twice.

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