

The First Lesson

Lesson 1

Yōkoso (Welcome), Hougang Japanese Language School e. Before studying Lesson-1 grammar, I would like to explain "Pronunciation" and "Writing System" of the Japanese language since it is very important when you study Japanese for the first time.



I read the handout.

----- {Handout start} -----

● Pronunciation

★ Japanese Syllables

At first, let's study the Japanese **syllables** because by learning Japanese syllables, you can pronounce all Japanese words and sentences properly.

"**Syllable**" means "a unit of pronunciation having one **vowel** sound, with or without surrounding **consonants**, forming the whole or a part of a word."

"**Vowel**" means "a speech sound which is produced by comparatively open configuration of the vocal tract, with vibration of the vocal cords but without audible friction, and which is a unit of the sound system of a language that forms the nucleus of a syllable"

"**Consonant**" means "a basic speech sound in which the breath is at least partly obstructed and which can be combined with a vowel to form a syllable."

(the definition of the word : iOS dictionary)

Basically, Japanese syllables are shown by **Hiragana** which is one of Japanese writing characters and is one of Japanese **syllabaries**.

"**Syllabary**" means "a writing system whose characters represent syllables."

Other than Hiragana, we have **Katakana** syllabary. We study more about Hiragana and Katakana later.

And the Japanese syllables also can be expressed in the English alphabets although it is slightly different from the actual English pronunciation. We call it **Rōmaji**. We study more about Rōmaji later.

For the time being, we use Rōmaji to explain the pronunciation of the Japanese language.

The Japanese syllables consist of the vowels 'a', 'i', 'u', 'e' and 'o' or a combination of one consonant sound with a vowel.

Let us pronounce the Japanese syllables and syllabaries chart together. You can find it at the next page. Before doing so, please see the chart below.

<i>Vowels:</i>	a as in <u>f</u> arm i as in <u>e</u> el u as in <u>bo</u> om e as in <u>e</u> gg o as in <u>o</u> ak
<i>Semi-vowels:</i>	y as in <u>y</u> acht w as in <u>w</u> affle
<i>Consonants:</i>	k as in <u>c</u> ake g as in <u>g</u> lass s as in <u>s</u> oap z as in <u>z</u> ebra j as in <u>j</u> am t as in <u>t</u> eeth d as in <u>d</u> oll n as in <u>n</u> oon h as in <u>h</u> at f as in <u>f</u> oot b as in <u>b</u> all p as in <u>p</u> uppy m as in <u>m</u> ale r as in <u>r</u> adish one n as in <u>i</u> nsect

A consonant plus 'ya', 'yu' or 'yo' such as 'cha', 'chu' or 'cho' is pronounced as in "chance", "choose" or "choke". 'sha', 'shu' or 'sho' is pronounced as in "shark", "shoe" or "show".

Hiragana Syllabary Chart with Rōmaji

あ a	い i	う u	え e	お o										
か ka	き ki	く ku	け ke	こ ko	が ga	ぎ gi	ぐ gu	げ ge	ご go					
さ sa	し shi	す su	せ se	そ so	ざ za	じ ji	ず zu	ぜ ze	ぞ zo					
た ta	ち chi	つ tsu	て te	と to	だ da	ぢ ji	づ zu	で de	ど do					
な na	に ni	ぬ nu	ね ne	の no										
は ha	ひ hi	ふ fu	へ he	ほ ho	ば ba	び bi	ぶ bu	べ be	ぼ bo	ぱ pa	ぴ pi	ぷ pu	ぺ pe	ぽ po
ま ma	み mi	む mu	め me	も mo										
や ya		ゆ yu		よ yo										
ら ra	り ri	る ru	れ re	ろ ro										
わ wa				を o										
ん n														
きゃ kya		きゅ kyu		きょ kyo	ぎゃ gya		ぎゅ gyu		ぎょ gyo					
しゃ sha		しゅ shu		しょ sho	じゃ ja		じゅ ju		じょ jo					
ちゃ cha		ちゅ chu		ちょ cho										
にゃ nya		にゅ nyu		にょ nyo										
ひゃ hya		ひゅ hyu		ひょ hyo	びゃ bya		びゅ byu		びょ byo	ぴゃ pya		ぴゅ pyu		ぴょ pyo
みゃ mya		みゅ myu		みょ myo										

りゃ		りゅ		りょ										
rya		ryu		ryo										

We combine the Japanese syllables to make any Japanese word and sentence such as:

'a' plus 'me' is 'ame' which means "rain",
 'yu' plus 'ki' is 'yu-ki' which means "snow" and
 'wa' plus 'ta' plus 'shi' plus 'wa' plus 'i' plus 'sha' plus 'de' plus 'su' is 'watashi wa isha desu' which means "I am a doctor."

Whenever you pronounce the Japanese syllables and syllabaries, Japanese words or Japanese sentences which are expressed in the English alphabets, please pronounce them in Japanese way.

----- {Handout end} -----



Well, let me explain about "Long Vowels" and "Double Consonants". I read the handout.

----- {Handout start} -----

★ Long Vowels and Double Consonants

Some Japanese words have long vowels (They are written in Rōmaji as in 'aa', 'ii', 'uu', 'ei' and 'ou' or 'ā', 'ī', 'ū', 'ē' and 'ō'. In our textbook, the latter writing is used.).

When we make the vowel sound long, we simply pronounce it a bit longer than the normal vowel. Its length is twice the normal vowel. If we do not pronounce long vowels properly, misunderstanding may occur. See examples.

ex.1 o·bā·sa·n means "grandmother."

o·ba·sa·n means "aunt."

ex.2 bi·i·ru means "beer."

bi·ru means "building."

Some Japanese words have double consonant (**kk**, **ss**, **tt**, and **pp**). When we pronounce the double consonant, we hold our breath a little bit after pronouncing the one syllable before the double consonant. If you do not pronounce this double consonant properly, you will have some misunderstanding. See examples.

ex.1 **shi·t·te ku·da·sa·i** means "Please know."

shi·te ku·da·sa·i means "Please do."

ex.2 **sa·k·ki** means "a little time ago."

sa·ki means "point."

So, whenever you see the words which have the long vowels and double consonants, please pronounce them properly.

----- {Handout end} -----

Let's practice to pronounce some more words.

oji san = uncle

ojii san = grandfather

doro = mud

dōro = road

yume = dream

yūmei = famous

yuki = snow

yūki = courage

iki = breath

ikki = in one go

kite kudasai = please come

kitte kudasai = please cut



Well, I will explain about Japanese writing system. I read the handout at first, and I will explain the details later.

----- {Handout start} -----

● Writing System

Most of the Japanese sentences are composed of three kinds of letter: **Hiragana**, **Katakana**, and **Kanji**.

Hiragana and Katakana are phonetic characters. There are no specific meanings in Hiragana and Katakana. They show a certain sound or syllable.

Mainly, Hiragana is used to write the particles, conjunctions, some adverbs, the ending of verbs and adjective that conjugate. Some words are also written in Hiragana.

Some Japanese words transliterated from non-Japanese language such as English, French, Malay, etc. To write the transliterated words in Japanese, we use Katakana.

Example: '**rajio**' made from English "radio", '**terebi**' made from English "television", '**kouhii**' made from English "coffee".

(Note that the pronunciation of the transliterated words are slightly (sometimes much) different from those of the original languages.)

And also we use Katakana to write non-Japanese names and places. However, Hiragana can be used if you do not know how to write Katakana.

Kanji (Chinese characters for the Japanese language) was imported from China. Please note that there is a great difference between Kanji and Chinese characters, (although they look similar), because Kanji developed independently in Japan after being imported a long time ago. About 2,000 Kanji are used commonly.

Basically, all Japanese sentences can be written in Hiragana. So, it is very important to learn Hiragana as soon as possible. Then, you should learn Katakana and Kanji.

We have English alphabet for the Japanese language - known as Rōmaji that is not used generally. It is only used to teach the Japanese language to learners who do not know how to read and write Japanese writing characters.

Where pronunciation is concerned Rōmaji is different from English alphabet. Rōmaji is used to help you pronounce Japanese writing characters (Hiragana and Katakana) until you can memorize them.

----- {Handout end} -----



Let me summarize what we read just now.

When we write English sentences, we use English alphabets. When we write Chinese sentences, we use Chinese characters or use Han Yi Pin Yin once in a while.

Regarding Japanese, we normally mix there characters which are Hiragana, Katakana and Kanji to write sentences. Which character to use depends on the word in the sentence.

I give you example. Look at the examples below, please.

English:

I drink coffee.

Chinese:

我喝咖啡。 (wo he ke fei)

Japanese:

私はコーヒーを飲みます。 (watashi wa kouhii o nomimasu.)

- 私 / 飲 --- Kanji
- は / を / みます --- Hiragana
- コーヒー --- Katakata
- watashi wa kouhii o nomimasu --- Rōmaji

Among these three characters, Hiragana is the most important because all Japanese sentences can be written in Hiragana as follows.

わたしはこうひいをのみます。

So, it is very important to master Hiragana as soon possible.

In this Elementary-1 course, we don't study Katakana and Kanji, so please concentrate on memorizing Hiragana.

It is a bit tough to memorize Hiragana, however, if you memorize 46 basic Hiragana, you can read the complete Japanese Syllables Chart in Hiragana instead of reading in Rōmaji.

We made Hiragana Picture Association Chart for you so that you can memorize Hiragana without any difficulties. So, please download it from our website.



Next, let's study the Japanese greetings which are very useful for our daily life. At first, I read and then you follow me, please.

----- {Handout start} -----

Greetings

1. A: **o·ha·yō go·za·i·ma·su.** (Good morning.)
B: **o·ha·yō go·za·i·ma·su.** (Good morning.)
2. A: **ko·n·ni·chi wa.** (Good afternoon. / Hello! / Hi!)
B: **ko·n·ni·chi wa.** (Good afternoon. / Hello! / Hi!)
3. A: **sa·yo·na·ra.** (Good-bye.)
B: **sa·yo·na·ra.** (Good-bye.)
4. A: **ko·n·ba·n wa.** (Good evening.)
B: **ko·n·ba·n wa.** (Good evening.)
5. A: **o·ya·su·mi na·sa·i.** (Good night.)
B: **o·ya·su·mi na·sa·i.** (Good night.)
6. A: **dō·mo a·ri·ga·tō go·za·i·ma·su.** (Thank you very much.)
B: **i·i·e, dō i·ta·shi·ma·shi·te.** (You are welcome.)
7. A: **dō·mo su·mi·ma·se·n.** (I am sorry.)
B: **i·i·e, ka·ma·i·ma·se·n.** (Never mind.)
8. A: **cho·t·to su·mi·ma·se·n.** (Excuse me,...)
B: **ha·i, na·n de·su·ka.** (Yes, what do you like to ask?)
9. A: **ma·ta a·i·ma·shō.** (See you.)
B: **ma·ta a·i·ma·shō.** (See you.)
10. A: **o·ge·n·ki de·su ka.** (How are you?)
B: **ha·i, o·ka·ge sa·ma·de, ge·n·ki de·su.** (Yes, I am fine.)
11. A: **o·me·de·tō go·za·i·ma·su.** (Congratulations!)
B: **dō·mo a·ri·ga·tō go·za·i·ma·su.** (Thank you very much.)
12. A: **ga·n·ba·t·te ku·da·sa·i.** (Do your best!)
B: **ha·i, ga·n·ba·ri·ma·su.** (Yes, I will do my best.)
13. A: **o·hi·sa·shi·bu·ri de·su ne.** (Long time no see!)
B: **o·hi·sa·shi·bu·ri de·su ne.** (Long time no see!)
14. A: **ha·ji·me ma·shi·te.** (How do you do?/ I see you for the first time.)
B: **ha·ji·me ma·shi·te.** (How do you do?/ I see you for the first time.)
15. **dō·zo yo·ro·shi·ku o·ne·ga·i shi·ma·su.** (Nice to meet you.)
16. **ki o tsu·ke·te ku·da·sa·i.** (Take care of yourself. / Watch out!)
17. **o·ne·ga·i shi·ma·su.** (Do me a favor, please.)
18. **mō i·chi·do o·ne·ga·i shi·ma·su.** (I beg your pardon?)
19. **ta·n·jō·bi o·me·de·tō go·za·i·ma·su.** (Happy birthday to you!)

20. a·ke·ma·shi·te o·me·de·tō go·za·i·ma·su. (A Happy New Year!)

----- {Handout end} -----



Well, we study Lesson-1 Grammar. At first, we go through the handout, and then we practice what we study at the handout through the question and answer section.

----- {Handout start} -----

Grammar

§1 **watashi wa gakusei desu.** (I am a student.)

'**wa**' right after '**watashi**' is a particle that is used to show a topic and a subject of the sentence.

'**desu**' corresponds with an English be-verb ("is", "are" and "am") and is put at the end of the sentence. The conception of '(A) **wa** (B) **desu**' is that "(A) equals (B)." It is not necessary to change '**desu**' into another form no matter what the subject is. ((A) and (B) must be a noun.)

What is a particle?

A particle shows the grammatical relationships between the words used before it and some other word in the sentence. It looks like an English preposition ("at", "in", "of", etc.). However, Japanese particles come after the words.

What is a topic and a subject?

In Japanese, a topic means that what the sentence is about. And a subject means that the thing or the person that performs the action of the verb, or about which something is stated. In most of the Japanese sentences, a topic and a subject are the same. So, we simply put '**wa**' right after a topic and a subject of the sentence. In § 1, '**watashi**' is a topic and a subject. Therefore, '**wa**' follows '**watashi**'.

Example:

ex.1 **watashi wa sensei desu.** (I am a teacher.)

ex.2 **anata wa gakusei desu.** (You are a student.)

ex.3 **anata wa sensei desu.** (You are a teacher.)

ex.4 **anata wa kaishain desu.** (You are an employee.)

ex.5 **kare wa kaishain desu.** (He is an employee.)

ex.6 **kare wa mushoku desu.** (He is jobless.)

ex.7 **kanojo wa Nihon-jin 1 desu.** (She is a Japanese.)

ex.8 **kanojo wa Shingapōru-jin desu.** (She is Singaporean.)

ex.9 **Kimura-san 2 wa jieigyō desu.**

(Mr Kimura is a self-employed person.)

1. We can describe one's nationality by adding '**-jin**' to the name of the country.
2. '**-san**' is used for addressing people. It is added after the name. It can be used for all people regardless of gender, marriage status, but never used when we mention our own name.



§2 **watashi wa gakusei dewa arimasen.** (I am not a student.)

'**-dewa arimasen**' is the negative of '**desu**'. It means "is not/ are not/ am not". In daily conversation, '**-ja arimasen**' is used commonly.

Example:

ex.1 **watashi wa sensei dewa arimasen.** (I am not a teacher.)

ex.2 **anata wa gakusei dewa arimasen.** (You are not a student.)

ex.3 **anata wa sensei dewa arimasen.** (You are not a teacher.)

ex.4 **anata wa kaishain dewa arimasen.** (You are not an employee.)

ex.5 **kare wa kaishain dewa arimasen.** (He is not an employee.)

ex.6 **kare wa mushoku ja arimasen.** (He is not jobless.)

ex.7 **kanojo wa Nihon-jin ja arimasen.** (She is not Japanese.)

ex.8 **kanojo wa Shingapōru-jin ja arimasen.** (She is not Singaporean.)

ex.9 **Tanaka-san wa jieigyō ja arimasen.**

(Mr Tanaka is not a self-employed person.)



§3 **anata wa gakusei desu ka?** (Are you a student?)

To make a Japanese question sentence, we simply put '**ka**', which is a particle used

to make a question, at the end of the sentence.

Example:

ex.1 **anata wa sensei desu ka?** (Are you a teacher?)

ex.2 **kare wa dokushin desu ka?** (Is he single?)

ex.3 **kare wa Kankoku-jin desu ka?** (Is he a Korean?)

ex.4 **kanojo wa mushoku desu ka?** (Is she jobless?)

ex.5 **kanojo wa meido desu ka?** (Is she a maid?)

ex.6 **Tanaka-san wa shufu desu ka?** (Is Mrs Tanaka a housewife?)

ex.7 Q: **anata wa Nihon-jin desu ka?** (Are you a Japanese?)

A1: **hai, 1 [watashi wa] Nihon-jin desu.** (Yes, I am Japanese.) /
hai, sō desu. 3 (Yes, I am.)

A2: **iie, [watashi wa Nihon-jin dewa arimasen.]** (No, I am not.)
[watashi wa] Shingapōru-jin desu. (I am a Singaporean.)

You are free to leave out the words in [].

1. Basically, '**hai**' means "Yes" and '**iie**' means "No." However, the exact meaning of '**hai**' is "what you have said is right" and that of '**iie**' is "what you have said is wrong." Thus, you have to be careful to answer the negative question in Japanese. For example, to answer '**anata wa Tanaka-san dewa arimasen ka?** (Aren't you Mr Tanaka?)', '**hai, Tanaka dewa arimasen** (No, I am not Tanaka.)' should be used if you are not Mr Tanaka, and '**iie, Tanaka desu** (Yes, I am Tanaka.)' should be used if you are Mr Tanaka.

2. We can leave out a topic or a subject of the sentence when both the speaker and the listener already know it.

3. '**hai, sou desu**' means "Yes, I am / you are / he is / she is / it is, etc." It is used so as to avoid repeating the noun in the answer. Thus, it cannot be replaced by the verb and the adjective.

ex.8 Q: **anata wa gakusei desu ka?** (Are you a student?)

A1: **hai, [watashi wa] gakusei desu.** (Yes, I am a student.) /
hai, sō desu. (Yes, I am.)

A2: **iie, [watashi wa gakusei ja arimasen.]** (No, I am not.)
[watashi wa] kaishain desu. (I am an employee.)

ex.9 Q: **kare wa kaishain desu ka?** (Is he an employee?)

A1: **hai, [kare wa] kaishain desu.** (Yes, he is an employee.) /
hai, sou desu. (Yes, he is.)

A2: **iie, [kare wa gakusei ja arimasen.]** (No, he is not.)
[kare wa] mushoku desu. (He is jobless.)

New Question-Word:

ex.10 Q: **anata wa donata * (dare) desu ka?** (Who are you?)

A: [**watashi wa**] **Tanaka desu.** (I am Tanaka.)

ex.11 Q: **kanojo wa donata * (dare) desu ka?** (Who is she?)

A: [**kanojo wa**] **Satō-san desu.** (She is Mrs Satou.)

* '**donata**' and '**dare**' are question-words for asking who the person is. Both mean "who." However, '**donata**' is more polite expression than '**dare**'. In Japanese, it is not necessary to change the word order by using the question-word.



§4 **watashi mo gakusei desu.** (I am a student, too.)

'**mo**' is a particle that means "also", "too" or "as well". It replaces a particle, '**wa**'.

Example:

ex.1 **anata mo Chūgoku-jin desu.** (You are also a Chinese.)

ex.2 **anata mo gakusei desu ka?** (Are you also a student?)

ex.3 **kare mo shachou desu ka?** (Is he a company president as well?)

ex.4 **Suzuki san mo Shingapōru-jin dewa arimasen.**

(Mr. Suzuki is not a Singaporean too.)

Note: Japanese Name

Here are typical Japanese names (written in **Kanji**).

田中 太郎 It reads **Tanaka Tarō**. **Tanaka** is a family name.

木村 春子 It reads **Kimura Haruko**. **Kimura** is a family name.

When we tell our name to non-Japanese people, we normally say a given name first like **Tarō Tanaka**, **Haruko Kimura**.

----- {Handout end} -----

Well, I ask you questions in Japanese using what we studied so far, so please reply me.

Example:

T: **anata wa Nihon-jin desu ka.**

S: **iiie, Shingapōru-jin desu.**

T: **anata wa donata desu ka.**

S: **watashi wa Tan desu.**
T: **Tan-san wa gakusei desu ka.**
S: **hai, sō desu.**

Well done. Next, we study the conversation at our textbook.



Conversation (self-introduction)

A: konnichi wa. hajime mashite. 1
watashi wa Tanaka to mōshimasu. 2
dōzo yoroshiku onegai shimasu. 3
B: watashi wa Tan to mōshimasu.
kochira koso 4 dōzo yoroshiku onegai shimasu.
A: shitsurei desu ga, 5 Tan-san wa 6 gakusei desu ka?
B: hai, sō desu. gakusei desu. Tanaka-san wa? 7
A: watashi wa kaishain desu.

1. '**hajime mashite**' means "How do you do?" In Japan, this greeting is used when we meet someone for the first time. After this greeting, we shake hands with each other.
2. '**...to mōshimasu**' is used when you are introducing your name. In this case, '**desu**' is seldom used.
3. '**dōzo yoroshiku onegai shimasu**' means "Nice to meet you."
4. '**kochira koso**' means "me, too" or "It is I who should say so".
5. '**shitsurei desu ga**' means "Excuse me, but ...". It is used when asking personal questions such as one's age, marriage status and name we have forgotten and so on.
6. In Japan, the name is usually used rather than '**anata**' when addressing to a person or asking a question about a person whom you talk with.
7. '**...wa?**' is pronounced with a rising intonation. This is a kind of question and means "How about ...?"

Translation:

A: Good afternoon. How do you do? My name is Tanaka. Nice to meet you.
B: I'm Tan. Nice to meet you.
A: Excuse me, but are you a student?
B: Yes, I am. How about you?
A: I'm a company employee.

That's all for our first lesson.