

**Introduction
to the
Transcription and Pronunciation
of
Contemporary Japanese**

ローマ字表記と標準語の発音

入門編

by

Rafael E. Beermann

Copyright 2006

Introduction to the Transcription and Pronunciation of Contemporary Japanese

1. Transcription and Pronunciation of the Basic Sounds

1. 1 The 46 Basic Sounds

Although the sounds of the Japanese language are more or less different from the sounds of other languages, efforts were made to transcribe them with letters of the Roman alphabet (romanization). In Japanese the smallest unit of sound, which makes it possible to distinguish between the different sounds, is typically represented by a consonant sound followed by a vowel sound (e.g. k+a=ka, s+o=so, f+u=fu). Exceptions among the 46 basic sounds are the five vowels **a**, **i**, **u**, **e**, **o**, and the consonant **n**.

All these **46** sounds are articulated in a similar, quite short and staccato-like way.

(Deviations like long vowel, long consonant, palatalization, etc. are shown in the next chapter 2.)

The 46 basic sounds of Japanese are usually transcribed according to the so-called *Hepburn System* (ヘボン式ローマ字表記) which is the most commonly used system in the Western World.

(Only in Japan another system with some orthographic differences to this one, the so-called *Kun'rei shiki* 訓令式, is used.)

Romanization					Hiragana	Katakana
a	i	u	e	o	あいうえお	アイウエオ
ka	ki	ku	ke	ko	かきくけこ	カキクケコ
sa	<u>shi</u>	su	se	so	さしすせそ	サシスセソ
ta	<u>chi</u>	tsu	te	to	たちつてと	タチツテト
na	ni	nu	ne	no	なにぬねの	ナニヌネノ
ha	hi	<u>fu</u>	he	ho	はひふへほ	ハヒフヘホ
ma	mi	mu	me	mo	まみむめも	マミムメモ
ya	-	yu	-	yo	や ゆ よ	ヤ ユ ヨ
ra	ri	ru	re	ro	らりるれろ	ラリルレロ
wa	-	-	-	<u>o</u>	わ を	ワ ヲ
<u>n</u>					ん	ン

The above presented chart corresponds with the syllabary charts of *hiragana* and *katakana*, those series of symbols which are mainly used in Japan and are comparable with the letters of western alphabet. (see *Introduction to Hiragana*) This order is predominantly used to collate Japanese dictionaries. So it is very recommendable to learn it now.

For memorizing this chart, which is nothing more than a combination of vowels a,i,u,e,o and consonants k,s,t,n,h,m,y,r,w and n, you may use the mnemonic:

Ah, Kana Symbols: Take Note How Many You Read Well.

However, the disadvantage of the romanized letters is its very rare use in Japan...

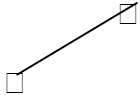
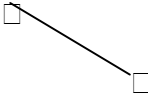
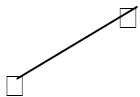
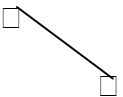
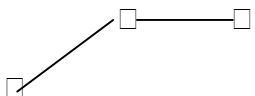
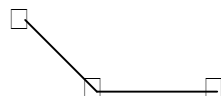
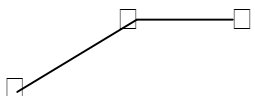
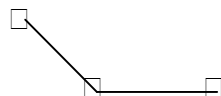
The attentive learner has already discovered some irregularity and empty spaces, or at least the underlines in the chart. The sounds si, ti, tu, hu, yi, ye, wi, wu, we and wo do not exist in contemporary Japanese. Instead of si, ti, hu, wo we use the sounds **shi**, **chi**, **fu** and **o**. The rest of the chart remains a fragment. Furthermore, there is an overlapping of o-sound in the *first* and the *second last* lines. This phenomenon originates from different ways of writing of the o-sound in hiragana お vs. を and katakana オ vs. ヲ although the pronunciation is the same.

1.2 Accent of Standard Japanese

The language spoken in Tokyo and its environs is nowadays accepted as standard. So if we talk about the “correct accent”, here it relates exclusively to the standard language.

Whereas languages like English and German are ruled more by a **stress accent**, which means accented syllables are pronounced forcefully, Japanese is characterized more by the **pitch**, which means the contrast within a word is ruled by *high* and *low*.

It can be illustrated by few examples how important the pitch accent in Japanese is. The following pairs of words are transcribed absolutely in the same way but they have completely different meanings. So only the pitch is able to define their meanings if they are written in alphabetic letters or in kana:

shi		ha		ha		shi		はし	-	はし		(橋-箸)
ha	(bridge)	-	shi	(chopsticks)								
												
me		a		me		あめ		あめ		あめ		(飴-雨)
a	(candy)	-	me	(rain)								
												
tsuka		i		tsuka		いつか		いつか		いつか		(五日-何時か)
i	(fifth day)	-	tsuka	(someday)								
												
nki		de		nki		でんき		でんき		でんき		(伝記-電気)
de	(biography)	-	nki	(electricity)								
												

The difference of meaning between those words becomes clear only when written in *kanji* (see Introduction to *kanji*).

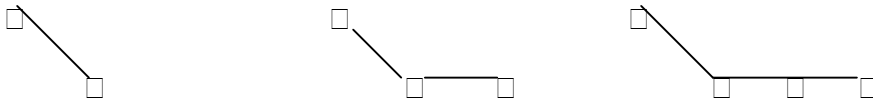
Although hundreds of Japanese words are ambiguous if you write them like above, about 80% of all Japanese words have just scarcely audible accent. The pitch rises continuously from a low at the start of the word to a high at its end. But their sound is quite flat.

So the accent in Japanese is generally *not* so important. A word pronounced pitchless or even with a wrong pitch is still understandable. Other phenomena like long vowels, voiced sounds, devoiced sounds, long consonants, and palatal consonants, all mentioned later, are much more important to differentiate between the majority of Japanese words.

By the way, there is no universal rule to find out the correct pitch accent of a particular word unless the following three clues:

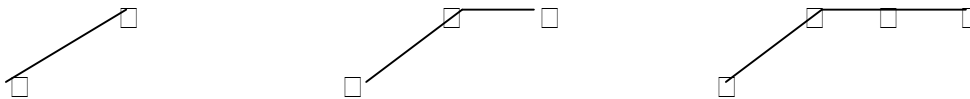
1. If the accent is on the *first* syllable, then the pitch starts *high* and drops suddenly at the second syllable and it stays there corresponding to the count of the syllables. (high-low, high-low-low, high-low-low-low, etc.)

ha shi (chopsticks), a i (love), ki so (fundamentals), ki setsu (season) etc.



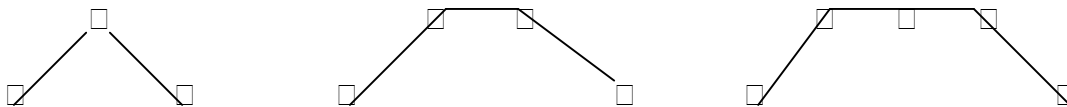
2. If the accent is on the *second* syllable, then the pitch starts *low* and rises suddenly at the second syllable and it stays there corresponding to the count of the syllables. (low-high, low-high-high, low-high-high-high, etc.)

shi (bridge) nu (dog) nki (biography) chibiru (lips)
ha , i , de , ku etc.



3. If the accent is on the *second* syllable, then the pitch starts *low* and rises suddenly at the second syllable and it stays there corresponding to the count of the syllables. After the penultimate syllable the pitch drops suddenly and the word ends with the very last syllable. So this form is like a mountain. (low-high-low, low-high-high-low, low-high-high-high-low, etc.)

be zukashi mayasa
ta ru (to eat), mu i (difficult), na i (uncooked vegetable), etc.



1.3 Pronunciation of the Basic Sounds

It depends on the strength of the valuation to say whether the already mentioned 46 basic sounds are completely different from the sounds of all other languages or not. This introduction is not a phonological reasearch, but rather a very elementary introduction. It deals only with particular and pragmatcal problems of pronunciation which may lead to comprehension difficulties. The best way to improve your pronunciation is still to listen carefully to the speech of native speakers and repeat their way of pronunciation.

All Japanese sounds are pronounced **shortly** and **clearly**. Not only five vowels, but also the unit of a consonant and a vowel have to be pronounced very clearly like the vowels in Italian or Spanish. The /a/ is *not* an /ei/ as in “ape“, it’s more like an /ɔ/ used in the English word “much“. So the popular Japanese word for “Mr.“ or “Ms.“ the suffix *-san* should *not* be pronounced like *San* Francisco, but nearly like the /sɔn/ as in “sunshine“.

Similar, the word “karate“ (competitive sport) is *not* pronounced like a /kæ/ as in “cat“, /rɔ/ inclosing in the word “rare“ and /tii/ inclosing in the word „tea“ . It’s more a combination of the underlined parts of “cut“, “run“ and “technique“.

The vowels a, and u

As already mentioned, the vowels are pronounced *purely* like the vowels in Italian or Spanish.

a - is more an an /ɔ/ like in the words much, tough, hush

u - is pronounced *without* round lips. The lips are *taut* and *straight*. (it is like a forced congealed smile) More precisely, “u“ is pronounced with the lips compressed toward each other, but not spread to the sides.

The unit shi

shi - Remember the short articulation. It is like the “shi-“ in the word “ship“

The unit chi

chi - sounds like the “ch“ in “touch“ with a short “i“ behind

The unit tsu

tsu - sounds like „hot soup“

The unit fu

fu - if you blow out a candle, you are pronouncing exactly this syllable

The units ra,ri,ru,re,ro

ra,ri,ru,re,ro – the initial sound of these units is actually a sound between “l“ and “r“, but closer to “r“ or even „d“. That is the reason why Japanese people sometimes are not able to distinguish between “l“ and “r“.

The consonant n

n - it depends on the surrounding how to pronounce the one and only consonant in Japanese, which stays alone.

Sometimes it sounds nasalized like in “singer“ or it is nearly a “ m“ like in “man-made“.

But the most important thing is to pronounce it always as *one* independent syllable, particularly in cases when “n“ is followed by a vowel. The word “manin“ (まんいん-満員) which means “crowded” is *ma-n’-in* and not ma-nin. Another examples are words “ki-n’-e-n“ (きんえん-禁煙) “no smoking” as the opposite to “ki-nen“ (きねん-記念) “memory”. (Since there is no habit to use this single quotation mark as a pronunciation aid the “anniversary of giving up smoking“ is transcribed as “kinen kinen-bi“ 禁煙記念日.)

1.3.1 Pronunciation Practise with Basic Sounds

Now try to pronounce some Japanese words together with your instructor.

1.3.1.1 Practise

a	(あ)	i	(い)	u	(う)	e	(え)	o	(お)
ka	(か)	ki	(き)	ku	(く)	ke	(け)	ko	(こ)
sa	(さ)	shi	(し)	su	(す)	se	(せ)	so	(そ)
ta	(た)	chi	(ち)	tsu	(つ)	te	(て)	to	(と)
na	(な)	ni	(に)	nu	(ぬ)	ne	(ね)	no	(の)
ha	(は)	hi	(ひ)	fu	(ふ)	he	(へ)	ho	(ほ)
ma	(ま)	mi	(み)	mu	(む)	me	(め)	mo	(も)
ya	(や)	yu	(ゆ)	yo	(よ)				
ra	(ら)	ri	(り)	ru	(る)	re	(れ)	ro	(ろ)
wa	(わ)	o	(を)	n	(ん)				

1.3.1.2 Practise

kai		karui		na		a	
a	(赤い)	a	(明るい)	a ta	(あなた)	ni	(兄)
i		sashi		i		ma	
kura	(いくら)	ya i	(優しい)	ma	(今)	i	(居間)
ka		eru		mi		ka	
eru	(帰る)	ka	(蛙)	ka	(紙)	mi	(神)
ki		ru		mi		ro	
ru	(切る)	ki	(着る)	no mono	(飲み物)	hi i	(広い)

1.3.1.3 Practise

fuyu	(冬)	kon'ya	(今夜)	tsukue	(机)	shiken	(試験)
sawaru	(触る)	namae	(名前)	nakusu	(なくす)	shinsetsu	(親切)
tsukau	(使う)	nihon	(日本)	senaka	(背中)	sen'mon	(専門)
sochira	(そちら)	sofu	(祖父)	nihon	(二本)	taisetsu	(大切)
taihen	(大変)	kimono	(着物)	chikai	(近い)	chichi	(父)
haru	(春)	chiisai	(小さい)	tsukareru	(疲れる)	suwaru	(座る)
natsu	(夏)	tenki	(天気)	sentaku	(洗濯)	hatsuon	(発音)

1.3.1.4 Practise

aki	(秋)	futari	(二人)	hitori	(一人)	hon'yaku	(翻訳)
furo	(風呂)	kuro	(黒)	fuku	(服)	fuku	(吹く)
kutsu	(靴)	nomu	(飲む)	akeru	(開ける)	shimeru	(閉める)
aruku	(歩く)	hashiru	(走る)	yomu	(読む)	hanasu	(話す)
kiku	(聞く)	kaku	(書く)	iku	(行く)	kuru	(来る)
matsu	(待つ)	motsu	(持つ)	miru	(見る)	warau	(笑う)
nishi	(西)	kita	(北)	minami	(南)	ue	(上)
shita	(下)	yoko	(横)	ushiro	(後ろ)	mae	(前)

2. Transcription and Pronunciation of Supplementary Sounds

2.1 The Voiced and Plosive Sounds

In addition to the 46 basic sounds there are twenty voiced and five plosive sounds:

Romanization					Hiragana	Katakana
ga	gi	gu	ge	go	がぎぐげご	ガギグゲゴ
za	ji	zu	ze	zo	ざじずぜぞ	ザジズゼゾ
da	ji	zu	de	do	だぢづでど	ダヂヅデド
ba	bi	bu	be	bo	ばびぶべぼ	バビブベボ

The underlined sounds ji-ji and zu-zu are absolutely identical in the transcription, but they have different syllables written in hiragana or katakana (hiragana: じ-ぢ, ず-づ; katakana: ジ-ヂ, ズ-ヅ)
There are no sounds like **zi** or **di** or **du** in Japanese.

Further, there are five more p-sounds (plosives):

Romanization					Hiragana	Katakana
pa	pi	pu	pe	po	ぱぴぷぺぽ	パピプペポ

2.1.1 Pronunciation of Voiced and Plosive Sounds

Once again we touch upon the most particular problems which may lead to comprehension difficulties.

All voiced and plosive sounds are also articulated **shortly** and very **clearly**.

The unit **ga, gi, gu, ge, go**

It depends on the surrounding whether to pronounce the “g” as it is, or more like a “ng”.

As initial sounds, ga,gi,gu,ge,go are all pronounced without deviation as “g” plus vowel, while they are pronounced often like a “ng” situated in between other sounds:

hagaki はがき (葉書) postcard; manga まんが (漫画) manga, comics; kugi くぎ (釘) nail;

nugu ぬぐ (脱ぐ) to undress; tamagoyaki たまごやき (卵焼き) omelet; nihongo にほんご (日本語) Japanese language etc.

All other voiced or plosive units have no specific problems.

2.1.2 Pronunciation Practise with Voiced and Plosive Sounds

Now try to pronounce some Japanese words together with your instructor. The pitch accent is not shown:

gaikoku (外国)	karada (体)	ganbaru (頑張る)	gin (銀)
gurai (ぐらい)	goro (ごろ)	sagasu (捜す)	jishin (地震)
sanpo (散歩)	tsuzuki (続き)	kaze (風邪)	hozon (保存)
jikan (時間)	denwa (電話)	doitsu (ドイツ)	zenzen (全然)
zubon (ズボン)	supein (スペイン)	oranda (オランダ)	kanji (漢字)
higashi (東)	megane (眼鏡)	miyage (土産)	botan (ボタン)

2.2 Long Vowel

2.2.1 Pronunciation of the Long Vowel

The vowels a,i,u,e,o and all the other units of one consonant and one vowel are categorized in terms of their length as short sounds. In addition to these basic sounds there are vowels in the Japanese language which have to be pronounced with relatively great length. They are treated as a sequence of *two identical vowels*..

Romanization					Hiragana	Katakana
aa	ii	uu	ee	oo	ああ いい うう ええ おお	アー イー ウー エー オー
kaa	kii	kuu	kee	koo	かあ きい くう けえ こお	カー キー クー ケー コー
saa	shii	suu	see	soo	さあ しい すう せえ そお	サー シー スー セー ソー
taa	chii	tsuu	tee	too	たあ ちい つう てえ とお	ター チー ツー テー トー
naa	nii	nuu	nee	noo	なあ にい ぬう ねえ のお	ナー ニー ヌー ネー ノー
haa	hii	fuu	hee	hoo	はあ ひい ふう へえ ほん	ハー ヒー フー ヘー ホー
maa	mii	muu	mee	moo	まあ みい むう めえ もお	マー ミー ムー メー モー
yaa	-	yuu	-	yoo	やあ ゆう よお	ヤー ユー ヨー
raa	rii	ruu	ree	roo	らあ りい るう れえ ろお	ラー リー ルー レー ロー
waa	-	-	-	-	わあ	ワー
gaa	gii	guu	gee	goo	があ ぎい ぐう げえ ごお	ガー ギー グー ゲー ゴー
zaa	jii	zuu	zee	zoo	ざあ じい ずう ぜえ ぞお	ザー ジー ズー ゼー ゴー
daa	jii	zuu	dee	doo	だあ ぢい づう でえ どお	ダー チー ヅー デー ドー
baa	bii	buu	bee	boo	ばあ びい ぶう べえ ぼお	バー ビー ブー ベー ボー
paa	pii	puu	pee	po	ぱあ ぴい ぷう ぺえ ぽお	パー पीー プー ペー ポー

It is very important to pronounce long vowels long and short vowels short because there are so many vocabularies distinguished only by the length of vowel. Incidentally, words including a long vowel are often loan words or foreign words. As you can see, there is no “oo” (tenth row).

2.2.2 Pronunciation Practise with Long Vowels

Try to pronounce some words including long vowels together with your instructor.

koohii (コーヒー)	kootoo (口答)	kookoo (高校)
otoosan (お父さん)	oniisan (お兄さん)	obaasan (おばあさん)
okaasan (お母さん)	oneesan (お姉さん)	imooto (妹)
chiiki (地域)	kiiro (黄色)	kii (キー)
kuukoo (空港)	kenkoo (健康)	toohoo (東方)
goodoo (合同)	hoohoo (方法)	tookoo (登校)
keeburu (ケーブル)	teeburu (テーブル)	teepu (テープ)
maikaa (マイカー)	mikisaa (ミキサー)	sensaa (センサー)
paatonaa (パートナー)	meedee (メーデー)	keeburu (ケーブル)
meeru (メール)	seeru (セール)	booru (ボール)
gooru (ゴール)	kooru (凍る)	kooru (コール)
piiku (ピーク)	puudoru (プードル)	biiru (ビール)

2.2.3 Pronunciation Practise with Short and Long Vowels

Now try to pronounce some word pairs together with your instructor.

oki 沖(open sea)	ookii 大きい (big)	
ki 木(tree)	kii キー(key)	
ho 帆(sail)	hoo 法 (law)	
chi 血(blood)	chii 地位(position)	
ojisān 伯父さん(uncle)	ojiisan お祖父さん(grandfather)	
ie 家(house)	iie いいえ(no)	
horu 掘る(to dig)	hooru ホール(hall)	
kuru 来る(to come)	kuuru クール(cool)	
e 絵(painting)	ee ええ(yes)	
toru 取る(to take)	tooru 通る(to pass)	
yoi 良い(good)	yooi 用意(preparation)	
to 戸(door)	too とお(ten)	too-oo 東欧(East Europe)
kado 角(corner)	kaado カード(card)	kadoo 華道(flower arrangement)
kuro 黒(black)	kuroo 苦勞(hardship)	kuuro 空路(by air)

2.3 Diphthongs

In phonetics, a **diphthongs** (“twice sounding”) are combinations of vowels which form a glide within one syllable; often interpreted by listeners as a single vowel sound. While “pure” vowels have one target tongue position, diphthongs have two target tongue positions. The Japanese diphthongs are perceived as sequences of **two different** vowels. So these vowel sequences are phonetically different from the diphthongs that occur in languages like English. In Japanese, both the pitch accent and slight rhythm breaks help to avoid an undesirable overlap when the vowels are identical. (The word “mei” 姪 which means “niece” is pronounced as “me-i” and not as “may” in English. The word “toooo” 東欧, which means “Eastern Europe”, is pronounced “too-oo” approximately like the English “toe owe” .)

2.3.1 The Diphthong ei

The long vowel “ee” and all the other units of consonant plus ee can be defined as a diphthong. While words which are originated from western languages and include this doubled “e” are transcribed with “ee”, the majority of Japanese words, however, are written with „**ei**” instead of “ee” :

eiga 映画 (film) and *not* “eega”
heiwa 平和 (peace) and *not* “heewa”
keiei 経営 (management) and *not* “keeee”
seimei 生命 (life) and *not* “seemee”.

As for kana-syllabary spelling, this “i” is written as い or ɨ in Japanese words and as – (a symbol for long vowels, the so-called vowel extender mark) in words originated from western languages.

2.3.2 Pronunciation Practise with the Diphthong ei

Try to pronounce some words including the diphthong ei together with your instructor.

sensei (先生)	gakusei (学生)	reisei (冷静)	heiwa (平和)
keizai (経済)	keiei (経営)	meirei (命令)	teinei (丁寧)
engei (園芸)	orei (お礼)	kirei (奇麗)	shihei (紙幣)
suihei (水平)	zeikin (税金)	mei (姪)	teido (程度)
kitei (規定)	seikatsu (生活)	seitei (制定)	seimei (生命)
keitai (携帯)	reisei (冷静)	heisei (平成)	yuumei (有名)
seisan (生産)	teinen (定年)	engei (演芸)	senrei (洗礼)
katei (課程)	eisei (衛生)	kaikei (会計)	senmei (鮮明)

2.3.3 The Diphthong oo

The long vowel “oo” and all the other units of consonant plus oo can also be defined as diphthongs. Although the official transcription does not make any difference between the long version of o and the diphthong o (both are written as “oo”) the diphthong of “o” is written in a syllabary as う (Hiragana, usually pronounced as /u/) and as a simple “ー” (Katakana, just a sign for a long vowel) in words originated from western languages.

So the Japanese word “koodo” 高度, which means “height, altitude, advanced”, is written in Hiragana as こうど with a う, while the loan word “koodo”, with absolute identical intonation and which means “a code”, is written コード with a simple sign for a long vowel “ー” in Katakana.

2.3.4 Pronunciation Practise with the Diphthong oo

Try to pronounce some words including the diphthong oo together with your instructor.

kenkoo (健康)	kookoo (高校)	koosoo (高層)	hoosoo (放送)
toohoo (東方)	hoohoo (方法)	yooboo (要望)	kikoo (氣候)
hoomon (訪問)	sootoo (相当)	roodoo (労働)	dooro (道路)
toobu (東部)	butoo (舞踏)	kendoo (剣道)	sadoo (茶道)
doosa (動作)	koosaten (交差点)	kotoo (孤島)	kootoo (口答)
gootoo (強盜)	koodo (高度)	tookoo (登校)	tokoo (渡航)

notice: Most of the words including diphthong are of Chinese origin and are compounded of two nouns.

2.4 The Devoiced Sounds

The vowels, especially “i” and “u”, tend to be devoiced between, after, and before *voiceless* consonants. In a normally spoken flow of words the vowels **i** and **u** are often swallowed up. Although devoicing is very common and important for the right pronunciation of contemporary Japanese, this phenomenon is unfortunately ignored in the transcription as well as in the original writing system. So the only way to refine your pronunciation is to listen carefully to that of a native speaker and try to copy it.

□

2.4.1 Pronunciation Practise with Devoiced Sounds

Try to pronounce some words with devoiced vowels.

kutsu 靴 (shoe)	KUTSU
chikai 近い (near)	CHIKAI
aki 秋 (autumn)□	AKI
enpitsu 鉛筆 (pencil)	ENPITSU
kiku 聞く (to hear)	KIKU
chikai 近い (near)	CHIKAI
aisatsu 挨拶 (greetings)□	AISATSU
hikaku 比較 (comparison)	HIKAKU
imasu います (to be)	IMASU
shimasu します (to do)	SHIMASU
ikura いくら (how much)	IKURA
ikutsu いくつ (how many)	IKUTSU
daigaku 大学 (university)	DAIGAKU
ashita 明日 (tomorrow)	ASHITA
kita 北 (north)	KITA
chichi 父 (own father)	CHICHI
sukunai 少ない (less)	SUKUNAI
sukoshi 少し (a little)	SUKOSHI
tsukau 使う (to use)	TSUKAU
tsuzuku 続く (to continue)	TSUZUKU
tekisuto テキスト (text)	TEKISUTO
hitotsu 一つ (one piece)	HITOTSU
kimatsushiken 期末試験 (final exam)	KIMATSUSHIKEN

2.5 Long Consonant (Gemination)

In phonetics, **gemination** is when a spoken consonant is "doubled", so that it is pronounced for an audibly longer period of time than a "single" consonant. In Japanese, there are several cases of gemination:

k	→	kk
s	→	ss
s	→	ssh
t	→	tt
t	→	tch
p	→	pp
n	→	nn
g	→	gg
d	→	dd
h	→	hh

The last three geminations (dd,gg,hh) appear only in loan words and words of foreign origin. (baggu – bag, heddo – head, bahha – J.S. Bach etc.)

2.5.1 Pronunciation Practise with Long Consonants

Try to pronounce some words including long consonants together with your instructor.

yokka (四日)	mikka (三日)	sakkaa (サッカー)	sekken (石けん)
mekki (メッキ)	hatten (発展)	kesshin (決心)	rettoo (列島)
hassen (八千)	hassoo (発送)	resseki (列席)	ressha (列車)
matte (待つ)	motta (持った)	ketten (欠点)	kettoo (血統)
ketchaku (決着)	kotchi (こっち)	sotchi (そっち)	dotchi (どっち)
kappa (カッパ)	roppon (六本)	konnann (困難)	sennin (専任)
bannin (番人)	honnoo (本能)	sannen (三年)	tennen (天然)
kekka (結果)	akka (悪化)	sakki (さつき)	ikken (一軒)
zannen (残念)	sonna (そんな)	anna (あんな)	donna (どんな)
setto (セット)	getto (ゲット)	netto (ネット)	petto (ペット)
beddo (ベッド)	rokku (ロック)	doggu (ドッグ)	hatto (ハット)

It is very important to pronounce gemination really as **doubled** consonants with a syllable division (e.g. “I met Tom “ and not “ I mettom “; “ a bad dream“ and not “a baddream“), because there are a lot of Japanese words distinguished only by the length of consonants:

2.5.2 Pronunciation Practise with Single and Long Consonant Pairs

Try to pronounce the following pairs of words together with your instructor.

saka 坂(slope)	sakka 作家 (writer)
supai スパイ(spy)	suppai 酸っぱい(sour)
shita 下(down)	shitta 知った (known)
moto 元 (cause)	motto もっと (more)
kako 過去 (past)	kakko 括弧 (parenthesis)
jiken 事件 (occurrence)	jikken 実験 (experiment)
kasai 火災 (fire)	kassai 喝采 (applause)
nishi 西 (west)	nisshi 日誌 (diary)
kasen 下線 (underline)	kassen 合戦 (battle)
kata 肩 (shoulder)	katta 買った (bought)
aka 赤 (red)	akka 悪化 (deterioration)
iken 意見 (opinion)	ikken 一見 (first sight)
jikan 時間 (time)	jikkan 実感 (really feel)
bushi 武士 (samurai)	busshi 物資 (supplies)
haken 派遣 (dispatch)	hakken 発見 (discovery)
seki 席 (seat)	sekki 石器 (stone implement)
hane 羽 (feather)	hanne 半値 (half price)
hone 骨 (bone)	honne 本音 (real intention)

2.6 Palatal Consonant

Palatal consonants are articulated with the body of the tongue raised against the middle part of the upper gum (hard palate). The interaction between the tongue and the hard palate is essential in the formation of the following sounds. They are always built of a consonant plus semi-vowel “y” and the vowel a, u or o:

Romanization			Hiragana	Katakana
kya	kyu	kyo	きゃ きゅ きょ	キャ キュ キョ
gya	gyu	gyo	ぎゃ ぎゅ ぎょ	ギョ ギュ ギョ
sha	shu	sho	しゃ しゅ しょ	シャ シュ ショ
ja	ju	jo	じゃ じゅ じょ	ジャ ジュ ジョ
cha	chu	cho	ちゃ ちゅ ちょ	チャ チュ チョ
nya	nyu	nyo	にゃ にゅ にょ	ニャ ニュ ニョ
hya	hyu	hyo	ひゃ ひゅ ひょ	ヒャ ヒュ ヒョ
bya	byu	byo	びゃ びゅ びょ	ビャ ビュ ビョ
pya	pyu	pyo	ぴゃ ぴゅ ぴょ	ピャ ピュ ピョ
mya	myu	myo	みゃ みゅ みょ	ミャ ミュ ミョ
rya	ryu	ryo	りゃ りゅ りょ	リャ リュ リョ

2.6.1 Pronunciation Practise with Palatal Consonants

The palatal consonant is always built of three components: consonant-semi-vowel-vowel. But the pronunciation is a quick and smooth movement. So it is a *single* sound (e.g. kya and *not* ki-ya, sha and *not* shi-ya etc).

By the way, palatal consonants can by all means appear together with *long vowel* (kyoo, shuu, pyoo etc.) or *long consonant* (-kkyo, -ssho, -ppyo etc) or both (-kkyoo, -sshoo, -ppyoo etc). Now try to pronounce some words with palatal consonants together with your instructor:

okyaku (お客)	kyoka (許可)	jama (邪魔)	gyaku (逆)
yu'nyuu (輸入)	densha (電車)	josei (女性)	chokin (貯金)
isha (医者)	kyonen (去年)	jisho (辞書)	kyaku (客)
hyaku (百)	yushutsu (輸出)	shumi (趣味)	hyoo (表)
yakyuu (野球)	ichibyoo (一秒)	kaisha (会社)	chotto (ちょっと)
chokin (貯金)	ryookin (料金)	myaku (脈)	ryaku (略)
gyuu'nyuu (牛乳)	shuu'nyuu (収入)	kingyo (金魚)	myooji (名字)
ryuukoo (流行)	happyaku (八百)	ryuugaku (留学)	chuu'nyuu (注入)
myuujikku (ミュージック)	nyuusu (ニュース)	hyuuzu (ヒューズ)	
kyandoru (キャンドル)	shatsu (シャツ)	byuutii (ビューティー)	
chuurippu (チューリップ)	nyuuyooku (ニューヨーク)	chokoreeto (チョコレート)	

notice: Transcription of Specific Foreign Words

Whereas most of the sounds of foreign words and names are transformed by this inventory of the Japanese sound system, which causes occasionally curious words (golf club = gorufu kurabu), some foreign words make eccentric transcription necessary:

fa ファ	fantajii ファンタジー	phantasy; fairu ファイル	file; fanshii ファンシー	fancy ;
fi フィ	firumu フィルム	film; fisshu フィッシュ	fish; fingaa フィンガー	finger;
fe フェ	fesutibaru フェスティバル	festival; fendaa フェンダー	fender; fizu ファイズ	fizz;
fo フォ	fooku フォーク	fork, folk; foomu フォーム	form; fookasu フォーカス	focus;
dyu デュ	dyuaru デュアル	dual; dyuutiifurii デューティー	フリー	duty free;
ti ティ	tiitaimu ティータイム	teatime; tisshu ティッシュ	tissue; tiishatsu Tシャツ	T-shirt;
tsa ツァ	tsaitogaisuto ツァイトガイスト	Zeitgeist (time spirit)		
wa ヴァ	warutoshuteruben ヴァルトシュテルベン	Waldsterben (dying of the woods)		
wi ウィ	wiriamu ウィリアム	William; wiruson ウィルソン	Wilson;	
vi ヴィ	vikutaa ヴィクター	Victor; virusu ヴィルス	virus;	
we ウェ	wesutan ウェスタン	western; wensudee ウェンスデー	wednesday;	
wo ウォ	woorusutoriito ウォールストリート	Wall Street; woressu ウォレス	Wallace;	
vo ヴォ	ivonnu イヴオンヌ	Yvonne (also: ibonnu);		
ye イエ	yesu イエス	yes; iesu イエス	Jesu(s)	

Definitive not existing sounds are treated as follows:

si→shi, tu→tsu, hu→fu, yi→i, ve→be, ä→e, ö→e, ü→yu