

# HIRAGANA42

"THE ANSWER" to LEARNING HOW to READ HIRAGANA



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Hey there Japanese-learner! Nice to meet you!

I'm guessing you're here to learn hiragana. Well done. The first step to getting help is admitting that you have a problem. Using experimental technology, heaps of horse steroids, and a necromancer cat named Nelly, you'll come out the other side an omnipotent hiragana being.

To sum it up, you'll be pretty good at hiragana.

By learning hiragana, you're opening so many doors for yourself. Japanese language resources that were just books full of gibberish suddenly become things that you can use. If you learn hiragana, you can learn Japanese. It's as simple as that. So let's learn hiragana.

The goal for this ebook is very simple: I want you to be able to read hiragana in a very short amount of time. Using these strategies, I've seen people learn everything here in *less than a day*. Most likely it will take you a week (or two), but that's still bundles faster than the *months* that most people need when they learn hiragana the regular way (I think it involves hitting your head on a curb over and over again? I can't remember because of the indent in my forehead).

To speed your hiragana learning up, this ebook does a couple of different things. In case you're interested, they are:

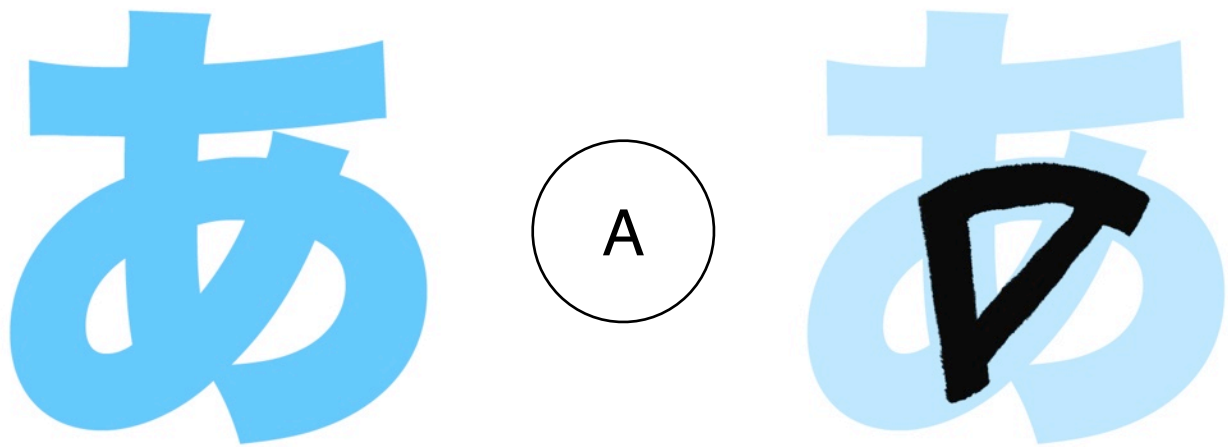
- **Mnemonics** - with kanji, you can't use picture mnemonics (they're just too complicated!). With hiragana, picture mnemonics are perfect! I use those to help you to get the kana into your brain long enough to solidify it a little bit later in the exercises.
- **No Writing** - WHAT? NO WRITING? I know what you're thinking. That's creeezay! But, think about it a moment. When was the last time you had to write something down with your beautiful, soft hands? Probably when you signed a receipt as you were leaving a restaurant. The need to write things by hand is going down, down, down. If you learn how to read hiragana you will be able to type it, which is like writing but 9000 times easier (or is it over 9000?). After you've learned how to *read* hiragana you can choose to learn to write it, though I'd rather you spend all that writing time learning more Japanese instead. That's just me, I suppose.
- **Exercises** - There're also exercises that will help you to learn the hiragana. Most of the exercises are focused on making you *recall* memories (created by the mnemonics). Recalling memories is the best way to make better memories, so I have you do this quite a bit.

So shall we get started? All you need to do is follow along with the lessons and do what you're told. If you do everything (and I mean *everything*) you'll be able to read hiragana in no time.

One last thing, though. Before you get started, you should know this information first:

1. You should know a bit about “The Japanese Alphabets.” By this I mean you should know about the existence of romaji, hiragana, katakana, and kanji. You don’t need to *know* them, but you need to know *of* them. [Learn about them here](#).
2. You also need to know the pronunciation of the kana. This will make sure you’re not pronouncing everything wrong (and therefore destroying your Japanese-speaking future!). If you don’t know the sounds that the kana make already, [learn about that first](#).

Got those two things down? That means you’re ready to learn to read. If you follow along and do what you’re told everything will be a-okay.

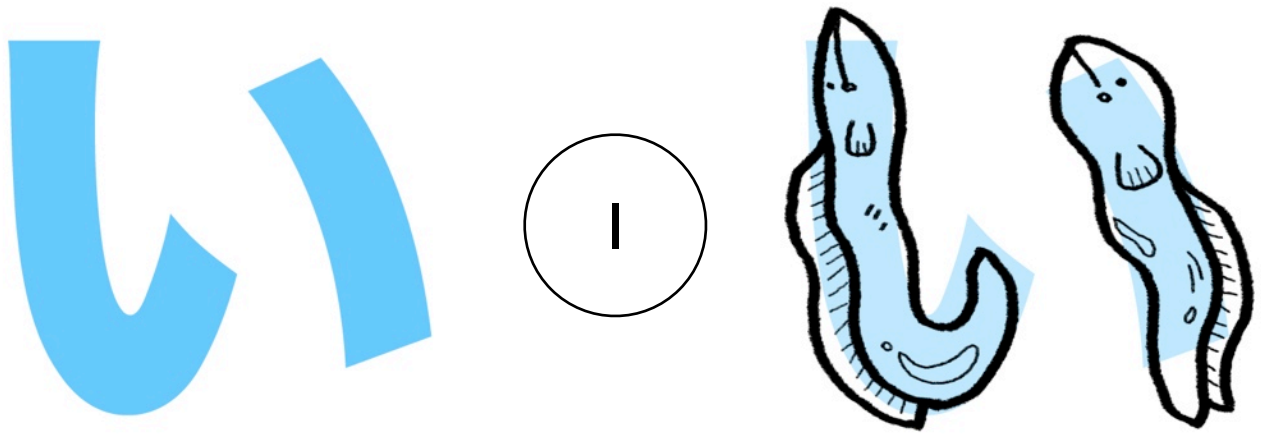


あ is pronounced like the “a” in “**car**” or the “a” in “**awful**.”

To remember this kana, find the capital “**A**” inside of it. This “A” will tell you that this kana is also “a” aka あ.

**Task:**

You don’t have any task for this kana. Just continue on and learn the next one. We need to build up a few more before attempting to recall this information out of your memory.

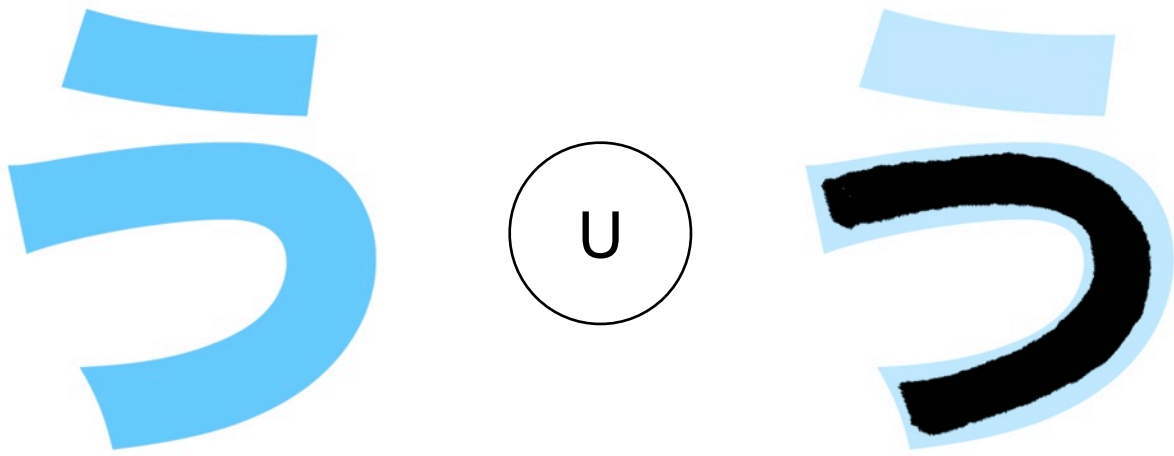


い is pronounced like the “ee” in “**ee**l.”

To remember this kana, just think of a couple of **eels** (i) hanging out. They’re upright because they’re trying to mimic the letter “i” which also stands upright and also happens to be the way you spell out this character in romaji.

**Task:**

Move on to the next kana.



う is pronounced like the “ooh” in “**oooo**... ahhh!” when you’re watching fireworks. It also sounds like the “ou” in “**You**.”

To remember this kana, notice the “**U**” shape right in it! It’s sideways but it’s there, just like the A in あ (can you still see it?).

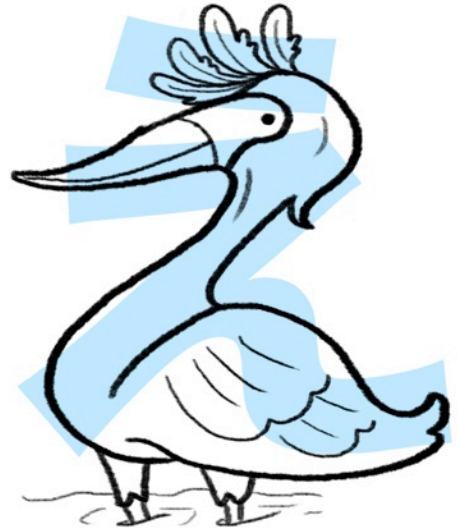
**Task:**

Move on to the next kana.



え

E

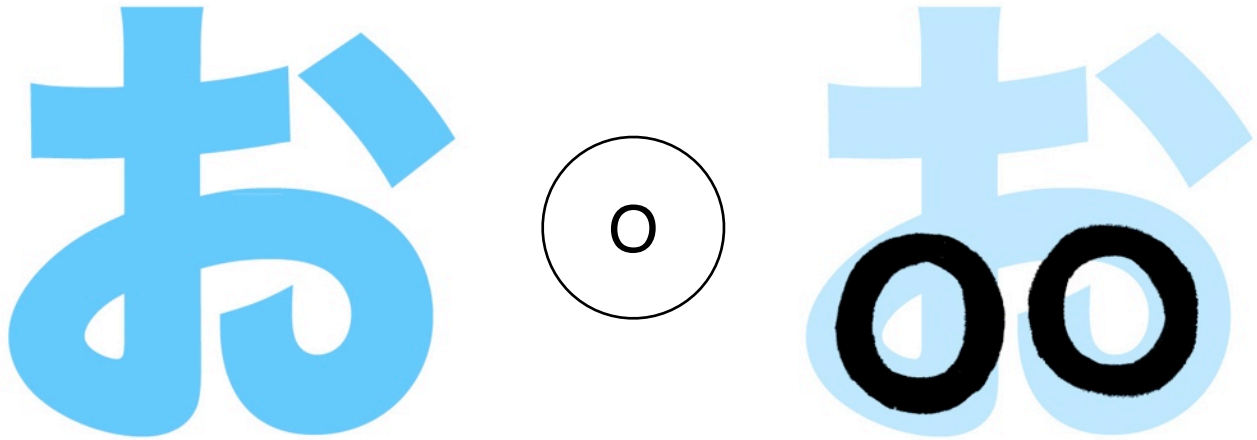


え is pronounced like the “**e**” in “**e**xotic” or the “**e**” in “**e**gg.”

To remember this kana, think of it like an **e**xotic bird. The big feathery thing on its head gives it away that it’s exotic. It also lays **e**ggs, because it’s a bird.

**Task:**

Move on to the next kana. Only one more before you start to get real tasks.



お is pronounced like you're saying "**oh**." It also sounds like the "o" in "**o**riginal."

Can you see the letter "**o**" in here, two times? This one looks similar to あ, except for its one key difference (the two "o" symbols in there). Make sure you differentiate them in your mind this way so you don't get confused between them.

#### Tasks:

1. Now you'll be heading over to the website [Drag n' Drop Hiragana](#). It'll have all the hiragana there, but I only want you to find, identify, then drag these first five that you learned. You have to find the correct hiragana amongst all the hiragana you don't actually know yet, which will be a challenge in itself. You'll want to use the mnemonics above to help yourself to recall the right info.
2. On the following page there is a series of kana. They will be kana that you've learned up until this point. I want you to write the romaji pairing above each character. It's also very important that you actually write these romaji pairings down, too, even if it's on a separate piece of paper as it will help you to solidify your memory. If you don't know what the romaji pairing is, you can refer to the hiragana chart I provided with this ebook.

a  
あ い う え お え お い あ う え お い

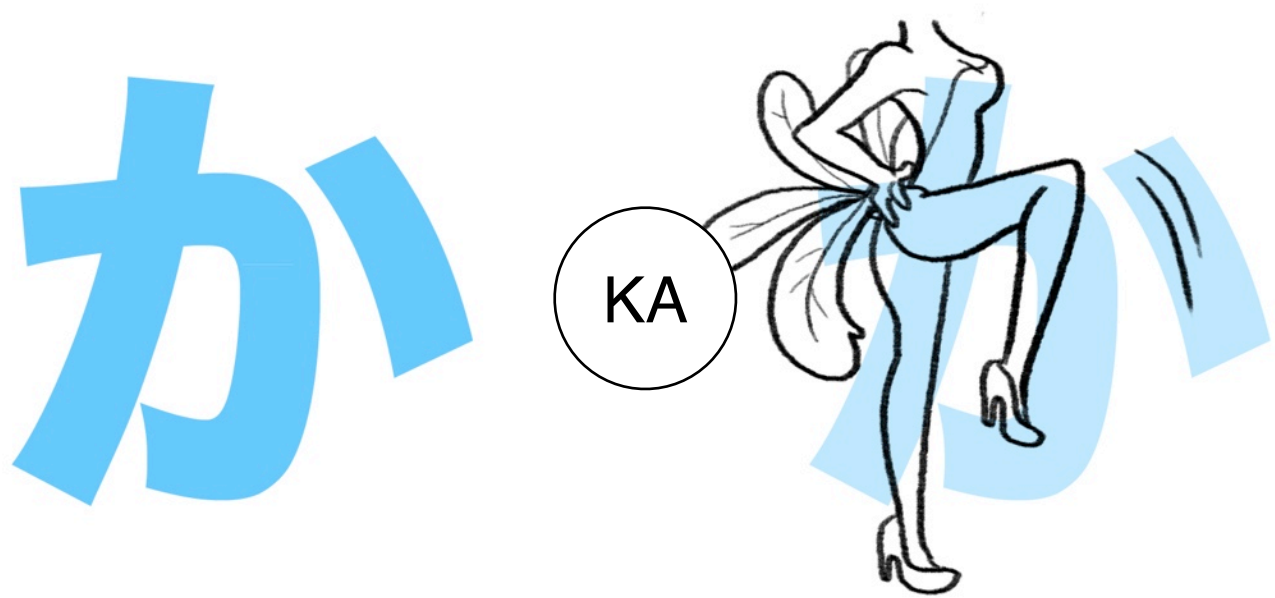
あ う お う え あ う え お あ う あ お

い え お あ お あ あ い え お え お あ

う あ お お え お い あ う あ う お う

### Tasks:

When you're able to write all the pairings down, move on to the next kana. Try to use and recall the mnemonics as well before cheating and looking at your hiragana chart. Recalling memories is actually the best way to build them, so try as hard as you can before peeking!



か is just the “K” sound plus あ, making a “ka” sound.

To remember this, think of someone who’s doing the “**can** **can**” (ka) dance.

♪ Cannn, can you do the can can, can you do the can can... ♪

**Task:**

Move on to the next kana.

き

KI

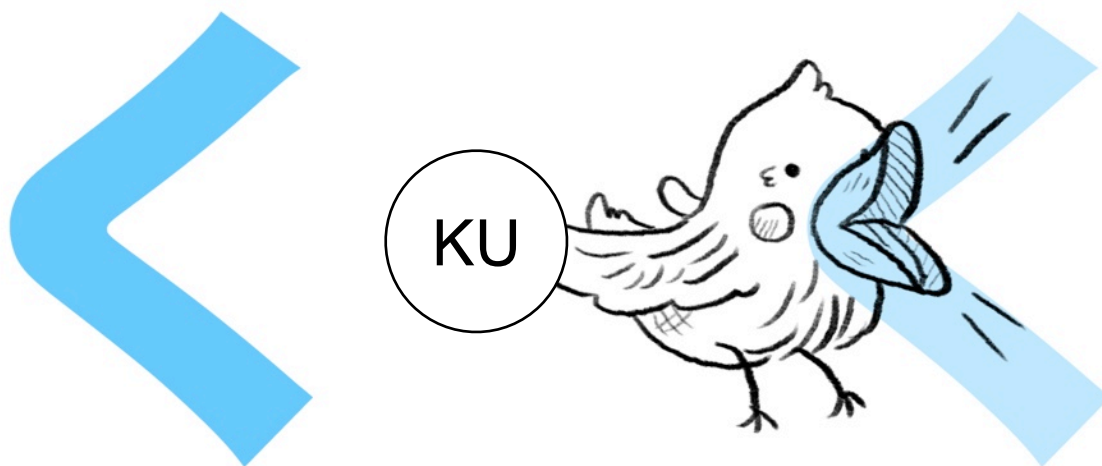


き is just the “K” sound plus い, making a “ki” sound. In fact, it sounds just like the word “**key**.”

To remember this, notice how much it resembles a **key** (ki).

**Task:**

Move on to the next kana.



く is just the “K” sound plus う, making a “ku” sound.

To remember this, think of this kana being the mouth of a **coo-coo/cuckoo** (ku) bird popping out saying “ku ku, ku ku!”

**Task:**

Move on to the next kana.

け

KE

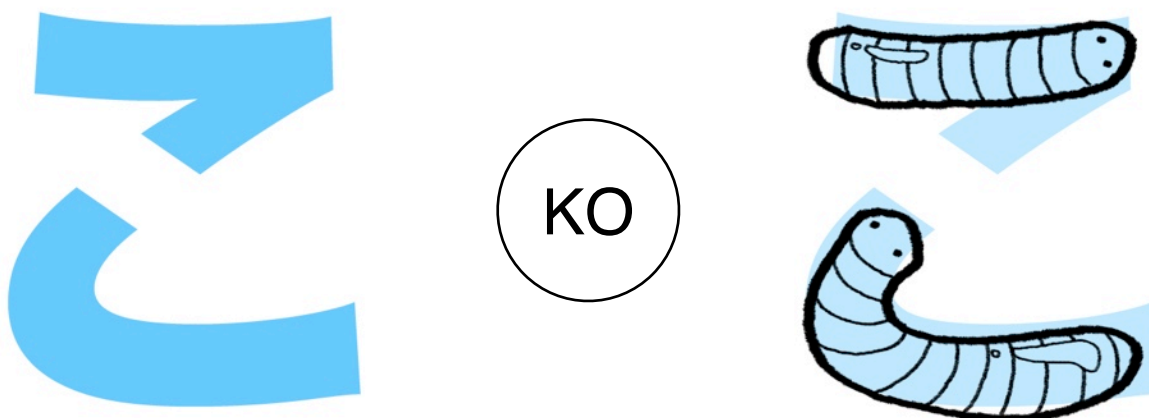


け is just the “K” sound plus え, making a “ke” sound.

You’ll have to use your imagination here, but this kana looks a lot like a **keg**.

**Task:**

Move on to the next kana.



こ is just the “K” sound plus お, making a “ko” sound.

Ko is a couple of **co**-habitation (ko) worms. They’re so happy together, co-habiting the same area!

**Task:**

1. Using [Drag n' Drop Hiragana](#), drag the あ column (あいうえお) hiragana and the か column (かきくけこ) hiragana into their correct spaces. Once you’re able to do this without cheating, move on to the next step.
2. On the next page is a series of kana based on what you’ve learned so far. Write the correct romaji character above each kana, then move on to the next set.



<sup>a</sup>  
あ か き こ う あ い け あ か こ う き

く う か く か こ あ い お け き か え

お け く か く き え か え け こ く き

お い あ お こ け う こ く こ け い あ

か こ か こ あ い お か え け こ お こ

**Tasks:**

When you're able to write all the pairings down, move on to the next kana. Try to use and recall the mnemonics as well before cheating and looking at your hiragana chart. Recalling memories is actually the best way to build them, so try as hard as you can before peeking!

さ

SA



さ is just the “S” sound plus あ, making a “sa” sound.

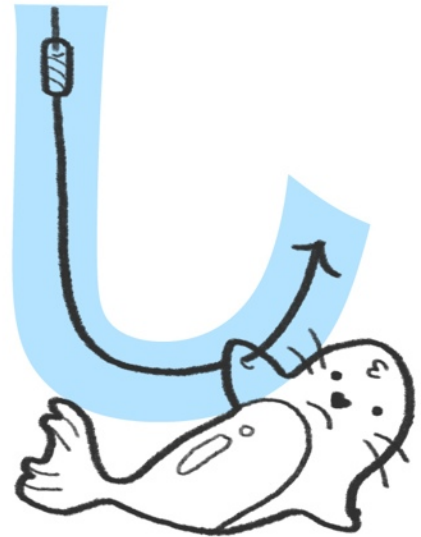
This kana looks like a weird **sign** (where the “si” of “sign” is pronounced like “sa”) stuck in the ground.

**Task:**

Move on to the next Kana.



SHI

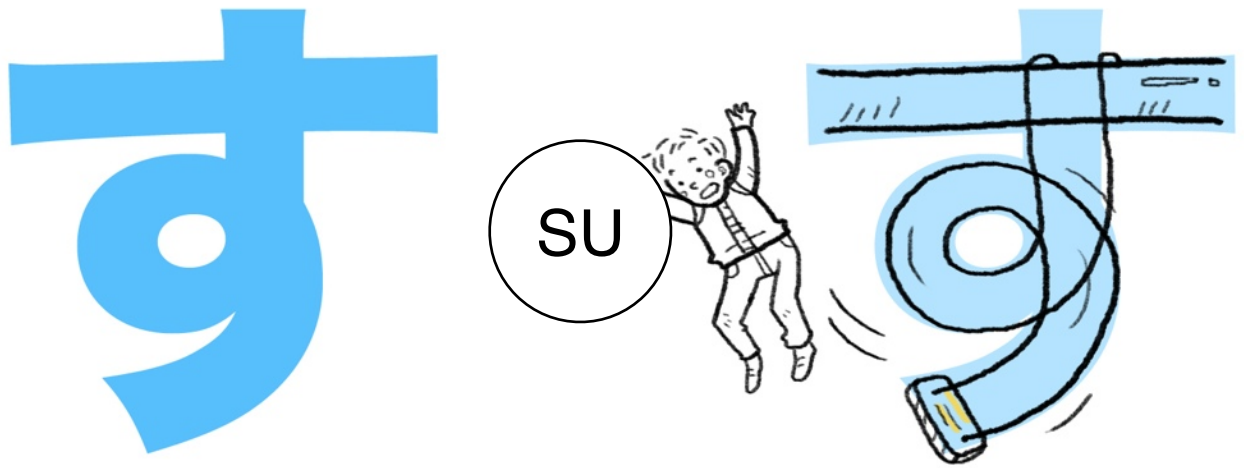


し is just the “Sh” sound plus い, making a “shi” sound. Take note that this is the first “exception” kana where it doesn’t follow the patterns that show up everywhere else. Instead of being “si” it’s “shi.”

This kana looks like a giant hook you’re dipping into the water. What do you catch? A poor **seal** (shi).

**Task:**

Be sure to remember that you’re dipping the hook straight down. There is another hook-like kana (っ) that you pull, and it’s important to distinguish the two.

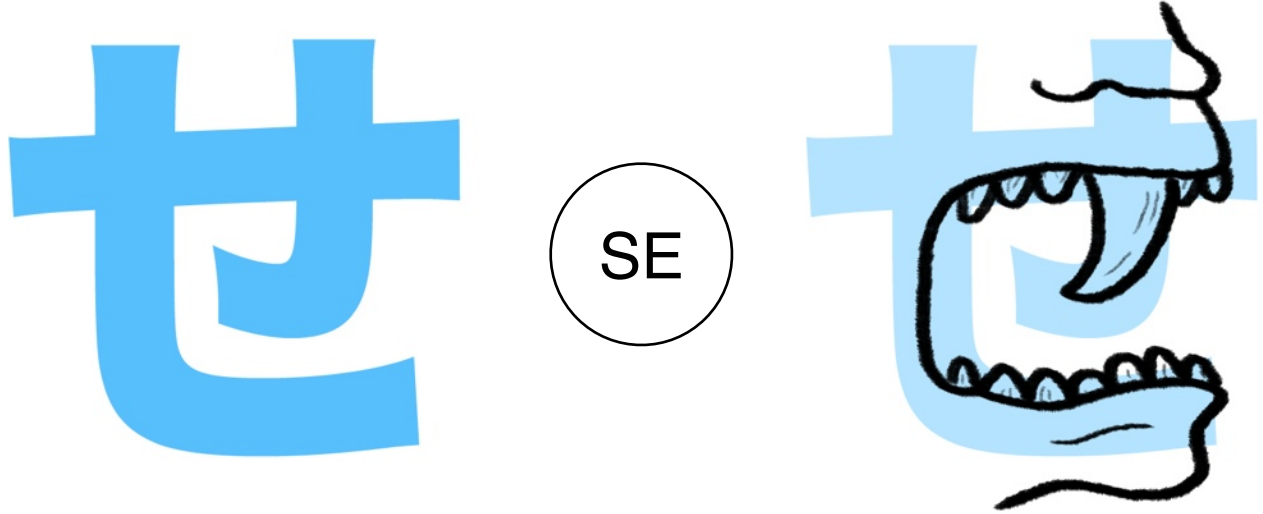


す is just the “S” sound plus う, making a “su” sound.

See the **swing** (su) doing a loop-dee-loop throwing that poor kid off of it? Imagine him screaming “I’M GONNA **SUE** SOMEBODY FOR THIIIIIIiiissss” as he flies off into the distance.

**Task:**

Move on to the next Kana.

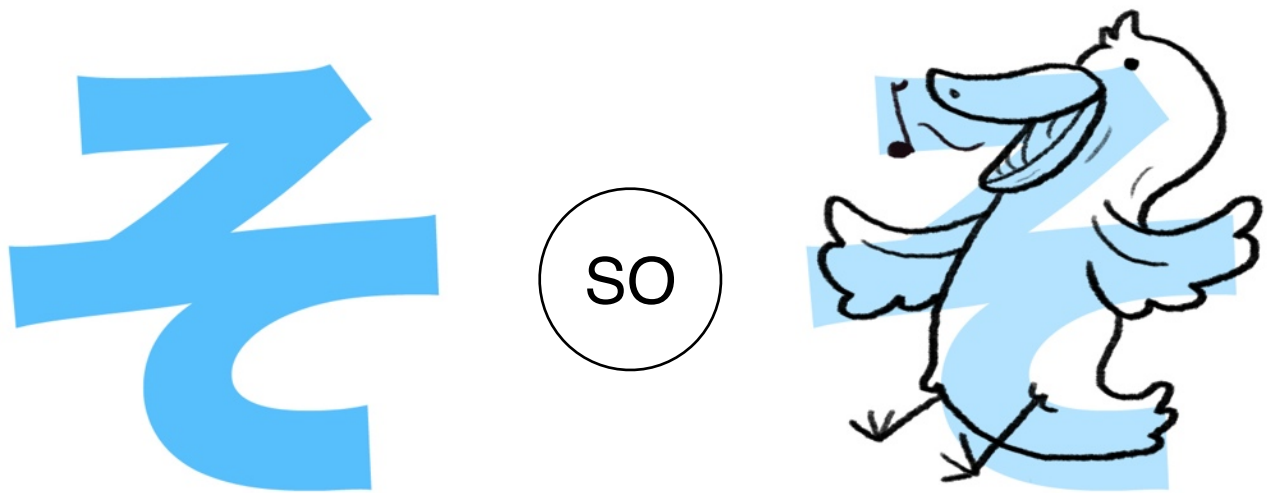


セ is just the “S” sound plus え, making a “se” sound.

This kana looks like a mouth with a big fang in it. What would someone like this **say** (se)? How **sexy** is that tooth, btw?

**Task:**

Move on to the next Kana.



そ is just the “S” sound plus お, making a “so” sound.

This kana is just a **songbird** (so), flapping its little wings while singing a little tune! “So so so soooo!” 🎵

### Tasks:

1. Head on back to [Drag n' Drop Hiragana](#). Just like before, drag n' drop the あ, か, and さ columns of hiragana into the right spots. When you're able to do this without cheating, move on to the next step. Make sure you try really hard to remember each kana before peeking at your hiragana chart! The harder you try to remember something, the better of a memory you'll create.
2. On the next page there is a list of kana that you need to know by this point. Add the romaji counterpart to each kana. You should be starting to feel comfortable with the first column (あ〜お) by now!

さ　せ　し　あ　お　す　そ　あ　か　き　こ　せ　さ

そ　え　お　う　す　せ　さ　か　け　く　し　す　せ

そ　す　き　く　か　お　あ　く　そ　さ　し　す　こ

し　え　そ　い　し　す　そ　あ　け　こ　う　お　き

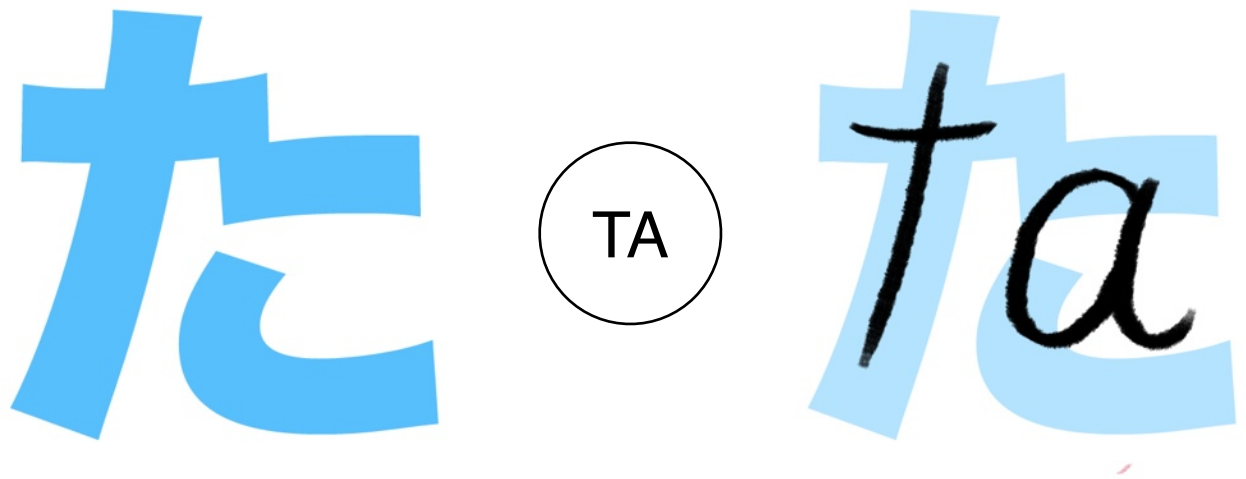
あ　く　し　さ　あ　い　う　え　お　こ　く　か　え

お　か　し　い　そ　さ　せ　せ　さ　か　け　く　し

そ　え　お　う　す　せ　き　く　か　さ　せ　し　あ

**Tasks:**

When you're able to write all the pairings down, move on to the next kana. Try to use and recall the mnemonics as well before cheating and looking at your hiragana chart. Recalling memories is actually the best way to build them, so try as hard as you can before peeking!



た is just the “T” sound plus あ, making a “ta” sound.

This looks just like the romaji that spells it out: “ta”

**Task:**

Move on to the next Kana.



ち

CHI



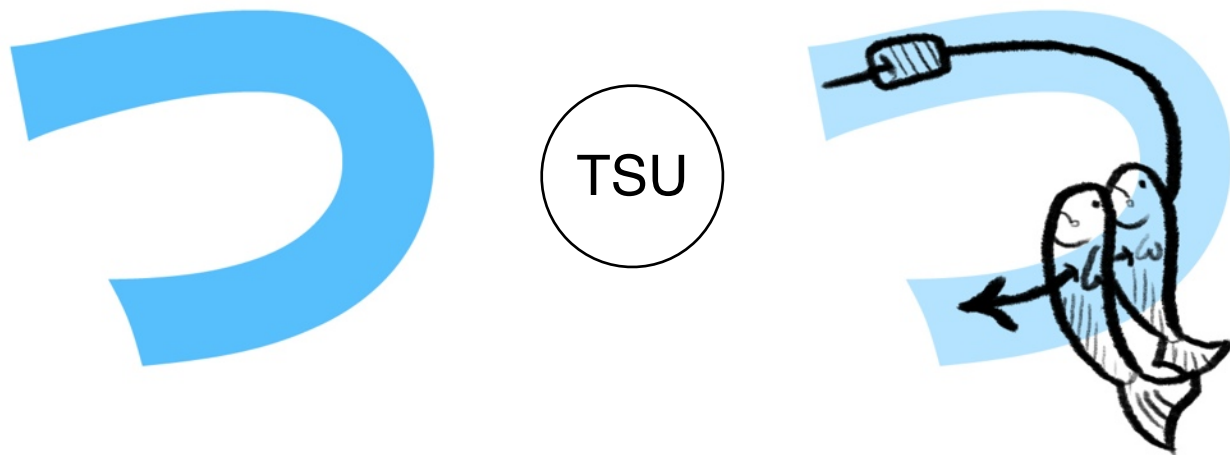
ち is just the “Ch” sound plus い, making a “chi” sound.

This is the second “exception” hiragana. Instead of a “ti” sound, it is a “chi” sound. Try not to forget this.

This kana looks like a man’s face... except it’s missing something: the **chin**!

**Task:**

Move on to the next Kana.



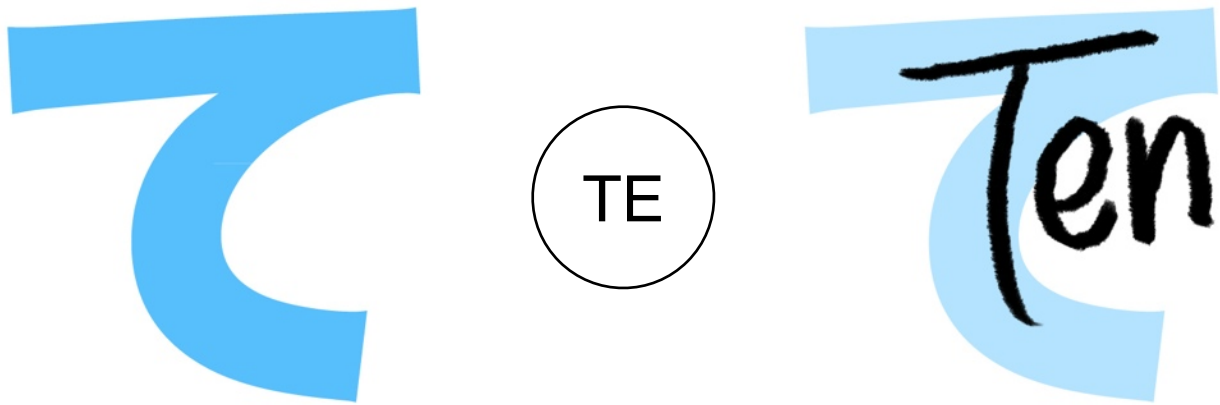
ツ is just the “Ts” sound plus っ, making a “tsu” sound.

This is another “exception” hiragana. Instead of saying “tu” you say “tsu.” Try not to forget this.

Do you remember the kana ム? It’s a hook that’s dipped straight down into the water. This didn’t work very well (you caught a poor seal!), so now you’re trying a new strategy: pulling the line behind you in a boat. This way the hook is facing sideways. It works, too! You pull up your line and you have **two** (tsu) fish!

**Task:**

Move on to the next Kana.

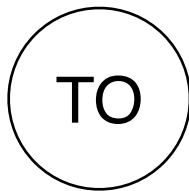


て is just the “T” sound plus え, making a “te” sound.

This kana looks like the uppercase letter “T” where “T” is for “**T**en.” How many kana can you learn at one time? I bet at least **ten** of them.

**Task:**

Move on to the next Kana.



と is just the “T” sound plus お, making a “to” sound.

This kana looks just like someone’s **toe** (to) with a little nail or splinter in it. Imagine how much this would hurt if it was your toe!

### Task:

1. Head to [Drag n’ Drop Hiragana](#) again. Complete the kana you’ve learned up to this point (あ, か, さ, and た columns).
2. Time for a new site. Now go to [RealKana](#). Over there, you’ll want to:
  - a. Check off the first four columns (these are the hiragana columns that you know).
  - b. Uncheck any columns in the Katakana tab (you won’t be learning katakana for a little bit).
  - c. Then, click on the “options” tab. Choose all of the typefaces. Just like in English, there are sometimes slightly different ways to write each individual character. For example, the letter “a” in English has two ways of writing it. Same goes for Japanese. Kana like き, さ, and so on can look slightly different depending on what font you’re looking at.
3. Spend 5-10 minutes drilling yourself on the first four hiragana columns then move on to the practice on the next page.

た　せ　ち　あ　つ　す　て　あ　た　き　と　せ　あ  
く　い　し　と　さ　か　く　こ　き　そ　と　た　ち  
と　つ　て　け　く　あ　お　う　し　て　く　き　ち  
せ　く　こ　さ　え　と　か　き　け　と　う　お　い  
あ　く　て　と　た　つ　か　ち　け　て　そ　せ　さ  
く　た　て　い　う　ち　と　い　あ　け　こ　つ　て  
か　け　き　こ　さ　せ　く　う　お　い　お　と　て

**Tasks:**

When you're able to write all the pairings down, move on to the next kana. Try to use and recall the mnemonics as well before cheating and looking at your hiragana chart. Recalling memories is actually the best way to build them, so try as hard as you can before peeking!

The next set of kana that you learn is going to be longer. You'll be learning two columns' worth of kana instead of one, so be sure you can recall everything up to this point!

な

NA



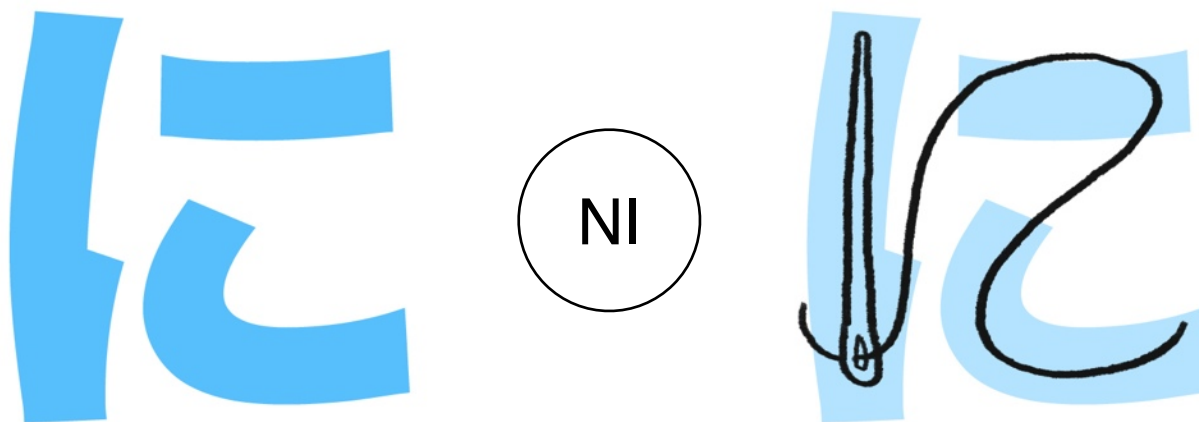
な is just the “N” sound plus あ, making a “na” sound.

The **na**ughty (na) nun is praying in front of the cross, asking for forgiveness of her naughty ways.

The cross up in the air like this should be the main giveaway that this is な.

**Task:**

Move on to the next Kana.

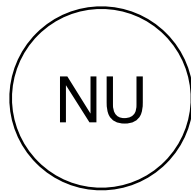


に is just the “N” sound plus い, making a “ni” sound.

Do you see the **needle** (ni) pulling the thread?

**Task:**

Move on to the next Kana.



ぬ is just the “N” sound plus う, making a “nu” sound.

This kana looks like some **noodles** (nu). There are several other kana that are similar to this one (れ, め, ね, わ) but you know this one is noodles because there are no sharp sides in it. It’s just smooth and bendable, like noodles!

**Task:**

Move on to the next Kana.



ね

NE



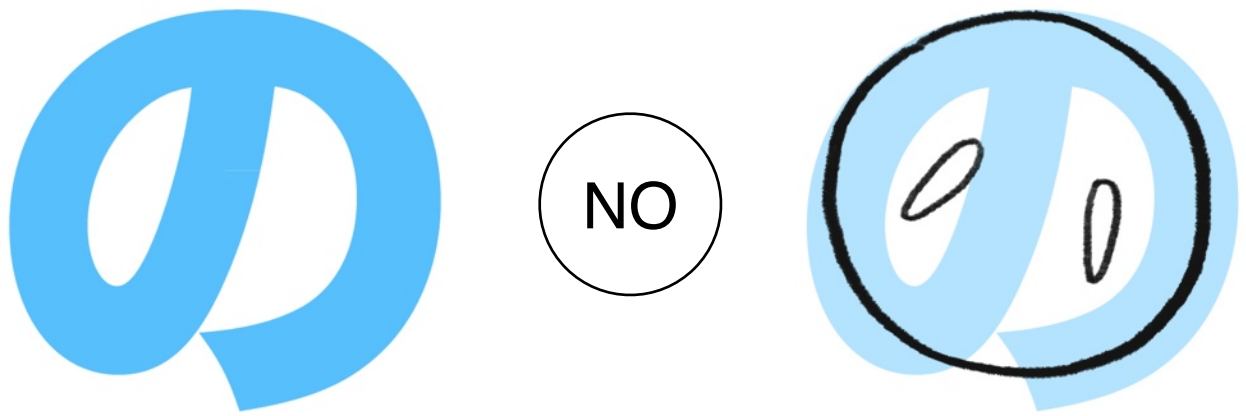
ね is just the “N” sound plus え, making a “ne” sound.

This is **Nelly** the cat. There are other kana very similar to this one (ぬ, ね, め, わ) but you know this is different because it has a loop at the end for the tail and it's not super bendable like め (noodles) is (see those sharp corners on the left?)

To top thins off, **Nelly** is a necromancer. Why? I have no idea, you'd have to ask her. It must have something to do with the undead cat army she's creating.

**Task:**

Move on to the next Kana.

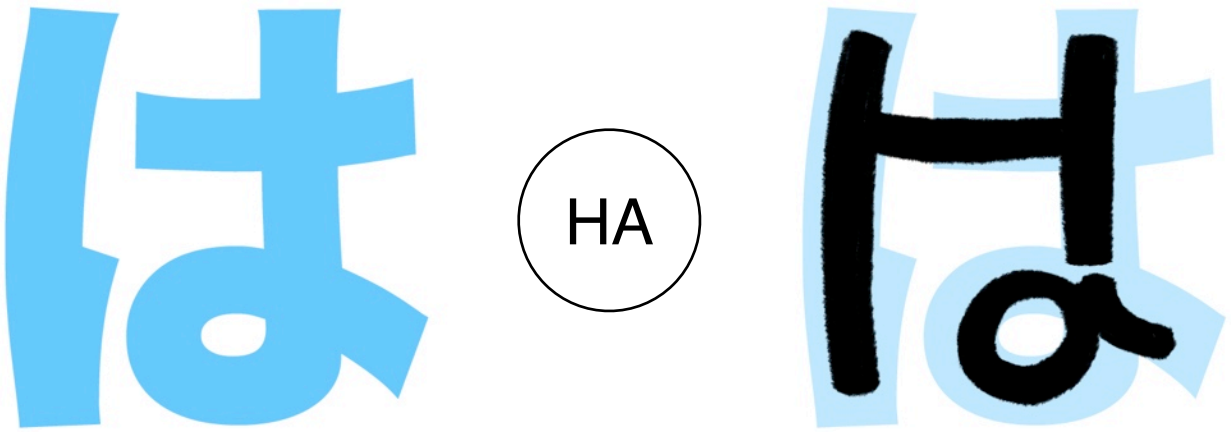


の is just the “N” sound plus む, making a “no” sound.

See the big pig **nose** there? You can also think of this as a “**No** smoking” sign (the ones with the cigarette and the big red circle and slash through it).

**Task:**

Move on to the next Kana.



は is just the “H” sound plus あ, making a “ha” sound.

This kana looks like the uppercase letter “H” plus the lowercase letter “a.” What does that spell? “**Ha!**”

Why are you laughing? Stop that.

**Task:**

Move on to the next Kana.

ひ

HI



ひ is just the “H” sound plus い, making a “hi” sound.

**He** (hi) has a big nose. See that big nose? Now say it out loud.  
“**He** has a big nose.”

**Task:**

Move on to the next Kana.

ふ

FU

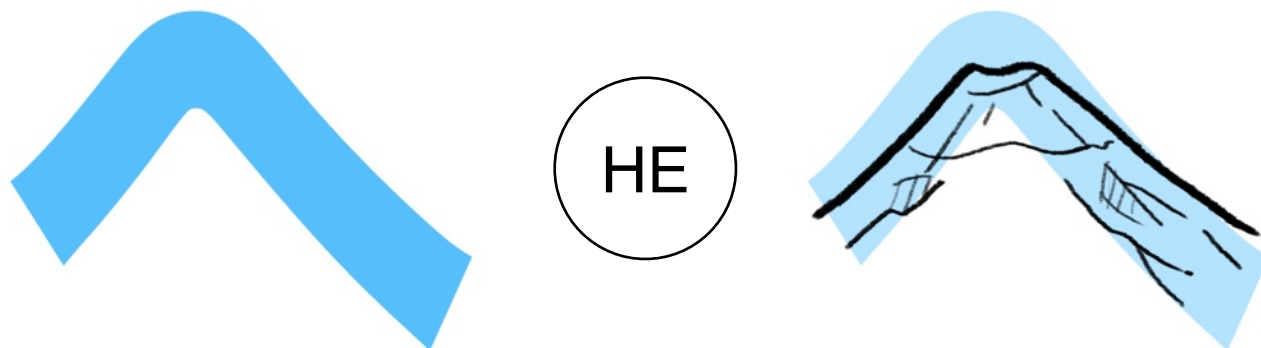


ふ is just the “F/H” sound plus う, making a “fu/hu” sound.

Usually this kana is pronounced with an “f” (fu) in hiragana, so we’re going to go with that. However, this kana does look a lot like a **h**ula dancer too, so keep the “hu” in mind as well. If you want, you can think of this hula dancer as a “**fu**-reaky hula dancer” to remember the fu.

**Task:**

Move on to the next Kana.



へ is just the “H” sound plus え, making a “he” sound.

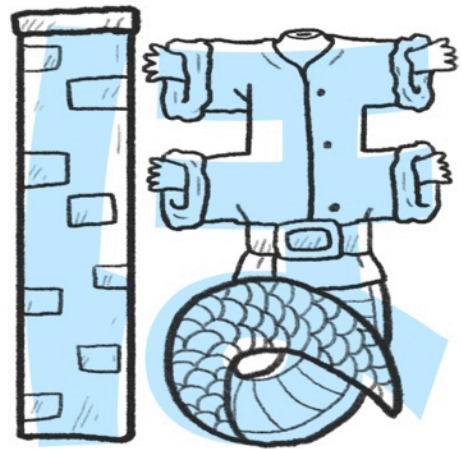
Do you know the famous mountain Mt. Saint **Helens**? This kana isn’t totally flat like Helens is, but it’s pretty squat looking. That’s why this one is **Helens**.

**Task:**

Move on to the next Kana.

# ほ

HO



ほ is just the “H” sound plus お, making a “ho” sound.

The left side line is a chimney. The right side is a mutated Santa Claus. He has four arms, a snake tail, and no head. Out of his neck he’s uttering “**ho** ho ho... ho ho ho...” Hopefully he doesn’t come down your chimney.

**Task:**

1. Using [Drag n’ Drop Hiragana](#), drag the columns あ, か, さ, た, な and は to the correct locations.
2. On the next page, fill out the romaji above the kana.

あ	か	さ	し	ぬ	の	ね	な	へ	こ	ほ	ふ	ひ
は	た	ぬ	ね	に	な	に	お	え	さ	ふ	ほ	へ
き	は	さ	し	せ	な	す	に	う	え	か	し	そ
ち	て	と	ひ	ふ	の	ね	に	の	は	か	き	け
そ	つ	う	お	あ	か	ひ	ふ	の	ね	に	は	ひ
ほ	な	ね	ぬ	あ	ぬ	ね	こ	け	き	せ	そ	く
け	い	お	ぬ	の	く	け	さ	せ	ち	つ	ほ	ぬ
の	こ	く	さ	て	く	き	せ	ほ	へ	ひ	ふ	ね
な	に	の	へ	ね	に	な	ぬ	あ	ぬ	ね	ほ	ふ

### Tasks:

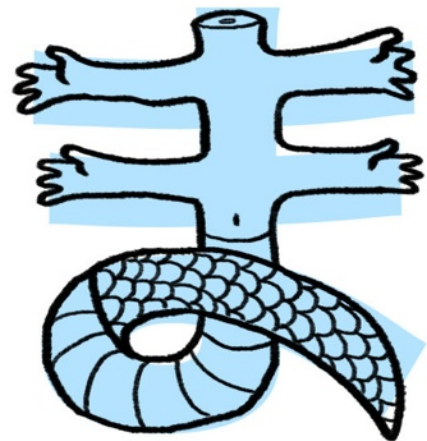
When you're able to write all the pairings down, move on to the next kana. Try to use and recall the mnemonics as well before cheating and looking at your hiragana chart. Recalling memories is actually the best way to build them, so try as hard as you can before peeking!

How're you doing with this? Do you feel like you were able to do all of these on your own (even if there was a little struggle-sauce in there?)? If there was anything you absolutely couldn't remember over and over again, take a break, study the problem-items, then continue on. If you're having trouble it's probably because your brain is full!



ま

MA

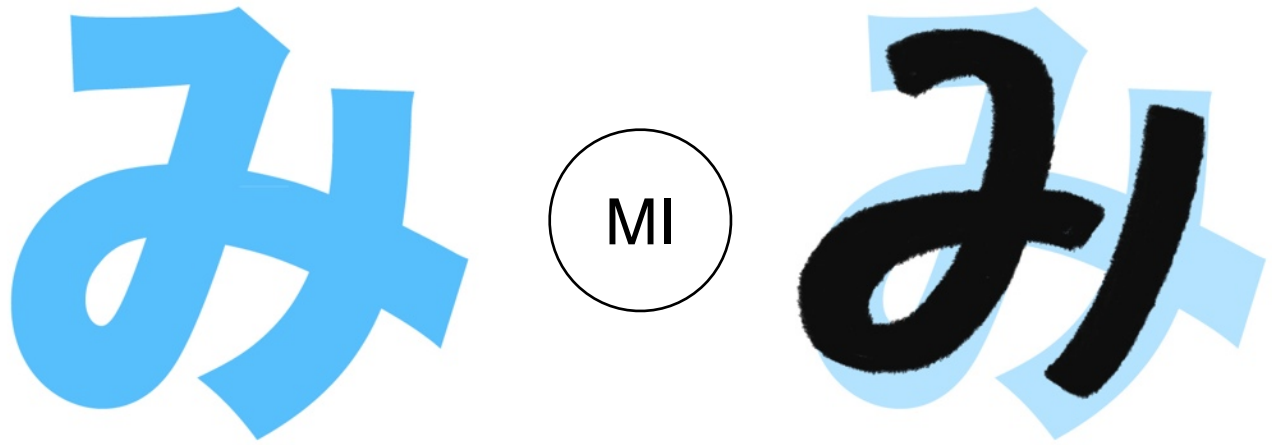


ま is just the “M” sound plus あ, making a “ma” sound.

Removing your head? Doubling your hands and arms? What sort of evil **magic** is this? What makes it weirder is that your **mama** is the one doing this magic. Imagine your ma looking like this. Aghh!

**Task:**

Move on to the next Kana.



み is just the “M” sound plus い, making a “mi” sound.

Looks like lucky number 21. Who just hit the blackjack? **Me** (mi)! Who just turned 21 as well? **Me** (mi)!!

**Task:**

Move on to the next Kana.

む

MU

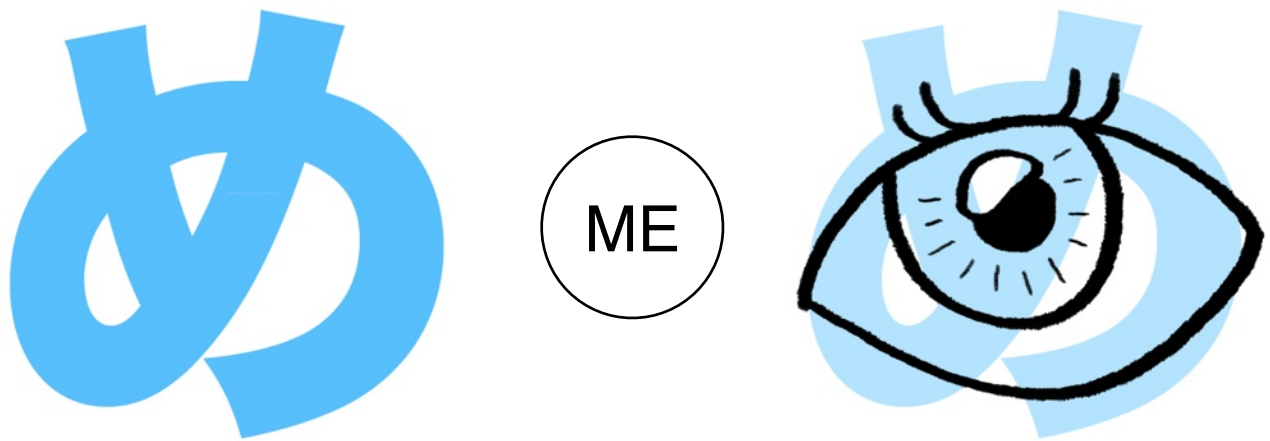


む is just the “M” sound plus う, making a “mu” sound.

“**Moooooooo**” (mu), says the cow. “MOOOOOOOOO.”

**Task:**

Move on to the next Kana.



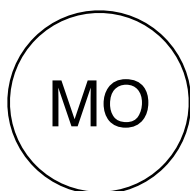
め is just the “M” sound plus え, making a “me” sound.

Look at that beautiful eye! It’s so beautiful because of the **makeup (me)** on it. Gotta look pretty in those eyes!

If you also happen to know the word for “eye” in Japanese, that will help too. The word for “eye” in Japanese is just め (me).

**Task:**

Move on to the next Kana.

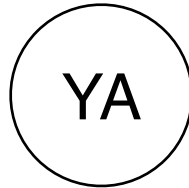


も is just the “M” sound plus お, making a “mo” sound.

You want to catch **more** fish so you add **more** worms to your hook. This is the third “hook” one, so make sure you can differentiate the mnemonics in your head: し, つ, and now も.

**Task:**

Move on to the next Kana.



や is just the “Y” sound plus あ, making a “ya” sound.

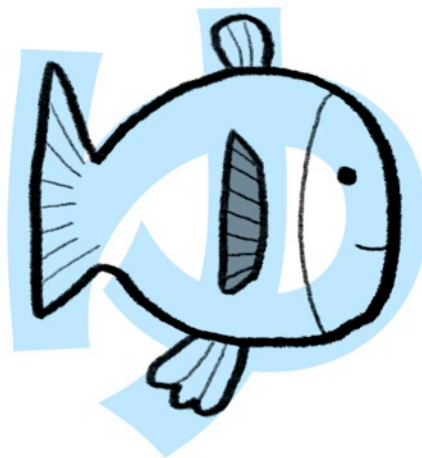
Do you see the **yak** in this kana?

**Task:**

Move on to the next Kana.



YU

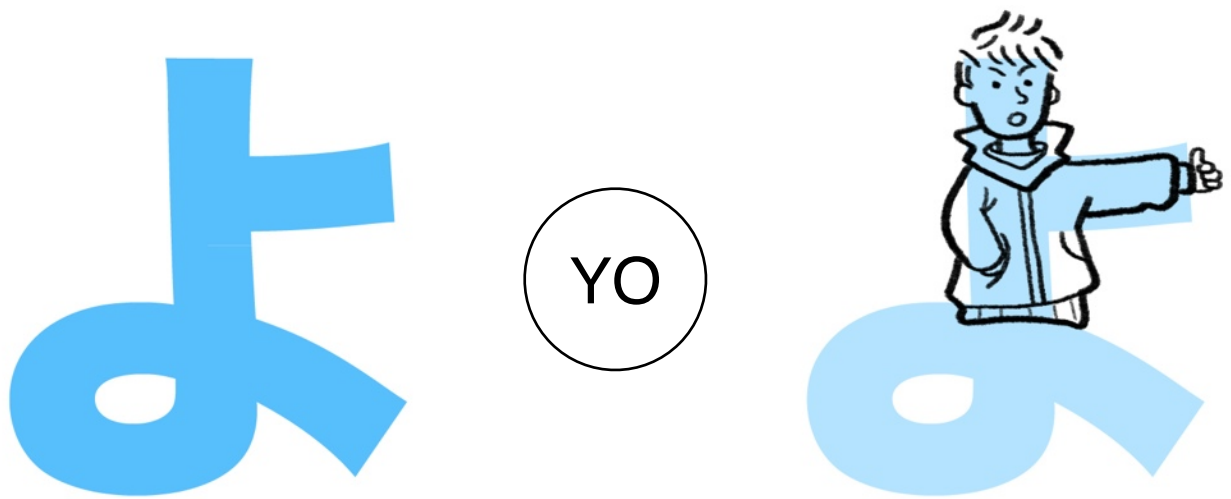


ゆ is just the “Y” sound plus う, making a “yu” sound.

This kana is a very **unique** (yu) looking fish! It looks like a big eyeball swimming in the water.

**Task:**

Move on to the next Kana.



よ is just the “Y” sound plus お, making a “yo” sound.

The hitchhiker has his arm and thumb out. He’s yelling “YO! yo!” at all the cars that go past him. Why won’t they pick him up?

**Task:**

1. Using [Drag n’ Drop Hiragana](#), drag the columns あ, か, さ, た, な, は, ま, and や into the correct places. You’re dragging in more hiragana than you’re leaving now! That’s pretty cool.
2. Using [RealKana](#), choose same columns as in step 1 and drill them until you feel bored. It won’t take long. When you are, download the practice sheet and give it a try to see how good you are at this!
3. No romaji/kana exercise here. I want you to power through to the end and stretch that memory of yours!



ら

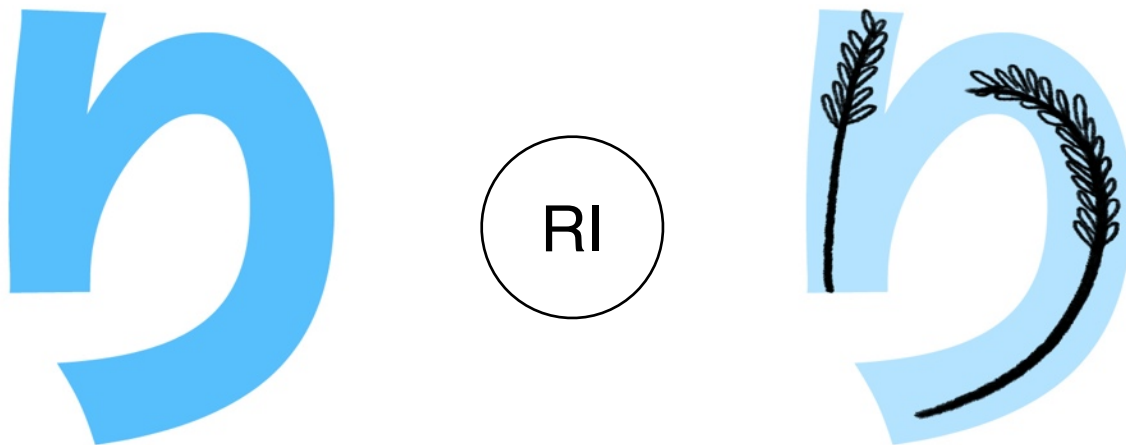


ら is just the “R” sound plus ゃ, making a “ra” sound.

The **rapper** is rapping at the DJ table.

**Task:**

Move on to the next Kana.



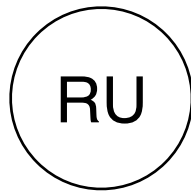
り is just the “R” sound plus い, making a “ri” sound.

The **reeds** (ri) are swaying in the wind.

This kana can also be written without the connection in the middle, too, which makes it more reedlike in that case (I wanted to present the more difficult of the two versions here, though).

**Task:**

Move on to the next Kana.



る is just the “R” sound plus ゝ, making a “ru” sound.

The is like ろ/**road** (you’ll learn it in a second) except it has a loop at the end. る is a crazier **route** (ru). There is a **loop** (ru) at the end. Are there no **rules** on this road?

**Task:**

Move on to the next Kana.

# れ

RE



れ is just the “R” sound plus ェ, making a “re” sound.

This looks like a guy kneeling on the ground, **re**tching up his dinner.

This kana is similar to め, わ, む, and ね. What makes this one different is the curve at the back. You can identify this as the guy’s knees bending, which makes it so you know he’s keeled over retching his guts out.

**Task:**

Move on to the next Kana.

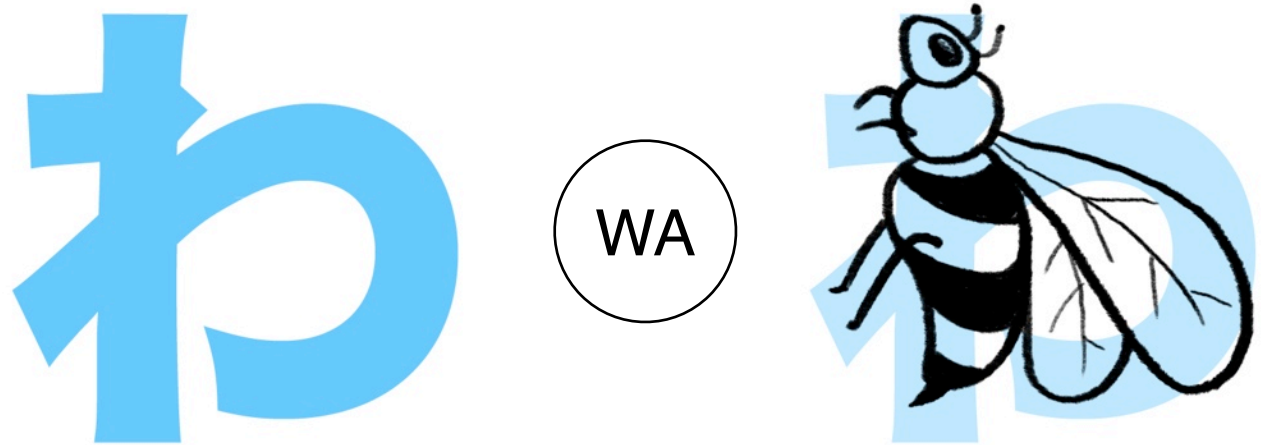
RO

ろ is just the “R” sound plus ろ, making a “ro” sound.

This is the counterpart to ろ, except this one doesn't have a loop at the end (there are rules here!). So, this kana is just a plain old **road**.

**Task:**

Move on to the next Kana. Almost there!



わ is just the “W” sound plus あ, making a “wa” sound.

This kana looks like a **wasp** flying straight up.

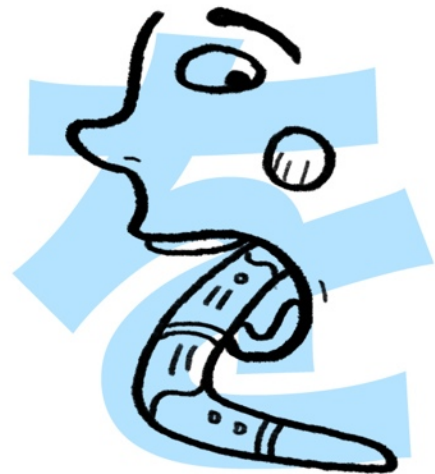
It looks similar to れ, ん, ね, and め. It looks especially similar to ね. You know ね is Nelly the cat because of the curl of a tail on the end. So, you can imagine the cat chasing this wasp, which is why it’s flying straight up to get away.

**Task:**

Move on to the next Kana.

を

WO

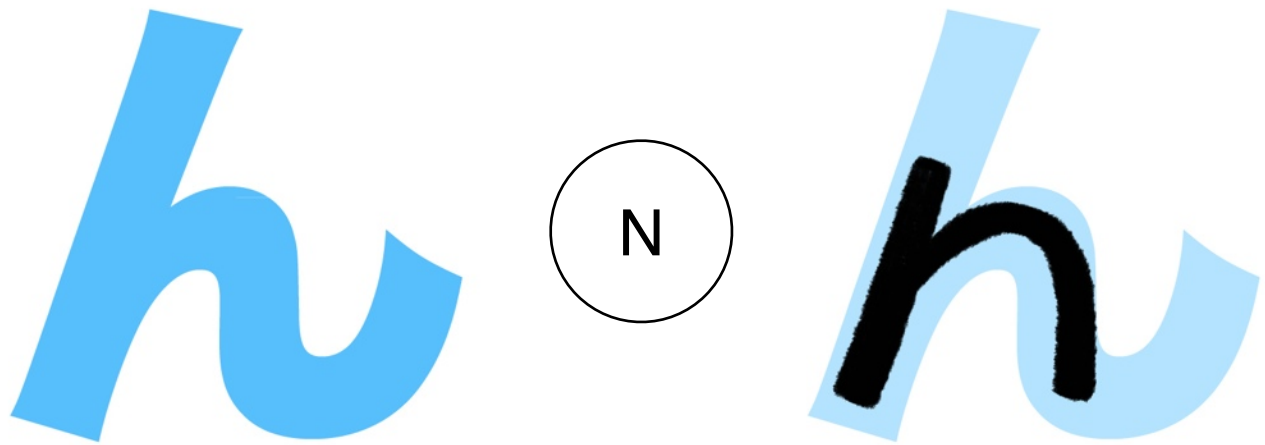


を is just the “W” sound plus お, though it sounds more like “oh” than it does “wo.” The “w” is pretty silent, though it’s still a tiny bit there.

“**Whoa!**” (wo) yells the guy with no chin (ぢ). Someone threw a boomerang into his mouth, so of course he’s going to yell something. “**WHOA!**”

**Task:**

Move on to the next Kana. Pro tip: the next kana is the last kana!



ん is just the “N” sound, that’s it. It’s the only kana that consists of a single consonant.

This kana looks just like the lowercase “n” in English. They happen to be the same sounds, as well. How convenient!

**Task:**

1. Complete the exercises on the next page.
2. Head over to [RealKana](#). Select all the hiragana. Deselect any katakana. Select every typeface. Spend 10-15 minutes drilling your hiragana. There’ll probably be a few trouble spots, but if you take note of them you should be able to re-study those kana and get them as solid as everything else.
3. Challenge time. Head on back to [Drag n’ Drop Hiragana](#). Now you get to drag everything. See if you can get it done in under three minutes. If you’re really itching for a challenge, two minutes is difficult, but more than possible. If you’re able to do this, you’ll be able to read hiragana pretty well pretty quickly.



わ め ま て を ね め や よ ら む ま み  
る さ ん ま む も う の り れ ね め め  
ね れ り と く ほ そ あ ち つ ん も よ  
の け ひ ち ら ろ る へ こ う あ お ち  
す せ え お む ほ ま も は む や ん よ  
ん わ せ へ れ ろ む り ら ん よ を も  
ま る め れ む る く り こ せ す け へ  
む の こ き せ ゆ と も お む ん れ ら  
こ ね ろ ん い の ね な す あ ろ る ん  
ら た を ん わ く と ち に か さ し な

**Tasks:**

Make sure you can write all the pairings down! When you can, you'll know all the "Main" Hiragana. Everything after this is a breeze!

# Dakuten

Dakuten are just like the kana you've learned, except they have a little symbol next to them (usually a quotation mark, sometimes a little circle). They look like this:

が ば じ ぽ ひ

Not every hiragana character has a dakuten version like this. Only five of the columns can be transformed this way. When this happens, the pronunciation for that kana changes as well, though luckily for you it is always consistent.

Let's go over each of those dakuten transformations.

か → が

Every kana in the か column can have dakuten. When this happens, the “K” sound goes to a “G” sound.

か → が (ga)

き → ぎ (gi)

く → ぐ (gu)

け → げ (ge)

こ → ご (go)

Because you know the か column already, all you really have to remember is that “K” goes to “G.”

Think of it this way:

The **car** (ka) runs into the **guard** (ga) rail.

So, before you move on just make sure that you know that か goes to が (or き goes to ぎ, etc).

さ → ざ

When something from the さ column gets dakuten, it changes to a “z” sound with the exception of し.

さ → ざ (za)

し → じ (ji)

す → ず (zu)

せ → ぜ (ze)

そ → ぞ (zo)

Because you know the さ column already, all you really have to remember is that “S” goes to “Z.” The only exception in there is し, where shi → ji. Exceptions breed new exceptions (and this will happen again, so keep this in mind).

Think of it this way:

The **saw** (sa) just ended up **zapping** (za) you when you tried to use it.

So, before you move on just make sure that you know that さ goes to ざ (or せ goes to ぜ, etc). Also remember that し goes to a “ji” sound, not a “zi” sound.

た → だ

Every kana in the た column can have dakuten. When this happens, the “T” sound goes to a “D” sound, with the exceptions being both ち and つ (exceptions breed exceptions!).

た → だ (da)  
ち → ぢ (dzi)  
つ → づ (dzu)  
て → で (de)  
と → ど (do)

Because you know the た column already, all you really have to remember is that “T” goes to “D.” Of course, there are the exceptions. Luckily both ぢ and づ are quite rare and you won’t see them often. The pronunciation of these is a sort of “dz” sound which is hard for a lot of people to pronounce. Use the [“hiragana pronunciation lesson”](#) on TextFugu to get an exact pronunciation.

To remember that た (ta) goes to だ (da), think of it this way:

Changing these kana to the dakuten sounds is like magic... **“Tada!”** (ta & da)

So, before you move on just make sure that you know that た goes to だ with the exceptions of ち→ぢ (dzi) and つ→づ (dzu).

は → ば, ぱ

The は column is a strange one. This is the one that has both the little quotation marks and the little circles. The circles sound different from the quotation marks and the both sound different than the original は column.

は → ば (ba), ぱ (pa)

ひ → び (bi), ぴ (pi)

ふ → ぶ (bu), ぷ (pu)

へ → べ (be), ぺ (pe)

ほ → ぼ (bo), ぽ (po)

You have to remember that the は column goes to both a “B” sound as well as a “P” sound. Think of it this way:

You are saying “**h**ahaha” (ha) at the **bar**, because you’re tipsy.

You say “**H**ahaha” too much, so somebody **p**unches you.

The “**p**unch” one is the little circle. Why? Because a fist is like a little circle. So, when you see the little circle think “p” as in “punch.”

Before you move on, try to recall the mnemonics for the following:

か → が

さ → ざ

た → だ

は → ば

は → ぱ

When you're able to recall the mnemonics for these five dakuten patterns, you'll be ready for the exercise on the next page. You know what to do!

か が さ ざ た だ は ば ぱ そ の ば ぽ  
ぼ ほ ぼ ち け げ の で た と ど が ぎ  
こ ぐ ぢ だ ぱ ぽ ほ け ご き ぶ ぷ ふ  
ぢ ど て ひ は ば づ つ ず じ す ざ ぞ  
さ せ ぜ が ぎ ぢ で ぶ ふ べ び だ な  
く ぐ ず ぜ た な こ せ る ろ ね ぬ め  
れ こ ざ ず ぢ で ど ら ふ ぞ で ぱ ぴ  
ぷ で ど だ ざ じ ぎ が ぐ ご ぴ ぷ ぽ  
ど ペ ベ あ ら な け こ ち ふ て も う  
あ ぷ ふ と な え い こ き ち な さ す  
が ふ ん る を や く ら ち せ ぜ と ま

**Tasks:**

Make sure you can write all the pairings down! When you can, you'll know all the hiragana! Amazing!



# What Now?

Learning to read hiragana as easily as you read English will take a little bit of time but you'll get there quickly, I'm sure. With your fancy hiragana knowledge, you'll be able to use all kinds of Japanese resources not available to you previously. You should use those.

If you enjoyed this guide, check out [TextFugu](#) (it's my online Japanese Textbook). The first season (free) covers the basics of Japanese, and goes beyond just learning how to read hiragana. You'll begin Japanese grammar, kanji, and vocabulary as well. No matter what resource you end up using to study Japanese with, this first season will give you a good foundation for it. You don't even have to be a member to access it.

Otherwise, you should continue practicing your hiragana! One way to do this is to [visit Japanese websites](#) and print out pages of text. There will be kanji and katakana in there as well, but ignoring them is part of the exercise. Above any hiragana you see, write out the romaji counterpart. If you do this for even five minutes a day, you'll be reading hiragana quickly and fluently in a very short amount of time.

I hope you enjoyed this ebook (and can now read hiragana!) If you'd like, consider following Tofugu on [Twitter](#) / [Facebook](#), or [join our newsletter list](#) (no spam!). [Check out our store](#) for more Japanese-related ebooks. We do a lot of Japanese-related things, so perhaps they will be right up your alley.

Also, if you have any questions, you can email me at [koichi@tofugu.com](mailto:koichi@tofugu.com).

Thanks!  
Koichi