

Japanese, Step by Step, Sign by Sign

A gentle introduction to contemporary standard Japanese,
one sign and one word at a time

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Starter edition — forty-four short lessons in eight cumulative
chapters.

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How to use this starter edition

Begin with no assumed Japanese. Each section takes one small expression, teaches only the writing that expression needs, explains where the word came from, and ends with a short retrieval prompt. There is no kana chart to memorise first.

Japanese uses three writing systems at the same time, and an ordinary sentence can contain all three. *Hiragana* carries much of the grammar, *kanji* carry many content words, and *katakana* commonly marks words borrowed from outside. This edition introduces them in that order. Every load-bearing sign gets its own short lesson before a word asks you to decode it.

Two habits are worth forming immediately. First, count beats: every kana carries one mora, and vowel length matters. Second, expect a kanji to have several readings. This book therefore teaches one sign, one relevant reading, and one useful word at a time rather than pretending a character has one fixed sound.

Romanization stands beside the Japanese here and will fade in later editions. Where a lesson is teaching beat count it also spells a word out beat by beat, because the macron in *arigatō* hides exactly what is being taught.

A note on what this book does not claim. Japanese shares no ancestor with English, so there is no family of English cousin words to hang new vocabulary on — and none is invented here. What Japanese does have is a real borrowed layer from Chinese, shared with Mandarin and Korean, an internal etymology of its own, and a handful of genuine loans from Portuguese, Dutch, German, and English. Those are used. Nothing else is.

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Chapter 1

Two Answers, Sign by Sign

Modes: 👁 eyes (2) ✍ pen (4) 🖐 Hands-free start: none of the 6 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can write the three hiragana signs in はい and いいえ, read both answers without romanization, and say each with even mora timing.

A yes-or-no choice using only three signs the learner has already traced, copied, recalled, and read.

1.1 い — two strokes, one beat

You already know the rule that makes this writing system easy: **one sign, one beat**. Not one letter one sound, and not one sign one word — one sign, one **mora**, the even beat Japanese counts time in.

What you have not had yet is a single sign taught on its own. Here is the first.

Script — the shape

い

Two strokes, both falling, the left one long and the right one short:

1. the **left** stroke — start high, come down, and hook gently to the right at the bottom
2. the **right** stroke — a short downward tick, higher up and clear of the first

It is read **i**, the vowel of English *machine* — short, tight, never the *eye* of English *bite*.

Where the shape came from, and why it does not help you. Every hiragana sign began as a Chinese character written fast and cursively until it wore smooth. But those characters were chosen **for their sound**, not their meaning, so unlike a Chinese component there is nothing inside い to decode. The shape is a signature you learn, not a structure you read. This book will tell you when a shape carries information and when it does not, and this is the second kind.

Your turn

- *Trace it:* follow the visible い once — long stroke first, then the short tick
- *Say it:* **i**, one clean beat

Keep the model visible and stop after one traced sign. Copying without the model comes later; today your hand is only learning the direction of two strokes.

Before you move on

How many beats does one hiragana sign take? (**One.**)

Source: Unicode Hiragana chart; stroke order per *Hitsujun Shido no Tebiki* (Japanese Ministry of Education, 1958).

1.2 は — three strokes

Write the two-stroke sign you met a moment ago. Long stroke, short tick.

Script — the shape

は

Three strokes. Look at it as a tall left post with a loop tied on its right.

1. the **vertical**, down the left side, with the smallest flick left at the foot
2. a **short horizontal** crossing that vertical near the top, on its right

3. the **loop** — down from the right of that crossbar, round to the left, and back up to close

Read **ha**, breathed rather than hard: the *h* of English *hat*, then the open *a* of *father*.

It has a second reading, and you have already used it. Keep that in your pocket for now — this sign is doing two jobs in Japanese, and the second one is what makes the greeting look misspelled to a beginner. It gets its own lesson, after you have met the sign it *sounds* like.

Your turn

- *Copy*: keep は visible and write it once — vertical, crossbar, loop
- *Say it*: **ha**, one beat, breath not force

Look back at the model between strokes if you need to. This is one guided copy, not a memory test.

Your turn — review pulse

Say ? and tap its one mora before adding another sign.

Before you move on

Which stroke of は is written first? (The **vertical** on the left.)

Source: Unicode Hiragana chart; stroke order per *Hitsujun Shido no Tebiki* (Japanese Ministry of Education, 1958).

1.3 Two signs, side by side — and a word appears

Both signs are yours. Look at them for five seconds:

はい

Cover the model. Write the two signs in that order and say each beat as you finish it. Uncover the model, compare once, and repair at most one stroke. This short look-hide-write-check cycle is the whole delayed-copy step.

Script — no new sign at all

Now write them touching:

は + い → はい

ha then **i**. Two beats, even, neither one stressed. You can now decode the sequence *hai*. The word lesson after the next sign attaches its useful meaning.

Nothing new was introduced in this lesson. No stroke, no sound, no word. What changed is where the word now lives: you are no longer recalling a shape you were shown, you are **reading** it — assembling it out of two pieces you can write from memory and sound out in order.

That is the whole method for this writing system, and it does not get harder. It gets longer. A word of five signs is five signs you already own, in a row.

Your turn

- *Read it:* はい — sound each sign in turn, do not recall the word whole
- *Write it:* はい — five strokes in total, three then two

Before you move on

How many new strokes did you have to learn in this lesson? (**None.**)
Source: Unicode Hiragana chart.

1.4 え — two strokes, and a second word for free

Read the word for *yes* off the page, sign by sign, out loud.

Script — the shape

え

Two strokes, and the second one does most of the work:

1. a **short tick** at the top, on its own, clear of everything below

2. the **body** — across to the right, back down and left in a flat zigzag, then out to the lower right in one continuous movement

Read **e**, the vowel of English *bed* — short, and never the *ay* of *day*.

What you've built

Three signs are now yours, and they spell more than one word. Put two of them together with the one you just learned:

い | い | え

i-i-e. Three beats — and note that the first sign is written **twice**, because Japanese counts two full beats there. The next lesson attaches its meaning. For now, the whole task is decoding three known signs in order.

Your turn

- Cover the printed え. Have a partner or recording say **e** once. If you are working alone, read the romanized cue *e*, cover it, and continue.
- *Write from the heard or romanized cue:* え — tick first, then the body in one movement
- *Read it:* い | い | え — three beats, and do not shorten the doubled sign

Uncover the model only after your one transcription attempt. Compare, repair one stroke if needed, and stop.

Before you move on

Why is the first sign of that word written twice? (Because it is **two beats**, not one held longer.)

Source: Unicode Hiragana chart; stroke order per *Hitsujun Shido no Tebiki* (Japanese Ministry of Education, 1958).

1.5 はい — yes, in two equal beats

Nothing is assumed yet. Begin with the shortest useful answer in the language, and with the first of its three writing systems.

Script — two signs, two beats

はい — は *ha* + い *i*

Japanese runs left to right. はい is written with two signs of **hiragana**, the everyday script. A hiragana sign is not a letter. It is one whole beat — a **mora** — and normally a consonant and a vowel already fused into one shape. There is no separate *h* to write, because は already is *ha*.

Five vowels, and they stay pure: *a* as in father, *i* as in machine, then *u*, *e*, *o*. So はい is *ha-i*, two beats of the same length, and not the single gliding sound of English “high.”

The word, taken apart

はい means **yes**, and also “here you are,” “I am listening,” and “present.” Its origin is genuinely unsettled: some accounts tie it to an older word *hai*, “a bow”; others treat it as an old interjection. Neither is proven, so hold it as an open question rather than a fact. The rare kanji sometimes used in that proposal can wait until a later reading chapter.

Say plainly what is true here. Japanese shares no ancestor with English, so no cousin word is waiting in your vocabulary to hold はい in place. What this track offers instead is the writing itself, built up one sign at a time, and — later — the real family Japanese does have, through the characters it borrowed.

Your turn

- *Say it:* はい — *ha-i*, two even beats] [REPEAT x2
- *Read it:* は, then い, left to right
- *Answer:* your name is called → はい

Before you move on

How many beats does はい hold? (Two.) Which sign carries *ha*? (は.)

Source: Wiktionary: はい.

1.6 いいえ — no, and why the extra beat matters

Say はい once and count its two beats out loud. This lesson adds the opposite answer, and one fact about beats that Japanese will never let go of.

Script — one new sign, three beats

いいえ — い *i* + い *i* + え *e*

Only え *e* is new; い you already read in はい. Written out, the word is three signs, so it is three beats: *i-i-e*. The first two are the same sign twice, which is exactly how Japanese writes a long vowel in hiragana — by writing the vowel again.

Beat count is not decoration. いえ (two beats) means **house**. いいえ (three beats) means **no**. Nothing else distinguishes them. Hold the first *i* for two beats and the word lands; clip it and you have said “house.”

The word, taken apart

いいえ is the plain **no** — and, just as often, a modest “**not at all**” used to wave away thanks or a compliment. That second use is the common one in daily speech, which is worth knowing before you meet it as an answer to **thank you** at the end of this chapter.

Your turn

- *Say it:* いいえ — *i-i-e*, three even beats] [REPEAT x2
- *Contrast:* いえ house, いいえ no
- *Choose:* agree → はい; decline → いいえ

Your turn — review pulse

Say ??, then write ? once from memory before learning the contrasting answer.

Before you move on

Which single sign is new here? (え.) What changes when the long *i* is cut short? (The word becomes いえ, house.)

Source: Wiktionary: いいえ.

Chapter 2

A Daytime Greeting, One Sign at a Time

Modes: 👁 eyes (1) ✍ pen (6) ⇄ Hands-free start: none of the 7 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can write the five distinct signs in こんにちは, read them in order, and remember why final は is pronounced wa.

A one-line daytime greeting whose five signs were each taught before the learner reads it.

2.1 こ — two strokes, and the greeting begins

The two-stroke sign read *e* — tick, then body. Write it once.

Script — the shape

こ

The simplest sign you have met. Two short horizontal strokes, stacked, the lower one longer and slightly curved:

1. the **upper** stroke, short, curving down a little at its right end
2. the **lower** stroke, wider, sweeping right and lifting slightly

Read **ko**: a clean *k*, then the *o* of English *more* shortened.

Nothing joins them. The gap between the two strokes is part of the shape — close it and you have a different sign.

Your turn

- *Write it:* コ — upper stroke, then the longer lower one, and leave the gap
- *Say it:* **ko**, one beat

Your turn — review pulse

Say ??? and tap all three morae before writing the new sign.

Before you move on

Which of the two strokes is longer? (The **lower** one.)

Source: Unicode Hiragana chart; stroke order per *Hitsujun Shido no Tebiki* (Japanese Ministry of Education, 1958).

2.2 ㇿ — one stroke, one beat, no vowel

Two stacked strokes with a gap. Write the sign read *ko*.

Script — the shape, and the exception

ㇿ

One stroke. Start with a small tick down-left, then sweep down, round to the right and up in a single unbroken movement, finishing with a rise.

Now the part that matters more than the shape. Every sign you have met so far is a consonant plus a vowel, or a vowel alone. **This one is a consonant with no vowel at all** — and it still takes a **full beat**, exactly as long as any other sign.

That is why Japanese counts morae rather than syllables, and it is the clearest evidence you will get. An English speaker hears the *n* at the end of a word as a tail on the vowel before it. Japanese does not. It is its own beat, held its own length, and shortening it is one of the most audible foreign-accent tells there is.

Your turn

- *Write it:* ㇿ — one continuous stroke, no lifts
- *Say it:* hold it for a full beat, as long as any other sign takes

Your turn — review pulse

Cover the model and write ?? from its two known signs.

Before you move on

If this sign has no vowel, how long is it held? (**A full beat** — the same as every other sign.)

Source: Unicode Hiragana chart; stroke order per *Hitsujun Shido no Tebiki* (Japanese Ministry of Education, 1958).

2.3 に — three strokes, and a shape you half know

Write the three-stroke sign read *ha*. Vertical, crossbar, loop.

Script — the shape

に

Three strokes, and **the first one you have already practised**:

1. the **vertical** down the left, with the same small flick left at the foot as the sign read *ha*
2. a **short horizontal** to its right, upper area
3. a **longer horizontal** below it, sweeping right

Read **ni**: the *n* of *knee*, then the tight *i* you learned first.

This is the first time two signs share a visible part, and it is worth naming, because it is nearly the last. Hiragana is not built from recombining components the way Chinese characters are — these two happen to have worn down to similar left-hand posts, not because they mean or sound anything alike. Treat the resemblance as a **handwriting** convenience, not as a clue. Reading information into it is the mistake this book keeps warning you off.

Your turn

- *Write it*: に — vertical, short bar, long bar
- *Notice*: write it beside は and compare only the left post

Your turn — review pulse

Before the new sign, write ? once and then ? once from memory.

Before you move on

Which stroke of this sign comes first? (The **vertical**.)

Source: Unicode Hiragana chart; stroke order per *Hitsujun Shido no Tebiki* (Japanese Ministry of Education, 1958).

2.4 ち — two strokes, four roman letters, one beat

Three strokes: vertical, short bar, long bar. Write the sign read *ni*.

Script — the shape

ち

Two strokes:

1. a **short horizontal** across the top
2. the **body** — down from the middle of that bar, curving left, then round into a full belly to the right and up

Read **chi**: the *ch* of English *cheese*, then the tight *i*.

Count what just happened. One sign. One beat. **Four roman letters** to describe it. The romanization is a pronunciation aid written for people who do not read the script yet — it is not a smaller version of the writing system, and the number of letters in it tells you nothing about the number of beats in the word.

This is the moment the roman spelling starts costing you more than it pays, and it is why the signs are worth the effort.

Your turn

- *Write it:* ち — top bar, then the body in one movement
- *Say it:* **chi**, one beat — as long as any other sign, no longer

Before you move on

Does the number of roman letters tell you how long a sign is held?
(No.)

Source: Unicode Hiragana chart; stroke order per *Hitsujun Shido no Tebiki* (Japanese Ministry of Education, 1958).

2.5 わ — the sign for *wa*, and the trap beside it

Write the three-stroke sign read *ha*: vertical, crossbar, loop.

Script — the shape

わ

Two strokes:

1. the **vertical** on the left, with the small flick at the foot
2. the **body** — a short bar right from the top, then down, round to the left in a loop, and out to the lower right with a curl

Read **wa**: like English *wa* in *wander*, one beat.

What you've built — and the trap

Here is the thing this sign exists in this lesson to protect you from. The daytime greeting **sounds** like it ends in *wa*. **It is not written with this sign.** It ends with the sign read *ha* — the one you learned early and were told was holding a second job.

That second job is grammatical: **は** is also Japanese's topic marker, and **as a topic marker it is pronounced *wa***. The greeting is a frozen fragment of a longer sentence, and it kept the marker's spelling along with the marker's sound.

So the rule you need is not about sound at all:

- わ is the sign for the mora *wa* inside ordinary words.
- は read as *wa* means you are looking at the topic marker, or at something that used to contain one.

Getting this backwards is the single most common beginner spelling error in Japanese, and it is the reason this book taught you the sign for

wa **after** you already knew the greeting — so the shape could arrive with its warning attached rather than be quietly assumed.

Your turn

- *Write it:* わ, then は beside it — two signs, one shared sound, different jobs
- *Decide:* hearing *wa* at the end of the daytime greeting, which sign do you write?

Your turn — review pulse

Say ??? again, keeping the two opening morae distinct.

Before you move on

Which of the two is a fact about **grammar** rather than about sound? (The one where は is read *wa*.)
 Source: Unicode Hiragana chart; stroke order per *Hitsujun Shido no Tebiki* (Japanese Ministry of Education, 1958).

2.6 Five signs in a row — and the greeting is readable

Four signs, one after another, from memory. Say each beat as you finish writing it:

こ ん に ち

Script — the assembly

Add the fifth — the one that is read *wa* because it is a topic marker — and the greeting is on the page:

こ + ん + に + ち + は → こんにちは

ko-n-ni-chi-wa. Five signs, **five beats**, all even. Say it against a steady tap and you will hear that the second beat, the one with no vowel, takes exactly as long as the four around it.

No new stroke appears here. You have decoded five pieces you can each write from memory, in order, including the one that sounds like something other than its name. The next lesson attaches the daytime-greeting meaning to the line.

What you've built

Eight signs, taught one at a time, and with them you can now decode three whole sequences off the page. Two already carry useful answers; the five-sign sequence gets its daytime-greeting job in the next lesson. Hiragana has forty-six basic signs. You hold **eight**. The rest arrive the same way, one per lesson, and the words they unlock arrive free — because a word in this script is never more than the signs you already own, in a row.

Your turn

- *Read it:* こんにちは — sound each sign in turn; do not recall it whole
- *Write it:* the greeting, then say it once at speaking pace

Your turn — review pulse

Write ? once, then set it beside ? and name which one closes the greeting.

Before you move on

How many of the greeting's five signs were new in this lesson?

(None.)

Source: Unicode Hiragana chart.

2.7 こんにちは — hello, and a sign that lies about its sound

Retrieve はい and the sign は. You are about to meet は again in the daytime greeting — where it is not pronounced *ha*.

Script — five familiar signs

こんにちは — こ *ko* + ん *n* + に *ni* + ち *chi* + は

You have written every sign separately. こ, に, and ち each carry a consonant and vowel. ん is the exception: a bare consonant with a full beat of its own. Read five signs in five beats: *ko-n-ni-chi-wa*. Do not swallow ん.

Grammar Lens — the sign は, read *wa*

The last sign is は, which you learned as *ha*. Here it is read **wa**. Here は is the **topic particle**, roughly “as for ____.” It keeps an older spelling. Carry one small rule forward: read は as *ha* inside a word and as *wa* when it is the particle.

Why it’s said this way

こんにちは is the daytime greeting. It began as an unfinished sentence: *konnichi wa...*, “as for today ...” The rest fell away and the topic marker stayed.

The older phrase is often written with two kanji for “this day.” You do not need to decode those yet. This chapter keeps the whole greeting in the hiragana signs you have already learned.

Your turn

- *Say it:* こんにちは — *ko-n-ni-chi-wa*, five beats] [REPEAT x2
- *Decide:* は in はい → *ha*; は ending the greeting → *wa*
- *Greet:* someone at midday → こんにちは

Your turn — review pulse

Write ? from memory and give it one full mora.

Before you move on

Which sign takes a beat without a vowel? (ん.) Why does the greeting end in a particle? (It is the opening of a sentence nobody finishes any more.)

Source: Wiktionary: こんにちは.

Chapter 3

Plain Thanks, One Sign at a Time

Modes: 👁 eyes (1) ✍ pen (7) 🖐 Hands-free start: none of the 8 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can write and read ありがとう,
build が with the dakuten, and say the five morae without swallowing
the long final vowel.

*A plain thank-you read only after every distinct hiragana sign and the
dakuten have their own small step.*

3.1 あ — three strokes, and the thank-you begins

Write こんにちは from memory. Five signs, all yours.

This chapter builds the five-sign plain thank-you from the page
up. Its meaning arrives only after every sign is yours, so this
first lesson asks for one shape: あ.

Script — the shape

あ

Three strokes, and the third is the one that gives beginners trouble:

1. a short **horizontal**, near the top
2. a **vertical** crossing it, leaning slightly left as it falls
3. a **loop** that starts at the upper right, sweeps down and left across
the vertical, curls round at the bottom, and finishes pointing right

The loop is one continuous movement, not a circle drawn separately. Start it, cross what you have already written, and come back out.

Read **a**: the *a* of English *father*, kept short. One beat.

Your turn

- *Write it*: あ — horizontal, vertical, then the loop in one movement
- *Say it*: **a**, one beat, short

Your turn — review pulse

Give the daytime greeting, then write ? from memory.

Before you move on

Is the loop drawn as a separate circle, or in one movement? (**One movement**, crossing what you have already written.)

Source: Unicode Hiragana chart

3.2 り — two strokes, and a tap rather than an r

Write あ. Horizontal, vertical, loop.

Script — the shape

り

Two strokes, drawn left to right, and they never touch:

1. a **short left stroke**, curving gently down and to the right
2. a **long right descender**, starting higher, falling much further, and hooking left at the very bottom

The gap between them is the shape. So is the difference in length — the right stroke should fall roughly twice as far as the left.

Now the sound, and it is worth a moment. **Japanese r is not the English r**. It is a single **tap** of the tongue against the ridge behind the teeth — very close to the *r* of Spanish *pero*, and not far from the *dd* in an American saying *ladder*. Your tongue touches once and releases.

If you say an English *r* here you will be understood and you will sound foreign in a way that one minute of practice fixes.

Your turn

- *Write it:* り — short left stroke, then the long right descender. Leave the gap.
- *Say it:* **ri** — one tap, not an English r
- *Say it:* **a**, then **ri** — the first two signs of the word

Your turn — review pulse

Write り from memory before tracing り.

Before you move on

Which of り's two strokes falls further? (The **right** one, by about double.)

Source: Unicode Hiragana chart

3.3 か — three strokes, and a shape you will reuse

Write り. Short left, long right, gap between.

Script — the shape

か

Three strokes:

1. a **hooked left stroke** — down, curving right at the foot into a small hook
2. a **short vertical**, crossing the first stroke near its top and falling to the right of it
3. a **short dot**, up at the right, slanting down-right

Read **ka**: a clean *k*, then the short *a* of あ. One beat.

Remember this shape more carefully than the others. **You are about to get a second sign out of it for free** — か is the base of が, and the difference between them is two small marks rather than a new character to learn.

Your turn

- *Write it:* か — hooked stroke, vertical, then the dot at the right
- *Say it:* **ka**, one beat

Your turn — review pulse

Write ?, then write the different sign that closes ????? and explain its particle reading.

Before you move on

Which stroke is written last? (The **dot**, at the upper right.)
Source: Unicode Hiragana chart

3.4 ` — two ticks, and every sign you know doubles

Write か. Then write こ, from Chapter 2.

Script — the mark

Here is the best bargain in the Japanese writing system.

Two short strokes, slanting down-right, written at the **upper right** of a sign:

`

It is called the **dakuten**, and it does one job: it **voices** the consonant. Voicing is what separates English *k* from *g*, or *s* from *z* — the same mouth position, with the vocal cords switched on.

So:

か *ka* → が *ga*

こ *ko* → ご *go*

No new shape. The sign underneath is exactly the one you already write; the marks sit above and to the right of it, small, and clear of the strokes.

This is worth pausing on, because it changes the size of the job in front of you. Hiragana has forty-six signs. Learning the dakuten does not add signs — it **doubles the ones you already have**, at the price of two ticks. Every *k* you know becomes a *g*, every *s* a *z*, every *t* a *d*, every *h* a *b*.

You have now met four signs that take it – は, こ, ち and か – and two of them are in the word this chapter is building.

Your turn

- Write it: か, then add the two ticks to make か[゛]. Say both.
- Write it: こ, then こ[゛]
- Say it: **ka** / **ga**, then **ko** / **go** — the same mouth, voice off and on

Your turn — review pulse

Write ????? from its five signs before adding any voice marks.

Before you move on

Does か[゛] need a new shape learned? (**No** — it is か plus two ticks.)
Source: Unicode Hiragana chart

3.5 と — two strokes, and they never meet

Write か[゛]. Then say what the two ticks did to it.

Script — the shape

と

Two strokes, and like り they stay apart:

1. a **short stroke** at the upper left, little more than a tick leaning down-right
2. a **long sweeping stroke** starting above and to the right of it, falling down and left, then curving out to the right at the bottom

The second stroke does the work. It should look like a single confident sweep, not a corner — the change of direction is a curve, not a bend.

Read **to**: a clean *t*, then the *o* of *more*, shortened. One beat.

Your turn

- *Write it:* と — the small tick, then the long sweep. Do not join them.
- *Say it:* **a, ri, ga, to** — four beats, and the word is nearly yours

Your turn — review pulse

Say the daytime greeting once without looking.

Before you move on

Which stroke is longer? (The **second**, the sweep.)

Source: Unicode Hiragana chart

3.6 う — two strokes, and a vowel that stretches

Write と. Tick, then sweep, no join.

Script — the shape

う

Two strokes, the simplest pair in this chapter:

1. a **short tick** at the top, roughly horizontal
2. a **wide curve** beneath it, falling from the upper left, bellying right, and tapering away to the lower left

Read **u**: close to the *oo* of *food* but shorter, and with the lips much less rounded than an English speaker expects. Do not push them forward.

What you've built — and what this sign does after と

Something happens when う follows と, and it is the reason the written word and the spoken word look like they disagree.

The five-sign sequence you are building ends と + う — *to* then *u*, which reads as five beats. But the final two signs are heard as a long **o**:

written: a-ri-ga-to-u

spoken: a-ri-ga-**too**

う after an o-sound does not add a syllable. It holds the one before it for a second beat. The beat is still there — Japanese counts it, and dropping it makes the word sound clipped and wrong — but it is the same vowel continuing, not a new one. Katakana will later receive a separate one-stroke length mark for the same job. Here the only written cue is the う you have just learned.

Your turn

- *Write it:* う — the tick, then the wide curve
- *Say it:* **to**, then **too** — one beat, then two, same vowel

Before you move on

Is the extra beat optional? (**No** — Japanese counts it, and dropping it sounds clipped.)
Source: Unicode Hiragana chart

3.7 ありがとう — no new sign, and a whole word

Write あ, り and か in a row. Then add the two ticks to the last one.

Script — the assembly

Here is the word you have been saying since Chapter 1:

ありがとう

Nothing in it is new. Take it sign by sign:

- あ — *a*, the three-stroke sign with the loop
- り — *ri*, short left, long right, tapped
- が — *ga*, which is か with the dakuten
- と — *to*, tick and sweep
- う — *u*, which here holds the *o* before it for a second beat

Five signs, five beats, and you can write every one.

That is the whole point of the last five lessons. In Chapter 1 this word was a sound you copied and a romanization you leaned on. It is now something you can read off a shop sign, and — more to the point — something you could write on a note without being able to say a single sentence of Japanese.

Read it slowly, once per sign, then at speed: *a-ri-ga-to-o*.

Your turn

- *Read it:* ありがとう — name each sign before you say the word
- *Write it:* ありがとう — all five, in order, without looking above
- *Say it:* **arigatou** — five beats, the last two one long o

Before you move on

How many signs did you have to learn for this word? (**Five** — but one of them was free, because が is か with two ticks.)

Source: Unicode Hiragana chart

3.8 ありがとう — thanks, from “this hardly ever happens”

Back to hiragana. Five signs are coming, and one small mark that unlocks a whole second row of sounds.

Script — five signs and two small strokes

ありがとう — あ *a* + り *ri* + が *ga* + と *to* + う

あ *a*, り *ri*, と *to* and う *u* are ordinary hiragana. が is the new idea: it is the sign か *ka* with two short strokes added at the top right. That mark is the **dakuten**, and it voices the consonant — the same two strokes turn *ka* into *ga*, *sa* into *za*, *ta* into *da*, *ha* into *ba*. One mark, learned once, doubles how much of the script you can read.

The final う does not sound like *u* here. After と it stretches the *o*, so the word ends *-tō* and holds five beats: *a-ri-ga-to-o*. Hiragana lengthens a vowel here by writing another vowel sign. Katakana will get its own tiny length lesson later.

The word, taken apart

The older form combines *aru*, “to exist,” with *katashi*, “difficult.” *Arigatashi* therefore meant literally “**hard to exist**” — that is, rare. Rare became precious, precious became grateful, and by the Edo period the word had settled into plain thanks. The *k* of *katashi* softened to *g* inside the compound, which is the same voicing the dakuten writes. Its historical kanji spelling can wait until those signs receive their own lessons.

So the memory hook is inside the word, not inside English: saying **ありがとう** is saying *this was not a thing that had to happen*. No English cousin exists, and inventing one would be worse than admitting that.

Your turn

- *Say it:* **ありがとう** — *a-ri-ga-to-o*, five beats] [REPEAT x2
- *Build:* か plus the dakuten → が
- *Connect:* *arigatashi* “hard to exist” → rare → precious → thanks

Your turn — review pulse

Write ? once from memory, then add the two dakuten strokes.

Before you move on

What did *arigatashi* mean literally? (Hard to exist.) What does the last う do? (It lengthens the *o*.)

Source: Wiktionary: **ありがとう**.

Chapter 4

Polite Thanks, Three More Signs

Modes: 👁 eyes (2) ✍ pen (3) 🗣 Hands-free start: none of the 5 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can add ございます to a known thank-you, read every sign, and choose the polite form for someone outside my close circle.

A short casual-versus-polite choice with every sign taught and the register decision checked independently.

4.1 さ — two strokes, and the ticks work here too

Write ありがとう. All five signs, no help.

Script — the shape

さ

Three strokes:

1. a short **horizontal**, near the top
2. a **short curving stroke** below it, falling down and left
3. a **separate small curve** at the foot, opening left — **not joined** to the stroke above it

Watch that gap. Most printed fonts join the second and third strokes into one continuous descender, so the さ you see on a screen looks like two

strokes. By hand it is three, and the break is real. Keep the handwritten gap even when a printed font closes it.

Read **sa**: a clean *s*, then the short *a*. One beat.

And now the bargain again — さ takes the dakuten:

さ *sa* → ざ *za*

Same mouth, voice switched on, two ticks at the upper right. That is the third voiced sign you have got for free. It will return in the polite ending ahead.

Your turn

- *Write it:* さ — horizontal, the short curve, then the detached foot curve
- *Write it:* ざ — the same, with two ticks
- *Say it:* **sa** / **za**

Your turn — review pulse

Say ?????, add the dakuten to ?, and recall how ?hard to exist? became thanks.

Before you move on

How many signs have the two ticks given you so far? (**Three** — が, ご and ざ.)

Source: Unicode Hiragana chart

4.2 ま — three strokes, and a loop you have drawn before

Write さ, then ざ.

Script — the shape

ま

Three strokes, and the order is top-down as always:

1. an **upper horizontal**, short
2. a **lower horizontal**, a little wider, below and parallel to it
3. a **looping vertical** that crosses both, falls, and curls left at the bottom

The third stroke is the same movement you learned on あ — down through what you have written, then a small loop at the foot. If あ's loop is comfortable, this one is already yours.

Read **ma**: as in English *mother*, shortened. One beat.

Your turn

- *Write it:* ま — two horizontals, then the looping vertical through them
- *Say it:* **ma**, one beat

Your turn — review pulse

Write ? from memory before tracing ?.

Before you move on

Which earlier sign uses the same looping last stroke? (あ.)
Source: Unicode Hiragana chart

4.3 す — two strokes, and a vowel you barely hear

Write ま. Two horizontals, then the loop.

Script — the shape

す

Two strokes:

1. a short **horizontal**, near the top

2. a **vertical** crossing it, falling, and finishing in a loop that closes back on itself before tailing away

The loop in す is tighter than ま's — it comes back and crosses its own line.

Read **su**: an *s*, then the *u* you met in う.

Why it's said this way

At the end of a word, and especially in ございます, that final *u* is usually **devoiced** — the mouth makes the shape, the beat is counted, but the vocal cords never switch on. What a listener hears is closer to *-mass* than *-masu*.

This is not sloppiness or fast speech. It is what standard Tokyo Japanese does, and saying a full clear *u* there is one of the most recognisable marks of a learner reading off a page.

The sign is still written. The beat is still counted. Only the voice drops out.

Your turn

- *Write it*: す — horizontal, then the vertical with its closing loop
- *Say it*: **su**, then the same with the voice off — a whispered ending

Your turn — review pulse

Write ? from memory before tracing ?.

Before you move on

Is the beat dropped along with the voice? (**No** — the beat is still counted.)

Source: Unicode Hiragana chart

4.4 ありがとうございます — politeness you cannot leave out

Say ありがとう once and rebuild が from か. This lesson adds the ending that makes it usable with a stranger, a shopkeeper, or a boss.

Script — five more signs, two of them dakuten

ございます — ご *go* + ざ *za* + い *i* + ま *ma* + す *su*

Two of the five are dakuten forms you can already build: ご is こ with the two strokes, and ざ is さ *sa* with them. い you have read since はい. Only ま *ma* and す *su* are genuinely new.

The whole phrase is ten beats — *a-ri-ga-to-o go-za-i-ma-su* — and the final す is normally said with the *u* barely voiced, close to a plain *s*.

Grammar Lens — politeness is grammar here, not word choice

ございます is a verb. It is the polite descendant of *aru*, “to be” — the same verb that sits inside ありがとう. The historical route runs *aru* to *gozaru* to ございます, where the ending -ます is the general politeness marker Japanese attaches to verbs.

That is the difference this chapter has to name. In many languages politeness is a choice between two words for “you.” Japanese instead marks it on the **predicate**, and every sentence has one, so every sentence is marked. There is no neutral setting: ありがとう to a friend and ありがとうございます to a stranger are not two styles of the same form, they are two different grammatical levels, and choosing wrongly is heard immediately.

At the far end of the system, even the verb can be replaced: ordinary *iu*, “to say,” has the respectful form *ossharu* and the humble form *mōsu*. Same act, three verbs, chosen by who is doing what to whom. That is **keigo**, and this lesson is only its front door. Their spellings belong in later, separately taught script lessons.

Your turn

- *Say it:* ありがとうございます — ten beats, final *su* light] [REPEAT x2
- *Choose:* a close friend → ありがとう; a shop assistant → ありがとうございます
- *Build:* こ → ご, さ → ざ

Before you move on

Which verb hides inside *ございます*? (*aru*, “to be.”) Can a Japanese sentence avoid marking politeness? (No — the predicate always carries a level.)

Source: Wiktionary: *ございます*.

4.5 Practice — the whole thank-you, off the page

Write *ありがとう*. Five signs, no help.

Script — the second half

ございます

Five more signs, and **again nothing here is new**:

- *こ* — *こ* from Chapter 2, with the dakuten
- *ざ* — *さ* from this chapter, with the dakuten
- *い* — from Chapter 2
- *ま* — from this chapter
- *す* — from this chapter, its *u* devoiced

Two of the five are signs you already had, wearing two ticks.

Why it's said this way

ありがとう on its own is warm and ordinary — friends, family, a shopkeeper you know. *ありがとうございます* is the same thanks in polite form, and it is what you want for a stranger, a colleague, anyone serving you.

The difference is not strength. Adding *ございます* does not mean you are *more* grateful; it means you are being **more formal about it**. Getting that wrong in either direction is the commonest register mistake a beginner makes.

If you are unsure which to use, use the long one. Being slightly too polite in Japanese costs you nothing.

The exchange

Two voices, and every sign on the page is one you can write:

A: こんにちは

B: こんにちは

A: ありがとうございます

B: はい

What you've built this chapter

Eight new signs and one mark. The mark is the part worth remembering:

- **eight shapes** — ありがとうさます
- **one mark** — 〃, which turned か into が, こ into ご, さ into ざ

Ten signs in ありがとうございます, and only eight of them cost you a shape. The dakuten is the first thing in this book that made the job *smaller* the further you went into it, and it keeps doing that: every *k*, *s*, *t* and *h* sign you ever learn arrives with a voiced twin already attached.

Your turn

- *Read it:* ありがとうございます — name each of the ten signs, then say it
- *Write it:* ございます — five signs, two of them with ticks
- *Say it:* arigatou gozaimasu — and let the final u go quiet

Your turn — review pulse

Give plain thanks, then polite thanks. Name the dakuten and the ?hard to exist? memory hook.

Before you move on

Which form would you use with a stranger — the short one or the long one? (The **long** one; being slightly too polite costs nothing.)

Source: Unicode Hiragana chart

Chapter 5

Nihongo, Built in Small Blocks

Modes: 👁 eyes (1) ✍ pen (6) 🔄 Hands-free start: none of the 7 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can write 日 and 本, assemble 語 from three practised components, and read 日本語 as nihongo.

Three kanji read as one known word after the simple signs and the complex sign's components were taught separately.

5.1 日 — one sun, four strokes

Say *ni-chi*: two even beats. Today you attach those beats to one kanji, but you write only one new shape.

Script — build the sun

日

Write four strokes:

1. the left side, down
2. the top and right side as one turning stroke
3. the short middle line, left to right
4. the bottom line, left to right

The middle line touches both sides. Keep the shape taller than it is wide.

Here it is read *nichi*. It carries the broad idea **sun/day**. Kanji can have more than one reading; this lesson asks for only the reading in the word ahead.

Your turn

- *Trace it:* 日 — side, corner, middle, bottom
- *Write it:* 日 once from memory
- *Say it:* **nichi**, two beats

Your turn — review pulse

Read ????? once and write its base sign ? without a model.

Before you move on

Which line sits inside the box? (The **middle horizontal** line.)

Source: KanjiVG stroke-order data.

5.2 本 — a tree with its root marked

Write 日 once. Read it *nichi* here.

Script — five strokes

本

Write the large tree first, then mark its base:

1. top horizontal
2. centre vertical, down through it
3. left-falling branch
4. right-falling branch
5. short horizontal across the lower stem

That last stroke is the memory hook: it points to the **root**, so the sign came to mean **origin**. In the word ahead, read it *hon*, one beat ending in *n*.

Your turn

- *Trace it:* 本 — cross, two branches, root mark
- *Write it:* 本 once without looking
- *Say it:* **hon**, one beat

Your turn — review pulse

Write ? once from memory before beginning the new kanji.

Before you move on

Which stroke comes last? (The short **root mark**.)
Source: KanjiVG stroke-order data.

5.3 言 — build the speech side first

Write 本 and point to its short root mark. Now set it aside.

Script — one component, not a whole word yet

言

This is the **speech** component. Write it as a small top mark, three horizontal lines, then a three-stroke box. Keep the horizontals distinct and the box narrow.

Do not memorise a vocabulary word for it today. Its job is visual: when it sits on the left, it signals that the larger kanji has something to do with words or speech. The next two tiny lessons build the right side.

Your turn

- *Trace it:* 言 slowly, top to bottom
- *Cover and write:* 言 once
- *Point to:* the small box at the bottom

Your turn — review pulse

Write ? once from memory before building the speech component.

Before you move on

Where will this component sit in the larger sign? (On the **left**.)
Source: KanjiVG stroke-order data.

5.4 五 — four strokes for the sound side

Trace 𠄎 once. Say “speech side.”

Script — the top-right piece

五

Write four strokes: top horizontal; a short vertical and turn; a second horizontal; then the long bottom horizontal. Keep the shape wider than tall.

This sign means **five** on its own. Here, you only need its second job: it helps cue the sound *go* inside the larger kanji that is coming.

Your turn

- *Trace it:* 五 — top, turn, middle, bottom
- *Write it:* 五 once from memory
- *Say it:* **go**, one beat

Before you move on

Which line is longest? (The **bottom** line.)
Source: KanjiVG stroke-order data.

5.5 口 — close a box in three strokes

Write 口 once. Leave a little space below it with your finger.

Script — the lower-right piece

口

Write three strokes:

1. left side, down
2. top and right side as one turning stroke
3. bottom, left to right, closing the box

It is the picture-sign for a **mouth**. In the larger kanji ahead, it sits under 五. Today the whole job is one small square.

Your turn

- *Trace it:* □ — side, corner, close
- *Write it:* □ once from memory
- *Stack:* point below 五, where □ will go

Your turn — review pulse

Read ????? from memory before drawing the new box component.

Before you move on

Which stroke closes the box? (The **bottom** stroke.)
Source: KanjiVG stroke-order data.

5.6 語 — assemble; do not memorise fourteen loose strokes

Point left and picture 言. Point upper-right and picture 五.
Point lower-right and picture 口. Those are all the pieces.

Script — three known blocks become one sign

語

Build it in blocks:

1. write 言, narrow, on the left
2. write 五 in the upper-right
3. write 口 directly under 五

Read the whole sign *go*, one beat. It means **language** here. There are fourteen strokes, but there are not fourteen new decisions: you already practised every block separately.

Your turn

- *Trace it:* 語 by naming the blocks — speech, five, mouth
- *Cover and build:* 言 + 五 + 口
- *Read it:* **go** — language

Before you move on

Which component fills the left side? (言, the speech component.)
Source: KanjiVG stroke-order data.

5.7 日本語 — three characters, and no single sound each

Say こんにちは (*konnichiwa*). Now write 日, 本, and 語 once each. This lesson joins those three already-practised kanji to name the language.

Script — kanji, and the readings problem

日本語 — *ni* + *hon* + *go*

These are **kanji**: characters borrowed from Chinese, each carrying a meaning rather than a sound. 日 is sun or day. 本 is origin or root. 語 is language. So 日本 is “sun-origin” — the country the sun rises from — and 日本語 is its language.

Now the fact that makes kanji unlike any letter you have learned. A kanji does not have *a* sound. 日 is read *niichi*, *jitsu*, *hi*, *bi*, or *ka*, depending on the word it stands in — and in 日本 it is shortened again, to *ni*. There is no sensible way to teach “the sound of 日.” What a lesson can teach is the **word**: you learn 日本語 as *nihongo*, and the reading of each character comes along with it.

Two families of readings explain the spread. The **on** reading is Japan’s version of the Chinese pronunciation, imported with the character. The

kun reading is a native Japanese word written with a borrowed character that already meant the same thing. 日本語 uses the imported reading family throughout. The older spelling behind the greeting is irregular even by those standards, so it remains postponed rather than becoming an unexplained decoding test.

The word, taken apart

Here the cousin web finally works — just not toward English. The on-readings *nichi*, *hon*, *go* are borrowings of Middle Chinese, so 日本語 has genuine relatives: Mandarin writes the same three characters and says *Rìběnyǔ*; Korean borrowed the same compound as *ilbon-eo*. Same characters, related imported sounds, one meaning, three languages. That is a real, checkable connection, and it is the honest replacement for the Latin roots that anchor a European language. English has no share in it.

Your turn

- *Say it:* 日本語 — *ni-ho-n-go*, four beats] [REPEAT x2
- *Name:* 日 sun or day; 本 origin; 語 language
- *Connect:* Mandarin *Rìběnyǔ*, Korean *ilbon-eo*, same three characters

Your turn — review pulse

Build ? once from ?, ?, and ? before joining the full word.

Before you move on

What does 日本 mean literally? (Sun-origin.) Does 日 have one pronunciation? (No — the word it appears in chooses one.)

Source: Wiktionary: 日本語.

Chapter 6

Coffee in Katakana, Three Shapes

Modes: 👁 eyes (1) ✍ pen (3) 🔄 Hands-free start: none of the 4 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can write コ, ー, and ヒ, read コーヒー as four morae, and explain that the long mark holds the preceding vowel.

A borrowed word made from only three distinct katakana shapes, each taught before the full word appears.

6.1 コ — same sound, a new script

Read 日本語 once. Now switch jobs: the next word came from abroad, so Japanese normally writes it in katakana.

Script — two angular strokes

コ

Write two strokes:

1. top horizontal, then turn down at the right
2. bottom horizontal, left to right

Read it *ko*, the same mora as hiragana こ. The sound is not new. Only the script is new: katakana is angular and commonly marks borrowed words.

Your turn

- *Trace it:* コ — top-and-side, then bottom
- *Write it:* コ once from memory
- *Contrast:* こ is hiragana; コ is katakana; both say *ko*

Your turn — review pulse

Trace ? once. Then recall why Japanese kanji readings connect to Chinese without giving each sign one fixed sound.

Before you move on

Does コ introduce a new sound? (**No** — only a new written shape.)
Source: Unicode Katakana chart.

6.2 — — one line, one extra beat

Write コ and say *ko*. Hold its vowel once: *ko-o*.

Script — length lives on the page

コ—

Write one horizontal stroke after the katakana sign. This mark is the **chōonpu**, the long-vowel mark. It does not have a sound by itself. It tells you to hold the vowel before it for one more mora.

So コ is *ko*, while コ— is *kō*: two beats, *ko-o*. Keep the line centred and about as wide as the sign before it.

Your turn

- *Write it:* コ, then —
- *Tap:* *ko* — one; hold *o* — two
- *Read it:* コ— as **kō**, not *ko*

Your turn — review pulse

Write ? once from memory, then return to the one-stroke length mark.

Before you move on

How many extra beats does **一** add? (**One**.)
Source: Unicode Katakana chart.

6.3 𐤁 — two strokes complete the inventory

Write 𐤁一 and tap its two beats: *ko-o*.

Script — the last new shape

𐤁

Write two strokes:

1. a short stroke from right toward left
2. a longer vertical stroke that turns and sweeps right at the bottom

Read it *hi*, one mora. Japanese *h* is light; keep the vowel clean, like the *ee* in *machine* but short.

Now every distinct sign in the word ahead is known: 𐤁, 一, and 𐤁.

Your turn

- *Trace it:* 𐤁 — short top, long bent body
- *Write it:* 𐤁 once from memory
- *Build:* 𐤁 + 一 + 𐤁 + 一

Your turn — review pulse

Write ? once from memory before switching back to katakana.

Before you move on

Which stroke bends to the right? (The **second**, longer stroke.)
Source: Unicode Katakana chart.

6.4 コーヒー — the third system, and a word that really is a cousin

Recall how hiragana writes a long vowel: it writes the vowel twice, as in いいえ. Katakana does it differently, and this word shows how.

Script — katakana, the borrowed-word script

コーヒー — コ *ko* + ィ + ヒ *hi* + ー

This is **katakana**, the third system, and it is a full twin of hiragana: the same beats, the same five vowels, different shapes. Its job is different too. Katakana marks a word as coming from outside — borrowed vocabulary, foreign names, sound effects, scientific terms.

The two scripts are siblings by origin as well as by sound. Hiragana came from whole Chinese characters written in flowing cursive; katakana came from *fragments* of characters, shorthand that monks scribbled beside a text to remember how to read it. ㇿ and ㇿ even trace back to the same character, which is why they still look alike.

ー is the *chōonpu*, the long-vowel bar. It holds the previous vowel for one more beat, and it belongs to katakana almost exclusively. So コーヒー is four beats: *ko-o-hi-i*.

The word, taken apart

コーヒー is **coffee**, and it entered Japanese from Dutch *koffie* through the Nagasaki trade. Dutch had it from Turkish *kahve*, and Turkish from Arabic *qahwa* — which is exactly where English *coffee* comes from as well.

So this word genuinely is a cousin of one you already own. Notice what kind of cousin: not an inherited relative, but the same borrowed object arriving from the same Arabic source by two different roads. That is the honest shape of most Japanese–English overlap. Other passengers on those roads include *pan*, “bread,” from Portuguese *pão*, and *arubaito*, “a part-time job,” from German *Arbeit*. Their katakana signs can wait for their own one-sign lessons.

Your turn

- Say it: コーヒー — *ko-o-hi-i*, four beats] [REPEAT x2

- *Trace it:* Arabic *qahwa* → Turkish *kahve* → Dutch *koffie* → コーヒー
- *Decide:* a borrowed word is written in katakana, not hiragana

Before you move on

Which script signals a borrowed word? (Katakana.) How many beats does コーヒー hold? (Four.)

Source: Wiktionary: コーヒー.

Chapter 7

The Doorway Exchange

Modes: ⇄ voice (1) ⇄ Hands-free start: all 1 lesson.

By the end of this chapter: I can greet, name the language, answer yes or no, and thank someone politely while listening, speaking, reading, and writing independently.

A six-line doorway exchange using only words and signs already taught in the preceding six chapters.

7.1 Practice — one daytime exchange, three scripts

Before reading on, retrieve three answers: the daytime greeting, the short yes, and the short no. Nothing new is added here.

The exchange — every line already learned

A: こんにちは。 — *Konnichiwa.* B: こんにちは。 — *Konnichiwa.* A: 日本語? — *Nihongo?* B: はい。 — *Hai.* A: ありがとうございます。 — *Arigatō gozaimasu.* B: いいえ。 — *Iie.*

Three lines of hiragana, one of kanji, and no word that has not been taught. Japanese lets a bare noun with a rising tone stand as a question, so 日本語 with the voice lifted is a complete and natural way to ask “Japanese, then?” — and はい answers it. B’s closing いいえ is the modest “not at all” that waves thanks away.

An ordinary Japanese page mixes systems: hiragana carries much of the grammar, kanji carries many content words, and katakana commonly carries borrowings. The six earlier chapters introduced those systems separately; this payoff is where they finally work together.

Your turn

1. **Listen:** hear one line with no text and identify greeting, language, answer, or thanks.
2. **Speak:** take B's part while the other lines are read aloud.
3. **Read:** run both voices from Japanese only, with the romanization covered.
4. **Write:** hear 日本語, wait ten seconds, and write the three kanji with no visible model.

Score the four actions separately. A fluent spoken line cannot cover a missing kanji in writing, and recognition cannot cover an unanswered spoken cue.

Your turn — review pulse

From memory, write ??, ???, ?????, ?????, ???, and ?????. Circle the dakuten and say why the borrowed word uses katakana.

Before you move on

Run the exchange once from memory. If a line stalls, return to that one lesson rather than rereading the chapter.

Chapter 8

One Goodbye, Sign by Sign

Modes: ⇄ voice (2) ✍ pen (4) ⇄ Hands-free start: first 1 of 6 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can hear and say sayōnara on five morae, write its three new hiragana signs, and read and write the complete farewell independently.

A context-dependent farewell whose sound and meaning arrive before three separately taught new signs and whose payoff scores all four skills.

8.1 Hear *sayōnara* — one way to say goodbye

Write katakana □, give the daytime greeting, then run one doorway exchange aloud. Close the text before the new expression begins.

What to know first

sa-yō-na-ra — **goodbye**, at a parting

Hear five morae: *sa / yo / o / na / ra*. The held *ō* occupies two beats, just as the final long vowel did in *arigatō*. Listen twice. Tap five even beats, then say the expression once. Its writing waits for the next four tiny sessions.

This is **one** Japanese farewell, not a universal line for every departure. Relationship and situation can call for other expressions; those will receive their own lessons rather than being smuggled into this one.

Your turn

Choose the parting cue rather than the meeting cue. Say *sayōnara* on five beats, then stop before trying to spell it.

Before you move on

Say the five beats once with no writing visible.

Sources: Japan Foundation Marugoto A1 vocabulary and Japan Foundation Irodori Starter lesson 1.

8.2 よ — the second sound gets a shape

Read *ありがとう*, then point to *ー* in *コーヒー* and say what it does. Tap *sayōnara* on five beats. Today adds one shape only.

Script — one sign

よ — *yo*

Keep the printed sign visible. Notice the short upper mark, then the longer line that falls, turns, and loops at the lower right. Finger-trace the whole route slowly. Say *yo* only after the finger stops.

Your turn

- *Trace it:* よ, once with the model visible
- *Copy:* よ, once beside the model
- *Say it:* *yo*, one mora

Before you move on

Cover the model, wait five seconds, and write よ once.

Source: Unicode Hiragana chart.

8.3 な — one sign for *na*

Write よ from memory. Say why *arigatō* once meant “hard to exist,” then point to the dakuten in 力. One new hiragana sign follows.

Script — one signな — *na*

Keep な visible. Find its compact left side first, then the separate right side with the small crossing mark and low loop. Trace each part without rushing; the two sides must not collapse into one blob.

Your turn

- *Copy:* な, with the model visible
- *Check:* compact left side; open right side
- *Say it:* *na*, one mora

Before you move on

Look away, say *na*, and write な once.
Source: Unicode Hiragana chart.

8.4 ろ — the last new shape

Write よ and な from memory, then write katakana り and say why コーヒー uses katakana. Do not force the new hiragana into that borrowed-word script.

Script — one signろ — *ra*

Keep ろ visible. It begins with a short top mark. The lower stroke starts separately, descends, bends right, and opens rather than closing into a circle. Japanese *r* is a light tongue tap; one careful tap is enough here.

Your turn

Look at ろ for five seconds. Cover it, wait five seconds, and write it once. Uncover only to compare the open lower curve.

Before you move on

Read the sign once, then stop.
Source: Unicode Hiragana chart.

8.5 さようなら — assemble what the hand already knows

Run the doorway exchange once, write ま, then say the farewell on five beats. Write よ, な, and ら separately.

Script — join five known signs

さ | よ | う | な | ら

sa / yo / o / na / ra

The five signs are all known. さ and う return from the thank-you chapters; よ, な, and ら are the three new shapes. In this word, よう carries the held *yō*: the written う owns the extra beat.

Your turn

1. Point and read: さ | よ | う | な | ら.
2. Cover the romanization and read さようなら.
3. Cover everything, wait ten seconds, and write the five signs.

Before you move on

Circle う and tap the beat it contributes.
Source: Japan Foundation Marugoto A1 vocabulary.

8.6 Practice — meet, thank, then part

Write す, then give the daytime greeting and plain thanks. Those two social jobs are already secure. The new third job is leaving.

What to know first

さようなら。

Use this line for the parting situation practised here. Japanese has other exit formulae for other relationships and settings; success means choosing and producing this taught farewell, not claiming that it fits every goodbye.

Your turn

1. **Listen:** hear *konnichiwa* or *sayōnara* and identify meeting or parting.
2. **Speak:** answer a parting cue with *sayōnara* on five morae.
3. **Read:** cover the romanization and read さようなら sign by sign.
4. **Write:** hear the word, wait ten seconds, and write all five signs.

Score the four actions separately. A remembered sound cannot cover missing writing, and a copied form cannot cover a missing spoken response.

Before you move on

Stop after one accurate four-skill pass. Speed and alternate farewells come later.

Sources: Japan Foundation Marugoto A1 vocabulary and Japan Foundation Irodori Starter lesson 1.

Chapter 9

One More Time, Please

Modes: ⇄ voice (7) ✍ pen (5) ⇄ Hands-free start: first 1 of 12 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say that I do not understand, politely ask for one repetition, read and write the earned block もういちど, and write five new hiragana forms without a chart.

A spoken repair assembled from independently learned pieces, with decoding and dictation limited to the signs the learner has actually earned.

9.1 すみません — open the repair gently

Hear the farewell in your mind, say it, read さようなら, and write it once. Now imagine that the other person has spoken and you missed it. Do not guess; open a repair.

What to know first

すみません。 — *su-mi-ma-se-n* — excuse me; I am sorry

Five morae, each given room. This polite expression can apologise, attract attention, or soften the request that follows. Here it means: “Excuse me — I need help with what was just said.”

Its shape is useful, not a literal translation burden. It is related to *sumu*, “to be settled or finished,” in a polite negative form: the small social debt is not yet settled. Keep the practical job first.

Your turn

- *Hear:* *sumimasen* → point to **repair**, not **farewell**
- *Say it:* *su / mi / ma / se / n* [REPEAT x2]
- *Choose:* you missed a word → すみません

The Japanese spelling is exposure for now. The next two lessons isolate its two new signs before either becomes load-bearing.

Before you move on

Say it once, then stop. The request itself comes later.
Source: Japan Foundation Irodori Starter lesson 2, pp. 1–3.

9.2 み — one looped bridge

Say *sumimasen* once, then write known ま and な. The new sign shares the *m* opening but carries a different vowel.

Script — the shape

み — *mi*

Write it in two strokes. First make the bent left body, ending in a small turn. Then begin at the upper right, sweep down through the middle, and finish by lifting to the right. Say *mi* only when the second stroke ends.

Your turn

1. Trace み once with a finger.
2. Trace it once with a pencil.
3. Point to み inside すみません; do not decode the other signs yet.

Before you move on

Cover the model and air-write the two strokes once.
Source: Unicode Hiragana chart; stroke order per *Hitsujun Shido no Tebiki* (Japanese Ministry of Education, 1958).

9.3 め — cross, loop, release

Find み in すみません, then say the five-mora repair opener.

Script — the shape

め — *me*

Two strokes. The short first stroke leans down to the right. The longer second stroke crosses it, curves into an open loop, and releases at the lower right. Keep that final opening visible; do not close it into a circle.

Your turn

- *Copy:* め once with the model visible
- *Read it:* point to み, then め and say *mi*, *me*
- *Find:* circle め inside すみません

Before you move on

Write め once more while saying *me*.

Source: Unicode Hiragana chart; stroke order per *Hitsujun Shido no Tebiki* (Japanese Ministry of Education, 1958).

9.4 よく — how fully?

Say *sumimasen*. Point to み and め inside it.

What to know first

よく — *yo-ku* — well; fully

Two morae. *Yoku* is the adverbial partner of *yoi*, “good.” In the coming line, it says that understanding did not happen **well** or **fully**. It does not itself mean “understand.”

You already write よ. Treat く as visible support for now; its own tiny writing lesson follows.

Your turn

- *Hear: yoku* → choose **well/fully**
- *Say it: yo / ku* [REPEAT x2]
- *Point to:* known よ, then supported <

Before you move on

Say *yoku* once without adding the rest of the sentence.
Source: Japan Foundation Irodori Starter lesson 2, p. 1.

9.5 < — one angled stroke

Write known よ and say *yoku*.

Script — the shape

< — *ku*

One stroke. Begin high on the right, sweep down-left to the point, then turn and sweep down-right. Keep it narrow and open. The turn is part of the same stroke.

Your turn

1. Look at < for five seconds.
2. Hide it and write the one angled stroke.
3. Reveal, check, then join known よ + < → よく.

Before you move on

Read よく once without romanization.
Source: Unicode Hiragana chart; stroke order per *Hitsujun Shido no Tebiki* (Japanese Ministry of Education, 1958).

9.6 わかりません — I do not understand

Read よく, then open a repair with *sumimasen*.

What to know first

わかりません。 — *wa-ka-ri-ma-se-n* — I do not understand

Six morae. The *wakari-* part carries “understand”; polite **-masen** makes the predicate negative. Japanese often leaves out “I” when the situation already makes the experiencer obvious.

Combine the two known pieces only in sound for now:

yoku wakarimasen — I do not understand well / fully

Your turn

- *Hear: wakarimasen* → choose **does not understand**
- *Say it: wa / ka / ri / ma / se / n*
- *Repair: yoku wakarimasen*

Before you move on

Do not add an invented pronoun. The short Japanese line is complete here.

Source: Japan Foundation Irodori Starter lesson 2, pp. 1–2.

9.7 ど — voice a sign you already own

Write と. Add the two-stroke dakuten beside it. Say *wakari-masen* once as the reason a repetition may be needed.

Script — carry the voicing mark

と *to* + “ → ど *do*

The base shape does not change. Write と first, then add the two short dakuten strokes at the upper right. The mark voices the opening consonant: *t* becomes *d* while the vowel stays *o*.

Your turn

1. Copy と → ㇿ once.
2. Cover the model and write the voiced sign from the heard mora *do*.
3. Read と / ㇿ as *to* / *do* without changing the vowel.

Before you move on

Write ㇿ once more from memory.

Source: Unicode Hiragana chart; voicing pattern and stroke order per *Hitsujun Shido no Tebiki* (Japanese Ministry of Education, 1958).

9.8 もう — one more time begins here

Say *sumimasen*, *yoku wakarimasen*. Write め and ㇿ once.

What to know first

もう — *mō* — again; one more

Two morae: *mo* / *o*. The macron in *mō* hides the second beat, but the Japanese spelling shows it with final う. In other settings this adverb can mean “already” or “more.” A request for repetition selects “again.”

Your turn

- *Hear*: *mō* in a repair → choose **again**
- *Say it*: *mo* / *o* and tap twice
- *Point to*: も | う; う owns the held second beat

Before you move on

Say it once more, keeping both beats.

Source: Japan Foundation Irodori Starter lesson 2, pp. 1–3.

9.9 も — two bars, then the curve

Write known う and み, then say *mo* / *o*.

Script — the shape

も — *mo*

Three strokes. Draw the central curve first, from the upper left down and around. Then add the upper short horizontal and the lower short horizontal. Both bars cross the central stroke.

Your turn

1. Copy も once.
2. Hide it for ten seconds and write it again.
3. Add known う: もう. Read *mo* / *o*.

Before you move on

Cover the model and write もう once.

Source: Unicode Hiragana chart; stroke order per *Hitsujun Shido no Tebiki* (Japanese Ministry of Education, 1958).

9.10 いちど — one time, all known signs

Write い, ち, and と. Add the dakuten to と and read the result *do*. Write め once as a review pulse.

What to know first

いちど — *i-chi-do* — one time; once

The word is built transparently: *ichi* is “one,” and *do* counts one occurrence. All four visible marks are already yours: い + ち + と + 〃.

Now join it to the previous word:

もういちど — *mō ichido* — one more time

Your turn

1. Hear *i* / *chi* / *do* without looking.
2. Write いちど from the three morae.
3. Read もういちど, keeping the two beats in もう.

Before you move on

Circle the dakuten. It changes the final mora, not the first two.
Source: Japan Foundation Irodori Starter lesson 2, pp. 1–3.

9.11 おねがいします — please, as a polite request

Read いちど. Say *sumimasen*, *yoku wakarimasen*. Write く.

What to know first

おねがいします。 — *o-ne-ga-i shi-ma-su* — please; I request it

The pieces make the social direction visible: respectful *o-*, *negai* “request or wish,” and polite *shimasu* “do.” Learn the whole as the courteous request ending. Do not translate each piece while speaking.

The common kanji spelling can wait. This chapter earns the sound and social use first, without switching writing systems mid-ramp.

Your turn

- *Hear: onegaishimasu* → choose **a polite request**
- *Say it: onegaishimasu* once at an even pace
- *Join: mō ichido, onegaishimasu*

Before you move on

Keep the tone even and courteous; volume does not make the request more polite.
Source: Japan Foundation Irodori Starter lesson 2, pp. 1–3.

9.12 もういちど、おねがいします — ask for one more pass

Write み, め, く, ど, も. Say *sumimasen*, *yoku wakarimasen*. Then retrieve *mō*, *ichido*, and *onegaishimasu* separately.

What to know first

もういちど、おねがいします。

mō ichido, *onegai shimasu* — one more time, please

Nothing new is hidden inside the line. もう supplies “again,” いちど supplies “one time,” and おねがいします makes the request polite. The first two words are now readable; the final expression remains supported exposure until its own longer script runway is complete.

Your turn

1. **Listen:** distinguish *sumimasen* from *mō ichido*, *onegaishimasu*.
2. **Speak:** say the opener, then the request, with a small pause.
3. **Read:** independently read もういちど; use the printed support for the rest.
4. **Write:** from dictation, write only the independently earned block もういちど.

Before you move on

Stop after one accurate repair. Chapter 10 will ask for slower speech instead.

Source: Japan Foundation Irodori Starter lesson 2, pp. 1–3.

Chapter 10

A Little More Slowly

Modes: ⇄ voice (7) ✍ pen (5) ⇄ Hands-free start: none of the 12 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can ask for slower speech, close the repair with wakarimashita, read and write the repair lines earned in the previous chapter, and write five new hiragana signs.

A second repair strategy assembled from seven tiny lexical steps while independent reading and writing stay inside the learner's earned script boundary.

10.1 せ — close the opener

Ask for one repetition. Then hear the farewell in your mind, say it, read さようなら, and write its final ら. Write known す, み, ま, ん separately. Only the fourth sign of *sumimasen* is still missing.

Script — the shape

せ — *se*

Three strokes: a short horizontal, a longer crossing horizontal with a small hook, then a vertical curve through the right side. Keep the two horizontals separate.

Your turn

1. Copy せ once.

2. Hide it and write it after ten seconds.
3. Join the five known blocks: す | み | ま | せ | ん.

Before you move on

Read すみません once without romanization.

Source: Unicode Hiragana chart; stroke order per *Hitsujun Shido no Tebiki* (Japanese Ministry of Education, 1958).

10.2 お — the respectful opening sign

Say *onegaishimasu*, write せ, then retrieve *yoku* as “well.”

Script — the shape

お — o

Three strokes. Write the short top horizontal, then the long central stroke that curves left and loops right. Finish with the small separate mark at upper right.

Your turn

- *Trace it:* お once
- *Copy:* お once with the model visible
- *Find:* point to the first sign in おねがいします

Before you move on

Cover the model and air-write all three strokes.

Source: Unicode Hiragana chart; stroke order per *Hitsujun Shido no Tebiki* (Japanese Ministry of Education, 1958).

10.3 ね — finish the polite request

Write お, then known が, い, し, ま, す. Say the whole request ending once. One written mora remains between お and が.

Script — the shape

ね — *ne*

Two strokes. First a short vertical. Second, cross it from the upper right, hook left, sweep down, and finish with a small loop at the lower right.

Your turn

1. Copy ね once.
2. Hide it and write it from *ne*.
3. Assemble お | ね | が | い | し | ま | す.

Before you move on

Read おねがいします without romanization, then stop.

Source: Unicode Hiragana chart; stroke order per *Hitsujun Shido no Tebiki* (Japanese Ministry of Education, 1958).

10.4 すこし — ask for a small change

Ask for one repetition, then write known す, こ, and ね.

What to know first

すこし — *su-ko-shi* — a little

Three morae. This word makes a request smaller and gentler: not a completely different explanation, only **a little** adjustment. The last sign is exposure for one lesson; its own writing step comes next.

Your turn

- *Hear*: *sukoshi* → choose **a little**
- *Say it*: *su / ko / shi* [REPEAT x2]
- *Point to*: known す, known こ, supported final sign

Before you move on

Keep it to three even beats.

Source: Japan Foundation Irodori Starter lesson 2, pp. 1–3.

10.5 し — one falling curve

Say *sukoshi*. Write す, こ, and review み.

Script — the shape

し — *shi*

One stroke. Begin high, descend almost vertically, then curve gently up and to the right. Do not add a second stroke or close the curve.

Your turn

1. Trace し once.
2. Hide it and write the single curve.
3. Join す | こ | し and read the three morae.

Before you move on

Read すこし once without support.

Source: Unicode Hiragana chart; stroke order per *Hitsujun Shido no Tebiki* (Japanese Ministry of Education, 1958).

10.6 ゆっくり — slowly, with a held beat

Read すこし, then write known く, り, and し.

What to know first

ゆっくり — *yu-k-ku-ri* — slowly

Do not squeeze the middle. The small っ holds one beat of closure before *ku*. The spelling is exposure today; this lesson earns the sound and practical job without pretending the two new shapes are already readable.

Your turn

- *Hear:* *yukkuri* → choose **slowly**
- *Tap:* *yu / hold / ku / ri*
- *Say it:* *yukkuri* slowly, without adding a vowel in the held beat

Before you move on

Meaning and timing are enough. The new opening sign comes next.
Source: Japan Foundation Irodori Starter lesson 2, pp. 1–3.

10.7 ヲ — open yukkuri

Tap *yu / hold / ku / ri*, then write known よ and も.

Script — the shape

ヲ — *yu*

Two strokes. First a short curved vertical on the left. Second, begin at the upper right, sweep left through the middle, loop around, and finish to the right.

Your turn

- *Trace it:* ヲ once
- *Copy:* ヲ once
- *Find:* point to ヲ at the start of ouncillor

Before you move on

The small っ remains supported; do not decode past what you own.
Source: Unicode Hiragana chart; stroke order per *Hitsujun Shido no Tebiki* (Japanese Ministry of Education, 1958).

10.8 ってください — please say it

Say *yukkuri*. Retrieve *onegaishimasu*, then write い, く, さ.

What to know first

いってください。 — *itte kudasai* — please say it

The first part is the request-linking form of *iu*, “to say.” *Kudasai* makes the requested action polite. Learn the whole spoken frame now. Its small つ, て, and voiced だ receive separate writing steps later.

Your turn

- *Hear: itte kudasai* → choose **please say it**
- *Say it: it-te ku-da-sa-i*
- *Join: yukkuri itte kudasai* — please say it slowly

Before you move on

Do not write the supported signs from memory yet.
Source: Japan Foundation Irodori Starter lesson 2, pp. 1–3.

10.9 もうすこし — a little more

Say *itte kudasai*, write ゆ, then write もう and すこし separately.
Read both.

What to know first

もうすこし — *mō sukoshi* — a little more

No new grammar is hiding here. もう points beyond the present amount; すこし keeps the requested change small. Every sign is already earned.

Your turn

1. Read もう | すこし.
2. Say *mō sukoshi*, keeping the extra beat in もう.
3. Hear the phrase, wait ten seconds, and write it from memory.

Before you move on

Circle う, the second beat of *mō*.

Source: Japan Foundation Irodori Starter lesson 2, pp. 1–3.

10.10 わかりました — the repair worked

Say “I do not understand,” then read もうすこし. Write み and し.

What to know first

わかりました。 — *wakarimashita* — I understand; understood

The familiar *wakari*- stem returns. Polite *-mashita* presents the change as achieved: the explanation landed. The final た is supported exposure until its own sign lesson.

Your turn

- *Hear: wakarimasen* → not understood
- *Hear: wakarimashita* → understood now
- *Say it: wakarimashita* after a successful repetition

Before you move on

Keep *-masen* and *-mashita* distinct; one reports a problem, the other success.

Source: Japan Foundation Irodori Starter lesson 2, pp. 2–3.

10.11 ここ — here, with one known sign twice

Write こ, say *wakarimashita*, then retrieve *sumimasen*.

What to know first

ここ — *ko-ko* — here; this place

One owned sign appears twice. The word belongs to a larger pointing family that will later contrast near me, near you, and over there. Today, keep only the speaker-near place: **here**.

Your turn

1. Point beside yourself and say *koko*.
2. Read こ | こ.
3. Hear *ko-ko*, wait ten seconds, and write both signs.

Before you move on

No new shape was needed; the payoff is recombination.
Source: Japan Foundation Irodori Starter lesson 2, p. 2.

10.12 もうすこし、ゆっくりいってください — slower, please

Write せ, お, ね, し, ゆ. Read *sumimasen* and *onegaishimasu*. Retrieve the repetition request, then the three new spoken pieces *mō sukoshi*, *yukkuri*, and *itte kudasai*.

What to know first

もうすこし、ゆっくりいってください。

mō sukoshi, *yukkuri itte kudasai* — please say it a little more slowly

No new rule arrives here. The first block is independently readable and writable. The second and third remain sound-first exposure where their small つ, て, and だ have not yet received individual writing lessons.

Your turn

1. **Listen:** choose repetition or slower speech from the request you hear.
2. **Speak:** *sumimasen* + the slower request.
3. **Read/write:** independently retrieve only もうすこし.

4. **Close:** after the repeated line, say *wakarimashita*.

Before you move on

Stop after one accurate repair and one *wakarimashita*.

Source: Japan Foundation Irodori Starter lesson 2, pp. 1–3.

Chapter 11

Seven Body Words, No New Guessing

Modes: ⇄ voice (8) ✎ pen (4) ⇄ Hands-free start: none of the 12 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can read, write, hear, and say seven basic body words, and I can decode the repair signs that were previously only sound-first exposure.

Seven concrete body labels built only from earned hiragana after four tiny lessons close every outstanding repair-script exposure.

11.1 つ — one small held beat

Point here and say *koko*. Count one time with *ichido*. Ask for the line a little more slowly, then isolate *yukkuri* and *itte kudasai*. Hold the silence before each second consonant; do not add a vowel.

Script — the shape

つ — small *tsu* — one beat of consonant closure

It has the same family shape as full-sized つ, but it is smaller and sits lower. Copy only the small form today. In ゆっくり, it holds before *k*; in いて, it holds before *t*.

Your turn

1. Trace つ once and copy it once.
2. Hide it; write the small sign after ten seconds.
3. Read ゆっくり and いって with one silent beat at つ.

Before you move on

Stop after one accurate small form.
Source: Unicode Hiragana chart.

11.2 て — close *itte*

Write もうすこし, say *itte kudasai*, then write the small つ that holds before *t*.

Script — the shape

て — *te*

One continuous stroke: begin across the top, turn back, then sweep down and right. Keep the lower curve open.

Your turn

1. Trace て once.
2. Copy it once, then retrieve it after ten seconds.
3. Join the earned ending: い | つ | て.

Before you move on

Read いって once without romanization.
Source: Unicode Hiragana chart; stroke order per *Hitsujun Shido no Tebiki* (Japanese Ministry of Education, 1958).

11.3 た — close *wakarimashita*

Say *wakarimashita*. Write と and notice that today's *ta* belongs to the same consonant row but has its own shape.

Script — the shape

た — *ta*

Four strokes: a short top stroke, a crossing vertical curve, then two small right-side strokes. Keep the right pair separate.

Your turn

1. Trace た once and copy it once.
2. Hide it; write it after ten seconds.
3. Add it to the known final block し | た.

Before you move on

Read the ending した once.

Source: Unicode Hiragana chart; stroke order per *Hitsujun Shido no Tebiki* (Japanese Ministry of Education, 1958).

11.4 だ — voice the known base

Write た, then add the two-stroke dakuten without changing the base. Say the *da* in *kudasai*.

Script — the change

た + dakuten → だ — *ta* → *da*

The voicing mark does the same job it did before. This is transfer, not a new complex shape.

Your turn

1. Write た once.
2. Add dakuten to make だ.
3. Point to だ while saying the middle of *kudasai*.

Before you move on

Read ください once, attending to だ.
Source: Unicode Hiragana chart.

11.5 て — hand

Write て and だ. Point here and say *koko*, then ask for the line a little more slowly.

What to know first

て — *te* — hand

The one-sign word names the hand. Sound, meaning, reading, and writing can meet without adding another shape.

Your turn

1. Hear *te*; touch one hand.
2. See て; say “hand.”
3. Hide the word and write its one sign.

Before you move on

Stop after one clean retrieval.
Source: Japan Foundation Marugoto A1 vocabulary database.

11.6 みみ — ear

Write み once, then retrieve て — hand.

What to know first

みみ — *mimi* — ear; ears

No new sign: repeat み on two even morae.

Your turn

1. Hear *mimi*; point to an ear.
2. Read み | み aloud.
3. Hide it and write the repeated sign twice.

Before you move on

Keep the two morae even.

Source: Japan Foundation Marugoto A1 vocabulary database.

11.7 くち — mouth

Write く and ち separately. Retrieve みみ.

What to know first

くち — *kuchi* — mouth

Join two earned signs; keep two even morae.

Your turn

1. Hear *kuchi*; point to the mouth.
2. Read く | ち.
3. Hide it and write the two signs in order.

Before you move on

Contrast *mimi* and *kuchi* once.

Source: Japan Foundation Marugoto A1 vocabulary database.

11.8 あし — foot or leg

Write あ and し. Retrieve くち — mouth.

What to know first

あし — *ashi* — foot; leg

Context chooses the narrower English translation. The Japanese word stays the same.

Your turn

1. Hear *ashi*; touch a foot or leg.
2. Read あ | し.
3. Hide it and write both known signs.

Before you move on

Stop after one accurate retrieval.

Source: Japan Foundation Marugoto A1 vocabulary database.

11.9 はな — nose

Write は and な. Retrieve あし.

What to know first

はな — *hana* — nose

Read は as *ha* inside this word. Its *wa* reading was tied to the topic marker job, not to every appearance of the sign.

Your turn

1. Hear *hana*; point to the nose.
2. Read は | な as *ha-na*.
3. Hide it and write both signs.

Before you move on

Say *hana* once without turning the first mora into *wa*.

Source: Japan Foundation Marugoto A1 vocabulary database.

11.10 かお — face

Write か and お. Retrieve はな — nose.

What to know first

かお — *kao* — face

Give か and お one mora each: *ka-o*.

Your turn

1. Hear two beats, *ka-o*; point to the face.
2. Read か | お.
3. Hide it and write the two signs.

Before you move on

Contrast はな inside the かお once.

Source: Japan Foundation Marugoto A1 vocabulary database.

11.11 め — eye

Write め. Retrieve かお and みみ.

What to know first

め — *me* — eye; eyes

One learned sign is the complete everyday word.

Your turn

1. Hear *me*; point to an eye.
2. See め; say the meaning.
3. Hide it and write the one-sign word.

Before you move on

Keep め and みみ distinct.

Source: Japan Foundation Marugoto A1 vocabulary database.

11.12 Seven readable body words

Write っ, て, た, だ. Read ゆっくり, いって, わかりました, and ください once; the old repair exposure is now closed.

What to know first

て ・ みみ ・ くち ・ あし ・ はな ・ かお ・ め

This is a reading-and-writing map, not a new-word dump. Every word arrived in its own lesson, and every sign was already earned.

Your turn

1. **Listen:** point to the named body part.
2. **Speak:** name any three without reading.
3. **Read:** read all seven from left to right.
4. **Write:** choose any three and write them from memory.

Before you move on

Stop after one accurate three-word dictation.

Source: Japan Foundation Marugoto A1 vocabulary database.

Chapter 12

Seven More Body Words, Spaced on Purpose

Modes: 🗣️ voice (20) 🗣️ Hands-free start: all 20 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can read, write, hear, and say seven more body words while retrieving older script, greeting, farewell, and repair knowledge at expanding intervals.

Seven fully decodable body labels interleaved with measured R3 and R4 retrieval rather than taught as a single topical list.

12.1 Retrieval 1 — mora, politeness, and し

Tap one mora for い, then write い and し from memory. Hear, say, read, and write the first seven-word body map; finish by isolating あし.

Your turn

Hear a polite thank-you, say it, read ありがとうございます, and choose it for someone outside your close circle.

Before you move on

Stop after one accurate card.

12.2 あたま — head

Write は and 日. Read ございます, say *yukkuri*, then retrieve はな.

What to know first

あたま — *a-ta-ma* — head

Every sign is earned. Keep three even morae.

Your turn

Hear, point, say, read, then hide and write あたま.

Before you move on

Source: Japan Foundation Marugoto A1 vocabulary database.

12.3 かみ — hair

Write あたま, read はい, write 本, sketch the speech component, write ゆ, and finish with かお.

What to know first

かみ — *ka-mi* — hair

Two known signs, two morae.

Your turn

Hear, point, say, read, then write かみ from memory.

Before you move on

Source: Japan Foundation Marugoto A1 vocabulary database.

12.4 Retrieval 2 — old signs, recent request

Write え and かみ. Build the five and mouth components of 語.
Then ask someone to say it with *itte kudasai* and write め.

Before you move on

Stop after one pass.

12.5 は — tooth

Say はい, write 語, recall its Chinese-derived bridge, and write もうすこし. Then hear, say, read, and write the first seven body words.

What to know first

は — *ha* — tooth; teeth

One sign is the complete word.

Your turn

Hear, point, say, read, and write は.

Before you move on

Source: Japan Foundation Marugoto A1 vocabulary database.

12.6 かた — shoulder

Write は. Say いいえ with its full vowel length. Read 日本語 with its learned readings, then close with *wakarimashita*.

What to know first

かた — *ka-ta* — shoulder

Two known signs, two even morae.

Your turn

Hear, point, say, read, then write かた.

Before you move on

Source: Japan Foundation Marugoto A1 vocabulary database.

12.7 Retrieval 3 — keep the scripts apart

Write hiragana こ, then katakana コー and hold the vowel. Point here with ここ. Name shoulder, then retrieve head after the longer gap.

Before you move on

Stop after one pass.

12.8 おなか — belly

Write ん, ー, and ヒ. Ask for slower speech, then write かみ after its longer gap.

What to know first

おなか — *o-na-ka* — belly; stomach area

Keep three morae.

Your turn

Hear, point, say, read, then write おなか.

Before you move on

Source: Japan Foundation Marugoto A1 vocabulary database.

12.9 せなか — back

Write おなか and に. Read コーヒー as a katakana loan, then write small つ.

What to know first

せなか — *se-na-ka* — back

Only the opening changes from おなか.

Your turn

Hear, point, say, read, then write せなか.

Before you move on

Source: Japan Foundation Marugoto A1 vocabulary database.

12.10 Retrieval 4 — leave the body-word topic

Write ち. Run the old doorway exchange and end with さようなら. Write て. Retrieve せなか, then は after five lessons.

Before you move on

Stop after one pass.

12.11 こし — waist or lower back

Write わ, then explain why topic は can sound *wa*. Hear *sayō-nara*, write its ら, write た, and retrieve かた.

What to know first

こし — *ko-shi* — waist; lower back

Two signs, two morae.

Your turn

Hear, point, say, read, then write こし.

Before you move on

Source: Japan Foundation Marugoto A1 vocabulary database.

12.12 Retrieval 5 — enter, leave, voice

Read こんにちは. Hear, say, read, and write さようなら. Write だ, then retrieve こし without looking back.

Before you move on

Stop after one pass.

12.13 Retrieval 6 — greet, repair, point

Greet, say that you do not understand well, write て, and retrieve おなか after five lessons.

Before you move on

Stop after one pass.

12.14 Retrieval 7 — from あ to せなか

Write あ and ど. Say *mō* on two morae. Write みみ, then retrieve せなか after five lessons.

Before you move on

Stop after one pass.

12.15 Retrieval 8 — り, も, いちど, くち

Write り and も. Say and write いちど, then retrieve くち.

Before you move on

Stop after one pass.

12.16 Retrieval 9 — request, leg, waist

Write か. Say *onegaishimasu*, then the complete repetition request. Write あし, then retrieve こし after five lessons.

Before you move on

Stop after one pass.

12.17 Retrieval 10 — mark, signs, nose

Add dakuten to a known base, write せ and ね, then write はな from memory.

Before you move on

Stop after one pass.

12.18 Retrieval 11 — と, すこし, かお

Write と, then すこし. Finish with かお, keeping *ka-o* on two morae.

Before you move on

Stop after one pass.

12.19 Retrieval 12 — う and め

Write う, then hear, say, read, and write め.

Before you move on

Stop after one pass.

12.20 Seven more body words, spaced on purpose

Read ありがとう. Then hear, say, read, and write any three words from the first seven-word body map.

What to know first

あたま・かみ・は・かた・おなか・せなか・こし

Every sign is earned, and every new word has already had short and medium retrieval scheduled in this chapter.

Your turn

Listen and point; say all seven; read all seven; then write any four from memory.

Before you move on

Stop after one accurate seven-word map.

Source: Japan Foundation Marugoto A1 vocabulary database.

Chapter 13

Nine Family Words Through One New Kana

Modes: ⇄ voice (15) ✍ pen (2) ⇄ Hands-free start: none of the 17 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can hear, say, read, and write nine immediate-family words, with listening, speaking, reading, and writing scored independently.

Nine official Irodori Starter family words built from earned hiragana plus one separately traced, copied, and recalled full-size つ.

13.1 つ — one full-size curve

Write ありがとう, name its older *arigatashi* family, and point to the dakuten. Then write small つ and retrieve one word from the body map.

Script — notice and trace

つ — *tsu*

This is the full-size sign. Trace its one stroke: begin at the upper left, sweep right, turn downward, and finish toward the lower left.

Writing — copy, then recall

Copy つ once. Hide it for ten seconds, write it once, then place つ beside small つ and check that the full-size sign is clearly larger.

Before you move on

Read it once: *tsu*.

Source: Unicode Hiragana chart; stroke order per *Hitsujun Shido no Tebiki* (Japanese Ministry of Education, 1958).

13.2 Full つ, small っ

Write distant さ once from memory.

Your turn — one contrast

Write distant さ, then つ・っ. Say *tsu* for the full-size sign; hold one silent beat for the small sign.

Before you move on

Stop after one accurate pair.

13.3 ちち — my father

Write known ち once and give it one even mora.

You'll Want to Know — hear it before reading it

Hear *chi-chi*. Point to “my father,” then say the two even morae once.

Your turn — read, copy, recall

Read ち | ち. Copy ちち, hide it, and write it once from the meaning.

Before you move on

Source: Japan Foundation Irodori Starter word list, Lesson 4.

13.4 はは — my mother

Say and write ちち once before meeting the paired family word.

You'll Want to Know — hear and say

Write distant す. Hear *ha-ha*, say it once, then contrast *chichi*.

Your turn — read, copy, recall

Read は | は. Copy はは, hide it, and write it once from the meaning.

Before you move on

Source: Japan Foundation Irodori Starter word list, Lesson 4.

13.5 あに — my elder brother

Retrieve はは once from its meaning.

You'll Want to Know — hear and say

Thank a stranger with ありがとうございます, name the polite-register choice, and retrieve any two body words. Then hear *a-ni* and say both morae once.

Your turn — read, copy, recall

Read あ | に. Copy あに, hide it, and write it from the meaning.

Before you move on

Source: Japan Foundation Irodori Starter word list, Lesson 4.

13.6 あね — my elder sister

Retrieve あに once from its meaning.

You'll Want to Know — hear and say

Read the distant block ございます once. Hear *a-ne*, say it, then contrast *a-ni*, my elder brother.

Your turn — read, copy, recall

Read あ | ね. Copy あね, hide it, and write it from the meaning.

Before you move on

Source: Japan Foundation Irodori Starter word list, Lesson 4.

13.7 おとうと — my younger brother

Retrieve あね once from its meaning.

You'll Want to Know — hear it first

Write distant 兄 once. Hear *o-to-o-to*: o | to | o | to, with the long o occupying two beats.

Your turn — read, copy, recall

Read お | と | う | と. Copy おとうと, hide it, and write it once.

Before you move on

Source: Japan Foundation Irodori Starter word list, Lesson 4.

13.8 いもうと — my younger sister

Say おとうと once and keep its four even morae.

You'll Want to Know — hear and contrast

Write distant 妹 once. Hear *i-mo-o-to*, say it, then contrast *o-to-o-to*.

Your turn — read, copy, recall

Read い | も | う | と. Copy いもうと, hide it, and write it once.

Before you move on

Source: Japan Foundation Irodori Starter word list, Lesson 4.

13.9 おっと — my husband

Retrieve いもうと once from its meaning.

You'll Want to Know — hear the held beat

Write distant 言 once. Hear *o* / *hold* / *to* and say it without inserting a vowel into the held beat.

Your turn — read, copy, recall

Read お | っ | と. Copy おっと, hide it, and write it once.

Before you move on

Source: Japan Foundation Irodori Starter word list, Lesson 4.

13.10 つま — my wife

Retrieve おっと once and notice the small つ.

You'll Want to Know — hear and say

Write distant 五 once. Hear *tsu-ma* and say two morae, with a full vowel after *ts*.

Your turn — read, copy, recall

Read つ | ま. Copy つま, hide it, and write it once.

Before you move on

Source: Japan Foundation Irodori Starter word list, Lesson 4.

13.11 こども — child

Retrieve つま once from its meaning.

You'll Want to Know — hear and say

Write distant 子 once. Hear *ko-do-mo*, choose “child,” then say the three even morae.

Your turn — read, copy, recall

Read こ | ど | も. Copy ことも, hide it, and write it once.

Before you move on

Source: Japan Foundation Irodori Starter word list, Lesson 4.

13.12 Family retrieval A

Say おとうと once without looking back.

Your turn — two directions

Build distant 語 once. Hear *otooto* and point to “younger brother.” Read ことも, then write both family words from memory.

Before you move on

Stop after one accurate pair.

13.13 Family retrieval B

Say いもうと once without looking back.

Your turn — three cues

Read distant 日本語 as *nihongo* and recall that borrowed kanji can carry word-specific readings. Then hear “younger sister,” say いもうと, read ちち・はは, and write all three.

Before you move on

Stop after one accurate set.

13.14 Family retrieval C

Say おっと once without looking back.

Your turn — three cues

Write distant katakana コ. Hear *otto* and mark its held beat. Read あに・あね, say each meaning, then write all three.

Before you move on

Stop after one accurate set.

13.15 Family retrieval D

Say つま once without looking back.

Your turn — size carries sound

Add distant — after コ and state that it holds the vowel for one more beat. Then hear, read, and write つま・おっと with a clear size contrast.

Before you move on

Stop after one accurate pair.

13.16 Nine family words — reception check

Retrieve こども once from the English cue “child.”

Your turn — listening

Use sound only. Score listening before revealing any written word.

Your turn — reading

Read without romanization. A failed section is repeated on its own.

Before you move on

Keep listening and reading scores separate; repair only the weaker channel.

13.17 Nine family words — production check

Start with two older forms. Write distant katakana ヒ. Then read コーヒー and recall why a loanword uses katakana.

Now hear, say, read, and write these four later body words: あたま・かみ・は・かた.

Finish with the remaining three: おなか・せなか・こし.

Your turn — speaking

Use no written answer while speaking. Check task completion and mora timing.

Writing

No section compensates for another. Repeat only the section below its own pass mark.

Before you move on

Keep speaking and writing scores separate; repair only the weaker channel.

Source: Japan Foundation Irodori Starter word list, Lesson 4.

Chapter 14

Five Numbers, No New Signs

Modes: ⇄ voice (6) ⇄ Hands-free start: all 6 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say and write one to five in Japanese, and I can say which number has a native word standing beside its borrowed reading.

Run ichi to go in order, then name the two of the five that were already yours and say where you had met each.

14.1 いち — one, taken out of a word you already say

Two recalls, at two distances.

- *Recall:* run the nine family words — **R1**, one lesson back
- *Recall:* the whole doorway exchange, start to finish — **R4**, eighty lessons back

You'll Want to Know — hear and say

いち — *ichi* — **one**

Say もういちど. You have asked for one more time since chapter nine, and that lesson told you what the first two morae were: *ichi* is **one**. Nothing about the word changes today. It stops being part of a phrase and starts being a number you can use on its own.

Both signs are yours: い + ち.

Your turn — read, copy, recall

Read い | ち. Copy いち, hide it, and write it from the meaning. Then say いちど and point to the part of it that is the number.

Before you move on

How many new signs did this lesson need? (**None.**)
Source: Wiktionary: いち.

14.2 ご — five, and the sign that was holding it

Two recalls, then the second number.

- *Recall*: say *one* — **R1**, one lesson back
- *Recall*: say the farewell, and say it after hearing it — **R4**, eighty lessons back

You'll Want to Know — hear and say

ご — *go* — **five**

Write 五 once. Chapter five taught you those four strokes, gave you the sound *go*, said on the page that **the sign means five on its own**, and then asked you for nothing but the sound, because it was only there to cue the *go* inside 語.

That was the whole of the deferral. 五 is **five**, and you have been able to write it for nine chapters.

In hiragana it is こ with the dakuten: ござ. Both marks are yours.

Your turn — read, copy, recall

Write 五 from memory: top, turn, middle, long bottom. Then write ござ and say *go*. Say いち, then ござ — the two numbers you owned before this chapter opened.

Before you move on

How many new signs did this lesson need? (**None.**)
Sources: Wiktionary: ござ; KanjiVG stroke-order data.

14.3 に — two, one mora long

Three recalls, then the third number.

- *Recall:* say *five* — **R1**, one lesson back
- *Recall:* run the fourteen body words — **R3**, twenty lessons back
- *Recall:* write よ — **R4**, eighty lessons back

You'll Want to Know — hear and say

に — *ni* — **two**

One mora, one sign, and you learned that sign in chapter two to build こんにちは. Say the three numbers you now have, in the order you met them: *ichi*, *go*, *ni*.

Do not let the shortness fool you into hurrying it. に is one full beat, exactly as long as either beat of いち.

Your turn — read, copy, recall

Read に. Write it, hide it, write it again from the meaning. Then say *ichi* — *ni* and hold both at one beat each.

Before you move on

How many new signs has this chapter needed? (**None.**)

Source: Wiktionary: に.

14.4 さん — three, on two old signs

Four recalls, then the fourth number.

- *Recall:* say *two* — **R1**, one lesson back
- *Recall:* take the family reception once more — **R2**, five lessons back
- *Recall:* write full-size つ — **R3**, twenty lessons back
- *Recall:* write な — **R4**, eighty lessons back

You'll Want to Know — hear and say

さん — *san* — **three**

さ came in chapter four for ありがとうございます; ん came in chapter two, and its lesson said it is the one hiragana sign that is not a full syllable. It still is not. さん is **two beats**: *sa*, then a beat of the nasal on its own.

Say *ichi* — *ni* — *san*. Four numbers, four lessons, no new signs.

Your turn — read, copy, recall

Read さ | ん as two beats. Write さん, hide it, write it again. Then say *ichi*, *ni*, *san* three times without slowing at ん.

Before you move on

Which four numbers do you now have? (*Ich*i, *ni*, *san*, *go*.)

Source: Wiktionary: さん.

14.5 よん — four, and where the two systems meet

Four recalls, then the number with two names.

- *Recall*: say *three* — **R1**, one lesson back
- *Recall*: run the nine family words — **R2**, five lessons back
- *Recall*: say *my father* — **R3**, twenty lessons back
- *Recall*: write 𐰚 — **R4**, eighty lessons back

You'll Want to Know — hear and say

よん — *yon* — **four**

し — *shi* — **four**, the same number said the other way

Both signs of よん are yours, and so is し. Two beats each: *yo* plus the nasal beat, or *shi* alone.

Grammar Lens — a native word inside a borrowed count

Japanese has two ways of reading a sign: the reading it borrowed from Chinese along with the sign, and the reading it already had for the thing the sign means. Wiktionary's readings box for the kanji **four** lists them side by side:

reading	kind	which
し <i>shi</i>	on'yomi, borrowed with the sign	four
よん <i>yon</i>	kun'yomi, the native word	four

Ichi, ni, san and *go* are all borrowed readings, and none of them has a native word standing beside it in the everyday count. **Four is the first place in the run where the native word is used too** — and in ordinary speech よん is the one you will hear far more often. That split is coming back. It is the same seam the counters run along, and it opens here.

Your turn — read, copy, recall

Write よん and し. Say the run in order: *ichi, ni, san, yon, go*. Then say it once with し in place of よん and hear how much closer *shi* sits to *ichi*.

Before you move on

Which four is a native Japanese word? (よん.)

Sources: Wiktionary: the kanji read *shi* and *yon*; Wiktionary: よん.

14.6 One to five, in order at last

Three recalls before the run.

- *Recall*: say *four*, both ways — **R1**, one lesson back
- *Recall*: say *my father* — **R3**, twenty lessons back
- *Recall*: read さようなら off the page — **R4**, eighty lessons back

Nothing new arrives here. This is the first time the five stand in numerical order, and that has been deliberate.

Your turn — the run, and the two you started with

- *Say it:* *ichi ni san yon go* — the run, without stopping
- *Say it:* it again with 𛄠 at four
- *Write it:* 𛄡, and say which of the five it is

What you've built this chapter, in one number

Five numbers, and zero new signs. Every mark in *ichi*, *ni*, *san*, *yon*, *go* was taught before this chapter opened, and two of the five words were already in your hands: *ichi* inside もういちど, and *go* as the kanji 五.

One thing did arrive that is not a word: at **four**, the native reading stands beside the borrowed one. Watch for it again.

Before you move on

How many new signs did this chapter cost? (**None.**) Which number in the run has a native word beside its borrowed reading? (**Four.**)

Chapter 15

The Two Signs the Rest of the Run Cost

Modes:  voice (5)  eyes (1)  pen (2)  Hands-free start: first 1 of 8 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can say and write one to ten in Japanese, build any number up to ninety-nine out of those ten words, and say which of them carry a second reading and why.

Run ichi to juu in order, build thirteen and thirty out of the same two words, and say what the ten numbers cost in signs.

15.1 なな — seven, and the pattern from four holding

Three recalls, then a number out of order, on purpose.

- *Recall:* say *four* both ways, and say which is the native one — **R1**, one lesson back
- *Recall:* say *my mother* — **R3**, twenty lessons back
- *Recall:* take the farewell in all four skills — **R4**, eighty lessons back

This chapter does not start at six. Six is one of only two numbers left that costs a new sign, and both of those wait until the end.

You'll Want to Know — hear and say

なな — *nana* — **seven**

しち — *shichi* — **seven**, the same number said the other way

All three signs are yours: な, し, ち.

What you've built — the same seam, a second time

Wiktionary's readings box for the kanji **seven** says exactly what the box for **four** said:

number	borrowed reading	native word
four	し <i>shi</i>	よん <i>yon</i>
seven	しち <i>shichi</i>	なな <i>nana</i>

Twice now, and both times at a number where the borrowed reading is easy to mishear — *shi* against *ichi*, *shichi* against *ichi*. The native word is the one that keeps the count clear, and it is the one you will hear. One instance was a fact about four. Two is a pattern, and this is where the book says so.

Your turn — read, copy, recall

Write なな. Say what you have: *ichi, ni, san, yon, go ... nana*. Leave the hole where six is; you will hear it.

Before you move on

How many new signs did this lesson need? (**None.**)

Sources: Wiktionary: the kanji read shichi and nana; Wiktionary: なな.

15.2 はち — eight, with nothing standing beside it

Three recalls, then the plain case.

- *Recall*: say *seven*, both ways — **R1**, one lesson back
- *Recall*: say *my elder brother* — **R3**, twenty lessons back
- *Recall*: say *excuse me* — **R4**, eighty lessons back

You'll Want to Know — hear and say

はち — *hachi* — **eight**

Two beats, two old signs: は from chapter one and ち from chapter two.

And that is the whole lesson, which is the point of it. **Eight has no second name.** Four had one and seven had one; eight does not, and neither did one, two, three or five. The pattern you were shown twice is not everywhere — it sits at two numbers out of the seven you now hold.

A rule you cannot see the edge of is not a rule you can use. This is the edge.

Your turn — read, copy, recall

Write はち. Say what you hold: *ichi, ni, san, yon, go ... nana, hachi*. The hole at six is still there.

Before you move on

How many new signs did this lesson need? (**None.**)

Source: Wiktionary: はち.

15.3 < — nine, and the exception to the seam

Three recalls, then a number with two readings and no native one.

- *Recall: say eight* — **R1**, one lesson back
- *Recall: say my elder sister* — **R3**, twenty lessons back
- *Recall: write み* — **R4**, eighty lessons back

You'll Want to Know — hear and say

< — *ku* — **nine**

One mora, one sign, and you have had that sign since chapter nine, where it closed よく. Say *hachi, ku*.

Nine has a second everyday reading as well, *kyū*, and it is the commoner of the two. This book cannot spell it yet — it needs two signs you have not met — so it is written here in romanization only and will be spelled when those signs arrive.

What you've built — a second reading that is not a native word

Four and seven each had two names, and in both the second was the **native** word. Nine has two names too, and Wiktionary's readings box puts **both** of them on the borrowed side:

number	readings the box calls borrowed	the native word
four	し	よん — used
seven	しち	なな — used
nine	く, <i>kyū</i>	<i>kokono</i> — not used in the plain count

So the pattern is narrower than it looked two lessons ago: *some* numbers have two everyday names, and only *some of those* get their second name from the native side. Nine has two names for a different reason.

You met the plain case at eight. This is the other edge.

Your turn — read, copy, recall

Write く. Say what you hold: *ichi, ni, san, yon, go ... nana, hachi, ku*. Two numbers are missing and you can hear both gaps.

Before you move on

Which two numbers are still missing? (**Six and ten** — the two that cost a sign.)

Source: Wiktionary: the kanji read *kyuu* and *ku*.

15.4 ㇿ — one turn, and the r you already make

Three recalls, then one sign.

- *Recall*: say *nine* — **R1**, one lesson back
- *Recall*: say *my younger brother* — **R3**, twenty lessons back
- *Recall*: write ㇹ — **R4**, eighty lessons back

Script — the shape

ㇿ — *ro*

Write む once. ㇿ starts the same way and ends differently: a short stroke across the top, then down and round to the left and back up, closing the loop instead of leaving a hook.

The sound is the one む already taught you — a single tap of the tongue, neither the English *r* nor the English *l*.

This is the first new sign in two chapters, and it is here for one word.

Your turn

1. Trace ㇿ once and copy it once.
2. Hide it; write it after ten seconds.
3. Write む and ㇿ side by side and say both, one tap each.

Before you move on

Stop after one accurate form.

Source: Unicode Hiragana chart.

15.5 ㇿ< — six, and the hole closes

Three recalls, then the word the last lesson bought a sign for.

- *Recall:* write ㇿ — **R1**, one lesson back
- *Recall:* say *my younger sister* — **R3**, twenty lessons back
- *Recall:* say *well, fully* — **R4**, eighty lessons back

You'll Want to Know — hear and say

ㇿ< — *roku* — **six**

ㇿ arrived last lesson; < you have had since chapter nine, where it also became the number **nine**. So the sign < does two jobs in this run: it is *nine* on its own and the second beat of *six*.

Six has one everyday reading. No native word stands beside it.

What you've built — why six waited

You have been counting round a gap for three lessons. Here is what the gap was: of the ten numbers in this run, **exactly two need a**

sign this book had not taught, and six is the first of them.
 That is why the chapter did not start here. Everything that cost
 nothing came first, so that when a lesson finally spends a sign you can
 see exactly what it bought.
 Say the run: *ichi, ni, san, yon, go, roku, nana, hachi, ku*. Nine of ten,
 and only one gap left.

Your turn — read, copy, recall

Read ㄣ | ㄥ. Write ㄣㄥ, hide it, write it again from the meaning. Then say *roku, nana, hachi, ku* four times, without stopping.

Before you move on

How many of the ten numbers cost a new sign? (**Two** — this one, and one more.)
 Source: Wiktionary: ㄣㄥ.

15.6 ㄥ — a small sign that joins forward

Three recalls, then the last new sign of the run.

- *Recall*: write ㄥ, full size — **R2**, five lessons back
- *Recall*: say *my husband* — **R3**, twenty lessons back
- *Recall*: write ㄣ — **R4**, eighty lessons back

Script — the shape

ㄥ — small *yu*

Same shape as ㄥ, written small and sitting low — the way ㄣ is a small ㄣ.

The two small signs do opposite jobs, and it is worth putting them side by side:

sign	what it does
ㄣ	holds a silent beat <i>before</i> the next consonant
ㄥ	joins to the sign <i>before</i> it, and the two become one beat

So し plus っ is not *shi-yu*. It is one beat, *shu*. Voice the し with the dakuten first and じ plus っ is one beat, *ju*.

That is the sign the last number needs.

Your turn

1. Write っ, then っ beneath it, half the height.
2. Write つ and っ side by side; say which one holds and which one joins.
3. Read じっ as a single beat. Do not let a *yu* escape between the two.

Before you move on

Stop after one accurate small form.

Source: Unicode Hiragana chart.

15.7 じゅう — ten, and what ten does

Three recalls, then the last number.

- *Recall*: write っ, and say what it does to the sign before it — **R1**, one lesson back
- *Recall*: say *my wife* — **R3**, twenty lessons back
- *Recall*: say *I do not understand* — **R4**, eighty lessons back

You'll Want to Know — hear and say

じゅう — *jū* — **ten**

Three signs, two beats. し voiced with the dakuten is じ; じ with the small っ is one beat, *ju*; the う after it holds that beat long. Say it as two beats, not three: *ju-u*, not *ji-yu-u*.

Grammar Lens — ten words, ninety-nine numbers

じゅう is not just the tenth word in a list. It is the one that makes the list go further than itself, and it does so with no joining word at all:

what you say	what it is
じゅういち	ten, one → eleven
にじゅう	two, ten → twenty
にじゅういち	two, ten, one → twenty-one
A number before じゅう multiplies it. A number after じゅう is added to it. Nothing is inserted between them.	
Ten words, and every number up to ninety-nine is one of their arrangements. That is what the last two chapters were for.	

Your turn — read, copy, recall

Write じゅう. Say the whole run, one to ten, without stopping. Then say *jūichi*, *nijū*, *sanjū*, and build one number of your own between twenty and ninety-nine.

Before you move on

How many beats is じゅう? (**Two**.)

Source: Wiktionary: じゅう.

15.8 One to ten, and what the run cost

Four recalls before the run.

- *Recall*: say *ten*, in two beats — **R1**, one lesson back
- *Recall*: say *seven*, both ways — **R2**, five lessons back
- *Recall*: say *child* — **R3**, twenty lessons back
- *Recall*: write ㇏ — **R4**, eighty lessons back

Nothing new arrives here. This is the first time all ten stand in order.

Your turn — the run

- *Say it*: *ichi ni san yon go roku nana hachi ku jū* — without stopping
- *Say it*: it again with し at four and しち at seven
- *Write it*: 五

What you've built in two chapters, in three numbers

Ten numbers. Two new signs. Ninety-nine numbers you can now say.

Ichi and *go* were yours before chapter fourteen opened. Only 三 and 四 had to be bought, one word each.

At **four** and **seven** the native word stands beside the borrowed reading; at **nine** both readings are borrowed, and **eight** has no second name at all.

五 is still the only one of the ten you can write as Japanese writes it. The other nine kanji are the next thing this book owes you.

Before you move on

How many new signs did ten numbers cost? (**Two.**) Which two numbers have a native word standing beside a borrowed reading? (**Four and seven.**) What does a number *before* じゆう do to it? (**Multiplies it.**)

Chapter 16

The Other Way to Count

Modes: ⇄ voice (5) 👁 eyes (1) ✍ pen (2) ⇄ Hands-free start: none of the 8 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can count things from one to five in the native Japanese series, write the two signs it cost, and say the one place where the same word stands in both of Japanese's counts.

Run hitotsu to itsutsu, say the borrowed five beside them, and name the one number where a single word appears in both counts.

16.1 ∪ — one stroke, and a second count begins

Three recalls, then one sign.

- *Recall:* write 𐄂 — **R2**, five lessons back
- *Recall:* say *ten*, then build *thirteen* and *thirty* from it — **R2**, five lessons back
- *Recall:* say *more, again* — **R4**, eighty lessons back

Last chapter bought two signs for a count of ten. This chapter buys five, for a count of ten that Japanese runs **beside** the one you already have.

Script — the shape

∪ — *hi*

One stroke, and the KanjiVG stroke data for this sign holds exactly one path: start high on the left, run a short way to the right, then sweep down and far to the left in a long shallow curve and finish by turning up. The pen does not lift once.

Compare ㄥ, which you wrote five lessons ago: also one stroke, but ㄥ closes its loop and ㇶ never closes at all.

Your turn

1. Trace ㇶ once and copy it once, without lifting.
2. Hide it; write it after ten seconds.
3. Write ㄥ and ㇶ side by side: one closes, one does not.

Before you move on

How many strokes? (**One.**)

Source: Unicode Hiragana chart; stroke count and order per KanjiVG.

16.2 ひとつ — one thing

Three recalls, then the first word of a second count.

- *Recall:* write ㇶ — **R1**, one lesson back
- *Recall:* say *six* — **R2**, five lessons back
- *Recall:* write ㇿ — **R4**, eighty lessons back

You'll Want to Know — hear and say

ひとつ — *hi-to-tsu* — **one thing**

Three beats, three signs: ㇶ from last lesson, と and つ long since yours.

You already have a word for *one*. It is いち, and it is borrowed. ひとつ is the word Japanese had before it borrowed anything, and the two are not interchangeable:

word	what it is for
いち	the number itself — <i>one</i> , counting aloud, a house number
ひとつ	one thing — a thing you are pointing at

Wiktionary's usage note for **ひとつ** is one sentence and it is the sentence this chapter turns on: it is used *when the items counted have no specific counter category*. Hold that. It will be the whole of the next chapter.

Your turn — read, copy, recall

Write **ひとつ**. Say *ichi*, then *hitotsu*, and hear that they share nothing — not a beat, not a sound.

Before you move on

Which of the two words is the borrowed one? (いち.)
Sources: Wiktionary: hitotsu.

16.3 ふ — four strokes, and a counter you already own

Three recalls, then one sign.

- *Recall*: say *one thing* — **R1**, one lesson back
- *Recall*: write the small 𐄂 — **R2**, five lessons back
- *Recall*: say *one time* — **R4**, eighty lessons back

いちど is worth stopping on. Its own lesson said *do counts an occurrence* — which is to say **いちど is a number with a counter behind it**, and you have been saying it since chapter nine without anyone calling it that. Two chapters from now that sentence is the whole point.

Script — the shape

ふ — *fu*

Four separate strokes, in this order, as KanjiVG records them: a short tick at the top; then the body, starting below it and curving down and to the left; then a small mark low on the left; then a small mark low on the right.

Everything this book has taught you so far has been one, two or three strokes. This is the first sign with four, and the last two are easy to run together by accident. They are separate.

Your turn

1. Trace ふ once, counting the four lifts aloud.
2. Copy it once; hide it; write it again.
3. Check only one thing: are the bottom two marks separate?

Before you move on

How many strokes? (**Four.**)

Source: Unicode Hiragana chart; stroke count and order per KanjiVG.

16.4 ふたつ — two things

Four recalls, then the second thing.

- *Recall*: write ふ, all four strokes — **R1**, one lesson back
- *Recall*: say *ten*, then *twenty* — **R2**, five lessons back
- *Recall*: say *please* — **R4**, eighty lessons back

You'll Want to Know — hear and say

ふたつ — *fu-ta-tsu* — **two things**

Three signs, and the only new one arrived last lesson.

Now hear the two words together: ひとつ, ふたつ. Both end in つ, and the part in front changes — *hito-*, *futa-*. That つ is not decoration. It is the piece doing the counting, and every word in this chapter but the last one carries it.

に is *two*. ふたつ is *two things*. Same relation as いち and ひとつ, and again the two words share nothing at all.

Your turn — read, copy, recall

Write ふたつ. Say the pair: *hitotsu, futatsu*. Then say *ichi, ni* straight after, and hear two different counts running side by side.

Before you move on

What does the つ do? (**It counts.**)

Sources: Wiktionary: futatsu.

16.5 みつつ — three things, for nothing

Three recalls, then a word that costs nothing.

- *Recall*: say *two things* — **R1**, one lesson back
- *Recall*: run the family reception — **R3**, twenty lessons back
- *Recall*: say *one more time, please* — **R4**, eighty lessons back

You'll Want to Know — hear and say

みつつ — *mi-t-tsu* — **three things**

Every sign is already yours: み, the small つ, and つ.

The small つ is the sign you met in ゆっくり: it holds the mouth shut for one beat. みつつ is three beats, and the middle one is silence.

さん is *three*. みつつ is *three things*.

Your turn — read, copy, recall

Write みつつ. Say the run so far, slowly: *hitotsu, futatsu, mittsu*. Stop on the silent beat in the third one.

Before you move on

How many signs did this word cost? (**None** — all three were yours.)

Sources: Wiktionary: mittsu.

16.6 よっつ — four things, and the seam opens

Three recalls, then the number that has been in both counts all along.

- *Recall:* say *three things* — **R1**, one lesson back
- *Recall:* run the nine family words — **R3**, twenty lessons back
- *Recall:* write 世 — **R4**, eighty lessons back

You'll Want to Know — hear and say

よっつ — *yo-t-tsu* — **four things**

No new sign. よ, the small っ, つ.

Grammar Lens — the seam, from the other side

Chapter fourteen taught よん and said something that was left hanging: *that split is coming back; it is the same seam the counters run along*. Here it is.

よん is a native word standing inside the borrowed count. よっつ is that same native word in the count it belongs to. They begin with the same beat, and that is not an accident — it is one word appearing twice:

number	borrowed	native
one	いち	ひと-
two	に	ふた-
three	さん	み-
four	<i>shi</i>	よ-

Every other line of the borrowed column is genuinely borrowed. At four, the native word came across into the borrowed count and stayed — which is why the number you actually say for four is よん and not *shi*. That is what chapter fourteen was pointing at, and you can now see both halves of it at once.

Your turn — read, copy, recall

Write よっつ. Say *yon*, then *yottsu*, and hear the shared beat. Then say *shi* and hear that it has none.

Before you move on

Which two words share a beat? (よん and よつつ.)

Sources: Wiktionary: yottsu.

16.7 いつつ — five things

Three recalls, then five.

- *Recall*: say *four things* — **R1**, one lesson back
- *Recall*: say *one* — **R3**, twenty lessons back
- *Recall*: write お — **R4**, eighty lessons back

You'll Want to Know — hear and say

いつつ — *i-tsu-tsu* — five things

Three signs, and two of them are the same one. い, つ, つ.

A warning worth one sentence: ひとつ opens on the same beat as いち, and the two have nothing to do with each other. ご is *five*; ひとつ is *five things*; いち is *one*. The ear will try to pair the wrong two.

Your turn — read, copy, recall

Write ひとつ. Say *ichi* and *itsutsu* back to back, then *go* and *itsutsu*, and fix which pair actually means the same number.

Before you move on

Which number does ひとつ NOT mean? (**One** — however it starts.)

Sources: Wiktionary: itsutsu.

16.8 Five things, and five numbers

Three recalls, then the run.

- *Recall*: say *five things* — **R1**, one lesson back
- *Recall*: say *one thing* — **R2**, six lessons back
- *Recall*: say *I understood* — **R4**, eighty lessons back

Nothing new arrives here.

Your turn — the run

- *Say it:* *ichi, hitotsu; ni, futatsu; san, mittsu; yon, yottsu; go, itsutsu*
- *Write it:* ひ and ふ — the two signs this chapter bought

What you've built so far

Five words for **two signs**. ひ and ふ were bought in the lessons immediately before the words that needed them; みつつ, よつつ and izzu cost nothing, because every sign in them was already yours. Two counts of five now run side by side, and they share exactly one thing: at **four**, よん and よつつ begin with the same beat. Everywhere else the two words have nothing in common — *ichi* and *hitotsu*, *ni* and *futatsu*, and so on down. Five more to go, and three more signs.

Before you move on

How many signs did these five words cost? (**Two.**) Where do the two counts touch? (**At four.**)

Chapter 17

The Other Five, and Where the Count Stops

Modes: ⇄ voice (6) ✎ pen (3) ⇄ Hands-free start: none of the 9 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can count things from one to ten in the native Japanese series, write the three further signs it cost, and say why the series stops at ten when the borrowed count does not.

Run hitotsu to too in order, name the two numbers whose native word is used in both counts, and say what the two chapters cost in signs.

17.1 む — three strokes, one of them a dot

Three recalls, then one sign.

- *Recall:* say *five things* — **R1**, one lesson back
- *Recall:* say *five* — **R3**, twenty lessons back
- *Recall:* write 𐰚 — **R4**, eighty lessons back

Script — the shape

む — *mu*

Three strokes, in this order, as KanjiVG records them: a horizontal across the upper left; then a long stroke from above it running down and looping at the foot; then a small separate mark up on the right.

That third mark is the one to watch. It is not attached to anything, and a む without it is not a む.

ね also ends in a loop at the foot. The difference is what comes before it and that separate mark on the right.

Your turn

1. Trace む once, counting three lifts.
2. Copy it; hide it; write it again.
3. Check one thing: is the right-hand mark there, and separate?

Before you move on

How many strokes? (**Three.**)

Source: Unicode Hiragana chart; stroke count and order per KanjiVG.

17.2 むつつ — six things

Three recalls, then six.

- *Recall:* write む, all three strokes — **R1**, one lesson back
- *Recall:* say *two* — **R3**, twenty lessons back
- *Recall:* say *a little* — **R4**, eighty lessons back

You'll Want to Know — hear and say

むつつ — *mu-t-tsu* — **six things**

む from last lesson, then the small つ and つ.

Last chapter said of ろく: *six has one everyday reading; no native word stands beside it.* That was true of the borrowed count and it is worth putting straight now. The native word for six exists — it is む, and you are holding it. What it does not do is stand inside the borrowed count the way よん does.

Your turn — read, copy, recall

Write むつつ. Say *roku* and *muttsu*: same number, two words, no shared sound. Then run the count so far: *hitotsu*, *futatsu*, *mittsu*, *yottsu*, *itsutsu*, *muttsu*.

Before you move on

Do ろく and むっつ share a sound? (**No.**)

Sources: Wiktionary: muttsu.

17.3 ななつ — seven things, and the seam again

Three recalls, then seven.

- *Recall: say six things* — **R1**, one lesson back
- *Recall: say three* — **R3**, twenty lessons back
- *Recall: write し* — **R4**, eighty lessons back

You'll Want to Know — hear and say

ななつ — *na-na-tsu* — **seven things**

No new sign, and no new word either — you have said なな since the last chapter.

Grammar Lens — the second place the seam shows

なな is the native word, and the borrowed count uses it — the same move you saw at four with よん. Write the two rows out and the pattern is exact:

the reading	four	seven
borrowed reading	<i>shi</i>	<i>shichi</i>
native word, used instead	よん	なな
native count	よっつ	ななつ

Two places in ten where the native word walked into the borrowed count and stayed, and both of them are places where the borrowed reading collides with another word. This is the seam, and you have now seen both ends of it.

Your turn — read, copy, recall

Write ななつ. Say *nana*, then *nanatsu*: the same word, once as a number and once as a count of things.

Before you move on

Which word did this lesson cost you? (**None** — you already had なな.)

Sources: Wiktionary: nanatsu.

17.4 や — the long stroke goes first

Three recalls, then one sign.

- *Recall: say seven things* — **R1**, one lesson back
- *Recall: say four*, and which of its two readings is the native one — **R3**, twenty lessons back
- *Recall: say slowly* — **R4**, eighty lessons back

Script — the shape

や — *ya*

Three strokes, and the order is the surprise. KanjiVG has them as: **first** the long sweep, starting low on the left and running up and away to the right; **then** a short tick at the top; **then** the long stroke that comes down through the middle and out to the bottom right.

Look at the finished shape and you would guess the descender was drawn first. It is not. Draw the sweep, then the tick, then the descender.

よ is already yours and shares the same first sound. It is built the other way round — the crossing stroke comes down first there.

Your turn

1. Trace や in the KanjiVG order, saying “sweep, tick, down”.
2. Copy it; hide it; write it again.
3. Write よ beside it and say both.

Before you move on

Which stroke is first? (**The sweep.**)

Source: Unicode Hiragana chart; stroke count and order per

KanjiVG.

17.5 やっつ — eight things

Three recalls, then eight.

- *Recall*: write や, sweep first — **R1**, one lesson back
- *Recall*: say *four* — **R3**, twenty lessons back
- *Recall*: write 𐰃 — **R4**, eighty lessons back

You'll Want to Know — hear and say

やっつ — *ya-t-tsu* — **eight things**

や from last lesson, the small つ, and つ.

Eight is the plain case. はち is the borrowed word, やっつ is the native one, neither has walked into the other's count, and there is nothing to disentangle. The last chapter used はち for exactly the same job — to show what the ordinary case looks like once the odd ones have been seen.

Say the run: *hitotsu, futatsu, mittsu, yottsu, itsutsu, muttsu, nanatsu, yattsu*. Eight of ten, and two signs left to buy.

Your turn — read, copy, recall

Write やっつ. Say *hachi*, then *yattsu*. Then run the eight in order without stopping.

Before you move on

Is eight one of the crossing places? (**No.**)

Sources: Wiktionary: *yattsu*.

17.6 の — one stroke, and the last sign of the chapter

Three recalls, then the fifth and last sign.

- *Recall*: say *eight things* — **R1**, one lesson back

- *Recall: say seven* — **R3**, twenty lessons back
- *Recall: say please say it* — **R4**, eighty lessons back

Script — the shape

の — *no*

One stroke. KanjiVG's data holds a single path: start high and to the right of centre, run down and left, round the bottom, up the left side and across the top, finishing by crossing what you have just drawn.

ひ, from the start of this chapter, was also one stroke and never closed. の closes and then keeps going.

This is the fifth sign this chapter has bought, and the last. Everything after it is words.

Your turn

1. Trace の once without lifting.
2. Copy it; hide it; write it again.
3. Write ひ and の side by side: one stroke each, one open, one crossed.

Before you move on

How many signs has this chapter bought? (**Five**, and this is the last.)

Source: Unicode Hiragana chart; stroke count and order per KanjiVG.

17.7 ここのつ — nine things

Three recalls, then the longest word in the chapter.

- *Recall: write の* — **R1**, one lesson back
- *Recall: say nine* — **R3**, twenty lessons back
- *Recall: say here* — **R4**, eighty lessons back

You'll Want to Know — hear and say

ここのつ — *ko-ko-no-tsu* — **nine things**

Four beats, four signs, and only の is new — you bought it last lesson.

Read the first two signs on their own: ここ, the word for *here* you have had since chapter ten. **They are the same two signs, and it means nothing.** *kokono-* is simply the native word for nine; it is not built on *here* and there is no story joining them. Say so and move on — an accident that gets explained is worse than one that gets named.

What it does mean is that you can write this four-beat word straight away, which no other word in the chapter has managed.

Your turn — read, copy, recall

Write ここのつ. Say *hachi*, *ku*, then *yattsu*, *kokonotsu* — both counts, two numbers each. Then say *ku* and *kokonotsu* again. Then say *koko* and *kokonotsu* and remind yourself that the second is not made of the first.

Before you move on

How many beats? (**Four.**)

Sources: Wiktionary: kokonotsu.

17.8 とお — ten things, and the end of the run

Three recalls, then the last word.

- *Recall:* say *nine things* — **R1**, one lesson back
- *Recall:* say *ten*, then *twenty-five* — **R3**, twenty lessons back
- *Recall:* say *a little more* — **R4**, eighty lessons back

You'll Want to Know — hear and say

とお — *tō* — **ten things**

Two signs, both old, and **no つ at all.**

Nine words in this count carry the つ that does the counting. The tenth drops it, and that is not a spelling quirk — it is the edge of the count. とお is where the native series ends. There is no *eleven things* in it.

Above ten, Japanese has only the borrowed count and a counter word, which is exactly the machinery the next chapter is for. じゅう goes on to ninety-nine; とお goes nowhere.

Your turn — read, copy, recall

Write とお. Say *juu*, then *tō*: same number, and only one of them can be built on. Then say *kokonotsu*, *tō* and stop.

Before you move on

Can you say *eleven things* this way? (**No.**)
Sources: Wiktionary: too.

17.9 The other ten, in order at last

Three recalls, then the run.

- *Recall*: say *ten things* — **R1**, one lesson back
- *Recall*: say *one thing* — **R2**, thirteen lessons back
- *Recall*: say *I understood* — **R4**, eighty lessons back
- *Recall*: say *here* — **R4**, eighty lessons back

Nothing new arrives here.

Your turn — the run

- *Say it*: the borrowed ten, then the native ten, back to back
- *Say it*: *ku*, then *kokonotsu* — the two nines, one from each count
- *Write it*: 𠬞 from last chapter, then ひ, ふ, む, や, の — the one sign the borrowed count bought late, and the five this chapter bought

What you've built this chapter

Ten words, and **five signs**: ひ, ふ, む, や, の. Five of the ten words cost nothing at all — みつつ, よつつ, いくつ, ななつ and とお were spelled entirely out of signs you already had.

Two things about the shape of what you now hold:

- The native count **stops at ten**. とお carries no つ and nothing is built on it. The borrowed count runs to ninety-nine on じゅう alone.
- At **four** and **seven** the native word is the one used in *both* counts. Nowhere else.

What the chapter has not yet said is what つ actually is. It is not a decoration and it is not part of the words: it is a **counter**, and the next chapter is about choosing one.

Before you move on

How many signs did the chapter cost? (**Five.**) Where does the native count stop? (**At とお.**) Which two numbers use the native word in both counts? (**Four and seven.**)

Chapter 18

A Counter for the Shape of the Thing

Modes:  voice (6)  eyes (1)  pen (2)  Hands-free start: first 4 of 9 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can put a counter behind a number in Japanese, choose between the general one, the one for people and the one for long thin things, and say which one to reach for when I do not know.

Complete JA-R18-counting-things: say one thing, one person and one long thin thing, count two eyes, two legs, two people and two hairs, and state the rule with both its edges.

18.1 What the ㇿ was doing

Three recalls, then the word for what you have been doing.

- *Recall:* say *one thing* and *two things* — **R1**, one lesson back
- *Recall:* say *eight things* — **R2**, five lessons back
- *Recall:* say *six* — **R3**, twenty lessons back
- *Recall:* ask for it more slowly, in full — **R4**, eighty lessons back

Grammar Lens — a number cannot stand alone

In Japanese a number does not simply sit in front of a thing. It takes a **counter** — a small word behind the number that says what kind of thing is being counted. Wikipedia's article calls counters *measure words used with numbers to count things, actions, and events*, and English has a few of the same shape: *two **sheets** of paper, three **head** of cattle*.

You have been using one since chapter nine and nobody said so.

いちど — *ichido* — **one time**

Its own lesson said: *ichi is one, and do counts an occurrence*. That ど is a counter. It counts occurrences, which is why いちど is *one time* and not *one*.

And the つ you spent all of last chapter on is a counter too — the **general** one. That is why nine of the ten native words carry it and とお does not.

You'll Want to Know — when to reach for it

Japanese has a great many counters and you will not learn them all here. What you can learn in one sentence is the rule that gets you through:

When you do not know the counter, use the ~つ series.

Up to ten it will carry almost any ordinary object.

That is exactly what Wikipedia says of the traditional numerals — that the problem of choosing *can often be sidestepped* by using them. ひとつ to とお, and no further, because that is where the series stops.

コーヒー ふたつ — two coffees. Nobody will blink.

The rule has an edge, and it is the next lesson: **people and animals do not take ~つ**. They have counters of their own and there is no way round it.

Your turn — read, copy, recall

Say コーヒー ふたつ. Then say いちど and name the counter inside it.

Before you move on

What do you use when you do not know the counter? (~つ, up to ten.)

Sources: Wikipedia: Japanese counter word; Wiktionary: hitotsu.

18.2 にん — counting people

Three recalls, then the counter the last rule cannot reach.

- *Recall*: say what to use when you do not know the counter — **R1**, one lesson back
- *Recall*: write の — **R2**, five lessons back
- *Recall*: write the small 𐰇 — **R3**, twenty lessons back
- *Recall*: write the small っ — **R4**, eighty lessons back

You'll Want to Know — hear and say

にん — *-nin* — the counter for **people**

Both signs are old. What is new is that it attaches to the **borrowed** numbers, not the native ones:

how many	how you say it
three people	さんにん
four people	よにん
five people	ごにん
ten people	じゅうにん

さん plus にん, ご plus にん. Nothing changes. Four is the one to watch: it is よ, not よん — the native word again, and shorter here.

You have nine family words and until now no way to say how many of anything you had. こども さんにん — three children.

Grammar Lens — where the tsu rule stops

Last lesson's rule had an edge, and this is it. ~つ **never counts people**. There is no *hitotsu* of a person; you cannot sidestep にん, and the same is true of animals, which have counters of their own. So the rule now reads with both ends showing: **use ~つ for ordinary things up to ten; use the proper counter for anything alive.**

And にん itself has an exception, at exactly two numbers. That is the next lesson.

Your turn — read, copy, recall

Write にん. Say *sannin*, *yonin*, *gonin*, *juunin*. Then say こども さんにん.

Before you move on

Which number is odd in this list? (**Four** — よにん, not *yonnin*.)
Sources: Wikipedia: Japanese counter word.

18.3 ひとり・ふたり — one person, two people

Three recalls, then the two people the last lesson could not count.

- Recall: say *three people* — **R1**, one lesson back
- Recall: say *nine things* — **R2**, five lessons back
- Recall: say *ten*, then *twelve* — **R3**, twenty lessons back
- Recall: write ㊦ — **R4**, eighty lessons back

You'll Want to Know — hear and say

ひとり — *hitori* — **one person**

ふたり — *futari* — **two people**

Not *ichinin*. Not *ninin*. Every other number takes にん and these two do not.

Every sign is yours: ひ and ふ came two chapters ago, と, た and り long before.

Grammar Lens — the seam, one more time

Read the four words together and the exception stops looking like one:

number	native count	with the people counter
one	ひとつ	ひとり
two	ふたつ	ふたり
three	みっつ	さんにん

hito- and *futa-* are the same pieces you learned two chapters ago. At one and two, the **native** number walks into the borrowed counter and stays; from three on, the borrowed number takes over. That is the third time you have seen this. At よん and なな the native word stood inside the borrowed count. Here the native word stands inside a borrowed counter. It is one seam, and it runs the whole length of Japanese numbers.

あね ひとり、あに ふたり — one elder sister, two elder brothers.

Your turn — read, copy, recall

Write ひとり and ふたり. Say *hitori*, *futari*, *sannin*, *yonin* — and hear the switch happen between the second and the third.

Before you move on

Where does the switch happen? (**Between two and three.**)

Sources: Wikipedia: Japanese counter word.

18.4 Counting your own face

Three recalls, then the first thing in this book you can count.

- *Recall*: say *one person* and *two people* — **R1**, one lesson back
- *Recall*: say *face* — **R3**, twenty lessons back
- *Recall*: write た — **R4**, eighty lessons back

Your turn — count what you have

Chapter twelve gave you a face. Until this chapter you could name every part of it and say how many of nothing.

め ふたつ — two eyes

みみ ふたつ — two ears

はな ひとつ — one nose

くち ひとつ — one mouth

Four nouns, none of them alive on its own, so the ~つ rule covers all four without your having to know a thing about which counter a nose takes.

- *Say it:* the four face lines without stopping, then ふたり

Before you move on

Which of the four needed you to know a special counter? (**None.**)
Which nearby word did? (**A person** — ふたり, not ふたつ.)

18.5 ほ — は with one more bar

Three recalls, then the last sign of the chapter.

- *Recall:* count the four parts of a face — **R1**, one lesson back
- *Recall:* write ひ — **R3**, twenty lessons back
- *Recall:* write だ — **R4**, eighty lessons back

Script — the shape

ほ — *ho*

Write は first. You have had it since chapter one: a left vertical, one horizontal, then the right stroke that loops at the foot.

ほ is that figure with **one more horizontal**, and Sirgazil's animation puts it above the one は already has. Four strokes, in this order:

1. the left vertical, hooking at the foot
2. the **upper** horizontal on the right
3. the **lower** horizontal on the right

4. the right vertical, down through both bars and looping at the foot

So the only thing you are learning is a bar, and where it goes.

𐛑 also finishes a set. Japanese’s **h-row** runs *ha, hi, fu, he, ho*, and you now hold four of its five: 𐛑 from chapter one, ひ and ふ from two chapters ago, and 𐛑 here. Only へ is missing.

Write ひ once beside them and hear the row.

Your turn

1. Write 𐛑, then 𐛑 beneath it, and mark the stroke that differs.
2. Copy 𐛑; hide it; write it again.
3. Say both aloud: *ha, ho*. Then say ひとつ and hear the same ひ.

Before you move on

How many strokes? (**Four.**)

Source: Unicode Hiragana chart; stroke count and order per KanjiVG and Sirgazil’s Commons animation.

18.6 ほん — counting long thin things

Three recalls, then a counter chosen by shape.

- *Recall*: write 𐛑 — **R1**, one lesson back
- *Recall*: say *hand* — **R4**, eighty lessons back
- *Recall*: say what ~つ is for, and what it is not for — **R2**, five lessons back

You’ll Want to Know — hear and say

ほん — *-hon* — the counter for **long, thin things**

Wikipedia’s list for it is worth reading whole: *rivers, roads, train tracks, ties, pencils, bottles, guitars*. Nothing on that list is a book, though the sign it is written with is 本 — the very kanji you have been writing since chapter five, inside 日本語.

That is the shape rule in one word: ほん does not care what the thing *is*, only that it is longer than it is wide.

Two of your own words qualify. One of them you can already say:

あし にほん — two legs

The other is *かみ*, a hair — and the word for *one* hair has to wait two lessons, because at one the counter changes shape.

Grammar Lens — the counter bends the sound

にん attached to the numbers and nothing moved. ほん does not behave. Here are the four that leave it alone:

number	the form
two	にほん
four	よんほん
five	ごほん
seven	ななほん

At **three** the ぽ takes the **dakuten** you have had since chapter three, and at **one, six, eight and ten** it goes further still — further than the dakuten can take it. Both of those need a mark on the sign, and the second mark is one this book has never taught. The next two lessons buy it and then spend it; until then, say the four plain ones.

Your turn — read, copy, recall

Write ほん. Say *nihon*, *yonhon*, *gohon*, *nanahon* — the four that leave the counter alone. Then say あし にほん.

Before you move on

What does ほん count? (**Anything longer than it is wide.**)

Sources: Wikipedia: Japanese counter word.

18.7 ° — the other mark

Three recalls, then the mark the last lesson stopped short of.

- *Recall*: say *three long thin things* — **R1**, one lesson back
- *Recall*: write ふ, all four strokes — **R3**, twenty lessons back
- *Recall*: say *ear* — **R4**, eighty lessons back

Script — the shape

◦ — the **handakuten**

A small circle, written at the top right of a kana, in the same place the **dakuten** goes.

Japanese has exactly two of these marks and you have had one of them since chapter three:

mark	what it does	example
˘ dakuten	voices the consonant	ほ → ぼ
◦ handakuten	turns the h -row into p	ほ → ぽ

The handakuten works on **one row only** — the row は and ほ belong to. Nowhere else in the syllabary does it appear, which makes it the rarest thing in the writing system and the easiest to place: if you see the little circle, the sign under it is an h-row kana and the sound is **p**.

That row is the one you have just been filling in. ふ takes both marks too, giving *bu* and *pu*, and so does ぷ. The mark is rare; the row is not.

Write the circle small. It is a circle, not a dot, and it does not touch the sign it sits on.

Your turn

1. Write ほ, then ぼ, then ぽ, and say all three.
2. Say the same three sounds on は, without writing them.
3. Check one thing: is the circle open?

Before you move on

Which row does the handakuten work on? (**Only the h-row.**)
Source: Unicode Hiragana chart, U+309C.

18.8 いっぽん — and the four that bend

Three recalls, then the form the counter takes at one.

- *Recall:* write ぽ — **R1**, one lesson back
- *Recall:* say *mouth* — **R4**, eighty lessons back
- *Recall:* write the small つ — **R2**, six lessons back

You'll Want to Know — hear and say

いっぽん — *ippon* — one long thin thing

Not *ichihon*. The いち shortens to ipp, and the ぽ takes the handakuten you learned last lesson.

Here is the whole counter, with the numbers this book can spell:

number	the form	what happens
one	いっぽん	p , and a held beat
two	にほん	plain
three	さんぽん	b
four	よんほん	plain
five	ごほん	plain
six	ろっぽん	p , and a held beat
seven	ななほん	plain
eight	はっぽん	p , and a held beat
ten	じゅうぽん	p , and a held beat

Nine is missing from that table on purpose. Its everyday form needs a sign this book has not taught, so it is left out rather than guessed at.

Read the shape of the rest: **one, six, eight and ten** all end in a held beat and take **p**. **Three** ends in the nasal ん and takes **b**. Everything else is plain. The counter is not being irregular — it is being pushed by the sound in front of it.

かみ いっぽん — one hair.

Your turn — read, copy, recall

Write いっぽん. Say the run: *ippon, nihon, sanbon, yonhon, gohon, roppon*. Then say かみ いっぽん.

Before you move on

Why is nine missing from the table? (**Its form needs a sign this book has not taught.**)

Sources: Wikipedia: Japanese counter word.

18.9 Three counters, and how to choose

Three recalls, then the run.

- *Recall*: say *one long thin thing* — **R1**, one lesson back
- *Recall*: say *three things* and *four things* — **R3**, twenty lessons back
- *Recall*: say *nose* — **R4**, eighty lessons back
- *Recall*: say *leg* — **R4**, eighty lessons back
- *Recall*: say what to use when you do not know the counter — **R2**, nine lessons back

Nothing new arrives here.

Your turn — the run

- *Say it*: かみ いっぱん, あし にほん, ふたり, はな ひとつ
- *Write it*: ほ, then the same sign with the handakuten — ぽ

What you've built this chapter

A number in Japanese does not stand on its own. It takes a **counter**, and the counter is chosen by what kind of thing is being counted:

the thing	the counter
an ordinary object, up to ten	~つ
a person	にん
anything longer than it is wide	ほん
an occurrence	ど, which you had in chapter nine

Both edges of that are worth carrying. **Reach for ~つ when you do not know** — up to ten it will carry almost any ordinary object. **Do not reach for it for anything alive**, and do not expect it past ten. And the seam this book has been drawing since chapter fourteen runs through all of it. よん and なな: the native word inside the borrowed count. ひとり and ふたり: the native word inside a borrowed counter. Two counts, and the places where they touch are not random — they are the same handful of numbers, every time.

Before you move on

What do you use when you do not know the counter? (~つ, to ten.)
Where does that rule fail? (**Anything alive.**) Say one person and one hair. (ひとり; かみ いっぱん.)

Chapter 19

Reading — Words, Greetings, and the Cues You Have Only Heard

Modes: 🗣️ voice (2) 👁️ eyes (1) 🗣️ Hands-free start: none of the 3 lessons.

By the end of this chapter: I can read Japanese words, greetings and classroom cues off a page, without anyone saying them first.

The repair cues the book has only ever spoken, read in order, ending with the longest stretch of Japanese it has set on one page.

19.1 (reading) — six words, nothing said first

You have written every sign in every one of these. Not one word is new.

What is new is that nobody says them before you read them.

Read this

て みみ くち はな かお め

Read down the list once. Do not sound out each sign — look at the whole word and let it arrive.

Again, and notice which came at once and which you had to build. Both are fine. The difference is what practice removes.

What to know first

Two of these are one sign long. て and め are whole words, and you have written both as signs on their own.

That is worth noticing, because it is the thing hiragana does that an alphabet does not: a sign can be a letter and a word at the same time, and nothing on the page tells you which it is. Only knowing the word does.

Six is enough for one sitting.

Your turn

- *Say it:* the six words down the list, once, without stopping

Twice through:

Before you move on

How many of the six were new? (**None.**)

What was new? (**Nobody said them first.** You read them.)

19.2 (reading) — the doorway words, on the page

The last lesson gave you six words. These are the six the book opened with.

Every one of them reached your ear before it reached a page.
Today that order is reversed.

Read this

はい いいえ こんにちは ありがとう さようなら
すみません

Read down once, without stopping.

Again — and notice that the two longest are the two you say most often. Length is not difficulty here; familiarity is.

What to know first

こんにちは ends in は, and you know that sign says *ha*. In this word it is read *wa*, because the greeting keeps a spelling from an older sentence that nobody finishes any more.

You do not need the history to read it. You need to know that this one word is spelled the way it is for a reason, and that reading a language means meeting a handful of such words rather than a rule you can apply.

Six lines, and one of them is a small piece of history.

Your turn

- *Say it:* the six lines, once, without stopping

Twice through:

Before you move on

How many of the six were new? (**None.**)

Which sign is read differently in one of them? (は, in こんにちは.)

19.3 (reading) — the cues you have only ever heard

Six words, then six greetings. These are the longest lines the book has set on one page.

Every one of them is a cue you already use. None is new.

Read this

ここ すこし わかりました わかりません
もういちど、おねがいします
もうすこし、ゆっくりいってください

Read down once, without stopping. The list gets longer as it goes; let it.

Again — and notice that the last two are the only ones with a comma in them, and that the comma falls exactly where you pause when you say it.

What to know first

わかりました and わかりません differ in three signs at the end and in nothing else. Understood, and not understood.

That is the pair worth being able to read rather than only hear. A cue you can only recognise when somebody says it to you is a cue you can only use when they do. Read once off a page, it becomes something you can reach for.

Six lines, and the last one is fourteen signs long — the longest stretch of Japanese this book has asked you to take in at once.

Your turn

- *Say it:* the six lines, once, in order, without stopping

Twice through:

Before you move on

How many of the six were new? (**None.**)
Which two differ only at the end? (わかりました and
わかりません.)

Pronunciation & Writing

Reference

A **reference**, not a chapter. Look a sound up when a lesson names it; do not read this page first. Japanese script is taught inside words the learner can already use, one sign at a time.

Romanization on this track is Hepburn with macrons (*arigatō*, *kōhī*). It is temporary scaffolding. Where a lesson is teaching beat count, it also spells the word out mora by mora (*a-ri-ga-to-o*), because a macron hides exactly the thing being taught.

The writing system in four facts

1. **There are three systems, and they run together.** An ordinary sentence uses all three at once: **hiragana** for grammar, **kanji** for content words, **katakana** for borrowings. None of them is a stage the others replace.
2. **Hiragana and katakana are moraic twins.** One sign is one beat, normally a consonant plus a vowel already fused. The two sets cover the same beats with different shapes; katakana marks a word as coming from outside.
3. **Kanji carry meaning, not a fixed sound.** 日 is read *nichi*, *jitsu*, *hi*, *bi*, or *ka*. A lesson therefore teaches the reading a **word** uses, never “the sound of the character.”
4. **Beats are counted, not stressed.** Every mora is the same length, and length is contrastive: いえ (2 beats) is a house, いいえ (3) is “no.”

Japanese has no case, no grammatical gender, no articles, and no plural agreement — so several standing methods in this curriculum simply do not

apply here. It does have an obligatory politeness level on every predicate, which nothing else in the corpus has.

Sound ids used by the Chapter 1 lessons

- **mora** — give every written sign one equal beat; do not stress one over another. First anchor: はい *hai*.
- **pure-vowels** — five vowels, held steady, no English glide: *a, i, u, e, o*. First anchor: はい *hai*.
- **mora-length** — a long vowel is a second beat, and it changes meaning. First anchor: いいえ *ie* against いえ *ie*.
- **moraic-n** — ん is a consonant that owns a whole beat of its own. First anchor: こんにちは *konnichiwa*.
- **particle-wa** — the sign は is read *wa* when it is working as the topic particle. First anchor: こんにちは.
- **chouon** — the katakana bar — adds one more beat of the vowel before it. First anchor: コーヒー *kōhī*.
- **dakuten** — two short strokes voice a kana: *ka→ga, sa→za, ta→da, ha→ba*. First anchor: ありがとう *arigatō*.
- **long-o** — in hiragana a long *o* is normally written with う, not a bar. First anchor: ありがとう *arigatō*.

Two things this page deliberately does not do

It does not print the kana chart. A learner who wants the full grid will find it anywhere; a learner who is told to memorise it before Lesson 1 usually stops there, which is the wall HL00 exists to remove.

It does not claim a stroke count as a prerequisite. Stroke order for kana and kanji is real and taught, and it lives in Japanese script reference beside each sign, to be consulted when a hand is free.

Sources

- Wiktionary: はい, 今日は, 有難う, and コーヒー.

Glossary

This glossary collects every word and phrase taught in the book. Pronunciation appears when it differs from the written form; chapter numbers show where each entry is introduced.

ほん *-hon*

the counter for long thin things — and a kanji you have been writing since chapter five
Introduced in Chapter 18.

にん *-nin*

the counter for people — and the first place the tsu rule stops working
Introduced in Chapter 18.

...つ *-tsu*

the counter you already own — what the tsu was doing all along
Introduced in Chapter 18.

あね *ane*

my elder sister
Introduced in Chapter 13.

あに *ani*

my elder brother
Introduced in Chapter 13.

ありがとう *arigatō*

thank you (plain)
Introduced in Chapter 3.

ありがとうございます *arigatō gozaimasu*

thank you (polite)
Introduced in Chapter 4.

あし *ashi*

foot; leg
Introduced in Chapter 11.

あたま *atama*

head
Introduced in Chapter 12.

ちち *chichi*

my father

Introduced in Chapter 13.

ふたつ *futatsu*

two things — and the beat that ties this count to a word you already say

Introduced in Chapter 16.

ご *go*

five — the second job of a kanji you have been writing since chapter five

Introduced in Chapter 14.

は *ha*

tooth; teeth

Introduced in Chapter 12.

はち *hachi*

eight — one reading, no native word beside it, and the plain case the pattern needed

Introduced in Chapter 15.

はは *haha*

my mother

Introduced in Chapter 13.

はい *hai*

yes

Introduced in Chapter 1.

はな *hana*

nose

Introduced in Chapter 11.

ひとり ふたり *hitori futari*

one person, two people — the native count reaching into a borrowed counter

Introduced in Chapter 18.

ひとつ *hitotsu*

one thing — the first word of the count Japanese kept when it borrowed another one

Introduced in Chapter 16.

いち *ichi*

one — the number you have been saying since chapter nine, standing on its own at last

Introduced in Chapter 14.

いちど *ichido*

one time; once

Introduced in Chapter 9.

いいえ *iee*

no; not at all

Introduced in Chapter 1.

いもうと *imooto*

my younger sister

Introduced in Chapter 13.

いっぽん *ippon*

one long thin thing — and the four numbers that bend the counter furthest

Introduced in Chapter 18.

いつつ *itsutsu*

five things — three signs, two of them the same, and none of them new

Introduced in Chapter 16.

いってください *itte kudasai*

please say it

Introduced in Chapter 10.

じゅう *jū*

ten — the last number of the run, and the one that turns nine words into ninety-nine

Introduced in Chapter 15.

かみ *kami*

hair

Introduced in Chapter 12.

かお *kao*

face

Introduced in Chapter 11.

かた *kata*

shoulder

Introduced in Chapter 12.

こども *kodomo*

child

Introduced in Chapter 13.

コーヒー *kōhī*

coffee

Introduced in Chapter 6.

ここ *koko*

here; this place

Introduced in Chapter 10.

ここのつ *kokonotsu*

nine things — four beats, and the first two sound like a word you already have

Introduced in Chapter 17.

こんにちは *konnichiwa*

hello (daytime greeting)

Introduced in Chapter 2.

こし *koshi*

waist; lower back

Introduced in Chapter 12.

く *ku*

nine — a second reading that is not the native one, which is the exception the pattern needed

Introduced in Chapter 15.

くち *kuchi*

mouth

Introduced in Chapter 11.

め *me*

eye; eyes

Introduced in Chapter 11.

みみ *mimi*

ear; ears

Introduced in Chapter 11.

みつつ *mittsu*

three things — the first word in the chapter that costs nothing at all

Introduced in Chapter 16.

もう *mō*

again; one more, in a request

Introduced in Chapter 9.

もういちど、おねがいします *mō ichido, onegai shimasu*

one more time, please

Introduced in Chapter 9.

もうすこし *mō sukoshi*

a little more

Introduced in Chapter 10.

もうすこし、ゆっくりいってください *mō sukoshi, yukkuri itte kudasai*

please say it a little more slowly

Introduced in Chapter 10.

むつつ *muttsu*

six things — and the second count's six, unlike the first one's, is native

Introduced in Chapter 17.

なな *nana*

seven — the second place the native word stands inside the borrowed count, which is what makes it a pattern

Introduced in Chapter 15.

ななつ *nanatsu*

seven things — the one word in this chapter the borrowed count already gave you

Introduced in Chapter 17.

に *ni*

two — one mora, one sign, and the sign has been yours since chapter two
Introduced in Chapter 14.

日本語 *nihongo*

the Japanese language
Introduced in Chapter 5.

おなか *onaka*

belly; stomach area
Introduced in Chapter 12.

おねがいします *onegai shimasu*

please; I request it
Introduced in Chapter 9.

おとうと *otooto*

my younger brother
Introduced in Chapter 13.

おっと *otto*

my husband
Introduced in Chapter 13.

ろく *roku*

six — the hole the chapter left open, and the reason it was left
Introduced in Chapter 15.

さん *san*

three — and the moraic ん you have been closing words with since こんにちは
Introduced in Chapter 14.

せなか *senaka*

back
Introduced in Chapter 12.

すこし *sukoshi*

a little; a small amount
Introduced in Chapter 10.

すみません *sumimasen*

excuse me; I am sorry
Introduced in Chapter 9.

て *te*

hand
Introduced in Chapter 11.

とお *tō*

ten things — the one word in the count that drops the counting piece
Introduced in Chapter 17.

つま *tsuma*

my wife
Introduced in Chapter 13.

わかりません *wakarimasen*

I do not understand

Introduced in Chapter 9.

わかりました *wakarimashita*

I understand; understood

Introduced in Chapter 10.

やっつ *yattsu*

eight things — and the last of the count that a borrowed number could be mistaken for

Introduced in Chapter 17.

よく *yoku*

well; fully, as an adverb

Introduced in Chapter 9.

よん *yon*

four — the first place in the count where a native Japanese word is standing in a borrowed series

Introduced in Chapter 14.

よっつ *yottsu*

four things — and the seam the last chapter promised would come back

Introduced in Chapter 16.

ゆっくり *yukkuri*

slowly; without rushing

Introduced in Chapter 10.

Review Questions

Try these without looking ahead. Every prompt comes from the same canonical lesson data as its chapter. Answers begin in the next section.

Chapter 1

1.1 い — *two strokes, one beat*

How many strokes does the hiragana sign for 'i' have?

1.2 は — *three strokes*

How many strokes does the hiragana sign read 'ha' have?

1.3 *Two signs, side by side — and a word appears*

How many beats does the written sequence はい take?

1.4 え — *two strokes, and a second word for free*

Write the final sign in i-i-e, then count the three visible beats.

1.5 はい — *yes, in two equal beats*

Write the Japanese word for 'yes' in hiragana.

1.6 いいえ — *no, and why the extra beat matters*

How many beats (morae) does いいえ hold?

Chapter 2

2.1 こ — *two strokes, and the greeting begins*

How many strokes does the hiragana sign read 'ko' have?

2.2 ん — *one stroke, one beat, no vowel*

Which vowel does this sign carry?

2.3 に — *three strokes, and a shape you half know*

Two signs so far share a similar left-hand vertical. Does that shared shape tell you anything about their sound or meaning?

2.4 ち — *two strokes, four roman letters, one beat*

This sign is romanised with four letters. How many beats does it take?

2.5 わ — *the sign for wa, and the trap beside it*

The daytime greeting ends in a sound like 'wa'. Is it written with the sign for wa, or the sign for ha?

2.6 *Five signs in a row — and the greeting is readable*

How many beats (morae) does the written daytime greeting take?

2.7 こんにちは — *hello, and a sign that lies about its sound*

The greeting ends in the sign は. How is it pronounced there?

Chapter 3

3.1 あ — *three strokes, and the thank-you begins*

How many strokes does the hiragana sign read 'a' have?

3.2 り — *two strokes, and a tap rather than an r*

Is the Japanese r in 'ri' closer to an English r or to a single tap of the tongue?

3.3 か — *three strokes, and a shape you will reuse*

How many strokes does the hiragana sign read 'ka' have?

3.4 “ — *two ticks, and every sign you know doubles*

What do the two small marks of the dakuten do to a hiragana sign?

3.5 と — *two strokes, and they never meet*

Do the two strokes of the sign read 'to' touch each other?

3.6 う — *two strokes, and a vowel that stretches*

When u follows an o-sound in hiragana, what does it do?

3.7 ありがとう — *no new sign, and a whole word*

Which sign in ありがとう is another sign plus the dakuten, and what is underneath it?

3.8 ありがとう — *thanks, from “this hardly ever happens”*

Which hiragana sign becomes が when the dakuten is added?

Chapter 4

4.1 さ — *two strokes, and the ticks work here too*

What does the sign read 'sa' become when the dakuten is added?

4.2 ま — *three strokes, and a loop you have drawn before*

How many strokes does the hiragana sign read 'ma' have?

4.3 す — *two strokes, and a vowel you barely hear*

At the end of gozaimasu, what happens to the final u?

4.4 ありがとうございます — *politeness you cannot leave out*

You are thanking a shop assistant you have never met. Which form do you use?

4.5 Practice — *the whole thank-you, off the page*

In ありがとうございます, how many signs are an earlier sign plus the dakuten?

Chapter 5

5.1 日 — *one sun, four strokes*

Write the four-stroke kanji read *nichi* in the word for Japanese.

5.2 本 — *a tree with its root marked*

Write the kanji read *hon*. Which stroke marks the root?

5.3 言 — *build the speech side first*

Write the component that will sit on the left of the kanji for language.

5.4 五 — *four strokes for the sound side*

Write the four-stroke component that cues go in the kanji for language.

5.5 口 — *close a box in three strokes*

Write the three-stroke mouth component that sits under 五.

5.6 語 — *assemble; do not memorise fourteen loose strokes*

Build the kanji read go, language, from the three blocks you know.

5.7 日本語 — *three characters, and no single sound each*

How is the character 日 read inside 日本語?

Chapter 6

6.1 コ — *same sound, a new script*

Write ko in katakana, the script used for the borrowed word coffee.

6.2 ー — *one line, one extra beat*

Add the katakana long-vowel mark to コ so it reads kō.

6.3 ヒ — *two strokes complete the inventory*

Write hi in katakana, then place it after コー.

6.4 コーヒー — *the third system, and a word that really is a cousin*

What does the bar ー do in コーヒー?

Chapter 7

7.1 Practice — one daytime exchange, three scripts

From sound alone, write nihongo in its three kanji. Then take B's part in the doorway exchange without notes.

Chapter 8

8.1 Hear sayōnara — one way to say goodbye

You hear sa-yō-na-ra at a parting. What social job does it do, and how many morae do you tap?

8.2 よ — the second sound gets a shape

Which mora does よ write?

8.3 な — one sign for na

Read な as one mora.

8.4 ら — the last new shape

After a five-second delay, write the hiragana for ra.

8.5 さようなら — assemble what the hand already knows

From the five heard morae sa | yo | o | na | ra, write the complete word.

8.6 Practice — meet, thank, then part

From sound alone, write the taught farewell, then say it once on five morae for a parting cue.

Chapter 9

9.1 すみません — open the repair gently

What polite Japanese opener tells a speaker that you need to repair the exchange?

9.2 み — one looped bridge

Which sign carries mi?

9.3 め — cross, loop, release

How many strokes does め have?

9.4 よく — how fully?

In the repair line, what does yoku measure?

9.5 く — one angled stroke

Write the one-stroke hiragana sign for ku.

9.6 わかりません — I do not understand

Say politely: I do not understand.

9.7 ど — *voice a sign you already own*

Voice と with the dakuten and write the resulting sign.

9.8 もう — *one more time begins here*

In a repetition request, what does mō mean, and how many morae does it take?

9.9 も — *two bars, then the curve*

In も, what comes first: the long curve or the two short bars?

9.10 いちど — *one time, all known signs*

From the heard morae i | chi | do, write once in hiragana.

9.11 おねがいします — *please, as a polite request*

What polite expression closes the request one more time, please?

9.12 もういちど、おねがいします — *ask for one more pass*

You missed the line. Ask politely for one more time.

Chapter 10

10.1 せ — *close the opener*

Write the hiragana sign for se.

10.2 お — *the respectful opening sign*

Write the first hiragana sign in onegaishimasu.

10.3 ね — *finish the polite request*

Write the hiragana sign for ne.

10.4 すこし — *ask for a small change*

What Japanese word makes the requested change only a little?

10.5 し — *one falling curve*

Write the one-stroke hiragana sign for shi.

10.6 ゆっくり — *slowly, with a held beat*

Say slowly and mark the held beat in yukkuri.

10.7 ゆ — *open yukkuri*

Write the hiragana sign for yu.

10.8 ってください — *please say it*

Ask politely: please say it.

10.9 もうすこし — *a little more*

From sound alone, write a little more in hiragana.

10.10 わかりました — *the repair worked*

The repetition worked. Respond politely: understood.

10.11 ここ — *here, with one known sign twice*

Write here in hiragana using the same known sign twice.

10.12 もうすこし、ゆっくりいってください — *slower, please*

Ask politely for the line a little more slowly.

Chapter 11

11.1 つ — *one small held beat*

Write the small hiragana sign that holds the following consonant.

11.2 て — *close itte*

Write the hiragana sign for te.

11.3 た — *close wakarimashita*

Write the hiragana sign for ta.

11.4 だ — *voice the known base*

Voice た with dakuten. Write the result.

11.5 て — *hand*

Write the Japanese word for hand.

11.6 みみ — *ear*

Write the Japanese word for ear.

11.7 ぐち — *mouth*

Write the Japanese word for mouth.

11.8 あし — *foot or leg*

Write the Japanese word for foot or leg.

11.9 はな — *nose*

Write the Japanese word for nose.

11.10 かお — *face*

Write the Japanese word for face.

11.11 め — *eye*

Write the Japanese word for eye.

11.12 *Seven readable body words*

Write the Japanese words for hand, ear, and mouth, in that order.

Chapter 12

12.1 Retrieval 1 — *mora, politeness, and し*

Write i, shi, the polite thank-you, and the seven-word body map; label each spoken unit a mora.

12.2 あたま — *head*

Write the Japanese word for head.

12.3 かみ — *hair*

Write the Japanese word for hair.

12.4 Retrieval 2 — *old signs, recent request*

Record the retrieval string: e, five, mouth, please say it, hair, eye.

12.5 は — *tooth*

Write the Japanese word for tooth.

12.6 かた — *shoulder*

Write the Japanese word for shoulder.

12.7 Retrieval 3 — *keep the scripts apart*

Write the retrieval string: hiragana ko, long katakana kō, here, shoulder, head.

12.8 おなか — *belly*

Write the Japanese word for the belly or stomach area.

12.9 せなか — *back*

Write the Japanese word for back.

12.10 Retrieval 4 — *leave the body-word topic*

Write the final retrieval string: chi, goodbye, hand-sign te, back, tooth.

12.11 こし — *waist or lower back*

Write the Japanese word for waist or lower back.

12.12 Retrieval 5 — *enter, leave, voice*

Write the greeting, farewell, voiced da, and waist word.

12.13 Retrieval 6 — *greet, repair, point*

Write the greeting, I do not understand well, hand, and belly.

12.14 Retrieval 7 — *from あ to せなか*

Write a, do, again, ear, and back in Japanese.

12.15 Retrieval 8 — *り, も, いちど, ぐち*

Write ri, mo, once, and mouth in Japanese.

12.16 Retrieval 9 — *request, leg, waist*

Write ka, please, the repetition request, leg, and waist.

12.17 Retrieval 10 — *mark, signs, nose*

Write voiced da, se, ne, and nose.

12.18 Retrieval 11 — と, すこし, かお

Write to, a little, and face in Japanese.

12.19 Retrieval 12 — う and め

Write u and eye in Japanese.

12.20 Seven more body words, spaced on purpose

Write head, hair, tooth, shoulder, belly, back, and waist in Japanese.

Chapter 13

13.1 つ — *one full-size curve*

Write the full-size hiragana sign for tsu.

13.2 Full つ, small つ

Write full tsu, then small tsu.

13.3 ちち — *my father*

Write the Japanese family word for my father.

13.4 はは — *my mother*

Write the Japanese family word for my mother.

13.5 あに — *my elder brother*

Write the Japanese family word for my elder brother.

13.6 あね — *my elder sister*

Write the Japanese family word for my elder sister.

13.7 おとうと — *my younger brother*

Write the Japanese family word for my younger brother.

13.8 いもうと — *my younger sister*

Write the Japanese family word for my younger sister.

13.9 おっと — *my husband*

Write the Japanese family word for my husband.

13.10 つま — *my wife*

Write the Japanese family word for my wife.

13.11 こども — *child*

Write the Japanese family word for child.

13.12 Family retrieval A

Write younger brother, then child, in Japanese.

13.13 Family retrieval B

Write younger sister, my father, and my mother, in that order.

13.14 Family retrieval C

Write my husband, my elder brother, and my elder sister, in that order.

13.15 *Family retrieval D*

Write my wife, then my husband, in Japanese.

13.16 *Nine family words — reception check*

Without a transcript, hear chichi, ane, imoto, tsuma, and kodomo. Type their meanings in order.

13.17 *Nine family words — reception check*

Read あね・おとうと・つま・ちち・いもうと. Type their meanings in order.

13.18 *Nine family words — production check*

From meaning cues only, say my mother, my elder brother, my younger brother, my husband, and child. Then type the Japanese forms you said.

13.19 *Nine family words — production check*

From meaning cues only, write all nine family words in the learned order.

Chapter 14

14.1 いち — *one, taken out of a word you already say*

Which part of ichido is the number, and what number is it?

14.2 ご — *five, and the sign that was holding it*

Which kanji have you been able to write since chapter five, and what number is it?

14.3 に — *two, one mora long*

Write one, two and five in hiragana, in that order.

14.4 さん — *three, on two old signs*

How many beats does san have, and what is the second one?

14.5 よん — *four, and where the two systems meet*

Of shi and yon, which one is the reading Japanese borrowed with the sign, and which is the native word?

14.6 *One to five, in order at last*

Write one to five in hiragana, in order.

14.7 *One to five, in order at last*

Two of these five were already yours before the chapter began. Which two, and where had you met each?

Chapter 15

15.1 なな — *seven, and the pattern from four holding*

Which two numbers so far have a native word standing beside a borrowed reading?

15.2 はち — *eight, with nothing standing beside it*

Does eight have a native word beside its borrowed reading in the everyday count?

15.3 < — *nine, and the exception to the seam*

Nine has two everyday readings. Is either of them the native word?

15.4 ろ — *one turn, and the r you already make*

Write the hiragana sign for the mora ro.

15.5 ろく — *six, and the hole closes*

The sign < does two jobs in this count. Name both.

15.6 っ — *a small sign that joins forward*

How many beats is じっ, and how many is っ?

15.7 じゅう — *ten, and what ten does*

Say what nijuu means and what juuni means, and say why they are different.

15.8 One to ten, and what the run cost

Write six to ten in hiragana, in order.

15.9 One to ten, and what the run cost

Say thirteen and say thirty, and say which part of each does the work.

Chapter 16

16.1 ひ — *one stroke, and a second count begins*

Write the hiragana sign for the mora hi.

16.2 ひとつ — *one thing*

You are pointing at one apple. Do you say ichi or hitotsu?

16.3 ふ — *four strokes, and a counter you already own*

Write the hiragana sign for the mora fu, and say how many strokes it takes.

16.4 ふたつ — *two things*

Say one thing and two things, and name the piece both words share.

16.5 みっつ — *three things, for nothing*

Write three things in hiragana, and say what the small sign in the middle does.

16.6 よっつ — *four things, and the seam opens*

Which word in the borrowed count is really a native word, and which word in this chapter shows where it came from?

16.7 いつつ — *five things*

Which borrowed number means the same as itsutsu?

16.8 Five things, and five numbers

Count things from one to five in the native series.

16.9 *Five things, and five numbers*

Say the two counts side by side to five, then name the ONE place where the same word appears in both.

Chapter 17

17.1 む — *three strokes, one of them a dot*

Write the hiragana sign for the mora mu, and say which stroke is easiest to forget.

17.2 むつつ — *six things*

Give both words for six, and say which one you would use pointing at six apples.

17.3 ななつ — *seven things, and the seam again*

Name the two numbers where a native word is used inside the borrowed count.

17.4 や — *the long stroke goes first*

Write the hiragana sign for the mora ya, and name the stroke that comes first.

17.5 やつつ — *eight things*

Give both words for eight and say whether either one is used inside the other count.

17.6 の — *one stroke, and the last sign of the chapter*

Write the hiragana sign for the mora no, and say how many strokes it takes.

17.7 ここのつ — *nine things*

kokonotsu begins with the same two signs as koko, here. What is the relationship between the two words?

17.8 とお — *ten things, and the end of the run*

Which word in the native count has no tsu on it, and what does that tell you?

17.9 *The other ten, in order at last*

Count things from one to ten in the native series, without stopping.

17.10 *The other ten, in order at last*

Name the two numbers where the same native word is used in BOTH counts, and give both of its forms.

Chapter 18

18.1 *What the つ was doing*

Name the two counters you already owned before this lesson, and say what each one counts.

18.2 にん — *counting people*

Can you count people with the tsu series? Say why or why not, and give three people in Japanese.

18.3 ひとり・ふたり — *one person, two people*

Count people from one to four.

18.4 *Counting your own face*

Count the four parts of a face in Japanese: eyes, ears, nose, mouth.

18.5 *Counting your own face*

Now count two people, and say why the word is not futatsu.

18.6 ほ — は *with one more bar*

Write ho, and say what makes it different from ha.

18.7 ほん — *counting long thin things*

Say two long thin things and four long thin things in Japanese.

18.8 ° — *the other mark*

Write ho, then the same sign with each of the two marks, and say all three.

18.9 いっぽん — *and the four that bend*

Which numbers push the counter to p, and what do they all have in common?

18.10 *Three counters, and how to choose*

Say ONE of each: one thing, one person, one long thin thing.

18.11 *Three counters, and how to choose*

Count these four: two eyes, two legs, two people, two hairs.

Chapter 19

19.1 (*reading*) — *six words, nothing said first*

Which of the six is one sign long and means eye?

19.2 (*reading*) — *the doorway words, on the page*

Which line thanks somebody?

19.3 (*reading*) — *the cues you have only ever heard*

Which line says you did NOT understand?

Answer Key

The first response is the canonical display answer. When a question accepts other authored forms, they appear underneath.

Chapter 1

1.1 い — *two strokes, one beat*

Answer: 2

Also accepted: two; 2 strokes; two strokes

1.2 は — *three strokes*

Answer: 3

Also accepted: three; 3 strokes; three strokes

1.3 Two signs, side by side — *and a word appears*

Answer: 2

Also accepted: two; 2 beats; two beats

1.4 え — *two strokes, and a second word for free*

Answer: え; 3

Also accepted: え; え, three; e; 3

1.5 はい — *yes, in two equal beats*

Answer: はい

Also accepted: hai; ha-i

1.6 いいえ — *no, and why the extra beat matters*

Answer: three

Also accepted: 3; three beats; three morae

Chapter 2

2.1 こ — *two strokes, and the greeting begins*

Answer: 2

Also accepted: two; 2 strokes; two strokes

2.2 ん — *one stroke, one beat, no vowel*

Answer: none

Also accepted: no vowel; not any; it has none; nothing

2.3 に — *three strokes, and a shape you half know*

Answer: no

Also accepted: none; it does not; nothing; no it does not

2.4 ち — *two strokes, four roman letters, one beat*

Answer: 1

Also accepted: one; one beat; 1 beat

2.5 わ — *the sign for wa, and the trap beside it*

Answer: ha

Also accepted: the ha sign; sign for ha; ha sign

2.6 Five signs in a row — *and the greeting is readable*

Answer: 5

Also accepted: five; 5 beats; five beats

2.7 こんにちは — *hello, and a sign that lies about its sound*

Answer: wa

Also accepted: as wa; わ; the topic particle wa

Chapter 3

3.1 あ — *three strokes, and the thank-you begins*

Answer: 3

Also accepted: three; 3 strokes; three strokes

3.2 り — *two strokes, and a tap rather than an r*

Answer: a single tap

Also accepted: a tap; tap; single tap; closer to a tap

3.3 か — *three strokes, and a shape you will reuse*

Answer: 3

Also accepted: three; 3 strokes; three strokes

3.4 〃 — *two ticks, and every sign you know doubles*

Answer: they voice the consonant

Also accepted: voice it; voices the consonant; make it voiced; turn k into g; they make the consonant voiced

3.5 と — *two strokes, and they never meet*

Answer: no

Also accepted: they do not touch; no, they stay apart; separate; no they are separate

3.6 う — *two strokes, and a vowel that stretches*

Answer: it lengthens the o

Also accepted: makes the o long; holds the o for another beat; lengthens the vowel; it makes it a long o

3.7 ありがとう — *no new sign, and a whole word***Answer:** ga, which is ka**Also accepted:** が, from か; ga from ka; the third sign, ka; が is か plus the marks; ka**3.8 ありがとう** — *thanks, from “this hardly ever happens”***Answer:** か**Also accepted:** ka; か ka

Chapter 4

4.1 さ — *two strokes, and the ticks work here too***Answer:** za**Also accepted:** ざ; it becomes za**4.2 ま** — *three strokes, and a loop you have drawn before***Answer:** 3**Also accepted:** three; 3 strokes; three strokes**4.3 す** — *two strokes, and a vowel you barely hear***Answer:** it is devoiced**Also accepted:** it goes quiet; devoiced; you barely hear it; the voice drops out; it is almost silent**4.4 ありがとうございます** — *politeness you cannot leave out***Answer:** ありがとうございます**Also accepted:** arigato gozaimasu; arigatou gozaimasu; arigatō gozaimasu; the polite one**4.5 Practice** — *the whole thank-you, off the page***Answer:** 3**Also accepted:** three; 3 signs; three signs; ga za and go; が ご ざ

Chapter 5

5.1 日 — *one sun, four strokes***Answer:** 日**Also accepted:** 日 (nichi); nichi**5.2 本** — *a tree with its root marked***Answer:** 本 — the final short horizontal stroke**Also accepted:** 本; the last stroke; the short bottom line; final horizontal**5.3 言** — *build the speech side first***Answer:** 言**Also accepted:** 言 (speech); the speech component**5.4 五** — *four strokes for the sound side***Answer:** 五**Also accepted:** 五 (go); go; five

5.5 □ — *close a box in three strokes*

Answer: □

Also accepted: □ (mouth); the mouth box

5.6 語 — *assemble; do not memorise fourteen loose strokes*

Answer: 語 = 言 + 五 + 口

Also accepted: 語; 言 + 五 + 口; 言五口

5.7 日本語 — *three characters, and no single sound each*

Answer: ni

Also accepted: as ni; に; read ni

Chapter 6

6.1 コ — *same sound, a new script*

Answer: コ

Also accepted: コ (ko); katakana コ

6.2 コー — *one line, one extra beat*

Answer: コー

Also accepted: コー; kō; ko-o

6.3 ヒ — *two strokes complete the inventory*

Answer: コーヒ

Also accepted: ヒ; コー ヒ; katakana hi

6.4 コーヒー — *the third system, and a word that really is a cousin*

Answer: it holds the vowel for one more beat

Also accepted: lengthens the vowel; long vowel; it lengthens the previous vowel; adds a beat to the vowel

Chapter 7

7.1 Practice — *one daytime exchange, three scripts*

Answer: 日本語; こんにちは。はい。いいえ。

Also accepted: 日本語

Chapter 8

8.1 Hear sayōnara — *one way to say goodbye*

Answer: It says goodbye; five morae.

Also accepted: goodbye, five; farewell, five morae; goodbye; 5

8.2 よ — *the second sound gets a shape*

Answer: yo

Also accepted: よ is yo; yo, one mora

8.3 な — *one sign for na***Answer:** な**Also accepted:** な is na; na, one mora**8.4 ら** — *the last new shape***Answer:** ら**Also accepted:** ら ra**8.5 さようなら** — *assemble what the hand already knows***Answer:** さようなら**Also accepted:** さようなら。**8.6 Practice** — *meet, thank, then part***Answer:** さようなら。; sa | yo | o | na | ra**Also accepted:** さようなら; さようなら。

Chapter 9

9.1 すみません — *open the repair gently***Answer:** すみません**Also accepted:** sumimasen; すみません。**9.2 み** — *one looped bridge***Answer:** み**Also accepted:** hiragana mi**9.3 め** — *cross, loop, release***Answer:** 2**Also accepted:** two; 2 strokes; two strokes**9.4 よく** — *how fully?***Answer:** how well or fully understanding happened**Also accepted:** well; fully**9.5 く** — *one angled stroke***Answer:** く**Also accepted:** hiragana ku**9.6 わかりません** — *I do not understand***Answer:** わかりません**Also accepted:** wakarimasen; わかりません。**9.7 ど** — *voice a sign you already own***Answer:** ど**Also accepted:** hiragana do**9.8 もう** — *one more time begins here***Answer:** again; two morae**Also accepted:** one more; two morae; again, 2; again; 2

9.9 も — *two bars, then the curve*

Answer: the long curve

Also accepted: curve; long curve first; the curve

9.10 いちど — *one time, all known signs*

Answer: いちど

Also accepted: いちど。

9.11 おねがいします — *please, as a polite request*

Answer: おねがいします

Also accepted: onegaishimasu; おねがいします。

9.12 もういちど、おねがいします — *ask for one more pass*

Answer: もういちど、おねがいします。

Also accepted: もういちどおねがいします; mō ichido, onegai shimasu; mou ichido, onegaishimasu

Chapter 10

10.1 せ — *close the opener*

Answer: せ

Also accepted: hiragana se

10.2 お — *the respectful opening sign*

Answer: お

Also accepted: hiragana o

10.3 ね — *finish the polite request*

Answer: ね

Also accepted: hiragana ne

10.4 すこし — *ask for a small change*

Answer: すこし

Also accepted: sukoshi

10.5 し — *one falling curve*

Answer: し

Also accepted: hiragana shi

10.6 ゆっくり — *slowly, with a held beat*

Answer: yu | hold | ku | ri

Also accepted: yukkuri; yu-k-ku-ri

10.7 ゆ — *open yukkuri*

Answer: ゆ

Also accepted: hiragana yu

10.8 ってください — *please say it*

Answer: ってください

Also accepted: itte kudasai; ってください。

10.9 もうすこし — *a little more*

Answer: もうすこし

Also accepted: もうすこし。

10.10 わかりました — *the repair worked*

Answer: わかりました

Also accepted: wakarimashita; わかりました。

10.11 ここ — *here, with one known sign twice*

Answer: ここ

Also accepted: ここ。

10.12 もうすこし、ゆっくりいってください — *slower, please*

Answer: もうすこし、ゆっくりいってください。

Also accepted: mō sukoshi, yukkuri itte kudasai; mou sukoshi yukkuri itte kudasai;
もうすこしゆっくりいってください

Chapter 11

11.1 つ — *one small held beat*

Answer: つ

Also accepted: small tsu

11.2 て — *close itte*

Answer: て

Also accepted: hiragana te

11.3 た — *close wakarimashita*

Answer: た

Also accepted: hiragana ta

11.4 だ — *voice the known base*

Answer: だ

Also accepted: hiragana da

11.5 て — *hand*

Answer: て

Also accepted: te

11.6 みみ — *ear*

Answer: みみ

Also accepted: mimi

11.7 くち — *mouth*

Answer: くち

Also accepted: kuchi

11.8 あし — *foot or leg*

Answer: あし

Also accepted: ashi

11.9 はな — *nose*

Answer: はな

Also accepted: hana

11.10 かお — *face*

Answer: かお

Also accepted: kao

11.11 め — *eye*

Answer: め

Also accepted: me

11.12 Seven readable body words

Answer: て、みみ、くち

Also accepted: て みみ くち; te mimi kuchi

Chapter 12

12.1 Retrieval 1 — *mora, politeness, and し*

Answer:

い・し・ありがとうございます・て・みみ・くち・あし・はな・かお・め;

mora; polite

Also accepted: い し ありがとうございます て みみ くち あし はな かお め mora
polite**12.2 あたま** — *head*

Answer: あたま

Also accepted: atama

12.3 かみ — *hair*

Answer: かみ

Also accepted: kami

12.4 Retrieval 2 — *old signs, recent request*

Answer: え・五・口・いってください・かみ・め

Also accepted: え 五 口 いってください かみ め

12.5 は — *tooth*

Answer: は

Also accepted: ha

12.6 かた — *shoulder*

Answer: かた

Also accepted: kata

12.7 Retrieval 3 — *keep the scripts apart*

Answer: こ・コー・ここ・かた・あたま

Also accepted: こ コー ここ かた あたま

12.8 おなか — *belly*

Answer: おなか

Also accepted: onaka

12.9 せなか — *back*

Answer: せなか

Also accepted: senaka

12.10 Retrieval 4 — *leave the body-word topic*

Answer: ち・さようなら・て・せなか・は

Also accepted: ち さようなら て せなか は

12.11 こし — *waist or lower back*

Answer: こし

Also accepted: koshi

12.12 Retrieval 5 — *enter, leave, voice*

Answer: こんにちは・さようなら・だ・こし

Also accepted: こんにちは さようなら だ こし

12.13 Retrieval 6 — *greet, repair, point*

Answer: こんにちは・よくわかりません・て・おなか

Also accepted: こんにちは よくわかりません て おなか

12.14 Retrieval 7 — *from あ to せなか*

Answer: あ・ど・もう・みみ・せなか

Also accepted: あ どう もう みみ せなか

12.15 Retrieval 8 — *り, も, いちど, くち*

Answer: り・も・いちど・くち

Also accepted: り も いちど くち

12.16 Retrieval 9 — *request, leg, waist*

Answer: か・おねがいします・もういちどおねがいします・あし・こし

Also accepted: か おねがいします もういちどおねがいします あし こし

12.17 Retrieval 10 — *mark, signs, nose*

Answer: だ・せ・ね・はな

Also accepted: だ せ ね はな

12.18 Retrieval 11 — *と, すこし, かお*

Answer: と・すこし・かお

Also accepted: と すこし かお

12.19 Retrieval 12 — *う and め*

Answer: う・め

Also accepted: う め

12.20 *Seven more body words, spaced on purpose*

Answer: あたま・かみ・は・かた・おなか・せなか・こし

Also accepted: あたま かみ は かた おなか せなか こし

Chapter 13

13.1 つ — *one full-size curve*

Answer: つ

13.2 *Full* つ, *small* つ

Answer: つ・つ

Also accepted: つつ

13.3 ちち — *my father*

Answer: ちち

13.4 はは — *my mother*

Answer: はは

13.5 あに — *my elder brother*

Answer: あに

13.6 あね — *my elder sister*

Answer: あね

13.7 おとうと — *my younger brother*

Answer: おとうと

13.8 いもうと — *my younger sister*

Answer: いもうと

13.9 おっと — *my husband*

Answer: おっと

13.10 つま — *my wife*

Answer: つま

13.11 こども — *child*

Answer: こども

13.12 *Family retrieval A*

Answer: おとうと・こども

Also accepted: おとうと こども

13.13 *Family retrieval B*

Answer: いもうと・ちち・はは

Also accepted: いもうと ちち はは

13.14 *Family retrieval C*

Answer: おっと・あに・あね

Also accepted: おっと あに あね

13.15 *Family retrieval D*

Answer: つま・おっと

Also accepted: つま おっと

13.16 *Nine family words — reception check*

Answer: my father; my elder sister; my younger sister; my wife; child

13.17 *Nine family words — reception check*

Answer: my elder sister; my younger brother; my wife; my father; my younger sister

13.18 *Nine family words — production check*

Answer: はは・あに・おとうと・おっと・こども

Also accepted: はは あに おとうと おっと こども

13.19 *Nine family words — production check***Answer:**

ちち・はは・あに・あね・おとうと・いもうと・おっと・つま・こども

Also accepted: ちち はは あに あね おとうと いもうと おっと つま こども

Chapter 14

14.1 いち — *one, taken out of a word you already say***Answer:** ichi, and it is one**Also accepted:** ichi — one; the ichi, one**14.2** ご — *five, and the sign that was holding it***Answer:** 五, and it is five**Also accepted:** 五 — five; the four-stroke one, five**14.3** に — *two, one mora long***Answer:** いち・に・ご**Also accepted:** いち に ご; ichi ni go**14.4** さん — *three, on two old signs***Answer:** two beats; the second is the nasal ん on its own**Also accepted:** two, the n; 2 beats, ん**14.5** よん — *four, and where the two systems meet***Answer:** shi is the borrowed reading; yon is the native word**Also accepted:** shi borrowed, yon native; shi is on'yomi and yon is kun'yomi**14.6** *One to five, in order at last***Answer:** いち・に・さん・よん・ご**Also accepted:** いち に さん よん ご; ichi ni san yon go**14.7** *One to five, in order at last***Answer:** ichi, inside ichido in chapter nine; go, as the kanji 五 in chapter five**Also accepted:** ichi in ichido and go as 五; one from mouichido, five from the kanji

Chapter 15

15.1 なな — *seven, and the pattern from four holding***Answer:** four and seven**Also accepted:** 4 and 7; yon and nana**15.2** はち — *eight, with nothing standing beside it***Answer:** no**Also accepted:** no, only one reading; it does not**15.3** く — *nine, and the exception to the seam***Answer:** no — the readings box calls both of them borrowed**Also accepted:** no; neither, both are borrowed

15.4 ろ — *one turn, and the r you already make*

Answer: ろ

Also accepted: ro

15.5 ろく — *six, and the hole closes*

Answer: it is the number nine on its own, and the second beat of roku, six

Also accepted: nine, and the ku in roku; nine and the second beat of six

15.6 っ — *a small sign that joins forward*

Answer: じっ is one beat; っ is two

Also accepted: one and two; 1, 2

15.7 じゅう — *ten, and what ten does*

Answer: nijuu is twenty and juuni is twelve; a number before juu multiplies it and a number after it is added

Also accepted: 20 and 12; before multiplies, after adds; nijuu 20, juuni 12

15.8 *One to ten, and what the run cost*

Answer: ろく・なな・はち・く・じゅう

Also accepted: ろく なな はち く じゅう; roku nana hachi ku juu

15.9 *One to ten, and what the run cost*

Answer: juusan is thirteen and sanjuu is thirty; the number after juu is added and the number before it multiplies

Also accepted: juusan 13, sanjuu 30; 13 juusan, 30 sanjuu

Chapter 16

16.1 ひ — *one stroke, and a second count begins*

Answer: ひ

Also accepted: hi

16.2 ひとつ — *one thing*

Answer: hitotsu

Also accepted: ひとつ; hitotsu, because it is a thing

16.3 ふ — *four strokes, and a counter you already own*

Answer: ふ, four strokes

Also accepted: fu, four; ふ

16.4 ふたつ — *two things*

Answer: hitotsu, futatsu — they share tsu

Also accepted: hitotsu futatsu, tsu; ひとつ ふたつ

16.5 みつつ — *three things, for nothing*

Answer: みつつ — the small tsu holds the mouth shut for one beat

Also accepted: mittsu, it doubles the consonant; みつつ

16.6 よつつ — *four things, and the seam opens*

Answer: yon is the native word inside the borrowed count; yottsu is it in its own count

Also accepted: yon, and yottsu; yon — yottsu

16.7 いくつか — *five things***Answer:** go**Also accepted:** ご; go, five**16.8** *Five things, and five numbers***Answer:** hitotsu futatsu mittsu yottsu itsutsu**Also accepted:** ひとつ ふたつ みっつ よっつ いくつか**16.9** *Five things, and five numbers***Answer:** ichi ni san yon go; hitotsu futatsu mittsu yottsu itsutsu — four, yon and yottsu**Also accepted:** four; yon and yottsu

Chapter 17

17.1 む — *three strokes, one of them a dot***Answer:** む — the small separate mark on the right**Also accepted:** mu, the right-hand mark; む**17.2** むつつ — *six things***Answer:** roku and muttsu; muttsu for six things**Also accepted:** roku, muttsu — muttsu; ろく むつつ**17.3** ななつ — *seven things, and the seam again***Answer:** four and seven**Also accepted:** yon and nana; 4 and 7**17.4** や — *the long stroke goes first***Answer:** や — the long sweep across the middle comes first**Also accepted:** ya, the sweep; や**17.5** やつつ — *eight things***Answer:** hachi and yattsu; neither crosses over**Also accepted:** hachi, yattsu, no; はち やつつ**17.6** の — *one stroke, and the last sign of the chapter***Answer:** の, one stroke**Also accepted:** no, one; の**17.7** ここのつ — *nine things***Answer:** none — the resemblance is an accident**Also accepted:** no relationship; they are unrelated**17.8** とお — *ten things, and the end of the run***Answer:** too — the count ends at ten**Also accepted:** とお; too, the series stops there**17.9** *The other ten, in order at last***Answer:** hitotsu futatsu mittsu yottsu itsutsu muttsu nanatsu yattsu kokonotsu tō**Also accepted:** ひとつ ふたつ みっつ よっつ いくつか むつつ ななつ やつつ ここのつ とお

17.10 *The other ten, in order at last***Answer:** four — yon and yottsu; seven — nana and nanatsu**Also accepted:** four and seven: yon/yottsu, nana/nanatsu**Chapter 18****18.1** *What the つ was doing***Answer:** tsu, which counts things in general, and do in ichido, which counts occurrences**Also accepted:** tsu and do; the tsu series and the do of ichido**18.2** にん — *counting people***Answer:** no — people take nin; sannin**Also accepted:** no, sannin; people need nin, sannin**18.3** ひとり・ふたり — *one person, two people***Answer:** hitori futari sannin yonin**Also accepted:** ひとり ふたり さんにん よにん**18.4** *Counting your own face***Answer:** me futatsu, mimi futatsu, hana hitotsu, kuchi hitotsu**Also accepted:** め ふたつ みみ ふたつ はな ひとつ くち ひとつ**18.5** *Counting your own face***Answer:** futari — people never take the tsu series**Also accepted:** ふたり; futari, people take nin**18.6** ほ — は *with one more bar***Answer:** ほ — one extra horizontal, drawn above ha's**Also accepted:** ho, an extra bar; ほ**18.7** ほん — *counting long thin things***Answer:** nihon, yonhon**Also accepted:** にほん よんほん**18.8** ° — *the other mark***Answer:** ほ ぼ ぽ — ho, bo, po**Also accepted:** ho bo po; ほ ぼ ぽ**18.9** いっぽん — *and the four that bend***Answer:** one, six, eight and ten — they all end in a held beat**Also accepted:** 1 6 8 10, the small tsu; one six eight ten**18.10** *Three counters, and how to choose***Answer:** hitotsu, hitori, ippon**Also accepted:** ひとつ ひとり いっぽん**18.11** *Three counters, and how to choose***Answer:** me futatsu, ashi nihon, futari, kami nihon**Also accepted:** futatsu, nihon, futari, nihon

Chapter 19

19.1 (*reading*) — *six words, nothing said first*

Answer: me

Also accepted: め

19.2 (*reading*) — *the doorway words, on the page*

Answer: arigatou

Also accepted: ありがとう; arigatō; thank you

19.3 (*reading*) — *the cues you have only ever heard*

Answer: wakarimasen

Also accepted: わかりません

Sources for this starter edition

Word histories follow Wiktionary’s Japanese entries for *hai*, *konnichiwa*, *arigatou*, and コーヒー. The farewell chapter follows the Japan Foundation’s Marugoto A1 vocabulary entry and the context-sensitive Starter treatment in Irodori lesson 1. The companion Markdown lessons carry the per-lesson citations and are the canonical short-practice source for this edition; the chapter that follows is generated from them, so the two cannot drift apart.

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my mother はは (haha)

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my wife つま (tsuma)

Chapter 13, p. 93

my younger brother おとうと (ototo)

Chapter 13, p. 93

my younger sister いもうと (imooto)

Chapter 13, p. 93

N

Nihongo, Built in Small Blocks

chapter topic; Chapter 5, p. 35

nine — a second reading that is not the native one, which is the exception the pattern needed く (ku)

Chapter 15, p. 107

Nine Family Words Through One New Kana

chapter topic; Chapter 13, p. 93

nine things — four beats, and the first two sound like a word you already have ここのつ (kokonotsu)

Chapter 17, p. 125

no; not at all いいえ (ie)

explicit focus: script, etymology; Chapter 1, p. 1

nose はな (hana)

Chapter 11, p. 77

O

One Goodbye, Sign by Sign

chapter topic; Chapter 8, p. 51

one long thin thing — and the four numbers that bend the counter furthest いっぽん (ippon)

Chapter 18, p. 135

One More Time, Please

chapter topic; Chapter 9, p. 57

one more time, please もういちど、おねがいします (mō ichido, onegai shimasu)

Chapter 9, p. 57

one person, two people — the native count reaching into a borrowed counter ひとり ふたり (hitori futari)

explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 18, p. 135

one — the number you have been saying since chapter nine, standing on its own at last いち (ichi)

Chapter 14, p. 101

one thing — the first word of the count Japanese kept when it borrowed another one ひとつ (hitotsu)

Chapter 16, p. 117

one time; once いちど (ichido)

Chapter 9, p. 57

P

Plain Thanks, One Sign at a Time

chapter topic; Chapter 3, p. 17

please; I request it おねがいします (onegai shimasu)

Chapter 9, p. 57

please say it ってください (itte kudasai)

Chapter 10, p. 67

please say it a little more

slowly もうすこし、ゆっくりってください (mō sukoshi, yukkuri itte kudasai)

Chapter 10, p. 67

Polite Thanks, Three More Signs

chapter topic; Chapter 4, p. 27

R

Reading — Words, Greetings, and the Cues You Have Only Heard

chapter topic; Chapter 19, p. 147

S

Seven Body Words, No New Guessing

chapter topic; Chapter 11, p. 77

Seven More Body Words, Spaced on Purpose

chapter topic; Chapter 12, p. 85

seven — the second place the native word stands inside the borrowed count, which is what makes it a pattern なな (nana)

Chapter 15, p. 107

seven things — the one word in this chapter the borrowed count

already gave you ななつ (nanatsu)

explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 17, p. 125

shoulder かた (kata)

Chapter 12, p. 85

six — the hole the chapter left open, and the reason it was

left ろく (roku)

Chapter 15, p. 107

six things — and the second count's six, unlike the first one's, is

native むつつ (muttsu)

Chapter 17, p. 125

slowly; without rushing ゆっくり (yukkuri)

Chapter 10, p. 67

T

ten — the last number of the run, and the one that turns nine words into ninety-nine じゅう (jū)

explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 15, p. 107

ten things — the one word in the count that drops the counting piece とお (tō)

Chapter 17, p. 125

thank you (plain) ありがとう (arigatō)

explicit focus: script, etymology; Chapter 3, p. 17

thank you (polite) ありがとうございます (arigatō gozaimasu)

explicit focus: script, grammar; Chapter 4, p. 27

the counter for long thin things — and a kanji you have been writing since chapter five ほん (-hon)

explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 18, p. 135

the counter for people — and the first place the tsu rule stops working にん (-nin)

explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 18, p. 135

the counter you already own — what the tsu was doing all along ...つ (-tsu)

explicit focus: grammar; Chapter 18, p. 135

The Doorway Exchange

chapter topic; Chapter 7, p. 49

the Japanese language 日本語 (nihongo)

explicit focus: script, etymology; Chapter 5, p. 35

The Other Five, and Where the Count Stops

chapter topic; Chapter 17, p. 125

° — **the other mark**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 18, p. 135

The Other Way to Count

chapter topic; Chapter 16, p. 117

The Two Signs the Rest of the Run Cost

chapter topic; Chapter 15, p. 107

three — and the moraic ん you have been closing words with since こんにちは さん (san)

Chapter 14, p. 101

three things — the first word in the chapter that costs nothing at all みつつ (mittsu)

Chapter 16, p. 117

tooth; teeth は (ha)

Chapter 12, p. 85

Two Answers, Sign by Sign

chapter topic; Chapter 1, p. 1

two — one mora, one sign, and the sign has been yours since

chapter two に (ni)

Chapter 14, p. 101

Two signs, side by side — and a word appears

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 1, p. 1

two things — and the beat that ties this count to a word you

already say ふたつ (futatsu)

Chapter 16, p. 117

“ — two ticks, and every sign you know doubles

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 3, p. 17

W

waist; lower back こし (koshi)

Chapter 12, p. 85

well; fully, as an adverb よく (yoku)

Chapter 9, p. 57

Y

yes はい (hai)

explicit focus: script, etymology; Chapter 1, p. 1

Other

あ — three strokes, and the thank-you begins

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 3, p. 17

ありがとう — no new sign, and a whole word

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 3, p. 17

い — two strokes, one beat

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 1, p. 1

う — two strokes, and a vowel that stretches

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 3, p. 17

え — two strokes, and a second word for free

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 1, p. 1

お — the respectful opening sign

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 10, p. 67

- か — **three strokes, and a shape you will reuse**
script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 3, p. 17
- く — **one angled stroke**
script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 9, p. 57
- こ — **two strokes, and the greeting begins**
script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 2, p. 9
- さ — **two strokes, and the ticks work here too**
script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 4, p. 27
- さようなら — **assemble what the hand already knows**
script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 8, p. 51
- し — **one falling curve**
script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 10, p. 67
- す — **two strokes, and a vowel you barely hear**
script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, usage and culture; Chapter 4, p. 27
- せ — **close the opener**
script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 10, p. 67
- た — **close *wakarimashita***
script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 11, p. 77
- だ — **voice the known base**
script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 11, p. 77
- ち — **two strokes, four roman letters, one beat**
script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 2, p. 9
- つ — **one small held beat**
script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 11, p. 77
- っ — **one full-size curve**
script and writing topic; explicit focus: script, writing; Chapter 13, p. 93
- て — **close *itte***
script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 11, p. 77
- と — **two strokes, and they never meet**
script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 3, p. 17
- ど — **voice a sign you already own**
script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 9, p. 57
- な — **one sign for *na***
script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 8, p. 51
- に — **three strokes, and a shape you half know**
script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 2, p. 9
- ね — **finish the polite request**
script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 10, p. 67
- の — **one stroke, and the last sign of the chapter**
script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 17, p. 125
- は — **three strokes**
script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 1, p. 1
- ひ — **one stroke, and a second count begins**
script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 16, p. 117

ふ — **four strokes, and a counter you already own**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 16, p. 117

ほ — **は with one more bar**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 18, p. 135

ま — **three strokes, and a loop you have drawn before**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 4, p. 27

み — **one looped bridge**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 9, p. 57

む — **three strokes, one of them a dot**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 17, p. 125

め — **cross, loop, release**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 9, p. 57

も — **two bars, then the curve**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 9, p. 57

や — **the long stroke goes first**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 17, p. 125

ゆ — **a small sign that joins forward**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 15, p. 107

ゆ — **open yukkuri**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 10, p. 67

よ — **the second sound gets a shape**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 8, p. 51

ら — **the last new shape**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 8, p. 51

り — **two strokes, and a tap rather than an r**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 3, p. 17

ろ — **one turn, and the r you already make**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 15, p. 107

わ — **the sign for *wa*, and the trap beside it**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 2, p. 9

ん — **one stroke, one beat, no vowel**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 2, p. 9

コ — **same sound, a new script**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 6, p. 43

ヒ — **two strokes complete the inventory**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 6, p. 43

一 — **one line, one extra beat**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 6, p. 43

五 — **four strokes for the sound side**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 5, p. 35

口 — **close a box in three strokes**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 5, p. 35

日 — **one sun, four strokes**

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 5, p. 35

本 — a tree with its root marked

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 5, p. 35

言 — build the speech side first

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 5, p. 35

語 — assemble; do not memorise fourteen loose strokes

script and writing topic; explicit focus: script; Chapter 5, p. 35