

Pronunciation Guide for Singing Japanese Songs

Pronunciation of Japanese Syllables

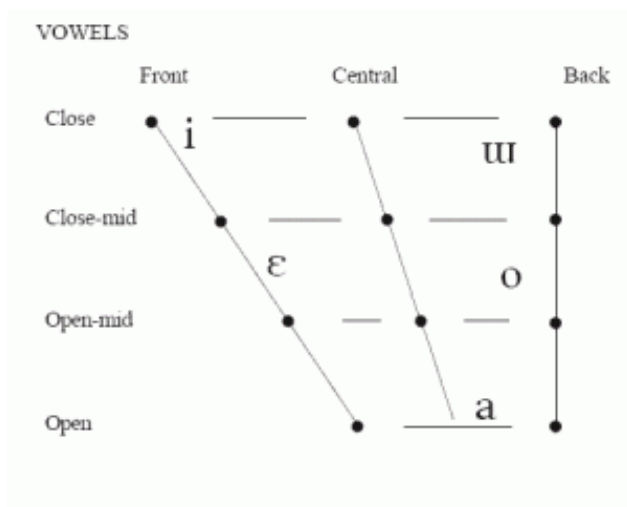
*The Japanese language has three types of characters: Hiragana, Katakana, and Kanji. Hiragana and Katakana are phonetic symbols, each representing one syllable while Kanji is ideogram, each stand for certain meaning. Hiragana characters are used mostly for choral scores.

		k	s	t	n	h	M	y	r	w	N
a	あ	か	さ	た	な	は	ま	や	ら	わ	ん
	a	ka	sa	ta	na	ha	ma	ya	ra	wa	n
	[a]	[ka]	[sa]	[ta]	[na]	[ha]	[ma]	[ja]	[ra]	[wa]	[n]
i	い	き	し	ち	に	ひ	み		り		
	i	ki	shi	chi	ni	hi	mi		ri		
	[i]	[ki]	[ɕi]	[tɕ]	[ni]	[ɕi]	[mi]		[ri]		
u	う	く	す	つ	ぬ	ふ	む	ゆ	る		
	u	Ku	su	tsu	nu	fu	mu	yu	ru		
	[u]	[kɯ]	[sɯ]	[tɕɯ]	[nɯ]	[ɸɯ]	[mɯ]	[jɯ]	[rɯ]		
e	え	け	せ	て	ね	へ	め		れ		
	e	ke	se	te	ne	he	me		re		
	[ɛ]	[kɛ]	[sɛ]	[tɛ]	[nɛ]	[hɛ]	[mɛ]		[rɛ]		
o	お	こ	そ	と	の	ほ	も	よ	ろ	を	
	o	ko	so	to	no	ho	mo	yo	ro	(w)o	
	[o]	[ko]	[so]	[to]	[no]	[ho]	[mo]	[jo]	[ro]	[o]	

Top row: Hiragana
Middle: Alphabetical notation
Bottom: International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)

	g	z	d	b	p
a	が ga [ga/ŋa]	ざ za [za]	だ da [da]	ば ba [da]	ぱ pa [pa]
i	ぎ gi [gi/ŋi]	じ ji [zi]	ぢ ji [zi]	び bi [di]	ぴ pi [pi]
u	ぐ gu [gʷ/ŋʷ]	ず zu [(d)zʷ]	づ zu [(d)zʷ]	ぶ bu [dʷ]	ぷ pu [pʷ]
e	げ ge [gɛ/ŋɛ]	ぜ ze [zɛ]	で de [dɛ]	べ be [dɛ]	ぺ pe [pɛ]
o	ご go [go/ŋo]	ぞ zo [zo]	ど do [do]	ぼ bo [do]	ぽ po [po]

ky	gy	ny	hy	by	py	my	ry	ch	sh	j
きゃ kya [kja]	ぎゃ gya [gja]	にゃ nya [ɲa]	ひゃ hya [ɕa]	びゃ bya [bjɑ]	ぴゃ pya [pjɑ]	みゃ mya [mjɑ]	りゃ rya [rja]	ちゃ cha [tɕa]	しゃ sha [ɕa]	じゃ ja [(d)za]
きゅ kyu [kjɯ]	ぎゅ gyu [gjɯ]	にゅ nyu [ɲɯ]	ひゅ hyu [ɕɯ]	びゅ byu [bjɯ]	ぴゅ pyu [pjɯ]	みゅ myu [mjɯ]	りょ ryo [rjɯ]	ちゅ chu [tɕɯ]	しゅ shu [ɕɯ]	じゅ ju [(d)zɯ]
きょ kyo [kjo]	ぎょ gyo [gjo]	にょ nyo [ɲo]	ひょ hyo [ɕo]	びょ byo [bjɔ]	ぴょ pyo [pjɔ]	みょ myo [mjɔ]	りょ ryo [rjo]	ちえ che [tɕe]	しえ she [ɕe]	じえ je [(d)ze]
								ちょ cho [tɕo]	しょ sho [ɕo]	じょ jo [(d)zo]



Consonants

	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Post-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	p b		t d				k g	
Nasal	m		n				ŋ	
Trill								
Tap			r					
Fricative	ɸ			s z	ʃ	ç		h
Affricate				ts	tʃ dʒ			
Lateral fricative								
Approximant						j		
Lateral approximant								

[ç]: voiceless alveolo-palatal fricative

- **Syllable = (1 consonant) + 1 vowel = Beat = Letter**

1 letter = 1 syllable = (1 consonant) + 1 vowel = 1 beat

e.g. さくら (cherry) *sa-ku-ra* あい (love) *a-i*

♪ ♪ ♪

♪ ♪

ん n 1 consonant without vowel

1 syllable (=1 note) / end of syllable

こんにちは(Hello) *konnichiwa* => *ko – n– ni- chi- wa*

♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪

- **Soundless beat**

“っ” *tsu* vs “っ” little *tsu*

(Romanized as double consonants = hop)

e.g. かこ | かっこ

ka ko (past) | ka kko (parenthesis)

♪ ♪

♪ ♪ ♪

- **Devoicing of vowels**

すき *suki* (like) *The “su” syllable becomes voiceless “s” in speaking, but should be voiced in singing if there is a note for it.

します *shimasu* (do/does)

です *desu* (am/is)

- **Allophones = letters pronounced in two ways**

ん N (n/m) こんにちは(Hello) *konnichiwa*

こんばんは(Good evening) *kombanwa*

G vs nasal G [ŋ]

G: beginning of a word

Nasal G [ŋ] : after another syllable; particles following a word *The nasal G is disappearing in spoken language but is observed in choral singing.

e.g. ごま (sesame) vs まご (grandchild)

goma

mago

[g]

[ŋ]

● **Pitch Accent ≠ Stress**

***No stress needed**

あめ ame (rain) – High / Low

あめ ame (candy/lollipop) – Low/ High

はし hashi (chopsticks) – High / Low

はし hashi (bridge) – Low/High