

ROMANIZATION SYSTEM FOR JAPANESE KANA

Modified Hepburn System BGN/PCGN 1976 Agreement

The modified Hepburn system for the romanization of Japanese has been in use by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names and the U.K. Permanent Committee on Geographical Names since the 1930's and has been used extensively in the romanization of Japanese geographic names. The system is well adapted to the general needs of speakers of English and is the most widely used system for romanization of Japanese.

The Japanese language is written in two forms: in *kanji*, which are Sino-Japanese characters, and in *kana*, which are syllabic symbols. There are two styles of *kana*, namely *katakana*, the squared form, and *hiragana*, the cursive form. *Katakana* symbols were originally derived from parts of *kanji* characters and today are used primarily for the phonetic transcription of foreign words and as the equivalent of italics. *Hiragana* symbols, on the other hand, were originally created by simplifying the strokes of whole *kanji* characters and are used to represent grammatical particles and suffixes. Running text is usually written in *kanji* with *kana* interspersed. Geographic names, personal names, and words written in isolation are usually written in *kanji*, with or without the addition of small-script *kana* equivalents, which, when used for that purpose, are referred to as *furigana*.

Many alternate *kana* forms were abolished in a post-World War II language reform. If reference to these forms is required, the traditional Hepburn system for Japanese should be consulted.⁽¹⁾

Kanji may be romanized with the aid of Japanese-English dictionaries that utilize the modified Hepburn system.⁽²⁾ A familiarity with the grammatical structure of the Japanese language, as well as with the Japanese writing system, is essential for the correct romanization of *kanji*.

In Japan today, the romanized form of Japanese, *romaji*, is widely used, particularly on the internet. In this modern usage, long vowels are frequently shown as doubled, rather than with a macron.

¹⁾ *The system was first presented in A Japanese and English Dictionary; with an English and Japanese Index.* J.C. Hepburn, Shanghai, American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1867

²⁾ *For example, Beginners' Dictionary of Chinese-Japanese Characters, compiled by Arthur Rose-Innes and published by Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1944*

Basic Forms

[hiragana | katakana | romaji]

Vowels	K	S	T	N	H	M	Glides	R	W	-n
あ ア a	か カ ka	さ サ sa	た タ ta	な ナ na	は ハ ha (wa) ¹⁾	ま マ ma	や ヤ ya	ら ラ ra	わ ワ wa	ん ン n ²⁾
い イ i	き キ ki	し シ shi	ち チ chi	に ニ ni	ひ ヒ hi	み ミ mi		り リ ri		
う ウ u	く ク ku	す ス su	つ ツ tsu ⁴⁾	ぬ ヌ nu	ふ フ fu	む ム mu	ゆ ユ yu	る ル ru		
え エ e	け ケ ke (ga) ²⁾	せ セ se	て テ te	ね ネ ne	へ ヘ he (e) ¹⁾	め メ me		れ レ re		
お オ o	こ コ ko	そ ソ so	と ト to	の ノ no	ほ ホ ho	も モ mo	よ ヨ yo	ろ ロ ro	を ヲ wo	
ア	ガ ガ ga	ザ ザ za	ダ ダ da		バ バ ba					
イ	ギ ギ gi	ジ ジ ji	チ チ chi		ビ ビ bi					
ウ	ク ク ku	ス ス su	ツ ツ tsu		フ フ fu					
エ	ケ ケ ke	セ セ se	テ テ te		ペ ペ pe					
オ	コ コ ko	ソ ソ so	ト ト to		ホ ホ ho					
ア					バ バ ba					
イ					ビ ビ bi					
ウ					フ フ fu					
エ					ペ ペ pe					
オ					ホ ホ ho					

Combined Forms

[hiragana | katakana | romaji]

Vowels	K	S	T	N	H	M	Glides	R	W	-n
YA	きゃ キヤ kya	しゃ シヤ sha	ちゃ チヤ cha	にゃ ニヤ nya	ひゃ ヒヤ hya	みゃ ミヤ mya		りゃ リヤ rya		
YU	きゅ キユ kyu	しゅ シユ shu	ちゅ チユ chu	にゅ ニユ nyu	ひゅ ヒユ hyu	みゅ ミユ myu		りゅ リュ ryu		
YŪ	きゅう キユウ kyū	しゅう シユウ shū	ちゅう チユウ chū	にゅう ニユウ nyū	ひゅう ヒユウ hyū	みゅう ミユウ myū	ゆう ユウ yū	りゅう リュウ ryū		
YO	きょ キョ kyo	しよ シヨ sho	ちよ チヨ cho	にょ ニョ nyo	ひょ ヒョ hyo	みょ ミョ myo		りょ リュ ryo		
YŌ	きょう キョウ kyō	しょう ショウ shō	ちょう チョウ chō	にょう ニョウ nyō	ひょう ヒョウ hyō	みょう ミョウ myō		りょう リュウ ryō		
Ō	こう コウ kō	そう ソウ sō	とう トウ tō	のう ノウ nō	ほう ホウ hō	もう モウ mō	よう ヨウ yō	ろう ロウ rō		
YA	ぎゃ ギヤ gya	じゃ ジヤ ja			ひゃ ヒヤ hya					
YU	ぎゅ ギユ gyu	じゅ ジユ ju			ひゅ ヒユ hyu					
YŪ	ぎゅう ギユウ gyū	じゅう ジユウ jū			ひゅう ヒユウ hyū					
YO	ぎょ ギョ gyo	じょ ジョ jo			ひょ ヒョ hyo					
YŌ	ぎょう ギョウ gyō	じょう ジョウ jō			ひょう ヒョウ hyō					
Ō	こう コウ kō	そう ソウ sō	どう ドウ dō		ほう ホウ hō	もう モウ mō	よう ヨウ yō			
YA					ひゃ ヒヤ hya					
YU					ひゅ ヒユ hyu					
YŪ					ひゅう ヒユウ hyū					
YO					ひょ ヒョ hyo					
YŌ					ひょう ヒョウ hyō					
Ō					ほう ホウ hō	もう モウ mō	よう ヨウ yō			

¹⁾ Lengths preceding vowel in katakana

²⁾ (wa) and (e) are used when (ha) and (he) are used as grammatical particles.

³⁾ The symbol looking much like a katakana (ke) becomes (ga) when placed between two kanji characters in place names (Seki ga Hara).

⁴⁾ n* is used before y-glides or a vowel letter.

⁵⁾ A small-script tsu form is inserted between kana symbols to indicate a double consonant and is romanized as k before k, as before s or sh, as t before t, ts, or ch; and as p before p.

⁶⁾ This katakana symbol is used only in the transcription of foreign words.