

LESSON TRANSCRIPT

# Ultimate Japanese Pronunciation Guide #6

## Marking the Change in Japanese Pronunciation with Diacritics

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# 6

Hi everyone! I'm Michelle Yamamoto.

Welcome back to The Ultimate Japanese Pronunciation Guide at JapanesePod101.com.

You've learned 46 basic kana sounds so far. In this lesson, you'll learn 23 additional sounds. The characters are familiar, but they are marked. And this changes the pronunciation.

So, now you can pronounce these hiragana characters, right?

か、き、く、け、こ

What about these?

が、ぎ、ぐ、げ、ご

When this little mark is added to the kana, it makes a different sound.

が、ぎ、ぐ、げ、ご

The formal term for this in Japanese is "dakuten", but it's usually called "tenten", which means "dot dot".

The tenten makes a sound voiced – let's look at how this works in practice so you can see what I mean!

The first one is...

が、ぎ、ぐ、げ、ご

These "g" sounds are based on the initial k-group か、き、く、け、こ.

When "tenten" is added to each kana, the "k" sound changes to "g". "k" is not voiced, whereas "g" is. Let's hear them again.

が、ぎ、ぐ、げ、ご

Repeat after me.

が

ぎ

ぐ

げ

ご

Let's hear some words.

かぎ, key, か・ぎ、かぎ

かがみ, mirror, か・が・み、かがみ

ぎ in かぎ and が in かがみ is a nasal sound.

ぎ (nasal "gi")

が (nasal "ga")

When you have a "g" sound such as が or ぎ in the middle of a word or at the end of a word, it's sometimes pronounced with this nasal sound.

Lately, many people, especially young people, don't use this nasal sound anymore.

But, you might hear an announcer say かぎ or かがみ on

TV.

ぎ in かぎ is a nasal sound.

ぎ in ぎんこう is not a nasal sound.

Okay, here's another example.

がむ gum、が・む、がむ

かがみ mirror、か・が・み、かがみ

が in かがみ is a nasal sound.

が in がむ is not nasal.

In the past, when you have a "g" sound such as が or ぎ in the middle of a word or at the end of a word, you pronounce it が or ぎ as a nasal sound.

This sound is becoming less common, however, especially among young people.

Instead, people will pronounce the consonants with a hard "g" sound.

But, you might still hear a news reporter or anchor say かぎ or かがみ on TV."

Next up is...

ざ、じ、ず、ぜ、ぞ

"They are based on さ、し、す、せ、そ

"

"When "tenten" are added, the s-group sounds become a z-group.

"

ざ、じ、ず、ぜ、ぞ

The exception is じ. し becomes "ji", not "zi".

Repeat after me.

ざ

じ

ず

ぜ

ぞ

Next up is

だ、ぢ、づ、で、ど

"These are based on た、ち、つ、て、と

"

"When "tenten" are added, the "t" sound changes to "d".

"

だ、ぢ、づ、で、ど

The exceptions are ぢ and づ.

"ぢ becomes ぢ (ji), not "di".

づ becomes づ (zu), not "du.""

Repeat after

me.

だ

ぢ

づ

で

ど

Did you notice that we have already had these same sounds, "ji" and "zu" in another row?

They appeared in the "z" row that we learned before.

"Both pairs of "ji" and "zu" sound exactly the same.

But, when it comes to writing, they have different kana, such as..."

じかん time, じ・か・ん、じかん

はなぢ nose bleed、は・な・ぢ、はなぢ

じ in じかん and ぢ in はなぢ are the same sound, but different kana.

ちず map, ち・ず、ちず

きづく notice, き・づ・く、きづく

ず in ちず and づ in きづく are the same sound, but different kana.

We use ぢ and づ in a few words, but じ and ず are more often used in writing.

Next up is...

ば、び、ぶ、べ、ぼ

"They are based on は、ひ、ふ、へ、ほ

"

"When "tenten" are added, the "h" sound changes to a "b" sound.

"

ば、び、ぶ、べ、ぼ

Repeat after me.

ば

び

ぶ

べ

ぼ

There is one more set of sounds which is based on は、ひ、ふ、へ、ほ, which is...

ぱ、ぴ、ぷ、ぺ、ぽ

This little circle mark is added, and the "h" sound changes to "p".

ぱ、ぴ、ぷ、ぺ、ぽ

The little circle mark is formally called "handakuten", but usually called "maru", meaning "circle."

Repeat after

me.

ば

び

ぶ

べ

ぼ

Here's a little pronunciation tip for ばびぶべぼ and ぱびぷぺぽ.

In English when you pronounce "b" and "p" sounds, such as "bat" or "put", you breathe out a small puff of air when you pronounce them. "bat" and "put". In standard Japanese pronunciation, however, the air released is significantly less.

So, try holding your hand in front of your mouth and pronounce ばびぶべぼ or ぱびぷぺぽ again! Do you feel any breath on your hand? Make sure that you're not making a puff of breath.

Repeat after me.

ば

び

ぶ

べ

ぼ

ぱ

ぴ

ぷ

ぺ

ぽ

You've learned 69 sounds so far! You should be familiar with almost all the Japanese sounds now.

In the next lesson, you'll combine sounds using the や、ゆ、よ that you've already learned in lesson 4. Review these sounds before the next lesson.

And record yourself to perfect your pronunciation!

Have you been practicing in the mirror? Or have you found a better tactic? Share your experience in the comments.

See you in the next Ultimate Japanese Pronunciation Guide lesson!