

LESSON TRANSCRIPT

Ultimate Japanese Pronunciation Guide #1

Introduction to Perfect Japanese Pronunciation

#1

Hi everyone! I'm Michelle Yamamoto.

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

In this series, you'll master Japanese pronunciation. Proper pronunciation is essential for being understood, and in this series, you'll learn it in a fast, accessible, and comprehensive way.

First, Japanese pronunciation is comparatively easy. Japanese has only 5 vowel and 14 consonant sounds.

Almost all Japanese syllables are made up of one of these consonants and one of these vowels, but the 5 vowels also appear individually.

Take a look at the chart. Each character, or kana, represents one syllable.

The characters in the top row of this chart represent a vowel sound only. In the left column, the characters represent consonant sounds. By combining these, you can form most Japanese syllables.

For example, look at the consonant "k" group.

Consonant k-sound plus the vowel "a" becomes "ka (か)."

Consonant k-sound plus the vowel "i" becomes "ki (き)."

Consonant k-sound plus the vowel "u" becomes "ku (く)."

Consonant k-sound plus the vowel "e" becomes "ke (け)."

Consonant k-sound plus the vowel "o" becomes "ko (こ)."

"The consonant "m" group follows the same pattern.

Consonant m-sound plus the vowel "a" becomes "ma (ま)."

Consonant m-sound plus the vowel "i" becomes "mi (み)."

Consonant m-sound plus the vowel "u" becomes "mu (む)."

Consonant m-sound plus the vowel "e" becomes "me (め)."

Consonant m-sound plus the vowel "o" becomes "mo (も)."

Again, each syllable on the kana chart is a combination of a consonant and a vowel.

The main exceptions are the 5-vowel group and the special "ん" sound.

Let's hear how some Japanese words are pronounced.

The first example is a common Japanese surname...

たなか

た・な・か

It's made up of three syllables, た、な、か

Each syllable consists of one consonant and one vowel.

Another common surname in Japanese is...

なかた

な・か・た

With a few notable exceptions, you can properly pronounce Japanese simply by reading hiragana or katakana, the two Japanese alphabets. Remember this tip, and it will help you throughout your studies.

Can you pronounce these words correctly?

ほんや

いっぱい

おばあさん

In addition to mastering how to pronounce each sound, you will learn how to pronounce a sound in a word in later of this series.

Now, the second key point is...

Each syllable in Japanese is pronounced for the same length of time with equal stress. For example, when you say "America" in English, you put stress on "mer" - and say it for longer than the other parts. "aMERica"

The word "アメリカ" in Japanese has 4 syllables, and you say each syllable for the same length of time. "アメリカ"

Pronounce it like this to sound like a native Japanese speaker.

Another example. How do you say this word in English?

You would say kar-ee-oh-kee.

But, in Japanese, you say, カラオケ.

Remember that each syllable in Japanese is pronounced for the same length of time and gets equal stress.

Now to close the lesson, here's a question for you.

Why should YOU, including advanced speakers, spend time on learning proper pronunciation?

The answer...

You will be understood, and this will build confidence when you're speaking. Also, speaking with proper pronunciation is always impressive. For beginners, you're on the path to perfect pronunciation, and for more advanced students, this a chance to perfect your pronunciation.

Now you know the basics of Japanese pronunciation. In the next lesson, you'll learn the top five pronunciation mistakes Japanese learners make. You'll want to avoid these at all costs, so keep watching.

What is the hardest part of Japanese pronunciation? Tell us about it in the comments. See you in the next Ultimate Japanese Pronunciation Guide lesson!