

LESSON NOTES

Ultimate Japanese Pronunciation Guide #9

Mastering the Small, Silent Tsu in Japanese Pronunciation

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GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson is Mastering the Silent *Tsu*

In this lesson, you'll master the Japanese pause, known as the small *tsu*, or silent *tsu*.

How do you pronounce these words?

かっこ “bracket”

きて “stamp”

すっぱい “sour”

This small っ is not pronounced as つ, but it indicates a pause.

This small っ sound is translated as a "double consonant" in English. When it's romanized, we have two consonants. Take a look at the romanizations of the previous example words:

Once you learn kana, it will be easier to master this pronunciation as a sound represented by the small っ pause.

Again, the small っ is not pronounced as つ, but it indicates a pause.

To pronounce *kakko*, say か, then pause, and say こ. Make sure you pause for the length of one syllable. So, for example, you can think of it as, かっこ being made up of three beats, with one in the middle that is a silent pause.

If you don't pause enough, you might end up saying a completely different word. For example:

かこ = "past" (no small っ, thus pronounced in two beats.)

かっこ = "bracket". (small っ in middle, thus pronounced in three beats.)

きて = "come" (two beats)

きって = "cut" (three beats)

So, it's really important to pause for one whole syllable.

Pronunciation Tip

Do you know which position you put your tongue in when you make a pause?

Let's take the word きって, for example.

To pronounce きって, after saying き, put your tongue in the position when getting ready to say the "t" consonant and pause before saying て.

So basically, you just put your tongue in a standby position for the next consonant during that *tsu* pause.

Let's try with the other words:

かっこ

After saying か, put your tongue in the standby position for "k" when pausing, then say こ.

すっぱい

After saying す, pause and bring your lips together to standby for "p" before saying ぱい.

The small っ is a little tricky to master. Try practicing with claps to time it as a whole syllable.