

LESSON TRANSCRIPT

How to Write in Japanese: Hiragana and Katakana #13 The Katakana S Column

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Hi everyone! Welcome to BASIC JAPANESE WRITING. The fastest, easiest, and most fun way to master the Japanese alphabet!

You've learned these 10 katakana characters from the previous lessons.

In this lesson, you'll learn five new katakana characters.

サザシジスズセゼソゾ

The first katakana character for this lesson is サ. サ.

This one looks like a *SA*DDLE.

Hiragana せ and katakana サ might get you confused, so to differentiate the two, just look at where the second and third strokes end. The ones for せ end at the center and the ones for サ end at the sides.

All of the characters in this column can also be altered by a "dakuten." Do you remember what サ with a "dakuten" sounds like?

It's ザ. サ; ザ. サ; ザ.

Katakana サ is written in 3 strokes.

The first stroke is a long horizontal line.

The second stroke is a vertical line cutting through the left side of the first stroke.

The third stroke is a longer vertical line that curves at the bottom. It cuts through the first stroke on the right side.

To have a good balance, the second and third stroke should cut the first stroke into thirds.

Ok, let's see it again.

Ok, next up is the katakana character シ. シ.

Try to think of シ as a sinking *SHI*P.

Let's add a "dakuten" to シ. Remember it's not supposed to sound like "zi."

シ with a dakuten is pronounced as ジ. シ; ジ. シ; ジ.

シ (し, シ) is the only Japanese character that produces the S-H sound and the only original Japanese syllable sounds available are しゃ, し, しゅ and しょ. The digraph シエ is then created by adding a small katakana エ to シ. This enables Japanese people to say words like "chef," (シェフ) and "share" (シェア.)

Also since shi with a dakuten is the only sound in Japanese to produce a J sound, the same is done to ji creating the je digraph. This allows Japanese people to say words like "jelly," (ジェリー) or "widget," (ウィジェット.)

Katakana シ is written in 3 strokes.

The first and second strokes are two parallel short slanted strokes on the upper left.

The third stroke starts below the first two strokes and curves upward.

To maintain the balance, try to have the same spacing between where the three strokes start.

Ok, let's see it again.

The third one is the katakana ス. ス.

Think of this one as a person *SU*KIING.

Let's add a "dakuten" to ス as well.

It now becomes ズ. ス; ズ. ス; ズ.

Katakana ス is written in 2 strokes.

The first stroke starts as a horizontal stroke on top then sharply turns and makes a curve going diagonally to the left.

The second stroke is a short slanted stroke that starts from the middle of the curved part of the first stroke

Ok, let's see it again.

This is the katakana character セ. セ.

Katakana セ is also another character that looks like an angular version of its hiragana counterpart. It's also just missing this part on the top right.

Let's modify セ with a dakuten.

It is now pronounced as ゼ. セ; ゼ. セ; ゼ.

Katakana セ is written in 2 strokes.

The first stroke starts as a long horizontal line then it turns sharply inwards and down.

The second stroke goes from top to bottom then turns to the right at the bottom.

Take note that the angle of this corner on セ is not as sharp as that of the other katakana characters you've learned.

Ok, let's see it again.

And our final character for this lesson is the katakana ソ. ソ.

To remember ソ, just imagine it as a *SO*FT-SERVE ice cream cone.

Now, can you go and say what ソ sounds like with a dakuten?

It will be ゾ. ソ; ゾ. ソ; ゾ.

Katakana ソ is written in 2 strokes.

The first stroke is a short slanted stroke going down. It's more vertical than most short slanted strokes in other characters.

The second stroke is a curved stroke starting from the same height as the first stroke. It goes downwards to the bottom left.

Ok, let's see it again.

Let's see all the characters again. サ, ザ, シ, ジ, ス, ズ, セ, ゼ, ソ, ゾ and the new digraphs シェ and ジェ.

Quiz time!

Now, let's review what you've learned. I'll show you a character or a word and give you time to say them. Ready?

ゾ.

ス.

カ.

It's ジ.

Which one is the katakana セ? (pause 3 sec) It's this one!

オ. Remember the *O*PERA singer? Oooo [sing this one]

て.

ガス. This refers to the gas in the gas lines and not gasoline or the gas-state of matter.

アジア. This means "Asia."

スキー. スキー means "skiing." Don't confuse it with 好き meaning "to like." 好き、スキー.

コース. This means "course."

ソース. It means "sauce," or sometimes, "source."

カサカサ. This is the Japanese onomatopoeia for rustling. It also means "dry."

ウィスキー. This means "whiskey." Japan has a few well known brands of whiskey.

シェアする. This means "to share." You can actually find it in the Japanese Facebook sites.

Great job! Did you know? When you ask for アイス in a store, you wouldn't actually get ice but ice cream instead. Japanese people tend to contract popular loan words so it's best to research first before turning English words into katakana words directly.

Ok, let's wrap up this lesson by recapping what you've learned.

In this lesson, you learned サ and ザ, シ and ジ, ス and ズ, セ and ゼ, ソ and ゾ and the digraphs シェ and ジェ.

よくできました！ You've now mastered 61 Japanese characters.

Is it soccer or football? Find out which one the Japanese use, when we discuss the T column in the next lesson!

Before you go, practice writing the following words on your own!

[pause]

And to learn MORE Japanese, go to JapanesePod101.com.

Do you know the top 10 Japanese sentence patterns? Even though you may already know some Japanese vocabulary, perhaps you're finding it difficult to string together coherent sentences. Learn the key components of 10 basic Japanese sentence patterns and get an example of each one with this free lesson!

See you in the next lesson! またね！