

LESSON TRANSCRIPT

Ultimate Japanese Pronunciation Guide #9

Mastering the Small, Silent Tsu in Japanese Pronunciation

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Hi everyone! I'm Michelle Yamamoto.

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

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

How do YOU pronounce these words?

Here's how you should pronounce them.

かっこ bracket、か・っ・こ、かっこ

きって stamp、き・っ・て、きって

すっぱい sour、す・っ・ぱ・い、すっぱい

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, like two Ks in "kakko", or two Ts in "kitte". 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, かっこ is made of three syllables, with one in the middle, and the middle one is a pause.

Repeat after me.

かっこ

かっこ

きって

きって

すっぱい

すっぱい needs to be said in four syllables.

すっぱい

Please master these, because if you don't pause enough, you might end up saying a completely different word. For example...

かこ and かっこ

かこ

means "past". It doesn't have small っ, and so it's pronounced in two syllables.

かっこ

Means "bracket". It has a small っ in the middle, and is pronounced in three syllables.

かこ

かっこ

The next pair is...

きて and

きて

きて

means "Come." and is pronounced in two syllables

きて

means "Cut." and is pronounced in three syllables

きて

きて

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

And now, are you ready for a pronunciation tip? Do you know which position you put your tongue in when you make a pause?

Repeat after me.

きて

きて

Can you get it?

"To pronounce きて, after saying き, put your tongue in the same position for the "t" consonant and pause, and say て.

So, you just put your tongue in a position ready for the next consonant when you make a pause."

Repeat after me again.

きて

きて

The next one is...

かっこ

かっこ

After saying か, put your tongue in the same position for "k" during the pause, then say こ. Try it!

かっこ

かっこ

Let's try this.

すっぱい

すっぱい

After saying す, bring your lips together, for "p". Then make a pause and say (ぱい).

すっぱい

すっぱい

Small つ is a little tricky to master. Try practicing with claps. This is helpful to time it as a whole syllable – this is why it is a pause.

Can you hear the difference between 箸 and 橋? They may sound like the same word, but they are two different words. Find out how to tell the difference in the next lesson.

Is the small, silent tsu harder for you to hear when listening or use when speaking?

See you in the next Ultimate Japanese Pronunciation Guide lesson!