

1. Japanese Writing Systems

There are three different writing systems:
Hiragana, Katakana and Kanji.

Kanji: Ideographs representing sound and meaning.

Hiragana & Katakana: Letters representing sounds. They are called “syllabaries,” because each letter represents one syllable. There are 46 basic letters for each system (plus some combinations).

For example, my name “Tomita (family name) Ikuko (first name)” can be written in three different ways:

冨	田	育	子	(Kanji)
とみ	た	いく	こ	(Hiragana)
トミ	タ	イク	コ	(Katakana)
Tomi	ta	Iku	ko	(Roomaji)

However, Katakana is generally used to write foreign loan words and foreign names.

2. Pronunciation

* Each Hiragana/Katakana letter corresponds to “**one beat**.” So, my name

● ● ● ● ● ● □ has six “beats.”
と み た い く こ

* Accent and Intonation

English uses stress accent: **Strong** or **Weak**

Japanese uses pitch accent: **High** or **Low**

(high)	(low)	(low)	(high)	(low)	(low)
と	み	た	い	く	こ