

Hiragana Alphabet

The hiragana alphabet, like the katakana alphabet, is a phonetic alphabet made up of 5 vowel sounds and 15 consonants, 14 of which can combine with the vowel sounds to make syllables – eg. s+a = sa, r+i = ri, m+u = mu, h+e = he, t+o = to (listen to the sound files).

‘n’ nearly always comes at the end of a word and will not have a vowel sound added afterwards.

Hiragana was developed by the Japanese to work with kanji (Chinese characters). It was developed because of the differences between Chinese and Japanese grammar and pronunciation, so extra sounds and symbols needed to be created to suit the Japanese language.

Hiragana can also be used as a pronunciation guide for those kanji characters, which can be difficult to read without some guidance. The correct way to read the kanji is written over the top of the symbol in small hiragana characters (children especially make use of this system when learning to read and write).

Japanese people’s names are usually written in kanji and they can be very difficult to read unless the hiragana pronunciation guide is written over the top of the name. Japanese children will usually learn to write their names in hiragana before kanji, as the symbols are much simpler!

Use the chart below to work out the common Japanese children’s names on the code-breaking worksheet:

お	o	え	e	う	u	い	i	あ	a	
こ	ko	け	ke	く	ku	き	ki	か	ka	k
そ	so	せ	se	す	su	し	shi	さ	sa	s
と	to	て	te	つ	tsu	ち	chi	た	ta	t
の	no	ね	ne	ぬ	nu	に	ni	な	na	n
ほ	ho	へ	he	ふ	fu	ひ	hi	は	ha	h
も	mo	め	me	む	mu	み	mi	ま	ma	m
よ	yo	え	e	ゆ	yu	い	i	や	ya	y
ろ	ro	れ	re	る	ru	り	ri	ら	ra	r
を	wo	え	e	う	u	い	i	わ	wa	w
								ん	-	n

o		e		u		i		a		
ご	go	げ	ge	ぐ	gu	ぎ	gi	が	ga	g
ぞ	zo	ぜ	ze	ず	zu	じ	ji	ざ	za	z
ど	do	で	de	づ	zu	ぢ	ji	だ	da	d
ぼ	bo	べ	be	ぶ	bu	び	bi	ば	ba	b
ぽ	po	ぺ	pe	ぷ	pu	ぴ	pi	ぱ	pa	p