## Katakana Alphabet

The Japanese katakana alphabet is a phonetic system which means each symbol has a sound to go with it. You then group the symbols together to make words (much like you do with letters in the English alphabet). Japanese can also be written using the English alphabet by translating these phonetic sounds. This is known in Japanese as 'romaji' (literally, 'roman letters').

There are five basic vowel sounds in Japanese -a, i, u, e, o. If you have a Japanese teacher, ask them to pronounce the sounds. Alternatively, listen to the sound files.

There are 15 consonants in Japanese, 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 come at the end of a word and will not have a vowel sound added afterwards.

The Japanese alphabet doesn't have all the sounds of English, so 'l' and 'r' for example can cause difficulty. If your name had an 'l' sound in it, then you need to pick the nearest sound starting with an 'r' to represent it. Alison, for example would sound like 'A+ri+so+n – Arison アリソン'. 'b' and 'v' cause similar problems, with a 'v' sound changing to 'b' in most cases: 'Vicky – bi+ki - ビキ', although a representation of the 'v' sound has been developed and is becoming increasingly popular - ヴィ, so Vicky would be ヴィキ.

If your name has a long vowel sound, then you can add a line to show that it is a long sound. Lee for example would be 'ri- $\cup$ -'

Look at the table below and practise the alphabet. Note that there are several exceptions to the rules when it comes to how the symbols are pronounced.

オ	0	エ	е	ウ	u	イ	i	ア	а	
コ	ko	ケ	ke	ク	ku	キ	ki	力	ka	k
ソ	SO	セ	se	ス	su	シ	shi	サ	sa	s
7	to	テ	te	ツ	tsu	チ	chi	タ	ta	t
1	no	ネ	ne	ヌ	nu	<u></u>	ni	ナ	na	n
ホ	ho	<	he	フ	fu	ヒ	hi	ハ	ha	h
モ	mo	メ	me	ム	mu	111	mi	マ	ma	m
E	yo	エ	е	ユ	yu	1	i	ヤ	ya	У
口	ro	レ	re	ル	ru	リ	ri	ラ	ra	r
ヲ	WO	エ	е	ウ	u	1	i	ワ	wa	W
								ン	-	n

(	)	е	)	ι	ı		i	á	<b>a</b>	
ゴ	go	ゲ	ge	グ	gu	ギ	gi	ガ	ga	g
ゾ	ZO	ゼ	ze	ズ	zu	ジ	ji	ザ	za	Z
ド	do	デ	de	ズ	zu	ジ	ji	ダ	da	d
ボ	bo	7	be	ブ	bu	ビ	bi	バ	ba	b
ポ	ро	°{	ре	プ	pu	ピ	pi	パ	ра	р

Some of the syllables can be further combined to make additional sounds. Have a look at the table below – are there any sounds here that are in your name?

у	0	у	u	у		
キョ	kyo	キュ	kyu	キャ	kya	ki
ショ	sho	シュ	shu	シャ	sha	shi
チョ	cho	チュ	chu	チャ	cha	chi
二ヨ	nyo	ニュ	nyu	ニャ	nya	ni
ヒョ	hyo	ヒュ	hyu	ヒャ	hya	hi
SЭ	myo	ミュ	myu	ミヤ	mya	mi
リョ	ryo	リュ	ryu	リャ	rya	ri
ギョ	gyo	ギュ	gyu	ギャ	gya	gi
ジョ	jo	ジュ	ju	ジャ	ja	ji
ビョ	byo	ビュ	byu	ビヤ	bya	bi
ピョ	руо	ピュ	pyu	ピャ	руа	pi

Here are a few more sounds – they are not commonly used in Japanese, other than for loan words which have entered the Japanese language. Perhaps there may be some sounds that you use in your name?

ウィウェウォ	ディデュ
wi we wo	di du
クァ	ツァ ツェ ツォ
kwa	tsa tse tso
ヴァヴィヴ ヴェヴォ	ファ フィ フェ フォ
va vi vu ve vo	fa fi fe fo
ティ	