

1 — Introduction

This book was designed to help the student learn Japanese characters quickly and to write them beautifully. There are three types of characters in Japanese: hiragana, katakana, and kanji. Whether or not a student can learn these characters quickly will determine whether they succeed or fail in their Japanese studies.

In this book, the student will practice writing hiragana and katakana clearly and legibly. This book is unique in that characters are not organized by pronunciation (the standard Japanese syllabary order). Instead, characters that have similar shapes or are written similarly are grouped together for practice.

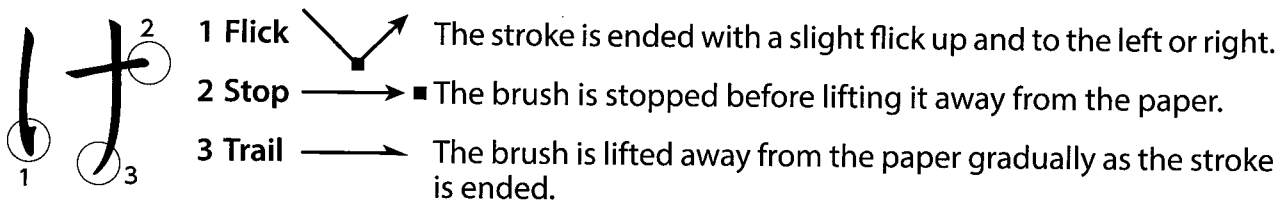
The student will also be introduced to a handful of kanji. Katakana characters are derived from pieces of kanji. By learning how to write katakana properly with the correct stroke order, the student can automatically learn how to write a number of kanji as well.

2 — Writing Japanese Characters: The Basics

When writing Japanese characters, the most important thing is to write them squarely. Kanji are square characters. Since hiragana and katakana are used together with kanji, you should keep the idea of a square frame in mind when writing them as well.

(1) Strokes and Dots

For a long time, Japanese characters were written using a brush. Brush characters are written using strokes and dots, which can be thought of as very short strokes. There are three ways to end a stroke.



(2) Hiragana and Katakana

Hiragana: Hiragana are curvy characters. A single line is written with a single stroke. The pen should not be lifted from the paper even if the stroke bends or curves, doubles back, or intersects another stroke.

Katakana: Katakana characters are made up of straight lines. A single straight line is written with a single stroke. The exception is that all upper-right bends and the lower-left bend in “△” should be written with a single stroke, without lifting the pen from the paper.

*The fonts, stroke orders, and translations used in this book have been selected with ease of understanding for the beginner-level Japanese student in mind.