

Japanese Pronunciation Guide

Basic vowel sounds

A – “ah”	Waseda
I – “ee”	Hiro
U – between “oo” and the sound in “push”	Murata
E – “eh”	Endo
O – “oh”	Konnichiwa

Basic Tips

- All Japanese words end with a vowel sound, unless they end with the letter N.
- Rs are flipped, similar to Spanish or Italian.
- Single vowels are “pure” without diphthongs; however, two or more vowels can be combined to produce a diphthong vowel. So e = “eh” but ei = “ay”
- Tone of voice is not used to express emotion in the same way it is in English or Romance languages. What would sound monotonous to English speakers sounds perfectly fine to the Japanese ear. Most of the time, less is more.
- Generally, syllable emphasis is much more toned down and comes 1-2 syllables before we would expect it in English.

Example: Kentaro

Incorrect: Ken-**TA**-ro

Correct: KEN-ta-ro

Advanced Tips

- Sometimes, “U” and “I” vowel sounds are dropped or barely whispered if they come at the end of a word or in particular mid-word constructions. This may take a little practice/experience to get the knack.

Example: Keisuke, Yoshihiro, Akiko

Incorrect: Kei-soo-ke, Yo-shee-hiro, A-kee-ko Correct: Kei-**s**-ke, Yo-**sh**-hiro, A-**k**-ko

- There are various ways of indicating that a vowel sound should be elongated. To make an “o” sound longer, for example, it can be notated as oo, oh, ou, or ō. Sometimes there’s no change.
- A double consonant or vowel basically indicates that the sound should be held for twice as long. To English speakers, an elongated vowel sounds stressed and the syllable after an elongated consonant sounds stressed, e.g. hikooki = hi-KO-ki and gakkō = gak-KO.

More Example Names (remember less is more when accenting syllables)

<u>As written</u>	<u>Basic</u>	<u>Advanced</u>
Aimi	EYE-mee	(same)
Asuka	AH-soo-kah	AH-s-kah
Chika	Chee-kah	Ch-kah
Etsuko	EH-tsoo-koh	EH-ts-koh
Fujiko	FOO-jee-koh	HOO-j-koh
Hibiki	Hee-bee-kee	sH-bee-k
Hikari	Hee-KAH-ree	sH-KA-ree
Hitomi	Hee-TOH-mee	sH-TO-mee
Itsuki	EE-tsoo-kee	EE-ts-kee
Kaede	Kah-eh-deh	(same)
Kazue	Kah-zoo-eh	(same)
Mitsuhide	MEE-tsoo-hee-deh	MEE-ts-sH-deh
Noboru	Noh-boh-roo	(same)
Rikuto	REE-koo-toh	DEE-k-toh
Ryosuke	RYOH-soo-keh	DYOH-s-keh
Sachiko	SAH-chee-koh	SAH-ch-koh
Shichiro	SHEE-chee-roh	SHEE-ch-roh
Tsukiko	Tsoo-kee-koh	Ts-k-koh
Yoshiyasu	Yoh-shee-yah-soo	Yoh-sh-yah-s