

# Instructions for using Hiragana Handwriting Practice Sheet

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These instructions are designed to help you recognize and draw traditional Japanese syllabic characters. This practice develops more than just character memorization; it also fosters concentration and motor skills. It transforms monotonous language study into a calming ritual.

## Preparation

- Download the practice sheet and print it on paper.
- If you use a thick-tipped pen or if your eyesight is not very good, print it in A3 size.
- Experiment with different pens and use the one you like best (soft pencils, gel pens, and ink brush pens are best).
- Set aside an unhurried moment for practice.
- Summon your will and claim your time by thinking: "This moment is mine," "I am practicing now," "I will do my best," or "Everything else can wait for now".
- Turn off distracting electronic devices and set your phone to silent.
- Settle into a peaceful space and arrange your supplies neatly on the table in front of you.
- If any clothing feels tight, loosen it and take a comfortable position.
- Let your breathing stabilize. This will also calm your mind.

## Drawing the Characters

- Pick up your pen, look at the character, and imagine the order in which the lines can be drawn with a continuous movement.
- Start from the upper left; draw horizontal lines from left to right and vertical lines from top to bottom.
- Create curves and change direction with continuous movements, even if the tip occasionally lifts from the paper.
- If you try to make the shapes slowly and precisely, you may squeeze the pen too hard, causing the character to easily lose its soft nature.
- Curved lines and circular arcs are more successful when the side of your hand and wrist are not pressed tightly against the table. Let your wrist be relaxed, not stiff.
- When you have finished drawing a character, look at it and say its name out loud.
- In the beginning, there are two "gentle ghosts." Draw the characters over them, and they will guide you toward the correct shape.
- Draw the characters calmly in the empty boxes. Your hand will begin to remember the shape.
- Halfway through, you will encounter a third "gentle ghost." Draw the character over it to help you remember the correct form.

## Pausing and Finishing

- When you get tired, distracted, or annoyed by a mistake, the shape begins to crumble. Take a short break until you are calm again.
- When a row is finished, close your eyes and imagine the shape of the character. Say the name of the character out loud. Open your eyes and check if you remembered correctly.
- If a character is not quite successful, try drawing it in a larger size to see if it is easier.
- The number of repetitions allowed by the sheet's grid alone is not enough to master the most difficult characters. Challenge them to a duel on a blank sheet.
- Imagine that you are drawing the lines as if you were fencing with the character.
- When you have tried all the characters, choose your favorite and reflect on why you picked that specific one.

## The Path Forward

Learning characters is not a lesson, but a journey. Hiragana contains 46 basic characters. Once you know them, the next milestones are the *dakuten* and *handakuten* modifiers. With their help, you get voiced consonants (e.g., *s* → *z*). They are only adding small ticks and circles to the character to change how they sound. Once you have learned those as well, you will have all 107 Hiragana characters.