

Romanization Japanese

Japanese presents additional complexities not found in Chinese (and you thought Chinese was difficult!). This complexity comes about because Japanese uses *both* Chinese characters and its own syllabary (characters representing syllables, not individual letters) in writing. The syllabary is actually easy to learn to read, since 47 characters make up the collection of syllables (in two different sets). Each character can be read in only one way.

The Chinese characters (*kanji*) that the written Japanese language uses can, however, usually be read in more than one way. Not uncommonly, a kanji can have three, four, or even more readings.

As an example, the Chinese character 行 (introduced in the last section) can be romanized as *xing* or *hang* in pinyin (disregarding the tones). In Japanese, however, the character can be read in any of these ways, depending on use and context:

kō
gyō
an
i
iki
oko
okona
yu
yuki
iku
nami
name
yuku

Before looking at how to determine the reading of the kanji, however, we will first look at the two syllabaries, called *katakana* and *hiragana*. These tables are not shown in *ALA-LC romanization tables*, so the next four pages show the romanization of these syllabaries.

Katakana Syllabary and Modified Hepburn Romanization

(C)V Combinations

CyV Combinations

ア a	イ i	ウ u	エ e	オ o			
カ ka	キ ki	ク ku	ケ ke	コ ko	キャ kya	キュ kyu	キョ kyo
ガ ga	ギ gi	グ gu	ゲ ge	ゴ go	ギャ gya	ギュ gyu	ギョ gyo
サ sa	シ shi	ス su	セ se	ソ so	シャ sha	シュ shu	ショ sho
ザ za	ジ ji	ズ zu	ゼ ze	ゾ zo	ジャ ja	ジュ ju	ジョ jo
タ ta	チ chi	ツ tsu	テ te	ト to	チャ cha	チュ chu	チョ cho
ダ da	ヂ ji	ヅ zu	デ de	ド do	ヂャ ja	ヂュ ju	ヂョ jo
ナ na	ニ ni	ヌ nu	ネ ne	ノ no	ニャ nya	ニュ nyu	ニョ nyo
ハ ha	ヒ hi	フ fu	ヘ he	ホ ho	ヒャ hya	ヒュ hyu	ヒョ hyo
バ ba	ビ bi	ブ bu	ベ be	ボ bo	ビャ bya	ビュ byu	ビョ byo
パ pa	ピ pi	プ pu	ペ pe	ポ po	ピャ pya	ピュ pyu	ピョ pyo
マ ma	ミ mi	ム mu	メ me	モ mo	ミャ mya	ミュ myu	ミョ myo
ヤ ya		ユ yu		ヨ yo			
ラ ra	リ ri	ル ru	レ re	ロ ro	リャ rya	リュ ryu	リョ ryo
ワ wa	ヰ i		ヱ e	ヲ o			

Combinations for Foreign Syllables

ヴァ	ヴィ	ヴ	ヴェ	ヴォ
va	vi	vu	ve	vo
	ウィ		ウェ	ウォ
	wi		we	wo

シェ
she

ジェ
je

ティ	トゥ	チェ
ti	tu	che

ディ	ドウ
di	du

ファ	フィ	フェ	フォ
fa	fi	fe	fo

ン
n

Notes: Vowel length is indicated in kana by doubling, or more often with a following dash: アア or アー is *ā*. Geminate consonants are written in kana with a preceding subscript ツ *tsu*; thus アツカ *akka*; ブック *bukku*.

Double *ch* is *tch*, not *chch* (for example, ツチ is *tchi*).

々 is character repetition: 我々: *wareware*.

Hiragana Syllabary and Modified Hepburn Romanization

(C)V Combinations

CyV Combinations

あ い う え お
a i u e o

か ka	き ki	く ku	け ke	こ ko	きゃ kya	きゅ kyu	きょ kyo
が ga	ぎ gi	ぐ gu	げ ge	ご go	ぎゃ gya	ぎゅ gyu	ぎょ gyo
さ sa	し shi	す su	せ se	そ so	しゃ sha	しゅ shu	しょ sho
ざ za	じ ji	ず zu	ぜ ze	ぞ zo	じゃ ja	じゅ ju	じょ jo
た ta	ち chi	つ tsu	て te	と to	ちゃ cha	ちゅ chu	ちょ cho
だ da	ぢ ji	づ zu	で de	ど do	ぢゃ ja	ぢゅ ju	ぢょ jo
な na	に ni	ぬ nu	ね ne	の no	にゃ nya	にゅ nyu	にょ nyo
は ha	ひ hi	ふ fu	へ he	ほ ho	ひゃ hya	ひゅ hyu	ひょ hyo
ば ba	び bi	ぶ bu	べ be	ぼ bo	びゃ bya	びゅ byu	びょ byo
ぱ pa	ぴ pi	ぷ pu	ぺ pe	ぽ po	ぴゃ pya	ぴゅ pyu	ぴょ pyo
ま ma	み mi	む mu	め me	も mo	みゃ mya	みゅ myu	みょ myo
や ya		ゆ yu		よ yo			
ら ra	り ri	る ru	れ re	ろ ro	りゃ rya	りゅ ryu	りょ ryo
わ wa	ゐ i		ゑ e	を o			

Combinations for Foreign Syllables

づあ づい づ づえ づお
va vi vu ve vo

 づい づえ づお
 wi we wo

しえ
she

じえ
je

ちい ちゆ ちえ
ti tu che

ぢい ぢゆ
di du

ふあ ふい ふえ ふお
fa fi fe fo

ん
n

Notes: Vowel length is indicated in kana by doubling, or more often with a following dash: ああ or あー is *ā*. Geminate consonants are written in kana with a preceding subscript つ *tsu*; thus あつか *akka*; ぶつく *bukku*.

Double *ch* is *tch*, not *chch* (for example, っち is *tchi*).

々 is character repetition: 我々: *wareware*.

Romanizing kana (the general term for any of these syllables, whether it is katakana or hiragana) is straight forward: Locate the kana in the chart, and use the accompanying romanization. Any *kanji*, however, cannot be romanized until one knows how it is read. Since there are at least two readings for almost every kanji, this poses a problem.

The best solution that the presenter has found to this problem is the time-honored solution of catalogers: borrow from someone else. In this case, borrow from the Japanese, who should be able to read their own language.

The NACSIS web (given in the resources page) allows one to search Japanese catalogs using the romanization given here. The only change needed is that long vowels (those romanized with a macron) need to be searched as double vowels: aa, etc., except ou for a long o.

Where to find information: The title page of a Japanese book provides much the same information as an English-language book. There is almost never a date on the title page, though, and the verso of the title page does not provide this information, either. When cataloging books in Japanese, it is absolutely necessary to check the colophon for such information as the edition and date of publication (as well as information about the distributor and other printing information that is not usually bibliographically significant).

The reason this information is so easily missed is that everything, including the numbers, is written in Japanese characters. One must be able to read Japanese numerals in order to catalog the book.

The Japanese numerals:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	100	1000
一	二	三	四	五	六	七	八	九	十	百	千

Books published in the Japanese language very often give the date of publication not in terms of the Gregorian calendar, but in terms of the era name. This date is almost always found in the colophon of the book. According to AACR2 1.4F1, the date should be recorded as found, followed with the year of the Gregorian calendar. Use the table on the next page to convert the Japanese date to a Gregorian date.

Romanized form	Vernacular form	Period	To get the Gregorian date	Year/month/day the era began
Meiji	明治	1868–1912	Add 1867 to the date in Meiji	1868/09/08
Taishō	大正	1912–1926	Add 1911 to the date in Taishō	1912/07/12
Shōwa	昭和	1926–1989	Add 1925 to the date in Shōwa	1926/12/25
Heisei	平成	1989–	Add 1988 to the date in Heisei	1989/01/08

Some Japanese bibliographical terms

Vernacular	Romanization	Meaning
著	cho	author (follows the author's name)—transcribed as part of the author statement
訳	yaku	translate(d)
訳者	yakusha	translator (follows the translator's name)
版	han	edition
初版	shohan	1st edition
再版	saihan	2nd edition
第二版	dai 2-han	2nd edition
改訂	kaitei	revision/revised
社	sha	company
発売	hatsubai	seller/distributor
東京	Tōkyō	Tokyo