

JAPANESE PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

r

Made by tapping the tongue behind the upper teeth. It is similar to the brief flap sound in the words “lettuce” or “letter.” Do not curl the tongue.

kirikane	kee-REE-KAH-NEH	Muromachi	mu-ROH-mah-chee
moriage	moh-REE-AH-GEH	Oribe	OH-ree-beh
suzuribako	su-ZU-REE-bah-koh	Rinpa	REEN-PAH

f – occurs before the vowel u

A soft sound pronounced by bringing the upper lip and lower lip close to each other and gently blowing air. Sounds like “who.”

furisode	who-REE-SOH-DEH	Fudō Myōō	who-DOHH-MYOHH-ohh
fusuma	who-SU-MAH	Kofun	koh-WHO-N
gofun	goh-WHO-N		

ts

Sounds like the ts in “cats.”

Kanō Sansetsu	kah-NOHH SAN-se-tsu		
Sakai Hoitsu	SAH-kah-ee HOH-ee-tsu		
Yamamoto Baiitsu	yah-MAH-MOH-TOH BAHEE-ee-tsu		

g

Sounds nasalized especially when it occurs between vowels.

nanga	NAHN-GA		
negoro	neh-GOH-ROH		
Utagawa Hiroshige	u-TAH-GAH-WAH hih-ROH-shee-geh		

ō / ou

Sounds like a long vowel o.

mukōzuke	mu-KOHH-ZU-KEH	Niō	nee-OHH
shōji	SHOHH-JEE	Tōdaiji	TOHH-dah-ee-jee

yo / yu – occurs after a consonant

Pronounce as one syllable, not two syllables. Kyoto is KYOHH-to, not ki-YOHH-to.

kyōgen	KYOHH-gen	kyōzuka	KYOHH-ZU-KAH
Gyōki	GYOHH-kee	Nyorai	nyoh-RAH-EE
Gyokuen Bonpo	GYOH-ku-en BON-poh	Sen no Rikyu	SEN no REE-kyu

Other pronunciations:

kimono	kee-MOH-NOH	Edo	eh-DOH
maki-e	mah-KEE-EH	Heian	HAY-AN

nashiji
tatami
ukiyoe

nah-SHEE-JEE
tah-TAH-MEE
u-KEE-YOH-EH

Nabeshima
Sesson Shūkei
Seto

nah-BEH-shee-mah
SEH-'-sohn SHUU-kay
SEH-toh