yomimaru

Hiragana mnemonics

A picture for every basic kana, and a word to hear it in.



あ

a

An apple's stem crosses the top while its peel spirals off in one long ribbon: that curl is あ.

あめ ame: Rain



い

i

Two eels stand on their tails side by side, one tall and one short: the two strokes of い.

いぬ inu: Dog



う

u

A steaming bowl of udon: steam ticks off the top, the bowl curves and hooks under into う.

うみ umi: Sea



え

e

An escalator's steps zigzag up to a single rider's head at the top: those angled steps are え.

えんぴつ enpitsu: Pencil



お

o

An olive on a toothpick, with a red pimento dot peeking out at the top right. That dot makes it お, not あ.

おにぎり onigiri: Rice Ball



か

ka

A car races down a road that hooks left, with a speed streak slashing across and a puff of exhaust off the top right: か.

かさ kasa: Umbrella



き

ki

An old key stands upright: two crossbars for the grip and a hooked tooth below. き has two bars, not さ's one.

きもの kimono: Kimono



く

ku

A cuckoo bursts from its clock, beak snapped wide open going 'ku-ku'. That sharp beak is く.

くつ kutsu: Shoes



け

ke

A kettle whistles: a tall jet of steam on the left, the handle and hooked spout on the right form け.

けむり kemuri: Smoke



こ

ko

Two koi drift one above the other, their parallel bodies the two strokes of こ.

こころ kokoro: Heart



さ

sa

A sailboat: the mast crosses the top and one sail bellies out below. さ has one crossbar, not き's two.

さくら sakura: Cherry Blossom



し

shi

A ship's anchor drops on its line and curves into one big hook at the bottom: upright, that's し.

しお shio: Salt



す

su

A curly straw dives into a tall soda and coils into a loop at the bottom: す.

すし sushi: Sushi



せ

se

A seedling, せ: a straight stem crossed by one broad leaf, rising from soil that curls up at the right.

せんせい sensei: Teacher



そ

so

A zigzag of thread being sewn, dropping into a curl at the end: そ.

そら sora: Sky

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た

ta

A gift tag, た: crossed ribbon up on the left and a little folded card hooking off the lower right.

たまご tamago: Egg



ち

chi

A knife rests across a wedge of cheese, its belly curling left. ち is the mirror image of さ.

ちず chizu: Map



つ

tsu

A single wave curls over from left to right, lying flat. That sideways hook is つ.

つくえ tsukue: Desk



て

te

An old telephone hanging on its hook, て: a flat top, then a curved drop.

てがみ tegami: Letter



と

to

A foot mid-step, と: the shin drops straight and the toe curls up, with a pebble stuck to the side.

ともだち tomodachi: Friend



な

na

A rope tied in a knot, な: strands crossed up top and a small loop dangling from the lower right.

なつ natsu: Summer



に

ni

A bandaged knee, に: the shin on the left and two strips of bandage wrapped across on the right.

にく niku: Meat



ぬ

nu

Noodles twirled on chopsticks, ending in one extra loop: that loop makes it ぬ, not め.

ぬの nuno: Cloth



ね

ne

A bird's nest in a tree, ね: the trunk on the left and twigs coiling into a round loop on the right.

ねこ neko: Cat



の

no

A bull's nose ring, の: one round loop with a little tail.

のり nori: Seaweed



は

ha

A straw hat on a stand, は: the pole on the left, the brim crossing it and the crown looping on the right.

はな hana: Flower



ひ

hi

The curved heel of a shoe, one smooth swoop: ひ.

ひと hito: Person



ふ

fu

A fountain, ふ: a droplet up top, the spout curving in the middle and a splash to each side.

ふね fune: Ship



へ

he

A hen hunched over, its back a single low peak: へ.

へや heya: Room



ほ

ho

Lay a roof-beam across the top of は and the hat becomes a house: ほ.

ほし hoshi: Star

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ま

ma

A ship's mast, ま: two spars cross the pole, and rope coils into a loop at its foot. ま ends in a loop, not も's hook.

まつ matsu: Pine Tree



み

mi

A hand mirror, み: the round glass loops at the top and the handle crosses down.

みず mizu: Water



む

mu

A cow goes 'muuu'. In む, the loop is its round body and the flick at the top right is its swishing tail.

むし mushi: Insect



め

me

A medal on crossed ribbons: one clean loop and no extra curl. That makes it め, not ぬ.

かめ kame: Turtle



も

mo

A mop stood on its head, も: the handle hooks at the floor, with two streaks of suds crossing it.

もり mori: Forest



や

ya

A ball of yarn with a knitting needle stuck through and a loose end flicking out: や.

やま yama: Mountain



ゆ

yu

A unicorn, ゆ: its round head loops and its horn slashes up through it.

ゆき yuki: Snow



よ

yo

A yo-yo on its string, よ: the string drops straight, the yo-yo loops at the bottom, and a short peg sticks out from the string.

よる yoru: Night



ら

ra

A rabbit sits up, ら: a flick of ear at the top and its round back curving down.

らくだ rakuda: Camel



り

ri

Two ribbon streamers hang side by side, the left one cut short: り.

りんご ringo: Apple



る

ru

A root twists down and curls into a loop at its tip: that loop makes it る, not ろ.

るす rusu: Absence



れ

re

Someone leans back to rest, れ: a straight back and a leg kicking out to the right. れ ends in a kick, not ね's loop.

れきし rekishi: History



ろ

ro

A winding road bends down and just ends, with no loop at the bottom. That makes it ろ, not る.

ろうそく rousoku: Candle



わ

wa

A water balloon on a string, わ: the string on the left and the round, open belly on the right.

わた wata: Cotton



を

wo

A wok tosses food: the pan swoops round at the bottom and the food flips across the top. を is only ever a particle, spelled wo in romaji and said o.

ほん を よむ hon wo yomu: Read a book



ん

n

One swoop like a cursive n, tail flicking up: ん hums on its own and never starts a word.

ほん hon: Book

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