yomimaru

Katakana mnemonics

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

ア a

An axe: the blade bends down at the top right and the handle drops through the middle. マ's second stroke flicks right instead.

アイス aisu: Ice Cream

イ i

A lean-to shelter: one roof beam slants down to the left and a straight post holds it up.

インク inku: Ink

ウ u

Hiragana う's steaming udon bowl, made boxy: the steam tick on top, the bowl hooking down. Without the tick it is ワ.

ウサギ usagi: Rabbit

エ e

A steel I-beam for the engineer: a short top bar, a post, a longer base. It looks like a capital I.

エアコン eakon: Air Conditioner

オ o

An opera singer: arms thrown wide across, body straight down, one leg sweeping back to the left.

オレンジ orenji: Orange

カ ka

Hiragana か without its puff of exhaust on the right. It also looks like the kanji 力, power.

カメラ kamera: Camera

キ ki

An old key with two teeth: two crossbars and a slanted shaft, and no hook at the bottom. Hiragana き keeps the hook.

キウイ kiui: Kiwi

ク ku

An arm bent at the elbow like a 7, ready to cook. Add a dash inside and it is タ; add a crossing leg and it is ケ.

クラス kurasu: Class

ケ ke

A leaning letter K: a short slash, a bar out to the right, and a long leg dropping from the bar's middle.

ケーキ keeki: Cake

コ ko

The corner of a box, open on the left. Close that side and it becomes 口.

コーヒー koohii: Coffee

サ sa

A saddle: one long crossbar resting on two legs, the right leg sweeping back to the left.

サラダ sarada: Salad

シ shi

A smiling face lying on its side: two dots stacked on the LEFT, and the smile sweeps UP to the right. ツ's dots sit on top.

シーソー shiisoo: Seesaw

ス su

A runner in mid-stride: the body bends forward and one leg kicks out behind. In ヌ the second stroke cuts through the body.

スポーツ supootsu: Sports

セ se

Hiragana せ with only one post: the bar hooks down at the right and the stem curls to the right at the foot.

センター sentaa: Center

ソ so

A needle sewing: a small stitch at the top left, then the needle plunges DOWN from the top right. ン's long line rises instead.

ソーダ sooda: Soda

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タ — **ta**
ク with a small dash inside, like the kanji 夕, evening. Plain ク has nothing inside.
タクシー takushii: Taxi

チ — **chi**
A cheerleader: a tilted cap, arms straight across, one leg swinging left. It looks like the kanji 千, thousand. テ has a flat cap.
チーズ chiizu: Cheese

ツ — **tsu**
Two raindrops fall side by side from the TOP edge, and one long stream runs DOWN to the left. シ's drops sit on the left and its line rises.
ツアー tsuaa: Tour

テ — **te**
A TV antenna on a roof: two flat bars and one cable drooping down to the left.
テスト tesuto: Test

ト — **to**
A totem pole with a single twig sticking out to the right.
トイレ toire: Toilet

ナ — **na**
The top-left corner of hiragana な on its own: a bar across and a leg bending down to the left. メ has no flat bar.
ナイフ naifu: Knife

ニ — **ni**
Two lines, like the kanji 二, two. They are also the right half of hiragana に.
ニュース nyuusu: News

ヌ — **nu**
Noodles in a bowl: the rim bends down to the left and one chopstick stabs through it. In ス the stroke only kicks out below.
ヌードル nuudoru: Noodles

ネ — **ne**
A necktie on a peg: the knot tick on top, the tie bending left, a stripe down the middle and a small one on the right.
ネクタイ nekutai: Necktie

ノ — **no**
A single slash, as if crossing out a word to say no: it runs from the top right down to the left. Add a tick and it becomes ソ.
ノート nooto: Notebook

ハ — **ha**
Two strokes bursting apart like a laugh: manga writes 'ha ha ha' as three of them in a row. It comes from the kanji 八, eight, and looks just like it.
ハム hamu: Ham

ヒ — **hi**
A hiker resting: back upright, legs stretched out along the ground, one arm pointing to the right.
ヒーロー hiiroo: Hero

フ — **fu**
One stroke across and then down to the left, like the edge of a hood. ワ adds a post on the left; ス and ヌ add a kick.
フランス furansu: France

ヘ — **he**
The same single low peak as hiragana へ. The two look almost identical, so the words around them tell you which script it is.
ヘリ heri: Helicopter

ホ — **ho**
The kanji 木, tree, with its two lower branches cut into short stumps on either side.
ホテル hoteru: Hotel

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マ ma

A mat folded over: the top bends down to the left and the end flicks out to the right. ア's second stroke drops through the middle.

マスク masuku: Mask

ミ mi

Three slanted dashes, like the kanji 三, three, blown sideways. 'Three' is mittsu.

ミルク miruku: Milk

ム mu

A small tent pitched on the ground, with a peg at its right corner.

ムービー muubii: Movie

メ me

A big X marking the spot on a treasure map. ナ has a flat bar across instead of a slash.

メロン meron: Melon

モ mo

Hiragana も straightened out: two bars across, and the stem drops then turns right along the floor.

モニター monitaa: Monitor

ヤ ya

Hiragana や without its small tick: the knitting needle and the curve of yarn are all that is left.

ヤシ yashi: Palm Tree

ユ yu

A letter U knocked over onto its side, with the bottom line running past the corner: 'yu'.

ユニコーン yunikoon: Unicorn

ヨ yo

A capital E facing backwards. Take out the middle bar and it becomes コ.

ヨーグルト yooguruto: Yogurt

ラ ra

Hiragana ら made angular: a short lid on top, then the back bending down to the left. ワ has a post on the left instead of a lid.

ラジオ rajio: Radio

リ ri

Almost the same as hiragana り, only straighter: two streamers, the left one short.

リボン ribon: Ribbon

ル ru

Two tree roots side by side: the left one bends away and the right one curls up at its tip. レ is that right root alone.

ルール ruuru: Rule

レ re

A checkmark: a stroke down that kicks up to the right. It is the right half of ル.

レモン remon: Lemon

ロ ro

A closed box, like the kanji 口, mouth. Open its left side and it becomes コ.

ロボット robotto: Robot

ワ wa

ウ without the tick on top: a short post on the left, then a roof that bends down. Remove the post and it is フ.

ワイン wain: Wine

ヲ wo

フ with an extra bar through the middle and a slash down. Katakana almost never uses it: loanwords write the sound with オ.

ヲタ wota: Geek (slang spelling)

ン n

A shooting star: a small spark at the top left, then its long tail flies UP to the right. ソ's long line falls DOWN.

ラーメン raamen: Ramen

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