

# 突発！ One Week to Kana

A Strategy Guide for the Determined Student



By Ryan Layman

---

## We got the Rights

This work is licensed as a Creative Commons work. You have the permission to share and distribute this freely.

Actually, I want you to. So if you think this will help a friend out, let them know. Let them all know. You can do that by sending this to them in an e-mail, or by sending them to the link on my site. It's way more important to me that I make something people want and need than making money off of it.

I only have one condition. Keep it as is and properly attributed to Ryan Layman, and don't make money off it.

So please use and share freely. Just because you've embarked on the path of self-study doesn't mean we can't help each other out every now and then. It is precisely independence that allows us to contribute freely to others.

Use Wisely,  
Ryan

---

## Introduction

You've decided to learn the Japanese language. And this time, you're not sitting around on the project. You're going to get this done. Great! You're going to go far, I'm sure. Of course, not everything is perfect. You have no budget. You have no teacher. You have no plan.

And there's also three different scripts in the Japanese language. All are required. All of them don't look a thing like English. All of them make you want to jump off a cliff. In fact, it looks a little like someone put ink on an insect and let it run around the page.

But that won't stop you! Good for you! I applaud your efforts. I also applaud you coming here to get it done, because I wrote this book just for you, the student on a budget with a mission to get the job done as quickly as possible so that you can focus on the real joys of language that come with being, for lack of a more polite word for your status, literate.

This book will give you all of the materials you need to smash (突発) through two of the scripts in one week. Hiragana and katakana are those scripts.

---

## This Book

I divided this book into four parts from here on out. The first part, *The Road Before You*, is just a simple primer on what you will be facing. It sounds simple, but it will be challenging.

The day before (which I will call *Zero Day*, in keeping with the somewhat martial theme of the book, since I'm also heavily into martial arts) is going to be the day where you acquire your tools to accomplish the task. You will also educate yourself about how to accumulate this vast knowledge, and then how to maintain it afterwards.

Then begins *The One Week Challenge to Kana*. I encourage you to look at this as *training*, because otherwise it will feel like work. And I don't like work. I imagine you don't either. You are making yourself stronger in literacy with this program.

Finally, I've included an appendix with some goodies that you can use to work on your kana and supplement your training from here on out. In addition, I'll be giving you my information, so you can check out my website and learn other ways to continue learning (you can also see my softer side there, too). I'm looking forward to seeing you on the other side.

---

## The Road Before You

There's a few things I should tell you about kana. First, there is no phonetic reason for the separation between the two characters. In fact, every hiragana character has a katakana character that looks similar and carries the exact same sound.

So now you're asking yourself, why bother having two kana, then? Good question. The reason is because the separate kana provide some of the functions that we've reserved in English that underlining or italicizing characters in printed text fulfill.

Hiragana is the easy one. Anything not written in kanji (which I'll discuss in a separate e-book) Japanese write in hiragana. Katakana is different.

Katakana is like italics used for Latin that we often see in law articles. *Sine qua non*, and all that jazz. We put them in italics right? Every language out there has a way of identifying what words are native words and what words are foreign words (or names, probably like yours). In English, italics do that. In Japanese, katakana does it. There's one more function. Impact words. *Bang! Crack! Whiz!* Once again, italics and katakana.

---

## Zero Day - Tools for the Job

You will need a few things to accomplish this task. The first will be your training tool. It is called the Spaced Repetition System, but you can call it the SRS. This is free software that works like electronic flashcards, except it runs on complicated algorithms developed by people smarter than you or me to automatically schedule your review.

Nice. I recommend either Surusu or Anki. Sign up for Surusu or download Anki, whichever you prefer. Get familiar with how they work.

You'll also need decks with the hiragana and the katakana on them. Thankfully you're in luck. I've already [created some](#) for you (as long as some links to other stuff), and I've even been real nice and decided to add some old ones that aren't even used in the language anymore. Because I care. Impress your Japanese friends!

Last, you're going to need some good old fashioned pencil and paper. Because you're going to be practicing writing these characters. By hand. Top to bottom, left to right. Sounds easy enough, right? Excellent.

# Zero Day – A Comparison of Surusu and Anki

Surusu and Anki are two different beasts, but I've been using both of them for a while now. I use Anki for my current German studies, and Surusu helps me with my Japanese studies. Here are a few features about them that you should know.

## Anki

- Fairly customizable with features
- Software client required, but can sync with internet account
- Daily reps can be adjusted, also can add more at will.
- Change operating language as you get better!
- Harder to grade yourself accurately
- [Link](#)

## Surusu

- Less customizable, but gets new features and upgraded constantly by creator, [Khatzumoto](#).
- More choices for grading yourself.
- Can't change operating language.
- Daily reps are set at 35. Add more at will afterwards.
- All online, no sync required for multiple location.
- [Link](#)

---

## Zero Day – Preparing Your Procedure

You've hopefully set aside a pretty free week to get this done, although you can do it simultaneously with work or school. You'll need some time every day to do it right.

First open up Anki or Surusu, whichever you'll use. Then import both decks and name them appropriately (you'll want to name the Surusu decks immediately after each upload. Once you have done this, and arranged your paper and pencil by your computer, it's time to take it easy. Rest up. Tomorrow's the day you start becoming literate in your new language.

Keep in mind that some questions tomorrow will feature multiple, but related kana. As you will see, the little dots that look like quotation marks slightly modify the sound of kana. A mark that looks like the tiny <sup>o</sup> you see for Fahrenheit/Celsius degree markings change an /h/ or /f/sound (hint, they're in the same group) to a /p/ sound, so be forewarned. If you see kana in groups, you are responsible for correctly identifying *all* of their sounds.

# Day 1 - A New Beginning

Wake up. Clean up. Sit down. Shut up. It's time to get started.

Open your SRS of choice and get started. Today you're going to go through and learn 40 separate cards (at least). You'll start with Hiragana. Open that deck. You basically have two simple task sets at this point.

## **If you see hiragana...**

Then guess the pronunciation(s) out loud.  
Measure your progress.

## **If you see pronunciations...**

Then draw the hiragana on your paper.  
Measure your progress

Measuring progress on Anki is easy, let it tell you how long to take. Surusu is also simple:

0 = No idea. Try again.

1 = Saw it once, but still no idea.

2 = I should see it again tomorrow.

3 = No problems. But still not feeling it.

4 = Alright. But not perfect.

5 = *That was a foreign language!?*

---

## Day 2 - The Process Begins to Take Hold

Your procedure from here on out is the same. You will see a mixture of things that you didn't do so well on yesterday. That's ok. That's the SRS telling you what needs work. Relax, let the SRS do its job, and trust the process. You are still being asked to do 40 new cards today. Good luck!

## Day 3 - Struggle & Promise

Same procedure. Different day. You will see some things that you struggled with yesterday as well as some things that were kind of *meh* on Day 1. However, your persistence pays off. At the end of the day, you should be within site of your first goal! The acquisition of hiragana awaits you.

---

## Day 4 - The Breakthrough and the Downhill Slope

You will still sift through the SRS reviews from the past days, offering a mix of things you did well on in Day 1, things ok on Day 2, and things you bombed on Day 3. Halfway through the day's new work, however you will finally pull it off. You will have finished hiragana! Hurrah! Reward yourself. If you live in Japan, go outside and enjoy the ability to sound out the hiragana. If you don't live in Japan, try to acquire a Japanese children's book to read (No kanji, so you're good). Even if you don't know the words, knowing the sounds will motivate you.

However, katakana still remains. Get back to your SRS and do your remaining 20 cards left in the day from that new deck. Some of them will kind of look like hiragana, making it kind of easy. Some of them will not look like anything you've ever seen before. That's normal. One day you'll *like that* about katakana.

---

## **Day 5 - You won't know what it is. Just Keep Shooting!**

You're now only on katakana. But hiragana is not off the hook. Open up that deck first, and do the day's review. Good. Now open up your katakana deck, do the review from yesterday. And now 40 new cards. You know the drill. The katakana looks alien to you. But don't worry. Technically, we're the aliens. Katakana was always there. And it'll all work out in the end.

## **Day 6 - Victory is within Your Grasp!**

Once again, start your day off right with a heaping bowl of hiragana review. Chug it down with your katakana review from the past two days. Feels good, doesn't it? After 40 new cards, you might want to finish it off now, and rest on the 7<sup>th</sup> day. So if you're feeling divine, get it done! If not, it's cool. The finishing touches can still be put on the last day and you won't have to call it work.

---

## Day 7 - Welcome to (Semi-) Literacy!

Stay up the night before until 11:59pm. Have your SRS open and ready. The second that clock flickers to midnight, you'll be cracking away at it. Hiragana review. Check. Katakana review. Check. And this time, not even 40 new cards left to go.

Before you know it, five cards left. Four cards left. Three. Two. One. Your hand is shaking with anticipation, the kana now difficult to write from cramping...

... And then you're done. No fireworks. No clapping audience. But you are semi-literate. You could probably identify most foreign words used in the Japanese language (and there's a lot). You can write your name. You can read kid's books. Maintaining your newfound knowledge is simple. SRS for five minutes a day. Every day. Like brushing your teeth.

Now you'll just have to learn the kanji.

But don't worry. In due time, I'll have a short e-book to help you with that one, too. It'll take a bit longer, but it will be infinitely more rewarding. You'll be *crazy* literate. And then you'll get to see how *easy* Japanese grammar is. Are you *psyched*?

## Appendix – The Hiragana

あ い う え お  
か き く け こ  
さ し す せ そ  
た ち つ て と  
な に ぬ ね の  
は ひ ふ へ ほ  
ま み む め も  
や ゆ よ  
ら り る れ ろ  
わ ゐ ゑ<sup>1</sup> を  
ん

a, i, u, e, o  
ka, ki, ku, ke, ko  
sa, shi, su, se, so  
ta, chi, tsu, te, to  
na, ni, nu, ne, no  
ha, hi, fu, he, ho  
ma, mi, mu, me, mo  
ya, yu, yo  
ra, ri, ru, re, ro  
wa, wi, we, (w)o  
n

---

<sup>1</sup> Both ゐ and ゑ are no longer in use

## Appendix – The Katakana

ア イ ウ エ オ  
カ キ ク ケ コ  
サ シ ス セ ソ  
タ チ ツ テ ト  
ナ ニ ヌ ネ ノ  
ハ ヒ フ ヘ ホ  
マ ミ ム メ モ  
ヤ ユ ヨ  
ラ リ ル レ ロ  
ワ <sup>2</sup>ヰ <sup>2</sup>ヱ ヲ  
ン

a, i, u, e, o  
ka, ki, ku, ke, ko  
sa, shi, su, se, so  
ta, chi, tsu, te, to  
na, ni, nu, ne, no  
ha, hi, fu, he, ho  
ma, mi, mu, me, mo  
ya, yu, yo  
ra, ri, ru, re, ro  
wa, wi, we, (w)o  
n

---

<sup>2</sup> ヰ&ヱ are the obsolete katakana of the last two hiragana.

---

## Appendix – Other Resources

I would be remiss if I didn't give you guys anything else to help you along your way, so I've compiled a list of other sites that help out with the learning of kana.

The first is from Squire Starsquid over at [チョコチョコ](#), who put together some really beautiful practice sheets for both sets of kana. You can definitely use these for some extra practice on your kana handwriting if you like!

The next recommendation I can give to you is to try out the trial version of [NihongoUp](#), which was created by Philip Seyfi. Try out the trial version, which you can use for fifteen days and do more than just hiragana. If you like it, the real deal is only \$10 USD.

And I definitely can't go on without mentioning Khatzumoto's [All Japanese All the Time](#), which actually got me started on the path to self-study. The man is currently an Asian-language learning machine, having blitzed through Japanese in a year and a half and currently getting his groove on in Chinese (specifically of the Cantonese variety). His blog has been running for a long time now and has been getting rave reviews everywhere.

## About the Author

Ryan Layman is a writer and blogger on the topic of independent language study. In addition, he is Assistant Professor of English Language at Kanazawa Institute of Technology, where he's now worked for almost two years.

Ryan currently lives in Japan, speaks Japanese, and studies German. He also works to promote independent language studying among English speakers and Japanese speakers.

If you liked this e-book, then he recommends that you go over to [www.ryanlayman.com](http://www.ryanlayman.com), where you can get more advice on how to teach yourself a language in as little as 1-2 years! Please join their little community. It's a really nice place! Promise!

See you there!



## Go Forth and Share!

I hope you had fun! And if you did, I would really appreciate it if you told your friends. If you've finished the program, now you're the master! And you can give your friends encouragement every day as they prepare for their own *Week to Kana*.

I've made it really, really easy for you to give the gift of this book to your friends. Simply e-mail them a copy of this e-mail book and give them some best wishes on their studies. But don't come to me if they start coming to you with questions. That's what happens when you get some experience with something. Enjoy it. It means you've done a good job.

If you could also stop by and send me a comment on the site or drop me an e-mail and let me know:

- If you liked this (it's the first e-book I've put together, so be nice!) and any constructive criticism
- What you'd like to see in the future.
- How this helped you in your studies, if at all.

Then that would be great as well. I'm always looking for ways to help you guys out. Hope you're doing well, and I wish you the best.

Peace,  
Ryan