

# MANMONKAI PRONUNCIATION

Five vowels, kept steady, without the glides English adds. The rhythm runs on morae — short beats of roughly equal length — not on hammered syllables. A macron means the vowel lasts two beats.

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THE OPEN GATE

## 1 · VOWELS

The English words show vowel quality, not length. Japanese vowels never glide into a second sound.

### The five

| Letter | Say it like                                            | In the setting            |
|--------|--------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| a      | a in father — short and open                           | Manmonkai, samurai, Utage |
| i      | i in machine                                           | Gi, naimon, Meiki         |
| u      | food, clipped short — lips relaxed, not pushed forward | Mu, kuchimi, koku         |
| e      | e in bed, a little purer                               | Rei, kettō, keishi        |
| o      | o in for — stop it dead, no w at the end               | Mon, koku, Kokujin        |

Every written vowel counts as a beat, even where i or u goes almost silent (§3). No schwa: **kamae** is kah · mah · eh, three beats — not “ka-may”.

### When vowels meet

| Pair    | Say it                                                                                                            |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ai      | Two beats, kah · ee — <b>not</b> the one glide of English “eye”. Manmonkai, samurai, naimon                       |
| ei      | A long e — the second beat is more of the same vowel, no y on the end. “Day” stopped before the glide. Rei, Seiki |
| ou      | A long o — treat it exactly like ō.                                                                               |
| final e | Always eh, never silent and never ay. Utage, Hoshikage, kamae.                                                    |

### The macron: ā ē ī ō ū

**The vowel lasts two beats.** Not a stress mark; the quality does not change — hold the sound, do not re-attack it. Dropping a macron can change the word, or leave which one you meant ambiguous.

## 2 · BEATS, NOT STRESS

Give every beat roughly equal time. No English-style stress — and not flat either; see below.

### Count morae, not syllables

The unit is the **mora**, shorter than an English syllable. It is also what the poetry counts: **seika** 5–7–5–7–7 morae, **renka** 5–7–5 / 7–7. Full list in §4.

| Word       | Morae                     | Count |
|------------|---------------------------|-------|
| Manmonkai  | ma · n · mo · n · ka · i  | 6     |
| Genmon-shū | ge · n · mo · n · shu · u | 6     |
| kettō      | ke · t · to · o           | 4     |

Each n is a beat of its own. Counting English syllables gives 4 for **Genmon-shū** and 3 for **Tenmonkyō**; both are 6.

### Three things that each take a beat of their own

| Element           | How it works                                                                                                                                                       |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| n                 | A standalone or final <b>n</b> is a beat, not a tail on the vowel before it. <b>Tamashi-in</b> is tab · mah · shee · ee · n — “shi-in” never collapses to “sheen”. |
| Long vowel        | The second half of ō ū is a beat — keep the sound running, do not strike it twice. <b>Genmon-shū</b> ends shu · u.                                                 |
| Doubled consonant | A held closure — a beat of near-silence. <b>kettō</b> is ke · stop · to · o. Skipping it makes a different word.                                                   |

### Stress and pitch

Japanese does not hammer one syllable the way English does — that is the habit to drop. It **does** use pitch accent, so the language is not flat; this sheet does not mark it. An even delivery is fine at the table.

**If you remember one thing:** count morae, give each roughly equal time, hold a macron rather than hitting it. **Genmon-shū** is six beats, none hammered.

## 3 · CONSONANTS

Anything not listed is said as an English speaker would expect.

| Letter | How                                                                                                                                         |
|--------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| r      | One tongue-flick on the ridge behind the teeth — between r, l and d, as in a fast “butter”. Never curl the tongue. Rei, reisō               |
| g      | Hard, as in go — never as in gem. <b>Gi</b> is “ghee”. Some speakers soften a mid-word g toward ng; hard g is always fine. Genpuku, kagemai |
| f      | In these words it appears only in <b>fu</b> , blown between both lips — softer than English f, no teeth on the lip. Fumi-yakko, Dochifuda   |
| tsu    | The ts of “cats”, then the vowel — both letters, one beat. Tsubaki-ryū                                                                      |

| Letter                        | How                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| kyo, ryu, shu, gyo            | A consonant plus a y-glide is <b>one beat</b> , never “kee-yo”. <b>Tenmonkyō</b> is te · n · mo · n · kyo · o.                                                                                                      |
| n before a consonant          | Keeps its beat but reshapes: toward m before m, b, p; toward the <b>ng</b> of “sing” before k, g. <b>Manmonkai</b> does both — “mam-mo(ng)-kai”, still six beats. Let it happen.                                    |
| i, u between voiceless sounds | Very light, sometimes near-silent: <b>genshoku</b> ends close to gen-shohk, <b>keishi</b> to kaysh. The beat is still there. Voicing them fully is perfectly clear at the table; natural speech barely sounds them. |

## 4 · THE WORDS YOU WILL SAY MOST

· separates beats; bold = hold, do not re-attack. The number is the mora count.

| Term          | Say it                            |       |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|-------|
| Manmonkai     | mah · n · moh · n · kah · ee      | 6     |
| naimon        | nah · ee · moh · n                | 4     |
| Gi / Jin / Mu | ghee / jee · n / moo              | 1/2/1 |
| Rei / Yū      | reh · <b>eh</b> / yoo · <b>oo</b> | 2/2   |
| kamae         | kah · mah · eh                    | 3     |
| kettō         | keh · <b>t</b> · toh · <b>oh</b>  | 4     |
| reisō         | reh · <b>eh</b> · soh · <b>oh</b> | 4     |
| Kokujin       | koh · koo · jee · n               | 4     |
| genshoku      | geh · n · shoh · koo              | 4     |
| kuchimi       | koo · chee · mee                  | 3     |

| Term            | Say it                                              |       |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-------|
| Tenmonkyō       | teh · n · moh · n · kyoh · <b>oh</b>                | 6     |
| Genmon-shū      | geh · n · moh · n · shoo · <b>oo</b>                | 6     |
| Tamashi-in      | tah · mah · shee · ee · n                           | 5     |
| chiyu-sō        | chee · yoo · soh · <b>oh</b>                        | 4     |
| Jizamurai       | jee · zah · moo · rah · ee                          | 5     |
| Hoshikage       | hoh · shee · kah · geh                              | 4     |
| Seiryū-ji       | seh · <b>eh</b> · ryoo · <b>oo</b> · jee            | 5     |
| Tōrō-Ichi       | toh · <b>oh</b> · roh · <b>oh</b> · ee · chee       | 6     |
| Seiki / Yureiki | seh · <b>eh</b> · kee / yoo · reh · <b>eh</b> · kee | 3 / 4 |