

Japanese Braille



Braille is a tactile writing system, based on a series of raised dots, that is widely used by the blind. It was invented in 1821 by Louis Braille to write French, but has since been adapted to many other languages. English, which uses the Roman alphabet just as French does, required very little adaptation, but languages that do not use the Roman alphabet, such as Japanese, Korean, or Chinese, are often organized in a very different manner!

To the right is a Japanese word written in the *tenji* (“dot characters”) writing system. The large dots represent the raised bumps; the tiny dots represent empty positions.

karaoke
ka ra o ke

1. The following *tenji* words represent *atari*, *haiku*, *katana*, *kimono*, *koi*, and *sake*. Which is which? You don’t need to know either Japanese or Braille to figure it out; you’ll find that the system is highly logical.

a. haiku

b. sake

c. katana

d. kimono

e. koi

f. atari

2. What are the following words?

g. karate

h. anime

3. Write the following words in *tenji* characters:

i. samurai

j. miso

Edamame

e da ma me

voiced prefix + a = da

Bonsai

ba n sa i

voiced prefix + ho = ba

Futon

fu to n

Teriyaki

te ri ya hi

Kamihaze

ka mi ha ze

Tofu

to fu

voiced prefix + se = ze

Tsunami

tsu na mi

Karate

ka ra te

Zen

ze n

voiced prefix + se = ze

Kendo

ke n do

voiced prefix + to = do

Yuhata

yu ha ta

Manga

ma n ga

voiced prefix + ha = ga

Origami

ori ga mi

voiced prefix + ha = ga

Otaku

o ta ku

Sudoku

su do ku

voiced prefix + to = do

Sushi

su shi