I

Radicals and Components

Chapter 1. Learning Strokes [画] (Kaku)

When learning Kanji, a solid knowledge of radicals is useful in analyzing and understanding the composition of Kanji characters. However, before you begin learning the radicals that comprise Kanji, it is important to spend some time learning about the smallest unit of a radical (and therefore of an entire character): the stroke. You will become familiar with the different types of strokes, in what order they are written, and how to count the number of strokes in a radical or a character.

### Types of Strokes [一画] (Ikkaku)

Strokes can be categorized into eight major groups. These include *ten* (the abbreviated stroke), *yoko sen* (the horizontal line), *tate sen* (the vertical line), *naname sen* (the diagonal line), *kado kagi* (the corner), *naname kagi* (the sharp angle), *magari* (the curve), and *ahiru* [*ahiru* = duck] (the sharp angle-and-curve combination). There are variations of these categories which depend upon how the stroke is ended. As shown below, there are four ways to end a stroke.

Stroke Endings:

The **stop**, indicated by a period (·), requires bringing the pen to a complete stop and then lifting it off the paper.

The **jump**, indicated by a check, (✔) requires quickly flicking the pen off the paper.
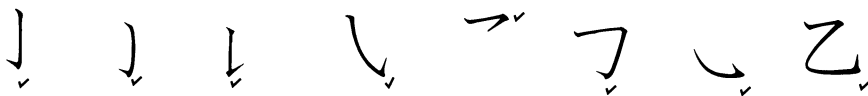
The **sweep**, indicated by a dotted line with an arrow head (⃗), requires gradually sweep-ing the pen off the paper in a continuous motion.

The final method, the **stop-sweep**, indicated by the stop sign (a period) followed by a dot-ted line (•⋯), requires the pen to come to a complete stop before lifting it off the paper in a sweeping motion diagonally down and to the right.

The Eight Major Stroke Categories:

The eight major categories of strokes are shown below in example Kanji that demonstrate the stroke with its various endings. Be sure to pay careful attention to the stroke endings.

1. Abbreviated stroke *(ten)*

TEN	shita	sora	koori	tori	fuyu
(dot)	(underneath)	(sky)	(ice)	(bird)	(winter)
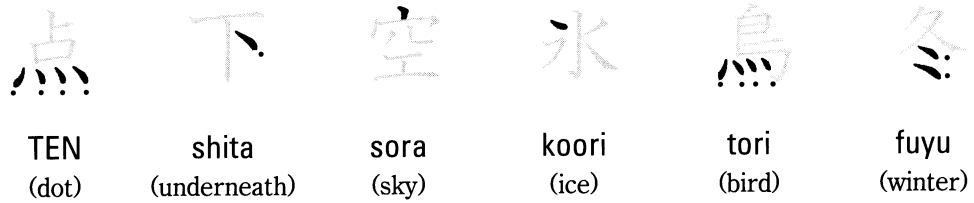
2. Horizontal line *(yoko sen)*
As a rule, the horizontal line is always written from left to right (→).

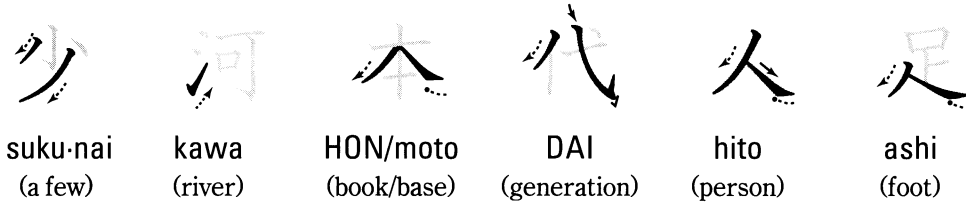| ICHI	NI	SAN	KETSU	ō·kii	TEN
(one)	(two)	(three)	(lack)	(large)	(heaven, sky)
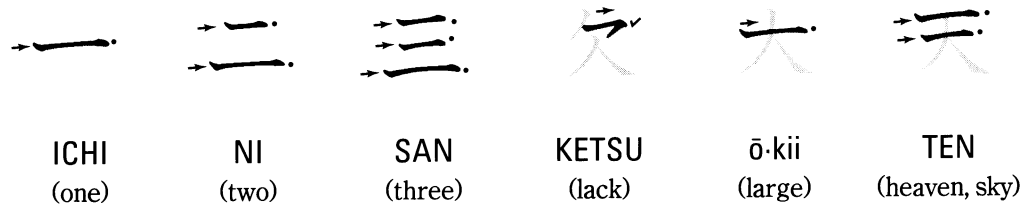
3. Vertical line *(tate sen)*
As a rule, the vertical line is always written from top to bottom (↓).

JŪ	kawa	CHŌ	te	naga·i	SHŪ
(ten)	(river)	(one block)	(hand)	(long)	(a state)
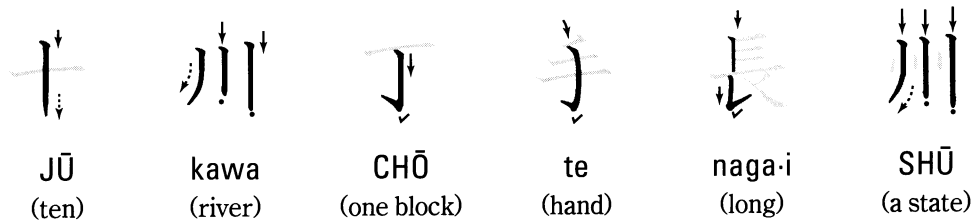
4. Diagonal line (*naname sen*)

Diagonal lines that begin at the top can sweep downward to the left but those that go downward to the right end either with a stop-sweep or a jump. Those that begin at the bottom sweep upward to the right.

少	河	本	代	人	足
suku·nai	kawa	HON/moto	DAI	hito	ashi
(a few)	(river)	(book/base)	(generation)	(person)	(foot)

5. Corner (*kado kagi*)

口	山	月	女	同	区
kuchi	yama	tsuki	onna	ona·ji	KU
(mouth)	(mountain)	(moon)	(woman)	(same)	(ward)
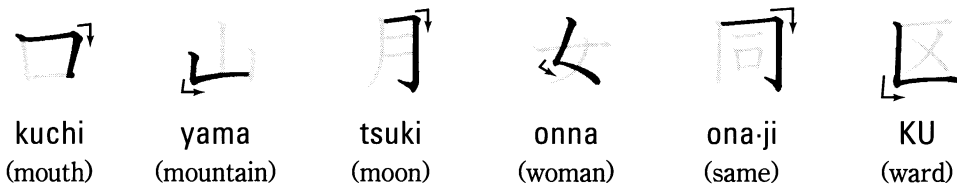
6. Sharp angle (*nanamekagi*)

子	夕	水	力	弓	公
ko	yū	mizu	chikara	yumi	KŌ
(child)	(evening)	(water)	(power)	(bow)	(public)

7. Curve (*magari*)

心	七	兄	毛	色	北
kokoro	SHICHI	ani	ke	iro	kita
(heart)	(seven)	(older brother)	(hair)	(color)	(north)
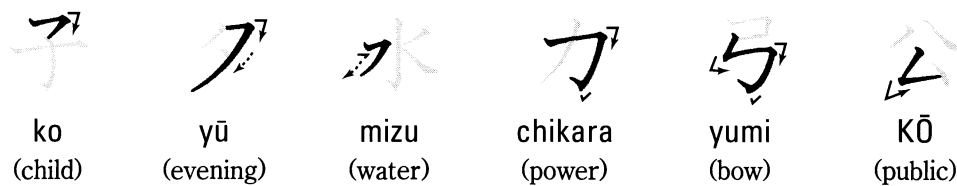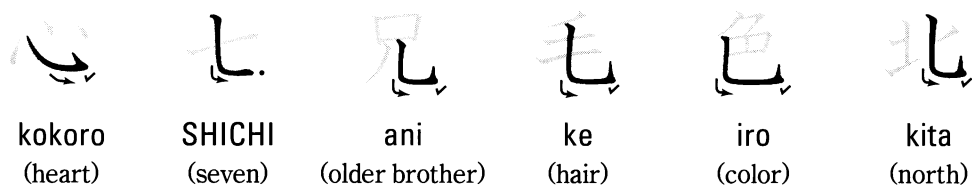
8. Sharp angle-and-curve combination (*ahiru*)

乙	九	風	気	飛	汽
OTSU	KU	kaze	KI	to·bu	KI
(the second)	(nine)	(wind)	(air)	(fly)	(steam)