



On The Fly Naming

The Problem: Game Time. You're the GM and you're winging it for this one. No one wants to stop play while you think of NPC names. Adding to the pressure, your players are starting refusing to talk with Bob, Sven and Ollie again—because those don't sound remotely Japanese. So what's a GM to do?

The Solution: *Deck O' Names* will help you generate names almost instantaneously.

This is a set of Japanese name segments and common endings, which can be used to generate male names, female names, surnames or place names. From these cards you can generate many new names, just by following a few simple guidelines.

1. Take two cards.



2. Match a white box with a colored box. Put a white box at the top. Do the same for a colored box, providing the appropriate name ending. Using the sample cards in the above images, the new surname is **Tachimoto**.

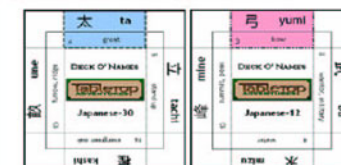
Other naming possibilities with these two cards:

- Rotate the first card to get **Kashimoto**, or **Unemoto**—both of which are surnames.
- Swap the cards to get **Tsujita**, **Akata**, **Erata**—all of which are male given names.
- Use the segments provided on the cards to mix and match: **Tachita**, **Kashita**, **Uneta**, **Akamoto**, **Eramoto**, **Tsujimoto**.

If those don't work for you, select new cards. With 9,000 unique possibilities with the white

then colored box rule and 54,285 otherwise, there is bound to be a combination that will work for you.

In this deck, each name segment is represented as a single Japanese character, called *kanji*. There are a few extremely common ending characters for each name type, often indicating the gender of the bearer of the name or the type of name itself. We have duplicated this aspect in our deck. The cards are color- and border- (for grayscale printing) coded for each name type as follows:



Male (blue, dash)

Female (pink, dash-dot)



Surname (purple, solid)

Place (gray, no border)

Tips:

- If you want less of a traditional feel add more cards (more segments), break the white-then-colored box rule, or combine this deck with others (i.e. the *Deck O' Names: Male and Female Names*), or use the translations on the cards.
- To increase the continuity during a game session, generate a few names during setup or while on break.
- Print two copies. Keep one by your planning area and one with your gaming stuff. Then you never have to do without!

Contents and Naming Information

Tabletop Adventures helps you bring an authentic Japanese flavor to your game with *Deck O' Names Japanese*.

The beauty and mystery of the culture cannot be contained in a single document, but we hope to bring you great Japanese names and a glimpse into aspects of this complex and glorious culture and its names.

Contents

Naming information.....	3
Cultural Tidbits and Sayings.....	4
Pronunciation Guide.....	6
Writing Systems.....	7
Kana Table.....	8
Lingo.....	9
Numbers in Japanese Culture.....	11
Seimei Handan (Name Fortunes)....	12
Japanese Calendar.....	13
Era Names.....	18
Period Names.....	21
Major Historical Points.....	22
For More Information.....	24



Buddhist temple in Kyoto. (Photo by Fig2, public domain.)

Notes on the Name Cards

- Japanese characters (kanji) are included on the cards to add a bit of optional flavor. The pronunciations for the kanji are not necessarily the most common ones you find in words. They may be special kanji pronunciations (called *nanori*) reserved for naming.
- There are a few really common endings for names, especially given names. These endings indicate the gender of the person behind the name.
- Surnames and place names have quite a bit of overlap for suffixes, because commoners often ended up being named after their place of origin.
- Eighteen of the 330 kanji presented in this deck are not from the *jouyou* kanji (characters learned in primary and secondary school, and required learning to be considered literate) or *jinmeiyō* kanji (characters in addition to the *jouyou* kanji, allowed for registered names) sets. But the kanji are in real names.

Writing Systems

Japanese has 3 main writing systems: Kanji, Hiragana and Katakana. These last two systems together are called kana. Writing directions for the kana are on the following page.

Kanji are the beautiful characters we most associate with Japanese. Most of the characters in the language were imported from China, between the 4th and 7th centuries.

Hiragana is a phonetic alphabet based on syllables. This style usually is used to indicate particles, nouns, suffixes - for nouns (i.e. -san to indicate Mr. or Mrs.) and for verb and adjective conjugation. Seeing hiragana in the text is one of the main ways to distinguish Japanese from Chinese. This style of writing is also used on occasion for female names.

It was originally called "onna de" (women's writing). Women were not educated to the same extent as men in the Heian period, so women used the simpler phonetic system instead of kanji.

Katakana, the other phonetic syllabary, is usually used to write foreign words and names, brand names, onomatopoeia (sound words like "buzz" or as the Japanese would say "bu" for the sound of a bell or buzzer). In ancient writings it was used for what hiragana is today.

Other terms you may come across are:

- Romaji**—the Romanization of Japanese words and sounds, using the Latin alphabet.
- Furigana**—small pronunciation guides written in hiragana beside kanji. As in the example below.

漢字 — Furigana
ひらがな

Direction

Japanese is written top to bottom, with columns going right to left. It can also be written left to right, in rows as in English.

Books from Japan start on the opposite side from American books. In other words, if you hold the book with the spine facing away from you and the page edges facing you, then the front of the book is the right hand side cover.



Pages from *The Chronicles of Japan* printed in 1599. (Public Domain)

Side Note—Seals

Name seals, called *hanko* or *inkan*, are often used with red ink to sign documents or art work. The seals use special script called *Ten-shōu*. They are registered with city hall in a person's town.



Photo of *hanko* (name seal stamps) by Angie Harms (Creative Commons License Attribution 2.0, image trimmed from original.)

Kana Table

The table below has three rows for each set of basic sounds (syllables). The first row shows the hiragana. The second shows the katakana, and the third is the English or Romaji representation.

Hiragana
Katakana
English/Romaji

あ	い	う	え	お
ア	イ	ウ	エ	オ
a	i	u	e	o
か	き	く	け	こ
カ	キ	ク	ケ	コ
ka	ki	ku	ke	ko
さ	し	す	せ	そ
サ	シ	ス	セ	ソ
sa	shi	su	se	so
た	ち	つ	て	と
タ	チ	ツ	テ	ト
ta	chi	tsu	te	to
な	に	ぬ	ね	の
ナ	ニ	ヌ	ネ	ノ
na	ni	nu	ne	no
は	ひ	ふ	へ	ほ
ハ	ヒ	フ	ヘ	ホ
ha	hi	fu	he	ho
ま	み	む	め	も
マ	ミ	ム	メ	モ
ma	mi	mu	me	mo
や	ゆ	よ		
ヤ	ユ	ヨ		
ya	yu	yo		
ら	り	る	れ	ろ
ラ	リ	ル	レ	ロ
ra	ri	ru	re	ro
わ				
ワ				
wa				
ん				
ン				
n				

(only used at the end of a syllable)

が	ぎ	ぐ	げ	ご
ガ	ギ	グ	ゲ	ゴ
ga	gi	gu	ge	go
ざ	じ	ず	ぜ	ぞ
ザ	ジ	ズ	ゼ	ゾ
za	ji	zu	ze	zo
だ	ぢ	づ	で	ど
ダ	ヂ	ヅ	デ	ド
da	ji	zu	de	do
ば	び	ぶ	べ	ぼ
バ	ビ	ブ	ベ	ボ
ba	bi	bu	be	bo
ぱ	ぴ	ぷ	ぺ	ぽ
Pa	pi	pu	pe	po

きゃ	きゅ	きょ
キャ	キュ	キョ
kya	kyu	kyo
ぎゃ	ぎゅ	ぎょ
ギャ	ギュ	ギョ
gya	gyu	gyo
しゃ	しゅ	しょ
シャ	シュ	ショ
sha	shu	sho
じゃ	じゅ	じょ
ジャ	ジュ	ジョ
ja	ju	jo
ちゃ	ちゅ	ちょ
チャ	チュ	チョ
cha	chu	cho
にゃ	にゅ	にょ
ニャ	ニュ	ニョ
nya	nyu	nyo
ひゃ	ひゅ	ひょ
ヒャ	ヒュ	ヒョ
hya	hyu	hyo
びゃ	びゅ	びょ
ビャ	ビュ	ビョ
bya	byu	byo
ぴゃ	ぴゅ	ぴょ
ピャ	ピュ	ピョ
pya	pyu	pyo
ふぁ	ふぃ	ふぇ
ファ	フィ	フェ
fa	fi	fe
みゃ	みゅ	みょ
ミャ	ミュ	ミョ
mya	myu	myo
りゃ	りゅ	りょ
リャ	リュ	リョ
rya	ryu	ryo



Sumi-E drawing by Mike Vander Voort

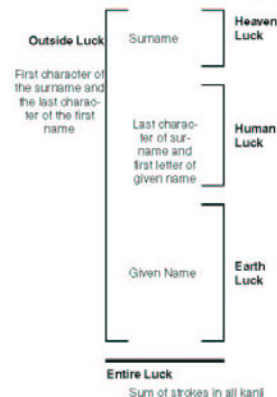
Seimei Handan

Fortune-telling is popular in Japan, particularly among women. You can go to a shrine and get your fortune told by drawing a fortune stick. There is also access to every other imaginable version: geomancy, I Ching, astrology, blood-types, palm reading, a version for house floor plans (called kaso), etc. You can even buy fortune-telling gum. (No kidding! We've seen "Japanese Lucky Gum Traditional Omikujii Cola." It looks like the fortune sticks at Shinto shrines.)

The Seimei Handan system of name fortune telling became particularly popular in the Edo Period. We thought it might be fun to include a simplified Seimei Handan table for use in a game, though we personally do not encourage such fortune telling for real-life purposes.

Seimei Handan Basics

Write the name vertically, in traditional Japanese style, and look up the number of strokes for each kanji. Then create sums according to the diagram below and table to the right.



# Strokes	Luck Value	# Strokes	Luck Value
1	lucky	41	very lucky
2	very unlucky	42	lucky
3	lucky	43	unlucky
4	very unlucky	44	very unlucky
5	lucky	45	very lucky
6	very lucky	46	very unlucky
7	lucky	47	very unlucky
8	lucky	48	lucky
9	very unlucky	49	unlucky
10	very unlucky	50	very unlucky
11	very lucky	51	lucky
12	very unlucky	52	very lucky
13	very lucky	53	lucky
14	very unlucky	54	very unlucky
15	very lucky	55	lucky
16	very lucky	56	unlucky
17	lucky	57	lucky
18	lucky	58	lucky
19	very unlucky	59	unlucky
20	very unlucky	60	very unlucky
21	lucky	61	lucky
22	unlucky	62	very unlucky
23	very lucky	63	very lucky
24	very lucky	64	very unlucky
25	lucky	65	very lucky
26	unlucky	66	very unlucky
27	unlucky	67	very lucky
28	very unlucky	68	very lucky
29	lucky	69	very unlucky
30	unlucky	70	very unlucky
31	lucky	71	lucky
32	very lucky	72	lucky
33	lucky	73	lucky
34	very unlucky	74	very unlucky
35	lucky	75	lucky
36	lucky	76	very unlucky
37	lucky	77	lucky
38	lucky	78	lucky
39	lucky	79	very unlucky
40	unlucky	80	very unlucky
		81	very lucky

- **Heaven Luck**— Fortune of the surname and ancestry.
- **Human Luck**— Fortune of the character, feeling, will, talent and relations.
- **Earth Luck**— Fortune for the younger years (up to age 30).
- **Outside Luck**— Fortune for the later years (after age 30).
- **Entire Luck**— Overall fortune. (Work and occupation fortunes are viewed here.)

Era and Historical Period Names

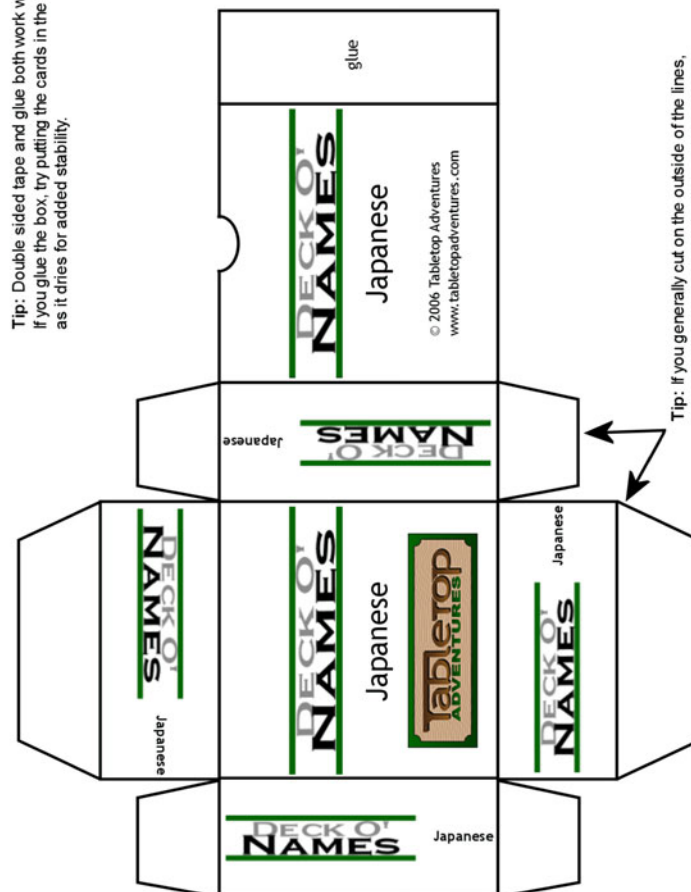
1736	元文	Gembun
1741	寛保	Kanpou
1744	延享	Enkyou
1748	寛延	Kan'en
1751	宝暦	Houreki
1764	明和	Meiwa
1772	安永	An'ei
1781	天明	Tenmei
1789	寛政	Kansei
1801	享和	Kyouwa
1804	文化	Bunka
1818	文政	Bunsei
1830	天保	Tempou
1844	弘化	Kouka
1848	嘉永	Kaei
1854	安政	Ansei
1860	万暦	Man'ei
1861	文久	Bunkyuu
1864	元治	Genji
1865	慶応	Kiei
1868	明治	Meiji - Mutsuhito, the Meiji Emperor
1912	大正	Taishou - Yoshihito, the Taisho Emperor
1926	昭和	Shouwa - Hirohito, the Shouwa emperor
1989	平成	Heisei - Akihito, the reigning emperor



Historical Periods

Years	Period Name
10,000 BC - 300 BC	Ancient Jomon
300 BC - 250 AD	Yayoi
c. 250 - 710 AD	Yamato
538 - 710 AD	Classical (Yamato continued)
710 - 794	Nara
794 - 1185	Heian
1185 - 1333	Feudal Kamakura
1333 - 1336	Kemmu restoration
1336 - 1392	Muromachi
1392 - 1573	Sengoku
1573 - 1603	Asuchi-Momoyama
1600 - 1867	Early Modern Edo
1868 - 1912	Modern Meiji
1912 - 1926	Taishou
1926 - 1945	Shouwa
1945 - 1952	Occupied Japan
1952 - 1989	Post-occupation
1989 - present	Heisei

Tip: Double sided tape and glue both work well. If you glue the box, try putting the cards in the box as it dries for added stability.



幸 yuki	香 ka scent, perfume	小 chi little	志 shi intention, plan	水 mi negative, clumsy	郎 rou son	曲 kyoku music
8 happen, fortune	DECK O' NAMES Japanese-25	3 title	DECK O' NAMES Japanese-28	4 negative, clumsy	DECK O' NAMES Japanese-31	6 music
17 self-reflecting	10	9 the change	10 mention, original	10 mention, original	10 mention, original	8 adjust, alter
謙 ken	彦 hiko prince, lad	梵 bon Buddhist	為 na change	原 wa original	斎 sai adjust, alter	
安 ama rain	雄 o male, hero	誓 jiz congratulations	雄 o male, hero	副 fuchi side, left	志 shi intention, plan	新 dzuku festival, festival
5	DECK O' NAMES Japanese-26	13	DECK O' NAMES Japanese-29	12 corner, monk	DECK O' NAMES Japanese-32	12 festival, festival
9	10	4	9	12	9	6
海 kai sea	志 shi intention, plan	願 ue wish, hope	雄 o male, hero	株 kake share, stock	志 shi intention, plan	城 shiro castle
12	DECK O' NAMES Japanese-27	10	DECK O' NAMES Japanese-30	8	DECK O' NAMES Japanese-33	5
12	10	10	16	12	12	7
渡 wataru transfer, ford	太 ta great	立 tachi stand, the	木 ki tree	應 maro 1, year	太 ta great	寄 kiyaku guest
12	DECK O' NAMES Japanese-27	5	DECK O' NAMES Japanese-30	18	DECK O' NAMES Japanese-33	9
10	10	16	16	12	12	7
藤 fu violet, ivy	太 ta great	誓 ue wish, hope	木 ki tree	音 on sound	太 ta great	夜 yoru night
12	DECK O' NAMES Japanese-27	10	DECK O' NAMES Japanese-30	8	DECK O' NAMES Japanese-33	5
10	10	16	16	12	12	7
傳 hiide transmit, spread	太 ta great	立 tachi stand, the	木 ki tree	應 maro 1, year	太 ta great	寄 kiyaku guest
12	DECK O' NAMES Japanese-27	5	DECK O' NAMES Japanese-30	18	DECK O' NAMES Japanese-33	9
10	10	16	16	12	12	7

市 ichi market	宿 juku station town	泉 izumi a spring
DECK O' NAMES Japanese-73	DECK O' NAMES Japanese-74	DECK O' NAMES Japanese-75
5	6	9
口 kuchi mouth	扇 sen fan	多 ta many
3	10	10
13	6	8
園 en park, garden	幸 gaku good luck, joy	本 moto book
10	8	5
上 ue up, above	本 moto book	本 moto book
3	5	5
DECK O' NAMES Japanese-76	DECK O' NAMES Japanese-77	DECK O' NAMES Japanese-78
13	7	6
裏 ura back, midst	佐 sa assistant, help	寺 era Buddhist temple
3	10	5
悦 etsu ecstasy, joy	泰 dai peaceful	辻 tsuji crossing
10	10	7
橋 hashi bridge	川 kawa river	川 kawa river
16	3	3
DECK O' NAMES Japanese-79	DECK O' NAMES Japanese-80	DECK O' NAMES Japanese-81
6	9	8
任 ataru responsibility, duty	郷 kata direction, person	持 moch hold, have
11	4	12
10	9	12
室 muro room, chamber	復 fuku restore	迹 jutsu mention
上 ue up, above	橋 hashi bridge	本 moto book
3	16	5
DECK O' NAMES Japanese-82	DECK O' NAMES Japanese-83	DECK O' NAMES Japanese-84
4	9	10
五 go five	柄 tsuka design	紙 kami paper
11	15	11
温 on warm	珍 chin rare, curious	笠 kasa bamboo hat
7	9	11
12	9	11
11	7	15
黒 kuro black	亜 a Asia, come after	無 mu abide by, follow
11	7	15