

# Making Japanese signs in the Latin alphabet more clear

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As foreign visitors to Japan grow, the question of how to write Japanese proper nouns (such as place and building names) in the Latin alphabet is gaining importance. The most important problems related to this question are the following: 1) The use of abbreviated words (especially the use of unintelligible abbreviations), and 2) The notation of long vowels (long vowels are often ignored). In order to further investigate these problems, we administered a questionnaire to international students. The results show that not any of the sample abbreviated words (Sta., Stn., St., Br., J. H. Sch. and Ginza E.) were intelligible. Furthermore, the style of a vowel with bar over it, for example “ō”, was the most preferred notation for long vowels. Our findings strongly suggest that the present writing system for Japanese proper nouns in the Latin alphabet cannot be described as user-friendly.