By adding てんてん or まる to certain カタカナ symbols, we can make new sounds. The name てんてん comes from the word てん, meaning mark or point, and まる means circle. These symbols are always added to the top right hand corner of the カタカナ, as shown.

Only カタカナ beginning with a K (カ), S (サ), T (タ) or H (ハ) sound can have てんてん added to them, and only characters beginning with a H (ハ) sound can have まる added to them.

Use these phrases and pictures to help remember the sound changes.

Kind Grandma
カ → ガ (ga)
キ → ギ (gi)
ク → グ (gu)
ケ → ゲ (ge)
コ → ゴ (go)

Striped Zebra
サ → ザ (za)
シ → ジ (ji) *
ス → ズ (zu)
セ → ゼ (ze)
ソ → ゾ (zo)

Hot Potato
パ → パ (pa)
ピ → ピ (pi)
プ → プ (pu)
ペ → ペ (pe)
ポ → ポ (po)

Top Dog
タ → ダ (da)
チ → チ (di) *
ツ → ツ (du) *
テ → テ (de)
ト → ド (do)

HB Pencil
パ → パ (pa) ピ → ピ (pi) プ → プ (pu)
ペ → ペ (pe) ポ → ポ (po)

カタカナ marked with an * symbol are exceptions to the above rules — シ becomes ‘ji’ instead of ‘zi’, and チ and ツ are pronounced similarly to ji and zu, but only used for specific words.