

An Unofficial Intuitive Pronunciation Guide In American English With a Matching Line-by-Line Compact Disk Tutorial For Teaching SGI-USA Gongyo

SUMMARY:

American Gongyo consists of a written Pronunciation Guide and a matching line-by-line Compact Disk (CD) Tutorial, which allow a new member to progress from zero knowledge about chanting Daimoku and Gongyo to competency in both, many times faster than other methods, with less frustration and stress.

AMERICAN GONGYO PRONUNCIATION GUIDE:

Common American Words. The American Gongyo Pronunciation Guide uses common American English words and sounds to reproduce *as closely as possible* the standard Romaji words in official SGI-USA Gongyo. The typical native American English speaker, with some coaching, is able to correctly pronounce all the words of Gongyo immediately. The student is also able to retain the correct pronunciation with fewer repetitions. Using the Pronunciation Guide alone, a student will develop accurate word pronunciation but not the proper recitation rhythm. Initially, the pronunciation will be slow, halting and without rhythm, but basically correct. The Guide is of value to some established members in isolating and curing flaws in pronunciation.

Ro-ma-ji Syllable Separation. The Pronunciation Guide also properly separates the standard Romaji into distinct syllables. Some common mispronunciations result from logical but incorrect syllable separation; an example is “Yumyo” which is sometimes pronounced “Yum yo.” The Romaji in American Gongyo is written “Yu-myō.” Syllable separation also obviates the need for Kanji to indicate separate “beats.”

Each Line Numbered. Each line in American Gongyo has an identifiable number, which matches the CD Tutorial and allows the student to maintain orientation with the audio. In American Gongyo (and any Gongyo), the period at the end of each phrase has meaning in showing the placement of the required micro pause. By placing each phrase on a separate line, the micro pause is made more distinct. The line numbers also facilitate discussion between student and helper about particular words of phrases.

Limitations When Used Alone. Limitations of the Pronunciation Guide used *alone* include the fact that it will not produce “perfect” pronunciation, is not a “fire (give) and

forget” tool, and may be confusing to established members who are comfortable with Romaji.

Optional and Disposable. The Pronunciation Guide is actually a set intuitive clues meant to “jump start” new members into learning and especially doing Gongyo. It is not a replacement for Romaji, an official Japanese language. However, a person will learn to pronounce Romaji using American Gongyo. Experience shows that a standard Gongyo book naturally replaces the Pronunciation Guide.

The Pronunciation Guide needs to be always viewed as an entirely optional and disposable learning aid.

Free Downloads of Pronunciation Guide. There are currently three free downloads available at the American Gongyo site:

The Convenient Booklet containing instructions.

This is the standard and preferred version.

The Condensed Four Page version without instructions.

This version is easier and less expensive to download.

The International English version.

This version eliminates American English pronunciation clues and is designed for speakers of non-American accented English. Within the context of SGI-USA responsibility, it may be of value to members in the former Pacific United Nations Trust Territorial, US Pacific Territories and the US Virgin Islands.

Coming: El Gongyo en Espanol. Since SGI-USA has many native Spanish language speakers as new members, a Spanish language version is being prepared. The Pronunciation Guide will use the book printed in Mexico as a starting point. (This SGI-Mexico version may have copied the format in an earlier edition of American Gongyo, which has been available in hard copy for five years and on the Internet for about two years.)

Living Document. The American Gongyo pronunciation clues change as better words or sounds are suggested by member/reviewers. Within this month, “chi” was changed to “chee” at the suggestion of an American member fluent in Japanese. A new member found a mistake in the text that had existed for several years. Each person providing a better word or finding a mistake or typo is thanked in the Convenient Booklet version.

AMERICAN GONGYO LINE-BY-LINE CD (Mp3) TUTORIAL:

The line-by-line CD (Mp3) Tutorial matches the line numbers in the Pronunciation Guide and has six (6) segments, which may be navigated in the same manner as the songs in an ordinary music CD. The CD Tutorial may be downloaded with one click for those with high-speed Internet connections. This takes about two (2) minutes. Each segment may

be downloaded separately, to help those with dial-up service. The format is MP3, which can be converted to regular CD or loaded into I Pod-type devices. The thirty (30)-second previews present a sample of each segment. This allows a prospective user to estimate the value of a particular segment before downloading.

The Voice of Gongyo. The recitation of Gongyo is by a Soka High School (Osaka) and Soka University (law faculty, Tokyo) graduate and Masters Degree candidate (computer science) at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. She was an YWD leader for a giant chapter in Japan. She was selected because of her excellent native pronunciation and rhythm. She is Youth Division and her voice relates well to young people. Her voice is not intimidating to new members. Students can have confidence that they are learning from excellent recitations in the various segments.

Segment One—Background. Web site information, the unofficial status, and legal boilerplate are stated in this segment.

Segment Two—Daimoku. Rather than assuming that new members understand how to pronounce Daimoku, it is offered in three (3) speeds: slow, moderate and regular.

Segment Three—Expedient Means Part A. This is the line-by-line tutorial, which coordinates with the written Pronunciation Guide. The speed is moderate rather than deadly slow. The speed was chosen to prevent pronunciation distortions and students from getting bored. A single voice and two repetitions is a good tutorial format.

Segment Four—Life Span Part C. This is line-by-line and also coordinates with written Pronunciation Guide.

Segment Five—Moderate Speed Individual Gongyo. Members do Gongyo eighty-five to ninety percent of the time at home, alone or with a few family members. The one voice option was chosen to provide the best clarity of pronunciation and rhythm, in an ordinary setting.

Segment Six—Regular Speed Individual Gongyo. This the final phase of the Tutorial, which will help a member become competent in the basic practice of Gongyo.

Production Note. American Gongyo was recorded in commercial studio. The mediocre voice tract of the narrator can be easily separated from the excellent voice tract of Ms. Kawashima. The Spanish Language CD will use Ms. Kawashima's tract with the narration rewritten and recorded in Spanish. Other languages can be similarly accommodated.

ADVANTAGES FOR NEW MEMBERS

- Initial experience shows that the Pronunciation Guide and CD Tutorial enable a new member to learn Gongyo faster, more accurately and with less stress.
- Makes SGI-USA Gongyo seem less foreign and daunting by being user friendly and American.
- Gongyo helpers and students improve Gongyo together.

ADVANTAGES FOR CURRENT MEMBERS

- Enables them to help new members learn Gongyo, even if they are not 100% sure about their own Gongyo.
- Enables them to perfect their own personal Gongyo, which provides confidence, eliminates the feeling of being a poseur and helps in the ability to lead Gongyo.

ADVANTAGES FOR SGI-USA

- Assists in retaining new members.
- Make every member into a potentially competent Gongyo teacher or helper.
- Increases the base of members who are qualified and willing to accept leadership positions.

CAVEATE

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• AMERICAN GONGYO DOES NOT REDUCE OR ELIMINATE THE NEED FOR PERSONAL CARE OF MEMBERS IN TEACHING OR HELPING WITH GONGYO. SIMPLY GIVING A NEW MEMBER THE GUIDE AND CD WITHOUT GOING OVER BOTH IN DETAIL IS STRONGLY NOT RECOMMENDED. |
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