

Guidelines for Transcription of English Consonants and Vowels

1. Phonemic (or broad) transcription is indicated by slanted brackets: / /
Phonetic (or narrow) transcription is indicated by square brackets: []

Unless otherwise indicated, you will be transcribing phonemically and should use slanted brackets around your transcriptions. For example:

single phonemes: / k / one word: / tɪp / utterance: / kæn ju rɪd ðɪs /

2. Do not use capital letters or punctuation marks. The IPA does not follow conventional writing rules and makes use of some capitals and punctuation marks as symbols indicating specific sounds or properties of sounds.

For example, a / G / is the symbol for a voiced uvular stop; a colon after a symbol indicates length, / i: /; and an apostrophe following a symbol indicates that the sound is an ejective, / p' /.

3. Do not use the letters x, c, or q in the transcription of English. These are symbols for sounds that occur in other languages. / x / is a voiceless velar fricative, / c / is a voiceless palatal stop, and / q / is a voiceless uvular stop.

The sounds that the letters represent in English are transcribed as follows: x represents either / ks / or / gz / as in *fix* and *exactly*, respectively; c represents either / k / or / s / as in *car* and *since*, respectively; and q represents the sound / k / as in *quick* or *risqué*.

4. Be careful to distinguish your symbols properly. Be especially careful not to confuse / ə / with / ʌ /, / ɔ̃ / with / θ /, / ʒ / with / ʒ' /.
5. If there are double letters in the spelling of a word, do not use double consonants in a transcription. For example, *rabbit* is transcribed / ræbɪt /.

Remember that spelling is a totally different system from that of transcription. Rely on your ears rather than your eyes.

6. In speech there are actually no gaps between words. In transcription you will find that some words seem to “stick” together and you should transcribe them as such. For example, “is a” in the phrase “is a cat” would be transcribed / ɪzə kæt /.
7. Be careful when transcribing / r /, / l /, / m /, and / n / when they occur at the end of a word. In most instances, they can form a syllable on their own in this position. You would transcribe these “syllabic” consonants with a tick mark under the symbol to indicate this. For example, *puddle* / pʌd̩l̩ /, *deeper* / di:p̩r̩ / and *golden* / ɡoʊld̩n̩ /.

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8. Use these various “sounds like” rules in transcribing vowels before nasals and / r /:
- Words that contain “ank” and “and”, like *tank, thank, bank, hand, band, tanned*, should be transcribed with the vowel [æ] and the appropriate nasal consonant: tæŋk, θæŋk, bæŋk, hænd, bænd, tænd.
 - Words that contain “ing” or “ink”, like *thing, ring, singer, think, blink*, should be transcribed with the vowel [ɪ] and the appropriate nasal consonant: θɪŋ, rɪŋ, sɪŋə, θɪŋk, blɪŋk.
 - The only tense vowels used before [ɪ] in the same syllable are [ɔ] and [ɑ]. Follow these rules:
 - ⇒ If it sounds like “or” it’s [ɔɪ] as in *tore, lore, four, score*.
 - ⇒ If it sounds like “are” it’s [ɑɪ] as in *car, far, bar, star*.
 - ⇒ If it sounds like “ear” it’s [ɪr] as in *fear, leer, sneer, beer*.
 - ⇒ If it sounds like “air” it’s [ɛɪ] as in *bare, stare, fair, care*.
 - ⇒ If it sounds like “lure” it’s [ʊr] as in *tour, poor*. **Your dialect may have [ɔɪ] for these words.

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STOPS

	Description	Examples
/ p ^h /	voiceless aspirated bilabial stop	p ut, a p art
/ p /	voiceless unaspirated bilabial stop	s p out, cap t ain, cu p
/ b /	voiced bilabial stop	b ut, a b andon, cu b
/ t ^h /	voiceless aspirated alveolar stop	t ab, a tt ack, t ry
/ t /	voiceless unaspirated alveolar stop	s t ick, cat w alk, pu t
/ d /	voiced alveolar stop	d one, e d it, pa d
/ k ^h /	voiceless aspirated velar stop	k at, a cc use, c risp
/ k /	voiceless unaspirated velar stop	s k ip, a ct ion, br ea k
/ g /	voiced velar stop	g et, be gg ing, dr ag

FRICATIVES (Alts stands for “alternative symbol”)

	Description	Examples	Alts
/ f /	voiceless labiodental fricative	f ly, co ff ee, cal f	
/ v /	voiced labiodental fricative	v erb, ca v e, ha v ing	
/ θ /	voiceless dental fricative	th in, mo th , bo th	
/ ð /	voiced dental fricative	this , wi th er, ba th e	
/ s /	voiceless alveolar fricative	si ng , ble ss ing, ca t s	
/ z /	voiced alveolar fricative	zi nc , bree z e, ro s e	
/ ʃ /	voiceless palato-alveolar fricative	sh ip, br ush ing, cr ush	/ ʃ /
/ ʒ /	voiced palato-alveolar fricative	mea s ure, sei z ure, rou g e	/ ʒ /
/ h /	voiceless glottal fricative	h ope, a h ead	

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AFFRICATES (Alts stands for “alternative symbol”)

	Description	Examples	Alts
/ tʃ /	voiceless palato-alveolar affricate	ch alk, catching , clutch	/ ʧ /
/ dʒ /	voiced palato-alveolar affricate	j ump, digest , rage	/ ʤ /

NASALS

	Description	Examples
/ m /	voiced bilabial nasal	m int, examine , drum
/ m̩ /	syllabic voiced bilabial nasal	bottom , random
/ n /	voiced alveolar nasal	n ut, money , can
/ n̩ /	syllabic voiced alveolar nasal	button , hidden
/ ŋ /	voiced velar nasal	f inger, d rink, sing

APPROXIMANTS

	Description	Examples
/ l /	voiced alveolar lateral approximant	lie , slip
/ l̥ /	voiceless alveolar lateral approximant	pl ate, cl ap
/ l̥̰ /	voiceless velarized lateral approximant	feel , pull , milk
/ l̩ /	syllabic voiced alveolar lateral approx.	bott le, mid dle
/ ɹ /	voiced alveolar approximant	ro ast, pouring , store
/ ɹ̥ /	voiceless alveolar approximant	pride , crow , trick
/ ɹ̩ /	syllabic voiced alveolar approximant	teacher , number

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APPROXIMANTS (continued) (Alts stands for “alternative symbol”)

	Description	Examples	Alts
/ w /	voiced labio-velar approximant	watch, await, sweet	
/ w̥ /	voiceless labio-velar approximant	twin, quick	
/ j /	voiced palatal approximant	yacht, c_ube, f_ew	/ y /
/ j̥ /	voiceless palatal approximant	p_ew, ac_ute	

LAX VOWELS (Alts stands for “alternative symbol”)

	Description	Examples	Alts
/ ɪ /	high-mid front unrounded	bit, wish, in	/ I /
/ ɛ /	mid-low front unrounded	get, mess, enter	/ E /
/ æ /	low front unrounded	ash, bad	
/ ə /	mid-low central unrounded, reduced	sofa, about, suppose	
/ ʌ /	mid-low central unrounded, full/stressed	putt, luck	
/ ʊ /	mid-high back rounded	put, foot, book	/ U /

RHOTACIZED VOWELS (Alts stands for “alternative symbol”)

	Description	Examples	Alts
/ ə̃ /	mid central rhotacized, unstressed/reduced	father, lawyer, campers ascertain, concern	/ əɪ / / ɪ̃ /*
/ ɜ̃ /	mid central rhotacized, stressed	purse, further, person	/ ɜɪ /

* alternate only in word-final position following another consonant

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TENSE VOWELS AND DIPHTHONGS (Alts stands for “alternative symbol”)

	Description	Examples	Alts
/ i /	high front unrounded	bead, three	/ ij / /iy/
/ eɪ /	mid-high front unrounded	clay, weigh	/ ei / / ej /
/ u /	high back rounded	crude, shoe	/ uw /
/ oʊ /	mid-high back rounded	boat, toe	/ ou / / ow /
/ ɔ /	mid-low back rounded	caught, paw	
/ ɑ /	low back unrounded	father, octopus, hot	/ a /
/ ɔɪ /	mid back rounded	boy, toil	/ oy / / ɔj /
/ aʊ /	low central rounded	cow, blouse	/ aw // ɑʊ // au /
/ aɪ /	low central unrounded	my, height	/ aj // aɪ // ai /