

Lytspel: A Simple Phonetic Respelling for the English Language

Vowels

«aa» as in «paam» <palm>

«ai/ay» as in «aim, play, layer»¹

«au/aw» as in «paus, law, drawing»
<pause...>¹

«ee/i» as in «tree, fansi, raidio» <...fancy,
radio>²

«oa/o» as in «boat, yelo, poetic» <...yellow,
poetic>¹

«oi/oy» as in «oil, boy, royel» <...royal>¹

«oo» as in «book»

«ou/ow» as in «mouth, now, power»¹

«uu/u» as in «gruup, clu, sichuaition»
<group, clue, situation>¹

«ue» as in «válu» <value> – also used in
words such as «due, tuen» <...tune> where
some people speak «uu»

«y/iy» as in «styl, quiyet, nuecliyy» <style,
quiet, nuclei>³

The schwa is usually written as «e»
(«camel, comen» <...common>) or «u»
(«álbun, nurvuss» <...nervous>), but as
«a» at the end of words («extra»). A
schwa immediately before the stressed
syllable can be represented by any of the
five main vowel letters, e.g. «a» in
«about», «o» in «compuet» <compute>.

The other vowels are written as expected
(«cat, pen, big, dog, club»). These five
vowels as well as «oo» and the schwa are
considered short, all others are long.

¹ Second spelling used at the end of words
and before other vowels.

² Second spelling used for unstressed
vowels at the end of words and before
other vowels.

³ Second spelling used before other vowels
and at the end of words after a vowel.

Consonants

«g» as in «big»

«j» as in «joy»

«ng» as in «long»

«w» as in «west»

«wh» as in «when» – many people speak
this like «w», but not everybody does

«zh» as in «miraazh» <mirage>

/k/ is written

- «c» before other letters except «e, i, y, h»
(«cat, cost, crisp») and in final unstressed
/ak/ or /Ik/ («mainiac, public»
<maniac...>)
- «k» otherwise («keep, king, book, drink»)

/s/ is written

- «c» between any vowel and «e, i, y»
(«decent, ixplicit» <decent, explicit>)
- «ss» between other vowels («assault,
épisoad» <assault, episode>) and at the
end of words except after /f, k, p, t, T/
(«less, évidenss» <...evidence>)
- «s» otherwise («sun, desk, chips»)

/z/ is written

- «s» between vowels («visit, dusen, disyr»
<...dozen, desire>) and at the end of words
except after /f, k, p, t, T/ («his, meens,
paus» <...means, pause>)
- «z» otherwise («zeero, igzact, obzurv»
<zero, exact, observe>)

/T/ and /D/:

- Voiceless /T/ is always «th», e.g. «thin»
- Voiced /D/ is usually «dh», e.g. «smuudh,
wurdhi» <smooth, worthy>
- But it remains «th» in the frequent words
«althó, tho, than, the, then, thay, them,
thair, thiss, that, thuss» <although,
though, than, the, then, they, them, their
or there, this, that, thus> as well as in all
words ending in /D@`/, such as «another,
bother, muther, whether» <another,
bother, mother, whether>. This spelling is
also used in derivatives of all these words.
- The small number of words ending in
/T@`/ is written with «thur»: «Arthur,
authur, panthur» <Arthur, author, panther>

The other consonants are written as
expected («bed, much, fat, hot, leg, now,
pop, run, ship, ever, yet»).

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R-colored Vowels

«air» as in «pair»

«ar» as in «dark»

«arr» as in «carri» <carry>

«eer» as in «cheer»

«er» as in «number»

«err» as in «merri» <merry>

«or» as in «north, order, port»

«orr» as in «sorri» <sorry>

«ur» as in «turn»

«urr» as in «current»

«yr» as in «fyr, vyruss» <fire, virus>

Other vowels keep their usual spelling

(«mirer, poor, puer, our» <mirror, poor, pure, our or hour>).

Sound Combinations

«qu» /kw/ as in «quit»

«x» /ks/ as in «mix, next, áxident» <... accident>

Final «all» /O:l/ as in «ball»

Final «tion» /S@n/ as in «section, recognition, permission, miusition» <... permission, musician>

Final «sion» /Z@n/ as in «vision, confuision, iquaision» <...confusion, equation>

Between any of /b, p, k/ and word-final /l/, the schwa is omitted, e.g. «flexebl, simpl, articl» <flexible, simple, article>.

Final /z@m/ is written «sm» with the schwa omitted, e.g. «sarcasm».

Stress

Stress is marked using an acute accent in cases where it deviates from the stress pattern predicted by the following rules:

- If a word has just one syllable, no accent is used or needed.
- If a word ends in «ee», this final vowel is stressed, e.g. «agree».
- If a word ends in «a» or «i» and has just two syllables, the first vowel is stressed, e.g. «extra, hapi» <...happy>.

- If a word ends in any of «grefi, leji, ic, icl, ics, iti, sion, tion», the vowel preceding this ending is stressed, e.g. «turminoleji, statistic, publicaition» <terminology, statistic, publication>.
- Otherwise the first long vowel in the word is considered stressed, e.g. «compleet, prisuem, sufyss» <complete, presume, suffice>. But, except for «y», long vowels written with just one letter (e.g. the «o» in «windo» <>window>) don't count for the purposes of this rule, and neither does the final vowel in words ending in «ait, y, ys, yt».
- Otherwise, if a word starts with a short vowel or with «di» or «ri», the second vowel is considered stressed, e.g. «adopt, difenss, riquest» <adopt, defense, request>. If not, the first vowel is considered stressed, e.g. «current». But in either case, if the chosen vowel would be «er», the next vowel that is not «er» is chosen instead, e.g. «interject, perhaps».

If a prefix has just one syllable and is stressed, it takes the accent, e.g. «nónsenss» <nonsense>.

The use of accents is optional, but recommended.

Sample

Four scor and seven yeers ago our faathers braut forth upon thiss continent, a nue naition, conseevd in Liberti, and dedicaited tu the proposition that all men ar criáited eequel. Now wi ar engaijd in a grait sivil wor, testing whether that naition, or eni naition so conseevd and so dedicaited, can long enduer.

Links

Online converter: <https://www.lytspel.org>

Detailed ruleset:

<https://www.lytspel.org/rules>