

Pronunciation Guide

| American English Pronunciation of Consonant Sounds with Symbols | | | | | |
|---|-------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|------------|-----------------------|
| Phonemic Symbol | AHD ¹ Symbol | Examples | Phonemic Symbol | AHD Symbol | Example |
| /b/ | /b/ | <i>boy, cabin</i> | /p/ | /p/ | <i>pink, hip</i> |
| /tʃ/ | /ch/ | <i>cheer, watch, cello</i> | /r/ | /r/ | <i>rest, far</i> |
| /d/ | /d/ | <i>dog, bed</i> | /s/ | /s/ | <i>sink, bus</i> |
| /f/ | /f/ | <i>fill, phone, life</i> | /ʃ/ | /sh/ | <i>she, special,</i> |
| /g/ | /g/ | <i>go, log</i> | /t/ | /t/ | <i>tiny, little</i> |
| /h/ | /h/ | <i>his, cohort</i> | /ð/ | /th/ | <i>the, bathe</i> |
| /dʒ/ | /j/ | <i>joy, giant, budge</i> | /θ/ | /th/ | <i>thin, bath</i> |
| /k/ | /k/ | <i>cat, king, lack</i> | /v/ | /v/ | <i>view, weave</i> |
| /l/ | /l/ | <i>long, ill</i> | /w/ | /w/ | <i>win, when</i> |
| /m/ | /m/ | <i>my, team</i> | /j/ ² | /y/ | <i>you, mayor</i> |
| /n/ | /n/ | <i>no, knife</i> | /z/ | /z/ | <i>zoo, rise</i> |
| /ŋ/ | /ng/ | <i>sing, think</i> | /ʒ/ | /zh/ | <i>leisure, beige</i> |

| American English Pronunciation of Vowel Sounds with Phonemic Symbols | | | | | |
|--|------------|-------------------|-----------------|------------|-------------------|
| Phonemic Symbol | AHD Symbol | Examples | Phonemic Symbol | AHD Symbol | Example |
| æ | ă | <i>can, hat</i> | ɔ: | ô | <i>caught</i> |
| eɪ | ā | <i>cane, bait</i> | ɔr | ôr | <i>north</i> |
| ɛər | âr | <i>air, hare</i> | ɔɪ | oi | <i>joy, noise</i> |
| ɑ: | ä | <i>father</i> | ʊ | oo | <i>took</i> |
| ɑr | är | <i>arm</i> | ʊər | oor | <i>tour</i> |
| ɛ | ě | <i>bet, head</i> | u: | oo | <i>soon</i> |
| i: | ē | <i>meet, beat</i> | aʊ | ou | <i>out</i> |
| ɪər | îr | <i>here</i> | ʌ | ü | <i>cut</i> |
| ɪ | ĭ | <i>pit</i> | ɜr | ûr | <i>word</i> |
| aɪ | ī | <i>my, light</i> | ə | ə | <i>about, the</i> |
| ɒ | ö | <i>hot</i> | ər | ər | <i>butter</i> |
| oʊ | ō | <i>no, know</i> | ju: | yoo | <i>view,</i> |

¹ American Heritage Dictionary

² While the IPA symbol for this sound is /j/, I will use the AHD symbol of /y/

Characteristic Difficulties with English for Speakers of Burmese Languages

1. Alphabet is syllabic: each letter has an inherent vowel, other vowels are indicated using separate letters or diacritics.
2. Burmese is tonal language. Pitch, intensity (loudness), duration, and vowel quality can all change the meaning of a word.
3. Burmese language has 10 vowel sounds (æ, ɪ, ʌ, aʊ, ɒ, oʊ, eɪ, ɛ, i:)
4. /r/ is difficult for Burmese speakers to pronounce, often is replaced by /ɣ/
5. Insertion of /ə/ into consonant blends (particularly three-consonant clusters)
 - a. Stream becomes satream
 - b. Sprout becomes saprout
6. Dropping of the initial /s/ in a three-consonant cluster starting with “s”
 - a. Screw becomes crew
 - b. Street become treet
7. Dropping the /r/ in consonant clusters
 - a. Street becomes steet
 - b. Crew becomes cew (coo)
 - c.
8. Non-pronunciation issues:
 - a. Burmese has about 450 “particles” which are added to words to show tense, respect, mood, and more
 - b. “Directional words”
 - i. Lend/borrow
 - ii. Give/take
 - c. Never touch a person’s hair, head, or cheek. Not even as a friendly gesture.
 - d. Burmese rarely show a negative emotion in public.