

Interpreting Pronunciation Symbols

Anyone who has tried to learn to speak—or to spell—English knows that spelling is not a reliable guide for pronunciation. Linguists and dictionary publishers need a way to write the pronunciation of words. Since symbols vary, even among dictionaries, this guide is designed to help you interpret the variance among the symbols used in popular resources.

VOWELS

	Accent America!	Longman	American Heritage	Webster's (print editions)
select	ə	ə	ə	ə
seat	ɪy	ɪ ^y	ē	ē
sit	ɪ	ɪ	ī	ɪ
same	ey	e ^y	ā	ā
set	ɛ	ɛ	ě	e
sat	æ	æ	ǎ	a
sun	ʌ	ʌ	ǔ	'ə
song	ɑ	ɑ	ǒ	ä
saw	ɔ	ɔ	ô	ò
so	ow	o ^w	ō	ō
soot	ʊ	ʊ	ö	ù
suit	uw	u ^w	ü	ü
site, sight	ay	aɪ	ī	ī
sound	aw	aʊ	ou	aù
soil	ɔy	ɔɪ	oi	òɪ
sir	ər	ɜr	ûr	ər

CONSONANTS

	Accent America!	Longman	American Heritage	Webster's (print editions)
may	m	m	m	m
name	n	n	n	n

Continued on next page



CONSONANTS (CONTINUED)

	Accent America!	Longman	American Heritage	Webster's (print editions)
sing	ŋ	ŋ	ng	ŋ
pay	p	p	p	p
bay	b	b	b	b
fade	f	f	f	f
veil	v	v	v	v
way	w	w	w	w
thin	θ	θ	th	th
they	ð	ð	th	th
tame	θ	t	t	t
day	d	d	d	d
say	ʃ	s	s	s
zoo	z	z	z	z
shade	ʃ	ʃ	sh	sh
leisure	z	z	zh	zh
chain	tʃ	tʃ	ch	ch
jay	dʒ	dʒ	j	j
lay	l	l	l	l
ray	r	r	r	r
yes	y	y	y	y
came	k	k	k	k
game	g	g	g	g
hay	h	h	h	h

© 2005 The Linguistic Edge. All Rights Reserved.

The phonetic fonts used in this work are available from Linguist's Software, Inc., PO Box 580, Edmonds, WA 98020-0580, USA tel (425) 775-1130, www.linguistsoftware.com.

To request permission to reprint or excerpt this article, please contact permissions@linguisticedge.com. The information presented in this article is intended to be accurate and authoritative information on the subject matter covered. It is provided with the understanding that The Linguistic Edge assumes no liability whatsoever in connection with its use.

