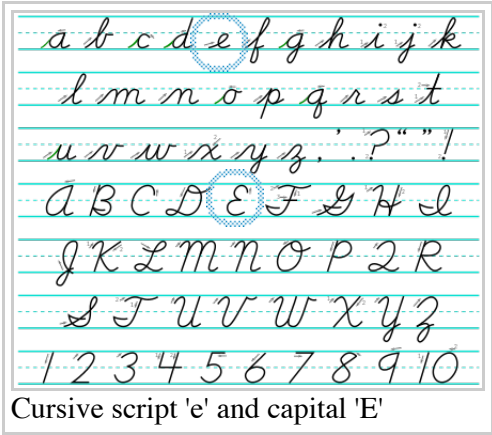# E

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**E** (named *e* /ˈiː/, plural *ees*)[1] is the fifth letter and a vowel in the ISO basic Latin alphabet. It is the most commonly used letter in many languages, including: Czech,[2] Danish,[2] Dutch,[2] English,[3] French,[4] German,[5] Hungarian,[2] Latin,[2] Norwegian,[2] Spanish,[6] and Swedish.[2]


Cursive script 'e' and capital 'E'

# Contents

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# History

| Egyptian hieroglyph *q'* | Phoenician *He* | Etruscan E | Greek *Epsilon* | Roman/ Cyrillic E |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 𓀠 | 𐤄 | ⧢ | Εε | Ε |

The Latin letter 'E' differs little from its derivational source, the Greek letter epsilon, 'Ε'. In etymology, the Semitic *hê* has been suggested to have started as a praying or calling human figure (*hillul* 'jubilation'), and was probably based on a similar Egyptian hieroglyph that indicated a different pronunciation. In Semitic, the letter represented /h/ (and /e/ in foreign words), in Greek *hê* became epsilon with the value /e/. Etruscans and Romans followed this usage. Although Middle English spelling used 'e' to represent long and short /e/, the Great Vowel Shift changed long /eː/ (as in 'me' or 'bee') to /iː/ while short /e/ (as in 'met' or 'bed') remained a mid vowel.

# Use in other languages

In the International Phonetic Alphabet, /e/ represents the close-mid front unrounded vowel. In the orthography of many languages it represents either this or /ɛ/, or some variation (such as a nasalized version) of these sounds, often with diacritics (as: ⟨e ê é è ë ē ĕ ě ẽ ė ę ȩ ė⟩) to indicate contrasts. Less commonly, as in Saanich, E represents a mid-central vowel /ə/. Digraphs with 'e' are common to indicate diphthongs and monophthongs, such as 'ea' or 'ee' for /iː/ or /eɪ/ in English, 'ei' for /aɪ/ in German, and 'eu' for /ø/ in French or /ɔɪ/ in German.

# Most common letter

'E' is the most common (or highest-frequency) letter in the English alphabet (starting off the typographer's phrase ETAOIN SHRDLU) and several other European languages, which has implications in both cryptography and data compression. In the story The Gold Bug by Edgar Allan Poe, a character figures out a random character code by remembering that the most used letter in English is E. This makes it a hard and popular letter to use when writing lipograms. Ernest Vincent Wright's *Gadsby* (1939) is considered a "dreadful" novel, and that "at least part of Wright's narrative issues were caused by language limitations imposed by the lack of *E*."[7] Both Georges Perec's novel *A Void* (*La Disparition*) (1969) and its English translation by Gilbert Adair omit 'e' and are considered better works.[8]

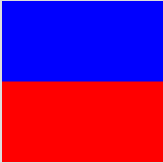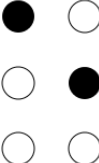# Related letters and other similar characters

- E ε : Greek letter Epsilon
- Ɛ ɛ : Latin letter Epsilon
- Ə ə : Latin letter Schwa
- Е е : Cyrillic letter Ye
- Є є : Cyrillic letter Ukrainian Ye
- Э э : Cyrillic letter E
- Ę ę : Polish and Lithuanian letter Ę
- ℮ : Estimated sign (used on prepackaged goods for sale within the European Union).
- € : Euro sign.
- *e* : a mathematical constant.
- ㅌ : a Hangul letter.
- ∈ : in set theory, the symbol for set membership.
- ɛ : the Euler–Mascheroni constant.

# Computing codes

| Character | E | | e | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Unicode name | LATIN CAPITAL LETTER E | | LATIN SMALL LETTER E | |
| Encodings | decimal | hex | decimal | hex |
| Unicode | 69 | U+0045 | 101 | U+0065 |
| UTF-8 | 69 | 45 | 101 | 65 |
| Numeric character reference | &#69; | &#x45; | &#101; | &#x65; |
| EBCDIC family | 197 | C5 | 133 | 85 |
| ASCII [1] | 69 | 45 | 101 | 65 |

[1] Also for encodings based on ASCII, including the DOS, Windows, ISO-8859 and Macintosh families of encodings.

# Other representations

| NATO phonetic | Morse code |
|---|---|
| **Echo** | · |

| Signal flag | Flag semaphore | Braille dots-15 |
|---|---|---|

In British Sign Language (BSL), the letter 'e' is signed by extending the index finger of the right hand touching the tip of index on the left hand, with all fingers of left hand open.

# References

1. "E" a letter *Merriam-Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged* (1993). *Ees* is the plural of the name of the letter; the plural of the letter itself is rendered E's, *E*s, e's, or *e*s.
2. Kelk, Brian. "Letter frequencies" (http://www.bckelk.ukfsn.org/words/etaoin.html). UK Free Software Network. Retrieved 2008-06-25.
3. Lewand, Robert. "Relative Frequencies of Letters in General English Plain text" (http://pages.central.edu/emp/LintonT/classes/spring01/cryptography/letterfreq.html). *Cryptographical Mathematics*. Central College. Retrieved 2008-06-25.

4. "Frequency of Occurrence of Letters in French" (http://www.santacruzpl.org/readyref/files/g-l/ltfrqfr.shtml). Santa Cruz Public Libraries. Retrieved 2008-06-25.
5. "Frequency of Occurrence of Letters in German" (http://scplweb.santacruzpl.org/readyref/files/g-l/ltfrqger.shtml). Santa Cruz Public Libraries. Retrieved 2008-06-25.
6. "Frequency of Occurrence of Letters in Spanish" (http://www.santacruzpl.org/readyref/files/g-l/ltfrqsp.shtml). Santa Cruz Public Libraries. Retrieved 2008-06-25.
7. Ross Eckler, *Making the Alphabet Dance: Recreational Word Play*. New York: St. Martin's Press (1996): 3
8. Eckler (1996): 3. Perec's novel "was so well written that at least some reviewers never realized the existence of a letter constraint."

# External links

- Media related to E at Wikimedia Commons
- The dictionary definition of E at Wiktionary
- The dictionary definition of e at Wiktionary

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Categories:  ISO basic Latin letters │ Vowel letters